Factors impacting the wishes of census data users

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Meeting of the Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses
Geneva, 4–6 October 2017
Goal

The usual purpose of a census user surveys in Estonia is to identify user requirements for the topics mapped in the previous census, to acquire an overview of the need for new topics, and to prepare a census program.
The respondents in the two major census user surveys can be divided into four main categories:

1) Local governments
2) Ministries, including agencies in the government area and county governments
3) Research institutions, universities, and consultation firms
4) Media organisations

It should be mentioned that users of census data in international organisations have never been surveyed in Estonia.
Users comparison by main categories

- Ministries
- Local governments
- Others
- Media

- 2016
- 2006

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Census program components

- Eurostat’s mandatory output (since 2000), which includes the main questions of the population and housing census
- Traditional questions of Estonian censuses (since 1881), such as ethnicity and native language
- Special questions for required for Estonian government or important research projects conducted in Estonia
Preparation and consultation process with users for traditional census approach

Formulation need | Draft questionnaire | Questionnaire tests | Pilot census | Correction, if needed | Census
---|---|---|---|---|---
User’s needs | WG | AAG | E-Census test | AAG | Census questionnaire
Previous censuses | WG | AAG | Pilot census questionnaire | AAG | Census questionnaire
ECE&EU Recommendations | WG | AAG | CAPI test | AAG | Census questionnaire

2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011

WG - Working groups
AAG - The academic advisory group

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Topics and question selection for PHC 2000 and PHC 2011

- User survey’s – need for topics and usage of Census 2000 data

- Criteria for selection - clearly demonstrated need, for both national policy and small area requirement
Fields of usage of the 2000 Census data

- Development plans, spatial plans: 43%
- Background information: 37%
- Prognoses: 33%
- Own institution/enterprise operational analysis: 21%
- Academic research: 17%
- Indicators, coefficients calculation: 16%


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The most important topics before PHC 2011

- Migration topics 90%
- Household and family characteristics 90%
- Economic characteristics 90%
- Housing topics 83%
- Educational characteristics 77%
- Health related topics 68%
- Etno-cultural topics 68%

Data need for PHC2011

- In **2006** more than **80%** of users needed data on dwellings and buildings. The data were mainly needed for drafting development plans, plans, analyses and assessments.

- The third block of questions covered dwelling characteristics in **2016** and respondents who had not used any of the dwelling characteristics. The share of such respondents was **36.8%**.
Fields of usage of the 2011 Census data

- No answer
- Other
- Professional development
- Research and studies
- Responding to international queries
- Comparison of countries
- Comparison of Estonian regions
- Policy monitoring
- Allocation of local government resources
- Allocation of state resources
- Investment analyses
- Describing the initial situation
- Legal compliance
- Making projections, impact analyses

Percentage of yes-answers

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**Need for bigger subject area**

- In 2016 the responses indicated that 18% of all respondents believed that the census could cover more subject areas than the mandatory international output indicators specified in the survey sheet. It resulted in a fairly long and diverse list of suggestions.

- In 2006 users had limited interest (30% and 18%, respectively) in more specific topic (year of birth of the first child, and religion etc.)
Opinion of different respondent groups (E-M Tiit. 2016)

- Add characteristics that can be extracted from administrative databases (e.g., income, health data, migration information, marital status and children, education, etc.)
- Find more opportunities for using the data of private structures to obtain up-to-date data on current processes, which could be used in decision-making
- Data on certain fields cannot be obtained in a register-based census

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Determinants of factors of users needs/wishes

1. census method
2. specific purpose of study of users groups
3. absence another kind of data sources for desired information
4. free and easily available detailed census database for users
5. level of cooperation or relationship with census data users and
6. purpose of data use
Conclusions

- The suggestions of information sources and methodologies revealed certain naivety and optimism of users, as the achievement of expected results would mean unreasonably high cost in terms of resources and the effectiveness would remain questionable even then.

- There is a better understanding of feasibility of the use of census data and the areas of use of census data are more diverse than they were in 2006.

- A challenge is to provide international data comparisons and create user-friendly outputs based on innovative solutions.

- It is possible to categorize the use of census data by consumer groups. At the same time, it can be observed that there is a growing demand for census data which could help to evaluate life quality and living conditions in the society through new perspectives.

- The relative importance of the identified factors varied by users groups according to the level of involvement with the census programme.