

Advice on Census Changes and Māori Data Sovereignty (46730158)

Replacing the census with an IDI-based framework introduces a risk of weakening Māori Data Sovereignty by diminishing Māori control and visibility over their data. The biggest risk is a loss of Rangatiratanga (Authority). While Census data has enabled Māori to assert identity and affiliation through iwi, te reo, and whakapapa, administrative datasets are collected for the Crown's purpose or an agency priority which could result in misclassification of Māori categories. This also constitutes a form of being culturally misplaced and diminishes Whakapapa, as the data needs to be accurate ('lived' in real terms), in context, and relevant to the ways Māori require the information.

The consequences of misclassifying Māori and using administrative datasets are considerable. Māori people are likely to be under-enumerated potentially leading to under-resourcing, inequitable servicing, and further entrenching "data colonialism." Additionally, without appropriate datasets, government and iwi would be unprepared to plan for the wellbeing of their whānau, language rejuvenation or ensure future generations will thrive.

As such, we recommend that Stats NZ establish Māori leadership within the Census redesign team, guaranteed protection for Māori categories in the IDI model and in partnership with Te Mana Raraunga, establish a Chief Māori Data Steward.