International Migration Statistics: concepts, definitions and sources

Haoyi Chen
United Nations Statistics Division

Regional workshop on Strengthening the collection and use of international migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 5 – 8 February 2019, Bangkok
• Definition of international migrant and relevant concepts
• The migration data infrastructure – key elements
• Some reflections
Some concepts related to international migration

- **An immigrant of a country:**
  - entering the country by crossing the border
  - not a usual resident of the country when entering
  - staying or intending to stay in the country for at least one year.

- **An emigrant of a country:**
  - leaving the country by crossing the border
  - being a usual resident of the country
  - staying or intend to stay in another country or abroad for at least one year.
Identifying immigrants at the border

Have you been in the country before?

Yes

No

How long were you away from the country?

3 months

1.5 year

How long do you intend to stay in the country?

3 months

12 months

How long do you intend to stay in the country?

3 months

12 months

NO

YES

NO

YES

3 months

12 months

NO

YES
Mr. Phan Chinda

- Born in Cambodia, age 27
- Came to Thailand for the first time to work, on 29 January 2018

Mr. Phan Chinda

- Born in Cambodia, age 27
- Came to Thailand for the first time to work on 7 October 2018
Ms. Maria Teresa

- Lived in the Philippines, Filipino citizen
- Went to USA in July 2012
- Came back to live in the Philippines since December 2017
Who is an international migrant?

Ms. Sallymata

- Lived in Lao, DPR
- Arrived at Suvarnabhumi airport on 1 March 2017, filling out an embarkation form with the following information:
  - Visa to work for 5 months
- Filed an extension of stay on 1 August 2017 for another 10 months
Identifying migrants for what?

Population estimates & projections

Population in 2017

+ births in 2017

- deaths in 2017

+ net immigrants in 2017

= Population in 2018
Identifying migrants for what?

How many foreigners are coming to the country each year?

- From which country? Age? Education level?
- They are coming for what reason(s)? (Study? Work?)
- Is the labour market ready for the immigrants?
- Where do the migrants settle within the country?

How many citizens are emigrating each year?

What are their characteristics?

How many emigrated citizens are moving back to the country each year? (Diaspora)
### Key inflows and outflows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inflows of</th>
<th>Usual residence of the country concerned</th>
<th>Citizenship status when crossing border</th>
<th>Categorization of flows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-residents</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td><strong>Immigrating citizens (Group A)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td><strong>Immigrating foreigners (Group B)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>Residents returning from visits abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>Residents returning from visits abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outflows of</th>
<th>Usual residence of the country concerned</th>
<th>Citizenship status when crossing border</th>
<th>Categorization of flows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-residents</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>Visitors departing after short-stay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>Visitors departing after short-stay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td><strong>Emigrating citizens (Group C)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>Emigrating foreigners (Group D)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Population stocks related to international migration

Stock of foreign-born
Stock of foreigners
Stock of returned migrants (citizens)
Stock of “second-generation immigrants”
Stock of emigrants
A few words about the definition of migrants

- Only long-term migrants are mentioned
- Short-term “movers” are also important population groups
- The important distinction between flow and stocks
- Possible revision of the definition
National migration data infrastructure – a framework for capacity development on national migration statistics

- **b. National migration data strategy**
  - Responsibility delineation

- **Interagency-coordination**
  - Coordination regarding legal, ethical, political, organizational, economic, semantic and technical aspects

- **c. Traditional data sources**
  - Authenticity, integrity, reliability

- **d. New Data management**
  - New data sources
  - New analytical methods
  - Linking heterogeneous datasets

- **e. Data dissemination and communication**
  - from data to policy

- **Open Data**
  - User empowerment
  - Individual data access and sharing with privacy and security

- **a. Data needs for national migration policy**
Major sources of international migration statistics

Main data sources:
- Population and housing censuses
- Household surveys
- Administrative sources
  - Registers: population register; register of foreigners
  - Issuance of residence permits; work permit

Other data sources
- Border cards
- Border surveys
A few reflections

- So much data are being collected: census, surveys and administrative sources.

- But what are data collected for?

- Is there an assessment on what data are needed for policymaking?

- Can we put the data together and give us a better picture of what migration looks like in the country? (coordination + integration)

- Experiment with non-traditional data sources
• Many are unhappy about the dissemination strategy and about how data are used to inform policy
  • Anybody has good experience to share?
  • Is producing a thematic report sufficient?
  • Some of you are policymakers, what do you consider effective data communication strategy is?
• Migration data strategy – rarely available
• Some has an inter-agency coordination body
  • How effective is it?
  • If effective, what makes it so?
Integrating multiple sources

Harmonisation of concepts and definitions!!!
Non-traditional sources

"Your recent Amazon purchases, Tweet score and location history makes you 23.5% welcome here."