

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Censuses are usually the best source of base data for internal migration for use in projections. Large surveys are only useful if they have broad geographical coverage including several areas within each region. Even then, because migrants are often concentrated in particular small areas at the place of destination, it is easy to miss them in surveys.

The best census question is one that asks about place of residence at a fixed prior time preceding the census by the time interval of interest for projections. Although five-year projections by five-year age group have commonly been used in the past, there is likely to be an increased demand for single year projections. A great deal of planning is short-range planning, which requires annual projections of population. Often, there is a demand for current population estimates by age and sex which can best be met by making single-year projections forward from the most recent census.

This situation suggests that a question on place of residence one year prior to the census, which is tabulated by single year of age, would be the most useful question for obtaining migration data for use in projections. The question on place of residence one year before the census is also likely to yield more complete and more accurate responses than the question on place of residence five years prior to the census.

There are, however, three potential problems with the one-year question. First, if the concept place of residence used to define where people live at the time of the census requires some minimum duration of residence, then some of the most recent migrants will not be counted and the effective period of measurement will be less than one year. Secondly, the year before the census may be atypical in terms of migration patterns. Thirdly, reporting of age in single years may be highly erroneous. In these cases, a longer period of time would provide a better measurement.

Where it can be afforded, two questions should be asked, one on place of residence one year prior to the census and another on place of residence five years before the census. Although asking for the place of previous residence and the duration of residence would appear to offer a good compromise which leaves the choice of time interval up to the analyst after the census, it has been shown that this approach can produce misleading data because of the possibility of multiple moves during whatever time period is chosen for analysis. The results are also affected by the level of geographical area used in asking the question. If place of residence is defined at the town or village level, then many moves across major boundaries, such as provinces, may be missed because they were followed by shorter moves within the major boundaries and only the last move is obtained. This is not a problem with the question on place of residence at a fixed prior time because it can be classified by whatever boundaries are desired for projections.

Lastly, it is important that the question on place of residence one or five years prior to the census be tabulated by current region of residence and age and sex. If a separate volume is produced for each state or province, one may include in each of these volumes a table on state or province of residence at the fixed prior time by age and sex. By combining data from all of these tables, it is possible to obtain the complete set of migration streams between states or provinces by age and sex, which is the best form of data for subnational projections.