

# Core aspects of a census

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# Core aspects of a census



What are the essential features of a census?

Who and what does a census enumerate?

What concepts and definitions are fundamental to a census?

→ *What does all of this mean for a register-based census?*

# Reminder

## what is a census?



**noun**

*/ˈsen.səs/*

“a count for official purposes, especially one to count the number of people living in a country and to collect information about them.”

*Cambridge English dictionary*

“an enumeration of people, houses, firms, or other important items in a country or region at a particular time.”

*Encyclopedia Britannica*

# Definitions



## CES Recommendations:

- ‘the operation that produces at regular intervals the official counting (or benchmark) of the population in the territory of a country and in its smallest geographical sub-territories together with information on a selected number of demographic and social characteristics of the total population.’ (same for housing stock)

## UN Principles & Recommendations:

- “the total process of planning, collecting, compiling, evaluating, disseminating and analysing demographic, economic and social data at the smallest geographic level pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well-delimited part of a country.”



# Basic principles

## of a census



- Individual enumeration
- Simultaneity
- Universality
- Small area data
- Defined periodicity



# What's the role of these principles?



- Everyone
  - Once and only once
  - In the right place
  - At the right time
- 
- To avoid/minimize overcount or undercount
  - To understand where people are really located most of the time
  - The info that's really needed for policymaking



# Who do we count?



- Counting people where they live:
  - Traditional census → ‘usual residence’:
    - Where people usually spend their daily rest at the census reference time and have lived, or intend to live, there for a continuous period of time of at least 12 months, excluding temporary absences
  - Register-based census → can be harder to identify usual residence, depending on the nature of the register
    - Can be hard to apply single reference period (compromising simultaneity)

# Population concepts & definitions



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- *Population to be enumerated*
  - The set of persons whom the country decides **should** be covered by the census, regardless of whether or not they're included in the final population count
- *Population base*
  - the population used for the compilation of statistical aggregates





# Population concepts & definitions



## *Population to be enumerated*

- **Traditional census:** depending on country priorities, might be **usually resident + currently present** (but not usually resident); in some cases might include people **not present**
- **Register-based census:** the purposes and nature of the register(s) and related laws dictate who is included



# Population concepts & definitions



## *Population base*

- **Traditional census:**  
usual residence based on UN definition; or legal residence based on right to live there
- **Register-based census:**  
registered residence—people listed as living in the country on census date, whether or not they're actually there.



# Units of enumeration



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- Person
- Household
- Housing unit
- Dwelling
- Building
- ...



# Units of enumeration

in a traditional census



- Main unit of enumeration is *person*
- For household and family characteristics, it's the *household*
- For housing characteristics, principal unit of enumeration is the *housing unit* (& sometimes *building*)

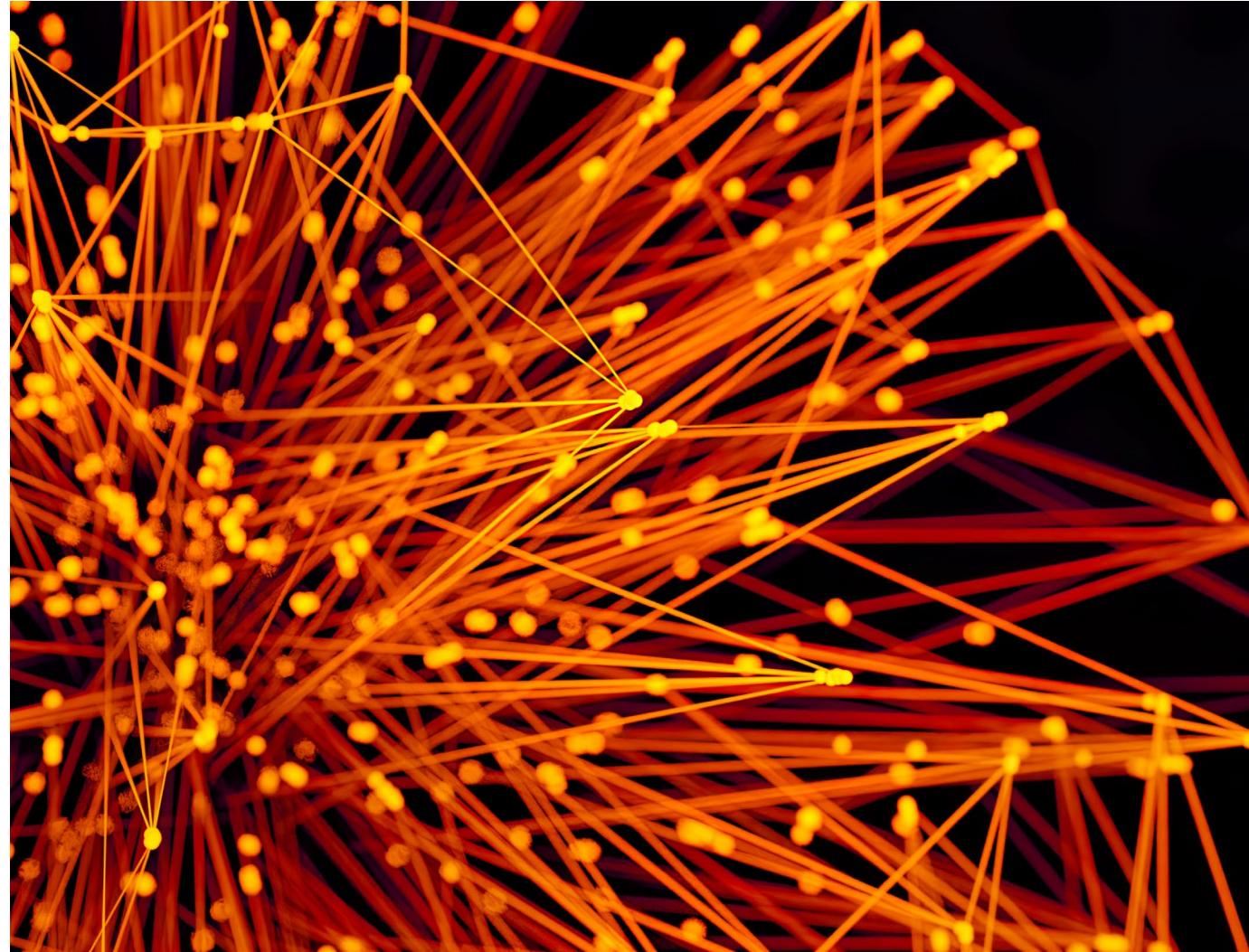


# Units of enumeration

in a register-based census



- The intended units of enumeration remain the same
- But the unit of measurement in a given register depends on what that register was designed for: persons, properties, enterprises, institutions, organizations...



# Why do all these definitions & principles matter?



We're already familiar with these definitions, so why emphasize them so much here?

- When we have a shift in techniques – such as a move to register-based censuses – we need to consider whether the definitions still hold
- Are these key principles fulfilled?
- If not, does it matter? (Should we change definition, or technique, or nothing?)

**Thank you!**

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