By the National Institute of Statistics (INSEE), France, 2008.

Since 2004, the French census system has worked to a revised method combining two core principles: a rolling census based on a 5-year cycle, and the deployment of a sample survey scheme led on communes counting either side of 10,000 inhabitants, based on a comprehensive housing inventory called the ‘RIL’. These principles are written into national census law. This revamped census system can output detailed year-in-year-out statistics at each geographic level of analysis, from national figures down to commune or district-level scope (§ 1 to 3).

The census reform was implemented in response to a mounting need for recent demographic data, most importantly at more granular levels. The reforms also make it possible to even out both the HR and budget-related census costs, and implement better operational control (§ 4). Finally, the new census format, and particularly the housing inventory, cuts down on omissions.

The population census, in its French format, meets the five core criteria set by the UN (§ 5) as well as the general quality assurance criteria governing statistical operations (§ 6).

Quality is managed end-to-end throughout the census preparation, collection, processing and publishing operations. Census quality is assured through quality control and metrics protocols plus reviews with input from all the census actors involved: communes, data collection agents, INSEE teams, and subcontractors (§ 7 and 8). Pilot tests and phased investigations are run to enhance a quantitative and qualitative analysis of census coverage (§ 9).

[Available in English and French]

Census Knowledge Base