

Advice on a risk of scrapping the traditional census method

One significant risk posed by scrapping the traditional form of census is the readiness of Stats NZ's IDI, which may not be well-modelled or robust enough to capture the characteristics and variables needed to measure the Māori population accurately. One of the core principles of Māori data sovereignty is authority, which requires significant changes to current practices and system structures. It also involves data governance, including the regulatory framework and infrastructure that define and control the collection, use, and disclosure of Māori data. The decision could potentially increase the risk of exaggerating existing discrepancies in Māori population counts.

A viable solution to this challenge is the implementation of a unified branch data warehouse, derived from Stats NZ's IDI, combined with appropriate data modelling, sufficient attributes, and consultation to ensure inclusion of the Māori population. On the technical side, the branch warehouse should adopt policies and practices that allow Māori authority over Māori data to be effectively exercised. Equally important is a commitment to Māori Data Governance (MDGov) funding and the establishment of an independent Māori entity to oversee governance. Overall, an integrated approach minimizes risk and builds an ecosystem with persistence, consistency, and continuity.

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