

REGISTER-BASED POPULATION CENSUS METHODOLOGY IN FINLAND

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In Finland the use of the administrative data and registers already has a history of over 40 years. The decisive step towards a register-based population system was taken at the end of the 1960s when the Central Population Register was established. By means of this system an identifying personal code was issued to each resident in Finland. The same personal identity number (PIN) was taken into use in other administrative registers, such as in taxation and in the employment pension insurance system.

The primary reasons for starting to exploit administrative and other register data are the lowering the costs, advancement in data systems and processing methods, reduction of response burdens and increased demand for information.

One of the main advantages of register-based statistical systems is that total data can be produced annually. Then the data collecting and processing systems are continuously maintained and updated, and the statistical data is quite timeliness compared e.g. census data, which is usually available every 10th year.

The use of registers for statistical purposes is by no means free from problems. One big challenge is dependence on data suppliers. An amendment in legislation or some other administrative change can cause changes to the content of the registers as well. Other problems to be mentioned are e.g. that the coverage of registers may be defective for some data, although the register itself would contain all the units to be described. Also, there may arise consistency problems when linking information from different registers.

In Finland, utilisation of administrative data as a source for statistics in order to rationalise statistics production is accepted. This becomes particularly clear from the Finnish Statistics Act, according to which statistical authorities must primarily exploit existing data sources and the authorities controlling these registers are obliged to supply this data to statistical authorities.

References

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