

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POPULATION STUDIES
2020/2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

NAME: CHIWAYA CHIBANDA
COMPUTER#: 2019054507
COURSE CODE: DEM 2110
LECTURER: MS. MIRRIAM D SILAVWE
TASK: ASSIGNMENT 1C
TUTOR: MR. M MUKENA
TUTORIAL DAY/TIME: TUESDAY 11-12HRS
DUE DATE: 30TH JULY, 2021

QUESTION: Should the traditional census be conducted when a country has a population registration system?

All governments need detailed information on their populations to design and run their health systems effectively as well as for planning purposes and policy decisions, for example how many schools to build and in what areas, Financial budget decisions, and policies to mention a few. The objective of this academic essay is to see whether a traditional census should still be conducted even when a country has a population registration system. As a matter of established structure, this essay begins by defining the key terms in order to familiarize with what will be discussed about. It will thereafter, go deep into the discussion and lastly a conclusion will be drawn.

According to the United Nations (UN 2008), a population census is the total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analyzing and publishing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well delimited part of a country. The census collects data from each individual and each set of living quarters for the whole country or area. It allows estimates to be produced for small geographic areas and for population subgroups. It also provides the base population figures needed to calculate vital rates from civil registration data, and it supplies the sampling frame for sample surveys.

There are many reasons for conducting censuses of population. At the most fundamental level a census provides a population headcount at the national level. Depending on how the census is organized, this national total may be broken down by detailed geographic area. Indeed, the taking of a census may even be enshrined in the constitution of a country for the purposes of determining political representation. In addition, budgetary allocations invariably hinge on census outcomes. However, notwithstanding the legal or quasi-legal nature of the census objectives at the national level, the richness of the data provided and the small-area dimension of the census are its greatest assets.

Population register is defined as an individualized data system, that is, a mechanism for the continuous recording of selected information pertaining to each member of the resident population of a country or area, making it possible to determine up-to-date information about the size and characteristics of the population at selected points in time (United Nations, 1969). Population registers are built up from a base consisting of an inventory of an area's inhabitants, which is continuously augmented by current information on births, deaths, changes of residence, marriages, divorces, adoptions, legitimations, and other characteristics such as changes of occupation.

Population registers are less well known and documented than other standard systems of demographic information (vital records, censuses, surveys). Although not found everywhere, they do exist in many European countries. They are always run on a municipal basis but computerization now makes it possible to centralize the data and establish national registers (Michel Poulain, Anne Herm, 2013).

The main purpose of a population register is to obtain a precise identification of each individual. It also provides aggregate data about the entire population concerned, making it possible to implement and monitor a wide range of public management and planning policies. The population register is also useful for statistical purposes: it can be used to estimate the size of a population and its socio-demographic structure at a point in time, as well as population change and its various components. Furthermore, if the system is fully operational for the continuous recording of changes of address, it is the main source of data on migration (ibid).

As a matter of concern, censuses are national instruments paid for out of taxpayers' money. It is for the countries themselves to determine what offers the best value for money, taking account of such factors as direct financial cost, data quality, burden on respondents, public acceptability and so forth. Indeed, in some countries there may be no real choice, as the traditional census may have fallen into disrepute for various historical reasons.

However, in countries where good administrative data are limited, it may not be feasible either politically or culturally to rectify the situation in the short term as to whether a traditional census is to be done away with. Neither is it sufficient to say that registers should be put in place in order to reduce the cost of collection of statistics. Experience shows that there has to be a very strong administrative rationale for developing and maintaining register-based information. Without that, the level of compliance by the public will render any information which may flow from the register to be of limited use for statistical purposes.

In conclusion, the real choice depends on the capacity of the country in question. The national statistical institution is accountable for the costs the incur, they therefore, have to justify to the government that the census will be carried out in the most cost-effective way possible. If the government sanctions this expenditure (even if it is the cost of conducting a traditional census), it does so bearing in mind that it is an investment in the knowledge necessary to be able to formulate public policies which are well informed and of long-term benefit to citizens. Otherwise, a country

with a well-established population registration system can still do away with the traditional census, an example of such countries is Austria and Netherlands.