

2023 Census: incentivising responses from people that are hard for us to reach

Version 1.0

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Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board;

1. **Note** that response rates for Māori and Pasifika are significantly lagging compared to the national response rate
2. **Note** that Māori and Pasifika are a critical priority response group for whom we have less comprehensive administrative data (and therefore Census responses are vital)
3. **Note** the opportunities and risks of this proposal
4. **Approve** the use of vouchers for up to \$40 (per completion) in value, as a form of manaakitanga to be used at planned and pop-up collection events
5. **Approve** the total budget of \$1m (to be funded from the koha budget recently confirmed as part of the NRFU extension by Cabinet)
6. **Note** that this proposal will also sit alongside all other activity that is currently underway and planned, to increase the response rate across the board, and especially for Māori and Pasifika (such as Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency, Te Mana Whakatipu, Te Ahu Kauawhi, Hīkina, and low response plan for Pasifika)

What's the issue?

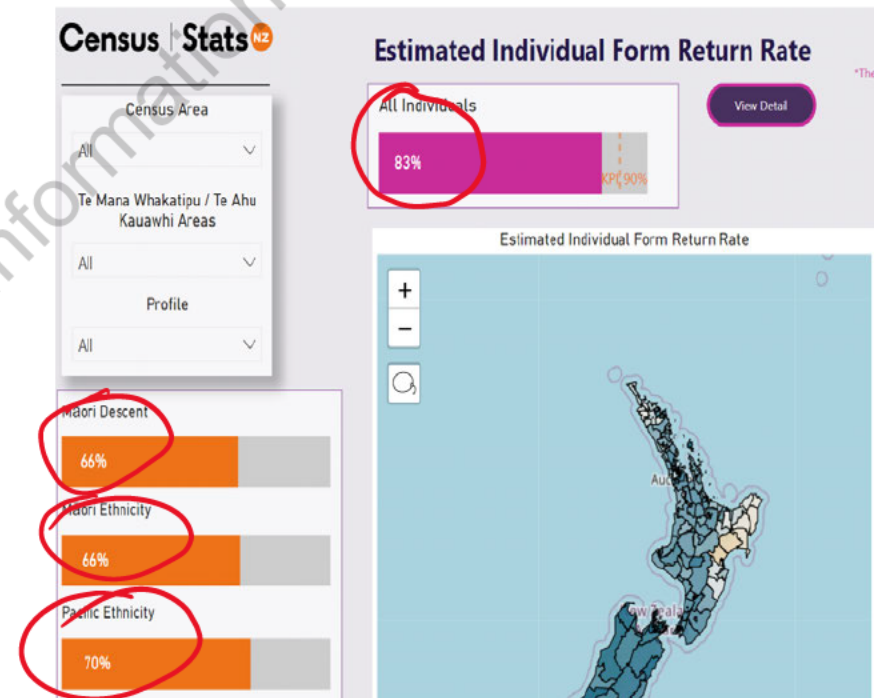
We are experiencing lower response rates for some sub-population groups / locations. Geographically, these are broadly consistent with areas of lower SES.

Consistent with the above, Māori and Pasifika people also have a lower response rate (see adjacent)

We are throwing all of our resources and efforts at these locations and groups that we find hard to reach, including working with partners to act on our behalf, running / joining with community events, and providing manaakitanga (such as kai and merchandise give aways).

However, as Aotearoa New Zealand experienced during the covid vaccinations, discrete incentives to individuals or whanau can also be a powerful motivation for those that would otherwise remain silent (and not counted in the Census).

For such approaches to be successful a high trust model is required, including determining appropriate governance appetite for such initiatives.



What's the proposal?

- We are seeking Board approval to formalise the guardrails for 2023 Census showing manaakitanga through vouchers for census completions of up to \$40 per completion (*or another amount to be specified*).
- Vouchers will likely be supermarket or similar (e.g. PaknSave, local produce shop, butcher – not alcohol or cigarettes). Where possible, vouchers will align with the location of the ACE / pop-up event (e.g. Foodstuffs vs Countdown) or reflect an existing arrangement between partners.
- The vouchers can be gifted out by Census staff directly to respondents, or via our operational partners to issue as they collect responses, at pop-up or planned Census events – such as ACE events, larger employers, MSD and Community Probation activities.
- We would **not** routinely distribute vouchers via NRFU doorstep visits (to ensure the HSW of collections staff and provide necessary support around the distribution of vouchers).
- The vouchers reflect reciprocity to respondents for their effort and time to complete the census (e.g. no census forms, no voucher).
- Regardless of the decision on this proposal, we will continue to provide manaakitanga through kai, randomised small give aways, and merchandise.
- No vouchers would be retrospectively gifted.
- Vouchers provided at discretion of census field staff – not be racially profiled (e.g. available regardless of ethnicity of respondent).

When and how would we do this?

- If supported, it is recommended that this proposal is utilised only in the final 14 days of the field collection phase (from Thursday 20 April to 3 May for most of country; and two weeks prior to 1 June for Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay).
- The proposal will be funded from the \$1m koha budget within the \$36m recently funded by Cabinet to extend the census operation.
- This would provide for a maximum of 25,000 vouchers / responses (for context, all ACE events to date have generated about 25k responses).
- Once the vouchers are exhausted the proposal will cease (minimum 10% will be retained for Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay).
- A record of events where vouchers are distributed will be maintained, including the number distributed and the number of responses.
- To protect the safety and wellbeing of census staff, vouchers will be provided at large events only – where there are larger number of census staff present (rather than individuals holding a large value of vouchers on the doorstep with respondents).
- This proposal will sit outside, but broadly aligned (although not in value) with the proposal from Whanau Ora Commissioning agency via Te Whānau o Waipareira).
- Te Mana Whakatipu are not explicitly included in the proposal - it will be at their discretion if they wish to do the similar.

Opportunities and Risks

Opportunities:

- Increased response rates in areas of low social economic status, which will in turn proportionally increase Māori and Pasifika responses - through incentivising completion of Census forms
- Addresses inequity in access and affordability in areas of high social deprivation (such as Northland, South Auckland, Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay)
- Demonstration of our manaakitanga through small provision of monetary support to New Zealanders
- Alignment with other recent Govt initiatives, including Covid vaccination approaches and our approach for other social surveys
- Consistent with the approach proposed to be taken by the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency with the Auckland collections approach

Risks:

- May inadvertently create fairness issues or perception of un-equal treatment (vs equity)
- May create further expectations of incentive for next Census (although noting that incentives already provided for other social surveys)
- May present operation or perception challenges in terms of what the vouchers are used for
- May create operational challenges in terms of duplication responses