

**ELEVENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations Secretariat  
New York, 21-22 February 2013

**DATA COLLECTION ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION  
UPDATE AS OF 1 FEBRUARY 2013<sup>1</sup>**

*United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)*

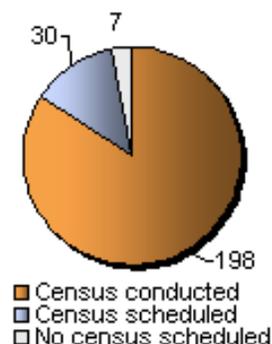
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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

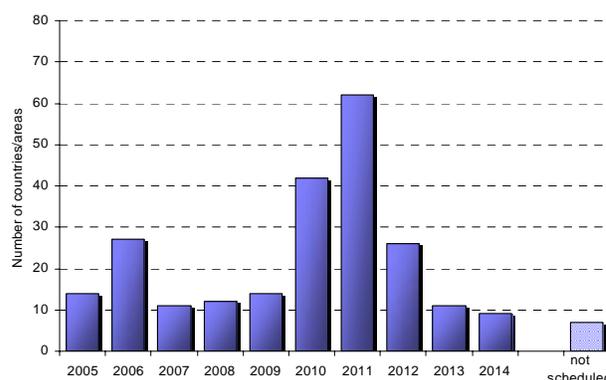
The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) collects, compiles and disseminates global statistical information, develops standards and norms for statistical activities, and support countries' efforts to strengthen their national statistical systems. One major programme of work of the Division evolves around demographic and social statistics, including international migration statistics. This note examines the availability of international migration statistics from population and housing censuses, and presents the status of reporting migration statistics by countries to the United Nations.

## A. PROGRESS OF 2010 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS PROGRAMME

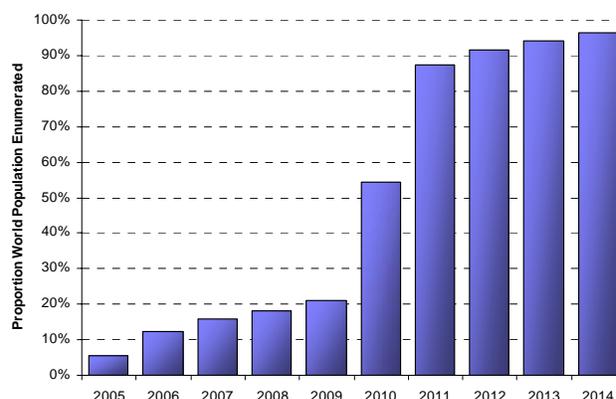
The population census is a primary source of basic benchmark statistics, enumerating every person within a defined territory, including international migrants. The 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme urges countries to conduct a population and housing census at least once during the period from 2005 to 2014 (the 2010 census round). In the 2010 census round, as of 1 February 2013, 198 out of 235 countries or areas have conducted a census (covering 89 per cent of the world's population), while 30 more have scheduled a census by 2014. Seven countries/areas have not yet scheduled a census.



The peak of the census round in terms of the number of censuses<sup>2</sup> taken was the year 2011 when 63 countries or areas conducted a census. In terms of the most number of persons enumerated during the current census round, the years 2010 and 2011 stand out. During each of those years, nearly 2.3 billion persons (representing about 33% of the world's population) were enumerated. This was primarily due to the impact of China (which held its census in 2010) and that of India (census in 2011).



By the end of the 2010 census round in 2014, over 96 per cent of the world's estimated population is expected to be enumerated. The seven countries that have not yet scheduled a census in the 2010 round or on which UNSD has no information are: Eritrea, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Somalia, Uzbekistan and Western Sahara.



<sup>2</sup> First census for every country only, some countries conduct more than one census per round.

## **B. INFORMATION RELEVANT TO INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION COLLECTED THROUGH POPULATION CENSUSES**

Population censuses are the most comprehensive source of internationally comparable information on international migration. Population censuses typically include three questions that can generate the information relevant to international migration: 1) country of birth, 2) citizenship, and 3) year or period of arrival in the country. The inclusion of these topics in a census questionnaire has been encouraged in the international statistical standard such as the *United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*, published in 2008, by listing them as core topics.

The collection of information on “country of birth” from a census enables to identify the group of people who were born outside the country of enumeration and ever migrated to the country at some point in their lifetime. “Citizenship” is the particular bond between an individual and his/her State. Because citizenship is a decisive factor determining a person’s rights in a country and often used to determine who is subject to control when crossing international boundaries, a legal nationality is used customarily as an identifying factor for international migrants. Additional question on year and month of arrival at the country of enumeration permits the calculation of the duration of migration and the classification of migrant population by the time of arrival.

Information from the 2000 census round shows (see table 1) that the majority of countries—whose census questionnaires were available to UNSD for analysis—have collected information on international migrants through questions on “country of birth” (92% of countries) and “citizenship” (75%). Similarly, a preliminary analysis of 2010 census round questionnaires from 126 countries or areas shows that the majority of these countries have collected information on international migrants. Three quarters of countries/areas had questions on “country of birth” and more than two-third had questions on “citizenship” (see table 1). This suggests that the data on migrant stock would be available from a significant number of countries worldwide, if such countries or areas commit to produce and disseminate the information in a timely manner. It should be also noted that many countries try to capture the phenomenon of international migration in their censuses by adding questions other than those on “country of birth”, “citizenship” and “year of arrival”. Most of the “other” questions eliciting information on international migration requested information on: members of household who reside(d) abroad; reasons for migration; remittances received by household from someone who lives abroad; place where mother and/or father was born; and others.

Table 1: Number of countries or areas which included migration related questions in a census questionnaire (data as of 1 February 2013)

	2000 round		2010 round**	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Countries or areas that conducted a census*	207		198	
Censuses for which questionnaires were available and analysed***	172	100	126	100
Question(s) on "COUNTRY OF BIRTH"	158	92	94	75
Question(s) on "CITIZENSHIP"	129	75	86	68
Question(s) on "YEAR OR PERIOD OF ARRIVAL"	65	38	52	41
Question(s) on topics relevant to international migration other than the above	83	48	76	60

Notes:

\* Including countries whose "censuses" are based on population registers.

\*\* The number of 2010 round censuses is as of 1 February 2013.

\*\*\* In case a country/area conducted more than one census in this round only the first census is considered here.

### C. COLLECTION OF DATA ON MIGRANT STOCK THROUGH DEMOGRAPHIC YEARBOOK DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM

Given that the 2010 Census round is closing to its end and the majority of countries worldwide have conducted a population and housing census by the end of 2012, UNSD has intensified the effort to collect key official demographic statistics from censuses, by dispatching a Demographic Yearbook census questionnaire to countries that have already conducted a census. Attempt has been made to collect the data from a census conducted not only in the current census round (2005-2014), but also in the previous round (1995-2004), if countries have not yet offered the information to UNSD.

Demographic Yearbook census questionnaire on general population characteristics inquires in tabular forms the following information relevant to international migration (Table 2).<sup>3</sup> For censuses conducted in 2000 round, the data on foreign-born population were reported to UNSD by 100 countries and areas and those on foreign population by 77 countries and areas. Compared to data reported for the 2000 round, reporting rate is much lower for the 2010 round of censuses, for most of the tables. The availability of data declines when the request to classify them by additional characteristics is made. Tables cross-classified by education attainment were newly added to the data collection in 2011 and therefore data have not been reported for most censuses conducted in the 2000 round.

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<sup>3</sup> Census questionnaires sent to countries are available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybquest.htm>

It is expected that more information would be available in coming years from censuses conducted in the 2010 round, as a significant number of countries complete the tabulation of census data and start disseminating the results.

Table 2. Number of countries or areas that reported the data on migrant stock based on a census (as of 1 February 2013)

Information collected	Number of countries/areas reported data in	
	2000 Round	2010 Round
Native and foreign-born population by age and sex	100	38
Foreign-born population by country of birth, age and sex	77	31
Foreign-born population (15 years and over) by country of birth, educational attainment	-	14
Population by citizenship status, age and sex	89	38
Foreign population by country of citizenship by age and sex	70	19
Foreign population (15 years and over) by country of citizenship, educational attainment	1	8
Economically active foreign-born by occupation, age and sex	45	17

Table 3 below illustrates the existing gap for international migration data obtained from population censuses. Logically if a census has question(s) on country of birth and/or citizenship, data on foreign born and/or foreigners should be available. However this is not often the case. For the 2000 round of population censuses, only 68 per cent of the censuses that included questions on country of births have reported data on foreign-born population to the *Demographic Yearbook*. Similarly in the same round, 72 per cent of the censuses that included questions on citizenship have reported data on foreigners. The reporting proportion is much lower for the 2010 round, probably due to the fact that many of the censuses have not completed data dissemination.

Table 3. Number of countries or areas collected and reported data on international migration based on censuses

Country of births	2000 Round			2010 Round		
	Collected	Reported	Per cent	With Question(s)	Reported	Per cent
	158	107	68%	94	41	44%
Citizenship	2000 Round			2010 Round		
	With Question(s)	Reported	Per cent	With Question(s)	Reported	Per cent
	128	92	72%	86	40	47%

Data gaps between the expected, i.e., the number of countries that have collected information on international migration and the observed, i.e., the number of countries that have reported data on international migration exist for many reasons. Sometimes the information on international migration might be considered too sensitive to disseminate although questions were asked on the census form. In other times, compiling migration data is not always given a high priority comparing to the compilation of data on other topics. There are also cases that data were compiled at national level but were not made available to UNSD.

The national data on migrant stock and its characteristics made available to UNSD are compiled and disseminated electronically through the medium of UNdata portal (<http://data.un.org/>) as well as the web-based Demographic Yearbook datasets (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybcensusdata.htm>).

#### **D. COLLECTION OF FLOW STATISTICS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION THROUGH DEMOGRAPHIC YEARBOOK DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM**

After an interruption of several years, UNSD resumed in April 2011 the collection of the data on annual migration flows through Demographic Yearbook data collection system, by sending a Questionnaire on International Travel and Migration Statistics<sup>4</sup> to national statistics offices (NSOs)<sup>5</sup>. The following information is now collected regularly in tabular forms:

Table 3. The type of flow statistics collected through Demographic Yearbook data collection system, 2011-2012; number of countries/areas with data for at least one year

Inflows	Number
Annual inflows by reason for admission and sex	26
Annual inflows by purpose of stay abroad and sex	14
Number of incoming international migrants by citizenship status, age and sex	21
Number of incoming foreign migrants by country of citizenship and sex	19
Number of incoming international migrants by previous country of usual residence and sex	14

Outflows	Number
Annual outflows by status at time of departure and sex	18
Annual outflows by purpose of going abroad and sex	15
Number of departing international migrants by citizenship status, age and sex	16
Number of emigrating citizens by future country of usual residence and sex.	12

Through migration flow data collection in 2011, UNSD received replies to this inquiry from 58 countries or areas. Out of these, 24 countries replied that either they did not have the statistics requested, or the collection and compilation of these statistics were the responsibility of offices other than national statistics office. Indeed, in many countries, flow statistics on international

<sup>4</sup> Annual questionnaires sent to countries are available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybquest.htm>

<sup>5</sup> The questionnaire has been sent to all but Eurostat countries.

migration are derived from administrative records such as registers of foreigners, work or stay permits, or the collection of information at the borders. Consequently, only 34 countries could offer flow statistics on international migration to UNSD in 2011.

During the 2012 data collection, 33 countries have responded, to date, with flow statistics on international migration. They include 9 countries that have reported the data for the first time. Hence the number of countries or areas that supplied flow statistics of international migration totals 43.

It remains to be seen if the availability of flow statistics on international migration can improve in a foreseeable future, given the fact that not many countries have a system to compile flow statistics in a systematic manner and the information are often collected by administrative offices other than the national statistical office.