

The Permanent Population and Housing Census in Italy

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As of 2018, the population census in Italy has marked the definitive transition from the traditional “door-to-door” enumeration to a “register-based” system with the so-called Permanent Population and Housing Census (PPHC). The PPHC is planned on a yearly sampling survey to produce annual data—replacing the previous decennial cycle—and is based on the integrated registers system. The integration of administrative data with statistical surveys allows ISTAT to construct statistical registers in line with the new organisational, technological, and methodological model aimed at fully exploiting data already available.

Moreover, no one could have predicted that the pandemic emergency due to coronavirus and the impossibility of carrying out the field operations would have boosted the need for web based interviews with such strength and urgency. In Italy the diffusion of the internet is quite extensive but it shows a large digital divide according to both the geographical areas (internet diffusion is better in the North than in the South) and the household typologies (mainly those with at least one member younger than 18 years old have a broadband connection). The different use of the internet compilation would suggest the possibility of a much higher share of CAWI responses. Therefore, in order to better understand how the share of respondents using the online questionnaire can be improved for the 2021 round, ISTAT is currently working to analyse the profile of respondents.

In any case, during 2020 ISTAT will produce the population count using only the signs of life of the administrative sources to evaluate the feasibility of this type of approach also in a post-2021 perspective when the financial support to the census will be halved compared to the current one.