

Activities of the Census of Population and Housing 2001 Sri Lanka



Introduction

A Census of Population and Housing is the single most extensive statistical undertaking of a country. The United Nations defines the Population Census as the total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analyzing and publishing demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specified time, in a country or in a well delimited part of a country. Sri Lanka has a long history of census taking. The first scientific census was conducted in 1871. Since then censuses have been conducted, once in ten years with certain exceptions. The last census was conducted in 17th of July 2001 and it is the 13th of the series.

The 2001 census has special significance as it was the first census to be taken in the new millennium after a lapse of 20 years from previous census, which is the largest time gap recorded for an intercensal period in the history of censuses in Sri Lanka

Coverage

The 2001 census enumeration was able to carry out completely in 18 out of 25 districts due to the disturbed conditions in Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. These include all the 17 districts in Western, Central, Southern, North Western, North Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa provinces and Ampara district in Eastern province. In Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts no enumeration was done. In Mannar district, out of 5 Divisional Secretariat (D.S) divisions only one was enumerated partially. In Vavuniya district, out of 4 D.S. divisions, one was enumerated completely and 2 were enumerated partially. In Batticaloa district, out of 12 D.S. divisions, 5 were enumerated completely and 6 were enumerated partially. In Trincomalee district out of 11 D.S. divisions, 7 were enumerated completely and 2 were enumerated partially. The results described have relates to the 18 districts in which the enumeration was completed on 100% basis.

Legal Authority and Organization of Census

The Census is conducted under the census ordinance which was recently amended by the Census (Amendment) Act. No.55 of 2000. Census Ordinance places the legal obligation upon the public to give accurate information to the Census Officers. This ordinance also guarantees the confidentiality of the information collected at individual level. As such the public need not have any fear what so ever to provide the information requested. Department of Census and Statistics assures the public that the individual information will not be divulged to any one and will be used only for statistical purposes.

The Director General of the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) was appointed as the Superintendent of Census by Her Excellency the President under the legal authority vested in her as the Minister-in-charge. Superintendent of Census was responsible for entire Census organization. He was assisted by Deputy Superintendents of Census who were the Directors and Deputy Directors of the Department of Census and Statistics and Assistant

Superintendents who were Statisticians and Statistical Officers of the Department. The field officers of the DCS who were in-charge of the census activities in the Divisional Secretary Division were designated as Divisional Census Officers.

Administrative responsibilities for taking the census was vested with government district administration. The District Secretaries/Government Agents were appointed as Census Commissioners with the responsibility to conduct the census in the respective districts as Divisional Secretaries/Assistant Government Agents were appointed as Deputy Census Commissioners and responsible for taking census in the areas under their purview.

Conducting the Census

The census was carried out in 4 stages,

- 1) Mapping Operation (From January to December 2000)
- 2) Listing Operation (February and March 2001)
- 3) Preliminary Census (From 25th June to 5th July 2001)
- 4) The Final Census (17th July 2001, 6.00 p.m. to 12.00 mid night)

Mapping and Listing Operations

The objectives of mapping and listing operations were to ensure that all building units are covered in the Island without any omission or duplication. Grama Niladhari (GN) divisions are the lowest administrative units in the country. To avoid omissions or duplications of building unit or any individuals, GN division maps were drawn with clear identifiable boundaries. As the GN divisions are too large to handle in a census operation they were subdivided into smaller area units called the 'Census Block'. A census block comprised of around 60 housing units and/or other building units in the rural sector and around 80 housing units and/or other building units in the urban sector. The census block boundaries were also marked on the GN division maps during the mapping operation.

Based on the maps prepared, building unit or a part of a building unit is identified as one of the following categories.

- (i) Housing unit
- (ii) Collective living quarter
- (iii) Institution
- (iv) Non housing unit

All housing units, collective living quarters, institutions and non-housing units were listed in a **Pre-Listing Form** during the listing operation.

- (a) Postal Address of the unit
- (b) Name of chief occupant or person in charge if the unit is a place of residence and Name of Business, owner or person in-charge if it is a non housing unit

- © Description of the unit (Housing Unit; Collective Living Quarters; Institution; Non-housing Unit)
- (d) Number of persons usually spending the night in the unit
- (e) Whether Agricultural Activity is being carried-out by any member of the unit
- (f) Whether any Non-agricultural Economic Activity is being carried out

The list with the above important information will provide the basic frame for the censuses and various surveys, which will be conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics, during the next ten years.

Enumeration Procedure

In the stage of preliminary census, the enumerators collected information pertaining to every individual who usually live in the household using the **Population and Housing Schedule**. Each 'Census Block' was assigned to an enumerator and such as , there were around 120,000 enumerators through out the country. In addition to the population data, information on housing and household information were also collected from each housing unit and collective living quarter on a 100 percent basis. In the previous census (1981 census), information on housing was collected on a 100 percent basis on a urban sector. In the rural and estate sector such information was collected only from 10 percent of the census blocks.

On the final census enumeration was carried out on the night of 17th July 2001, between 6.00 p.m. and 12 mid night. The time was changed certain areas, depending on the prevailing ground situation in the area. The referred date for the census is the final date and all information relating to each individual was at 6.00 pm on the 17th July 2001. The final census enumeration is carried out as a direct check on the persons enumerated in the Preliminary Census, in-order to ensure that no person is missed or enumerated more than once. Special arrangements were made to enumerate people staying outdoors on the final census night.

If a person included in the schedule at the Preliminary Census is not present at the time of the final enumeration on the final census day, a code '2' was circled for such persons in 'question P0' which was completed only in the final census. If the person who has been enumerated in the Preliminary Census is actually present at the final enumeration also, such person was circled as code '1'. If the household member is absent as he/she had gone abroad at the time of the final enumeration, such person was circled as code '3'. If a person who has not been enumerated during Preliminary Census is present at the time of the final enumeration all information pertaining such persons need to be collected and a circled as code '4' in 'question P0'.

In addition to the enumerators who visit the units, which have been already listed and given a census unit number of Out-door Enumerators were also appointed, to cover the persons who live in streets (homeless), those who happen to be in bus stands, railway stations, in busy places, etc. Once a person is enumerated on the road or some such place, while on the move they will be given a card indicating that the person has been already counted, so that if he/she comes across another enumerator, this card could be shown and avoid getting counted again.

Identified institutions like barracks/camps of forces, hospitals large hostels etc. was covered by officers selected for the purpose from their own institutions.

In Sri Lanka censuses, the method of enumeration has traditionally been “de facto” basis i.e. persons were enumerated at the place they were actually found on the census night.

Training

The training of census staff was a three tiered programs. In the first tier, the Master Trainers were trained. They were the senior officers of the department in the ranks of Statisticians and Deputy Directors. The second tier was the training of trainers by the Master Trainers. The trainees were the Statistical Officers of the department who were entrusted with the task of training all supervisors and enumerators. The third tier was the training of supervisors and about 110,000 strong army of enumerators.

Census Questionnaire

In 2001 census, two types of schedules were used. The **Population and Housing Schedule** and **Disabled Schedule**. In 2001, information on migration, fertility and housing were collected on a complete enumeration basis, whereas these were collected from a sample of census blocks in 1981 and 1971 censuses.

I Population and Housing Schedule: This schedule was used to collect 24 items from individuals pertaining to demographic and economic characteristics

- General information (name, relationship, sex, date of birth, citizenship, religion and ethnicity)
- Migration patterns (district of birth, district of usual residence, duration of residence and district of previous residence)
- Educational characteristics (education during last 30 days, educational attainment and literacy)
- Economic characteristics (type of activity, occupation, industry, employment sector & status and non economic activities)
- Nuptiality and Fertility (marital status, total live births, number of living children and date of birth of last live birth)

In addition 9 items on **Housing** characteristics;

- Occupancy status
- Number of households in the unit
- Number of occupants in the unit
- Construction material of wall, floor, roof
- Type of structure
- Year of construction

- Unit usage
- Availability of rooms and Number of rooms

and,

7 items of **Household** information pertaining to each and every household were collected;

- Number of occupants in the household
- Availability of toilet
- Type of toilet
- Source of drinking water
- Type of lighting
- Type of cooking fuel
- Tenure

II Schedule for Disabled Persons: This schedule was used to collect information pertaining to 6 types of disabilities;

- Seeing disabilities
- Hearing / Speaking disabilities
- Disabilities in hands
- Disabilities in legs
- Other physical disabilities
- Mental disabilities

Data Processing

Data processing consisted of two major phases.

- (1) Manual editing and coding,
- and
- (2) Computer processing. Manual editing

was confined simple checks. Such as area identification codes were inserted correctly and to verify the codes for certain questions (eg. district of birth) during the field work.

Coding was required only in respect of three questions, namely educational attainment, occupation and industry. A series of computer edit checks were carried out and records containing errors were printed for manual corrections. These edit checks include both range and consistency checks. Finally limited number of imputations was done before the tabulating the data. Processing was done on IBM S390 integrated server 3006 model B01 and several personal computers. Key to disk data entry was used for data capture. The software Integrated Micro Computer Processing System (IMPS) developed by U.S. Bureau of Census was used to data processing activities including data entry.

Dissemination of Census Data

Census data are disseminated to the data users through printed as well as electronic media. The available publications and CD's are shown under *Publications and CD's released*. Printed publications continued to be the main media of dissemination of census results. List of publications released;

- (a) Within a week after the conducting the census on 17th July 2001, the total population (provisional) enumerated at the census by districts.
- (b) The first preliminary report which was entitled **“Population by sex, age, religion, ethnicity according to the district and Divisional Secretary's(DS) division (Provisional)”** was released in October 2001
- (c) Another preliminary report on **“Information on Building units by district and DS division”** was released in January 2002.
- (d) **“Information on Disability Population”**. This report was released in January 2003.
- (e) **Results on Sample Tabulations.** As the release of final information is a time consuming process, questionnaires pertaining to 5 percent sample of census blocks were processed in order to meet the urgent data requirements. Reports at the district level were published giving basic population and housing information at the end of 2002.

Preliminary census results down to the level of DS division were also released in the form of Geographic Information System (GIS).

- (f) Lowest administrative (Grama Niladhari) division level for 18 districts; A CD named **“GN Level Data Population and Housing”** was released in early 2004 based on Census supervisor's summaries.
- (g) **Final Reports.** District reports based on 100 percent tabulation covering all census topics were prepared to publish. These district reports contains information on both population and housing characteristics of the district and some basic information pertaining to the district as Divisional Secretary's (DS) division level. A brief analysis of population and housing characteristics of the district is also incorporated into the reports.
- (h) CD's have prepared for each district giving all information contained in the district reports as well as the information at GN division level.