



Reference Document: A Note on Census Response Classification

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For the purposes of reporting on the success of data collection, reporting on census data quality and for certain processing operations, every household for every dwelling on the dwelling frame must have an outcome classification. That classification may differ slightly depending on which of these is being considered.

During data collection the enumerator will need to classify each unit to a final response classification codeset such as the following. This list should be adapted to the specific needs and circumstances of the NSO.

1. Not a dwelling (e.g., demolished, business)
2. Not occupied on census day
3. Secondary residence (i.e., occupied with zero usual residents)
4. Complete response
5. Partial response
6. Partial response from a neighbour
7. Refusal
8. Other nonresponse (e.g., evidence that dwelling was occupied on census day, but household absent throughout the data collection period)
9. Special nonresponse (e.g., natural disaster or other emergency prevented data collection)
10. Unresolved

It is highly desirable that the quantity of dwellings classified as “unresolved” be zero. In particular every unit listed needs to have a determination as indeed being a dwelling or not and whether it is occupied or not. Unresolved is the initial default classification for each dwelling and any dwelling that remains thus classified indicates a case where the enumerator has not yet visited the dwelling.

Partial Response from a Neighbour

In the latter stages of census data collection a strategy may be adopted where if no response can be obtained from a household respondent then a knowledgeable neighbour could be asked to provide certain minimal demographic data. PRASC recommends that such collection from a neighbour never be attempted when the household in question has refused.

When data are collected from a neighbour only sex and age (approximate if necessary) should be collected for each household member. It should be confirmed that the neighbour feels knowledgeable enough to provide such information; this is a special limited case of proxy reporting. PRASC recommends against attempting to also collect names. Household size may be explicitly asked or derived from the number of persons listed.

Reporting the Response Rate

There are other useful data quality indicators regarding the success of data collection operations but a primary one responds to the question “For what proportion of dwellings occupied by usual residents was a response obtained”?

For this, occupied dwellings would consist of groups 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 above.

A definition of “response” is required. PRASC recommends that any response providing at least sex and age for every household member be considered a response. Responses where demographic data (i.e. sex and age) may be incomplete but the remainder of the questionnaire is substantially complete (definition needed) should also be treated as a response. This would include all of group 4 and part of groups 5, and 6.

A rate of “complete response” would also be of interest. In this case the numerator would consist only of group 4.

Adjusting for Nonresponse

In this note we consider only complete or near-complete nonresponse and do not consider what, if anything, to do about item non-response.

In addition to remarks here, readers should also refer to the PRASC documents “Adjusting for Dwelling Nonresponse” and “Implementing Whole Household Imputation”

If adjusting via weighting, a clear definition and distinction between response and non-response is needed. PRASC recommends that for consistency and ease of explanation the same definition as used for reporting on response rates be used for this purpose as well. Then standard stratified weighting procedures can be implemented as explained in the above noted documents.

If adjusting via whole household imputation then a procedure as described in “Adjusting for Dwelling Nonresponse” can be followed. Cases for which imputation should be done include:

- Refusals (6) and Other nonresponse (7)
- Partial response from a neighbour (5)
- Cases from groups (3) and (4) where the response provides some or all demographic data (i.e. sex and age) and nothing else

Geographic identifiers and whatever demographic data are available are used to find as best quality a donor record as possible from eligible donor records. All non-demographic data and any missing demographic variables are imputed for the entire household using data from a single best matching donor record.

Coverage Studies

In the processing for the post-enumeration survey, it will be necessary to match persons listed in the PES to persons enumerated in the census.

To do this it will be essential to distinguish between persons counted in the census who are identifiably enumerated from those not identifiably enumerated. The former will include only those enumerated persons where all of a full name (first and last) and non-imputed values for sex and age are present.

Thus persons in the PES will only be classified as enumerated if they can be reliably matched to an identifiably enumerated person. Consequently persons in the census who are not identifiably enumerated (e.g. responses provided by a neighbour) will be classified in the PES as not found in the census. Then to arrive at the estimate of missed persons it will be necessary to take the PES estimate of not found persons and subtract the census count of persons not identifiably enumerated.