



Technical Guidance Note



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Guidance Note on Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Recommendations for Census

This note is jointly issued by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an unprecedented global climate of uncertainty, with each nation having to respond to the pandemic and revise planned programmes and activities. With the 2020 census round well underway, the pandemic has caused many Governments to postpone the conduct of their census. It is critical to emphasize that as countries proceed with the population and housing census during the COVID-19 pandemic, **a priority goal is to reduce the risk of transmission for all census personnel, and for the general public.**

UNSD and UNFPA jointly recommend the postponement of census as most prudent, where plans are already in an advanced stage. However, for countries proceeding with the population and housing census during the COVID-19 pandemic, a key priority is how to reduce the risk of transmission for all census personnel, and for the general public. A key component of reducing the risk of transmission is the procurement and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during census activities. This briefing note provides guidance for countries on how to define the requisite PPE requirements for census.

Context of Risk and Accountability

The World Health Organization (WHO) findings suggest consistent wearing of masks, using alcohol-based hand sanitizer or washing hands with soap and water, and social distancing in public reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Consultation with select UNFPA country offices shows that the list of PPE procured for census varies considerably between countries, and may include any of the following:

- Face Masks
 - Respirator masks (FFP2/N95), medical masks, reusable cloth masks
- Latex sterile gloves
- Hand sanitizers
- Disinfectant wipes and spray
- Thermometers

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- Face shields

Governments must choose the types of PPE procured for the protection of their population. National responsibility for these choices is necessary due to the following:

- The risks of COVID-19 transmission are unique to each national context, and they are changing over time and location;
- The capacity for adequate testing capacity and data to track transmission risks with certainty varies widely between countries;
- The science underlying COVID-19 transmission, and the optimal protective actions, are constantly updated and adjusted, with new research and information emerging at a rapid pace;
- Governments have deployed varied responses to COVID-19, and provisions to limit transmission risks during census will be shaped by the prevailing government strategies for containing the pandemic.

Recommendations

National Statistical Offices are strongly encouraged to consider the following:

- Consult with national health authorities in order to generate national guidance on recommended PPE requirements for census;
- Refer to the latest [WHO guidelines on PPE](#) in national decision-making (e.g.):
 - [Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) and considerations during severe shortages](#);
 - [Advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID-19](#)
- If available, consider using the national task force on COVID-19 as a venue for convening conversations about how to protect personnel and the public during census;
- Implement national guidelines related to census operations and/or define complementary guidelines on other aspects of census operations, that will impact the risk of COVID-19 transmission;
- Review census operational and logistical planning to address the following:
 - The uncertainty of procurement timelines due to increased global demand;
 - Impact of national mobility and transport restrictions, and social distancing measures on census operations;
 - Training enumerators/census staff while maintaining social distancing;
 - Training all field staff on COVID-19 safety protocols, including the use of PPE and its impact on the usability of devices;
 - Transporting enumerators in the field while maintaining social distancing;
 - Assuring disinfection procedures for any/all common equipment;

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- Defining guidelines for enumeration while social distancing - e.g. will all interviews occur outdoors, and how will these be managed in cold or inclement weather?;
- Awareness-raising in partnership with key stakeholders, e.g. ministry of health, local authorities, religious leaders, local leaders, etc.;
- Adapt census advocacy and sensitization materials to take into account the COVID-19 context.

Summary Guidance to National Statistical Offices

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) cannot define/endorse generic PPE specifications for census as local conditions may vary considerably, and the situation in each country is continuously changing. Furthermore, national policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic vary widely.

The choice of PPE products for census ***should be defined by census authorities in government, in consultation with national health authorities***, and in light of WHO guidelines.

Key considerations that should inform decision making:

1. If a successful undertaking of the national population and housing census requires the deployment of field staff, the National Statistical Authority should conduct a detailed risk assessment, including the need for personal protective equipment and procedures to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to both the census-takers and the responding population;
2. In that context, census authorities should confer with national health authorities on the need to align PPE requirements for census with other COVID-19 national operational plans for reducing the risk of transmission (i.e. training, transport, mandatory outside interviews, etc.);
3. Monitor the updates on the use of protective gear issued by WHO and ensure that the census authorities are fully briefed on these;
4. Census authorities to institute a Standing Committee with the Ministry of Health and other relevant bodies at the national level (such as, for example, national COVID-19 Crisis Management Task Force) to ensure the most effective protective measures and protocols that are in line with national circumstances.