

# **A Comparative analysis of data sources to measure international migration in Dominican Republic: Methodological aspects, short term challenges and some recommendations**

## **Abstract**

The main objective of this paper is to present an evaluative diagnostic of the sources of information on international immigration in order to search for better ways to estimate the number and characteristics of people entering and leaving the Dominican Republic.

Measuring the international migration phenomena has been attempted by several means in Dominican Republic. However, the only factor taken into account so far by institutions dealing with this matter has been to consider the population arriving to the country, i.e., **international immigration**.

Dominican Republic lacks of adequate mechanisms to socialize and share experiences between the institutions involved in collecting, analyzing and presenting statistics about international immigration. Besides, a conceptual map obtained by consensus to show the quality, usefulness, coverage and scope of such information has not been developed yet. Additionally, the actual situation of the country in this regard can be described by insufficient specialized human resources, workshops and seminars to discuss about the data potential and relevance are virtually inexistent; the cultural background in using statistical information for social and economic planning is scarce and there is not enough openness to allow access to available data.

Despite the methodological objections that can be pointed out to the survey questionnaire used for ENHOGAR 2006, the National Statistics Office (its acronym in Spanish is ONE) being in charge of this task, in presenting ENHOGAR 2006 results, would be giving to the country a project like few in its type, approaching the international immigration phenomena in an integral manner.

## **Introduction**

It is fundamental for a country to be aware of the number of foreign people entering through its borders in order to know the dimension of international immigration, but in the case of Dominican Republic also it is very important to know about people departing from the country to others nations of the World. This is so, not only to get the population balance implied in the migration in a given country (amount of people that the country gain or loss due to the migration effect or the net international migratory balance), but also perhaps the Dominican Republic is the only country in the world where both the migration and immigration have considerable manifestations (\*\* impact\*\*) and, if this were of few importance, the colossal presence of movements of undocumented people in both ways (\*\* entering and leaving the country \*\*).

Furthermore, it is unquestionable that international migration is a very dynamic demographic phenomenon whose occurrence affects (and this can be verified) considerably other aspects of national life. Usually the insertion on the labor market of the receiving country as well as getting access to health and educational services are just a few important reasons why the countries endeavor to keep well updated the collection forms used to measure those variables and other topics constantly incorporated to characterize this very dynamic phenomenon.

Because international migration is a phenomenon that happens in a country in an irregular way we should think in a new methodology to achieve an acceptable estimation of its size and, in approaching it, we should keep in perspective the possibility of characterizing it.

Knowing about topics related to the conditions in which international immigrants reach Dominican territory: How many they are, what are their most important characteristics, among other issues, will allow to diagnose in an integral manner the entrance of international immigrants to the country and to develop methodological strategies to better collection and measurement (\*\*\*), and to implement actions to regulate this phenomenon.

Unfortunately, Dominican Republic lacks of adequate mechanisms to socialize and share experiences between the institutions involved in collecting, analyzing and presenting statistics about international immigration. Besides, a conceptual map obtained by consensus to show the quality, usefulness, coverage and scope of such information has not been developed yet.

One of the objectives of this work is, precisely, first make an attempt to build an inventory of the different sources that have elaborated international immigration statistics in Dominican Republic; to know about their experience on elaborating this information; to present in a general way some considerations about their advantages and limitations; to make some reflections about the temporal and conceptual similarities in order to ease its comparative and trend analyses; to think about the form and intensity that the data has been exploited and to make some recommendations in order to contribute to improve and strengthen the study of international immigrations in the Dominican Republic.

Nevertheless, the situation of forecast reserved that the migratory statistics exhibit in the country, would be able to change positively in the immediate thing, since the National Office of Statistics advances in the establishment of covenants with institutions, national as well as international, for the purposes of building from an adequate methodological technical base, the international migratory statistics that are needed in Dominican Republic to study appropriate the phenomenon. In concrete, a proposal of contribution with the General Direction of Migration exists, with the purpose of improving the formats applied to the national and the foreigners that enter and they leave the country and, in this way having a better approach of the volume of emigrants and immigrant as to their characterization.

This combined to the previous thing, the ONE is in contact with the National Institute Statistic (NIS) of Spain, in search to finalize a covenant of contribution to exchange information related to the dominicans they established in Spanish territory; and in exchange, the office would be delivering information linked to the Spaniards and Europeans in general situated in Dominican Republic.

The conceptual strengthening of the processes by which the statistics emanated of these covenants would be generated, the contracting of human resources specialized and the training of the personnel involved in this important work, are activities taken into consideration in the package of projects that the ONE has presented to the **Interamerican Development Bank (IDB)**, and that will be financed with international funds.

### **Methodological considerations about collection of international migration statistics in the Dominican Republic**

It is fundamental to start this part of the analysis by first looking at the institutions working on the development of the important task of gathering information that allows the study of the international migration in our country.

The **Central Bank of the Dominican Republic** (its acronym in spanish is **BC**) is one of the main institutions with tradition of generating data related to this topic, especially by means of the National Survey on Labour Force whose purpose has been to obtain information about the Labour Market using as

unit of information the households. This survey is done every sixth months, using as reference period the week before the date of the interview.

In addition, the Central Bank during the period of October 1997 to September 1998 carried out the National Survey of Households Income and Expenses (**ENGIH** is the spanish acronym) also considers this theme, by the way, it is convenient to mention that so far, there is no defined periodicity for this survey. The next edition of this survey will be done by the **National Statistics Office** (acronym in spanish is **ONE**) and it is planned to start this year.

Meanwhile, the National Statistics Office in the VIII National Census of Population and Housing 2002; has taken into account the measurement of international migration through the households; and it is perhaps the only institution in the country that has looked upon the population migration from the Dominican Republic towards the foreign countries, but the conceptual approach that ONE has used for this purpose, narrow it to only ask about the people that used to live in the household and at the moment of the census were living in other countries, omitting in this way the measurement of **return international migration** which is a part very important to this phenomenon.

It is also worth mentioning that an important point of 2002 census was to include a question, addressed to residents identified as foreign citizens, asking about the year of entry to the country. This adds a significant value to the information collected to knowing the arriving date to Dominican territory allows to set a temporal reference to the phenomenon and thus, it is possible to associate the migration with other types of political and socioeconomic events, both in the country that receives the migrants as well as in the country that send them out.

Additionally, looking to strengthen the scarce amount of international migration information available in the country, a module on international migration has been added to **ENHOGAR 2006**, a Multi Purpose National Households Survey. In this module, there are several questions asking the household about some of its members leaving the country and going to reside overseas during the five years previous to running the survey.

**ENHOGAR 2006** is one of the first experiences in our country to collect information about the theme of international migration. Despite the limitations in methodology, design, and in the scope of the questions that could be pointed out (that will be addressed in this document) it is a contribution to fill up the great necessity of information that for decades was not available regarding a phenomenon that many experts agree to say that has a big role not only in the demographic dynamic of Dominican Republic but also in other areas of national life like the economic and social.

Also, **ENHOGAR 2006** through questions about place of birth of the population interviewed and place of residence five years ago of the population of five years and more of age, provides information on two important aspects of international migration: a) accumulated international migration by knowing the place of birth of the person interviewed, and b) recent international migration by determining the country of residence five years ago for population with age of five years or more.

Despite the methodological objections that can be pointed out to the survey questionnaire used for **ENHOGAR 2006**, the country could have with this survey, a project like few in its type, approaching the international immigration phenomena in an integral manner.

On other side, the National Survey on Demography and Health (ENDESA is the acronym in Spanish) in its different versions has collected some data with the purpose to obtain some indicators about migration related only international immigration through the questions about *time residing in the place of interview and migratory condition of the total population as well as the population of twelve (12) years and more.*

The registry of arrivals and departures that collects the General Direction of Migration could be a way to efficiently measure the phenomenon; however, this is a population registry taken only for administrative purposes. It is desirable that, in addition to the administrative use of the information collected, to do a revision and modification to the system conceptual platform and to the data gathering operational procedures in order to get information useful to estimate the international migration.

It is certain that our country has available a number of sources of migratory information to know how the Dominican population moves around the world, but the measurements obtained are marginal and scarcely related to the migratory phenomenon, so it is imperative to put in place a plan to improve and strengthen such sources of migratory information.

- ***Conceptual frameworks used in Dominican Republic to approach the theme of International Migration.***

According to what has been said, ENHOGAR 2006 and VIII Population and Housing Census 2002 are the only projects that consider the collection of statistics that allow a closer look over international emigration and immigration. In the case of immigration, it is determined by establishing the country of birth and the country of residence five years before, for the total population and for the population of age five years and more, respectively, it is possible to fix the temporal reference of the immigrations collected in this way; however, due that the data obtained about emigration through 2020 census are not fixed to one specific moment in time, it is not possible to know the international migratory net balance which is so important to calculate the migration specific rate, a valuable indicator to make population projections.

All other surveys done in Dominican Republic with national scope, only consider the measurement of foreign population entrance, and in doing so get short in the attempt of studying in an integrated manner the international migration phenomenon.

Considerations about the questions used by the sources that measure the migratory phenomenon:

SOURCE	VARIABLE NAME	TARGET POPULATION	QUESTION	AVAILABILITY	CONSIDERATIONS
NATIONAL SURVEY OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND EXPENSES OCTOBER 1997- SEPTEMBER 1998	Place of Residence	Total Population residing in Dominican Republic (RD)	Have you resided in this household during the last three months or are you decided to fix residence in this household?	Not available for the general public	The residence of a person is established in relation to the housing, because one only belongs to the household. The habitual residence of a person should be established based on the intentionality and not as a function of time of permanence at the place.
	Nationality	Total Population residing in Dominican Republic	Actual Nationality		In a country with low availability of information about international migration as is the case of Dominican Republic, asking about nationality is not the most

SOURCE	VARIABLE NAME	TARGET POPULATION	QUESTION	AVAILABILITY	CONSIDERATIONS
					appropriate way to find about this theme.
NATIONAL SURVEY ON DEMOGRAPHY AND HEALTH (ENDESA 2002)			Before that you were 12 years old, ¿Where did you live the most part of the time: in the capital city, in another city or town, in the country side or in a foreign country?	Available for the general public	There is not clarity in what pretends to measure this variable, the target population is not delimited, it does not have mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories, and additionally it does not have clarity in the geographic delimitation.
	Time of residence at the place where the interview was done		¿How long have you been living here?	Available for the general public	The units to measure “time” are not precise, therefore it is not clear if the answer provided can refer to days, months or years.
VIII NATIONAL CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING 2002	Place of birth	Total population residing in Dominican Republic	¿Where was born (name)?	Available for the general public	This close look to place of birth combined with year of arrival for foreign people, resolves the problem of the temporal reference of accumulated international migration, and helps to study the information in a joint manner with other social and demographic variables.
	Year of arrival to DR	For people born in foreign countries	If born in a foreign country, year of arrival to DR		
	Place of residence five years ago	Population of five and more years of age residing in Dominican Republic.	¿Where did (name) live five years ago?		
	International Emigration	International emigrant population of Dominican Republic	¿Do some of people that used to live		The question does not delimit with clarity the geographical referent (small rural village or small urban neighborhood, province, municipality or country), neither specify the temporality (month of interview and year of beginning of the period).

SOURCE	VARIABLE NAME	TARGET POPULATION	QUESTION	AVAILABILITY	CONSIDERATIONS
			<p>in this place live in outside of the country?</p> <p>¿How many males and how many females live outside of the country?</p>		<p>The residence of a person is established in relation to the housing, because one only belongs to the household. The question only measure the international emigration of persons that at the moment of the census live outside of the country; If the international migration phenomenon, presents movement of people leaving and arriving, the migration of those people that came back, to the same household or another, it is not possible to be determined and therefore lacks a complete understanding of the international migration phenomenon.</p>
MULTI PURPOSE NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY (ENHOGAR 2006)	<p>Place of birth</p> <p>Place of residence five years ago</p> <p>INTERNATIONAL EMIGRATION MODULE (11 questions)</p>	<p>Total Population residing in Dominican Republic (DR)</p> <p>Population of five and more years of age residing in Dominican Republic.</p> <p>The module is applied to population that emigrated in the last five years and at the moment of interview is international emigrant of Dominican Republic</p>	<p>¿What was the country or province where (name) was born?</p> <p>¿During (month of interview) of 2001, What was the country or province where (name) live?</p>	<p>At this moment the information provided by the survey is being processed and will be available to the general public in the near future.</p>	<p>The module captures the international emigration, regardless that the emigrants are actually alive or dead. Some experts agree to point out that the exodus of complete households from DR to other nation, is a</p>

SOURCE	VARIABLE NAME	TARGET POPULATION	QUESTION	AVAILABILITY	CONSIDERATIONS
	1. International migration condition		¿During the last five years, that is from (month of interview) of 2001 to this date, did some people that used to live with you in this household went to live in other country?		common characteristic in the country and this methodology does not cover this situation. It should be recognized the effort of including this module as a first serious close look to obtain international migration figures.
	2. Number of international emigrants		¿How many people left?  Please, tell me the name of each one of the persons that went out to live in other country during the last five years without regard of if they actually are alive or not		The question only measure international emigrations during the last five years to persons that at the moment of the census live outside of the country; therefore the international migratory phenomenon that presents movements of people like departures and arrivals, that is, the international migration of those people that left the country five years ago and at the moment of the interview are coming back, to their household or another, it is not possible to be determined so there is an incomplete knowledge of the international migration phenomena. Additionally, it should not considerer the persons already dead.
	3. Identification		When (name) left, Did he or she live with you in this household?		

SOURCE	VARIABLE NAME	TARGET POPULATION	QUESTION	AVAILABILITY	CONSIDERATIONS
	4. Condition of Residence		¿What was the parental relationship of (name) to the actual household head at the moment of leaving the country?		
	5. Kinship		¿Is (Name) male or female?		
			¿How old was (name) in years of age when he or she left?		
	6. Sex		¿What was the province where (name) resided when he or her left to live in other country?		
	7. Age				
	8. Place of origin		¿On what year and month did (name) leave to live in other country?		
			¿To what country left (name)?		
	9. Migration date		¿When (name) left, what was the highest level of instruction reached by (him or her)?		

SOURCE	VARIABLE NAME	TARGET POPULATION	QUESTION	AVAILABILITY	CONSIDERATIONS
	10. Place of destination				
	11. Level of instruction				
NATIONAL SURVEY ON LABOUR FORCE APRIL 2006	Place of birth  Time of residence at this place (localidad in Spanish)  Migration cause	Total Population residing in Dominican Republic (RD)	Place of birth  How long .... have you been living at this place?  What was the reason of you moving to this place?	Not available for the general public	The word place (localidad in Spanish) does not have a conceptual delimitation and there is no certainty that the people answering the questionnaire understand clearly and precisely to what is being referred to by using that term.  It is not perfectly delimited if the question makes reference to the cause associated with to the origin place or the arrival place, so the information collected is ambiguous.

- *Advantages and limitations*

The alternatives to generate statistical information are census, surveys and administrative registers. Each one of them has advantages and limitations. Researchers and institutions using this type of methodologies have the option to choose among them according to their needs and the goal they consider most appropriate.

In the case of surveys, when we compare them to other type of sources to gather information about international migration their major advantage is that it makes possible to include much more questions in the collection form because only a part of the population is interviewed. This allows to make a broader and deeper analysis of this theme. In addition, if the sample is chosen in a probabilistic manner it is possible to make inferences concerning to the population under study. However, when we consider international migration, independently that this phenomenon occurs frequently in the population, this advantage becomes a disadvantage. It is so because the possibility to disaggregate information provided by surveys always has a specific limit set up during the sample design stage.

A census provide universal coverage and *have* the advantage of gathering information at very low geographical levels (with all that this implies for detailed planning and follow up to social programs run by the government), however, when it comes to the theme of international migration which generally requires to set up several questions in the collection form, **the census** is not the more adequate mean because the cost per question is very high.

Although the administrative registers represent the most cheaper way to collect information of the three alternatives presented, they have two serious limitations: **1)** generally they do not have a conceptual framework that allows the generation of statistics having in perspective the characterization, comparativeness, quality, coverage and usefulness required and; **2)** they are addressed to very specific populations, generally they are incomplete and have problems related with the opportunity.

### **Accessibility to information**

If we understand exploiting the statistical information as a way to disseminate it, we have to recognize that in Dominican Republic the process to generate information related to international migration represents one of the pending matters of the National Statistical System. First, not all the institutions involved in this task put the data in the hands of the users with equal openness, and when the general public have had access to data, this has not been exploited with the required dept. Such is the case for statistics related to international migration.

For example, ENDESA 2002, the demographic and health survey, one of the sources that has captured this type of information, do not present in their methodological report processed data about international migration in the Dominican Republic and we are not aware of some report or research about this theme that have taken it into account. However, it is available to the general public through databases, and it is favourable to use it at any moment on related research, although the possibility for analysis offered are very limited.

Data contained in the National Survey of Labor Force prepared by the Central Bank are not widely available to researchers outside the institution; and it is handled as own property, biasing the dissemination and exploitation of the data.

On other side, the VIII National Census on Population and Housing 2002 presents a different situation compared to ENDESA 2002. First, in the census there are no problems to identify the origin and destination of the identified migrations, giving the opportunity to establish the origin and destination of the migratory flows; second, it is openly available to the user without any restriction; and last; it allows to analyze and study (concomitantly with other social and demographic variables) data about domestic and international immigration generated through the questions “place of residence five years ago”, “place of birth” and “year of arriving to the country”. The last question fixes the problem of the temporal reference for absolute international migration.

### **Short term challenges**

Migration as a phenomenon imposed by a combination of factors, such as those related to employment search and salary competitiveness, release “pressure” over the labor market and in that sense, it becomes a “convenient” (\*\*liberador\*\*) effect for governments of countries of origin.

For that reason, giving the absence of adequate information to completely characterization of international migration, it is fundamental to work in the construction of a conceptual framework so that the sources of information pay attention to the study of this theme in all its aspects.

In our country we do not have a system to register with statistical purposes the population arrivals from and departures to other countries. The only institution that is doing a similar task is the General Direction of Migration, however, their purpose are exclusively of administrative nature.

Dominican Republic needs with urgency the development of mechanisms to improve and strengthen the sources of migratory information, as well as to set up procedures used by these sources to quantify and qualify this phenomenon.

Another aspect that needs improvement regarding migratory statistics in our country is that of open access to the information gathered. This review of sources of information has noticed the lack of dissemination in the majority of the sources. This limits the possibility of diversify the study of these themes.

The absence of a conceptual framework that keep updated the study of migration in the country, demands the creation of a migratory statistic system with an institutional scope to pursue three basic objectives:

- Develop conceptual and operational norms to generate migratory statistics and related topics to it.
- Systematic production of migratory statistics
- Dissemination of migratory statistics

In a broad sense, this idea should be conceived as an Integrated Migratory Statistical System, which once built should contain on his first step the documentation of the state of the sources of migratory statistics information; the state of the conceptual framework; and given those steps, to identify the opportunity areas. (\*\* preguntar a Dario \*\*)

Products generated on the first phase should be retaken by this system. Also it will be convenient to development a standard conceptual framework package along with a procedural norms package both aimed to guide the generation of this kind of data all over the country. The other aspect will be to discuss with organizations and institutions that generate migratory statistics to reach an agreement on norms and procedures to apply on such system.

Given that an ongoing process of institutional reform is taking place on the National Statistics Office (ONE) it is fundamental and opportune that ONE undertake a leading role implementing a system of such kind and in this way, it will be confirmed as the leading generating statistics institution for the country, strengthening its image on society at large, on the academic world and on research endeavors.

It is necessary to make an effort to establish the scope of this work and as a result, to put together a set of tasks to systematize, norm and disseminate migratory statistics in the Dominican Republic.

We understand by **systematize**, to build a framework with the elements (sources of information, conceptual framework, sampling lists, methodologies, etc.) that are part of a master plan, having those elements cohesion and unity of purpose; by **norm**, to establish the conceptual and methodological rules to guide the new generation of migratory statistics; and by **disseminate**, to publish and make the information available to the users.

On other side, given the conceptual heterogeneity and the diversity of temporal references present on the sources to collect information about international migration, it is necessary to include in the population census all the questions that, according to international recommendations, are required to adequately measure the international migration.

Additionally, it is a must to integrally include in the surveys all the questions asked about international migration used on population census, and those questions that provide data to get a deeper understanding

of this phenomenon. Always should be kept in perspective, the possibility to standardize the conceptual aspects to approach the topics studied.

It is urgent also, to define methodologies that allow the use of the administrative registers of the General Direction of Migration as a source of information for international migration, and this should be achieved by differencing the international immigrants from the temporal travelers; to get the inclusion in the collection forms of the information related to the necessary aspects to characterize the international immigrants; and to be able to get the data available to all institutions and persons that use such information.

### **Some final reflections**

The underlying diagnostic in what has been presented so far makes it evident that the information available about international migration in Dominican Republic is limited. In addition, there is a problem with the insufficient exploitation of that limited data.

Additionally, there are insufficient human resources specialized in international migration, very rarely this topic is discussed in workshops and seminars where it could be presented the great potential of such information; the cultural background in using statistical information for social and economic planning is scarce and there is not enough openness to allow access to available data; these are some of the events that better describe the real situation of Dominican Republic regarding international migration statistics.

On other side, being exhaustive studies, the population censuses are the best data collection way that guarantees the data presentation with the high level of geographical desegregation, because the information collected can be analyzed considering much reduced geographic areas; and the different population segments could be studied without worrying about their dimensions.

The complexity inherent to the planning and execution of a population census impose certain restrictions to explore in a broad and deep manner a diversity of themes that could be of interest to international migration; so it reduces the possibility to characterize adequately the migratory phenomenon.

Due to the fact that the surveys are based on a sample, they have the additional advantage to save time and resources (financial, technical and technological). The themes chosen are treated with more deep and it takes care more carefully about the information quality because the hired personnel has a greater level of training and expertise; this greater quality of the collected information depends also of a greater control in the process of data collection.

However, the level of desegregation of data derived from surveys will always depend on the sample size which makes the information gathered from them always will have a specific limit with respect to its geographical desegregation. If data about minority groups of the population is collected pretending some analytic scope from them it will be necessary to increase the sample size.

The administrative registers are continuous, are generated at fixed places and have a coverage for all the population that enter and leaves the country **in a regular manner** (\*\* conversado con Dario \*\*), and therefore, these methodological prerogatives put them in a privileged situation to provide updated information about the phenomenon; allowing the realization of estimates with a greater degree of desegregation, both at geographic level as well as regarding whatever other characteristic pertaining to the migrant; it also allows to save financial, technical and technological resources.

Regrettably, the situation of the country registers regarding population arriving and departures thru national borders and airports is not very good, considering also the great omission that they have, it seems that the only purpose taken into account for their collection is of administrative nature.