

Estonian 2021 population census combining a register-based census with a sample survey

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Abstract

After the 2011 Population and Housing Census, it was decided that the next Estonian Population and Housing Census in 2021 would be based on registers.

Between 2011 and 2021, the registers and other databases necessary for the census were mapped and co-operation was established with various state agencies, local governments and registrars with the aim of improving the quality of registers and agreeing on data exchange structures and channels. The quality of registers was analysed, and algorithms for calculating indicators were developed. In 2016 and 2019, two pilot censuses were conducted, as a result of which it was decided that the quality of the registers is so good that all the internationally required census indicators can be calculated.

Consultations with the users of census data revealed that some additional information about Estonian residents that is not in the registers is needed. These are data based on self-assessment or personal beliefs, e.g., religious affiliation, language skills, existence of a long-term illness or health problem and any resulting limitations on daily activities.

The additional data were collected with the questionnaire from people living at selected addresses. The addresses were chosen in such a way that it would be possible to publish data of sufficient quality (error rate up to 5%) for each local government. The data could be submitted online or provided to an interviewer by telephone or in a face-to-face interview. All Estonian residents could voluntarily answer the online questionnaire. It took 5–10 minutes for one person to complete the questionnaire. The online questionnaire was in the Blaise application, and a new environment was developed for logging in to the census questionnaire. The usual VVIS offline data collection application was used for collection of data by the interviewers. The published data are based on all responses to the survey, including voluntary responses.

In the communication, we mainly focused on informing the public about the additional survey, publishing the intermediate results of data collection, explaining the census methodology and results of the census. The communication messages were formulated in cooperation with the communication agency and the advertising agency.

Data from the 2021 census will be published much earlier than the previous 2011 census. We published the first data on 1 June 2022 and will publish all census data within 7 months in 2022.

The presentation will describe in more detail:

- the methodology of the 2021 population and housing census in Estonia;
- data collection: administrative registers and the survey;
- media and communication activities;
- publication of the data.