

GEOGRAPHY HONS

SEM VI

DSC 3: Population Geography

Major Sources of Collecting Population Data

Population Geography is an empirical science that discusses about the regional differences of population parameters.

Why does a population geographer need data?

Any population geographer needs population data mainly for two reasons:

- To record the situation of population at any give for a particular place. This is also known as stock data. It is represented by census and various social surveys.
- To record the population dynamics, that is, the population composition, combined effect of birth, death and migration on a particular area. It is known as flow data.

What are the various sources of collecting population data?

1. **Census:** It is the single largest source of data for population studies all over the world.

History of Census: The earliest example of modern type of census is known to have been conducted in New France (present-day Quebec) in Canada, in 1665 and Iceland in 1703. The first periodical census began in the United States in 1790 and in Britain and France in 1802. After the Second World War, with the assistance of the United Nations, the developing countries have begun census operations in a more scientific manner, and the output is becoming more and more reliable. By then, almost the whole of Europe had developed the system. At the present time, almost all the countries of the world, excluding a few exceptions (notably China), conduct census counting at regular interval.

Defination of Census: The modern population census has been defined by the United Nations as “the total process of collecting, compiling and publishing demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specified time or times, to all persons of a defined territory”. In other words, enumeration of the entire population of a country or a region at a particular time is called a census.

Characteristics of Census:

- **Periodicity**: In a census, population details are counted at a regular interval. Most of the countries, including India, conduct census every 10 years.
- **Simultaneity**: It refers to the counting of population simultaneously at a specified point of time. This time or date is known as reference date or census moment or census time. As a general rule, a day is fixed for the census and also a particular moment which is called the "census moment". In India, the "Census moment" now is the sunrise of 1st March, of the census year. The fixing of the "census moment" helps the enumerators to decide which persons are to be included in the census. The persons born after the census moment or the persons dying before the census moment are to be excluded from the census. Some of the characteristics of the population like age, marital status, occupation, literacy and birthplace etc., are referred to a period of time usually from 10th February to 28th February of the census year to ensure simultaneity.

Approaches of counting Census data

Two approaches are adopted.

- **De facto**: In the de facto approach, used in Australia for instance, each individual is recorded at the place where he/she is found at the time of enumeration.
- **De jure**: In the de jure approach, as in the United States, people are recorded at their normal or usual place of residence. In some countries, however, a combination of both the approaches is used, for example, in Brazil and England.

Problems/ Challenges in Census taking

- **Increasing costs**: To conduct a census, is a huge economic burden for a country, for example, on the 2010 census in the United States costing approximately USD\$13 billion, double what was spent on the 2000 census, which in turn doubled the 1990 cost. For many poor countries all over the world, taking huge amounts of money out of their limited resources for the purpose of census can be a very difficult thing. As a result of this, many poor countries cannot conduct censuses as regularly or as efficiently as richer countries do.
- **Intrusiveness, privacy concerns, and response burden**: People don't share private data.
- **Lower public cooperation and participation**. This is mostly due to illiterate population who have taboo is sharing details with the authority.
- **Difficulties in accessing** secure apartments and enumerating unsafe areas

- More complex living arrangements, for example, individuals living in multiple locations (such as children of separated parents), the homeless, nomads, refugees, and other hard to reach populations
- Timelines in relation to user needs, for example, needs for more frequent data on changing patterns of internal and international migration.
- Corruption during census can make it difficult to have an efficient population census exercise that provides accurate population figures. This automatically leads to inaccurate population figures of a country. Also, in countries where population sizes determine how much money the central government releases to a state or province, corruption can easily overtake the census taking process and make states to exaggerate their population sizes in order to get a bigger share of funds during the central government's distribution of funds.
- Insufficient number of professionals with the knowledge and experience of conducting census. More often than not, governments of underdeveloped countries don't have sufficient experienced census officers, demographers and population experts to effectively handle the task of conducting population census. As a result of this, these countries end up using inexperienced census officers to do the job.

Essential features of a Census/ Requisites of a Census

- Sponsorship: To conduct a census, vast organisation and considerable resources are needed. The census organisation has to mobilise extensive administrative machinery with adequate legislative authority. This can be done only by National Government with the cooperation of States and Local Governments.
- Defined Territory: The population figures have no meaning unless they refer to a well defined territory. The territory covered, along with any changes in its area in successive censuses should be clearly and explicitly stated.
- Universality: Each person present and/or residing within its scope, without omission or duplication should be included in the census to ensure completeness and accuracy of census data.
- Simultaneity: The total population enumerated should refer to one well defined point of time and the data collected should also refer to a well defined point or period of time. This is essential to an accurate count of the total population and relationship of facts about the population to a specified period of time.
- Defined Periodicity: Censuses should be taken at regular intervals so that comparable information is made available in a fixed sequence. A series of censuses makes it possible to appraise the past, accurately describe the present and estimate the future.
- Individual Units: Census data must be collected separately for each individual so that detailed classifications may be provided in all the required combinations. A procedure of "group enumeration" is not a census in the strict sense of the term because the recording of aggregated or summarized information on the characteristics of a group of person usually precludes the cross-tabulation of data on several characteristics.
- Compilation and Publications: No census is complete unless the data collected are compiled and published by geographic areas and by basic demographic variables. The unpublished data is of no use to the potential users of the census data. That is why the census should be limited to very important items which can be tabulated and published in time.

- International Simultaneity: The census of any country is of greater value nationally, regionally and internationally if it can be compared with the censuses of other countries which are taken at approximately the same time. Censuses in most countries of the world are conducted in years ending in 0 or 1. In India, the decennial censuses are conducted in years ending in 1. International comparability is thus maintained. **The Indian census accompanies all the above features.**