

# The third discussion on the SJAOS discussion platform: The definition, methodology and relevance of census taking

The third discussion on the SJAOS discussion platform ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)) focusses on Population and Housing Censuses and is kicked off via a set of 6 questions, about the definition of a census, its methodology and the relevance of census taking.

On the definition of a census: *should the census be defined by its unique methodology or are the outputs the main element of its definition? An item related to the definition is the question if the criteria of individual enumeration, universality, simultaneity, defined periodicity, and capacity to produce small-area statistics, are still relevant as essential features of a census?*

On the necessity of a census methodology: *some authors question the theoretical soundness of the register based census. Readers are invited to contribute to the discussion to give their opinion if such a theoretical base is really needed for a census, and why so?*

*Readers might agree with the statement that the risk with the register-based census approach is that it reverses the paradigm of statistics: it is only measuring what is available, instead of properly defining first a concept and then develop a methodology to measure it.*

On relevance of census taking and census results: *Censuses are generally seen as very costly projects. The readers are invited to give on the discussion platform their opinion on to what extent the limited use of census results, in particular for evidence-based policy making, is worth the huge cost?*

*And finally, discussion contributions are expected on the statement that, in the current fast moving world, to produce census results only every ten years is not relevant any more.*

For a more detailed introduction to the discussion platform and the supporting statements that are open for discussion I invite you to the end of this introduction.

**The second discussion on the discussion platform, kicked off in December 2019, is still open and waiting for contributions on: [www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)**

The second discussion centres around statements taken from an article by Walter Radermacher ‘Governing-by-the-numbers/Statistical Governance; Reflections on the future of official statistics in a digital and globalized society’, published in the December 2019 issue (Vol 36, number 4).

The main statement you are invited to react on is: *Data are given – Facts are produced: In the long run trust in official statistics can only be maintained based on a continual striving for the best quality, with leadership based on profound knowledge of the business and with customer orientation as the supreme orientation. This implies that statistical products must meet the expectations of users in their design, production and communication.*

You are invited to contribute on: [www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)

**The first discussion, was kicked off in September 2019 and is also still open for contributions**

The first discussion opened in September 2019: ‘Can un-official statistics help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Global Indicator Framework and how can Official Statistics play a role in this process?’ Based on statements taken from an article by MacFeeley and Nastav ‘You say you want a (data) revolution’ ‘A proposal to use unofficial statistics for the SDG Global Indicator Framework’, that was published in Vol 35, number 3.

You are invited to discuss on the main or detailed statement(s). The main statement is ‘*Official Statistics should consider switching from a purely production or manufacturing based model to a mixed business model: one combining the manufacture of official statistics with the franchising of production under license.*’

### **Some background on the SJIAOS discussion platform**

On the 22th of August 2019 the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics (SJIAOS) launched the new on-line platform for discussion on topics of significant relevance for official statistics ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)) as part of the SJIAOS website. The discussion platform invites you to contribute to important discussions at a time of your own choosing.

The ISI World Statistics Conference, the IAOS conference and Journals like the *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, are the traditional platforms where views on new developments and important issues in Official Statistics are exchanged. However, conferences occur only a few times per year, journal issues are released maybe four times per year and typically only reach specific

interest groups. This new on-line discussion platform of the SJIAOS is an opportunity for anyone working or interested in official statistics, to contribute to topical discussions, at your own convenience.

Every three months there is a new discussion item. With each issue of the SJIAOS, a new discussion topic will be launched via a leading article. Statements from this article will then invite you to post your opinion and arguments. Each discussion will run for a year and be closed with a concluding commentary by the article author(s). When fully up and running (after four journal issues), there will be four different discussions topics open for your contribution at any one time.

The discussion platform can be found on a prominent place on the new SJIAOS website ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)). Contributions have to be in English, have to be clear and concise, specifically addressing one of the statements and should not exceed 25 lines. When considered useful, references to a longer text (article, paper) can be added as an attachment. Contributors are required to register on the discussion platform. Anonymous contributions are not appreciated.

The SJIAOS discussion platform editor (James Whitworth) moderates the discussions and the quality of the contributions (but of course not on the positions taken), takes decisions on the integrity of the arguments and is available for support when needed.