

Submission to Statistics New Zealand on proposed changes to census data for 2018

Basis of submission

Grey Power Federation makes the following submission on the proposed content of the 2018 census from the basis of a data consumer.

Given the purpose of our organisation, it is inevitable that our primary interest is in the 50+ age cohort, although we also utilise data based on other cohorts for comparative purposes.

We have commented on the areas where a change has been recommended or rejected. We have not commented on, but support the continued provision of data on basic demographic data such as population distribution by age and locality required under the Statistics Act 1975.

Detailed submissions

Our comments on the preliminary content recommendations are as follows.

1. Location
We support the collection of the location of residence one year previously.
2. Ethnicity.
We are disappointed that the option of 'New Zealander' is not to be provided as a separate option. We understand and support the need for longitudinal analysis, but would suggest that the use of a self-determined cultural affiliation definition of ethnicity¹ must include the ability to recognise changes in cultural perception over time. We understand that significant changes to ethnicity choices would affect its use in major public policy issues, but consider that public confidence in the purpose and use of this item would be best served by the inclusion of 'New Zealander' as a level 1 option.
3. Education and Training
We support the inclusion of both Post-school qualification and study participation in the census. We consider this data essential in determining the social and economic drivers for education in the 50+ age cohort. We anticipate that this data will also be useful in evaluating the existence and speed of transition from the conventional three stage life cycle (learning, working, retirement) to an integrated lifestyle where learning and working extends into old age and mid life sabbaticals become common.
4. Work
We concur with the stated opinion of MSD that data on unpaid and voluntary work is increasing in importance. We acknowledge however that the lack of any quantum in the census restricts the utility of this data, as does the poor response rate. We consider the collection of data on unpaid and voluntary work to be essential, but agree that the

¹ Final Report of a review of the Official Ethnicity Statistical Standard 2009, pg 9

Time Use Survey, The New Zealand General Social Survey and the Household Labour Force Survey provide superior and more granular data. On that basis we concur that the item be dropped from the census.

5. Income

We concur that respondents to surveys either have difficulty in providing reliable data on income, or are reluctant to do so. We support the collapsing of benefit receipt to a single category, and that New Zealand Superannuation remains as an identifiable category of income. We also support the retention of income bands for personal income. Although as data users we would also prefer the data to be as precise as possible, we believe that \$10k bands are most likely to achieve the best compromise between responses and analytical capability.

6. Families and households

We are particularly interested in data on Grandparents in a parental role.

7. Housing

We would support and utilise the suggested extra data to support tenure type and tenure holder.

We have a particular interest in the quality of housing, especially the ability to keep the dwelling dry and to heat it to at least WHO standards, as this is as important for the elderly as it is for young children. We consider this basic data could be collected through simple though admittedly qualitative question, eg 'Do any rooms have damp or mould patches'. Although we concede that other instruments may well provide the opportunity to collect data with greater scope and detail, we believe that the quantification of the problem via the census would facilitate the funding of this subsequent research. We would recommend the inclusion of housing quality questions in the census.

8. Transport

We support the inclusion of questions on the usual means of travel to work / educational establishment.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

P. Matcham

Chair, Research, Grey Power Federation