

**ENGLISH ONLY**

**STATISTICAL COMMISSION and  
UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR  
EUROPE (UNECE)**

**STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES  
(EUROSTAT)**

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN  
STATISTICIANS**

UNECE/Eurostat Seminar on Migration Statistics  
Organized in cooperation with UNFPA  
(Geneva, 21-23 March 2005)

**Information Session– Invited paper**

**INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS: CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION**

Submitted by UN Statistical Division \*

**I. Introduction**

1. The present paper reviews current activities relevant to international migration statistics methodology and data collection and dissemination in the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
2. The methodological work refers to the development and implementation of the United Nations *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*<sup>1</sup> and the review and update of the *Principles and Recommendations of Population and Housing Censuses, Rev. 1*<sup>2</sup>.
3. International migration data collection and dissemination are accomplished through the *Demographic Yearbook* System. The United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system consists of a set of instruments and procedures for collecting, processing and disseminating national population statistics. Its most visible product, the *United Nations Demographic Yearbook (DYB)*,

---

\* Paper prepared by Haoyi Chen, Demographic Statistics Section, Demographic and Social Statistics Branch United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M58/Rev.1, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Rev.1, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8.

is a unique source of national population statistics, for over 230 countries or areas. Published annually, since the 1948, when the system was established, the *Demographic Yearbook* provides statistics on population size and composition, fertility, mortality, infant and foetal mortality, marriages, divorces and international migration. The recent issues of the *Demographic Yearbook* – the *DYB* 2000, 2001 and 2002 as well as special topic issues are now available electronically at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/default.htm>.

## II. Methodological works

### a. Implementation of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*

4. The United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), organised a ‘Workshop on Improving the Compilation of International Migration Statistics’ 15-17 September 2003, in Geneva. Representatives from 14 countries in Africa, Asia, North America, South America and Europe participated in the workshop. The main objective of the workshop was to review approaches to the dissemination of statistics on international migration through the United Nations Demographic Yearbook system, and to consider national capacity to exchange international migration statistics. Participants were introduced to the framework for compiling international migration statistics from available data sources as laid out in the United Nations *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migrations, Revision 1*. The participants reviewed the requirements for and uses of international migration statistics; and explored ways to produce more complete and timely statistics to meet the growing demand for informed policy and decision-making.

### b. Revision and update of the Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses

5. As a part of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, the United Nations Statistics Division conducted the United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in New York from 15 to 17 September 2004. This Expert Group set priorities of work as well as concrete outputs for the development of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses including the revision and updating of the United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Rev. 1*.

6. Within this Work Programme, three working groups and six technical subgroups are proposed for the review and update of the current *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*. The Technical Subgroup on Internal and International Migration Statistics is established as one of the subgroups of the Working Group on Standards and Frameworks and a Core Set of Outputs. The objective of this technical subgroup is to provide input for updating and revising sections on internal and international migration characteristics in the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Rev. 1* (paras. 2.18 – 2.59 and 2.248 – 2.257).

7. The contribution of this technical subgroup will take into consideration the results of this meeting and the seminar of the United Nations Statistics Division on international migration planned for 23-24 May 2005. In its work, the technical subgroup will focus on emerging issues, core topics, concepts, definitions and classifications, as well as stakeholder needs and tabulations. The deadline for communicating to UNSD the first draft related to internal and international

migration is mid July 2005. These proposals will be carried to the Expert Group Meeting, 22-26 August 2005 in New York for further discussion and review, as part of the Work Programme for 2005. Ultimately the whole set of draft recommendations will be taken to the Statistical Commission for approval.

### III. Data collection

8. The Statistics Division collects most of its data from national statistical authorities through a set of *Demographic Yearbook* questionnaires (see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybquest.htm> for the questionnaires).

#### a. Migration statistics from population censuses and registers

9. Migration statistics on stocks are collected through two population census questionnaires, which are sent to countries every year once it is known that a census has been conducted, until most of the data are received. The Population Census Questionnaire on General Characteristics collects the following information:

- Native and foreign born population by age, sex and urban/rural residence;
- Foreign-born population by country of birth, age and sex;
- Foreign-born population in the country for less than five years by country of birth, age and sex; and
- Population by country of citizenship and sex.

The Population Census Questionnaire on Economic Characteristics collects information on economically active foreign-born population by occupation, age, sex and urban/rural residence.

10. Since migrant stocks are mostly expressed in terms of foreign-born population and foreigners (non-citizens), the level of response from countries and areas is illustrated using the availability of data on foreign-born or population classified by citizenship collected for the latest two rounds of population censuses (1985-1994 and 1995-2004). As the *Demographic Yearbook* questionnaires also request data disaggregated by sex, the number of countries that have been able to provide data on foreign-born population or population by citizenship disaggregated by sex is also reviewed. Further elaboration will not be provided here, although it has to be emphasized that the more detailed information the questionnaire requests, the lower the response level is by countries or areas.

11. Thus far the number of countries and areas that have ever provided any information on native and foreign-born population since 1985 is 104 out of 230. The number of countries that have reported those data in the 1990 census round (1985-1994) is higher than that in the 2000 round (1995-2004) at this point in time. (Table 1) The lower level of reporting on native and foreign-born population for the 2000 census decade is due to the fact that some countries have not yet submitted data from the 2000 census rounds to the United Nations Statistics Division<sup>3</sup>.

12. There are 96 countries and areas that have provided data on population by citizenship since 1985. The proportion of countries that have provided population breakdowns by citizenship is similar across all continents in the 1990 census round, with Africa and Europe having slightly higher response rate than the other four continents. For the 2000 census round, higher proportion of the countries and areas in Asia and Europe reported population by citizenship, while the response rate for other continents is much lower. (Table 1) The low

proportion of reporting countries in the 2000 census decade is associated with the fact that some countries have not yet reported on the 2000 census round<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 1. Number of countries or areas that provided statistics on foreign-born or foreign population to the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* at least once, 1985-2004**

Regions	Data provided on						Total number of countries
	Foreign-born population			Population by citizenship			
	1985-1994	1995-2004	1985-2004	1985-1994	1995-2004	1985-2004	
Africa	13	6	18	20	7	23	56
America, North	14	9	17	11	5	13	37
America, South	7	5	7	3	1	3	14
Asia	13	12	19	15	16	22	50
Europe	17	25	32	17	22	29	48
Oceania	7	5	11	5	2	6	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>230</b>

13. Most countries that have provided data on foreign-born population or population by citizenship since 1985 also provided those data disaggregated by sex. For example, among 104 countries and areas that have provided any data on foreign-born population since 1985, 96 countries also provided the sex disaggregation. Similarly, of 96 countries or areas that have reported population by citizenship since 1985, 93 also reported sex-disaggregated data.

#### b. Migration statistics on flows

14. The United Nations Statistics Division temporarily suspended its data collection on international migration flows in 2000. The major reason for such an action was the pressing need to assess the compliance of this data collection instrument with the new and revised set of *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*<sup>4</sup> and to provide an opportunity for developing international data collection instrument that would facilitate the implementation of the revised recommendations. Discrepancies between the *Demographic Yearbook* Questionnaire on Migration and the new framework will not be elaborated in details in this paper<sup>5</sup>. Three major areas that were not covered by *Demographic Yearbook* Questionnaire and explicitly spelled out in the recommendations, however, need to be mentioned: reason for admission (immigrants)/purpose of staying abroad (emigrants), duration of stay and country of birth.

15. Consequently, UNSD developed the *Trial Questionnaire on International Travel and Migration Statistics*<sup>6</sup>, on the basis of the framework of the revised recommendations and with the intention of testing it in a number of countries to evaluate its adequacy in terms of collecting international migration statistics. The trial questionnaire is an attempt to interpret the recommendations using a set of eleven tables and the concepts of inflows and outflows of citizens

<sup>3</sup> The census questionnaires were sent out until March 2004 to all the countries that have conducted a census during the period 1995-2004. A special topic of the *Demographic Yearbook* on population censuses will be published in 2005.

<sup>4</sup> *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14, United Nations, New York, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> A discussion on this topic is presented in the *United Nations Demographic Yearbook Review: National Reporting of International Migration Data*, United Nations publication, ESA/STAT/2004/4, available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybtr.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybquest.htm>.

and foreigners, all other across-the-border movements, place of usual residence, duration of stay, and reason for admission and country of birth and citizenship. These tables are presented below:

**Table 1A.** Inflows of foreigners by reason for admission to the country and sex and outflows of foreigners by current status in the country and sex,

**Table 1B.** Inflows of citizens by purpose of stay abroad and outflows of citizens by purpose of travel abroad by sex

**Table 2A.** Inflows of foreigners by reason for admission, duration of stay and sex,

**Table 2B.** Outflows of foreigners by current status in country and sex

**Table 3A.** Inflows of citizens by duration and purpose of stay abroad and sex,

**Table 3B.** Outflows of citizens by purpose of travel abroad and sex

**Table 4A.** Number of incoming migrants by country of citizenship, age and sex

**Table 4B.** Number of departing migrants by country of citizenship, age and sex

**Table 5A.** Number of incoming migrants by country of birth, citizenship, and sex

**Table 5B.** Number of departing migrants by country of birth, citizenship, and sex

**Table 6.** Number of incoming migrants by country of last residence and number of departing migrants by country of future residence by sex

16. The trial questionnaire was tested in fifteen countries as part of the activities of the United Nations Statistics Division and UNCTAD Workshop on Improving Compilation of International Migration Statistics, held in Geneva, 15-17 September 2003<sup>7</sup>. In addition, there is an ongoing testing in several countries in the Pacific region. The results of these testing indicate that many national statistical authorities are able to provide data as requested. It was also noted that the questionnaire requires accessing multiple sources of information and that the variable “duration of stay” is not, in some cases, completely applicable.

17. The trial questionnaire more closely follows the revised set of international recommendations and meanwhile more testing of the trial questionnaire might be necessary before it is dispatched for data collection at the international level. At the Inter-secretariat Working Group on Demography and Migration Statistics, 15-16 February and the subsequent meeting of the Working Party on Demographic Statistics and Population and Housing Censuses, 17-18 February 2005, UNSD submitted a proposal<sup>8</sup> that the following tables on the trial questionnaire – Table 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B – to be added for the forthcoming joint data collection of UNSD and Eurostat in European and CIS countries, while keeping the current 5 tables on the joint Eurostat/UNSD migration data collection questionnaire. The proposal was adopted during the meeting.

18. Developing such approach would enable all the partners to assess more accurately the feasibility of implementing the revised set of international recommendations with respect to collecting migration statistics at the international level. It will also provide a more complete overview of national statistical capacities in this area and will be re-evaluated based on response rates and reactions from national statistical authorities.

---

<sup>7</sup> The full report is available at: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/wshops/migr\\_0904/Genevareport.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/wshops/migr_0904/Genevareport.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> The proposal was made to more than 30 countries and a number of international/regional agencies, which include 25 European Union member states, a number of non-member states, Statistical Office of the European Commission (EUROSTAT), and the Council of Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Organization of Economically Developed Countries (OECD), as well as the analytical arm of the Council of Europe, l' Observatoire Demographique d' Europe.

#### IV. Data Dissemination

19. In the area of data dissemination, it is planned that international migration stock statistics for the last two census rounds (1985-2004) will be available to the public both electronically and in print by the end of 2005<sup>9</sup>. These statistics are collected through the *Demographic Yearbook* Census Questionnaires. The tables that will be available online are as follows:

Table 1. Native and foreign-born population by age, sex and urban/rural residence, 1985-2003

Table 2. Population by citizenship, sex and urban/rural residence, 1985-2003

Table 3. Population by citizenship, sex and urban/rural residence, 1985-2003

Table 4. Foreign-born population by country or area for less than five years by country or area of birth, age and sex, 1985-2003

Table 5. Economically active foreign-born population by occupation and sex, 1985-2003

20. Simultaneously, meta-data related to international migration statistics and reported to the *Demographic Yearbook* system will be reviewed and made available to the public online at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/migration/migr2.htm>

#### V. Coordination and collaboration

21. Currently, there is a joint data collection on migration between UNSD and Eurostat/Council of Europe.

22. Following the United Nations Third Coordination Meeting on International Migration organized by the Population Division in New York (27-28 October 2004), UNSD invited statisticians present at that meeting for an ad-hoc working subgroup meeting<sup>10</sup> to consider the statistical implications of the Coordination Meeting.

23. The Working Subgroup to the Coordination Meeting on International Migration, on International Migration Statistics provided a platform for representatives from national, regional and international statistical offices to discuss issues in improving coordination between agencies. In the meeting, the working subgroup of statisticians (1) emphasized the need for consistent and coherent statistics on international migration with a goal of minimizing discrepancies and (2) recognized the necessity to lessen the burden of reply on the national statistics authorities, by increasing cooperation, data and experience sharing between data collectors at the international and regional level.

24. The Working Subgroup to the Coordination Meeting on International Migration, on International Migration Statistics will meet every two years, the day after the United Nations Coordination Meeting on International Migration held by the United Nations Population Division.

-----

---

<sup>9</sup> For more details, please see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybschedule.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Full report of the meeting is available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/migration/migr4.htm>