Press release

20 May 2021

First interesting facts from the 2021 Census – a brief summary

On Tuesday 11 May, the 2021 Census, the largest statistical project of the decade, finished. It was organised by the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO). Extraordinary effort of people and use of technologies, especially in the real operation phase that lasted for 46 days, from 27 March to 11 May, were devoted to it. Throughout the whole period of the Census, it was possible to fill in the census form (questionnaire) online; from 17 April, paper census forms (questionnaires) were also available. For you to better imagine what this year’s Census involved, we provide several statistical pieces of data that are interesting.

What was highlighted this year most of all was an opportunity to get counted (enumerated) online, which turned out to be a significant advantage during the coronavirus pandemic, which was not taken into account at all, naturally, during most of the time of the project preparation. According to the opinion poll of the Kantar agency carried out this January, 71% of people were considering the online form to get counted; however, it is estimated that in the end 87% of the population filled in electronic census forms (questionnaires) and sent them. The Population Census is thus the largest IT project, in which the biggest number of inhabitants of the Czech Republic participated so far. Not only the epidemic situation but also the easy and fast way to complete the electronic census form (questionnaire) contributed to that. On average, people spent 20 minutes and 34 seconds by filling in (completing) the electronic census form (questionnaire) for a household and thus they saved 9 minutes compared to the paper census form (questionnaire). They saved some more time because they did not have to wait for the census officer (census enumerator) or bring the paper census form (questionnaire) to the post box or to a Census contact point.

In total, 4 217 261 electronic census forms (questionnaires) and 683 000 paper census forms (questionnaires) were submitted as at 11 May. However, some paper census forms (questionnaires) are still coming by mail; therefore, their final total will be somewhat higher, as at today we have received 795 000 paper census forms (questionnaires). To log in into the electronic census form (questionnaire), 64% of users used a computer and 36% a mobile phone or a tablet. Electronic census forms (questionnaires) had been prepared in 7 language versions so that also foreigners and members of national minorities could get counted (enumerated) without problems.

Intensive preparations for this year’s Census project started already in 2014 with the aim to facilitate the situation to all who are getting counted (enumerated) as much as possible. Therefore, since the very beginning, there was an effort to maximally use data stored in various registers and databases and to ask people only for those pieces of information that cannot be obtained in another way in the necessary quality. For this year’s Census, data from nine public registers were successfully obtained and the number of questions was thus reduced approximately by half compared to 2011. A form (questionnaire) to find out information about buildings (houses) was entirely eliminated.

Contrary to the original plan, when the Online Census was to be only made available for the first 14 days, however, the opportunity to get counted (enumerated) online remained open throughout the entire period of the field phase of the Census due to the pandemic situation that was unfavourable. The system was thus continually working for 46 days and except for an outage soon after the start of real operation it reliably worked up until the end of the Census. The total score thus stands at 1096 hours without a failure to the 8-hour outage.

During the Census preparation, the Contact Centre where people could call or send their questions regarding the Census by e-mail, was prepared very carefully. The Contact Centre handled 266 245 phone calls, of which 53% were processed by an automatic machine without the necessity to be assisted by a human operator. Preparatory works on an intelligent/smart and dynamic reply system for the Census were highly intensive and lasted for over two months. For the voice automatic machine, a combination of texts read by a professional speaker and a voice synthesis were used so that it was impossible to recognise that it is not a human answering the phone. Staff of the Contact Centre also answered 22 686 questions sent by e-mail.

The staff of the Contact Centre comprised 182 operators, 4 heads of project, 8 heads of teams, 10 instructors, and 5 internal auditors of quality – and satisfaction with that staff reached 92%. It thus highly surpassed the expectations as the original threshold was set at 80%. Operators were answering various questions – e.g. regarding the obligation to get counted (enumerated), specific queries about individual questions in the census form (questionnaire) up to phone calls with lonely people or people who are not satisfied with their life that lasted for many minutes.

Further 264 845 questions were answered by a chatbot – it is a unique solution and the Czech Statistical Office was among the first ones globally to use it for the needs of the Census. People could communicate with the chatbot (in Czech only) on the website scitani.cz and also directly in the electronic census form (questionnaire) or in the mobile application.

Paper census forms (questionnaires) were distributed to households by 10 000 census officers (census enumerators) of the Czech Post and it was also possible to pick them up and submit them at some of the 800 contact points established at branches of the Czech Post all over the Czech Republic or at 13 contact points of the Czech Statistical Office.

The Czech Statistical Office also organised 5 webinars for persons with hearing impairment in order to provide sufficient assistance to those who, for example, could not call the information line; the CZSO also ensured services of an interpreter on determined days. The census form on the website was naturally tailored for persons with visual impairment, the purblind and the blind.

Web pages scitani.cz were displayed over 33.5 million times and they were visited by over 5 million users. Besides the direct entry to the electronic census form (questionnaire), “Help” was the most visited page.

The biggest statistical project in the Czech Republic, the aim of which is to obtain precise and up-to-date data that will serve to make more effective plans for the public life including transport, education, health care and social care or the integrated rescue system has now entered the phase of processing of obtained data. The first results will be available at the turn of this year and the next one.

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