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**Leaving no Child Behind: The 2021 Population-  
Housing Census in Greece**

**Note by Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)\***

*Abstract*

The 2021 Population-Housing Census in Greece stands as a benchmark for success, representing best practices in execution, institutional completeness, and seamless integration with administrative records. Pioneering as the first digital census in Greece, this paper explores the meticulous efforts undertaken to ensure the inclusion of all population groups, including Roma communities, refugees, and children residing in hospitality facilities. It explores the meticulous methodology that contributed to its success, ensuring institutional robustness and the ability to interconnect effectively with administrative registries. This ensured the identification of living conditions for individuals (and children) across the entire population spectrum. Additionally, it highlights the forthcoming publication dedicated exclusively to children, presenting statistical insights derived from the comprehensive census data celebrating Greece's commitment to leaving no one behind by setting new standards for innovative and thorough census practices.

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## I. Introduction

1. The Population-Housing Census is the most complex and large-scale statistical work for every country. Its results reflect each conducting period's demographic, political, and socio-economic conditions. The first Population Census in modern Greece was held in 1828, seven years after the Greek Revolution for the Independence within the borders of the first, not yet fully independent, Greek State (table 1). During the 1828 Census, there was also an estimation of the population of 1821. [1] The 2021 Population-Housing Census, the first digital Census in Greece, was conducted by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) in the period November 10, 2021, until February 21, 2022, with reference date of the data the 22nd of October 2021, in three distinctive phases (Electronic self-enumeration, traditional enumeration and fully electronic enumeration).
2. In the present paper, we are dealing with the scope and the methodology of the 2021 Population-Housing Census in Greece, and the institutional framework that facilitated the meticulous efforts undertaken to ensure the inclusion of all population groups, including Roma communities, refugees, and people residing in hospitality facilities. The whole project was in compliance with the United Nations' Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the principles stipulated in the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP) [2,3]. The Census ensured the identification of living conditions for individuals across the entire population spectrum setting new standards for innovative and thorough census practices highlighting Greece's commitment to leaving no child behind. In the upper secondary school, lasting two years, the vast majority of students specialise in a subset of subjects. Those interested in an academic pathway take A levels usually in three subjects. These are highly regarded qualifications used for admissions to university. A range of VTQs are also available to students (often provided by Further Education colleges), who can take them instead of A levels (if interested in a more applied education), or alongside A levels (if interested in pursuing a mixed pathway featuring a combination of academic and applied qualifications).

## II. The Population and Housing Census in Greece

3. In Greece, beginning from the year 1951, the Population-Housing Census along with a Building Census, takes place every ten years. [1]
4. The purpose of the Population-Housing Census is to collect up-to-date and valid data on the demographic, economic and social characteristics of the population and its housing conditions, in order to meet the statistical information needs at national and international level. This information is essential for drawing the economic, social and environmental policies of each State and for fulfilling the Country's obligations toward international organizations.
5. As a result of the Population-Housing Census ELSTAT has updated data regarding:
  - the **Resident Population** of Greece, i.e., the inhabitants who reside permanently in each Region, Regional Unit, Municipality, Municipal Unit, Community and autonomous settlement, regardless of citizenship and residence status,

- the **Registered (De Jure) Population** of Greece, i.e., the citizens registered in each Municipality and Municipal Unit, on the basis of which the parliamentary seats are allocated to the individual constituencies during the parliamentary elections,
- the number of dwellings, by type (regular or non-regular dwellings), and data on their main characteristics and amenities,
- the number and composition of households and nuclear families,
- the demographic, social, educational and economic characteristics of the resident population of Greece.

#### A. The 2021 Population-Housing Census in Greece

6. Regarding the 2021 Population – Housing Census in Greece [4], ELSTAT organized an impact assessment evaluation and a stakeholder consultation in order to prepare a draft legislative proposal for the General Censuses and their design and overall organization in order to ensure the smooth conduct of the Census and to meet the needs of users for statistical information. A number of participants took part in the relevant consultation such as the Advisory Committee of the Hellenic Statistical System (SYEPELSS), the Statistics Users Conferences organized by ELSTAT, the Ministries, the Hellenic Data Protection Authority, the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (AADE), the e-Government Center for Social Security (IDIKA SA), the Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization (OASP), the National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece, UNICEF Greece, the Municipalities, etc.
7. The consultation revealed that even though the Hellenic Statistical System (ELSS) has achieved significant improvements as regards population and social statistics, more detailed and frequent datasets were needed for topics, characteristics and breakdowns that have become politically and societally important. At the same time, the 2021 General Censuses ought to provide the basis for a more flexible statistical system that will be able to adapt to evolving user needs and be able to provide reliable, disaggregate data.
8. Given the circumstances resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, the data collection was modified compared to the previous Censuses (door-to-door with interviews via enumerators) by redefining the census procedure, with a view to the protection of the population's health. The new approach was based on the exploitation of modern technology. In particular, the population was enumerated electronically via a specially designed web application (electronic self-enumeration). If the enumerated persons had any questions, they could contact an ELSTAT Enumerator for further guidance. In the cases where self-enumeration was not possible, the Census was conducted through a face-to-face or telephone interview.
9. For the households that would not be able to participate in the electronic self-enumeration, as well as people in reception facilities, nursing homes, hospitals, camps etc., the Census would be conducted through a face-to-face or phone interview. didn't self-enumerate to arrange a physical or telephone interview.
10. The results of the impact assessment and the fact that the 2021 Census had to be conducted through the traditional method (where the whole population would be approached), led to the decision to collect variables which would serve as unique IDs and would be used as "keys" for linking the census data with the appropriate administrative registers. These variables were the Tax Identification Number (TIN Number or ΑΦΜ) and the Social Security Number (ΑΜΚΑ).

11. The necessary condition for these “key” variables to be useful for the current and future production of official statistics is ELSTAT’s access to the respective administrative sources to which these unique IDs refer. Due to previous experience in which insufficient legal framework and lack of trust created difficulty in accessing administrative data, it was decided that a complete and effective legal and institutional framework was necessary to insure the smooth conduct of the Census in both organizational and legal matters.
12. Data regarding special groups (e.g. hard-to-reach or marginalized populations) was in the spotlight.

## **B. Phases of data collection for the Population-Housing Census 2021**

### **1. Preparatory Phase: The Building Census**

13. The Building Census is conducted every 10 years before the Population-Housing Census in order to collect information as regards the number of buildings, their use and their characteristics with the aim to meet national requirements in statistical information. Apart from the building characteristics the Buildings Census 2021 allowed for the collection of information for building coordinates and the compilation of lists of buildings with identification of the dwelling type (residential and non-residential) for each Census Sector. The information from these lists was necessary for the implementation of the Population Census as it was to be used to locate the dwellings and the corresponding households that would be recorded during the Population-Housing Census.
14. The Building Census was carried out by the Heads of Sectors of the Census using tablets. The data of each building were introduced through a specially designed electronic application in a cloud database. The sector managers visited each building block with the appropriate cartographic material (provided by ELSTAT) and registered the buildings of each building block. This process allowed, apart from recording the buildings' characteristics, to locate them geospatially.

### **2. Phase A: Population and Housing Census – Electronic self-enumeration**

15. In November of 2021, the approximately 40,000 ELSTAT Enumerators distributed a sealed envelope in each house, apartment, or accommodation with a unique (geospatially) residence code that corresponded to the specific residence. A representative of the household was then able to use the special app of the Census, through the digital portal of the Greek public sector ([www.gov.gr](http://www.gov.gr)), using this unique code and their “taxisnet” code (identification method) to complete the questionnaire for the residence and the members of the household.
16. Throughout this procedure, the Enumerators had to provide help and answer questions over the telephone. The Enumerators could monitor their assigned households and identify those who were self-enumerated and those who were not. People living in refugee camps and Roma settlements did not have to self-enumerate but special enumerators had to proceed to phase B and collect data via interview.
17. The initial deadline for phase A was the 26<sup>th</sup> of November. The deadline was extended till the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2021, due to substantial response of the public in the electronic self-enumeration.

### **C. Phase B: Population and Housing Census – Data Collection via interview**

18. Since the Enumerators could identify the residents who were not self-enumerated in Phase A, they had to visit them again to arrange a phone or face-to-face interview. At this stage Enumerators would use paper questionnaires and were obligated to do the data entry in ELSTAT's dataset via a web application.
19. During that period the web application for self-enumeration was still in use for the households that would choose to use it. It should be noted that, in order to avoid distorted incentives, each Enumerator received the same compensation per questionnaire, both for the questionnaires they completed during the interview process and for the questionnaires that the citizens completed and finalized themselves through the self-enumeration procedure. Phase B lasted from December 14, 2021, until February 14, 2022, to help the Enumerators, especially outside big cities or on the islands, to reach and count every single person.

### **D. Phase C: Population and Housing Census – Electronic self-enumeration for those who didn't manage to contact their Enumerator**

20. Phase C was organized for the few residents that the Enumerator didn't manage to find or communicate with as most of the citizens and residents of the country had already been counted using the electronic self-enumeration procedure (phase A). During the period from February 15 to February 21, 2022, those who, for any reason, didn't self-enumerate or were not interviewed by an Enumerator were able to visit ELSTAT's website ([www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr)) and use a new app where they could fill their address of residence and postal code and use one of two options:
  - Receive a new "unique residence code" corresponding to their residence and follow the procedure of phase A (electronic self-enumeration), or
  - Receive the contact details (address and telephone) of the Supervision of the area of their residence and arrange an interview.

### **E. The Questionnaire**

21. The Census questionnaires have been designed according to the UNECE Recommendations having taken into consideration ELSTAT's accumulated experience as well as the suggestions of other public agencies and stakeholders who took part in the relevant consultation.
22. The Census questionnaire included all the variables in accordance with the European Regulation (EU) 763/2008 [4] on Population and Housing Censuses, as well as variables that met national requirements in statistical information (see table 3). For the first time, the Population Census included the collection of the tax identification number (TIN Number) and the Social Security Number (AMKA) of each person. The aim was to introduce a unique identification number for each person that would be used as a "Key" to link the statistical data from the Population Census to data from administrative registers.
23. The purpose was dual; firstly to link the variables gathered in the Census with data from administrative registers, with the aim to verify their quality (for errors/uniqueness) and to ensure full coverage of the entire population, in order to safeguard the results of the Census and secondly to help build a solid basis (together with the results of the 2021 Census) for the

establishment of the first Statistical Population Register, subject to a continuous updating with the use of administrative data.

24. It is worth noticing that in the Population-Housing Census, ELSTAT chose not to collect any sensitive personal data (e.g., data regarding health status, sexual orientation, etc.).

#### **F. Processing Census data**

25. The data obtained from the Population Census have been inserted in the database of ELSTAT during the data collection period and were subject to processing right after the end of the Census. The quality of the collected data in terms of completeness and correctness was of a high level due to the integrated automatic controls in the questionnaire. More precisely the data were checked for identification of duplications and missing values / variables.
26. The use of administrative sources was also part of ELSTAT's Strategy for the 2021 General Censuses. ELSTAT asked for and used administrative data from the Tax Authorities (key: TIN Number), Social Security (key: AMKA), the Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs as regards special groups of the population (e.g. Roma and homeless people), etc. Data from administrative sources were used as a mean to control and supplement the missing values of main demographic characteristics of the population, such as place of permanent residence, age etc. or any missing records.

### **III. Legal and institutional framework**

27. A very important aspect of the 2021 Population-Housing Census was the strong legal statistical framework with a solid democratic legitimization in line with the best chosen scientific statistical practices. These institutional arrangements ensured the smooth conduct of the Censuses in accordance with the international recommendations and standards.
28. The General Censuses of 2021 were carried out in accordance with the following framework:

#### **European Union Legislation**

- Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council
- Implementing Regulations (EC) No 543/2017 and No 881/2017
- Regulation (EC) No 712/2017 of the European Parliament and of the Council
- Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council
- GDPR Regulation (EU) 679/2016 of the European Parliament and of the Council

#### **National Legislation**

- The Census Law 4772/2021 regulating the Census
- The Greek Statistical Law 3832/2010
- The Law 4624/2019 implementing GDPR in Greece
- Regulatory Decisions of the President of ELSTAT

#### **United Nations Recommendations**

- United Nations Recommendations for the Population - Housing Censuses of 2020 round

## IV. Leaving no one behind

29. In the pursuit of an accurate and inclusive Census, it is imperative to acknowledge that certain segments of the population may be harder to reach. Among these are people in Monasteries, Military barracks, Correctional facilities and reformatories, Orphanages, Care homes, Nursing homes, Psychiatric hospitals, Centers for individuals with special needs, Hospitals, Migrant and refugee camps, Roma camps, Homeless shelters and other marginalized communities.
30. Recognizing the importance of comprehensive data collection, ELSTAT employed specialized enumerators to engage with these communities directly. This targeted approach proved instrumental in overcoming barriers such as digital literacy, language barriers, and trust issues that often hinder participation among marginalized groups.
31. By deploying enumerators who were well-versed in the cultural and linguistic nuances of these communities, census authorities facilitated meaningful engagement and ensured accurate data collection.

### A. Leaving No One Behind: Children

32. Children, especially those belonging in vulnerable groups, require special consideration in the Census process due to their status and limited legal capacity. In collective accommodations or within hard-to-reach or marginalized populations, ensuring their inclusion presents additional challenges.
33. To address this:
  - Administrative data was utilized for children who were inadvertently overlooked during enumeration.
  - A Statistical Literacy strategy was employed to build trust in the Census among the general population.
  - Close collaboration with administrations of institutions housing children, such as reformatories, orphanages, and hospitals, ensured comprehensive data collection.

### B. Leaving No One Behind: Refugees

34. Collaborating with the Greek Ministry of Migration & Asylum, ELSTAT conducted the Census in refugee camps using special enumerators and questioners. Data collection efforts focused on:
  - Determining the population of each camp.
  - Collecting household-level data, with each family treated as a separate household.
  - Capturing individual characteristics with appropriate disaggregation.
35. Special Enumerators, selected by camp authorities and accompanied by translators, played a crucial role in facilitating data collection. Additionally, social workers served as enumerators to gather information on refugees living outside of camps.

### **C. Leaving No One Behind: Roma People**

36. In partnership with the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity & the Fight Against Poverty of the Greek Ministry of Labor, ELSTAT conducted the Census in Roma settlements. Special enumerators, including members of the Roma community themselves, were employed to:
  - Determine the population of each settlement.
  - Collect household-level data, treating each family as a separate entity.
  - Ensure disaggregated data collection for each household member.
37. To foster trust within the Roma community, the selection of Special Enumerators was guided by the General Secretariat. Roma individuals living in houses participated in the Census on equal footing with the general population, without any specific identification.
38. By employing targeted strategies and specialized personnel, ELSTAT endeavored to leave no community behind in the Census process, ensuring equitable representation and accurate data collection for all.

## **V. The Significance of the Census: Illuminating Insights and Inclusive Data for Effective Policy (Next Steps)**

39. In the realm of official statistics, the significance of the Census cannot be ignored. At its core, the Census serves as a cornerstone for reliable data and statistics, laying the groundwork for the formulation and implementation of successful policy strategies. By delving into the depths of demographic data, the Census unveils a plethora of insights crucial for shaping the future trajectory of societies.
40. One of the primary virtues of the Census lies in its ability to provide data that can be disaggregated, transcending mere numerical figures to reveal nuanced patterns and trends. Beyond the surface, the Census acts as a beacon, illuminating the often unseen realities of marginalized and vulnerable groups within society. By spotlighting these communities, the Census equips policymakers and stakeholders with invaluable information essential for crafting targeted interventions and support mechanisms tailored to address their specific needs.
41. However, the Census is far more than just a meticulous spotlight. It serves as the bedrock upon which future statistical endeavors are built. By furnishing comprehensive sample frames for subsequent surveys, the Census ensures that official statistics encompass the entire spectrum of the population, capturing its diverse tapestry with all its intricacies and nuances. This holistic approach not only enhances the accuracy and reliability of statistical analyses but also fosters a deeper understanding of societal dynamics, paving the way for more informed decision-making.
42. As we navigate the complexities of an ever-evolving world, the Census remains an indispensable tool for navigating the intricacies of governance and policymaking. Its role transcends mere enumeration, evolving into a dynamic force driving positive change and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society for generations to come.
43. Finally, by establishing new standards for innovative and comprehensive census practices and data, specialized publications spanning the entire spectrum of the population (with



appropriate disaggregation) offer user-friendly insights derived from the detailed census results, celebrating Greece's commitment to leaving no one behind. A publication specific on children based on census data and in collaboration with UNICEF Greece, to provide various insights which could inform also National Action Plans on children.

## VI. References

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[3] European Statistics Code of Practice for the National Statistical Authorities and Eurostat. 2017;

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