Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on International Migration Statistics Collected Through Population Censuses

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On 11 March 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic

While the magnitude/duration of the effects of the pandemic were unknown at that time ─ UNSD, as secretariat for the 2020 World Programme:

- recognized the need to continuously monitor the impact of COVID-19 on PHCs
- identified some areas of concern:
  - census timeline, budget, questionnaire, method of collection (multi-mode), quality of results (coverage, timeliness, comparability)
- particularly worrying was the situation of countries preparing to conduct census in the peak census years of 2020 and 2021
  - UNSD conducted four surveys in 2020-2022
  - three Expert Group Meetings in 2021-2022, to monitor the impact of the pandemic
Overall impact on census operations

104 NSOs responded:
*47 countries - census year 2020
*57 countries - census year 2021

Results of the survey conducted in December 2020/January 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of responding countries</th>
<th>27% No</th>
<th>73% Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census in 2020</td>
<td>17% No</td>
<td>83% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census in 2021</td>
<td>35% No</td>
<td>65% Yes</td>
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</tbody>
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About 20 countries postponed again mainly due to budget limitations and security issues.

### 2020

49 countries postponed their census to 2021 or beyond.
Impact on Data Accuracy

- **Data quality concerns may arise due to:**
  - Increasing non-response
  - Changes in the design of field operation to reduce face-to-face interview
  - Extension of the duration of enumeration (recall effect), at least 6 months
  - Shortening census questionnaire
the pandemic circumstances (mobility restrictions) would have a significant influence on census results -
- persons living in institutional places
  - significant decline in number of foreign students/workers because of lockdowns
- mortality
- **International** and internal migration
  - Both stocks and flows
- employment/unemployment, place of work/study

For countries in which **Immigration**, not fertility, mostly drives the **population growth** before the pandemic, will also be the main reason for the **slowdown since 2020** due to border restrictions.
Impact on timeliness

- International migration data generated from population census is usually available with **ten-year interval**
  - concentrated in two years ending with “0” and “1”,

- Because of the pandemic, release of census results will be delayed for several years

  - **12-13 years interval may have significant impact on data analysis and comparability overtime**
Few remarks..

➢ Census results should be carefully analyzed to understand to what extent census results on international migration were affected by the pandemic conditions
   ▪ expected that the census data collected during the pandemic could show some extraordinary patterns

➢ When travel restrictions were relaxed towards the end of 2021, there might be substantial gains in international migration in 2022 –and beyond

➢ Extensive dissemination of migration statistics and metadata will assist users to contextualize the effects of the pandemic
Report on survey results


Expert Group Meetings

