

United Nations Statistical Commission

Fifty-third session

Item 3 (e) of the provisional agenda

Items for discussion and decision: population and housing censuses

Document E/CN.3/2022/8 – Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme

Statement provided by:

Grenada on behalf of CARICOM

Statement:

Grenada, being among the first batch of CARICOM Countries to commence the undertaking the Population and Housing census would like to express concern about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses. As we continue to administer the census to this day our experiences are similar to those expressed in this report under item 3e, as we have been adversely affected by the postponements in the conduct of our census mainly as a result of COVID19 spikes, resulting in increases in the census budget. Data quality would also be of major concerns because of the changes that we made to our operations in order to adapt to conducting a census in a COVID19 environment. As many countries, our approach is traditional and mainly face to face (CAPI). Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing, CATI, is the second approach we have been using in light of the pandemic but with this approach an initial face to face contact must be made through a listing process to acquire telephone numbers to be able to conduct atelephone interview.

The change to a completely virtual training platform for census field staff due to the COVID19 spike created significant delays and challenges. Further, the practical aspects of using the tablets and the software to complete the visitation records and census questionnaire were not fully understood by all trainees on our virtual platform. As such, at the time of enumeration, significant time was devoted to handholding of enumerators, placing additional burden on office staff. Though there were a series of polls, test and mock interviews to ensure participation, the virtual mode for training made it difficult to monitor traineesunderstanding, participationand performance in the training.

The policy decision to only hire vaccinated persons which was taken by ourgovernment post the training resulted in half the persons who were recruited and trained for census dropping out because of their vaccine hesitancy.In addition, The policy decision to give precedence in employing unemployed individuals over employed (given the loss of jobs due to COVID) affected us gravely, as when regulations relaxed to allow some businesses to resume operations, persons start resigning from census for stable employment. We administered 3 batches of training to ensure the right complement of field staff but after all this training there was still a huge shortage of census staffas a result of the high dropout rate. This has caused us to institute a self-training facility where all materials and census training video can be accessed for any person who still wants to be employed under census. As a way to speed up the census we recently adopted a team approach to enumeration especially for the difficult areas where a relatively large number of field staff will target one enumeration district at a time. Not only should this speed up census but it is also a way of motivating both census workers and respondents. It is believed that this approach will minimize refusals and non-response.

The revision of census forms to take new census approaches into account in light of the pandemic also contributed to the delay in census start date.The overall delay in census has been resulting in an

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increase in overall cost as certain contracts, license and packages (mobile and security packages) had to be extended.

Despite the myriad of challenges this census posed for us in Grenada we remain highly committed to the goals of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme and to completing our census which we started in 2021 in 2022 taking into account international and regional recommendations.

Initial discussions have started at the CARICOM level at the meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians on the use of National Population registers. We therefore recognized the need to continue this discussion in light of the obstacles census-takers and national statistics offices encountered with the COVID-19 pandemic. We therefore appreciate that the need to continue this discussion is particularly important, especially in the context of the 2030 censusround and beyond, as it provides a viable alternative to the traditional census, or it can be used to complement the census especially in situations of crisis like this current pandemic.

Our appreciation of this discussion, should not be taken to mean that we have no concerns about a register-based population census, e.g. as expressed in MacDonald, Alphonse L. Of science and statistics: The scientific basis of the census. Statistical Journal of the IAOS 36 17–34.

Submitted on:

2/21/2022