

# Lessons learned from censuses of the 2020 round

**The polish experiences from the 2021 census.**

**Dr Janusz Dygaszewicz**

Director of the Central Census Bureau

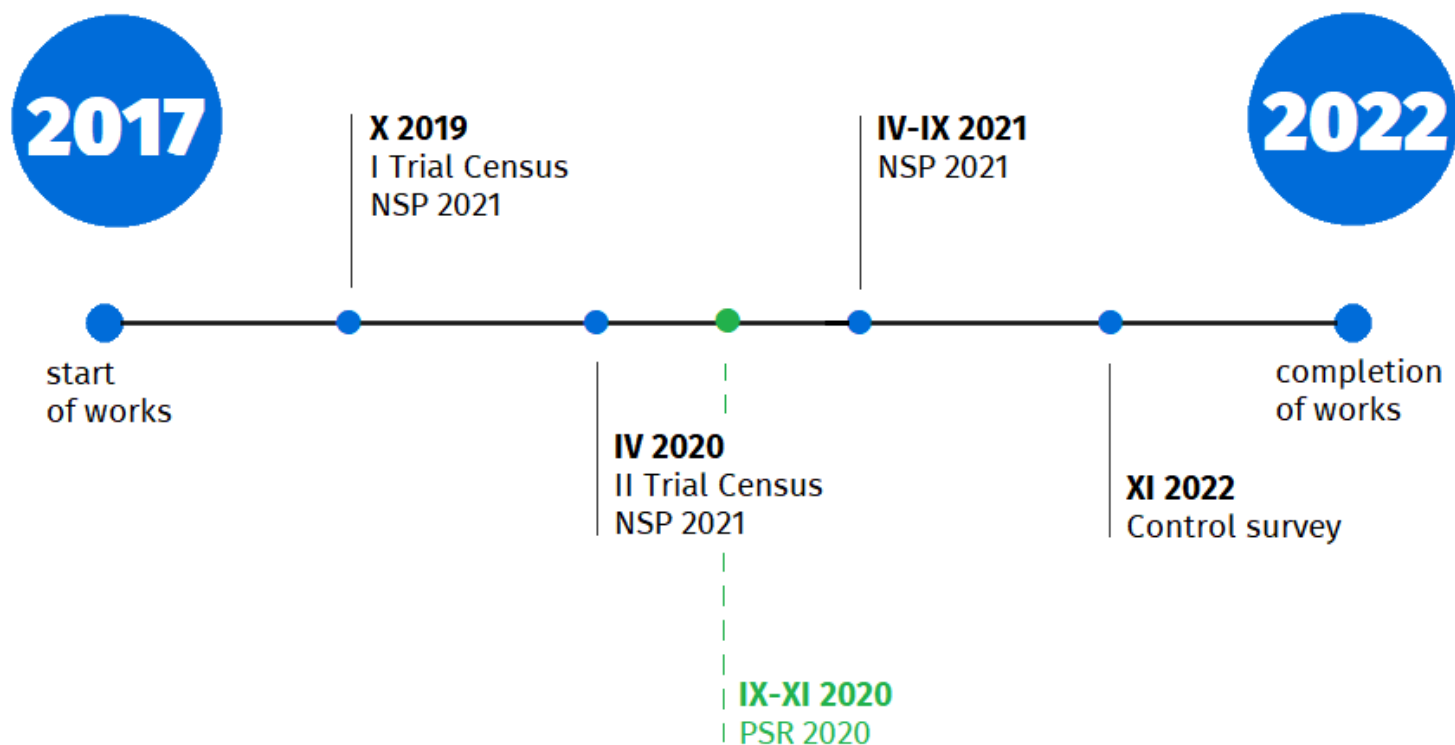
Director of the ICT Systems, Geostatistics and Censuses Department

**Statistics Poland**

# Introduction (1)

The Population and Housing Census 2021 was preceded by two trial censuses conducted in Poland in October 2019 and April 2020. A post-census control survey in November 2021 was also part of it.

The timeline looked as follows:



*Explanation of abbreviations: NSP 2021 - National Population and Housing Census 2021, PSR 2020 – Agricultural Census 2020*

# Introduction (2)

- **Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the withdrawal from the II Trial Census was considered.** Finally the survey was carried out with adapted organisational solutions to ensure the safety of all participants. The implementation of this task verified the flexibility of the management system and its resilience to crisis events.
- **An agricultural census was also carried out in Poland in 2020,** allowing valuable experience to be gathered and used during the population and housing census.
  - The suitability of the applied solutions and the correctness of the decisions taken were confirmed by the success achieved in both censuses.



# Deadlines in the Census 2021

**The Population and Housing Census was conducted during the period:**

**1 April 2021 - 30 September 2021**

as at 31 March 2021 24:00

The census was carried out using the following methods:

- **Internet Self-Enumeration (CAWI)** – 1 April to 30 September 2021,
- **Telephone Interview (CATI)** – 4 May to 30 September 2021,
- **"Census on request"** – 1 April to 30 September 2021,
- **Direct Interview (CAPI)** – 21 June to 30 September 2021.

# Solutions applied based on the experience of the 2011 census (1)

- The census was conducted **without the use of paper forms, using only an interactive form application**, prepared in 4 language versions (Polish, English, Ukrainian and Russian).
- **The obligatory form of participation in the census was an online self-enumeration.** Complementary methods were telephone or face-to-face interviews, conducted by census enumerators.
- The **'Census on request' option** on the census helpline was also made available. This option was available to everyone, during the working hours of the helpline.



# Solutions applied based on the experience of the 2011 census (2)

Logging into the self-enumeration application was carried out using 3 methods:

- **National Node of Electronic Identification** – logging in using electronic identification means (Trusted Profile, online banking),
- **Personal ID (PESEL) number and mother's maiden name**, which required the respondent to define immediately an individual access password,
- **email address and defining an individual access password** – this method was intended for foreigners without a PESEL number.

# Solutions applied based on the experience of the 2011 census (3)

New methods and tools for confirming the identity of census enumerators were introduced:

**An application allowing the verification of the enumerator, throughout the census period**

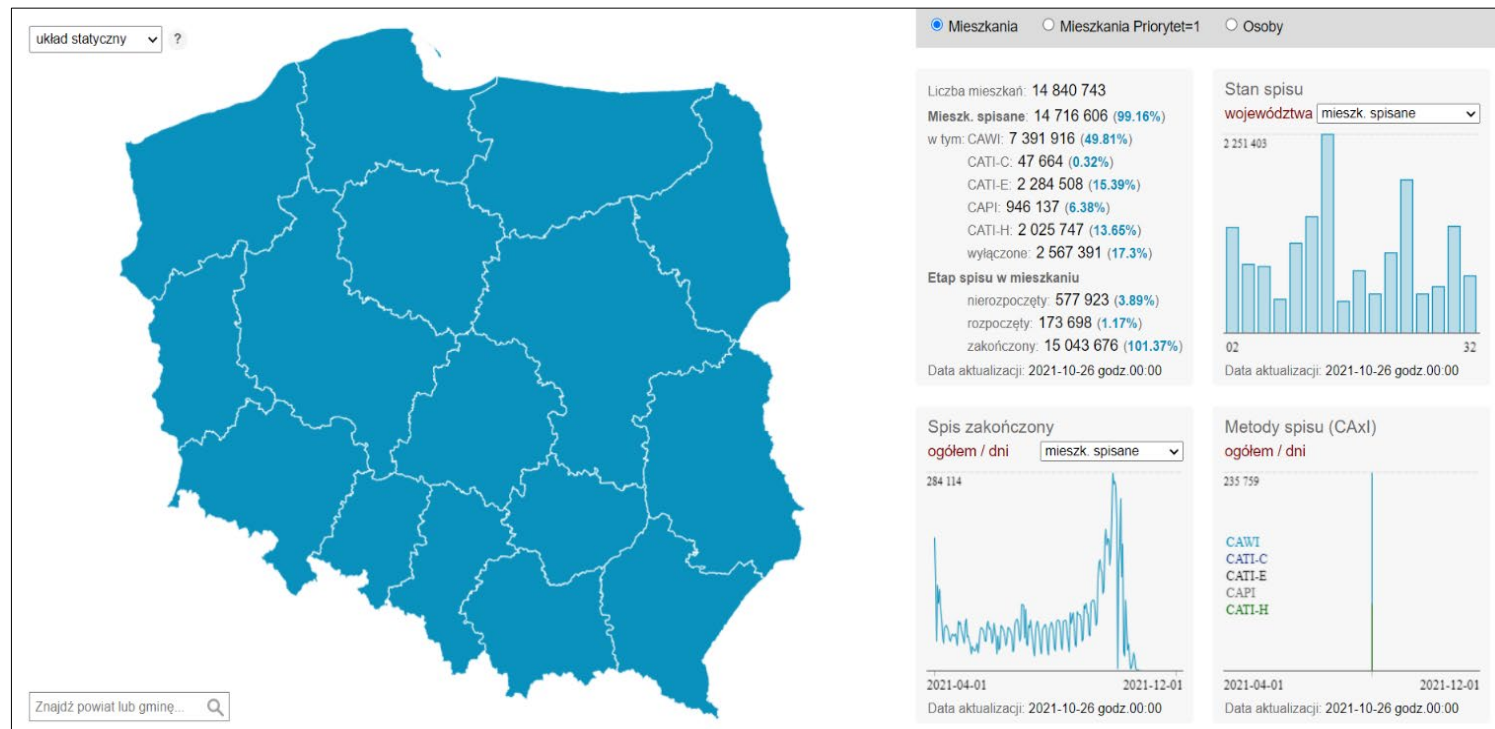
**Contact of the respondent with the census helpline**

**Providing by the enumerator one freely chosen digit from the last five digits of the respondent's PIN number**

# Solutions applied based on the experience of the 2011 census (4)

The census implementers were provided with a tool to monitor the status and progress of the census at the national and local level in the form of an information dashboard.

Below is an example of a basic view of the dashboard.





# The most important changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (1)

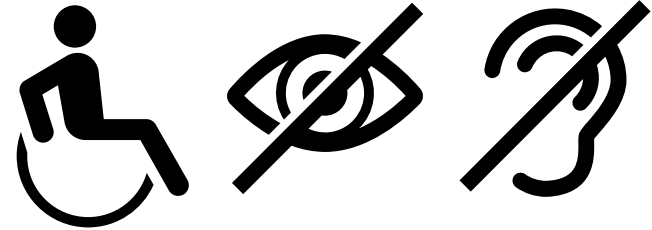
- The amendment to the Census Act 2021 allowed **the census to be extended by three months**. This enabled flexible management of the census methods, taking particular account of the COVID-19 threat level and the areas of highest disease.
- The list of information system operators providing data in the census was expanded (to include providers of publicly available telecommunications services) in order to feed the list with current telephone numbers of respondents. This change **minimised face-to-face interviews in favour of telephone interviews**.
- **Flexibility in the use of data collection methods has been introduced** by allowing them to be combined or replaced, depending on the needs.

# The most important changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (2)

- **Census applications and systems were adapted and provided with additional functionality**, enabling census enumerators to conduct both telephone and face-to-face interviews using the same mobile device.
- The organisation of the work of the census enumerators was adapted, including allowing them to work remotely or face-to-face (depending on the local pandemic situation) and extending their areas of operation from municipality to province.
- **Most of the work was carried out remotely**, including recruitment of census enumerators, training of enumerators and other members of the census apparatus.
- Online self-enumeration points were provided under a sanitary regime - personal protective equipment adequate to the pandemic threat was supplied, appointments for a specific day and time were mandatory.

# Other solutions introduced to increase the completeness of the census (1)

In the 2021 Census, a number of solutions have been implemented to enable people with disabilities:



- the involvement of census enumerators with sign language skills, so-called "signer enumerators",
- the establishment of a census website dedicated to deaf, deaf-blind and hard-of-hearing people,
- information materials in Braille were developed for visually impaired and blind people,
- adaptation to the needs of persons with disabilities of the census points available in the municipalities and all statistical offices.

# Other solutions introduced to increase the completeness of the census (2)

- During the census, **meetings of the top management, the so-called census staff**, were held once a week to discuss current activities, the progress of the census (based on the dashboard reports) and to resolve emerging issues.
- The dashboard was also used **to calculate daily targets**, i.e. the number of dwellings that should be enumerated by census enumerators in municipalities, regionals and Poland as a whole.
- Regional statistical offices and municipal census offices organised **mobile self-enumeration points** during special events.
- Special events were organised throughout the country to allow respondents to complete their census duty at unusual times, such as late afternoons, evenings and even nights, or also on Sundays, e.g. '**Census Night**' on 25 September 2021, **enumeration until midnight on the last day of the census**, i.e. 30 September 2021.

# Experiences from the 2011 and 2021 censuses as recommendations for the 2031 round censuses (1)

On the basis of the experience and comments gathered from the 2011 and 2021 censuses, conclusions and recommendations have been prepared which will constitute the knowledge base for the next censuses. Below are the most important of these:

- **conducting further work on the development of census solutions in terms of electronification.** The electronification of the census in Poland, started in 2011, continued and expanded during the 2021 census and the flexible use of CAxI methods of data collection proved to be an excellent 'cure' for contingencies;
- **greater use of telephone interviews than face-to-face interviews** - with 25% of the information obtained from respondents coming from the telephone channel and only 15% from the face-to-face method;
- conducting a wide-ranging information campaign and promoting the online self-enumeration in all available media and advertising media;
- **carrying out trial censuses** to test organisational and methodological solutions and make necessary changes;
- **flexible work of the census enumerators** to conduct telephone or face-to-face interviews;
- **carrying out a significant part of the work remotely** , e.g. recruitment of candidates for enumerators, training of participants in the census apparatus,

# Experiences from the 2011 and 2021 censuses as recommendations for the 2031 round censuses (2)

- **calculation and communication of daily targets**, i.e. the number of dwellings and persons to be enumerated on a voivodeship basis;
- providing respondents with free online self-enumeration stations;
- providing a demo version of the online form application to allow respondents to familiarise themselves with the electronic form and the range of questions before taking the actual census;
- **the provision of different language versions of the online form application** with user manuals prepared in those languages;
- **further cooperation with administrators of administrative data**, especially in order to support them in improving the quality of data in dedicated registers, which is important in view of the ever-increasing share of these data and in view of the future use of registers according to the new EU Regulation on Population Statistics (ESOP);
- maintaining **public consultation** with users using the statistical data; cooperation with the scientific and research communities and government administration bodies.


# Experiences from the 2011 and 2021 censuses as recommendations for the 2031 round censuses (3)

The census experience indicates that some changes or improvements should be made. A few of the most important are listed below:


- consider a shorter census period - too long a period results in loosening up among enumerators and less mobilisation of respondents (especially if the census falls during the holiday season),
- increasing the share of the „Census on-request,, method, which was much more popular than expected; it is estimated that the reason why it was often chosen by respondents was the possibility for them to decide themselves when the census should be conducted,
- providing a free helpline for respondents (due to mandatory participation in the census),
- spending more time on practical part of the training, i.e. filling in the online form application for different possible scenarios,
- consulting (already during the preparation phase) independent experts on the online form application and the solutions used.

# Comparison of the 2011 and 2021 censuses


## 2011



**18 000 enumerators**  
**0 forms**  
**0 tons of papier**



**2 types of census forms:**  
- full survey (15 questions),  
- sample survey (100 questions).




**Cost of census:**  
- 395 mln zł (83,1 USD)




**Data from 27 registers were used**


## 2021



**16 000 enumerators**  
**0 forms**  
**0 tons of papier**



**Single census form (58 questions):**  
- personal questionnaire– 25 questions  
- housing questionnaire– 12 questions



**Cost of census:**  
Plan 386 mln zł (81,2USD)  
Realisation of a plan 273 mln zł(57,5USD)



**Data from 35 registers were used**



# Thank you for your attention

**Dr Janusz Dygaszewicz**

Director of the Central Census Bureau

Director of the ICT Systems, Geostatistics and Censuses Department

**Statistics Poland**