

The 2021 population and housing censuses in the EU



What is a population and housing census?

Population and housing censuses provide a precise and geographically detailed count of the population in a country.

They offer information about a wide range of population characteristics with very detailed cross-classifications. This makes them a rich source for in-depth and flexible analysis. Censuses provide essential statistical input for formulating and evaluating policies, for administration and for research. By laying the foundation for population estimates, sampling and geographical data collections, population and housing censuses are the backbone of social and regional statistics.

Censuses have a long tradition in the Member States of the European Union (EU). Historically, the development of census methods in each country has been shaped by numerous factors, such as: information needs; the availability of data sources and technology; data protection requirements; the burden on the respondents; and, last but not least, the financial cost of the census operation.

Why are censuses conducted?

The United Nations encourages countries to hold a population and housing census at least once in each ten-year period.

Population censuses are important for:

- making population projections;
- estimating resource needs;
- calculating the Human Development Index;
- calculating other important indicators, such as per capita indicators;
- formulating, implementing and monitoring policies aimed at inclusive socioeconomic development and environmental sustainability.

The population and housing census is an exhaustive data collection (it covers all usual residents and dwellings in EU Member States), characterized by a uniform program and a fixed moment of census.

Each Member State is free to choose the census sources and methods as long as the resulting statistics meet the quality requirements at EU level.

In Europe, population and housing censuses are coordinated by Eurostat, which determines the output, its form of presentation and the year for holding a census to ensure data comparability between countries.

Why is harmonisation at EU level important?

At the EU level, national censuses are of greater value if their results can be compared between Member States.

This is why the EU has been taking continuous steps to harmonise census outputs. After the first European census programmes in 1980, 1990 and 2001, the 2011 round marked an important milestone as it was, for the first time, based on a comprehensive legal framework at the EU level. European census requirements ensure international comparability as well. On the user side, the Census Hub was successfully launched as a central access point to the 2011 European census outputs. These innovations served the key objectives of the EU census programme, namely to disseminate more detailed data in a user-friendly way, and to make the data more comparable.

What data is collected?

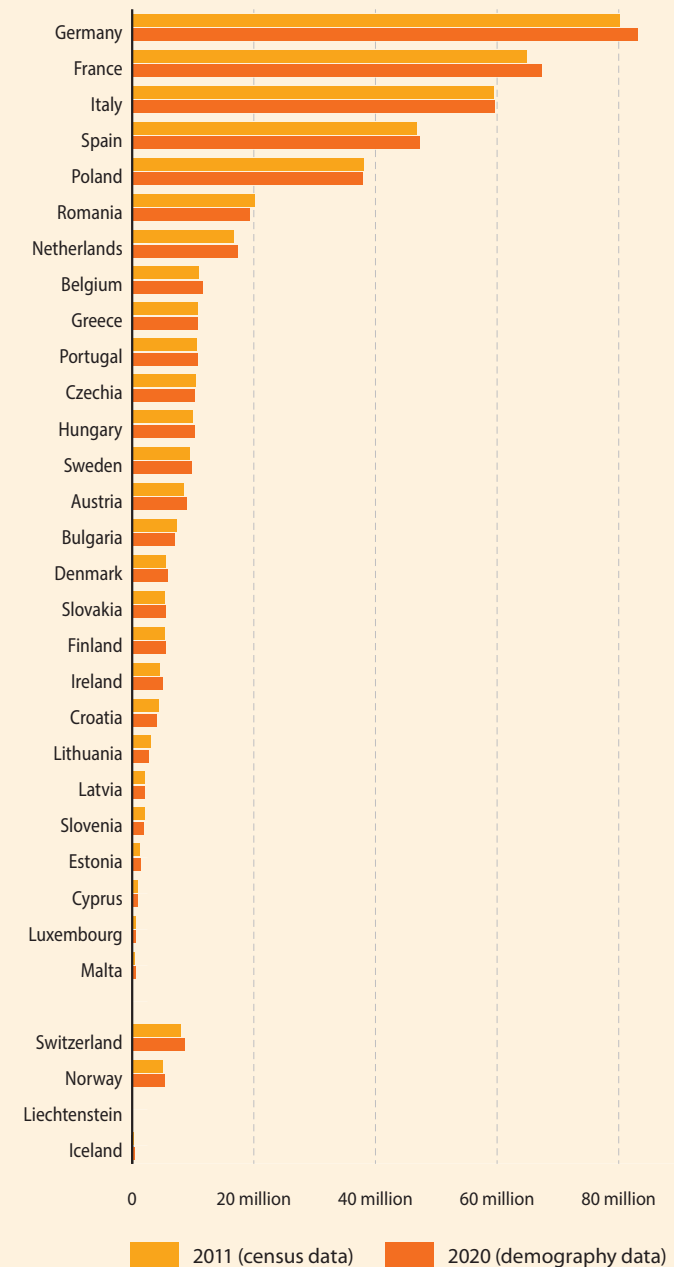
Census data cover persons, families and households, as well as their dwelling and housing arrangements:

- 1 Data on persons include the demographic structure (the population broken down by sex and age groups); educational and employment characteristics, and migration characteristics of the population;
- 2 Data on families and households are categorised by types and sizes;
- 3 Data on dwelling types and housing arrangements.



Population of EU Member States, 2011 and 2020

Total population of the EU in 2020: 447.3 million
Total population of the Euro area in 2020: 342.4 million



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: [cens_11ag_r3](#) and [demo_pjan](#))

What is new for the 2021 census round?

The 2021 EU census round comes at a time of fundamental transition:

Administrative data sources have become the backbone of the 2021 census in most EU countries. This leads to more powerful census systems and addresses rapid changes in user expectations, with regional detail becoming increasingly important.

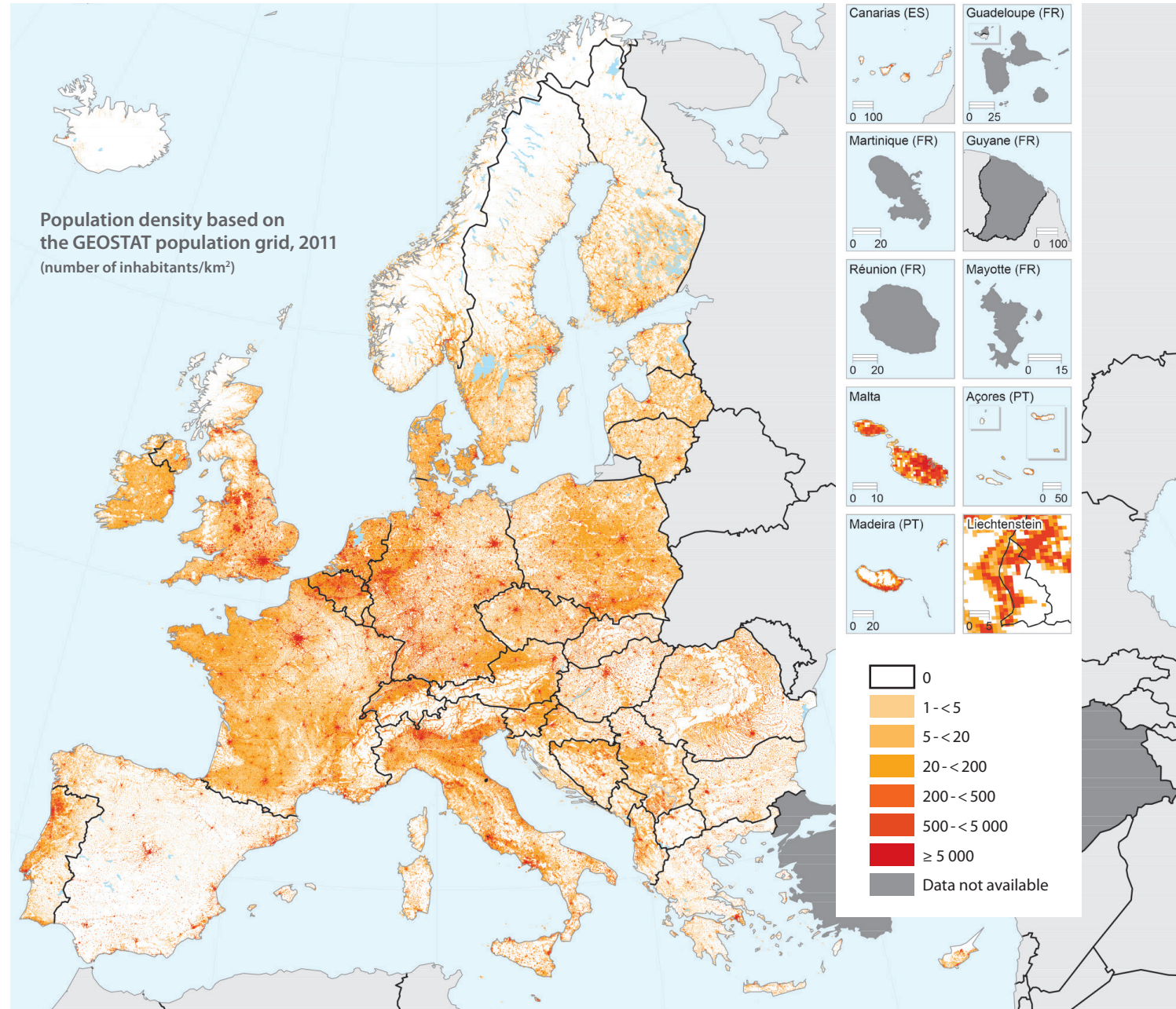
A major innovation will be the presentation of key census topics on an EU-wide 1 km square grid. This will allow for much more flexible analysis, even at cross-border level, tailored to research or policy needs.

What are 'grid data' ?

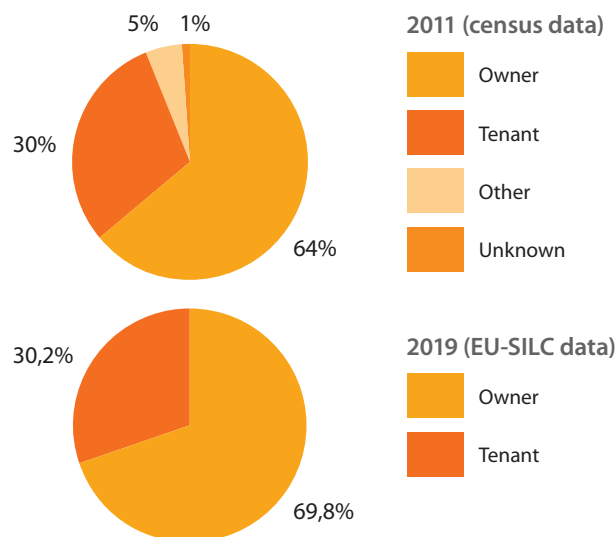
Statistical grid data are statistics geographically referenced to a system of square grid cells in a grid net with Cartesian coordinates.

Traditionally, official statistics are reported in accordance with a hierarchical system of administrative units ranging from the local to the EU level and usually under the control of an official authority. In the EU the Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) is the most important example of such an output system. While this is excellent for accounting purposes, and for reporting to the respective authority administering services within the territory, it is not suitable for studying causes and effects of many socioeconomic and environmental phenomena, such as flooding, commuting, mobility, leisure etc. When studying such phenomena, a system of grids with equal-size grid cells has many advantages:

- grid cells all have the same size allowing for easy comparison;
- grids are stable over time;
- grids integrate easily with other scientific data (e.g. meteorological information);
- grid systems can be constructed hierarchically in terms of cell size thus matching the study area; and
- grid cells can be assembled to form areas reflecting a specific purpose and study area (mountain regions, water catchments).



Private households in the EU by tenure status, 2011 and 2019



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: [cens_11https_r2](#) and [ilc_lvho02](#))

Where and when is the census data going to be available?

Census data are published for each census round using three dissemination channels maintained by Eurostat.

The Census Hub (<https://ec.europa.eu/CensusHub2>) is the main tool where data of the 2021 population and housing census in the EU can be found; information will be uploaded as soon as they become available in each EU Member State.

Shortly after the final data provision deadline of 31 March 2024, all the data will also be available in the Eurostat database (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>).

In March 2023, georeferenced data to a 1 km square grid will be available in the Eurostat website section on the Geographical information system of the Commission, GISCO.

Data collected in the 2021 EU population and housing census round will be provided to Eurostat in two steps:

- By 31 December 2022: Data on total population on the 1 km square grid;
- By 31 March 2024: All other census data.

What is the Census Hub?

The 2021 census data, similarly to the 2011 round, are disseminated in a way designed to maximise the value of these hugely detailed data files by offering users great flexibility to tailor data extractions to their needs.

Users are not restricted to a small number of pre-defined tables. Instead, they can specify their own cross-tabulations that will be produced from the highly detailed datasets held by the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs).

The Census Hub is an easy-to-use online tool that can quickly produce customised tabulations. The tool allows users to specify the tables that they need, extracts the necessary data from the databases held by the NSIs. Data from the national databases are then compiled by the Census Hub, with output either displayed on screen or in spreadsheet-readable files. This whole process takes just seconds.

Are my data safe?

Statistical confidentiality is a fundamental principle of official statistics enshrined in the Treaties, in EU and national laws and in the European statistics Code of Practice. Harmonisation of principles and guidelines on the protection of confidential data is the obligation of Eurostat and of national statistical authorities in the European Statistical System.

Statistical disclosure control techniques contain different measures applied to the data to eliminate or reduce the risk of disclosing information on individual statistical units (for instance individual persons). Therefore, no information on identifiable individual persons can be derived from the tables.



EU legislation regulating the 2021 Population and housing census

EU population and housing censuses regulation

[European Parliament and Council Regulation \(EC\) No 763/2008](#) on population and housing censuses

2021 EU census implementing regulations

[Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1799](#) of 21 November 2018 on the establishment of a temporary direct statistical action for the dissemination of selected topics of the 2021 population and housing census geocoded to a 1 km² grid

[Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2017/881](#) of 23 May 2017 implementing Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on population and housing censuses, as regards the modalities and structure of the quality reports and the technical format for data transmission, and amending Regulation (EU) No 1151/2010

[Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2017/712](#) of 20 April 2017 establishing the reference year and the programme of the statistical data and metadata for population and housing censuses provided for by Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council

[Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2017/543](#) of 22 March 2017 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on population and housing censuses as regards the technical specifications of the topics and of their breakdowns

Find more information on:

- the 2021 population and housing census, as well as a plethora of current and historical demographic data at the Eurostat website at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography>
- European Commission activities on the impact of demographic change in Europe and relevant policy initiatives at https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/impact-demographic-change-europe_en

In case of questions, please contact Eurostat's [user support](#).

Geographical information

The European Union (EU27) includes Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

The euro area (EA19) includes Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland.

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