



# Overview of the Importance of population and housing censuses and evolution of census approaches over time

## Part II

Sinovia Moonie  
Statistician/ Lecturer  
SIAP



# Evolution of census approaches in Asia-Pacific

- First contemporary census was undertaken in the **19<sup>th</sup> century** and varied widely across countries;
- Census taking **increased** significantly in the **20<sup>th</sup> century** following the establishment of the **UNSD** and commencement of the decennial **World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses**;
- By the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century and start of 21<sup>st</sup>, **all ESCAP Member and Associate member States** had undertaken at least one “modern” census.



## Are population censuses in Asia and the Pacific evolving?

The population census is among the most complex and massive exercises a nation undertakes, requiring comprehensive planning, immense resourcing, attentive implementation, and systematic collaboration on a national or even regional level, such as among the Pacific Island States. In return, the population census generates a wealth of data for legislative and evidence-based decision-making at all levels - global, regional, national and subnational.

With expanding and evolving statistical demands in the face of limitations and disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic, National Statistical Offices are exploring new approaches to producing data and statistics, which among others, include “modernizing census taking”.

This Stats Brief gives an overview of how census taking has been evolving over recent decades, focusing on Asia and the Pacific region as the home to two-thirds of the world’s population.

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### Introduction

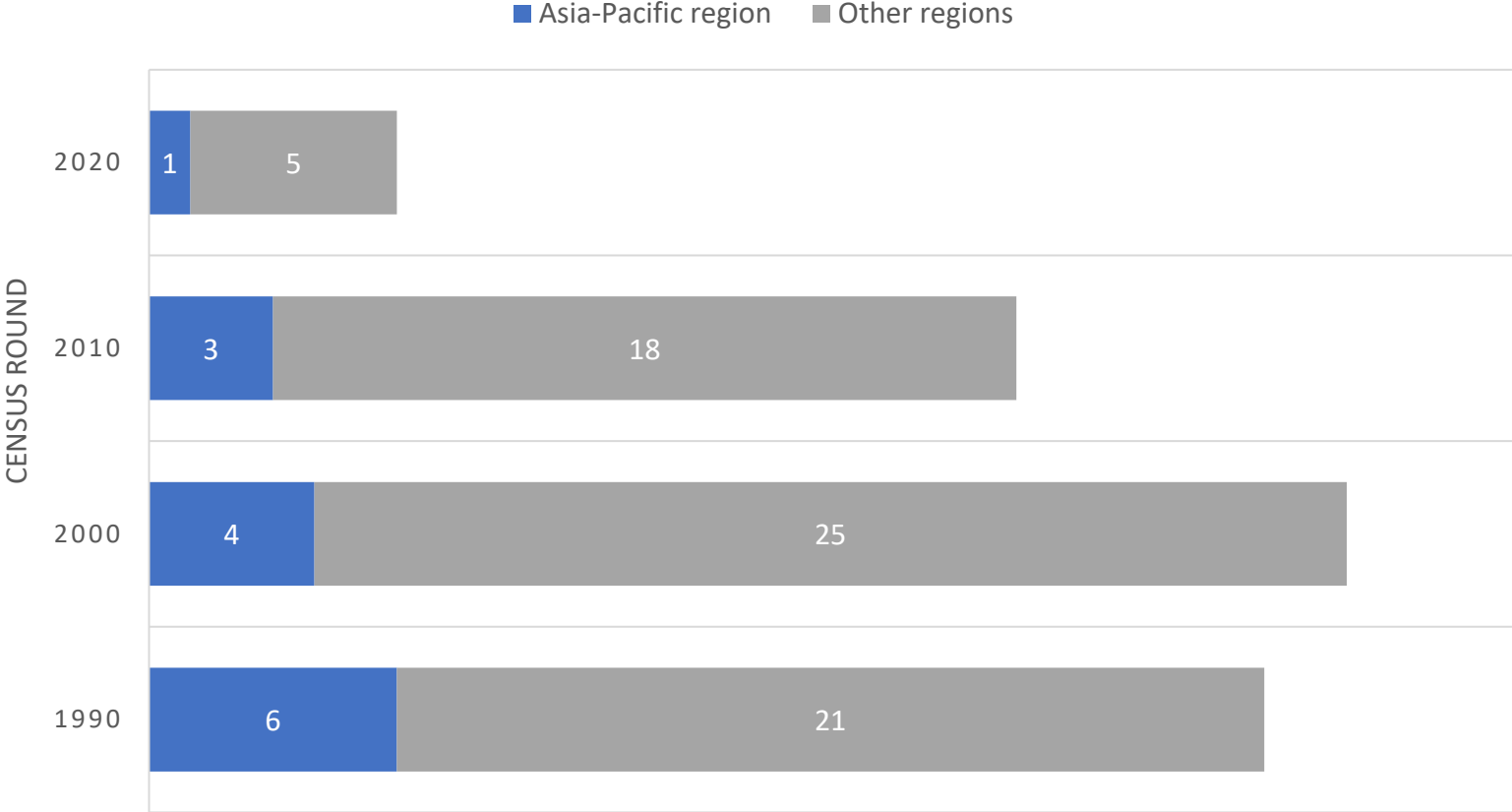
The modern population census began to evolve in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to that time, inventories of persons, taxpayers, or valuables were made, but with two key differences. Those early inventories were for the purpose of control, for example, to identify who should be taxed, inducted into military service or forced to work, and they did not seek to count all the people or even a representative sample of them but only those in particular categories such as family heads or males of military age. Such surveys are known to have taken place in ancient Babylonia, Palestine, Persia, China, and Egypt,<sup>1</sup> with the Australian muster in 1788 being a more recent example.<sup>2</sup>

The contemporary concept of a population census as the complete enumeration of all people originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to comprehend the basic structure and trends of the society rather than to identify and control specific individuals. India’s first census as a complete enumeration, listed as 1881,<sup>3</sup> is one of the earliest in Asia-Pacific, falling under the category of modern censuses. More developed Asia-Pacific nations like Australia list their first national census as 1911, around 30 years later than India, and some developing nations like Afghanistan list their first (and only) national census as 1979,<sup>4</sup> about 100 years after India.

[https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Stats\\_Brief\\_Issue30\\_Census\\_Evolving\\_Aug2021.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Stats_Brief_Issue30_Census_Evolving_Aug2021.pdf)

# Fewer countries are missing census rounds

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES THAT MISSED CENSUS ROUND



<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/census/index.cshhtml#censusdates>

# 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses

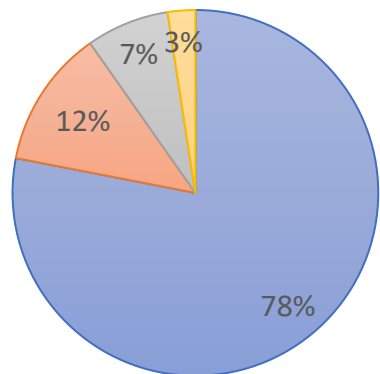
## UNSD Survey on 2020 Round of PHCs:

### Census Methods

### Enumeration

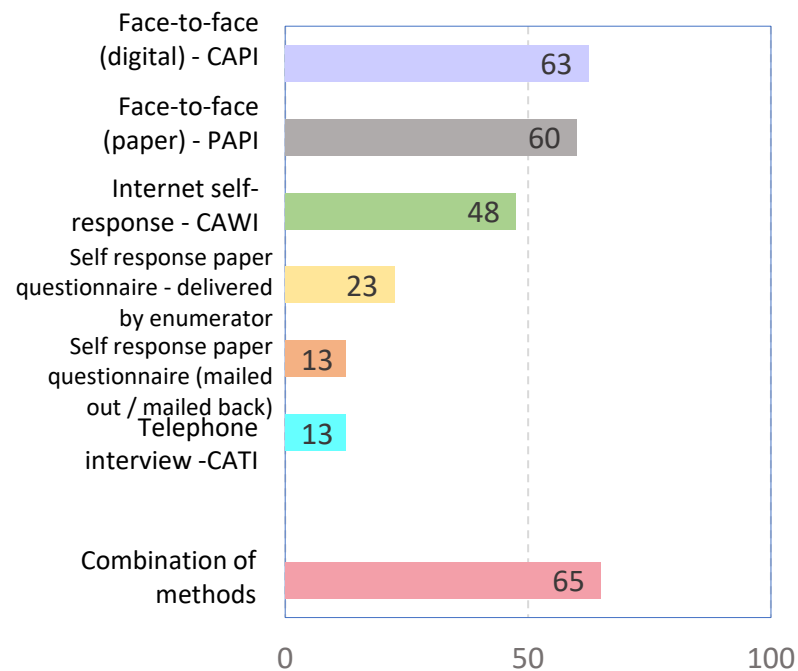
### Dissemination

Main census method in Asia-Pacific countries

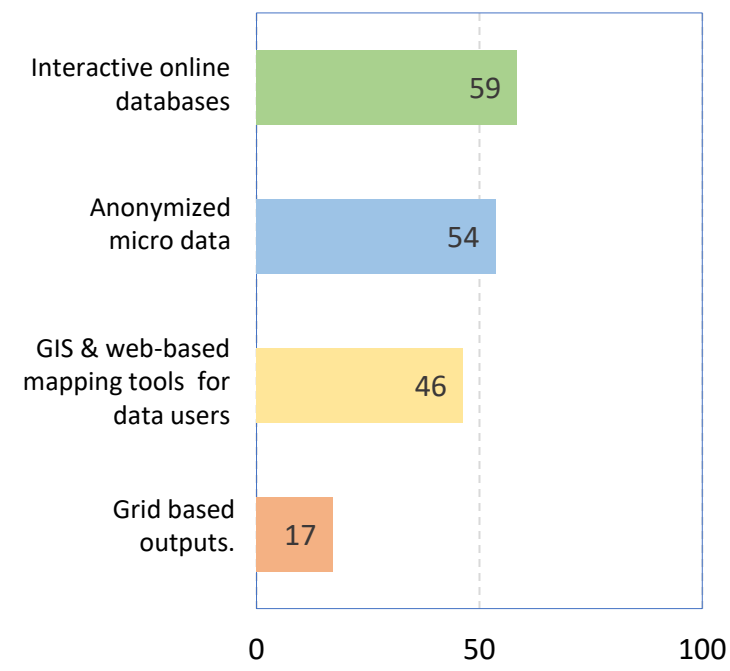


- Traditional census
- Combined - Registers and full field enumeration
- Combined - Registers and sample survey
- Fully register-based census

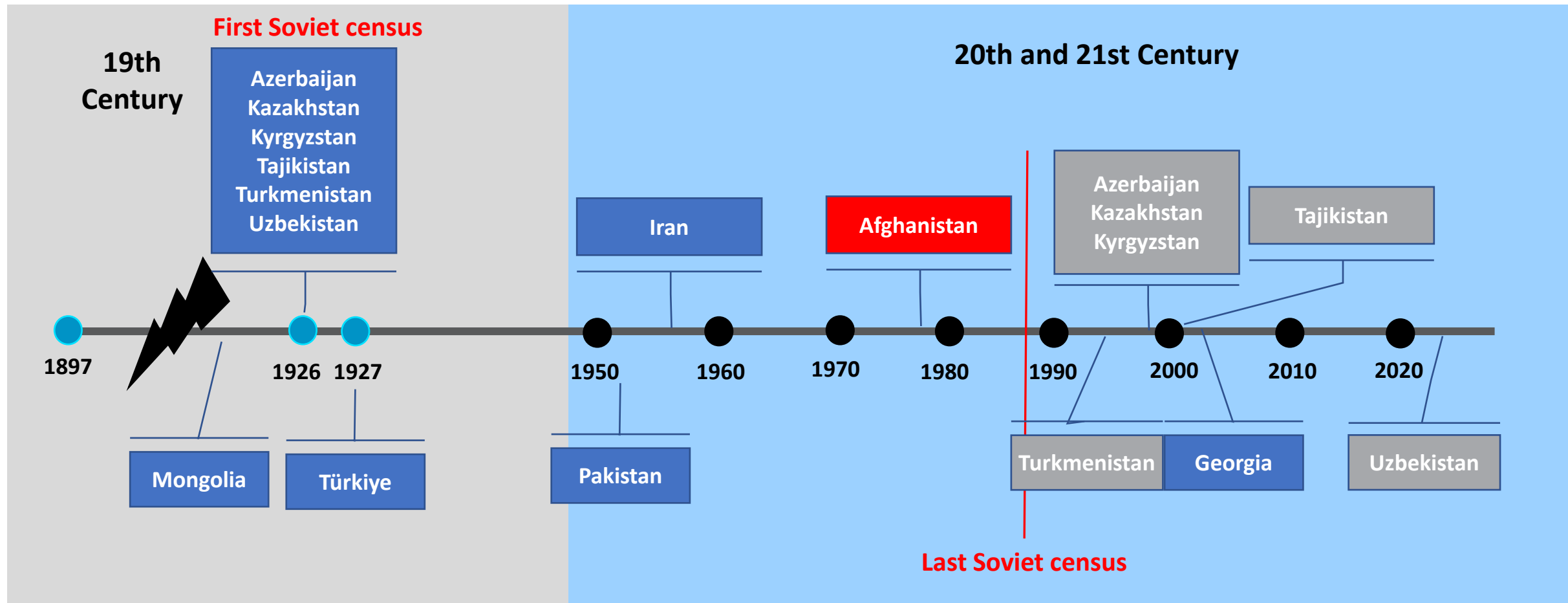
Methods of enumeration in Asia-Pacific countries, for field-based data collection, percentage



Plan to provide contemporary data dissemination products in Asia-Pacific countries, percentage



# History of first censuses in selected Member States



# Census Methodologies (2010 and 2020)

Country	2010 Census Round (year)	2020 Census Round (year)
Azerbaijan	Traditional census (2009)	Traditional census (2019)
Georgia	Traditional census (2014)	Traditional census (2024)
Iran (Islamic Republic Of)	Traditional census (2006, 2011)	Combined census (2016)
Kazakhstan	Traditional census (2009)	Traditional census (2021)
Kyrgyzstan	Traditional census (2009)	Traditional census (2022)
Moldova	Traditional census (2014)	Traditional census (2023)
Mongolia	Traditional census (2010)	Combined census (2020)
Pakistan	Traditional census**	Traditional census (2017)
Tajikistan	Traditional census (2010)	Traditional census (2020)
Türkiye	Combined census (2011)	Combined (register dominant) (2021)
Turkmenistan	Traditional census (2012)	Traditional census (2022)
Uzbekistan	Traditional census**	Traditional census (2023)

# Incorporation of technology in field-based enumeration



Paper and pencil Interviews (PAPI)



Face-to-face interviews using CAPI (digital questionnaire)



Web-based questionnaires



Telephone interviews

# Conclusions

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- Countries have a long history of census taking that dates to 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Census methods in Asia-Pacific region (including ECO subregion) have evolved
- Iran and Türkiye gradually transitioned to register-based censuses
- Data collection methods for field enumeration are more advanced; most countries using a combination of methods i.e. CAPI, CATI, CAWI





**THANK YOU!!**

