

# Population Census in the Republic of Belarus: Experience and Perspectives

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## Abstract

The paper considers the main questions of the program, methodology, design and distinctive features of carrying out the population census in the Republic of Belarus

*Keywords:* population census, census program.

## 1 Introduction

The population census provides unique information about the size and structure of the population by sex, age, nationality, education, marital status, occupation and other characteristics and is the major information resource about the population received at the state level by interviewing citizens.

The main advantages of the population census are that it provides demographic indicators at the level of the smallest administrative-territorial units and these indicators are comparable between the territories since they relate to a single moment of time.

## 2 Population Census in Belarus

### 2.1 History and conducting principles

Within the borders of modern Belarus the population census took place 9 times: in 1897, 1926, 1937, 1959, 1970, 1979 and 1989. The census was not only in 1949 and in 1969: in 1949 because the country's leadership did not want to show the true losses of the Second World War; in 1969 because of the difficult economic situation (the census was held in 1970 coinciding with the centenary of Lenin's birth).

In the history of independent Belarus there were two censuses: in 1999 and in 2009.

There are the next basic principles of carrying out a population census in Belarus:

- The generality (a census covers all territory and all population).

- Simultaneity (the choice of the critical moment (date and time of a census)). All data collected during the census belong to one certain and in advance determined moment.
- Uniform program of a census: collecting data on the same signs, characteristics specified in the census form, for all rewrites.
- Collection of personal and easily identifiable information about each individual person.
- Self-determination: all information is collected only from the words of the respondents; it is prohibited to require their documentary confirmation. The only exception is when the respondent claims to be 100 or more years old.
- Confidentiality (the prohibition of informing someone about personal information received about the census during the census).
- Strict centralization of census management: the state assumes responsibility for conducting, monitoring and financing the census.
- Regularity of the census. In Belarus the requirement to conduct a population census at least once every 10 years is legally fixed.

The census program traditionally consists of three sections:

1. An address part (name and the address of the rewritable, its relation to the head of a family/household);
2. The actually a census program (personal demographic characteristics (sex, age, marriage status), social and economic characteristics (education level, profession, occupations, income, social status), ethnic (ethnic origin, native language, language skills, religion / confessional accessory) characteristics; the questions connected with studying of population reproduction; migration);
3. The questions connected with other survey (determined by the objectives of this particular census).

## **2.2 Population Census in 1999**

From February 16 to February 23, 1999 in Belarus the first population census among the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries has been conducted. Difficulties in the organization of carrying out a census have been caused by the fact that before Belarus was a part of the USSR and all leadership in process of collecting and the analysis information was carried out through Moscow. 33 thousand specialists were attracted for the census; each of specialists was supposed to interview people from 25 to 40 apartments on the day. The method of the census is «face-to-face» interviewing.

Unlike previous censuses only the permanent population was rewritten and not present population as before. This was done to save money (as the budget for one person was 0.5-0.7 USD), and also taking into account the experience of other countries.

In developing the census program the 1989 program was used as a basis, but with significant changes ((instead of 13 main questions the program has included 17). The

questionnaire was not only in Russian, but also in Belarusian.

The main differences in forming the questions of the census program were:

- For the first time not only registered but also unregistered marriage was taken into account;
- The question was included about how many children people not only have but also plan to have;
- Since the peculiarity of Belarus is the spread of the language, the questionnaire was asked not simply "What is your native language?" as it is done in other countries and in what language the person speaks at home and what other language is fluent;
- The question of how many sources of livelihood were available has been for the first time included.

### **2.3 Population Census in 2009**

The population census in 2009 was conducted from October 14 to October 24. In comparison with a census of 1999 duration of the period of a census has increased from 8 to 11 days that has allowed reduced the burden on the specialist to 300 people and, thereby, to increase quality of the survey.

More than 48 thousand temporary specialist of whom 63% employees of the organizations, 33% – pupils and students, 4% – pensioners have participated in a population census. More than a half of participants of a census had the highest or average special educations.

In addition the pilot census showed the need to organize the work of stationary census plots (about 5% of the population living in the pilot census area visited such sites). Thus, for the first time in the population census of Belarus there were more than 3000 stationary census plots where respondents could indicate information about themselves.

Poll of respondents and filling of questionnaires were carried out in Belarusian or Russian at the request of the respondent.

The census program included 9 main thematic clusters:

- The number and location of the population;
- Demographic characteristics;
- Level of education;
- Socio-economic characteristics;
- National composition of the population, citizenship;
- Population migration;
- Characteristics of households;
- Housing conditions;
- Population temporarily residing (residing) in the territory of the Republic of Belarus.

The distinctive features of the 2009 census program were following:

Unlike the 1999 the census program in 2009 contained an additional question about the type of educational institution in which the respondent studied.

The program for the first time includes information characterizing the labor migration. The data indicate migration flows within the administrative region, country region, the republic, as well as the number of external labor migrants. At the same time, information on the location of the main work of labor migrants is given in combination with their age, level of education, status in employment, occupation, type of economic activity, place of residence.

## **2.4 Population Census in 2019**

The next population census in the Republic of Belarus will be held in 2019 and will be conducted to the period from October 4 to October 30. Duration of a census will be 27 days.

On October 4,5,6 2019 the census will be conducted at stationary sites (according to the principle of elections), then from October 7 to October 11, 2019, the lists will be updated and from October 12 to October 30, 2019 a round of interviewing by specially trained people in households will be carried out (at the same time stationary sites continue to work).

Unlike the two previous censuses the population census-2019 will be conducted in three ways:

- «face-to-face» interviewing by a specialist;
- on stationary sits;
- by the Internet (the principle of self-registration).

The innovation of the forthcoming census is the replacement of traditional paper questionnaire with tablet computers in which census forms will be downloaded electronically, as well as maps of sites with addresses and house outlines. Automation of data entry at the survey stage of respondents will allow to provide high quality of filling out questionnaires due to the connection of the control system. It is provided to use the information system "Register of the Population" as a basis for filling of an address part of the questionnaire. It will allow to obtain automatically about 20% of the information needed to fill out the questionnaire (a full name, the identification number, date and place of birth, gender, citizenship, place of residence and place of stay). And only the remaining missing information will be obtained through an of interviewing.

Using tablets will also increase the load per specialist to 750 people (in 2009 were 300 people). As a result in 2019 it is planned to attract about 2.5 thousand people for the census (in 2009 there were 7,5 thousand people). Thus, the number of temporary census staff will be cut 3 times in comparison with the previous census.

On the first time within the population census of 2019 in the Republic of Belarus there

will take place the agricultural census (which according to the recommendations of FAO has to be conducted once in 10 years). In the Republic of Belarus the National Statistical Committee provides current statistical accounting of the main agricultural organizations activity and also makes selective monitoring of agricultural activity of the citizens having personal subsidiary farms and constantly living in rural areas (a survey of private subsidiary plots in rural areas (from 2011)). At the same time the population carrying out agricultural activities in urban areas, in garden associations, seasonal houses and summer cottages is not examined. It has caused need of inclusion of questions about their agricultural activity in the census program.

The questionnaire on agricultural activities includes a minimum set of indicators allowing to specify existence in the property (possession, use, rent) of the household, their location (urban or rural area, garden associations), determine the structure of arable land, the number of perennial plantations , the number of livestock, poultry and bee colonies.

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