

SOURCES AND METHODS OF INVESTIGATIONS
ON THE POPULATION IN SWEDEN

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Sources

In Sweden there is an unbroken succession of annual official statistics on the population from the year 1749 in the famous Tabellverket. But modern research has proved it possible to produce a sort of population statistics also for the period before Tabellverket, so that even parts of the 17th century can be covered, something that was formerly thought to be impossible.

The sources of these statistical investigations are mainly the following:

1. Taxation lists, viz., on the one hand annual lists such as the grain-tithe lists, registers of land (jordeböcker) and poll tax registers (mantalslängder), and on the other hand temporary lists such as the Alvsborgs lösen of 1571. Such registers are generally available from the middle of the 16th century, and in temporary and local forms as early as the Middle Ages.

These fiscal sources are mostly to be found in Kammararkivet in Stockholm.

2. Ecclesiastical parish registers such as so-called ministerial books, i. e. registers of baptism (births), burial (deaths) and marriages and, above all, catechetical lists (husförhörslängder).

The earliest of such registers date back to the first half of the 17th century, but not until 1686 they were ordered in law.

These ecclesiastical sources are kept in the different church archives.

The taxation lists are for the most part unsatisfactory sources for demographic investigations, as one must allow for the fact that very many people

tried to avoid taxes. Better results may be expected from an examination of the ecclesiastical parish registers, which constitute the basis for the official population statistics contained in the above-mentioned Tabellverket from its beginning in the middle of the 18th century.

The oldest of the catechetical lists generally include only persons who had been examined on their knowledge of Scripture.

We call these lists incomplete catechetical lists.

But sometimes, even in the 17th century, one finds catechetical lists covering all persons, both children and adults.

We call these lists complete catechetical lists.

Of course the complete catechetical lists are the most important from the viewpoint of population studies.

Especially in Dalarna (Dalecarlia) but also in other Swedish provinces we have found several such complete catechetical lists from the period before Tabellverket.

Yet we don't know, how many complete catechetical lists there are in the Swedish church archives from the time before 1750, but it must be a lot of them. It is however a very great and timespending work to investigate all these catechetical lists in order to get a more extensive population statistic for the old Sweden.

The catechetical lists have generally been used for some years. Sometimes there was only a couple of years before the parish-priest drew up a new catechetical list for his parish but in other cases the catechetical list could be used for a considerably long time.

The catechetical lists do not merely give the names of the parishioners. They also give data concerning their domicile, their family status and their employment, and their knowledge of Scripture. Most of the lists include notices of deaths, though not always with the date. The best lists also give the year of birth and, sometimes, the place of birth and notes concerning the marriages contracted. Removals are often entered in the lists, though it is only in exceptional cases that these notes are complete and provided with exact dates.

Beside these complete catechetical lists there exists also some complete population lists who are drawn up for a special occasion. In Östergötland we have

found such complete population lists from the year 1686. on that occasion the bishop had ordered the parish priests to draw up special lists of the total population before his visitation in their parishes.

Methods

Critical Examination of the Parish Registers

The registers of baptisms, marriages and burials have as a rule been found usable for statistical analysis.

The catechetical lists on the contrary have in most cases been put on one side as undecipherable. Our investigations give however a method to use them statistically.

Before the working up of the ministerial books and the catechetical lists it is of course necessary to undertake a detailed criticism of the documents.

The most important aspect of the critical scrutiny is the question as to how far the parish registers conform with reality. Our investigation with reference to this question are based on the fact that the different registrations of one and the same group of individuals are carried out on different occasions and sometimes by different persons. If these lists are collated with each other it should be possible to establish their agreement with reality fairly satisfactorily.

The completeness of the registers of baptisms has been ascertained by collation with the registers of burials for the nearest following years. It can be proved that in Dalarna on an average 96 % of the names of the deceased persons in the registers of burials are also to be found in the registers of baptisms.

In several cases it has also been possible to compare the registers of baptisms with the catechetical lists. The result in on the whole equally favourable.

Similar comparisons of individuals carried out on the registers of marriages and burials point in the same direction. One can thus refer to the Dalecarlian registers of baptisms, marriages and burials as, for the time before Tabellverket, a good statistical source material. Exceptions from the rule are few.

The establishment of the accuracy of the catechetical lists requires comparison with several sources. At first we have to collate them with the ministerial books, through controlling that all contemporary living persons noted in the registers of baptisms, marriages and deaths are also listed in the catechetical lists.

But also sources of secular origin must be used. We have to control that all persons noted in the different contemporary taxation lists, of which the annual poll tax (mantalslangd) is the most important, are also registered in the catechetical lists.

Our different investigations have shown that the complete catechetical lists are in general reliable instruments in a statistical study of the population.

Dating of the Catechetical Lists

We have found that the catechetical lists are most carefully kept during the first period of their existence. This together with certain other circumstances justifies one in asserting that only a calculation of the population based on the period during which a certain catechetical list was drawn up can give a tenable result.

Thus first of all the date for the drawing up of the catechetical list must be established. The dates found on the documents themselves have often been added afterwards and may be quite erroneous.

The simplest way of ascertaining the true date is by comparing with personal data in the registers of baptisms, marriages and burials.

If two persons noted in the register of marriages are listed as married in the nearest contemporary catechetical list, this list must have been drawn up after the date of their marriage. Thus we have got a terminus post quem for the drawing up of the catechetical list.

On the other hand, if at a later date married persons are listed as unmarried in the catechetical list, this list must have been drawn up before their wedding. Thus we have found a terminus ante quem for the catechetical list.

In general the registers of marriages give us only a rather course dating of the catechetical lists.

Perhaps we may reach longer with the aid of the register of baptisms. If a newborn child is originally listed in the catechetical list, this list must be drawn up after the baby's baptism. So we may get a better terminus post quem. It is however sometimes difficult to establish that the child really is listed in the catechetical list by the drawing-up point of the list. It may be that the priest has noted the child's name perhaps a year later.

The register of burials is the best source for establishing the drawing-up date of the catechetical list. It has much more names than has the register of marriages. And especially by finding out whether the deceased persons noted in the register of burials are included in the catechetical list or not one can establish with a fair degree of accuracy the time when the catechetical list was drawn up.

Calculations of the Population Based upon Complete Catechetical Lists

The calculation of the population registered in complete catechetical lists give us many problems to solve.

As a catechetical list has in general been used for several years, there are a lot of notes who are made after the first drawing up of the list.

Later born children and in-migrants have been listed, while deceased persons and out-migrants have been stricken. In connection with marriages people have been moved from their original families and villages and noted on new places in the catechetical list.

So much work has to be done in order to establish the original text of the first drawing-up. In the main two methods are applicable.

1. Through careful studies of the catechetical list itself.

In general it is possible with aid of the original handwriting to establish which people were noted by the first drawing-up of the list.

The attendance at the communions of different people also give us a good help to establish whether they were living in the parish or not at the drawing-up of the catechetical list.

2. Through comparison with other contemporary lists.

During the calculation of the population in the catechetical list we have to do incessant controls in the registers of baptisms, marriages and burials.

But also the contemporary taxation lists as grain-tithe lists, registers of land and, above all, the poll-tax registers must be used in order to establish that all people are noted who lived in the parish at the time of the drawing up of the catechetical list.

The methods in working up incomplete catechetical lists are as principle the same as for the complete lists. But the youngest children must be added. These children can be found in the register of baptisms and placed on their different families with exception, of course, of all children who according to the register of burials were dead before the drawing up of the catechetical lists.

It is necessary to make special investigations about families who had migrated into the parish or left it during the validity of the catechetical list.

The margin of errors in the calculations of the population based upon complete catechetical lists can be estimated as $\pm 1-3\%$, upon incomplete catechetical lists as ca 5% .

Variables for calculation of the population in greater districts

As complete catechetical lists for the time before Tabellverket only are to be found for certain parishes it is necessary to fix the relation between the total population and special variables, who are available for all parishes of the country and in continual series. The most important of these variables is undoubtedly the annual poll-tax lists, which in general are available since about 1630.

If the relation poll-taxed people/total number of people is known for a sufficient number of parishes it is possible to get an acceptable figure for the total population with the aid of regression analysis.

We hitherto have found that during the seventeenth century about 40% of the total population living in the cities and in the mining districts were registered in the poll-tax lists. In the agricultural districts in general only $30-35\%$ were noted. The variations from year to year are nevertheless great.

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