Preliminary progress report of the CES Census Task Force on Emergency Preparedness and Contingency Planning

24th Meeting of the Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses
Geneva, 20-22 September 2023
The need for new guidance

Overall impact of COVID-19 (3rd survey)

Total number of responding countries

- Yes: 73%
- No: 27%

Census in 2020

- Yes: 83%
- No: 17%

Census in 2021

- Yes: 65%
- No: 35%

Source: 3rd UNSD Survey of COVID-19 Impacts on Censuses, January 2021
The need for new guidance


Source: UN Statistics Division
The need for new guidance became obvious during the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Worldwide, censuses were delayed and impacted by COVID-19
- Other natural disasters (e.g. wildfires, major weather events etc), cyber risks and technology dependency are increasing operational risks
- The 2020 Recommendations contain very little reference to the topic of emergency preparedness and contingency planning
Step 1: Develop a framework

To structure the work of the Task Force, a framework was developed:

• Effective documentation of inherent risks and possible mitigations (Risk registry)
• Proper emergency management, governance and decision-making (Emergency management plan)
• Use of practice sessions to condition a proper response (Team conditioning)
• Effective techniques for quick changes to the plan (Flexibility and lean management)
• Development of multiple contingencies in the event of main plan failure (Census planning insurance)
Step 2: Share country experiences

Canada (2021 COVID response):

• Pre-pandemic risk registry adapted to the new context
• Fast adaption (8-10 months reaction time) to COVID and Kanban lean management technique
• Risk playbooks developed and practice sessions pre-operations
• Strengthening of Management Information Systems and “command centre” information
• Activation of incident management process, as necessary
• Development of a “statistical contingency” (admin data back-up)
Step 2: Share country experiences

New Zealand (2023 risk management practices):

• Risk registry documented in cloud-based project management tool
• “Heat map” assessments of risk likelihoods, impacts, and residual risks
  • Included risk of low recruitment, low response, COVID-19 issues, mis/disinformation and cybersecurity
• “Incident Response Preparation” exercises implemented pre-operations, to mimic incidents during operations
• Incident management plan followed the NZ-government Coordinated Incident Management System framework, using four steps:
  • Notify, Assess, Decide and Act”, with assigned severity to incident
Step 2: Share country experiences

Portugal (2021 COVID response):
• April 2020 pilot cancelled
• Proceeded with 2021 operations, with mitigations:
  • Introduced a new Public Health Protocol (PPE, video training, etc)
  • Re-enforced the internet option
  • Introduced CATI option
  • Adapted communications
  • New administrative date to support field operations
Step 2: Share country experiences

Mexico (Risk management practices):

• Used documented framework, “Methodology for Risk Management of INEGI”, based on ISO 31000 standard

• Risk registry with focus on program execution, data quality, data security, human and financial resources, behavioural risks

• Risks categorized and controls put in place to mitigate, residual risk determined. More acceptable levels of risk managed differently than high risk.

• Inclusion of new technology a key factor in success in 2020, as well as enhanced communication between INEGI, general population and Mexican authorities
Step 3: Develop the questionnaire

Two types of questions (40 overall):
- Risk management
- Crisis management

- Designed to take stock of country policies, procedures, documentation and expertise, related to Emergency Preparedness and Contingency Planning
- Cover the framework described earlier
- Open ended, allowing description of current capacities and where countries may prefer added guidance
Conclusion

• Looking forward to your input today and when the questionnaire is completed
• Other similar guidance coming, through a related project of the UNSD to develop Emergency Preparedness and Contingency Planning content in the Principles and Recommendations for the 2030 Round
  • To ensure consistency, TF1 Chair has agreed to lead the related UNSD exercise, which got underway this summer