

Point 3. Users and uses of projections

OFFICIAL POPULATION FIGURES AND POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Paper submitted by the National Statistical Institute of Spain¹

Summary

1. As it is well known, in most Western countries population projections by age and gender are made under the component method. That is, starting from population figures by gender and age provided by an exhaustive population count, usually a census, hypothesis are established about the future development of mortality, fertility and migration.
2. As new observed figures on births, deaths and migrations are available; they are compared with those we had previously projected. In the same way, the availability of a new population census figures shows the differences between projected and observed population data. Very often, however, it is difficult to explain whether such differences are due to errors in the projected components or to the census figures.
3. On the other hand, in Spain, besides the censuses carried out every ten years, the population registers of all the municipalities are updated every five years. This leads essentially to the *official* population figures by gender. In this context, the word *official* means that they are mainly used for administrative purposes (certification of the inhabitants' residence) or electoral ones (determination of the number of councillors and other elective posts). Moreover, a statistical treatment is carried out for the data obtained, which generally provides the population by gender and age. Even more this information may be helpful for checking the current projections or for setting up new ones.
4. At this stage, problems of census sub-registration or over-counting are reflected in the figures provided by municipal registers. The population figure inferred from the latter is still more liable to be artificially *inflated* as compared to the actual population.
5. At this point it is necessary to determine which figures are to be used to official ends (number of members of parliament, grants of resources,...) and which ones are meant for population projections. This is important because of their repercussions on the calculation of several indicators (demographic, economic,...)
6. The question is: should the basic information be assessed or even corrected? This would particularly be the case for figures of censuses and municipal registers. It would be desirable to know the experience and practice in the countries where this situation arises.

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