

9. Preservation of Census information confidentiality

One of the main new features of the 1991 Censuses was the special attention paid to protecting the confidentiality of census data.

In terms of the dissemination of Census data, concern in this area, which was exacerbated by the data collection operation that was in full swing and which was unfairly accused of *privacy invasion*, was able to be conveniently channelled via the then recently created *Protection of Statistical Data Board* (within the High Council on Statistics). Following long deliberations, recommendations on Census dissemination were drawn up with which the INE strictly complied. In virtue of these recommendations, the INE adopted a combination of protective confidentiality measures, which included both strictly technical regulations, as well as those of a legal or advertising nature¹.

For the 2001 Census, maintaining confidentiality when disseminating Census data is already well on course: making a few minor adjustments to the measures taken in 1991 to adapt them to the context in which the next Censuses are developed will be enough.

The central issue will become the preservation of confidentiality in previous Census stages, especially during the information collection (where, for example, envelopes will be used) and computerisation processes. The combination of register and Census data will also require delicate processing in order to respect their different characters and, above all, to prevent Census data from being added to the registers (which would clearly be illegal), simultaneously allowing the opposite to happen (which as well as being legal, is also essential). The key to this process is **to not create any nominal file with data that are not strictly register data, not even temporarily**. Files with strictly Census information only will contain IT keys without meaning, which for even greater security, can be subjected to an encrypting process.

Furthermore, the technical-legal panorama in which future Censuses will be developed in terms of statistical secrecy will present a significant change with regards 1991: the existence of the *Data Protection Agency*, a body expressly responsible for ensuring that statistical secrecy is complied with and which already has specific experience in this field as a result of supervising the Demographic Statistics that certain Communities attached to the 1996 Renovation, where a combination of register and Census data was used in a similar way to this proposal.

¹ They can be looked at in the book on Methodology of Population and Housing Censuses 1991.