

7 April 2026

Committee Secretariat

Justice Committee

Parliament Buildings

Wellington

ju@parliament.govt.nz

Retail NZ submission: Data and Statistics Amendments Bill

Overview

1. Retail NZ is a membership organisation that represents the views and interests of New Zealand's retail sector. We are the peak body representing retailers across Aotearoa, with our membership accounting for nearly 70% of all domestic retail turnover. New Zealand's retail sector comprises approximately 30,000 businesses and employs around 222,000 Kiwis.
2. Retail NZ consulted our membership in the preparation of this submission.
3. Retail NZ is generally supportive of the goals and expected outcomes of the Data and Statistics (Census) Amendment Bill which aims to transition New Zealand to an annual census model starting in 2030 by shifting the Government Statistician's statutory obligations from five-yearly data collection to annual data publication using a modern, administrative-data-first approach to improve efficiency, timeliness, and long-term sustainability.
4. Retail NZ however is concerned that the granularity and accuracy of census data may be diluted under the proposed changes. We encourage a comprehensive explanation of how officials will engage with communities and populations that are less visible in administrative data. It is important that we can be confident census data represents the true diversity of the New Zealand population.

Recommendations

5. If the bill progresses, Retail NZ supports establishing a year-round survey of approximately 60,000 households (as described in the discussion paper) to collect subjective or harder to measure variables. However, we note that there is no minimum number of households which are required to be surveyed in the Bill. We're concerned that this leaves the door open to a degradation of quality census data if the proportion of surveyed population further declines. We would benefit from reassurance that the population surveyed captures the diversity of lived experience in New Zealand. For example, the experience of New Zealanders in rural or isolated locations is different to the experience of New Zealanders in towns and cities.
6. We support the flexibility of the Government Statistician to determine the most accurate and effective way to conduct a census. However, if significant changes are tabled between the proposed three-year consultation cycle, we believe a special consultation period should be granted.
7. We support the requirement to engage with Māori, public sector agencies, the public, and other parties which have an interest in the census at least every three years, ensuring the system remains responsive.
8. We welcome the inclusion of the new pulse of the nation indicators including quality of life indicators, income composition indicators, and additional housing metrics.
9. We would welcome consultation on the inclusion of metrics that establish dynamic population estimates. Understanding how local populations move between locations during core trading hours and how distribution shifts between, for example, midday and midnight, or weekdays and weekends, would provide retailers with a more accurate view of demand.
10. We would welcome the inclusion of indicators of hobbies and leisure activities, which would enable retailers to better understand market demands and support the growth of regional recreational economies.

11. It is vital that there is full transparency relating to “tailored solutions” including methodologies and consultation processes used to sample smaller or harder to measure populations.
- a. We are concerned that administrative data will be insufficient to produce quality iwi affiliation data following the delay in release of the 2018 Census iwi data. This data is vital for understanding New Zealand’s unique demographic landscape. Accurate, iwi-led data is a functional necessity for retailers seeking to engage meaningfully with regional Māori economies.
 - b. We are concerned that administrative data will be insufficient to represent LGBTQ+ New Zealanders. Without a robust survey component to capture appropriate data, retailers (and other sectors) lose visibility of a significant consumer segment, hindering efforts toward inclusive service design and diverse workforce planning.
 - c. We are concerned that some New Zealanders, for example those without a home or sleeping rough, will not be visible in administrative data except through deficit-based data sources such as access to services.
 - d. Retailers require a complete picture of the local population when making strategic decisions.

Conclusion

12. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.
13. Retail NZ is happy to discuss any aspect of this submission further.
14. No part of this submission should be withheld under the OIA.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Young

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

carolyn.young@retail.kiwi