

How is the French census coping with the Covid crisis ?

Valérie Roux – Head of demography department



Each year, 4 months of preparation of the field survey

- From October N-1 to January N : training of all the actors

The Census Survey

- In January and February, lasting 4 to 5 weeks
- 8,000 municipalities, 5 million dwellings, 24,000 enumerators
- A door-to-door census with the possibility to answer by internet or by paper questionnaires

Then, 3 months of checks articulated with the pick-up and data capture schedule of questionnaires by a subcontractor

- These checks are performed on a selection of municipalities with potential problems
- Carried out by clerks of the statistical institute
- **with a major principle : no data are changed without an on-the-ground check**

=> In 2020, the pandemic started in France after the census survey but at the beginning of the checking period

It was impossible to postpone all the controls after the lockdown

- because of the obligation to publish each year the official population

So what did we do ?

- 1- **A stronger prioritisation of controls** focusing on municipalities with more than 5 % difference with administrative data
- 2- A new method to check the category of housing units (occupied or not) using **telephone control calls during the lockdown** (with specific guidelines)
- 3- **A return to the field** as soon as possible to check the existence of some addresses and the number of dwellings in these addresses plus the dwelling occupancy status where telephone controls were not possible

With health protocol for interviewers

With some practical adaptations in the instructions (for instance to check the mailboxes instead of going up in the floors)

Assessment of telephone check-ups

- 3 400 telephone numbers searched, 1 000 found
- 400 households joined, 300 results modified

=> A low efficiency searching for telephone numbers (29%) but a strong efficiency when the contact is established (75%)

A way to prepare 2021 controls : improve the tool to find telephone numbers

Results : despite these efforts, less controls than usual

- 243 municipalities controled (475 in 2019)
- 199 municipalities with a population change (409 in 2019)
- 34 with a population change of more than 2 % (120 in 2019)

During the pre-collection period : reflexions and proposals to adapt the procedures

- When face to face meetings are not possible with the municipality representative, propose a « Zoom » conference

=> Good results with a participation of municipalities at a higher level and more people than usual

- Training of the managers of the census survey (in municipalities and in Insee) : try the face to face way but if not possible adapt the training course to a remote mode

- **One main issue** : the training of the enumerators needs to be organised in a face to face meeting. If this is not possible, the survey can not start.

During the collection period : where necessary, adaptation of the procedures

- After a contact with the household at the doorstep

Possibility to drop-off the questionnaire or the internet connection id and password under the door or in the mailbox

Possibility to send the id and password by email

Possibility to interview the household by telephone if he can not answer

by himself

- If a **manager is vulnerable**, possibility to share the work with a manager in the area close to him

- If there are **local lockdowns** or delays in the training of the enumerators

Possibility to postpone at any time the data collection town by town until the end of April (after a formal authorisation

given by the Director of Insee)

Retrouvez-nous sur :

insee.fr



Valérie Roux
Insee