

3. Objectives of the 2001 Censuses

a) To provide a population recount

The Population census determines the number of inhabitants in the State, Autonomous Communities, provinces and the municipalities, as well as in entities and population nuclei. The use of the data from the Municipal Register of Inhabitants (described in the previous chapter) will allow the improvement of the precision of the census population figures.

b) To provide information on the structure of the population

The Population census, as it investigates the geographical, demographical, cultural, economic and social characteristics of the inhabitants, provides a structural image of the population that is used as the source to compile demographic, economic and social policies that, unquestionably, use the human factor as the basic reference.

c) To promote the implementation of a new model for Register management

Improving the precision of the census figures and reducing trouble for citizens are the two main advantages of using the Register in combination with the Censuses. This combined operation also benefits the Register as it will allow the correction of the errors that have appeared since it was carried out and that have not yet been corrected (and sometimes not even noticed) during its everyday use.

d) To act as the basis for demographic studies

The Population census allows us to obtain data that are essential to study the evolution of the population. Similarly, it can also be used to calculate specific rates of the characteristics investigated in the flow statistics. As regards the previous Censuses, the 2001 operation presents the peculiarity of acting as the starting point for the new statistical operation considered in the 2001-2004 National Statistics Plan, known as the *Longitudinal Demographic Analysis*, which aims to accumulate all the statistical information (dully harmonised) that is collected on each household, dwelling, person, using register data as the pivot.

e) To act as a basis for the compilation of sample statistics

The Population and housing censuses have traditionally acted as the framework for sample surveys. On the one hand, they allow us to calculate the parameters needed to guide the sample methodology (for example, the stratification of primary sampling units); on the other, the different, computerised¹, statistical directories can be used for the direct selection of the different statistical units (municipality, section, block, family dwelling, person). The computerisation of the Register means that the most promising mid-term option is to form a framework that combines the permanent updating of the register information with the improved data provided by the Censuses².

f) To consider the needs for information for small geographic areas

The reduction established by law, and already implemented in the 1991 Registry renewal, of the information contained until that moment in the municipal registers

¹ This is an important novelty because to date, as previously the agents' notebooks were not computerised, they had to be used as directories, on paper.

² This auxiliary information provided by the Censuses (that includes very stable characteristics, like most of those related to the dwelling), will allow a more efficient selection of the last units for observation, which, as occurs with the sample size, will increase the precision of the surveys without increasing the cost.

of inhabitants, that should only contain the data needed strictly for their purpose (i.e. to determine the population resident in each municipality), has given greater relevance to one of the essential functions of the Censuses: to provide statistical information for small geographical areas. This results in maintaining the exhaustive nature of the census exploitation (one of the most highly regarded qualities of the 1991 Censuses) and introducing variables that are specially useful for very fine spatial break downs, that are not contemplated in sampling researches.

g) To recount dwellings, buildings and commercial premises

The Housing Census has traditionally been used to determine the number of dwellings in the State, autonomous communities, provinces, municipalities, entities and population nuclei. On this occasion, the collection of all the census information during a single itinerary allows us to establish the number of buildings and commercial premises for each of the geographical details simultaneously (and even for inferior ones, like blocks, streets or road sections.).

h) To provide information on the characteristics of the dwellings and buildings

The Census provides information on the structure of family dwellings considering aspects such as time of construction, surface and general characteristics, facilities... The simultaneous collection of all the census information will allow the integration of data on the buildings where they are located.

i) To update and standardise the instruments used in the statistical infrastructure

The directories of dwellings and buildings, a-to-z, maps linked to the censuses, are basic infrastructure elements that are renovated and standardised due to the census operation. Consequently, they will become reference instruments for the whole of the Public Administration.

j) To consider international statistical needs

The main international organisations periodically request information from different countries to compile their social and demographic statistics; the Demographic Censuses as usually the main sources consulted.