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Press Information Notice

Census of Population and Housing 2021

Introduction

The Census of Population and Housing is held every 10 years and comprehensively covers all usual residents in Malta and Gozo. For the upcoming round, the Census Day is set as Sunday 21 November 2021 and the data collected will refer to midnight of 21 November, formally called 'Census Night'. The theme for the upcoming census was chosen to reflect inclusivity of all groups in the population and is encapsulated by the slogan, "Everyone Matters". The Census Officer at the helm of operations is Mr Etienne Caruana, NSO Director General.

The Census 2021 questionnaire is the fulcrum of the exercise. Its format has been simplified and at the same time, the topics covered have been adapted to collect information on current realities. Among others, these include demographics, migration and citizenship, health and education, and labour status of persons; and house facilities, building structure, tenure status and secondary dwellings as regards the dwellings.

Scope

The nature of a census means that its scale and scope is extensive. The 2021 Census is expected to exceed the demands of any of the censuses before it - with Malta's total population surpassing the half a million mark and 20% of the population being foreign, the operational set-up and resources needed are substantial. The COVID-19 pandemic brings with it an added layer of complexity not seen in other census rounds. People in private dwellings and in approximately 300 institutions will be enumerated. The entire population spread over 68 local councils will be divided into 985 enumeration areas. Each enumeration area consists of several streets, or parts thereof, in a locality and typically encompasses an average of 200 dwellings.

For the first time in history, enumeration will include geocoding, which involves recording the coordinates of each dwelling and producing census outputs within a 1km² grid. This will allow for a more detailed geospatial breakdown at the analysis stage, resulting, for the first time, in the compilation and publication of geospatial census results by the NSO.

The census is designed to satisfy both national and European requirements as stipulated in the Census Act 1948 and European Regulation (EC) No 763/2008. It also abides by the recommendations, concepts and definitions on population censuses developed by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). This allows for international comparison of most of the results derived from the census. To cater for any additional national requirements, the NSO issued a call for public consultation, which resulted in the inclusion of additional variables deemed of high relevance within the local context.

Data collection

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the EU Regulation governing the Census, obliges all Member States to carry out the Census in 2021. It is important to note that given the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, the NSO is working closely with the Superintendence of Public Health to ensure that all necessary safeguards are implemented to guarantee the wellbeing of staff and respondents alike.

This year, for the first time, the NSO is offering the possibility for households to complete the Census questionnaire online. While this innovative approach to data collection was always planned to be included within the 2021 Census, the pandemic has made it essential that such a tool is available for families who might feel uncomfortable inviting

an enumerator into their home. Interviews can also be conducted by telephone. In a drive to make data collection more efficient, secure, and paperless, face-to-face interviews will be conducted using tablets. Notwithstanding this, paper questionnaires will still be available for families who prefer to fill in a paper questionnaire for collection by the enumerator. The census questionnaire is expected to only take approximately 20 minutes to fill in for a typical family of three.

Around 1,000 field enumerators will be recruited to assist respondents during the data collection process. Additionally, there will be seven district managers and 50 supervisors, who will be assisting the census office in coordinating the data collection and verifying the quality of the data collected from the households.

The fieldwork process will take place over a span of three weeks starting on November 8. However, those opting to self-complete the questionnaire online, will be able to do so as from October 1.

Results

By April 2022, the NSO will be publishing a preliminary report covering the main demographic variables which include, sex, age, and citizenship. A report resulting from this preliminary analysis will be submitted to Eurostat in December 2022.

The final census results are also essential for internal statistical production, including the revision of survey data and methodological enhancements. Thematic publications featuring detailed analysis of the variables collected through the census are planned for publication from the start of 2023 onwards.
