

## **Distorted Representations of Māori Data due to Census Changes**

Stopping the Census runs the risk of portraying Māori well-being through a deficit-based lens due to weaknesses in administrative data. This goes against the Māori Data Sovereignty principle of Manaakitanga, which states that data analysis should uphold the dignity of Māori and avoid stigmatisation or blame.

Administrative datasets come with inherent flaws as they are collected through interactions with government services such as hospitals, law enforcement or social services. It is well known that Māori are over-represented in such areas, including unemployment, incarcerations, health and housing. If we rely only on administrative data, the analysis will be skewed. It would put an overfocus on the negative aspects of Māori wellbeing, creating a deficit-based view and ignoring the principle of Manaakitanga.

To gain a more complete perspective of Māori and their needs, the existing Te Kūpenga survey from Stats NZ could be expanded alongside Census changes, as it has a more wide-ranging focus on the social, cultural, and economic well-being of Māori. Most importantly, any steps to change the Census should include co-governance to involve Māori and iwi in the decision-making process. By ensuring Māori can have control over their data, this strengthens the principle of Authority whilst protecting Manaakitanga.

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