

DEM 2110

Population Registers

The University of Zambia

Outline

- Definition of Population Registers

- Population Registers vs CRVS
- Historical Overview of Population Registration
- Uses of Population Registers
- Central Population Registers
- Guiding Principles of Population Registration
- Advantages of Population Registers
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Population Registers

- **Definition:** The UN defines Population Registers “as an individualized data system, that is, a mechanism of continuous recording and/or coordinated linkage of selected information pertaining to each member of the resident population of a country” (United Nations, 1969).
- Hence, population registers are defined as registers that contain figures about every individual in a certain country or area.
- Serves to collect individual characteristics – age, sex, migration etc
- Serves as well for policy and planning

Population Registers

- Population registers (PRs) 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
- Registers are thus the result of record linkage in which notification of certain events, often originally recorded in separate files;
- Each distinct collection of records is referred to as a file. EG: residence file or an archive file

Population Registers vs CRVS

- CRVS is confined to certificates drawn up for important demographic events, namely, births, deaths, marriages, and divorce. Population Registers go beyond this in the following manner:
 1. First of all, the certificates containing the separate events (births, marriages, etc.) for one person must be brought together under a common denominator, namely, the person concerned

Population Registers vs CRVS

- 2. Second, since the population register relates to every person living in a certain area or country, data on changes of address must also be included and;
- 3. Third, an initial registration of the population residing in the area must take place, generally by means of a census.
- Population register systems thus also provide migration statistics, as changes of address are included among the events that are described and processed

Origins of PRs

- Earliest register of households and individuals has been dated to the Han Dynasty in China in the second century BC (OSCE, 2009).
- Within Europe, a population register system is first attested in the Nordic region
- According to Arosenius (1928), and Hofsten and Lundström (1976), in 1665, the Lutheran bishop Johannes Gezelius the elder ordered the clergy of the diocese of Åbo (now Turku, Finland) to record all the families in each parish.

PRs Origins continues

- It was not until 1686 that a single decree ordered each pastor to make a list of all the families in his parish in what amounted to a parish population register of:
 - married couples;
 - legitimate and illegitimate children with their date and place of birth, date of christening and parents' names;
 - deaths and burials;
 - all arrivals and departures from the parish.

Uses of Population Registers

- To identify specific categories of the population generally called permanent residents, former residents, and temporary residents

Administrative uses include:

- Identification of persons, checking electoral rolls,
- Selection for military service,
- Indications of each person's status with respect to various social security benefits, and the preparation of tax lists.
- Control food rationing in times of shortage and
- Implement regulations concerning compulsory education

Statistical uses

- The generation of population statistics, including current population statistics, population estimates and characteristics, statistics of population change, vital statistics, and internal and international migration statistics;
- The planning of population censuses and the evaluation of census results using data from the population register; and
- The preparation of population or subpopulation lists by address, age group, sex, etc., for various statistical purposes such as inquiries or samples.

Statistical Uses

- By combining data from the population register with data from other systems and by matching data by means of name (number) or residential address, various additional statistics can be produced, such as
 - Electoral statistics,
 - Social security, health, and judicial statistics, educational statistics, statistics of family income and consumption, labor statistics, income tax statistics, and housing statistics.

Concept of Central Population Registers

- Population Registers are ideally supposed to be operated at a local level (Headman/woman; Chiefdom/Kingdom; Ward, constituency etc)
- Since 1965, Zambia had such a system (UN 1969)
- One of the pioneers of Population Registers is Sweden and it is Sweden as a country to again spearhead the setting up of a Central Population Register.

Central Population Registers

- Population registers in most developed countries fall under Councils or Municipalities (Local Government)
- Local authorities are in charge of the overall day-to-day management of the register
- However, in other countries, such as (Iceland) the national statistical office manages the central population register for both administrative and statistical purposes

Central Population Registers

- So what these countries have done is really to ensure that all data that is produced locally (council level) is then shared with the central registry where all elements of data is augmented for both administrative purposes and also for statistical reasons
- So the data at the central registry mimics the data from source documents and with computerization, this process has even been made effective
- For example, one can check duplicates, missing cases etc

Guiding principles of population registration

- Mandatory nature and full coverage
- Continuous and permanent nature: Populations are constantly changing, the entity responsible for the registration system should have sufficient administrative stability and operate within a sound legislative framework
- Relevance of data: Population registration can only be effective and efficient if it stores data that is relevant to the identity, life events and place of residence of data subjects
- Confidentiality: Data protection measures are in place; Data processing is legitimate and data security is guaranteed

Guiding principles of population registration

- Facilitating the free movement of people
- Sound administrative procedures regulating the process: develop detailed procedures and regulations governing the registration process that is service oriented
- One person, one record: This means that each piece of information about an individual should be registered in one place and one place only; requires a clear structure for sharing information throughout all parts of the state administration is a prerequisite
- Single registration, multiple uses

Guiding principles of population registration

- Non-discrimination
- “Legally invisible persons”: applies to citizens that may find it difficult to prove their legal identity or to exercise certain rights OR where the right to register is hindered by legalities pertaining to certain jurisdictions
- Place of residence and property ownership

Advantages

- The continuous nature of data collection, allows information available to be current, unlike information from decennial census, which maybe many years out of date.
- Population registers can be updated almost instantaneously - no waiting period for the data to be collated and analyzed as is with decennial census.
- Potential for linked records - individuals (anonymised) can be followed through the life course for research purposes.

Problems and limitations

- The type of data available is determined by the nature of the administrative departments collecting it.
- When first established, the quality across different departments or regions may be of uneven quality.
- Very expensive to set up and maintain, requires both systems and physical almost everywhere.

Question

- **Should the traditional census be conducted when a country has a PRS?**

Population Registers - Resources

- Methodology and Evaluation of Population Registers and Similar Systems – United Nations – 1969
- Population Registers and Population Statistics -Stable URL:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3643792>
- https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_POPU_1302_0215--central-population-registers-as-a-source.htm#
- http://papp.iussp.org/sessions/papp102_s01/PAPP102_s01_060_010.html