

Be counted: once and only once

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Population and Housing Census is the largest statistical undertaking of a country. It is vital for providing information about the population in order to present a full and reliable picture of the population in the country in terms of its size and spatial distribution, its demographic, social and economic characteristics, as well as its housing conditions.

The Census is the only reliable source for detailed information on the population at the level of small administrative areas. As a source for evidence-based decision making, Census data have many uses. It provides essential information for policy development and planning, for managing and evaluating programme activities across a broad range of applications, and for monitoring overall development progress. Census data also play an indispensable role in the calculation of social indicators, particularly those that are needed for small areas.

Sri Lanka has a long history of Census taking. The first of a scientific series of decennial Census was conducted in 1871. Thirteen Censuses were held thereafter. The last Census conducted in 2001, after a lapse of 20 years, could not cover the whole country. The current Census which is the 14th in the series has a special significance as it is able to cover the whole country including Northern and Eastern provinces after 30 years.

Organization of Census

Since 1946 the Department of Census and Statistics has conducted the Censuses with the collaboration of the district administration. The superintendent of Census is the Director General of the Department and has the overall responsibility of the Census. The district administration plays a major role in conducting the Census. District Secretary has been appointed as Census Commissioner for the respective district and Additional District Secretary is the Deputy Census Commissioner. Divisional Secretary (DS) has been appointed as Deputy Census Commissioners for the respective DS division and Assistant Divisional Secretary is the Assistant Census Commissioner. Necessary technical guidance is provided by the staff of the Department of Census and Statistics.

There are three main stages of the

Census taking operation. The first stage is mapping. In this operation complete and up to date maps are drawn for Grama Niladhari (GN) division boundaries and small enumeration areas known as Census Blocks are demarcated within GN divisions. A census block consists of approximately 150 building units. The whole country is divided into about 65,000 census blocks. This stage has been completed in 2010. The second stage is the listing operation. During this operation, based on the maps prepared, all the building units are given a number and labeled. In addition to numbering, some key information is also collected during the listing operation. This stage was carried out in April 2011. This serves as the basic frame for collecting the information.

Enumeration stage

The final stage is enumeration. Data collection is carried out during three weeks period from February 27 to March 19. Enumerators visit each and every housing unit and other living quarters and collect the information from all usual residents in these units. Housing characteristics are also collected in the Census. Census day is March 20. Census moment is the beginning of the Census day i.e. 12.00 mid night of March 19. It is taken as the reference time of the Census. Based on the Census moment, roofless persons are enumerated at the place where they spent the night of March 19. Special arrangements have been made to enumerate such population. During the two days, March 20-21 enumerator will visit again and collected data are updated based on births, deaths and changes of usual residents in the household, occurred during the three weeks period.

There are about 80,000 specially trained enumerators throughout the island to canvass the information. They were selected by Divisional Secretaries who are the Deputy Commissioners of Census in the areas. Each enumerator is issued with an identity card and will carry it at the time of enumeration. About 16,000 government offices deployed as supervisors.

Population and Housing Census are conducted under the Census ordinance. Accordingly every person is legally bound to provide the information asked for in the Census. On the other hand, confidentiality of information is guaranteed and the individual information collected in the Census is

not divulged to anyone. Data are disseminated only at aggregated levels.

Types of information

The basic information collected from usual residents are Name, National Identity Card (NIC) number, relationship to head of household,

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Sex, Date of birth, Marital status, Religion, ethnic group and citizenship. To measure migration patterns district of birth, duration of stay in the district, district of previous residence and reason for migration are collected. Considering the current importance, reason of migration is introduced in this Census. Under the physical and mental difficulties information is gathered on difficulties in seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self care and communication, from all usual residents. Educational characteristics are collected through the questions on school attendance, highest educational and professional qualification, literary in three languages and computer literacy. For the first time in a Census, information is collected on the computer literacy and professional qualifications. Economic activities are yet another important set of information. Economic activities section include information on activities

engaged in last 12 months, occupation, name of the work place, employment status and sector (Government, private etc.) and non economic activity. Information on child births are asked from ever married women and includes questions on number of children ever born, number of living children and date of birth of the last live

housing units are: source of drinking water, type of cooking fuel, type of lighting, toilet facilities, method of solid waste disposal, tenure, communication equipments and Internet facilities at home. The latter two items i.e. Information on communication equipments and Internet facilities at home have introduced for the first time in this Census. As the government has taken various measures to improve the skills of the public in information and communication technology, these data together with the information on computer literacy will be of immense use in evaluating and further improvements to such programmes. For the first time in the history of Census, data are collected through the web from a very limited group of housing units. The consent of such households has been taken to participate in the e-Census. They can download e-questionnaire from the web and submit after on-line completion.

These are password protected to safeguard the security and confidentiality of data. The system has been tested and implemented on an experimental basis.

Information so collected

from the Census should be processed and disseminated to data users as early as possible in order to get the maximum benefits. In order to expedite the processing of data, Department of Census and Statistics introduced imaged based form processing technology such as Optical Mark Recognition (OMR)/Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR), for the first time in the history of Population and Housing Censuses in Sri Lanka. This will eliminate manual data entry system through the key board to the computer and the completed questionnaires will be scanned and the data are directly read into the data base. Another improvement is the introduction of computer assisted coding system. This will expedite the

assigning of codes to certain descriptive items such as occupation. This was done manually in the previous Censuses.

Master Register of Census Blocks (MRCB) which is a computerized data base containing information at Census Block level is yet another new application in this Census. This is an invaluable tool for monitoring the field work, planning for materials and human resources to be sent to the field and also for producing summary reports. The collected information will be disseminated to the users in different stages. Preliminary counts of population will be released first followed by a preliminary release on population and housing based on summary reports received from enumerators. More detailed district level, DS level and GN level information will be disseminated in next stages.

All island reports on population and housing will be published followed by a General Report giving more analytical aspects of the characteristics. It is also planned to have thematic reports on different areas such as population distribution, migration patterns, households and families, economic activities, fertility behaviour and housing characteristics. It is expected to establish a Geographic Information System using the Census information consisting of spatial data at GN division level. Census information will be disseminated through printed and electronic media as well as via web.

Co-operation of the public

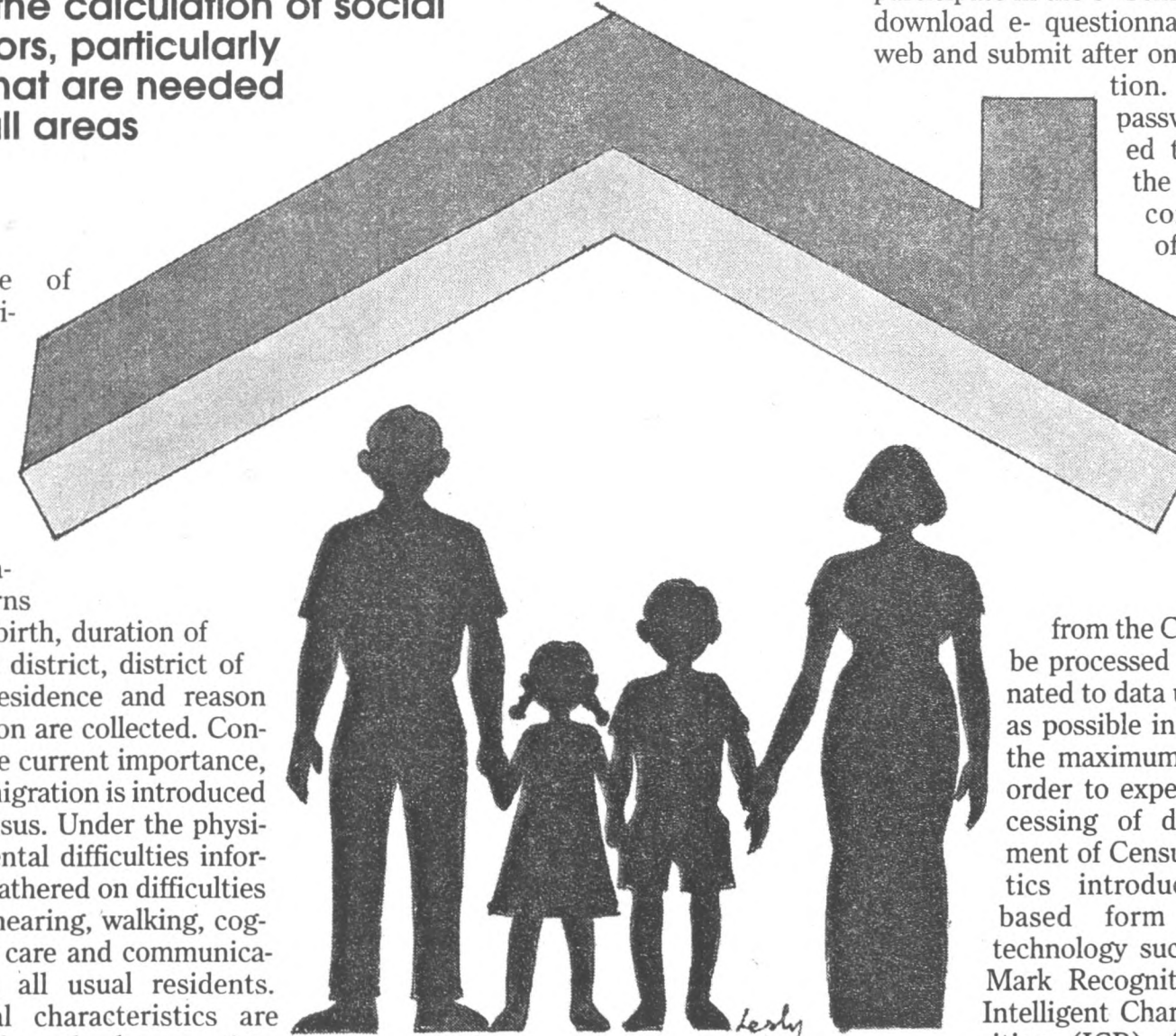
The Census of Population and Housing is an event of national importance. The information received is vital for the development of Sri Lanka. Every person in the country should be enumerated once and only once at the place of usual residence.

No omissions or duplications should take place. Participation and co-operation of the public is extremely important to have a successful Census. They are requested to provide the accurate information to the enumerator who visits their houses or living quarters. They can keep ready information such as NIC number, date of birth, district of birth, highest education and professional qualification, occupation etc., so that the enumerator can record the information accurately and speedily. Be counted in the Census once and only once.

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2012/03/12



born child. In addition to the above information on usual residents, some basic details are collected from members of the household who are living abroad for more than six months (except for those who live permanently). The information collected are name, sex, age, country of residence and the reason for going abroad.

The information collected from