

Written Advice on Māori Data Governance and Sovereignty

by Irellah R. Arroyo

Māori Data Sovereignty is at serious risk, as the census is to be replaced with administrative datasets. In the past few decades, census-based statistics have been some of the only comprehensive statistics collecting data on iwi affiliation, ethnicity, and descent, which are of paramount importance to the Māori identity and self-determination. There are likely to be Māori identity being excluded, as those measurements were not designed or created with Māori in mind, and will support and have Māori interest at heart but not in entirety. Governance has to make a decision between competing priorities including individual and collective rights and hanaungatanga (obligations).

To address the issues and risks above, Stats NZ must apply Māori leadership through the new census process and incorporate co-design with iwi so that iwi affiliation, descent, and ethnicity remain the central fields, and that governance of the collection, storage, and use of these data are held by Māori. Embed the principles of Rangatiratanga and Whanaungatanga to ensure that Māori are in charge of how their data is collected, stored, and used according to MDS principles.