



Legislative review

New flexible, future-focused data and statistics legislation

Data has the power to change lives and create better outcomes for New Zealanders by informing government policy and decision-making.

Government holds a vast amount of data on behalf of New Zealanders. This data has the potential to be a valuable asset both for government, and outside of government, driving innovation and contributing to economic, social, and environmental progress.

To support the government's priority to get more value from data, Stats NZ Chief Executive Liz MacPherson was appointed as the Government Chief Data Steward (GCDS). Liz is also the Government Statistician.

At the heart of this work is establishing clear and transparent rules and infrastructure to safeguard the people, communities and organisations to whom the data relates including fit for purpose laws.

Why change is needed

The world of data is changing quickly as new information needs arise, new technologies are adopted, the capabilities of data users increase, and new data sources are created.

The need to keep data safe and protect personal and confidential information hasn't changed, but how we can do this has.

The Statistics Act 1975 is struggling to keep up with change. It was designed in the 1970s when statistics were produced in hard copy and regular computer use was just beginning.

The Act doesn't even refer to 'data' and is out of sync with more modern legislation, such as the Official Information Act 1982, the Privacy Act 1993/Privacy Bill 2018, and the Public Records Act 2005.

The Statistics Act is limiting the value New Zealand could gain from greater use of government-held data.

"Data and statistics support everything government does."

– Hon James Shaw, Minister of Statistics.



New data and statistics legislation

We know better outcomes can be achieved by using the right data to inform decision-making across New Zealand.

New data and statistics legislation is needed to:

- ensure data is collected, managed, shared, used and re-used in ways that are safe, transparent and trusted
- support government agencies to work together by collecting, sharing and using data to deliver better outcomes for New Zealanders
- enable iwi and Māori, businesses, non-government organisations (NGOs), and communities to safely use government-held data – alongside their own data sources – to inform thinking and decisions.

New data and statistics legislation must ensure the right rules, safeguards and protections are in place so data is used safely and responsibly. It must address the challenges that come with more data being collected, managed and used, especially when data is personal and/or sensitive.

What we asked New Zealanders

Through a public consultation process – which ran from September to November 2018 – we heard from 600 New Zealanders on:

- recognising the Treaty relationship between Māori and the Crown
- setting the Government Statistician's functions, duties and powers to lead and co-ordinate the official statistics system

- ensuring the most appropriate data source is used to produce official statistics
- releasing data proactively, whenever appropriate
- sharing data across government to produce official statistics and for research and analysis
- enabling access to government-held data for research and analysis that's in the public interest
- safeguarding and protecting data and the people, organisations and communities behind it.

Next steps

The comments received during public consultation will help inform our work to develop policy options for the Minister of Statistics to consider. Cabinet will discuss the Minister's preferred options and will decide if new data and statistics legislation can be drafted.

When a Bill is introduced to Parliament, it will be referred to a Select Committee, and the public will be invited to comment on it.

The earliest new data and statistics legislation could be in place is in the second half of 2020.

Contact us

To discuss any of the proposals, timeframes, or other matters relating to this work please email stats1975@stats.govt.nz.

Connect with us