

Scrapping Census: Risk to Māori Data sovereignty

Scrapping the census compromises Māori Data sovereignty, including the principle of rangatiranga (Authority), as mentioned in Chris's lecture. Māori have the right to determine the classification, collection and usage of their data. Despite this, administrative datasets are not constructed with Māori requirements in mind or collected with Māori consent.

As emphasized by Chris, administrative data lacked important whakapapa context, like iwi connection Hapu identity and self-determined categories of health. Instead, it documented Māori during times of crisis like health or justice, perpetuating deficit narratives and eroding communal strengths. We understand that this transition will permanently weaken the quality and depth of Māori data, particularly for smaller iwi, rural communities, and takatapui, resulting in the continuous loss of visibility, autonomy and voice for who are frequently excluded.

Lack of rich and detailed data, government agencies are unable to maintain accountability, trust or equity, and Māori communities lose tools for self-determination. This undermines public trust which is the foundation of any ethical data system.

To protect Māori data governance, we must collaborate with iwi to design a successor model under the Mana Ōrite agreement, designate a Chief Māori Data Steward and incorporate Māori authority in decision making.