

1. 2001 Spanish Censuses: classical censuses, register-based censuses, or complementary sample investigation of the Register.

In the next global round of Demographic Censuses, the prevalence of *classical censuses* (that is, Censuses based on a thorough investigation carried out by visiting the whole of the territory) will continue to be patent. It will, in fact, continue to be the method used in countries like France, Italy, Great Britain, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Greece, Portugal and most Latin American countries.

However, this will be compatible with a certain increase in the exploitation of the records, either to use them as a basis (Nordic countries), to support the classical census (Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Portugal Singapore...) or to complete them with sample surveys (although Holland is the only country known to use this option, whilst Belgium is considering adopting this method).

For Spain, the most appropriate option in terms of the current circumstances is a **Classical census** that exploits the existence of the **Continuous Register** appropriately for the first time.

Specifically, the best option for the 2001 Spanish Censuses is an **operation based on a thorough itinerary around the territory, strongly supported by the Continuous register and by a single, comprehensive questionnaire**. Conversely, the following alternatives are still considered unfeasible at present:

A. Census based exclusively on administrative registers

Spain is still quite removed from this possibility, however much it is considered a direction we have to move towards (and in fact, this census will stand as a significant step in this sense); this unfeasibility is due to the following multiple and very relevant reasons: probable need for delicate legislative reforms, possible problems for social acceptance, non-existence of a common identity number for each person, administrative information is not standardised and cannot be exploited easily from a statistical perspective.

B. Register (Continuous register) + sample survey

Given the scarce demographic information contained in the Register, this option would imply a serious backward step in the quality and level of detail of the information for specific population groups (small geographical areas, groups whose level of training requires a high conceptual breakdown...), which is probably the biggest success of the 1991 Censuses.

Furthermore, it is too early to trust the Continuous register exclusively for population counts, as it was only implanted recently.

This Census-Register relationship could even present legal problems; specifically with article 79 of the new Population Regulation *Royal Decree 2612/1996, passed on December 20th*, that imposes a more comprehensive and symbiotic interrelation between both files. However, in future not only will the Census be based on the Register, but also, census tasks should be used to control the exactness of the Register information and enter the necessary rectifications¹. These operations could not be fulfilled if the Census simply took for granted the content and coverage of the Register and complemented it via a sample survey.

In all, the option of performing a Census based on sampling (even after assimilating the paradox this expression involves) is clearly

¹ Obviously this Census-Register relation should be established with the due operative caution. The following chapter is dedicated expressly to this important census aspect.

unsatisfactory. Indeed, apart from the previous conclusions, it is important to consider that:

a) The Continuous register could be used as a record of persons but could never be used as a record of dwellings, buildings or households. Considering that it were possible to form one of these (using the Cadastre, the Land Register...) in Spain, it would require a long preparation process¹.

b) Considering the statistical data contained in the Register, it only includes a scarce amount of thorough information: sex, nationality, and date and place of birth.

c) The count of persons would not be very reliable, as we would have to trust the exactness of the Continuous register very shortly after its implementation and with an original base (the 1996 Renovation) that obviously presents some errors. Furthermore, given their nature, some of these errors cannot be corrected via the mere aggregation and comparison of the register files the INE has (fictional persons, persons who no longer reside in the same place but have not been removed; symmetrically, residents that are not registered officially, ...). All these errors could be detected, at least most of them, thanks to the exhaustive fieldwork that has been proposed for the census.

d) In the scope of EUROSTAT, there is only one Census (the Dutch one) that uses a similar method (register + sample survey). However, circumstances are different:

For over a decade, they have been preparing a continuous system for demographic information (based mainly on the Civil Registers, but completed with files from the Social Security, Treasury, Cadastre, Education...), which is now perfectly implemented and provides a lot more information than the Spanish register; this aspect is aided by the relatively small size of the population in this country.

- This system allowed them to pass a law in 1990 that removed the obligation to perform Censuses without the demographic information suffering too badly.

- The quality and, specifically, the level of breakdown included in the Dutch *pseudo-censuses* are below those obtained in the Classical censuses performed in most other countries, and even in the *Censuses based exclusively² on administrative registers*, typically used in Nordic countries. The only advantage lies in the periodicity of the basic results, which are practically continuous.

e) A sample survey containing the basic content of the Censuses would simply be meaningless: it would hardly provide additional information with regard to the INE's other demographic surveys³, which focus more precisely on the specific issues they analyse.

In all, two of the main objectives of the Census (on the one hand, to facilitate a reliable count of the population, by verifying the precision of the register data; on the other, to provide basic socio-demographic information for very broken down

¹ In the Finnish case, although they were historically in possession of a great amount of high quality administrative records and in a country much smaller than Spain, it took them 20 years (from 1970 to 1990) to completely abandon the classical Census.

² Thanks to the greater coverage and content and/or exploitation with statistical purposes

³ At most, depending on the size, it could be used to obtain results with a slightly greater level of break down, but this could hardly justify the cost.

geographical and conceptual levels, furthering the path opened by the 1991 Censuses) could not be achieved using a demographic survey performed to complement the Continuous register.

Some examples of socio-demographic issues that are considered of great interest and topicality can only be answered correctly using a comprehensive census. Thus, they could not be covered appropriately using the Register + sample survey option:

- Analysis of the processes of emancipation and insertion into the labour market.
- Educational inequalities and level of education.
- Detailed structure of occupations.
- Relationship between the studies performed and the occupation.
- Number, and characteristics, of de facto couples.
- Models of coexistence, family structures... and relationship with the characteristics of the dwellings.
- Most frequent journeys between the place of residence and the place of work/study (and means of transport).

C. Classical Census

A Classical Census, considering this to be a comprehensive population count, with slight or no relationship with the Register, would not be appropriate either: as well as not suitably maximising the potential savings brought about by supporting the information with data from the Register, it would not satisfy the common benefit relationship established in article 79 of the Population Regulation.

As a conclusion, the type of census used in this project is a Classical **Census based strongly on the Continuous register and with a single¹ questionnaire model, that is implemented exhaustively.**

Specifically, the project does not consider it feasible to combine a comprehensive questionnaire with very few variables and a sampling questionnaire with a much greater content (that could be sent, for example, to one in five/six households, as Canada or United States do with their *long* questionnaires, reserving the comprehensive nature of the process to the enumeration and completion of *short questionnaires*): Spanish censuses are some of the shortest in the world in terms of the number of variables investigated but, in exchange, the thoroughness (especially given the growing relevance of the data for small geographical areas) cannot be denied.

¹ Generating the corresponding bilingual models in regions that have their own language, used simultaneously with Castilian Spanish.