

Cover note

Terms of reference for Expert Group – Ethnicity Standard Review

July 2026

This cover note provides context and clarifies key aspects of the terms of reference below.

- While the terms of reference identify the period January to December 2024, this was extended to cover 2025 (with no updates).
- The original project governance structure, noted as being under review, was subsequently retained following the project rescope in late 2024.
- The scope described reflects the project's position prior to the rescope in late 2024 and has not been updated to reflect that rescope.

Terms of reference for Expert Group – Ethnicity Standard Review

January 2024

Objective

To review the standard for ethnicity to improve consistency in the collection and use of ethnicity data across Aotearoa New Zealand's Government Data System. The intent is to deliver an ethnicity data standard that will be adopted for use across the data system to help lift the quality and usefulness of ethnicity data.

Background

Ethnicity is a key social factor used to describe the New Zealand population. Information collected on ethnicity is used by a wide range of government agencies and other organisations to inform, plan, and evaluate services and policies.

The standard for ethnicity was developed to ensure that ethnicity is collected and used consistently for statistical purposes, and administrative collections. Unless consistent ethnicity data is available, valid and reliable measures cannot be produced. Lack of consistency across different collections means data may not be comparable.

Information on ethnicity is collected widely across the public sector. However, based on the evidence received from recent ethnicity public consultation and scoping studies, ethnicity data is not collected, managed, or used across government in a consistent manner. This inconsistency limits the quality of the data, constraining the data's value and impacting policy and research analysis.

The [public consultation](#) in 2019 identified issues related to the ethnicity definition, the representation of ethnicities, and structural issues and operational gaps related to the ethnicity classification. The issues raised during the consultation led to a wider scoping exercise in 2021 with data providers across government, data users, and academia. The outcome of this scoping exercise was recommending a major review of the ethnicity standard to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Project scope

Inclusion: What will this project cover?	Exclusion: What won't this project cover?
This project will cover: - evaluating whether the existing ethnicity concept and definition reflects the contemporary reality of New Zealand's increasingly more ethnically diverse population - investigating the relevance of the existing classification, collection criteria, coding processes, and output methods - development of additional guidelines for the ethnicity data standard	This project will not cover: implementation of the new ethnicity data standard and classification.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building collaborative partnerships with topic experts, internal and external stakeholders, government agencies, and representatives of Māori data needs • engagement with government agencies, data users, and ethnic and community groups of interest to ensure the standard remains fit for purpose • a public consultation and release of a findings paper • recommendation of a new ethnicity data standard and classification. | |
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Expert group responsibilities

The commitment of expert group members under the previous terms of reference began in March 2022 and ends in December 2023. This updated terms of reference covers the period **January 2024 to December 2024**. This period may be extended if needed.

Expert group members will be responsible for:

- attending meetings (in person, by telephone, or by video conference) and reading pre-meeting papers
- contributing to discussions on the project scope, and desired outcomes
- raising issues and helping develop robust recommendations
- key decision-making through the agreement process for recommendations
- identifying potential engagement audiences
- reviewing project documentation
- providing input on the proposed ethnicity data standard and classification.

Expert group members

The following organisations are members of the group. Previous members are listed in [Appendix 1](#).

- Centre for Asian and Ethnic Minority Health Research and Evaluation (CAHRE – University of Auckland)
- Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies (University of Canterbury)
- Ministry for Ethnic Communities
- Ministry for Pacific Peoples
- Ministry of Education
- Pacific Data Sovereignty Network
- Te Kāhui Raraunga
- Te Kupenga Hauora Māori (University of Auckland)
- Te Ngira (University of Waikato)
- Te Puna Mārama (University of Auckland)
- Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand

Chair responsibilities

Stats NZ will chair each meeting and will set the agenda. Expert group members will be invited to nominate agenda items.

Notice of each meeting shall be given to each member at least two weeks prior to meeting.

The relevant papers will be assembled and distributed to members at least five working days in advance of each meeting. It is at the discretion of the chair to accept late agenda items and papers.

The minutes of the previous meetings shall be circulated to members within ten working days after the meeting.

Communication

Meetings will be held throughout the duration of the project. It is expected there will be 12 expert group meetings in total. There may be more if deemed necessary. Meetings will be online via video conference, after the initial face-to-face meeting. For 2024, meetings will be prebooked for every two months.

Between meetings, communications will continue to progress the review via email and phone calls.

Proposed expert group meeting schedule

Time frame	Meeting frequency	Interaction
<i>Phase 1 – Scope, issues, investigations, and engagement</i> April 2022 to mid-2024	8	○ First meeting was online on 27 April 2022 ○ Second meeting was face-to-face on 31 May 2022 ○ Third meeting was online on 26 July 2022 ○ Fourth meeting was online and held over two sessions on 6 and 26 April 2023 ○ Fifth meeting was online on 5 October 2023
<i>Phase 2 – Public consultation, qualitative analysis, and draft findings</i>	2	Online
<i>Phase 3 – Draft standard, approval, and dissemination of final ethnicity data standard</i>	2	Online

Proxy for meetings

Members of the expert group may nominate a proxy to attend a meeting, if the member is unable to attend. The chair will be informed of the substitution at least one working day prior to the scheduled meeting. The nominated proxy shall provide relevant comments/feedback to the group from the member they are representing when attending the meeting, and report back to the member after the meeting.

Decision-making

The project team will work in partnership with the expert group to shape the direction of the review and support the provision of kāwanatanga and the principle of partnership in Article 1 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The current project governance structure can be found in [Appendix 2](#). It is currently being reviewed to reflect changes in the way the project will operate and how decisions are made. A new governance structure will be shared with the expert group for their feedback. Once the new governance structure is in place, expert group members will be asked if they wish to continue

being a member of the group. The terms of reference will be updated with the new governance structure and decision-making process, when they are approved.

Remuneration of members

The remuneration of expert group members will be determined by guidance from the Public Services Commission and the Cabinet Fees Framework. The Cabinet Office Circular CO (22) 2: [Fees framework for members appointed to bodies in which the Crown has an interest](#) provides the specific mechanism that will be used. The group is classified under 'Group 4' in this document.

Public sector members

- Members who are employees of the wider public sector are not entitled to be paid fees for group business conducted during regular paid work time (that is, members cannot be paid twice by the Crown for the same hours).

Non-public sector members

- For attending an online scheduled expert group meeting, members will be remunerated at an agreed hourly rate of \$100.00 (excluding GST).
- For an in-person expert group meeting, members will be remunerated a maximum of \$800.00 (excluding GST), this includes travel time.
- Any work between expert group meetings (for example, preparation for meetings, reading materials, providing feedback) will be remunerated at an agreed hourly rate of \$100.00 (excluding GST), up to a maximum of \$400.00.

Stats NZ will reimburse travel and accommodation for members if required, with prior approval.

Stats NZ will reimburse members for incidental costs directly incurred as part of performing their duties as a member of the group, provided these have prior approval.

Acknowledgement

Stats NZ wishes to acknowledge the commitment of group members. Their willingness to contribute time, expertise, and insight is what makes it possible to achieve the aims of this work.

Appendix 1

Previous members of the expert group

- Ministry of Health

Appendix 2

Original project governance structure – **under review**

