

4. General approach of the 2001 Censuses

All Demographic Censuses, both in different countries and in successive census rounds, are obviously similar in essence. However, this is perfectly compatible with the fact that notable differences appear between the various Censuses, both in terms of time and space. Most differences are caused by the scale of priorities used in each census operation.

Consequently, before going in to further detail, it is necessary to clearly explain the general focus that will be used in the 2001 Censuses, **their identity marks**, compared to previous Censuses or those performed in others countries. This will ensure that the decisions presented in this document are more understandable.

By order of importance, the most relevant is the need for **keeping census workloads at acceptable limits**¹, both for the agents and, most specifically, for the citizens. The advantages of this criterion are plentiful and very necessary; for example:

- Better social acceptance of the Censuses.
- Cost reduction
- Reduction of the periods required to make results available (main requirement that users complained about in previous censuses, which alongside the control of the cost in monetary terms, will substantially increase the performance of the Census operation).

In coordination with this criterion, it is also important to make the **effort as productive as possible**. Specifically, maintaining **the comprehensive nature of all the questions** (the main success of the 1991 Censuses), it is necessary to identify the variables that in 2001 would no longer provide sufficiently useful information and replace them with other new ones, that present a better cost/profit relation.

The availability of the register data beforehand is of great help in this sense, as it provides the four most important variables (sex, date of birth, place of birth and nationality) at a much lower cost (since they are printed beforehand on the register sheets, citizens simply have to confirm them to make them immediately valid for census purposes). Moreover, this advantage is also applicable to certain variables related to migrations, which will not have to be formulated specifically, as they can be obtained from the register.

This provides a new margin for the consideration of new questions that consider relevant and contemporary social concerns. In this sense, the 2001 Censuses includes questions about, for example, place of work and study (potentially useful to improve traffic and parking problems), research of the number of hours worked (vital to analyse part-time work, which is becoming more important in Spain and achieving more social relevance), or especially the innovative question regarding problems in the dwellings and its environment (which deals with issues that are of major concern to the households and could contribute to improve the greater social acceptance of these Censuses, as expected in view of the pilot tests, where it was the most accepted question of all those considered.

¹The Chart-Summary included in section 8.G, comparing the content proposed with that of the previous Censuses, shows that the number of questions that have been left out or simplified is substantially greater than the number of new questions included.