

Stats NZ Ethnicity Standard Classification Consultation

13 December 2019

We recognise that ethnicity is a difficult concept to measure, and there is no internationally recognised classification for this concept. However, we have reviewed the current classification of ethnic groups by Stats NZ and would like to provide the feedback below for you to consider.

General feedback

- Under the Level 1 classification listing, re-order the categories so that Māori are listed first to acknowledge Māori as tāngata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Note: Statistics Canada list First Nations People first followed by all others.

- If the purpose of collecting ethnicity information is to determine the diversity of people in Aotearoa New Zealand, identify inequalities and outcomes, and inform the development of responsive and relevant policy then including Pākehā or white New Zealander as an ethnic group is important. This can also help Stats NZ to gather statistics on those who identify as a New Zealander but no longer as European.
- The European classification is intrinsically tied to colonisation and requires decolonising.
- A research paper published by Otago University on [“Ethnicity, national identity and New Zealanders: Considerations for Monitoring Māori Health and Ethnic Inequalities”](#) highlights that in the 2006 census there was a spike in people identifying solely as New Zealander. What are the implications of this?

Level 1 categories

- Māori to be the **first** category (followed by all others) to acknowledge Māori as tāngata whenua of Aotearoa NZ
- Ethnic people born in Aotearoa New Zealand may have a shared identity i.e. they are New Zealand born Indian / Zimbabwean / Chinese etc. and the list of categories should reflect this.

- According to the 2013 census figures more New Zealanders were marrying partners of a different ethnicity to their own, resulting in an increasing number of children in Aotearoa NZ identifying with more than one ethnicity. Mixed ethnicity should be listed as a category to acknowledge ethnic group intermarriage.
- The Middle Eastern, Latin American or African (MELAA) ethnicity grouping consists of extremely diverse groups with diverse cultures, religions and backgrounds so instead of combining this group as one under the level 1 categories, separate them to acknowledge their distinct cultures and geography.
- We can look to other countries to inform us. For example, Statistics Canada allow people to identify with ethnic origins.
- There are no North, Central, South American categories. Canadians and Americans are classified as belonging to “Other European” although this does not represent their place of belonging.

Level 2 categories

- **Middle Eastern** – Israeli/Jewish grouping requires a second drop down to reflect the diversity within this group i.e. Israeli, Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi. Each group has its own customs and practices outside of religion. Israel is a multi-ethnic state.

Collecting accurate data and analysing ethnicity information in a meaningful way will positively inform planning, policy and decision making in Aotearoa New Zealand going forward. We understand that Aotearoa New Zealand’s population has changed dramatically over the last 15 years, and our ethnic diversity is projected to grow. We therefore need to be future focused and ready to provide culturally responsive services based on the ethnicity data collected.

Aotearoa New Zealand society can and will thrive because of its diversity when everyone, including ethnic communities, feel a strong sense of belonging and inclusion. Collectively, we can contribute to creating an inclusive Aotearoa NZ and this consultation is a pro-active first step by Stats NZ to do so.