

Technical Workshop on International Migration and Temporary Mobility Statistics

Warsaw, Poland, 16 – 19 July 2024

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The technical workshop was convened by the United Nations Statistics Division, in cooperation with Statistics Poland. The workshop aimed to address the gaps in the availability of reliable and timely migration data, crucial for designing effective operational and policy responses in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), in response to Statistical Commission Decision 50/117 (2019), as well as several requests received from countries and regions, notably during the International Forum on Migration Statistics 2023, and the 54th and 55th sessions of the Statistical Commission.
2. The meeting was opened by Mr. Dominik Rozkrut, President of Statistics Poland and Ms. Francesca Grum, Assistant Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, who delivered welcome remarks. This was followed by a high-level panel discussion on key data demands from policy makers in the migration space. The panel consisted of Ms. Magdalena Kozłowska, Head of Migration Analysis and Statistics Division in the Office for Foreigners, Poland, Mr. James Raymer, Professor at Australian National University, Ms. Gladys Cisneros, Chief of the Labour Migration Branch of ILO (joining remotely), Mr. Diego Iturralde, Chief Director of Statistics South Africa, and Mr. Dominik Rozkrut. The panel highlighted the prominence of migration on the policy agenda, and emphasized the need for timely, relevant, accurate, and disaggregated data to inform policy and decision-making while addressing misinformation and promoting public trust.
3. The primary **objectives** of the workshop were to: 1) facilitate knowledge exchange on measuring international migration, 2) discuss opportunities and challenges associated with the operationalization of the revised conceptual framework and related definitions for statistics on international migration and mobility, which have been endorsed by the Statistical Commission, and 3) build statistical capacity in the production and use of relevant, high quality and disaggregated statistics on international migration. Additionally, the workshop aimed to capture inputs and feedback from the discussions to inform the revision of *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*.
4. To accomplish the above objectives, the workshop was organized around a number of key topics and activities, including presentations and break-out group discussions. The workshop was preceded by a pre-workshop assignment that introduced guiding questions to be reflected on from the countries' perspective, covering a range of national statistical development levels and related data challenges. The workshop was attended by 29 country participants, of whom 26 represented NSOs and 3 were from other NSS entities. A total of 12 developing countries and 9 developed countries were represented. In addition, there were 6 representatives of the UN system in attendance and 4 other participants from international organizations and academia.

Endorsed conceptual framework, statistical definitions and indicators

5. The technical part of the workshop began with a review of the revised **conceptual framework** and **indicators** for producing international migration and temporary mobility statistics, both endorsed by the Statistical Commission. The alignment of the conceptual framework and accompanying statistical definitions with the Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses, the revised draft ICLS guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration and the recommendations on refugee statistics (IRRS) and statelessness statistics (IROS) was highlighted. **Data sources** required by the conceptual framework, in particular to produce core migration indicators to monitor Policy Area 1, together with their comparative advantages and limitations, were discussed. These include field-based population censuses, household surveys (specialized migration surveys or other-purpose household surveys) and administrative data sources.
6. During the discussion on indicators, it was suggested that the **indicators for disaggregation related to Policy Areas 3-6**, although important, should not be included in the revised *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*. This proposal was based on the fact that most of these indicators reference the SDG indicator framework, which is expected to only remain in its current form until 2030. Given that the *Recommendations* are intended to be relevant beyond that timeframe, it was generally agreed that these indicators should not be included. **Indicators for Policy Area 2** concerning irregular cross border movements and visa overstays, classified as additional, were also discussed. It was reiterated that in most countries, these indicators are not produced by NSOs or line ministries or are produced only on a pilot basis. It was proposed, therefore, that the *Recommendations* focus first and foremost on those indicators supporting Policy Area 1, with the broader list of indicators to be provided as a supplementary resource document.
7. It was further highlighted that indicators on **temporary mobility**, all agreed as additional for Policy Area 1, are challenging to produce for the majority of countries, having been introduced for the first time by the revised conceptual framework. Countries agreed that they need time to introduce this new concept in their national statistical systems and evaluate how to produce data for key types of temporary mobility and related population groups. It was proposed that these indicators also remain in the supplementary document rather than the upcoming revision of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*.
8. The core **indicators for Policy Area 1** “Improve the measurement of international migration and temporary mobility flows and stocks” were discussed at length. Countries shared that they were generally able to produce stock indicator MI 1.1 through the census (field or register-based). Few countries are currently producing MI 1.2 (acquisition of citizenship). There was some discussion about whether this is indeed a stock rather than a flow indicator, with the consensus emerging that the indicator measures change of status events, rather than flows. Countries shared that producing flow indicators MI 1.3 (immigration) and MI 1.4 (emigration) was significantly harder, with many countries currently unable to adequately produce these indicators. It was agreed that the core indicators should be seen as building blocks that countries will be able to produce incrementally.

National practices and challenges

9. The workshop breakout discussions clustered countries by the setup of their national systems of migration statistics into three groups: primarily field-based data collection (population censuses and household surveys), fully administrative (well-established register-based statistical systems), and a combination of both. From the group discussions, a number of cross-cutting challenges emerged. All systems needed to account for the highly mobile nature of migrant populations, which makes them difficult to measure. There is ambiguity with regard to data governance and ownership across all systems. Additionally, indicators for Policy Area 2 are particularly difficult to produce, with countries noting significant gaps in data on irregular migration and undocumented migrants.
10. Countries with **register-based** systems expressed challenges with varying definitions of key concepts like "resident" and "registered" populations, which can lead to data discrepancies, affecting the comparability and coherence of migration statistics. Additionally, countries shared challenges with data quality, related to the use of methods to detect "signs of life" in the measurement of emigration, impacting the reliability of data on emigration flows. Register-based systems are also limited in their ability and flexibility to capture detailed demographic characteristics, affecting the depth and utility of the data collected.
11. Countries using **combined** systems reported facing legal and bureaucratic barriers that restrict access to administrative data, making integration difficult. Inconsistencies in definitions across different data sources further complicate efforts to harmonize and integrate data, making the process resource and labour-intensive. Participants also noted difficulties in validating data accuracy, particularly when discrepancies exist between survey data and administrative records, or among different administrative data sources, making it challenging to ascertain the "true" figures.
12. Countries relying mainly on field-based data collection methods reported challenges with producing annual data on migration flows and can produce stock data only when a population and housing census takes place. A lack of robust sampling frames was highlighted as a key issue, which can lead to coverage gaps and bias, as well as extremely costly surveys. Participants noted that passenger surveys place a high burden on respondents, making it challenging to obtain accurate data. Household surveys face declining response rates, which can undermine the quality and reliability of the data collected. Moreover, certain population groups, such as undocumented migrants or highly mobile individuals, are often reluctant to participate in surveys, leading to underrepresentation in migration statistics.

Improving systems of migration statistics

13. Workshop discussions were rooted in the common understanding that countries should eventually move towards a system that harnesses administrative registers for migration statistics, together with sample surveys relevant to migration, alternative data sources and innovative methods. The **increased use of administrative data** not only promises a reduction in costs related to the production of migration statistics (and population statistics as a whole), but also addresses the issue of

decreasing response rates in field-based data collection. The idea of identifying champions – countries where an enabling environment has been set up that promotes access to and use of administrative data sources for statistical purposes – to serve as models was proposed to advance these efforts globally.

14. Specific recommendations emerged from the discussions on how each type of migration data system could be improved. For **field-based systems**, harnessing the potential of upcoming censuses to generate benchmark data on the number, distribution and main characteristics of migrants, establish updated sampling frames that can support design of surveys targeting migrants, and to support calibration of survey results was emphasized. This should involve training field workers and providing them with reference sheets and resources specific to migration statistics concepts and definitions to ensure accurate data collection. Reducing the respondent burden in surveys was also highlighted as a priority, aiming to increase participation and data reliability. Linking census and survey teams or workstreams was suggested to improve coordination and integration of data collection efforts. Building and maintaining robust sampling frames, accumulating samples, and beginning to incorporate administrative sources into field-based data systems was also recommended.
15. For systems that **make use of multiple data sources**, it was suggested to leverage upcoming censuses as a pivotal opportunity to establish robust migration stock statistics. There was consensus that a stronger role for National Statistical Offices (NSOs) as coordinators in data collection and integration efforts should be advocated. Creating a "sandbox" environment was proposed to facilitate collaboration between NSOs and other ministries, enabling experimentation and innovation in data practices. There was also a call to analyse existing legal frameworks to find ways to facilitate access to administrative data and to identify data producers of the NSS who can advocate for data sharing based on their own successful experience with the NSO. Integration of various data sources, harmonization of definitions, and building longitudinal datasets were emphasized as key steps to improve data consistency and long-term analysis.
16. Participants proposed several enhancements to **register-based systems** to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of migration data. One key suggestion was to refine the "signs of life" methods to better capture emigration data. There was also a recommendation to use additional data sources, such as Labour Force Surveys (LFS), to validate administrative data and improve its reliability. Identifying specific population groups with unique data challenges was highlighted as essential for tailored data collection strategies. Maintaining a feedback loop with data providers was seen as crucial for continuously improving data quality. Furthermore, participants agreed on the importance of disaggregating data by migrant status, sex, and age as much as possible.
17. A number of best practices were shared and discussed that could be used to improve all three types of migration data systems. Participants agreed on the importance of **enhancing data sharing** (both macro and micro) between origin and destination countries and at the regional level to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of migration statistics. In addition, the use of qualitative methods and integrated surveys were some specific best practices that could be shared. There was consensus on the need to engage and collaborate with a broad range of stakeholders, including those outside of traditional survey and administrative data systems. Participants proposed better communication of metadata, including the acknowledgment of data uncertainty, to build transparency. **Building**

capacity and trust among stakeholders was also emphasized as essential for the effective integration and use of migration data.

18. Participants agreed that starting with core statistics (Policy Area 1) that are foundational to understanding migration should be the priority for countries. Migration data should be seen as an integral part of broader population data systems. It was highlighted that within the fast-moving field of migration statistics, NSOs would need to be open to **embracing change** and innovation to measure the phenomena effectively and efficiently. The need to **mainstream a gender perspective** in migration statistics to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the entire data production cycle was also mentioned. This involves conceptualizing, collecting, analysing and communicating data on how migration affects men and women differently and ensuring that data collection methods are sensitive to gender-specific challenges and needs.
19. There was a discussion regarding the value of **experimentation** with new methodologies and data sources, such as big data, to enhance migration statistics. Cooperation with privately-held data owners was discussed, including the need to find ways for establishing mutually beneficial collaboration and leveraging private sector partnerships. Participants proposed documenting success stories and innovative practices to provide a reference for other countries. Additionally, there was an emphasis on developing methods to better capture data on irregular migration, an area underrepresented in traditional data collection efforts. Countries shared their experience with producing and publishing experimental statistics and there was discussion on best practices in doing this that would clearly communicate the experimental nature of the figures, allowing the NSO to maintain the trust of its users while innovating.

Capacity building

20. The workshop included a session on further capacity building, including a potential **global capacity-building programme on migration statistics**, aimed at supporting countries in improving their data collection, analysis and use capabilities. The programme would focus on practical training to promote the adoption of international standards, to improve migration data systems, and to experiment with the use of innovative data sources. There was rich discussion on the capacity building needs which will serve to inform the development of the programme. UNSD mentioned the *Introduction to Migration Statistics* [eLearning course](#) recently developed and publicly available, which can be a first step in the capacity building program.
21. Key capacity building needs identified for NSOs include advanced techniques in weighing and modelling to ensure accurate estimation. There is also a need to strengthen skills in managing disclosure risk in order to protect the privacy of individuals while handling sensitive data. The operationalization of coordination mechanisms was highlighted as a priority to improve the integration and synchronization of data collection efforts across different governmental and non-governmental entities. Participants also stressed the importance of advancing capabilities in processing administrative data, including the development and application of algorithms to streamline data processing. Assessing coverage to ensure comprehensive data collection and utilizing big data

sources were also seen as areas of development.

22. **Improving data literacy** was identified as a crucial area for capacity building, not only within NSOs but also among policymakers, the general public, and the broader NSS. For policymakers, enhanced data literacy is vital for informed decision-making, particularly in areas significantly impacted by migration. Educating the public on how to correctly interpret migration statistics can foster greater trust and mitigate potential conflict, leading to improved integration outcomes for immigrants. Within the NSS, increasing data literacy can help standardize definitions and data handling practices, and improve overall data quality across the system.

Elements for the revised Recommendations

23. It was agreed that the next draft of the revised *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* should be succinct, focusing on the conceptual framework and key recommendations to enhance the quality and consistency of migration data. Given the multi-stakeholder nature of migration statistics, the *Recommendations* should target not just the NSO, but also the NSS, providing them with a clear framework to guide their data collection, production, and dissemination efforts.
24. A cornerstone of the revised *Recommendations* should be a human rights-based approach to data collection, ensuring that data collection processes respect the rights and dignity of migrants, safeguarding their privacy and ensuring that data use does not lead to discrimination or harm.
25. The *Recommendations* should advocate for a comprehensive migration data system that integrates various data sources, including an increased use of administrative data, to provide a more complete and nuanced understanding of migration patterns. This system should be built within an enabling environment that facilitates data sharing across institutions and borders, overcoming legal and bureaucratic obstacles that often hinder data integration.
26. To ensure consistency and comparability of data, the *Recommendations* will emphasize the harmonization of definitions across different data sources, and, to the extent possible, countries. This harmonization will be crucial for accurately capturing migration flows and stocks and aligning them with broader population statistics. The importance of coordination among various stakeholders, including different government agencies and international organizations, will also be stressed in order to streamline data processes.
27. The document will place a strong focus on the core indicators of Policy Area 1, which deal with the measurement of international migration and temporary mobility stocks and flows. This will include the alignment of stocks and flows within broader population statistics, supported by a conceptual framework that categorizes the four subpopulations, relevant from a policy perspective.
28. The importance of regional cooperation in enhancing migration data systems will be underscored. Additionally, a unified voice from the United Nations will be presented, with alignment of the

conceptual framework on migration statistics with other relevant international frameworks and standards highlighted.

29. Communication around migration statistics throughout the statistical process, including before, during and after data collection, and during dissemination, will be explored in a separate chapter of the *Recommendations*. The importance of effectively communicating and disseminating migration statistics across different stakeholder groups will be emphasized. For data producers within the NSS, there will be a focus on creating incentives to enhance data quality and consistency. This includes clarifying concepts and definitions, ensuring comprehensive metadata documentation, and establishing robust data-sharing agreements. Training data collectors will be crucial to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills to gather accurate and reliable data.
30. For policy actors, the *Recommendations* will stress communicating the need to elevate the visibility and importance of migration data, aligning it with policy needs and emphasizing its human impact. This may include the development of dashboards in secure data spaces, providing accessible and actionable insights for decision-makers.
31. Engaging with the general public and media should involve promoting transparency and enhancing data literacy to ensure a correct understanding of migration statistics. Efforts should be made to mitigate data misuse through public education and clear communication. Conducting user surveys, offering open data access, and using storytelling are strategies to make the data more relatable and understandable.
32. Regarding migrants, the *Recommendations* will highlight the necessity of building trust through transparent communication, ensuring that consent is obtained when collecting data and involving migrants in the data collection process to reflect their perspectives and experiences accurately in the statistics produced.
33. Recognizing the varying capacities of NSSs, the *Recommendations* will propose standards that can be achieved step-by-step, allowing for gradual improvement of capabilities throughout the data cycle. The experimental aspect will also be included, encouraging countries to test new methodologies and data sources, such as big data, to innovate and improve the accuracy of migration statistics.

Next steps

34. As next steps, the secretariat committed to producing a revised draft of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*, taking onboard the rich feedback provided by the group, before circulating the draft for further review.
35. The workshop recommended continuing a high level of collaboration and alignment among UNSD and international organizations working in the migration statistics space.
36. The importance of regional cooperation was emphasized, particularly in sharing data and best

practices among countries, and in addressing common challenges such as data privacy and the harmonization of concepts and definitions.

37. The final version of the revised *Recommendations* is expected to be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its 56th session in 2025, for endorsement. Once it is endorsed, a common communication strategy will be elaborated to inform data users (both on the international and regional/national levels) about the revision of the *Recommendations*.
38. UNSD will engage with partners to guide the development of a global capacity building programme to support the operationalization of the revised *Recommendations*.