Max Blockley - Written Critique - 22982551

The decision to replace the current census with a data-based model census will likely affect Māori data sovereignty. A key principle of Māori data sovereignty is rangatiratanga, which is basically Māori governance in the use of Māori data. So only using past data sets that may not have a high number of Māori influence, Stats NZ risks collecting data that may not reflect Māori and their cultural identity accurately. If these are lost, Māori and their community may not have access to accurate information that is could be used their decision-making and development.

This could weaken Māori trust in Stats NZ by repeating past events of exclusion and Māori misrepresentation. The new census could also limit the mana motuhake (autonomy) of Māori as it is reducing access to policies and plans developed by Māori.

To stop this, Stats NZ should make sure that there is Māori input and partnership when they are building the new census approach, keeping consistent with the principle of rangapū. Collaborating on data collection and governance frameworks with Māori would help preserve important cultural information, protect rangatiratanga, and maintain the accuracy of the census data for Māori.

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