

Risk of deficit lens in Māori data without the Census

Moving from the Census to administrative datasets based on the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) risks framing Māori data through a deficit lens. IDI datasets, often drawn from vulnerable interactions with the state (such as welfare, hospitalisations, and police records), highlight inequitable outcomes for Māori without historical and institutional context. This makes it easier to perpetuate harmful narratives about Māori, putting them at blame for the inequities they face.

This undermines the Māori data sovereignty principles of kotahitanga (collective benefit) and manaakitanga (dignity), which require the use of Māori data to benefit and uphold the dignity of Māori individuals and communities. It also violates the rangatiratanga of Māori over their data and its use.

To ensure these principles are upheld, the IDI should be heavily supplemented with Māori-focused surveys such as Te Kupenga, reducing overall bias. Māori should also have more input into how their data is used. This could be done by establishing a Māori Chief Data Steward position in government and mandating iwi-Māori input into research involving Māori data. This prevents further inequities in policy and resource allocation and enhances partnership in data governance between Māori and the State in accordance with Te Tiriti.

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