Traditional censuses: challenge and opportunity

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Outline

1. Definition
2. Necessary conditions
3. Advantages and disadvantages
4. Some considerations for census taking and content
Traditional approach comprises a complex operation of actively collecting information from individuals and households on a range of topics at a specified time, accompanied by the compilation, evaluation, analysis and dissemination of demographic, economic and social data pertaining to a country or a well-delimited part of the country.
Various methods of collecting data: a mailed or dropped-off questionnaire, the telephone, the Internet, personal visit follow-up, or a combination.

The traditional census has merit in providing a snapshot of the entire population at a specified period and data for small geographic domains.
2. Necessary Conditions

It is essential to have *national legislation* for conducting the population and housing census to *ensure confidentiality* and *completeness of coverage*.

*A permanent central census organization*, that may or may not be part of statistical office, needs to exist in the country. This can be expanded during the time of census.

Traditional census requires substantial resources, *sufficient funding* for a field operation covering the entire country, and data processing.

The other conditions are *the support and general acceptance by the public* to participate in the enumeration, and trust towards the statistical office or census agency.
3. Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages of a traditional census

• comprehensiveness of coverage and simultaneity.
• the flexibility in deciding topics and design questionnaire.
• lesser need for complex data adjustment since processing of raw data provides all inputs.
• The census frame becomes the base for all sampling frames.
• data collection is finished in a short period
3. Advantages and disadvantages

Disadvantages of a traditional census

• Cost and administrative complexity.
• Very long processing time.
• Outdated since it is conducted after 5- or 10-year intervals.
• Respondent burden, especially in countries where participation in the enumeration is declining.
• Difficulties in enumerating specific population groups, such as persons with high mobility or with multiple residences, or persons difficult to reach for other reasons.
4. Some considerations for census taking and content

Very precise planning is required for every stage of census because of the sheer volume of work and overlapping time frames.

The recruitment and training of a large number of census takers adds to cost and complexity.

Possible error in canvassing the questions and in the quality of response. But can be minimized by proper questionnaire design, effective training, and wide publicity.

Data can be presented for every administrative level but subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations.

Essential features of a population and housing census are fully satisfied with the traditional census method.
References

Adopted from:

Thank you