

THE 2020 WORLD PROGRAMME ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES: IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE FUTURE OF CENSUSES

Virtual side-event
Monday, 21 February 2022
9:00 - 11:00 AM

Background

It is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic is having significant adverse impact on the conduct of 2020 round population and housing censuses. Most censuses scheduled for the years 2020 and 2021 saw the postponement of data collection or the extension of the enumeration period, sometimes by several months. The pandemic has made some segments of the population—such as students, workers and institutional populations—more difficult to enumerate due to uncertainty as to the place of their usual residence, which is likely to negatively impact the quality of 2020 round census statistics. The pandemic could also potentially affect the comparability of census results over time, as census data collected during the pandemic may show some extraordinary patterns.

COVID-19 has increased the cost of census-taking in most countries. The cost increases are due to the postponement of planned activities, expenditures for personal protective equipment and enhanced publicity campaigns, as well as the switch to data collection techniques that do not require direct contact with respondents. The implementation of such techniques requires significant additional investment, for example, for the purpose of developing detailed geographical frames, as address registers are not readily available in many countries. Census budgets in several countries also saw reductions, as Governments shifted funds to fight the pandemic.

Countries that were able to successfully adapt to the circumstances of the pandemic implemented several changes to their methods of data collection, including adjustments to questionnaire instructions, increased reliance on self-enumeration methods, and the use of administrative sources to enhance field-based data collection.

Objectives

The side-event will assess the impact of COVID-19 on census-taking. It will discuss modifications and adaptations of census methods (including the use of administrative registers) necessitated by pandemic circumstances. UNSD and other members of the International Committee on Census Coordination (ICCC)—consisting of the UNFPA, the International Programs of the US Census Bureau and the World Bank—will provide briefings on their respective support towards 2020 round of population and housing censuses. The side event will also highlight the national experience of countries that conducted census during the COVID-19 pandemic, and those that developed register-based methods for census data collection.

Programme

I. Opening and welcoming remarks

- ❖ UNSD

II. Briefings on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on, and support towards, the 2020 round of population and housing censuses

- ❖ UNSD
 - Briefing on: the conclusions and recommendations of the UN Expert Group meetings on the “Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Conducting Population and Housing Censuses and on Census Data Quality Concerns”; and, the UN Handbook on Registers-based Population and Housing Censuses
- ❖ UNFPA
 - 2020 Census Round- UNFPA support
- ❖ US Census Bureau International Program
 - Challenges and Opportunities: Supporting the 2020 Global Round of Censuses through the COVID-19 Pandemic

III. National experience and lessons learned on adaptations of census methods during the COVID-19 pandemic

- ❖ Chile
 - Impact of COVID-19 on Chilean Census 2023 and use of administrative registers
- ❖ Ghana
 - Changes Introduced in the 2021 PHC Processes due to Covid-19
- ❖ Oman
 - E-Census 2020 and Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic
- ❖ Portugal
 - 2021 Census – The Portuguese experience

Meeting links

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