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ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION *

Demographic and Social Statistics Branch
United Nations Statistics Division **

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Demographic and Social Statistics Branch
United Nations Statistics Division

Introduction

The United Nations Statistics Division has the responsibility for the collection, processing and dissemination of population and vital statistics. The data collection process is based on compiling national statistics using a series of questionnaires. With regard to dissemination, the major vehicle for dissemination is the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook (DYB)*, a 52-year old publication that presents population and vital statistics for the world.

This report presents the activities of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in the area of international migration. It reviews types of data on international migration that are requested from countries, and the number of countries for which these data are available. The presentation also includes other activities of UNSD on this topic such the development of recommendations on statistics of international migration, further development of the Division's website on international migration, and approaches to newly formulated needs for international migration statistics specifically in the area of international trade in services.

Data collection on international migrations through DYB

The United Nations Statistics Division regularly publishes statistics of international migration and issues international recommendations for those statistics. Detailed statistics on international migration flows and stocks have been published by the United Nations Statistics Division in two issues of the *Demographic Yearbook:* 1977 and 1989[1]. The 1985 and 1996 issues of the *Demographic Yearbook* include a limited number of tables on international migration pertaining to international arrivals and departures.

The data collection for international migration is done through two DYB questionnaires. The first one is a regular annual questionnaire on international migration and travel statistics dispatched for the purposes of the DYB. The information collected is based in three tables: (1) Major categories of international departures and arrivals; (2) Long-term emigrants and immigrants by country of intended long-term residence or by country of last-long term residence, and (3) Long-term emigrants and immigrants by age and sex. The sources for this type of yearly information are border collection and population registers. In order to evaluate the quality of the data for each table, it is necessary to identify which of the following statistics has been used:

> Port Statistics (statistics based on manifests);
> Statistics of frontier control (other than those based on manifests);
> Statistics of registration coupons detached from certain documents;
> Statistics of passports issued;

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[1] United Nations (1978), 1976 Demographic Yearbook, New York, NY;
United Nations (1991), 1989 Demographic Yearbook, New York, NY

Statistics of local population registers;
Other statistics (please specify).

The second questionnaire is a DYB census inquiry dispatched to countries after they have a census to collect information relative to: 1) Native and foreign born population by age and sex; 2) Foreign-born by country of birth, age and sex; 3) Foreign-born in the country for less than five years by country of birth, age and sex; 4) Country of citizenship and sex.

The information relative to long-term migration, with the exception of some countries (see DYB 1989), is collected using the following definitions:[2]

−   *Long-term emigrants*: data refer to residents intending to remain abroad for a period of more than one year.

−   *Long-term immigrants*: Non-residents or persons who have not continuously lived in the country for more than one year arriving for a length of staying of more than one year.

The main source for information long-term immigrants and emigrants is administrative data from border collections. Table 1 presents the number of countries for each geographical region that have replied to the DYB questionnaire reporting yearly information on long-term emigrants at least once in the decades 1971-1980, 1981-1990 and 1991-2000.

1. Reporting by continents for the decades 70s, 80s and 90s.

Overall, the reporting of information on international migration by the countries to the DYB inquiries is quite low. For the three decades under review, however, Europe as a region has a much higher response rate than the other regions. In contrast, Africa shows the lowest number of countries reporting any information on long-term migrants.

Table 1 presents the responses by countries based on data from administrative sources,

Table 1: Number of countries that provided statistics on long-term emigrants and immigrants, 1971-2000

	1971-1980		1981-1990		1991-2000	
	Emigrants	Immigrants	Emigrants	Immigrants	Emigrants	Immigrants
Africa	7	7	3	4	6	4
America	8	14	4	7	9	12
Asia	3	5	3	3	8	9
Europe	20	21	23	23	27	28
Oceania	3	5	3	4	2	3
Total	41	52	36	41	52	56

2. Overview

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[2] It should be noted that the definitions used in the 1989 DYB publication are different from what is contained in the Recommendations because they were developed before the revision of the current recommendations. The new definitions of these terms are presented later in this report and are now being incorporated into future DYB questionnaires.

In the past three decades, a total of 76 countries have ever reported any information about emigrations and 89 on immigration out of over 200[3] that were sent the questionnaire[4]. Within these countries only four reported information for both sexes together[5]. Each country reported information by age; however, 10 countries used wider age groups[6]. An examination of the reporting shows that only a handful of countries[7] consistently provided information on a yearly basis. For those not reporting any information on long-term migrants in the last three decades, there are countries such as Turkey that reported the arrivals and departures only and did not report any information about long-term migrants. Other countries such as Brazil, France or the USA reported the number of immigrants and not the number of emigrants. The USA in particular has not reported any information on long-term emigrants since 1957.

As for the census information, UNSD is currently working on the information reported by countries in the 2000 round of population censuses, and will be able to provide the results by the end of the year.

3. Issues of data comparability

The main problems linked with international migration data are the incompleteness of the information on time series and age reporting as well as the lack of comparability of the definitions and data sources among countries. As reported in the DYB footnotes, there are exceptions to the definitions given above and also the data sources for the information provided. For example, for the differences in definitions, the data on migrants for Italy include short-term migrants. As an example of the differences in the sources, the UK obtains the information about migrants through an estimate of a sample survey of traffic at air and seaports taken throughout the year. This survey excludes the information of traffic with the Republic of Ireland and Scandinavian routes. For more details see 1989 DYB.

Recommendations on statistics of international migration

The United Nations Statistics Division publishes international recommendations on international migration. The *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migrations, Revision 1*[8] which were adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 1997 supersede earlier recommendations of 1976 and are a result of collaborative work between the UNSD and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), in cooperation with the United Nations Population Division, the regional commissions, and other interested organizations. These recommendations were developed in response to the growing importance of international migration and the concerns it raises, and the need to improve the coverage and international comparability of statistics. These statistics are needed to identify migration flows and measure the stocks, to monitor change and to provide Governments with a solid basis for the formulation and implementation of policy.

The aim of the recommendations is to improve the availability, quality and comparability of statistics on international migration through a common framework as well as common concepts and definitions. The Recommendations provide an improved definition of an international migrant that helps distinguish short-term travellers from long-term migrants. It provides a taxonomy of international inflows and outflows that includes a listing of categories and their definitions of both citizens and foreigners under each of these.

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[3] The number of countries in the world varied in the past 3 decades.
[4] A detailed list of the countries according to the most recent year that they reported, is shown in Annex I.
[5] Egypt, Ethiopia, Mexico and Republic of Moldova.
[6] Hungary, Philippines, Italy, Spain, UK, Fiji, Samoa, Columbia, Seychelles, Zimbabwe.
[7] Poland, Sweden, Canada and Japan.
[8] *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migrations, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14.

The Recommendations review the different sources of information on international migration, including the potential and shortcomings of these sources, and pay particular attention to the importance of administrative recording systems for the management of international migration. It also provides a framework for the compilation of statistics on defined categories of international migrants, both citizens and foreigners included in the taxonomy on international migrant inflows and outflows.

The Recommendations also provide recommended information on international migrants, such as, on age, sex, educational attainment, marital status, country of citizenship, date of arrival, intended duration of stay, country of birth, and on economic characteristics such as on occupation in previous country, etc. There is also a section on recommended tabulations on inflows and outflows of international migrants.

There is a new section (not included in the 1976 Recommendations) devoted to recommendations on the collection of data on asylum seekers and also on tabulations for presenting the data necessary to compare the data on this specific type of international migrants.

In addition to information on inflows and outflows, the Recommendations also contain a section on information on stock data relevant to the study of international migration. The section looks at definitions and data-collection issues related to the foreign population and also the foreign-born population. The publication also discusses sources of data on these population groups, which are used to estimate the stock of immigrants in a country mainly through population censuses, and presents a list of recommended tabulations related to the foreign and foreign-born population, such as on place of birth and on citizenship.

Important changes between the 1976 and 1997 Recommendations include the following:

1.   Definition of international migrant as shown below:

The 1976 Recommendations defined "long-term immigrant" and "long-term emigrant" on the basis of actual presence or absence from the country of origin or that of destination. According to the definition, long-term migration is defined as presence in or absence from a country of more than 12 months.

The 1997 Recommendations use the concept of place of usual residence in the definition of an international migrant, with no conditions on continuous residence. Long-term migration is defined as change of place of usual residence of 12 months or more.

2.   Data collection systems considered in Recommendations:

1976 Recommendations list the following as source of statistics on international migration
   (a) Border collection
   (b) Registration
   (c) Field inquiry

1997 Recommendations include the following sources of statistics on international migration with administrative recording systems highlighted as an important source:
   (a)   Administrative registers
   (b)   Other administrative sources
   (c)   Border collection
   (d)   Field inquiries

3.   The concept of citizenship plays a central role in the 1997 Recommendations, in the taxonomy of international migrants and also in the framework for the compilation of international migration statistics to distinguish between different categories of migration flows. Both inflows and outflows are categorized by citizenship, i.e., whether citizens or foreigners.

In the 1976 Recommendations, the concept of resident is used to characterize migrants and migration flows are classified according to whether the persons involved are residents or non-residents.

4.   The 1997 Recommendations include and also define asylum seekers because of its importance for developed countries.

The UNSD maintains a website on international migration statistics. This site describes the activities of the Division, including publications that are relevant to international migration statistics. The URL for the site is: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/migration/index.htm.

Follow up activities

Four major areas are identified for further work to improve the collection and reporting of data by countries in the area of international migration:

1.   UNSD recognizes the difficulty in collecting comparable data on international migration. For the future, one goal of UNSD on data collection on international migration from countries is to increase our understanding of the non-responses to the DYB data requests from countries so as to improve the reporting within a year through:
   – Direct contact with countries which have not responded to the questionnaire.
   – Searches through the websites of National Statistics offices for official data available.
   – Investigation and thorough review of available information from libraries.

2.   To encourage use of the new Recommendations by countries, UNSD would like to organize, with interested partners, regional workshops aimed at both statisticians and agencies responsible for collecting administrative data on international migration.

3.   The website on international migration contains an electronic copy of the English version of the Recommendations. The site will be further developed, within the next one year, to include the French version of the Recommendations.

4.   There will be a full review of the DYB questionnaire on international migration and travel statistics to make it consistent with the definitions used in the Recommendations.

In addition, new areas and needs of users must also be addressed by UNSD. For example, a proposal has been made to identify synergies between international migration statistics and statistics on other topics with particular relevance to policy needs, including the need for international flow statistics in providing services across borders. In light of these new demands, UNSD is organizing in collaboration with the Interagency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services, a session of the Joint ECE-Eurostat intergovernmental meetings on migration statistics in the second quarter of 2003, primarily

to review the needs for international migration statistics based on the newly approved *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services.* [9]

Annex I

Countries ever-reporting to UNSD emigrants and immigrants by region and most recent year reported (DYB)

a) Countries reporting emigrants

<u>**Africa**</u>

Angola	1973
Botswana	1991
Burkina Faso	1991
Egypt	1995
Ethiopia	1996
Mauritius	1991
Nigeria	1971
Seychelles	1990
South Africa	1996
Zimbabwe	1996

<u>**America**</u>

Aruba	1997
Bermuda	1997
Canada	1998
Chile	2000
Colombia	1987
Costa Rica	1971
Cuba	1995
Dominican Republic	1973
Ecuador	1997
El Salvador	1996
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	1991
Guyana	1976
Mexico	1972
Peru	1994
Saint Kitts-Nevis	1971

<u>**Asia**</u>

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[9] *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services,* ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/86, November 2000. For further details on the development of statistics of international trade in services see the following website: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/default.htm.

Azerbaijan	2000
Cyprus	2000
Israel	1996
Japan	1997
Kazakhstan	1998
Kyrgyzstan	1997
China: Macao SAR	1997
Philippines	1992
Ukraine	1997
Uzbekistan	1997

Europe

Belgium	1990
Bulgaria	1978
Belarus	1997
Croatia	1997
Former Czechoslovakia	1988
Czech Republic	2000
Denmark	2000
Estonia	1996
Faeroe Islands	1991
Finland	2000
Germany	2000
Germany: Former German Dem. Rep.	1989
Germany: Federal Rep. of Germany	1986
Greece	1986
Greenland	1997
Hungary	2000
Iceland	1995
Ireland	1997
Italy	1987
Latvia	1997
Lithuania	1997
Luxembourg	1982
Malta	1994
Monaco	1972
Republic of Moldova	2000
Netherlands	2000
Norway	2000
Poland	1997
Portugal	1988
Romania	1997
Russian Federation	1997
San Marino	1991
Slovakia	2000
Slovenia	2000
Spain	1987
Sweden	2000
Switzerland	2000
The Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	2000
United Kingdom	2000

Oceania

Australia	1996
Fiji	1977
New Caledonia	1989
New Zealand	1997
Niue	1972

b) Countries reporting immigrants

Africa

Angola	1973
Botswana	1972
Burkina Faso	1991
Cape Verde	1990
Mali	1976
Mauritius	1991
Namibia	1993
Nigeria	1971
Seychelles	1990
South Africa	1997
Zambia	1974
Zimbabwe	1997

America

Argentina	1972
Aruba	1997
Bermuda	1997
Brazil	1979
Canada	1998
Cayman Islands	1979
Colombia	1987
Costa Rica	1971
Cuba	1995
Dominican Republic	1973
Ecuador	1997
El Salvador	1996
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	1992
Guyana	1976
Mexico	1977
Nicaragua	1948
Panama	1996
Peru	1994
Saint Kitts-Nevis	1971
United States	1993
Uruguay	1971

Asia

Azerbaijan	2000

Brunei Darussalam	1987
Cyprus	2000
Israel	1997
Japan	1997
Kazakhstan	1998
Kyrgyzstan	1996
China: Macao SAR	1997
Philippines	1976
Singapore	1976
Ukraine	1997
Uzbekistan	1997

Europe

Belgium	1990
Bulgaria	1990
Belarus	1997
Former Czechoslovakia	1988
Czech Republic	2000
Denmark	1996
Estonia	1996
Faeroe Islands	1991
Finland	2000
France	1989
Germany	2000
Germany: Former German Dem. Rep.	1989
Germany: Federal Republic of Germany	1989
Greece	1976
Greenland	1997
Hungary	1997
Iceland	1996
Ireland	1997
Italy	1988
Latvia	2000
Lithuania	2000
Luxembourg	1993
Malta	2000
Republic of Moldova	2000
Monaco	1972
Netherlands	2000
Norway	1996
Poland	1997
Portugal	1996
Romania	1997
Russian Federation	1994
San Marino	1994
Slovakia	2000
Slovenia	2000
Spain	1993
Sweden	2000
Switzerland	2000
The Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	2000
United Kingdom	2000
Former Yugoslavia	1990

<u>Oceania</u>

Australia	1998
Fiji	1975
New Caledonia	1992
New Zealand	1997
Niue	1971
Papua New Guinea	1988
Samoa	1976
Tonga	1996