

Table 4

Table 4 presents population by national and/or ethnic group, sex and urban/rural residence for each census between 1985 and 2003.

Description of variables: Statistics presented in this table are from population censuses. The data shown in this table relate to a series of categories that are not uniform in concept or terminology. They represent a variety of characteristics or attributes, variously designated by countries or areas as race, colour, tribe, ethnic origin, ethnic group, ethnic nationality (as distinct from legal nationality) and so forth. The categories shown for each distribution are arranged in English alphabetic order for convenience. The category “Other” comprises data for all categories not listed separately.

Reliability and limitations of data: Although it is impossible to define these concepts precisely, the terms remain in use in national statistics and find application in the analysis of national data. The national and/or ethnic groups of the population about which information is collected in different countries are dependant upon national circumstances. Some of the bases on which ethnic groups are identified are: ethnic nationality (i.e., country or area of origin as distinct from citizenship or country of legal nationality), race, colour, language, religion, customs of dress or eating, tribe or various combinations of these characteristics. In addition, some of the terms used, such as “race”, “origin” or “tribe”, have a number of different connotations. The definitions and criteria applied by each country investigating ethnic characteristics of the population are, therefore, determined by the groups that it desires to identify. By the nature of the subject, these groups will vary widely from country to country; thus, no internationally relevant criteria can be recommended.

Knowledge of national and/or ethnic group is essential to any study of economic and social development in societies where such populations are important. Statistics on national and/or ethnic group furnish the primary information needed for the study of these characteristics. A number of the same names, with incidental national variations in spelling, appear in several of the distributions, giving some indication of the dispersion of culture groups across national borders on the continent. The label “Romani (Gypsy)” is used for the ethnic group referred to by countries as Gypsy, Roma, Romany, Romani and/or Tsigani.

Some idea of the diversity of the national classifications can be gained from the number of categories in which data are presented. Some countries or areas use a very small number of categories while others present data according to a detailed list of national and/or ethnic groups.

Errors in national census data can arise at any stage of the collection, processing or presentation process, and these errors may limit the quality and international comparability of census statistics presented in the Demographic Yearbook. Two major types of errors in census data are often distinguished: first, coverage errors, which lead to the over-enumeration or under-enumeration of the population in the census, and second, content errors, which affect the accuracy of the recorded information for the covered population. Because coverage errors may occur more frequently among some population subgroups than others, coverage errors may affect not only the absolute number of persons in any given category but also their relative distribution. Levels and patterns of coverage and content errors differ widely among countries and even, at times, from census to census for a specific country. Further limiting the international comparability of census statistics are variations among countries in the concepts, definitions and classifications used in their censuses.

The heterogeneity of the concepts used in collecting these data is their basic defect for international comparison. This lack of uniformity is evidenced by the variety of the terms described above. Furthermore, different shades of meaning have been attached to these words, so that the connotations

range from a rough biological concept, through a concept involving the national origin of one or more of the ancestors of the person concerned, to a question of cultural affiliation with historically, well defined groups within a country. In addition, more than one concept has sometimes been employed in a single distribution so that, for instance, "French" and "Black" may appear as two of the items in a classification by race or ethnic origin.

The particular term used by each country in indicating the concept employed is given, where known, in footnotes. It cannot, however, be assumed that similar terminology implies comparability of the data. This is probably of particular importance where the data pertain to race. Some countries have explained the sense in which the word is used but in most cases there is no such explanation and, in general, the term appears to cover a variety of concepts. Caution must therefore be used in any international comparison.

In addition to their heterogeneity, there are probably wide differences in the reliability of most of the basic data. Contributing to the variability of census responses dealing with ethnicity and/or national origin are such factors as (1) whether the response is provided by a family member (for example, when a census employs the self-enumeration method) or is entered by the census enumerator on the basis of his or her observation; (2) whether legal rights or acquired benefits may be perceived as effected by the response given; and (3) whether changes have occurred over time in patterns of ethnic identification.

For these reasons, it is impossible to estimate the degree of comparability that may exist among the data. It is probably preferable to regard the figures for each country or area as consisting of the information on population groups required for internal use, although certain rough comparisons on an international basis may be made between classifications based on the same variable.

Another important drawback to the use of these data for comparative purposes is the lack of data of the same type for a sufficient number of countries. Caution should be taken in comparing data across time, as concepts and questions can change.

The comparability of data by urban/rural residence is affected by the national definitions of urban and rural used in tabulating these data. National definitions are displayed in the regular issue of the Demographic Yearbook in the notes for table 6.

Population by national and or ethnic group has been shown previously in issues of the Demographic Yearbook featuring population census statistics as the special topic. Most recently these data were published in the 1993 Demographic Yearbook.