

# Proposed data collection approach and content for the census

## Discussion document for public consultation





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#### **Citation**

Stats NZ (2025). *Proposed data collection approach and content for the census: Discussion document for public consultation*. Retrieved from [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz).

ISBN 978-1-991307-83-5 (online)

#### **Published in November 2025 by**

Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa  
Wellington, New Zealand

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## Foreword

In today's world, people need data and statistics that are meaningful, relevant, and timely.

Stats NZ recognises this and is focused on continuing to deliver the high-quality information our partners, customers, and communities rely on, and which supports positive economic and social outcomes now – and into the future.

This includes census statistics which provide an official count of people and dwellings. Census information is a critical tool for planning and decision making. It provides important insights about people and communities, supports decisions about infrastructure and essential services that improve everyday life, and plays an important role in our electoral system.

As we prepare for the next census, Stats NZ is introducing important changes to how the census is delivered. A new, future-focused approach is being introduced that is more responsive, flexible, and sustainable.

Our intention is that from 2030, census data and statistics will be produced every year. We will do this by making better use of the information already collected by government and other organisations as part of their day-to-day work (known as 'administrative data' or 'admin data').

Surveys will continue to play an important role and a new type of annual census survey will begin in 2027 that reaches a small percentage of the population each year. We will also work with iwi Māori and other priority communities to develop tailored solutions that help meet their data needs. Using these three elements – admin data, survey information, and tailored solutions – Stats NZ will deliver relevant, useful data that meets the need for more timely information.

As we introduce these changes and prepare for the next census, we want to hear about the information that's important to you. We're seeking your feedback on the content for the next census, and how we collect this information through the new admin-data-first model. We also seek your insights on current and emerging information needs.

I encourage you to share your views and feedback, so that our work to modernise the census and improve New Zealand's official population and social statistics system benefits everyone.



**Mary Craig**

Acting Chief Executive and Government Statistician

# Finding your way around this document

## Purpose and structure of this document

This document seeks feedback on our proposed data collection approach and the primary content for the next census.

It is structured in seven parts:

1. Introduction to this consultation – page 8
2. About the census – page 11
3. Opportunity for feedback – introducing the new admin-data-first census model – page 13
4. Opportunity for feedback – census topics, collection approach, and potential impacts for priority communities – page 20
5. Opportunity for feedback – proposed changes to census content – page 30
6. Opportunity for feedback – meeting broader information needs – page 37
7. Next steps – page 39

## Consultation questions and feedback

We invite you to make a submission on the content for the next census, and how we implement the new admin-data-first census model in the coming years.

Consultation questions are included in the text at the end of each section.

Submissions can be made until **5pm on Friday 19 December 2025**.

Please [make your submission online](#).

If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired, New Zealand Relay can help you make contact by phone. Find out more about the free [New Zealand Relay services](#).

Summary versions of this discussion document, including in a range of translated and alternate formats, are also available on the website.

### For more information

Visit: [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)

Email: [info@stats.govt.nz](mailto:info@stats.govt.nz)

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## Part 1: Introduction to this consultation

### Modernising the census

In June 2025, following Cabinet endorsement, details were announced about how New Zealand's census would be conducted in the future. [Modernising the census](#) provides more information about why the census is changing and the decision-making process. The new approach is built on three key components:

- **Administrative (admin) data**

We will use more of the information already collected by government agencies. Admin data forms the foundation of the new model, reducing the need for everyone to complete a census survey, and enabling faster, more efficient data production.

- **A new annual sample survey (Census Attribute Survey)**

A new, smaller type of census survey will begin in 2027. The new survey will run year-round and be completed by a small percentage of the population each year. This survey helps verify the accuracy of admin data and collects additional information that admin data does not provide.

- **Tailored solutions**

We will work with partners, customers, and priority communities to develop tailored solutions that help meet their data needs.

The new approach is the next logical step in the evolution of the census and builds on changes Stats NZ has made since 2018, when we began combining survey and admin data to produce census statistics.

To help ensure the changes are introduced as smoothly as possible, we have built more time into the process. New Zealand's next census will now take place in 2030 (subject to legislative amendments).

#### **What is admin data?**

Admin data is information that government agencies collect when people use public services, like enrolling in school, visiting a doctor, or filing a tax return. Admin data is sometimes shared with Stats NZ to help produce data and statistics. The data is anonymised, meaning all personal details are removed so individuals cannot be identified. Admin data helps build a clearer picture of New Zealand's population and communities, without needing everyone to fill out a survey.

#### **Benefits and opportunities of the new approach**

The previous census approach of aiming to survey everyone was no longer sustainable, with increased time, effort, and resources needed to achieve satisfactory response rates. It has become harder to motivate people to complete census survey forms, driven by changing societal attitudes



and declining civic engagement. To address these challenges, Stats NZ has been researching how to modernise and transform the census for over a decade.

The benefits of the new approach are significant, including:

- more timely and frequent data – census data will be released every year from 2030
- greater flexibility – topics and questions can be updated more often
- increased opportunities for collaboration – we can work with partners, customers, and priority communities to develop solutions that reflect their data needs
- a stronger, more efficient data system – supports better planning, decision-making, and services.

Most census data needs will continue to be well supported, particularly for most of the general population and for primary census content. The combination of admin data and the new annual survey will provide high coverage and quality for most uses.

### **There are some challenges we need to manage carefully**

We expect some challenges, especially during the transition period, including:

- less detail for some areas or groups, particularly where sample sizes are small
- lower admin data coverage for people who interact less with government services
- some census variables not captured in admin data, such as religion or unpaid work, which will rely on the new annual survey
- variations in how data is collected across government agencies, which may affect how easily some information can be combined or compared.

Stats NZ is working to address these challenges through careful design and testing, and introducing the new approach in stages. We are committed to working closely with partners, customers, and priority communities to manage challenges and ensure the census continues to deliver high-quality, inclusive, and trusted data.

The census is also used by the Government Statistician to determine the number of general and Māori electorates, and by the Representation Commission to review and adjust electoral boundaries. This process can only occur after census results are finalised. Running a census in 2028 would not have supplied data in time for a boundary review to take place before the 2029 General Election.

## We want to know what you think

This document outlines our current thinking for the next census and invites your feedback on the proposed approach and content. We are collecting feedback on four things:

**1. How we introduce the new admin-data-first census model**

Your feedback will help inform our planning and design work, including our work to ensure the census continues to meet information needs.

**2. Collecting census information and potential impacts for priority communities**

We would like your feedback on some of the census variables that will be affected by the change in model – and how we could collect this information. Your feedback will help inform how we can best work with communities.

**3. What data we collect for the next census**

We welcome your views on the proposed content for the next census – the topics we propose collecting information about using admin data and the new annual census survey. This includes proposed changes to some current content and adding some new content.

**4. How we can meet broader information needs**

We are interested in understanding your wider data needs – beyond what the census alone can provide. This includes how Stats NZ's other surveys, the new annual census survey, and tailored solutions could work together to help meet those needs.

## Part 2: About the census

### Census data is highly valuable to New Zealand

The census (officially called the Census of Population and Dwellings) is New Zealand's official count of people and dwellings. It provides a snapshot of life in New Zealand, helping us understand how communities are changing socially and economically.

Census data is among the highest quality information we hold as a nation and is essential for policymaking, resource allocation, and targeting investment. Census data also supports core economic and democratic measures, including per capita GDP, greenhouse gas emissions, population estimates and projections, and determining the number of electorates and the drawing of electoral boundaries for general elections.

[Census of Population and Dwellings](#) provides more information about the census and its role.

**Table 1**

<b>Examples of how census information is used</b>	
Health, social, and economic outcomes	By government to plan health services, such as hospitals, and by health and social service providers to figure out what services are needed in specific areas. It also supports analysis of health needs.
Community services	Councils use census data to decide where to put community services, such as libraries and parks. Community organisations use census information to support funding applications and advocate for improvements within their communities.
Transport and infrastructure	Government and councils use census data to understand where public transport, roads, power, internet, water, and sewerage services are needed and how many people will be using them.
Electoral system	To determine the number of general and Māori electorates and to adjust electoral boundaries for Parliament.

### In the past, we have mostly relied on surveying to collect census data

Historically, the census has been run using a full field enumeration approach. This meant everyone in the country was counted on census night, whether they lived in New Zealand permanently or not. A dwelling survey form needed to be completed for each dwelling that was occupied, and each person needed to complete an individual survey form or have one completed on their behalf (for example, adults filled out census survey forms for young children or babies).

Previous censuses have also used 'de facto' enumeration, meaning that we counted everyone present in New Zealand based on where they were on census night, to give a census night

population count. Information about where people usually lived was also collected, which enabled the usually resident population to be calculated.

## Surveying has been supported by admin data in recent years

Not all information Stats NZ uses is collected by us through surveys. Other organisations, including other government agencies and some non-government organisations, also collect certain information from you as part of their day-to-day work. This is known as ‘admin data’. Examples of admin data include information collected for tasks like providing services (such as healthcare), meeting legal requirements to register events (such as registering births or marriages), or keeping records of transactions (such as tax or benefit payments).

We have used admin data for many years and have extensive experience using it to produce statistics. Examples include population estimates and international migration statistics.

## We’ve combined survey and admin data for census since 2018

Since 2018, if census forms have not been completed or have been partially completed, we have used admin data and data from previous censuses to help fill in the information we need. This process is referred to as a ‘combined model’.

The combined model was introduced for the 2018 Census due to lower-than-expected response rates. For the 2023 Census, we used a combined model by design. By combining census data with other information sources, we delivered data covering 98.9 percent of the population from the 2023 Census – the highest coverage rate since it was first measured in 1996. Without the use of admin data, we would not have been able to produce robust and reliable census population counts.

**Table 2**

<b>Examples of sources of admin data used to support 2023 Census</b>	
<b>Data</b>	<b>Admin data source</b>
Birthplace	Birth records (Department of Internal Affairs); border movements (New Zealand Customs Service)
Study participation	School enrolments, tertiary enrolments, industry training information (Ministry of Education)
Total personal income	Employer monthly schedule and individual tax returns (Inland Revenue); Working for Families, benefits information (Ministry of Social Development)
Dwelling type	Building consents, tenancy bonds (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment)

## Part 3: Opportunity for feedback – introducing the new admin-data-first census model

### How we will collect census information in the future

The new approach to the census is built on three key elements:

- admin data provides broad coverage
- a new annual census survey provides information not available from admin data and verifies the quality of admin data
- tailored solutions support the data needs of iwi Māori and priority communities.

The census model will move from a ‘de facto’ to a ‘de jure’ way of counting the population. This means that every year we will count everyone who usually lives in New Zealand, including people temporarily overseas, based on their usual place of residence. We will not produce a census night population count and will instead produce population measures based on a reference date (30 June each year).

Admin data sources and information from the new annual survey will form the foundation of future censuses.

By linking these two sources we can get more value than we would from either one on its own. Responses from the annual survey will help us check the quality of admin data and potentially adjust for errors. In turn, admin data can help improve the accuracy of estimates based on the survey. Together they give us a stronger, more complete picture of the population.

We will continue to develop and share the specific methodologies that will be used to produce census outputs.

#### 1. Admin data

In some cases, our admin data provides better coverage than survey data. For example, we know that the best way to count the population, which is a key part of the census, is through admin data.

Around half the data about people and dwellings previously collected in the census can be collected through admin data. We already have high-quality admin data about age, birthplace, number of years in New Zealand (for migrants), number of children born, location and mobility, income, work, and education.

We do not necessarily rely on just one source of admin data to inform a variable. Instead, we use a range of appropriate data sources. For variables like ethnicity, most people appear in more than one source, and almost everyone appears in at least one. Each source varies in how accurate,

detailed, and up to date it is. To get the best result, we apply a set of rules that assess these factors and combine the available data to select the most reliable value(s) for each person.

Official population and dwelling statistics created primarily from admin data can be published at least annually, and we will start doing this from 2028.

### **Collecting census information through admin data**

Work is already underway to improve data quality and how frequently it is collected. Stats NZ has identified the key data sources required for delivering the census, and we are working with government agencies that can supply this data. For example, we will be working to improve admin data about ethnicity, younger and older people, and recent immigrants to New Zealand.

As improvements are made, more admin data will be used to support production of official census data and statistics. We will also make methodological improvements in other areas, like how we count dwellings and measure households and families data.

We may also begin collecting some new information through admin data, or use existing admin data that has not previously been used for the census before. The following are examples of potential new admin data sources that could contribute to the census:

- New Zealand Customs Service collecting new information about Māori descent through the New Zealand Traveller Declaration to support information for people born overseas, particularly in Australia.
- Inland Revenue collecting new information about people's occupation to support information about work previously collected through the census.
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Social Development supplying information from transitional and community housing providers to support information about housing deprivation and homelessness.
- Education providers collecting more detailed ethnicity and gender information.
- Tertiary Education Commission supplying information about students addresses to support Stats NZ's ability to locate people in the correct place.

Improving admin data requires a collective effort across government. To support improvements, including collecting any new admin data, directives may be put in place for specific government agencies and crown entities, setting out key requirements and helping drive the work.

## **2. A new annual survey**

While admin data is a strong foundation for the census, it doesn't cover everything. For some census content, admin data is not currently collected or is not of sufficient quality to produce accurate statistics. Some topics are also more subjective and harder to measure through admin data. In 2027, we will introduce a new annual census survey – the Census Attribute Survey – that will reach a small percentage of the population each year.

### **Spotlight on the new census survey**

A new type of census survey will begin in **July 2027**. It will run continuously throughout the year, from July to June of the following year. We propose:

- a sample size of around 60,000 households per year (about 3 percent of the projected 2027 population)
- data pooling – over five years, data from the survey will cover up to 300,000 households (around 15 percent of the projected 2027 population).

Households will be randomly selected nationwide, and the same dwelling won't be surveyed in consecutive years. Special sampling strategies will be developed for people in non-private dwellings (like residential care facilities). The new annual survey will include:

- primary content asked every year to allow comparisons over time
- rotating content from 2029 onwards covering new or more detailed topics, either across the full sample or targeted subgroups. Stats NZ will work with partners, customers, and communities to design the rotating content programme so it reflects emerging needs and priorities.

Potential phased rollout: The first two years may start with smaller samples, scaling up to full size from July 2029.

The new annual survey will help us reach communities often missed in admin data by using survey responses to create sample lists for further follow-up. It will also help verify the accuracy of admin data and support quality improvements.

### **How reliable are the results?**

Survey results are never perfect, but we can measure how reliable they are using statistical techniques. Here's what an achieved sample size of around 60,000 households can produce:

- National and regional results: Statistically reliable with just one year of data – even for groups or sub-populations that make up 1 percent of the country.
- Territorial authority (TA) results: When we combine three years of survey data, we can get reliable information about groups that make up 3 percent of the national population within each territorial authority (like a city or district).
- Small community results: When we combine five years of survey data, we can get reliable data about groups that make up 3 percent of the national population, even in small areas.

### 3. Tailored solutions

Admin data and survey information will form the foundation of future censuses, but additional approaches are needed to meet the full range of information needs. This is especially important for topics that are personal, subjective, or complex. That's because admin data often lacks detail on identity, attitudes, perceptions, and lived experiences, and may misrepresent or exclude some smaller population groups.

To address this, Stats NZ will work with partners and priority communities to develop tailored solutions for iwi Māori, Pacific peoples, LGBTIQ+, disabled, and ethnic communities, and transient and homeless populations. These communities are our initial focus until 2030, as we know they are likely to experience data loss or reduced data granularity through shifting to the admin-data-first model.

We will engage with communities in various ways to understand their information needs and how these are affected by the new census model. For example, we are looking for new and different ways for priority communities to feed into the design and planning of statistics programmes. The first example of this is the Crown–Māori Statistical Design Forum, which we are currently establishing. We will also continue engaging with communities directly.

**Table 3**

<b>Types of tailored solutions and examples of how they might look in practice</b>	
<b>Tailored solution</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Data frameworks to help consistently measure variables important to a group, show what data is already available, and highlight areas for improvement</b>	We have begun work, in partnership with Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, to develop a disability data framework to help measure New Zealand's range of obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
<b>New questions added to our suite of Stats NZ surveys targeted at specific groups</b>	Targeted modules to ask communities (such as rainbow/LGBTIQ+) about their quality of life or barriers they face. The survey could also include deep dives on topics such as languages and housing quality.
<b>Community-led data collection, including by iwi Māori</b>	Working in collaboration with iwi Māori on the future of Te Kupenga survey, including how our survey tools could have broader applicability for iwi.
<b>Finding new data sources and using different methods to collect data on complex issues</b>	Working with partners to get better data on people who are living in emergency or transitional housing.
<b>Building data skills and capability within communities</b>	Our Te Ara Takatū service provides free customised census data requests for iwi. Services like this could be looked at with our partners to support data capability training or community-led research initiatives.



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**Other innovations**

Designed to produce more value from data, including more accessible and relevant Stats NZ releases, improved tools and products, and other solutions identified by communities.

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## The new approach will deliver important benefits and opportunities

Key benefits include the following:

- **More frequent and timely data**  
Census statistics will be released every year instead of every five years, giving communities, iwi Māori, and decision-makers access to more current information to support planning and policy.
- **Greater flexibility and responsiveness**  
The new annual survey will allow for regular updates to topics and questions, helping us respond to emerging data needs and maintain relevance over time.
- **Improved representation and inclusion**  
Tailored solutions will be developed with iwi Māori and other priority communities to ensure their data needs are met.
- **A stronger and more resilient data system**  
Using existing government data and collecting survey data continuously will reduce reliance on large-scale, one-off collections, and support a more efficient and adaptable data system.

## But there are some challenges to manage

While the new approach to census will meet most data needs, especially for the general population and for primary census content, it involves some significant changes from how we have done things in the past. Stats NZ is working to manage any impacts carefully. Challenges include:

- **Less detail for some areas and communities**  
Because the new approach combines admin data with an annual sample survey, it may not always be possible to produce detailed statistics for small geographic areas or population groups. Over time, improvements in admin data, survey design, and new statistical methods will help address this.
- **Some topics are not covered by admin data**  
Admin data doesn't currently include information on things like religious affiliation, housing conditions (like damp), or volunteer work. These topics will be collected through the annual survey, but there may be limitations in how this data can be analysed alongside other variables.

- **Some groups are under-represented in admin data**

Admin data comes from interactions with government services. People who are new to New Zealand, experiencing homelessness, or who do not engage much with government systems, for example, may be under-represented. Tailored solutions will help collect information to address these types of situations.

- **Differences across admin data sources**

Admin data is collected for different reasons and in different ways. These variations can make it harder to combine or compare information, which may lead to inconsistencies in some statistics.

While these impacts are expected to be limited for most users and most census topics, we recognise that for some variables – and for some communities – the impacts could be significant. We are focused on addressing these as we move ahead with the detailed design so that the new approach to the census works for everyone. We are already working to improve admin data quality, coverage, and integration, and will continue to test and refine the approach during the transition.

#### **Consultation question 1**

Do you have feedback on the benefits, opportunities, and challenges of the new census approach?

#### **Consultation question 2**

We've identified specific communities to work with and some examples of what tailored solutions could include. Do you have any suggestions about how Stats NZ could work with communities to design and deliver tailored solutions?

## **Your data will continue to be safe**

Protecting your privacy and keeping your data secure remains our top priority. We will continue to apply the same strong safeguards that have always been in place, ensuring your information is used responsibly and kept confidential.

Census data must follow the principles of the Privacy Act 2020. Stats NZ is also bound by the Data and Statistics Act 2022, which includes strict legal protections such as all staff and researchers working with data signing a lifetime certificate of confidentiality.

We follow best practice standards for ethics, statistics, and data security, working closely with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner. This includes using:

- the Five Safes framework, which provides a consistent and transparent process to manage the access and use of data for research
- Ngā Tikanga Paihere principles, which guide the safe, responsible, and culturally appropriate use of data.

[Ō raraunga i Tatauranga Aotearoa – Your data at Stats NZ](#) provides more information about how we keep data safe. As with previous censuses, we will publish the methodology used, along with supporting documents like privacy impact assessments, to ensure transparency about how admin and survey data are used.

Most admin data used in the census comes from government and non-government organisations. Before it is accessed for research or statistical purposes, personally identifying information is removed. In some cases, this data is securely linked across sources to create integrated datasets, which help researchers to build a more complete picture of life in New Zealand while maintaining strict privacy protections.

These protections will remain in place as we transition to the new census model. A key focus will be supporting consistent, ethical data practices across government agencies to maintain public trust and confidence.

## Part 4: Opportunity for feedback – census topics, collection approach, and potential impacts for priority communities

### Census topics will remain largely the same

We propose collecting information across the same topics as 2023 Census, with some proposed changes to variables, including new variables. Table 4 has a list of census topics and variables in each. New variables we propose introducing are **in bold**. Existing variables we propose changing are *in italics*. More information on the proposed new variables or changes to variables, and the rationale, is provided in the next section.

Table 4

Proposed census topics and variables for the next census	
Census topics	Variables
<b>Population structure</b>	Name, age/date of birth, gender, sex at birth, legally registered relationship status, partnership status in current relationship, number of children born, variations of sex characteristics, cisgender and transgender status.
<b>Location</b>	Dwelling address, usual residence address, usual residence one year ago, usual residence five years ago, years at usual residence.
<b>Ethnicity, culture, and identity</b>	Ethnicity, Māori descent, iwi affiliation, birthplace, years since arrival in New Zealand, languages spoken, religious affiliation, sexual identity, rainbow/LGBTIQ+ indicator.
<b>Education and training</b>	Highest secondary school qualification, post-school qualification level of attainment, post-school qualification field of study, post-school qualification in NZ/overseas indicator, highest qualification, study participation.
<b>Transport</b>	Educational institution address, main means of travel to education, <i>workplace address, main means of travel to work</i> , number of motor vehicles.
<b>Activity limitations</b>	Activity limitations, disability indicator.
<b>Health</b>	<i>Cigarette smoking behaviour</i> , <b>quality-of-life indicators</b> .
<b>Income</b>	Total personal income, sources of personal income, <b>income amount by income source</b> .
<b>Work</b>	Status in employment, hours worked in employment per week, occupation, industry, sector of ownership, work and labour force status, job search methods, unpaid activities.
<b>Housing</b>	<i>Access to telecommunication systems</i> , <b>access to cellphone for individuals</b> , dwelling type, dwelling occupancy status, <b>age of dwelling, floor area</b> , access to basic amenities, <b>dwelling coldness indicator</b> , dwelling dampness indicator, dwelling mould indicator, main types of heating and fuel types,

	<i>number of rooms</i> , number of bedrooms, individual home ownership, tenure of household, sector of landlord, weekly rent paid by households.
<b>Families and households</b>	Household composition, family type, extended family type.

## But how we collect this information may change

While we will collect both admin data and survey data for most variables, some will be collected using a single method. This is based on the nature of the information and how best to ensure accuracy and relevance:

- **Collected through admin data only:** Used where existing admin data sources provide more accurate or complete information than what could be collected through surveys.
- **Collected through census survey only:** Used when information is not available or high quality in admin data and must be gathered directly from individuals.
- **Collected through tailored solutions only:** We recognise that some priority communities want specific information not currently captured through admin data or planned to be captured through the new annual survey. We will work with partners, customers, and priority communities to design tailored solutions that help meet their data needs.

A breakdown by method is set out in Table 5.

**Table 5**

<b>Proposed collection method for each census variable</b>	
<b>How we plan to collect information</b>	<b>Census variables</b>
<b>Admin data only</b>	Usual residence one year ago, usual residence five years ago, years at usual residence, birthplace, years since arrival in New Zealand, total personal income, sources of personal income, income amount by income source, industry, sector of ownership, age of dwelling, floor area, sector of landlord.
<b>Census survey only</b>	Variations of sex characteristics, cisgender and transgender status, languages spoken, religious affiliation, sexual identity, rainbow/LGBTIQ+ indicator, main means of travel to education, main means of travel to work, number of motor vehicles, activity limitations, disability indicator, cigarette smoking behaviour, quality-of-life indicators, job search methods, unpaid activities, access to telecommunication systems, access to cellphone for individuals, access to basic amenities, dwelling coldness indicator, dwelling dampness indicator, dwelling mould indicator, main types of heating, individual home ownership.

<b>Combined approach using both admin data and survey data</b>	Name, age/date of birth, gender, sex at birth*, legally registered relationship status, partnership status in current relationship, number of children born, dwelling address, usual residence address, ethnicity, Māori descent, iwi affiliation, highest secondary school qualification, post-school qualification level of attainment, post-school qualification field of study, post-school qualification in NZ/overseas indicator, highest qualification, study participation, educational institution address, workplace address, status in employment, hours worked in employment per week*, occupation*, work and labour force status, dwelling type, dwelling occupancy status, number of rooms, number of bedrooms, tenure of household, weekly rent paid by households, household composition, family type, extended family type.
<b>Tailored solutions</b>	To be determined following further engagement with priority communities. Will likely include additional information for and about iwi Māori, Pacific peoples, LGBTIQ+, disability, and ethnic communities, and people experiencing severe housing deprivation/homelessness.

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\* The viability of collection from admin data is being investigated. If admin data is not viable, this will be collected through survey only.

Some census information is not collected directly through admin data or asked in the census survey. Instead, it is **derived** from one or more other variables. For example, the disability indicator is derived from activity limitations. We will continue to produce these types of derived variables in the next census using a combination of admin and survey data. For more complex derived measures, such as homelessness, we will work with partners and data experts to develop appropriate methodologies.

A complete list of all census topics, variables, and admin data sources (where admin data is available) is set out in Appendix 1.

## Impacts on variables about iwi Māori and priority communities

Different census variables will be affected in different ways as we introduce the new census model. Some variables are already well supported by high-quality admin data. Others will rely on the new census sample survey, which may affect granularity (for populations and/or geographies) or coverage (for small population groups). Further information on variables of interest to partners and priority communities, and how they may initially be impacted by the new model, is outlined below.

## Māori descent

### Purpose

Māori descent information tells us about the number of New Zealanders who whakapapa Māori (descend from Māori). It is a biological concept that differs from ethnicity or cultural affiliation. We collect this information to provide important insight into needs and outcomes for Māori.

Examples of Māori descent information use include:

- for Te Tiriti o Waitangi matters by the Waitangi Tribunal and Māori Land Court
- to calculate the Māori electoral population and determine the number of Māori electorates (used with Māori electoral registrations).

### How the new model may impact Māori descent data

Māori descent data is available in some admin data sources, covering most of the population. However, admin data is sometimes missing information for people born overseas. Data from 2023 Census will remain useful in 2030, though its value will decline over time. We will also collect Māori descent information through the new annual census survey but, due to sample size limits, the survey alone will not allow us to determine how many Māori live in each area.

We are actively working with our iwi Māori partners on the solutions for collecting and producing Māori descent information. We expect these solutions to be in place for the next census, limiting any potential impact on the census information used to determine the size of the Māori electoral roll and the number of Māori electorates and seats.

#### Consultation question 3: Māori descent

Do you have any feedback about how we plan to collect information on Māori descent for the next census?

Do you have suggestions about how Māori descent information could be improved for the next census?

## Iwi affiliation

### Purpose

Iwi affiliation information is used by iwi and other organisations to plan and provide services, like housing, and allocate resources and funds. It can be combined with other census information for iwi to understand more about their people, where they are living, and how they are doing in different areas of life. Iwi affiliation information is also important to monitor and address Crown and iwi commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and help with Waitangi Tribunal decisions.

Iwi affiliation information from 2023 Census is currently published on [Te Whata](#) – a data platform tailored by iwi for iwi.

### **How the new model may impact iwi affiliation data**

Some iwi affiliation data is available from admin data sources, but it is not always accurate or fulsome. Data from 2023 Census will remain useful in 2030, though its value will decline over time.

We will collect iwi affiliation information through the new annual census survey but, due to sample size limits, only larger iwi (with 10,000 to 18,000 members or more) will be adequately represented through this survey by 2030. This will improve over time as more data is collected through the survey. By 2035, iwi with 5,000 to 9,000 members or more will be represented.

However, even with improvements in admin and survey data, we anticipate that tailored solutions will also be required to achieve sustainable iwi affiliation data. We are actively working with our iwi Māori partners on solutions to ensure this data meets their needs.

#### **Consultation question 4: Iwi affiliation**

Do you have any feedback about how we plan to collect information on iwi affiliation for the next census?

Do you have any suggestions for how we could better represent smaller iwi for the next census?

## **LGBTIQ+ communities**

### **Sexual identity, variations of sex characteristics, cisgender and transgender status, and rainbow/LGBTIQ+ indicator**

#### **Purpose**

Data on sexual identity, variations of sex characteristics, and cisgender and transgender status is collected and produced to understand the social and economic outcomes of different groups within the rainbow/LGBTIQ+ population.

- Sexual identity data is used to understand social and economic outcomes for people with minority sexual identities.
- Variations of sex characteristics provides information about the population of people born with variations of sex characteristics (sometimes referred to as the intersex population).
- Cisgender and transgender status is used to understand social and economic outcomes of transgender and non-binary people.

This information supports inclusive planning, service provision, and advocacy, and contributes to a more representative understanding of population diversity. The rainbow/LGBTIQ+ indicator variable brings these variables together to represent the broader rainbow population.

### **How the new model may impact LGBTIQ+ data**

For the next census, we propose collecting and producing information about sexual identity, variations of sex characteristics, and the rainbow/LGBTIQ+ population through the new annual



sample survey. This is because information about these variables is not currently available through admin data and admin data systems may not be the right place to collect this kind of information.

In the 2023 Census and our household surveys, cisgender and transgender status is derived using someone's responses to questions about sex at birth and gender. While admin data does provide some information about gender, we propose producing cisgender and transgender status using information collected in the annual sample survey only for the next census. This will be worked through with stakeholders.

We will collect information on LGBTIQ+ communities through the new annual census survey but, due to sample size limits, only larger communities (with populations of 10,000 to 18,000 or more) will be adequately represented through this survey by 2030. This will improve over time as more data is collected through the survey. By 2035, communities of 5,000 to 9,000 members or more will be represented.

In addition, we will work with LGBTIQ+ communities to explore tailored solutions that will better meet their needs.

Gender is also a fundamental demographic characteristic used in population and social statistics analysis. It is regularly used with other census variables to understand differences in outcomes across genders, such as in education, employment, and income. Admin data is very high quality for people who are male or female, but it is currently difficult to produce data for people who are another gender using admin data alone.

We will also collect gender information through the new annual census survey. We expect to use a combination of admin data, survey data, and historical census data to produce gender data for the next census.

We are actively exploring how we can maximise the consistent collection of gender in admin data, and we will work with communities to ensure opportunities for tailored solutions are well understood.

#### **Consultation question 5: LGBTIQ+ communities**

Do you have any feedback about how we plan to collect information on sexual identity, variations of sex characteristics, gender, cisgender and transgender status, and the rainbow/LGBTIQ+ population for the next census?

Do you have suggestions about how LGBTIQ+ information could be improved to better reflect your community or lived experience?

## Ethnicity data

### Purpose

Ethnicity is an important variable and sociocultural indicator used for a wide variety of purposes. For example, assessing the demographic, social, and economic progress of ethnic groups; evaluating the impact on ethnic groups of policies and targeted programmes; or allocating funds and planning services for specific ethnic groups. It is also used by Stats NZ to produce population estimates and projections.

### How the new model may impact ethnicity data

Ethnicity data is collected from a range of admin data sources, but the approach can vary. For example, admin data is generally high quality for broad ethnicity categories, like 'Pacific peoples', but not all admin data collections provide the opportunity for people to select more detailed categories, for example 'Tongan'. We call these more detailed categories 'level 4' ethnicity data, and it is of particular interest to groups such as Pacific peoples and ethnic communities.

For this reason, we will use a combination of admin data, annual census survey data, and historical census data to produce level 4 ethnicity data for the next census. Where detailed information is only available through the survey data, by 2030, the survey will only adequately represent ethnic groups that have 10,000 to 18,000 people or more. This will improve as we collect more data through the survey. By 2035, groups with 5,000 to 9,000 people or more will also be covered.

We are actively exploring how we can maximise the consistent, detailed collection of ethnicity in admin data, and we will work with communities to ensure opportunities for tailored solutions are well understood.

#### **Consultation question 6: Ethnicity data**

Do you have any feedback about how we plan to collect information on ethnicity for the next census?

Do you have suggestions about how ethnicity information could be improved to better reflect your community or lived experience?

## Data about housing deprivation and homelessness

### Purpose

Severe housing deprivation is defined as people living in severely inadequate housing due to a lack of access to minimally adequate housing. This means not being able to access a private dwelling to rent or own that has all the basic amenities (cooking facilities, safe drinking water, a kitchen sink, a bath or shower, a toilet, and electricity). These amenities allow people to meet their basic needs for living within the walls of their home.

This data is used by researchers, government agencies, and community groups to understand the scale and nature of housing deprivation and homelessness.

### **How the new model may impact data about housing deprivation and homelessness**

In the past, we have produced estimates (not counts) of severe housing deprivation. They are considered estimates because they are based on the best available information but do not represent a complete count. Some people couldn't be classified due to missing or unclear data, and others might have been missed altogether.

Estimates of housing deprivation and homelessness include a range of situations, including living without shelter, living in temporary accommodation, sharing someone else's private dwelling, and living in uninhabitable housing.

The new approach to census provides the opportunity to improve this data and to fulfil previously unmet data needs (such as previous experience of homelessness, or more frequent measurement of some categories of homelessness). Stats NZ will work with the community, and relevant agencies and organisations, to evaluate a range of options for supporting key data needs, and how best to measure homelessness. These options include:

- sourcing relevant admin data (for example, interaction points with people experiencing homelessness or periods of transience and those in emergency housing or on social housing waitlists)
- developing targeted data collection activities (for example, point-in-time street counts of those without shelter)
- working with social service providers (many of which capture information through service provision that help determine whether someone is homeless and rough sleeping, and their location)
- inclusion of related content in the new annual census survey and/or other household surveys.

#### **Consultation question 7: Data about housing deprivation and homelessness**

Do you have any feedback about how we could measure housing deprivation and homelessness for the next census?

Do you have any suggestions for how we could better reach or represent people experiencing housing deprivation/homelessness?

## Data about the disabled population

### Disability and activity limitations data

#### Purpose

Activity limitations are measured in the census using the [Washington Group Short Set on Functioning \(WGSS\)](#). The WGSS asks about six basic activities that a person might have difficulty with: seeing, hearing, walking or climbing stairs, remembering or concentrating, washing all over or dressing, and communicating. A person was counted as disabled in the 2023 Census if there was at least one of these everyday activities that they had a lot of difficulty with or could not do at all.

The census does not provide an official count of the disabled population. This is because the WGSS does not capture all disabled people. The census disability and activity limitations statistics should be used to understand and compare outcomes (such as employment and education) for the disabled and non-disabled populations. Government agencies, services providers, and community groups use this information to support the development of accessible services.

The Household Disability Survey provides the official disability prevalence estimates. The census responses to the activity limitations questions are used to help select the households that we ask to take part in the Household Disability Survey.

#### How the new model will impact data about the disabled population

Some information about disability and activity limitations is collected through admin data, but it is not of suitable quality or consistency across government to meet information needs from the census.

For the next census, we will continue to collect data about the disabled population through surveys, including the new annual census survey and all our other household surveys.

The survey information we collect will support comparisons of outcomes between disabled and non-disabled people across domains including work, education, travel, and health.

The Household Disability Survey will continue to provide official estimates on how many people have disabilities and more detailed information about disabled communities. This survey currently runs every 10 years and is next scheduled for 2033. One of the Future Census Independent Evaluation Panel's recommendations was to run this survey more frequently.

#### **Consultation question 8: Data about the disabled population**

Do you have any feedback about how we plan to collect information about the disabled population for the next census?

Do you have any suggestions for how information about the disabled population could be improved to better reflect your community or lived experience?

## Impacts on data about dwellings

Admin data collected via government agencies, such as Land Information New Zealand, is being integrated to produce a property centric dwelling register – connecting addresses to properties to buildings to dwellings.

A property centric dwelling register will also allow us to:

- keep dwellings and associated attributes (or characteristics of dwellings) up to date through a variety of property and building related admin datasets
- uniquely identify dwellings in New Zealand (in a dwelling register) and automatically code and classify dwelling types
- use admin data more consistently, by accurately linking different types of property datasets from government and NGOs to support census requirements, research, and official statistics.

Stats NZ is introducing ‘property’ and ‘building’ as key statistical units alongside ‘dwellings’. This will support faster, more accurate insights on critical issues over time like housing supply, ownership, value, and affordability, economic growth, and business development.

## Part 5: Opportunity for feedback – proposed changes to census content

Before each census we seek public feedback on the topics, or content, we propose collecting information about. For the next census, we will be collecting this information using admin data and the new annual census survey.

The proposed content is similar to the 2023 Census, but we are planning to update some census variables and introduce some new ones.

Due to the change in census model, there is also some content we no longer need to collect to produce census statistics. This includes the census night population count, number of census night occupants, census night address, and absentees.

The feedback you share with us on these proposed changes will help determine how specific census variables are collected and produced.

Proposed changes have been informed by feedback we received through previous consultations and engagement, quality assurance analysis from past censuses, and input from our subject matter experts.

Changes have also been initially assessed against our content determination framework (see Appendix 2), which guides decisions about what information is collected and how.

### Proposed new census content

#### Quality of life indicators

We propose including quality of life indicators in the census. This reflects strong public interest in health and quality of life data, particularly for understanding outcomes across different population groups.

Stats NZ currently collects detailed wellbeing data through the General Social Survey (GSS), which is scheduled to run again in 2026/2027. However, the new annual census survey starting in mid-2027 presents an opportunity to collect some key quality of life data more frequently, supporting ‘pulse of the nation’ insights and enabling analysis by population subgroup and over time.

We are proposing to include a question on life satisfaction, as recommended by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), using a scale from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). We are also exploring two additional indicators:

- Sense of purpose – whether people feel the things they do in life are worthwhile (using a 0 to 10 scale).
- Self-rated general health – whether people rate their health as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor.

We welcome feedback on whether quality of life indicators should be included in the census, and which specific measures would be most useful.

**Consultation question 9: Quality of life indicators**

***If we collect quality of life indicators information in the census, at minimum we would ask about life satisfaction.***

Do you need information about life satisfaction to be collected through the census?

What would you use this data for?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

***We are seeking feedback on whether there is a need to collect additional quality of life indicators.***

Do you need information about sense of purpose?

What would you use this data for that can't be met with life satisfaction information?

Do you need information about self-rated general health?

What would you use this data for that can't be met with life satisfaction information?

If it is not possible to have all these measures, which would be most useful and why?

**Income amount by income source**

We propose adding a variable 'income amount by income source' to the census. This information would be collected through admin data only.

Information about income from source already exists to a high quality and coverage in admin data. This new variable would give deeper insights than 'total personal income' and 'sources of personal income' on their own. It shows how each source contributes to overall income, enabling better understanding of income composition, financial stability, and economic vulnerability.

We welcome feedback on including this variable in the census.

**Consultation question 10: Income amount by income source**

Do you need information about income amount by income source?

What would you use this data for?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

## Floor area and age of dwelling

We propose adding ‘floor area’ and ‘age of dwelling’ variables to the census. This information would be collected through admin data only. We are considering drawing on sources such as building consents data, which provide high-quality information on dwellings built since 1990, and Quotable Value data or District Valuation Rolls, which may offer good coverage for older dwellings (subject to further feasibility assessment).

These variables were previously consulted on for 2023 Census. They were not included due to concerns about data quality, and the ability to evaluate these variables alongside survey responses.

Adding these measures would provide greater depth to housing-related census data. Floor area offers an alternative measure of dwelling size, while age of dwelling can serve as an indicator of housing quality.

We welcome feedback on the value of including these variables and how they might be used.

### **Consultation question 11: Floor area**

Do you need information about the floor area of a dwelling?

What would you use this data for?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

### **Consultation question 12: Age of dwelling**

Do you need information about the age of a dwelling?

What would you use this data for?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

## Dwelling coldness

We propose adding a variable ‘dwelling coldness’ to the annual census survey.

Housing quality includes the adequacy of a dwelling’s structure and internal environment, such as warmth, safety, and dryness. The census currently collects data on access to basic amenities, dampness, and mould. Including a coldness indicator could provide a more complete picture of housing conditions and energy hardship.

A similar question is asked in the General Social Survey (GSS) – whether a person’s house or flat is colder than they would like in winter. Including this in the census would allow for more granular analysis across population groups and geographic areas.



We want feedback on whether there is a need to collect this information in the census, and how it would be used.

**Consultation question 13: Dwelling coldness**

Do you need information about dwellings being colder than people would like in winter?

What would you use this data for?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

## Proposed updates to current census content

### Cigarette smoking behaviour

We propose expanding the variable 'cigarette smoking behaviour' to include electronic cigarette (vape) use by adding additional questions. Traditionally, cigarette smoking behaviour has captured the active smoking of one or more manufactured or hand-rolled tobacco cigarettes per day by people aged 15 years and over, but has not included vaping.

During consultation for the 2023 Census, we received feedback supporting the inclusion of electronic cigarette use, reflecting its growing prevalence and public interest in understanding related behaviours and outcomes. Due to limited scope for content changes at the time, it was not added. This is a relatively new information need in response to changing technology. Smoking technology could continue to change, which may impact the ongoing need for this information.

We want feedback on whether information on electronic cigarette use is still needed for the next census, and how it would be used. (Note that vaping data is collected in the New Zealand Health Survey.)

**Consultation question 14: Cigarette smoking behaviour**

Do you need information about electronic cigarette (vape) use?

What would you use this data for?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

### Access to telecommunication systems

We propose collecting information on access to a cellphone at the individual level, rather than only at the household level.

Currently, access to telecommunication systems (including cellphone, telephone, and internet) is collected at the household level. However, we've received feedback that this does not reflect how

cellphones are typically used – as they are personal devices rather than shared within a household.

We are seeking feedback on:

- whether collecting information on access to a cellphone at a household level sufficiently meets user need, or
- if users require this information to be collected for individuals, or
- if users require this information to be collected for both households and individuals.

We are also interested in what age it would be most appropriate and useful to ask this question from, if collected at the individual level. Specifically, the census individual form currently includes age-based routing for people aged five years and over, and 15 years and over. If cellphone access is collected at the individual level, we would like feedback on whether it should be asked of people aged five years and over, or 15 years and over.

#### **Consultation question 15: Access to telecommunication systems**

What do you currently use household level cellphone access data for?

Do you need cellphone access information for households only, individuals only, or both households and individuals?

What would you use this data for?

Should cellphone access for individuals be asked of people aged five years and over, or 15 years and over?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

## **Main means of travel to work and workplace address**

We are not proposing changes to the ‘main means of travel to work’ and ‘workplace address’ variables at this stage, but welcome feedback on whether the current approach continues to meet data user needs for transport planning purposes. Your input will help inform future updates to how this information is collected.

Since the 2018 Census, working patterns have shifted significantly with more people working at home or splitting time between home and their employer’s location. The workplace address question used in 2023 Census asked whether you ‘mostly’ work at home, or away from home. If you mostly work away from home, you were then asked for the address you ‘mostly’ worked at and the one main way you usually travelled there. The workplace address of people who mostly worked at home was recorded as their usual residence address and their means of travel to work was ‘work at home’ (see questions 46 and 47 on the [2023 Census individual form](#)).

We want feedback on whether the information we collect about working at home is a suitable level of detail for transport planning, or if we need to change our approach.

**Consultation question 16: Main means of travel to work and workplace address**

Is the information we collected in the 2023 Census about working from home at a suitable level of detail for transport planning needs, or do we need a different approach?

If we need a different approach, what information would you like to understand?

What would you use this data for?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

## Number of rooms

We are not proposing changes to the ‘number of rooms’ variable at this stage. However, we want feedback on whether the current approach to counting room types meets data user needs, which may inform future changes.

In the census, number of rooms refers to the total count of habitable spaces in a dwelling. This includes bedrooms (including sleepouts furnished as bedrooms), lounges, living rooms, family rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, conservatories you can sit in, and studies or hobby rooms. Service areas such as bathrooms, toilets, laundries, hallways, pantries, and garages are excluded.

Currently, all counted room types are combined into a single total, with bedrooms being the only type separately reported.

We want feedback on whether the types of rooms we count meets the needs of users. For example, we have historically received feedback that there is interest in bathrooms or toilets being included in the count of number of rooms.

Note: Any changes would affect the total number of rooms reported, but not how individual room types are output, as detailed breakdowns are not currently planned.

**Consultation question 17: Number of rooms**

What do you currently use number of rooms data for?

Do the types of rooms we count meet your needs?

What additional types of rooms would you like included in the count of number of rooms?

Would adding additional types of rooms, such as bathrooms and toilets, impact your use of the count of number of rooms?

Do you have any feedback about this data being collected?

## How we decide what to include in the census

Decisions about what to include in the census need to consider a wide range of factors. We use a content determination framework to help make these decisions.

The content determination framework is available in Appendix 2.

The framework is based on a series of questions reflecting criteria that should be considered for content to be included in the census. It helps ensure content is selected in a consistent, transparent, and evidence-based way that balances user needs, suitability for the census, and the feasibility and acceptability of collecting the information.

We review and update the framework after each census to reflect changing information needs and approaches.

Feedback on the proposed content for the next census received through this consultation will be used to help assess each proposed variable against the questions in the framework. This assessment will give us an indication of whether a variable is suitable to be included in the census.

Final decisions on content for the next census will be made by the Government Statistician, after consideration of all the feedback, analysis, and information available.

### **Consultation question 18: Content determination framework**

Do you have any feedback on the content determination framework guiding questions?

## Part 6: Opportunity for feedback – meeting broader information needs

### **The census will work alongside other surveys to deliver richer insights**

The census is just one part of a broader system Stats NZ uses to collect data about people and households. As we modernise how we produce population and social statistics, we are thinking beyond the census, toward a more flexible, responsive system that better meets the diverse data needs of communities.

Our other surveys already play a key role in providing more detailed or timely insights:

- The Household Income and Living Survey provides detailed information on income and wealth, housing costs, and poverty.
- The Household Labour Force Survey delivers the official measure of employment and unemployment in New Zealand.
- The General Social Survey provides information on the wellbeing of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over, and covers a wide range of social and economic outcomes.
- The Household Disability Survey (last run in 2023) provides in-depth data on disability prevalence, support needs, and barriers to participation.
- Te Kupenga (last run in 2018) collects information on the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of Māori, including data from a Māori cultural perspective.

In addition, the:

- New Zealand Health Survey (led by the Ministry of Health) provides comprehensive information about the health and wellbeing of people in New Zealand
- New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (led by the Ministry of Justice) provides a comprehensive picture of crime and its impact on victims.

We are interested in hearing from you about what information matters most to your community, and how it could be collected in the future.

For example, in the future we could:

- shift some topics traditionally covered by the census into other surveys
- adjust how often surveys are run, what questions they ask, or how many people they include
- develop new surveys or tailored solutions to meet information needs.

## Supporting broader information needs: Collecting data about veterans

Stats NZ is exploring new and important data sources to support the evolving information needs of New Zealanders. One example of this work is the improvement of admin data about veterans, providing accurate and comprehensive insights to inform policies and services.

Collecting veterans' data in New Zealand would improve understanding of the size, needs, and social and economic outcomes of the veteran community. Accurate information supports the development of evidence-based policies, targeting resources effectively, and monitoring outcomes for veterans and their families.

Although we do not currently collect data specifically on veterans, work is underway to explore how admin data – such as information held by Veterans' Affairs New Zealand with support from the New Zealand Defence Force – could be used to generate better insights into the veteran community.

### **Consultation question 19: Veterans' data**

Do you need data about veterans?

What would you use this data for?

## Supporting a more inclusive data future

We welcome your feedback on what data you need, and how we can best deliver it through the wider statistical system.

### **Consultation question 20**

We're keen to understand what would make the population and social statistics system more useful, inclusive, and future-focused. Are there particular data needs, gaps, or opportunities you think Stats NZ should consider?

### **Consultation question 21**

Are there ways that you use Stats NZ data that you want to tell us about?

### **Consultation question 22**

Is there anything else you want to say or share with us?

## Part 7: Next steps

### We invite you to make a submission

Stats NZ is committed to delivering an admin-data-first approach to the census.

[We welcome your feedback](#) on the content for the next census and how we collect this information using the new admin-data-first model.

All feedback received will help inform the content for the next census, and how we implement the new admin-data-first approach to census in the coming years.

Your insights will also help inform how we improve and adapt the broader population and social statistical system to deliver richer insights in the future.

The Government Statistician will decide on the content to be collected for the next census.<sup>1</sup> These decisions will be informed by what we have heard through consultation and engagement,<sup>2</sup> and further design work.

In mid-2026, a summary report of the feedback received through this public consultation will be published on our website, alongside final decisions on the content to be collected for the next census.

We will continue engaging with government agencies, key data suppliers, and a range of partners and customers to understand their information needs and insights as we work to introduce the new census model.

We will also continue to incorporate the insights and feedback already shared with us about modernising the census, including through the public consultation and targeted engagement programme in 2024.

We will continue sharing information about the census, including future opportunities to provide feedback, or if any significant changes to the approach need to be made.

### Keep in touch

See [Modernising the census](#) to keep informed about our work to prepare for the next census and introduce the new admin-data-first model.

[Subscribe to newsletters](#) to receive to our census newsletter.

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<sup>1</sup> section 16 of the Data and Statistics Act 2022

<sup>2</sup> section 35 and 36 of the Data and Statistics Act 2022

## Timeline to 2030

We are working towards producing the first full set of census data and statistics using the new admin-data-first model in 2030. To ensure the new approach to census is introduced as smoothly as possible, we are introducing it in stages. The new approach will be strengthened over the next 5 to 10 years as improvements are made to admin data and more information is collected through the new annual census survey and through tailored solutions.

By introducing the new census model in a phased way, we can maximise the benefits of each collection method, make continuous improvements, and carefully manage and mitigate any impacts.

Milestone	Date
Census survey: field test	October 2025
Public consultation: census content and collection approach	November to December 2025
Census content decisions published	Mid-2026
Amendments to Data and Statistics Act 2022 confirmed	Mid-2026
Census high-level design published	September 2026
Census survey: design and readiness test	October 2026
Data release: transitional population measures (admin data only)	Late 2026
Census survey 2028	July 2027 to June 2028
Data release: transitional population measures (admin data only)	Late 2027
Census survey 2029	July 2028 to June 2029
Data release: official population and dwelling measures (admin data only)	Late 2028
Te Kupenga   Māori wellbeing survey	2028
Census survey 2030	July 2029 to June 2030
Data release: official population and dwelling measures (admin data only)	Late 2029
Data release: official census data and statistics (admin and survey data)	From late 2030 or early 2031
Data made available to the Representation Commission for boundary review	
Annual releases from now on	
Independent review of the census	2031



## Appendix 1: Complete variables table

Topic	Variable	Collected via the new census survey?	Collected via admin data?	Proposed admin data sources	
				Existing regular supply to Stats NZ	Improvements or new sources being explored
Population structure	Name	Yes	Yes	Not an output variable. Name is used for linking between sources. All admin sources used for people related variables will have names included.	
	Age/date of birth	Yes	Yes	Multiple sources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ACC (injury claims)</li><li>DIA (birth, death, marriage, and civil union registrations)</li><li>HNZ (National Health Index)</li><li>IR (tax system)</li><li>MBIE (border movements and visa applications)</li><li>MOE (enrolments)</li><li>MSD (benefit system)</li><li>NZTA (motor vehicle and driver licence registers)</li></ul>	Stats NZ received a one-off supply from EC (electoral roll) for this variable in the 2023 Census. We are working to receive a regular supply of this data for ongoing use in the census.
	Gender	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ACC (injury claims)</li><li>HNZ (National Health Index)</li><li>MOE (enrolments)</li><li>MSD (benefit system)</li><li>NZTA (motor vehicle and driver licence registers)</li><li>TEC (tertiary enrolments)</li></ul>	Work is underway on the improvements required to gender collection across some agencies that currently supply this data. We are also exploring sourcing this information from additional agencies not listed.
	Sex at birth	Yes	To be decided*	To be decided*	Further work is required to source admin data for sex at birth as few agencies directly collect sex at birth. Some potential sources include DIA (birth registrations) and HNZ (National Health Index).
	Legally registered relationship status	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DIA (birth, marriage, and civil union registrations)</li></ul>	Stats NZ received a one-off supply from MBIE (visa applications) for the 2023 Census. We are working to receive a regular supply of this data for ongoing use in the census.
	Partnership status in current relationship	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DIA (birth, marriage, and civil union registrations)</li><li>MSD (benefit system; Working for Families)</li></ul>	
	Number of children born	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DIA (birth registrations)</li></ul>	
	Variations of sex characteristics	Yes	No		
	Cisgender and transgender status	Yes	No		
	Location	Dwelling address	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LINZ (district valuation roll)</li><li>TA (building consents)</li></ul>
Usual residence address		Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ACC (injury claims)</li><li>DIA (birth, death, marriage, and civil union registrations)</li><li>HNZ (National Health Index)</li><li>KO (social housing data)</li><li>MOE (enrolments)</li><li>MSD (benefit system; StudyLink)</li></ul>	Exploring enhancements to existing supply from HNZ, MOE, MSD, NZTA, and TEC.  Stats NZ received a one-off supply from COR (prison statistics) for the 2023 Census. We are working to receive a regular supply of this data.

Topic	Variable	Collected via the new census survey?	Collected via admin data?	Proposed admin data sources	
				Existing regular supply to Stats NZ	Improvements or new sources being explored
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NZTA (motor vehicle and driver licence registers)</li> <li>TEC (tertiary enrolments)</li> </ul>	EC have signed an agreement with Stats NZ to provide a regular supply of electoral roll data for ongoing use in the census, following the one-off supply for the 2023 Census.
	Usual residence one year ago	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ACC (injury claims)</li> <li>CUS (international passenger arrivals and departures)</li> <li>DIA (birth, death, marriage, and civil union registrations)</li> <li>HNZ (National Health Index)</li> <li>KO (social housing data)</li> <li>MOE (enrolments)</li> <li>MSD (benefit system; StudyLink)</li> <li>NZTA (motor vehicle and driver licence registers)</li> <li>TEC (tertiary enrolments)</li> </ul>	<p>Exploring enhancements to existing supply from HNZ, MOE, MSD, NZTA, and TEC.</p> <p>Stats NZ received a one-off supply from COR (prison statistics) and EC (electoral roll) for the 2023 Census. We are working to receive a regular supply of this data for ongoing use in the census.</p>
	Usual residence five years ago	No	Yes		
	Years at usual residence	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ACC (injury claims)</li> <li>DIA (birth, death, marriage, and civil union registrations)</li> <li>HNZ (National Health Index)</li> <li>KO (social housing data)</li> <li>MOE (enrolments)</li> <li>MSD (benefit system; StudyLink)</li> <li>NZTA (motor vehicle and driver licence registers)</li> <li>TEC (tertiary enrolments)</li> </ul>	
Ethnicity, culture, and identity	Ethnicity	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ACC (injury claims)</li> <li>DIA (birth registrations)</li> <li>HNZ (National Health Index)</li> <li>MOE (enrolments)</li> <li>MSD (benefit system, StudyLink)</li> <li>TEC (tertiary enrolments)</li> </ul>	Exploring enhancements to existing supply from HNZ, MOE, MSD, and TEC.
	Māori descent	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DIA (birth and death registrations)</li> </ul>	<p>Exploring new admin data sources for Māori descent is a high priority for Stats NZ.</p> <p>Stats NZ is exploring a new data source from CUS (New Zealand Traveller Declaration).</p> <p>Stats NZ received a one-off supply from EC (electoral roll) for the 2023 Census. EC have signed an agreement with Stats NZ to provide a regular supply of this data for ongoing use in the census.</p>
	Iwi affiliation	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOE (enrolments)</li> <li>MSD (StudyLink)</li> </ul>	Exploring improvements to admin data for iwi affiliation is a high priority for Stats NZ.
	Birthplace	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CUS (international passenger arrivals and departures)</li> <li>DIA (birth registrations)</li> </ul>	

Topic	Variable	Collected via the new census survey?	Collected via admin data?	Proposed admin data sources	
				Existing regular supply to Stats NZ	Improvements or new sources being explored
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MBIE (passport and visa applications)</li></ul>	
	Years since arrival in NZ	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CUS (international passenger arrivals and departures)</li></ul>	
	Languages spoken	Yes	No		
	Religious affiliation	Yes	No		
	Sexual identity	Yes	No		
	Rainbow/LGBTIQ+ indicator	Yes	No		
Education and training	Highest secondary school qualification	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MOE (qualifications and enrolments)</li></ul>	We are working to receive a regular supply of this data from MBIE (visa applications) for ongoing use in the census.
	Post-school qualification level of attainment	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MOE (course completions and qualifications)</li></ul>	
	Post-school qualification field of study	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MOE (course completions)</li></ul>	
	Post-school qualification in NZ/overseas indicator	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MOE (course completions and qualifications)</li></ul>	
	Highest qualification	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MOE (course completions, qualifications, and enrolments)</li></ul>	
	Study participation	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MOE (enrolments)</li></ul>	Exploring enhancements to existing supply from MOE.
Transport	Educational institution address	Yes	Yes		
	Main means of travel to education	Yes	No		
	Workplace address	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>IR (tax system)</li></ul>	
	Main means of travel to work	Yes	No		
	Number of motor vehicles	Yes	No		
Activity limitations	Activity limitations	Yes	No		
	Disability indicator	Yes	No		
Health	Cigarette smoking behaviour	Yes	No		
	Quality-of-life indicators (new proposed variable)	Yes	No		
Income	Total personal income	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>IR (tax system)</li><li>MSD (benefit system; Working for Families)</li></ul>	Exploring enhancements to existing supply from IR.
	Sources of personal income	No	Yes		
	Income amount by income source (proposed new variable)	No	Yes		

Topic	Variable	Collected via the new census survey?	Collected via admin data?	Proposed admin data sources	
				Existing regular supply to Stats NZ	Improvements or new sources being explored
Work	Status in employment	Yes	Yes	• IR (tax system)	
	Hours worked in employment per week	Yes	To be decided*		Exploring enhancements to current information collected by IR.
	Occupation	Yes	To be decided*		
	Industry	No	Yes		
	Sector of ownership	No	Yes	• IR (tax system)	
	Work and labour force status	Yes	Yes		
	Job search methods	Yes	No		
	Unpaid activities	Yes	No		
Housing	Access to telecommunication systems	Yes	No		Exploring potential agencies to source this data from in the future.
	Access to cellphone for individuals (proposed new variable)	Yes	No		
	Dwelling type	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LINZ (district valuation roll)</li> <li>• MBIE (tenancy bonds)</li> <li>• TA (building consents)</li> </ul>	Stats NZ received a one-off supply from HUD and MSD (transitional housing and community housing providers data) for this variable in the 2023 Census. We are working to receive a regular supply of this data for ongoing use in the census.
	Dwelling occupancy status	Yes	Yes	Derived from usual residence address sourced from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACC (injury claims)</li> <li>• DIA (birth, death, marriage, and civil union registrations)</li> <li>• HNZ (National Health Index)</li> <li>• KO (social housing data)</li> <li>• MOE (enrolments)</li> <li>• MSD (benefit system; StudyLink)</li> <li>• NZTA (motor vehicle and driver licence registers)</li> <li>• TEC (tertiary enrolments)</li> </ul>	Exploring enhancements to existing supply from HNZ, MOE, MSD, NZTA, and TEC.  Stats NZ received a one-off supply from COR (prison statistics) and EC (electoral roll) for usual residence address in the 2023 Census. We are working to receive a regular supply of this data for ongoing use in the census.
	Age of dwelling (proposed new variable)	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LINZ (district valuation roll)</li> <li>• TA (building consents)</li> </ul>	
	Floor area (proposed new variable)	No	Yes		
	Access to basic amenities	Yes	No		Exploring potential agencies to source this data from in the future.
	Dwelling coldness indicator (new proposed variable)	Yes	No		
	Dwelling dampness indicator	Yes	No		

Topic	Variable	Collected via the new census survey?	Collected via admin data?	Proposed admin data sources	
				Existing regular supply to Stats NZ	Improvements or new sources being explored
	Dwelling mould indicator	Yes	No		
	Main types of heating and fuel types	Yes	No		
	Number of rooms	Yes	Yes		Stats NZ received a one-off supply from HUD and MSD (transitional housing and community housing providers data) for this variable in the 2023 Census. We are working to receive a regular supply of this data for ongoing use in the census.
	Number of bedrooms	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>KO (social housing data)</li><li>MBIE (tenancy bonds)</li></ul>	
	Individual home ownership	Yes	No		Exploring potential agencies to source this data from in the future.
	Tenure of household	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>KO (social housing data)</li><li>MBIE (tenancy bonds)</li></ul>	
	Sector of landlord	No	Yes		
	Weekly rent paid by households	Yes	Yes		
Families and households	Household composition	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DIA (birth, marriage, and civil union registrations)</li><li>MSD (benefit system; Working for Families)</li></ul>	Stats NZ received a one-off supply from MBIE (visa applications) for the 2023 Census. We are working to receive a regular supply of this data for ongoing use in the census.
	Family type	Yes	Yes		
	Extended family type	Yes	Yes		
*The viability of collection via admin data for this variable is being investigated. If admin data is not viable, this will be collected through survey only.					

**Acronym glossary:**

**ACC** – Accident Compensation Corporation

**COR** – Department of Corrections

**CUS** – New Zealand Customs Service

**DIA** – Department of Internal Affairs

**EC** – Electoral Commission

**HNZ** – Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand

**IR** – Inland Revenue

**KO** – Kāinga Ora

**LINZ** – Land Information New Zealand

**MBIE** – Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

**MOE** – Ministry of Education

**MSD** – Ministry of Social Development

**NZTA** – Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency

**TEC** – Tertiary Education Commission

**TA** – Territorial Authorities

## Appendix 2: Content determination framework

We use a content determination framework to make decisions about the content for the census (including information that will be gathered through admin data and the new annual survey). The framework is based on the following questions reflecting criteria that should be considered for content to be included in the census.

### **Does the proposed change add value to New Zealand's society and economy?**

- Can the data be used by a wide range of decision makers?
- Will the data be used to inform decisions of national significance?
- Will the information support New Zealand's key uses of data?
- Does the proposed change support data aspirations of whānau, hapū, iwi, and other Māori collectives?

### **Can this information need be met by admin data?**

- Does the admin data provide the kind of information required?
- What is the coverage of admin sources?
- What is the quality of admin sources?

### **If the information need cannot be met by admin data, is the Census Attribute Survey the most appropriate information source?**

- Is there wide geographical relevance across New Zealand?
- Is there wide relevance across the New Zealand population?
- Is small area or small population data needed?
- What is the preferred frequency for this information?
- Does the census provide the kind of information required?
- Is census the best data source to meet customers' needs?
- Will the census provide data of sufficient accuracy?
- Will the census provide data of enough depth?
- Will intersectionality of this information with other demographic data provide key information to New Zealand?
- Are there minimal or no expected quality problems?

### **Does this align with our strategic goals?**

- Do the proposed changes align with our strategic objectives, our commitments as a Tiriti partner, our relationship agreements?

### **Does the proposed change reflect an enduring information need?**

- Will the information need still be required in 5 to 10 years?

**Is there continuity with previous census data?**

- Will collection of this variable produce consistent and comparable data with previous censuses?

**Is data consistent with other data collections?**

- Is it consistent with other data collections (concepts, definitions, classifications)?

**Is there general acceptance of the proposed change?**

- Are there particular concerns, or are there risks or harms, for specific groups?
- Is it non-intrusive?
- Is it non-offensive?
- Are respondents willing and happy to answer?
- Do respondents feel the proposed variable is of value?
- Are people comfortable with the use of admin data for this topic?

**Would the proposed questions be easy for respondents to complete?**

- Are they easy to understand and interpret?
- Are they easy (simple) and quick to answer?
- Do people know the answer?