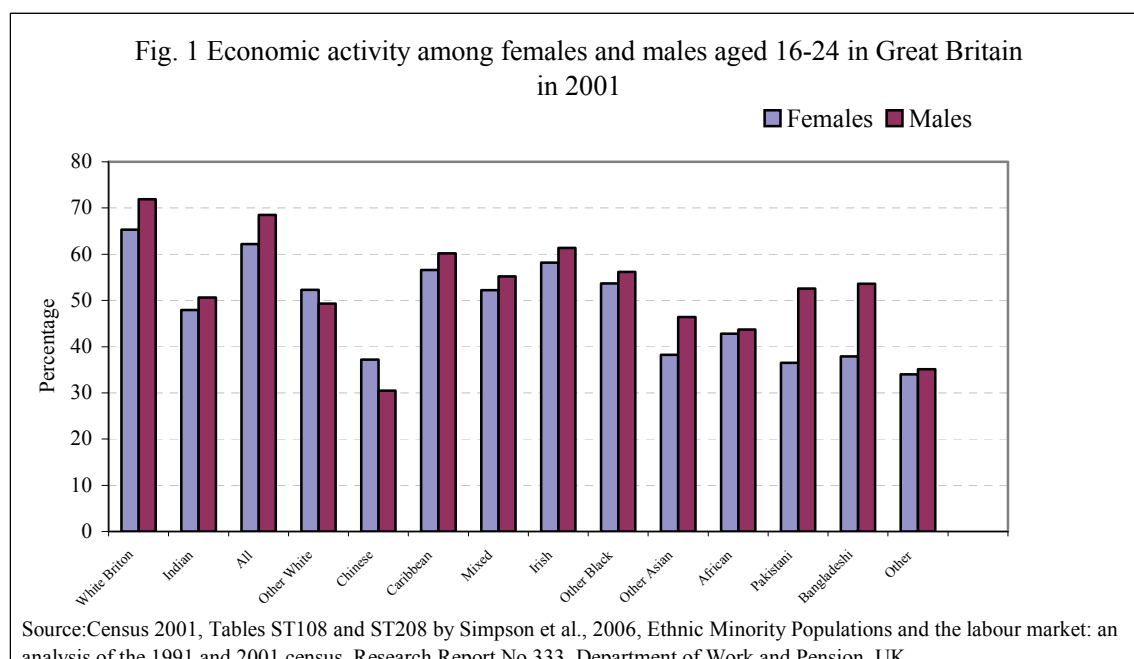


Challenges in measuring gender and minorities*

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Introduction

Strategies for the improvement of the collection, compiling and dissemination of statistics with a gender stratification have been developed and implemented in many European countries¹. However, these statistics are often available at national level with total aggregate number and hide important characteristics that may be different between women and men, not only from mainstream population group, but also among and between minority groups. For a recent past, identifying such differences between women and men from different minority sub- groups have been realised in order to formulate appropriate development policies by which societal cohesion can be maintained. National, regional and international bodies are therefore increasingly interested on minority rights^{2,3,4} and intra-gender equality⁵. However, reliable and timely data reflecting the reality of women and men from different minority sub-groups in the national statistics are rarely presented.



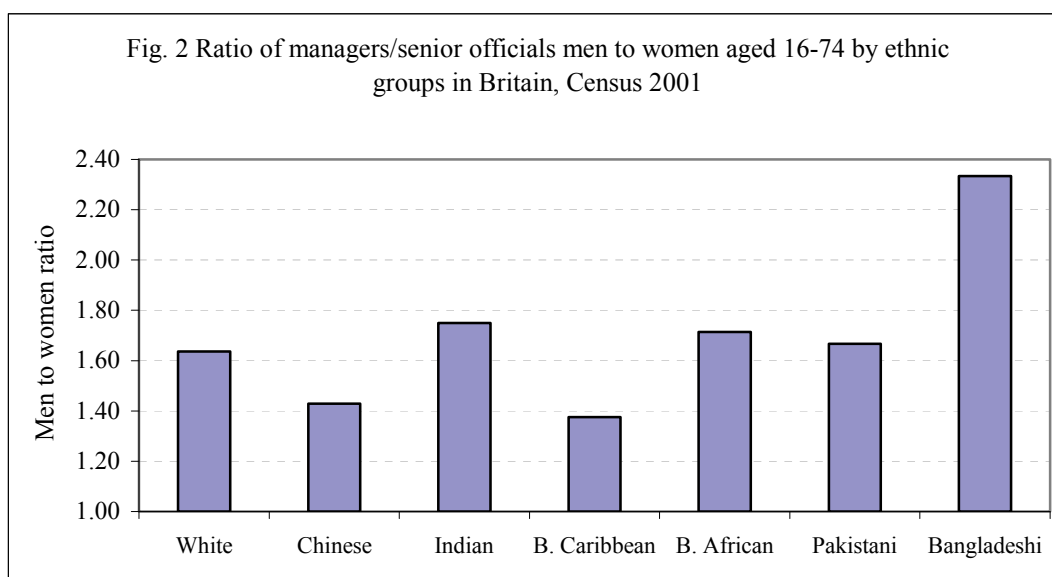
Available evidences (albeit limited) show that discrimination against minority groups is considerably high⁶. At the same time, socio-economic status of women is often different

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from their male counterparts⁷ (Fig. 1). The experience from the UK shows that male tend to have 38-75 per cent (except Bangladeshi where the ratio is more than 200%) chance of being employed as managers or senior officials than their female counterparts (Fig 2). These reflect that minority women are more likely to be subjected to double discrimination – as minorities and as women. Again, minority women are facing discriminatory behaviour within their own community. The persistence of such discrimination may also be resulted due to the difference in expression and understanding of gender roles across different minority groups.

It is also important to note that gender analysis of minority sub-groups is an essential element of socio-economic analysis which provides information on gender, and its relationship with ethnicity, culture, race and/or other status.

Statistics on gender and minority are needed to address such inequalities by raising consciousness, persuading policy makers on the need to re-address such discriminations in their respective societies⁸. Gender and minority statistics are also essential to monitor and evaluate policies and measures on minority women and men. However, the absence of data makes it hard for public bodies to identify and address the issues affecting minority men and women.



Source: www.statistics.gov.uk/cci

Measuring minority population with a gender dimension is complex since this requires the availability of gender-sensitive data disaggregated both by sex and minority status. The availability of sex-disaggregated data has improved over the last 20 years, however, the process of mainstreaming gender into the entire process of production, analysis and dissemination of official statistics has not yet been completed. Statistics that have been traditionally developed into the economic areas such as business, transport, agriculture and services are in many countries still approached in a gender-blind manner limiting the availability of sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data. In addition the definition of minority groups is sometimes problematic because the majority and minority dichotomy is often dependent on the nation's political, legal, historical, social, demographic and economic contexts⁹. The incomplete and unsatisfactory nature of objective classifications that are commonly employed to identify minorities and the subjective and multifaceted

and changing nature of minority identification make also the compilation and production of minority statistics all the more difficult¹⁰.

This paper, therefore, aims to present an overview of practices that were adopted to define and measure minority populations in the UNECE region in the past and highlights the operational challenges in enumerating/measuring minority populations keeping gender stratification in mind.

The paper begins with a discussion on existing practices of defining and measuring gender and minority status. It then highlights the measurement challenges and concludes with some recommendations for more consistent data collection and analysis on gender and minority status.

1. Measuring gender and minority status

While determining one's gender status may be relatively easy, minority status is a complex concept as it raises the key question: 'minority with respect to what?' There is still no universally accepted definition of a minority that is objective and easily measurable¹¹. Different countries or regions use different concepts and dimensions for identifying and defining minority populations. These often involve reference to numerical weight, racial or ethnic origin, language, migration status, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, as well as disability status¹². However, for this paper, only selected measurement related to migration and some ethno-cultural characteristics are covered.

Table 1 shows different approaches that could be used to identify minority groups according to the migration and ethno-cultural status of individuals. The tables emphasizes also the advantages and disadvantages of each approach with respect to its use in better understanding gender disparities in sub-population groups.

Among the approaches listed in the Table 1, some tools are easier and less sensitive to measure than others, whereas some are more relevant than others to analyse gender differences. It is also important to note that group level characteristics such as language, country of birth, religion or ethnicity may not always easy to collect and measure due to their sensitivity and wider definition. However, these characteristics may better reflect gender perspectives. In some instances, data related to gender discrimination may also be underreported due to the fact that respondents may be tolerant to some discriminatory behaviour that are culturally accepted in their respective societies.

Table 1. Approaches for identifying minority populations and associated advantages and disadvantages for gender analysis

Tools	Disadvantages	Advantages
Migration <i>*Country of birth</i> <i>*Region of birth</i>	Being born in a foreign country or have a foreign citizenship may not always indicate minority status. These concepts may not reflect the	These topics are not sensitive, easy to collect, measure, compile and disseminate and often readily available. Combined with information on sex of

<p><i>*Country of birth of parents</i> <i>*Citizenship</i></p>	<p>culture background of individual if they identify only a short migration movement. Sub-population groups identified using these concepts may not identify homogeneous groups with respect to gender roles.</p> <p>Although these tools provide some background information regarding gender roles, they may not always reflect realities how individual react on the stereotypes group-level-attributes</p>	<p>individuals, they can be used to identify gender disparities.</p> <p>These concepts reflect a migration process that individuals or their parents had in foreign countries. Depending on the duration of the migratory movement, individuals absorb the culture of the foreign country and therefore these concepts can describe the different approach that individuals have toward the roles of women and men in the society and may identify individuals that <i>have inherited a culture highly based on gender discrimination</i></p> <p>Citizenship can also detect groups that have higher probability of discrimination due to legal or informal barriers.</p>
<p>Racial/ethnic origin</p> <p><i>*Racial origin</i> <i>*Ethnicity</i> <i>*Ancestry</i></p>	<p>Concepts based on racial and ethnical status are highly sensitive and difficult to capture multiple heritages. Some times, they are too broad to distinguish minority groups;</p> <p>Race and ancestry may not adequately capture the different culture based on gender roles; not easy to quantify women and men of multiple identities with higher status, because they may not want to be identified as minority that makes them to feel inferior</p>	<p>Although race and ancestry give a broader picture about gender roles, ethnicity and religion generally reflect the culture where individuals build their understanding of gender roles</p>
<p>Culture & trait</p> <p><i>*Religion</i> <i>*Language spoken</i></p>	<p>Subject to change with time and between generations</p>	

As an illustrative example of the practices of countries in collecting data on the characteristics listed in Table 1, Table A.1 and A.2 in Appendix 1 show the questions related to migration and ethno-cultural characteristics included in 2000 round census in countries of ECE region.

As Table A.1 shows, question related to country of birth is common in all 44 countries in the region. Censuses of almost all countries (95%) asked question on citizenship as well. Almost half (45%) further asked on multiple citizenships, whereas some countries also enquired on citizenship at birth, or parents' place of birth.

As Table A.2 shows, many countries in ECE region asked questions on ethno-cultural characteristics. However, out of 46, 17 countries (40%) did not ask question on ethnic affiliation. Although countries from Western Europe did not collect information on ethnicity, countries in Central and Eastern Europe, United Kingdom and the traditional immigration countries Australia, Canada, USA, Israel asked one or several questions regarding ethnicity. Majority of the countries (75%) also enquired information on language.

The challenges faced by countries in the ECE region to measure gender differences within minority groups can be summarized as i) data gaps due to lack of recognition of minority groups; ii) methodological problems in the identification of minority status; iii) data quality.

1. 1 Data gaps

The collection of relevant data on gender and minorities can be hampered due to lack of recognition of minority groups, especially in the countries of South-East Europe. Examples are Macedonians in Greece and Bulgaria, and Turks in Greece, which are not recognized as minority groups. In some countries, recognition of minorities is also linked with citizenship. When the former Yugoslavia broke-up, some groups came to be minority but are not recognized as minority as they are still not citizens in the country of their current residence. Similarly, in Albania, Egyptians are not recognised either as national or minority groups¹⁴.

Table A.1 and A.2 in Appendix 1 show that many European countries hardly collect information on topics such as ethnicity, race, and religion in order to avoid social tension, or because of privacy legislation. For example, France and Germany still do not collect data on ethnicity. Spain also does so based on the 1978 constitution¹⁵. In this situation, even if data on gender spectrum are collected, specific characteristics of women and men by different minority sub-groups cannot be produced. In the contrary, in the former transition countries, there is a more established tradition to collect data on ethnicity although the data are not regularly disseminated particularly when it is related to gender concerns¹⁶.

Countries in the East of Europe and CIS have an older tradition to collect information on ethnicity; however, social and demographic statistics are hardly presented and disseminated broken down by ethnical status. Therefore, even in these countries, it is difficult to have the necessary data to measure gender differences within the different ethnical groups. This is also proven by the recent assessment that UNECE has undertaken in South Eastern European and CIS countries on the countries' capacity to produce and disseminate statistics related to the Millennium Development Goals. The assessment reveals "Data by ethnicity are still a big challenge for the future since there are very few indicators available according to this variable"

1. 2. Methodological problems in the identification of minority status

When information is collected on migration or ethnno-cultural status of the population there are several measurement challenges due to the reporting of this information by the individuals. Interpretation of the concepts, stigma, measurement of mixed status are among these challenges. For example, it is sometimes difficult to identify actual meaning of respondents' declaration of particular ethnic origin. This is because it could be a statement of identity, a declaration of particular ancestry or an expression of affiliation with a particular group within the society¹⁷.

Self-identification of minority women and men based on their ethnicity or language or religion or race is widely accepted approach both from humanitarian ground and from the ground of research ethics. However, it is a subjective approach and information collected

by this approach may vary with time. This is because, reliability of information related to self-identification depend on the personal perceptions where he/she would like to be belonging. These personal perceptions may change over time as true identity may be over or under-reported, depending on whether or not the socio-political environment of the country is safe or favorable enough for individuals to identify their minority status.

Women and men of minority populations with multiple identities or belonging to segregated minorities may not want to identify as minority since minority status brings a stereotyped stigma. Example can be drawn in relation to the actual size of a minority population group: *Roma*, living in different countries in Europe. Although official statistics have information about the number of *Roma* living in a particular country of Central and Eastern Europe, advocacy groups and others believe that these statistics heavily underestimate the real number¹⁸. One of the main reasons for this could be the stigma to report true identity due to the fear of discrimination in the host country¹⁹.

Other reasons that minority individuals might change their affiliation include renewed ethnic pride, marriage, adoption, perceived benefits or increased options to identify as mixed race, and problem with people who were not of minority descent identifying themselves as minority (albeit fraction may be tiny)²⁰. Such perceptions may also be influenced by their rural-urban settlements, status of assimilated and non-assimilated groups, homogenous and heterogeneous groups - as well as their different religious affiliations. In that respect women and men may also have different attitudes in reporting their ethno-cultural background.

In addition, identification of children from the parents of mixed ethnic groups may not be consistent over time. Depending on cultural or religious practices, it is often the father's background that prevails and is reported for the children.

What do these data on ethno-cultural characteristics and self identification indicate about the roles of minority women and men in the societies, is another questionable issue. This is because, every individual from different minority sub-groups may learn different gender roles in their respective societies which determine what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman/man in their respective socio-cultural contexts. These gender specific expectations and social values are group-level attributes and may be different from one minority group to other. At the same time, the gender specific group-level attributes might

Box 1. Comparability of data on ancestry in Australia

In Australia the 1986 and 2001 censuses asked questions on ancestry. The asked question was "What is the person's ancestry?" However, the guiding principles or definitions they used between two censuses were different²⁵. In 1986 census, the guiding principle was "ancestry means the ethnic or national group from which you are descended. It is quite acceptable to base your answer on your grandparents' ancestry. Persons of mixed ancestry who do not identify with a single ancestry should answer with their multiple ancestries. Persons who consider their ancestry to be Australian may answer 'Australian' ". However, in 2001, the guiding principle was "the ancestries with which you most closely identify (for example: English, Irish, Italian, German, Greek, Chinese, Australian, Other-please specify). Count your ancestry back as far as three generations, if known. For example, consider your parents, grandparents and great grandparents. If you are a descendent of South Sea Islanders brought to Australia as indentured labour around the turn of the century, please answer 'Australian South Sea Islander' ". In such situation, even if the question was similar the answers from respondents may vary between censuses providing different pictures.

not always reflect the realities how individuals from different minority sub-groups react. The reason for this is that although individuals may have little control on these socio-cultural values, the extent of practice whether to follow these cultural norms depends on individual interest. It is also important to note that these gender roles are not fixed and changeable with time. These can influence data

qualities which pose a challenge in defining and measuring gender specific minority status.

Migration status can also reflect roles of minority women and men in the societies as proxy characteristics. This is because gender roles can be associated with the socialization processes of individuals where they or their parents were originated. However, for the second or third generations of migrant populations, these value systems may not be applied since the origin of these generations may be different entirely than the original environment of their parents'. The influence of these aspects may not be easy to measure and compare over time.

Nonetheless, up-to-date information of migrants (for example- migrant's place of birth, parents' place of birth and arrival time) is important in order to identify their minority and gender status. However, some receiving countries have no complete and consistent record of such types. For example, New Zealand did not record data on the place of birth of migrants since 1987²⁴. Measuring gender and minority status and their comparison over time is not possible without the complete record of such data.

Similarly, ancestry is another approach to collect data for identifying minority status. This approach allows researchers to collect information for minority sub-groups by indigenous status as well as migrants' status. However, censuses and surveys often fail to use consistent definitions of ancestry over time. This also comes to be a challenge for data comparability (see for example Box 1). Information on ancestry does not tell much about gender roles in the society although it may give a broader picture what one might expect regarding the attitudes and behaviour of women and men on the basis of their ancestry.

1.3. Data quality

Gender analysis of minority groups should focus on different patterns of involvement, and activities of minority women and men in their economic and social life. The purpose is to assess if women in minority groups are subjected to higher discrimination than men in accessing education, gainful employment, control over resources and decision making. This requires data that cross classify with a large number of information: sex, minority status, economic characteristics, educational status, access to resources, etc. When all these data are collected through the census, the cross-classification of the information can provide accurate data to measure the different social and economic status of the individuals according to both sex and minority status. However, the census is usually carried out only every ten years and it does not cover social and economic data in great details.

Most of the social and economic characteristics of a population are often collected through surveys which can be more frequent and more comprehensive in terms of the topics covered. However, data analysis and the validity of the results heavily depend on the number of people or sample size used in the survey. Producing statistically significant results on the distribution of sex, minority status and other social-economic characteristics may not always be possible due to the small number of people from some minority groups. Samples are often designed to represent only a small number of sub-population groups and women and men in minority groups are rarely adequately represented, particularly small minority groups. This means that separate analysis of such minority groups cannot be carried out.

To present data of such small size, one may wish to combine two or more categories. How to combine these categories may still depend on the specific purpose of the data. However, it does not always make sense to combine categories together just because one or some categories are particularly small in number. This is because, specific gender norms between minority groups may have completely different social and economic characteristics. For example, data for Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian may be combined due to small sample size in each category. But the characteristics of these people may be very different if one looks at their religious affiliations. The socio-cultural value system of Pakistani Muslim is different from the socio-cultural value system of Indian Hindus. Producing and disseminating data combining such types of heterogeneous population may infer different conclusions than the facts in their real life.

Collecting reliable survey data also depends on whether the sampling frame is complete covering all populations concerned. If the distribution of minority households is widely dispersed and if the society is socio-economically heterogeneous, survey data analysis may produce biased results. An example of such type can be taken from *Sami* population residing in the extreme north sides of Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia. Although every one accepts *Sami*'s living in these areas but no actual information about their population size and also their whereabouts is available²⁷. Such information gap is a serious challenge for collecting reliable data on this sub-population group.

Except census and survey, national statistical agencies and other government departments are also increasingly interested in administrative data as sources of information on the population. In theory, where the administrative system of data recording is introduced, all vital statistics and population characteristics need to be recorded. In this context, one can expect that the coverage will be equivalent to that of a census although verification may require. Migration status based on country of birth, citizenship, and to a less extent country of birth of parents can be widely available through administrative records. However, ethno-cultural information related for example to ethnicity and religion are more difficult to be recorded in administrative sources given their sensitivity and variability that individuals may have in self-identify themselves.

2. Concluding remarks

Despite the growing interest of national, regional and international bodies on minority rights and intra-gender equality and having significant progress in producing, analysing and disseminating data on gender statistics in many European countries, statistics reflecting the realities of minority women and men (within minority groups, and with reference to mainstream populations) are scarce. The discussion above clearly shows the challenges in measuring gender and minority statuses. To deal with such challenges, a number of recommendations are proposed.

2.1 Perception of respondents and confidentiality

Producing reliable data may be problematic due to the lack of confidentiality. Introduction of data protection act to protect confidentiality of individual data and the rights to privacy may help members of minorities to be willing to be identified. It is also important to note that despite the provision of individual data protection, minority individuals may not still be confident enough to disclose their real identity due to the fear of distrust towards

government claims that individual data are intended for fair treatment rather than discrimination²⁸. The consistent use of the disaggregated data to reinforce the discrimination towards minority groups prevents also a systematic dissemination of social, economic and demographic data by minority status.

Unless the national statistical system creates trust on the confidentiality of individual data, perceptions of minority individuals may not fully change. Recognition of minority groups and conducive environment to protect their rights may support minority individuals to change their perceptions by which data quality may be improved.

2.2 Multiple options and open ended questions

The free and self-declaration of respondents remains an essential principle in the collection of official data on migrant and ethno-cultural characteristics of individuals. Instead of pre-coded questions, the use of open-ended questions should also be considered with the view of increasing the perception of neutrality of the statistical system and improving the reporting of minority status (as also recommended in the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2010 Population and Housing Census Round). In addition, questions should allow individuals to choose more than one options or a combination of two or more minority affiliations in order to reflect their real identities. The advantage of this approach is that it captures the multiple identities of minorities although it may add complexities in analysing and interpreting data.

2.3 Avoiding sensitive questions

In some countries, it is sensitive to directly identify minority status by race, ethnicity or religion. In these countries it may be useful to use the country of birth (parents' country of birth or ancestry) as a proxy of ethnicity to identify ethno-cultural characteristics of minority groups. Country of birth of parents can still provide information about the respondents' socio-cultural beliefs, their attitude towards gender roles and their behaviour, but at the same time, it is a less sensitive and more accurate information to collect.

2.4 Other recommendations regarding data quality and comparability

- Data collected through the census should be used more extensively to measure the distribution of minorities based on sex and other social and demographic characteristics. In Eastern European and CIS countries ethnicity is widely collected through the census but the data are not all social and demographic data are always disseminated by sex and ethnicity status.
- The surveys' sampling frame should include all sub-population groups. If the existing sampling frame is incomplete not including some minority groups, updating it with full information is most essential.
- The sample size should be representative enough to analyse data on gender and minority status. Over-sampling from some area or population groups may be needed to collect data that are representative for minority groups.

- It needs to be ensured that questionnaires or other instruments used to collect information (such as administrative records) capture both sex and minority status (however it is defined).
- Establishing the trust of the respondent and the confidentiality of the data are essential. If the mode of data collection is to be by self-completion forms, clear instructions to respondents on why the information is being collected and why it is important for them to provide accurate information need to be communicated appropriately.
- Involvement of minority community in the data collection is helpful to establish rapport and improve data quality.
- Where the data and the cultural environment allow, social and demographic characteristics should be systematically disseminated linking gender and minority status. In many countries, censuses and surveys may collect data related to gender and minorities. But often do not analyse and disseminate them.

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27. Please see reference 22 above.
28. See reference 14 above.

Appendix 1

Table A.1: Number of countries that included topics relevant to migration in the 2000 Round Census, UNECE region

Topics	Included	Not included	Total
Country of birth	44	0	44
Citizenship	42	2	44
<i>Other questions on citizenship:</i>			
Multiple citizenships	20	24	44
Citizenship at birth	8	36	44
Place of birth of parents	8	36	44
Ethnic group	27	17	44
<i>Related questions:</i>			
Language	33	11	44
Race	2	42	44
Religion	22	22	44
Reason of migration	11	33	44

Source: Bisogno, E., Pozzi, C., and Thorogood, D. (2004). Definition and measurement of international migration in the 2000 census round and issues for the 2010 round. Working Paper No. 8, UNECE/EUROSTAT.

Table A.2: Number of countries that included topics relevant to ethno-cultural characteristics in the 2000 Round Census, UNECE region

Topics	Included	Not included	Total
Ethnic group	29	17	46
Language	35	11	46
Mother tongue	21	25	46
As main language	3	43	46
Most spoken language	11	35	46
Knowledge of language	19	27	46
Religion	24	22	46
Formal member of Church or community	6	40	46
Religious belief	9	37	46

Source: Haug, W. (2004). Ethnic group, language and religion: recommendations for the 2010 censuses of population and housing in the ECE region, Working Paper No. 10, UNECE/EUROSTAT.