

Stats NZ: Representation review

Population guidelines



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Document Overview

Intended audience	Users that wish to undertake a representation review and understand the process for making a request for population estimates for an electoral geography.
Document purpose	To provide a set of guidelines for councils to understand the process of population data request from Stats NZ during a representation review.
Feedback	This is a living document and feedback is welcome. Please email any comments to representationreview@stats.govt.nz

Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes
V1.0	1/01/2024	First release for the local government commission website
V2.0	8/07/2024	Separate geospatial and population guidelines. Add further clarification on the use of meshblock population estimates.

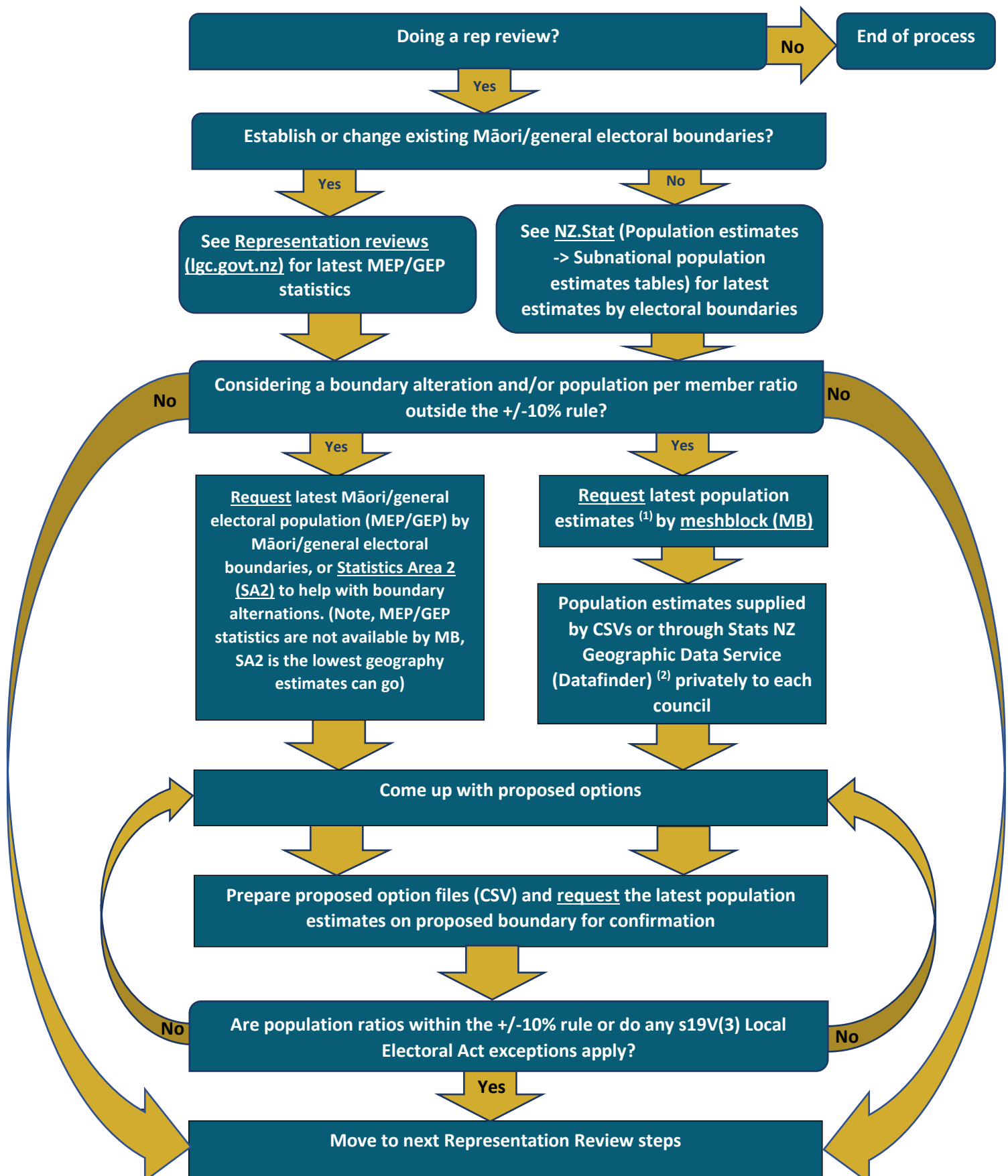
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Process flow diagram

Figure 1. Process flow using population data for preparation of representation review



Note:

- (1) 2023 Census results will NOT be available in time for this rep review process. The June 2023 population estimates are available on request from 25 October 2023. To request these please email us at RepresentationReview@stats.govt.nz
- (2) Meshblock estimates from the Datafinder tool allows councils and the Local Government Commission to explore boundary alterations by aggregating populations to wards or constituencies that meet legislated requirements. The tool is not to allow decisions to be made about individual meshblocks per se, but just what sets of meshblocks could be aggregated to form a given set of wards or constituencies. Stats NZ will confirm the population of the proposed wards or constituencies boundaries before a council's submission (see next steps).

About population estimates

While meshblock population estimates serve a specific administrative and statistical purpose, they are not official statistics and have limitations in their accuracy and intended use.

Basis

The 2018-base meshblock population estimates are derived from the results of the 2018 Census and the 2018 Post-enumeration Survey, and updated for subsequent births, deaths and migration. These estimates are not considered official statistics but are customised data intended for aggregation to higher geographic levels where data quality is better. They are not intended to be used as precise population measures for individual meshblocks.

These meshblock estimates should not be disseminated to entities beyond approved users. This restriction is due to concerns about accuracy and ensuring that the data is used appropriately.

While meshblock estimates themselves are not suitable for wider dissemination, estimates aggregated to higher geographic levels (such as proposed or final council areas) are suitable for broader use. Census counts at meshblock level are also not published but are available on request to info@stats.govt.nz.

See [Population statistics – user guide | Stats NZ](#) for more information about population statistics including the important differences between census counts and population estimates.

Subject to revision

The 2018-base population estimates are scheduled for revision in early 2025, following the release of the 2023 Census and the 2023 Post-enumeration Survey results. This revision cycle ensures that the estimates remain up-to-date and reflective of the most recent demographic data.

The meshblock population estimates are used for the 2024 representation review work. They align with provisional subnational population estimates as at 30 June 2023, which were released in October 2023.

Rounding

The population estimates have been rounded to the nearest 10, following standard rounding rules for population estimates. This is to avoid conveying spurious levels of precision and to maintain data confidentiality.

More data

More subnational population estimates tables are available in our free online tools [NZ.Stat](#).

Data Structure

Supplying a CSV file for a proposal.

Stats NZ will process and produce population estimates for custom geography requests from csv files supplied with a list of meshblock id's defining the proposed areas of interest. The data should be provided in the format as detailed below.

File format

1. Save CSV files in UTF-8 format.
2. CSV naming: include your territorial authority or regional council name, interested boundaries options, and date of supply.

Examples:

- hastings_ward_option1_20220305
- hawkesbay_constituency_option2_20221215
- manawatu_maori_ward_option3_20220807
- ruapehu_community_board_option3_20220131

Check points:

- all text in lowercase
 - date in format yyyymmdd
 - underscore (_), NOT spaces
3. CSV contents: include only 3 columns, meshblock code (MB), meshblock version, and proposed electoral boundary name that the meshblocks will be aggregated from.

Figure 2. Typical examples of various supplied csv files for processing

meshblock_code	meshblock_version	ward
1544800	MB2022_V1_00	North Ward
1544900	MB2022_V1_00	North Ward
1545000	MB2022_V1_00	North Ward
1545100	MB2022_V1_00	North Ward
1545200	MB2022_V1_00	North Ward

meshblock_code	meshblock_version	maori_ward
1544800	MB2023_V1_00	Te Purutanga Mauri Pūmanawa
1544900	MB2023_V1_00	Te Purutanga Mauri Pūmanawa
1545000	MB2023_V1_00	Te Purutanga Mauri Pūmanawa
1545100	MB2023_V1_00	Te Purutanga Mauri Pūmanawa
1545200	MB2023_V1_00	Te Purutanga Mauri Pūmanawa

Note: the above examples were provided during the 2022 review cycle, the meshblock_version reflected the most current geography at the time of supply.

Check points:

- CSV column heading: spell out the full name, use singular form, always in lowercase, and linked using underscore (_), NOT space.
- Each CSV file should be prepared as concordance for one geography only. For example, if you are considering change boundaries for both ward and Māori ward, you'll need to supply 2 separate CSVs (Comma Separated values).
- Include ALL MBs (Meshblock) for your TA/RC (including MBs with 0 population), NOT only the areas you consider changing. For example, you have a total of 214 MBs in your TA/RC, you should have all of them with the correspondent proposed electoral boundary.

Charges

Stats NZ charges a standard rate of \$620 + GST (or 4-hour job) for all Councils requesting MEP/GEP data. This charge will include the following:

- Initial request
- Follow up request for estimates on different options (up to 6 options)

Additional cost will occur if you have more than 6 options. Additional charge will depend on final options your Council requested.

Additional resources

For making a request for spatial information about electoral geography, please refer to the Local Government commission [resources webpage](#) for Stats NZ guideline documents.

Summary

The process flow will help councils to understand what population data to request and how the supplied population data should be used in the representation review process. The data structure guidelines will help Stats NZ process the information received from councils more efficiently with reduced time spent checking and modifying the supplied datasets for loading into our systems. The improvements will ensure accuracy and completeness of data throughout the process.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Stats NZ staff for assistance via this email address: representationreview@stats.govt.nz.