



15 June 2024

Submitted via: www.stats.govt.nz/future-census

Tēnā koe

Re: submission re the approach to the 2028 Census

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission about the content and nature of the 2028 Census. Our submission is written specifically in the context of our work on the NZDep small-area index of relative socioeconomic deprivation, and our data needs for future iterations of the index.

Who we are

We are the team working on the production of the NZDep2023 index of socioeconomic deprivation. This work is funded by Te Manatū Hauora (Ministry of Health) and by Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka (University of Otago) and is being carried out in close collaboration with Statistics New Zealand.

Clare Salmond and Peter Crampton have been involved in the production of the NZDep indexes since the first iteration, NZDep91, which was based on the 1991 Census. The 2023 version of the index is the seventh iteration. June Atkinson has been involved in the creation of NZDep since 2006, and Kura Lacey and Helen Viggers have joined the team this year.

Since its creation in the mid-1990s, NZDep has been widely used in Aotearoa as a tool for resource allocation, planning, needs assessment, community-based advocacy and research. The index is widely accepted as a tool both for highlighting the social and health needs of communities and for directing resources into those communities. It will be included on the StatsNZ website as an output of the 2023 Census in October this year when we have finalised its production.

Purpose of this submission

In this submission we highlight our data needs in the context of the production of NZDep and, more generally, the unique ability of the Census to count everyone, particularly those living in communities that are socially or economically marginalised. Our priority is to create a tool that captures aspects of the living conditions of those most in need of effective social, economic, education and health policies so that they are not *further* marginalised by the processes of policy development and resource allocation that are intended to address their needs.

We acknowledge the rapidly changing social and demographic landscape that forms the backdrop for the 2028 Census, and the challenges associated with data collection, social licence, iwi data sovereignty, and the changing data needs of iwi, communities and policy makers. While these challenges make for a highly complex



context for the 2028 Census, because of these challenges we believe that, from a policy perspective, the requirement for regular, high quality, comprehensive, universal data collection is now stronger than ever.

Our need for data in the 2028 Census

In order to create the NZDep index of socioeconomic deprivation we require Census data that cover all individuals and households. Survey data are of no use for the production of NZDep as they do not cover the entire population and we cannot use data imputation for our purposes. In any case, surveys are likely to under-represent those individuals, whānau and communities most in need. To expand on this point slightly, in order to create NZDep we need accurate data for very small geographies (SA1), because the small size of the small areas is intended to locate small pockets of relative socioeconomic deprivation. Many of the areas that we use are single SA1s (87% of small areas in NZDep2018 were 1 SA1; 12% were 2 SA1s). Survey data do not provide SA1-level data; only Census data achieve that level of resolution and accuracy.

Administrative data sources provide us with some of the variables we require, but are lacking in terms of:

1. household enumeration;
2. household and family relationships (currently administrative data do not define satisfactorily household and family relationships, especially current ones, which are very important in creating NZDep);
3. the ability to calculate household-level variables such as equivalised household income and household crowding;
4. quality of housing data (eg damp and mould);
5. access to the internet at home (in previous versions of the index this has emerged as an important variable that reflects access to resources, goods and services and opportunities for participation in society);
6. housing tenure; and
7. smoking status (which we use as an external criterion variable for validating the index).

The input variables used in the NZDep indexes have evolved slightly from Census to Census as the underlying social meaning of variables changes over time. For your information, the following table shows the variables that were included in the 2018 version of the index and whether or not they are available in the IDI. We have been exploring other variables that are available in the IDI but not available in the Census. There are very few likely candidate variables in the IDI that are 1) consistent with the theoretical underpinning of the NZDep index and 2) likely to be salient and useful to us.



Table: Variables included in NZDep2018 and their potential for inclusion in NZDep

NZDep2018 variables	Available in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other IDI sources also, or • Census only
People with no access to the Internet at home	Census only
People aged 18 - 64 receiving a means tested benefit	Other IDI sources also
People living in equivalised households with income below an income threshold	Census only (we can obtain income from other IDI sources, but because other IDI sources do not define household and family relationships, we are not able to calculate equivalised household income)
People aged 18 - 64 unemployed	Other IDI sources also
People aged 18 - 64 without any qualifications	Other IDI sources also for some of the population, but not for older adults or those with only overseas qualifications
People not living in own home	Status unclear for majority of population
People aged < 65 living in a single parent family	Census only
People living in households below a bedroom occupancy threshold	Census only (because other IDI sources do not define satisfactorily household and family relationships (people, ages, relationships) and number of bedrooms in the dwelling, we are not able to calculate equivalised bedroom occupancy)
People living in dwellings that are always damp and/or always have mould greater than A4 size	Census only (because other IDI sources do not define household and dwelling conditions (mould, damp etc), we are not able to measure the quality of living conditions)



Our recommendation

In summary, for the creation of NZDep we need data from the Census, produced at regular intervals, that are detailed, comprehensive and accurate for very small geographies. This is essential if policy makers, researchers and communities are to be able to define and elucidate relationships between socioeconomic conditions experienced at the small-area level and social and health outcomes.

We recommend that Stats NZ retain those elements of a national Census that cannot be collected via other means. These data elements include, at the individual and household level for New Zealanders: household enumeration; household and family relationships; quality of housing data (eg damp and mould); access to the internet at home; housing tenure; and smoking status. These data elements are essential if iwi, planners, the policy community, researchers and communities are to have access to data and data-derived tools such as NZDep that accurately reflect the actual lived conditions and needs of all individuals, whānau and communities, particularly those with the highest level of need. In the absence of these variables there are very few likely candidate variables in the IDI that are likely to be salient and useful to us. We believe the collection and curation of such data are a core responsibility of the state.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Crampton".

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