

Advice on honouring Māori Data Sovereignty in a move away from the traditional Census

The decision to scrap the traditional census in favour of an administrative model based on Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure could pose profound risk to Māori Data Sovereignty if not approached judiciously. By moving away from a complete enumeration survey in which Māori had free say regarding descent, ethnicity and iwi, their voice is stripped away and replaced by an artificial model relying on government-administered data, often neglecting indigenous perspectives. This, in return, violates several Māori Data sovereignty principles. Firstly, by shifting to a government-controlled census, the authority over indigenous data, as well as the ability to oversee its storage and usage, is removed from the Māori, thus overlooking the principles of rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga. Furthermore, the administrative model's potential inability to adequately capture data on descent, ethnicity and iwi could marginalise Māori within the population, thereby diminishing their views and needs, while weakening whanaungatanga. Additionally, reliance on government-administered data, which often stigmatises Māori, could worsen their public image by amplifying overrepresentation in statistics on crime and homelessness, thereby disregarding manaakitanga. Nevertheless, risks associated with this new approach could be mitigated by empowering a Māori entity to oversee the handling of indigenous data, ensuring it is treated as a taonga, while its sovereignty and principles are upheld.

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