

Table 2 presents foreign-born population by country or area of birth, age and sex for each census between 1985 and 2004.

Description of variables: Statistics presented in this table are from population censuses. Data obtained from sample surveys are sometimes shown for those that are available. These have been footnoted. Data reported to have been based on the de facto or de jure concept are identified as such.

Data shown in this table relate to native and foreign-born population where native population is defined as persons born within the country or area; foreign-born population is defined as persons born outside the country or area. The country or area of birth is based on the national boundaries existing at the time of the census.¹

Age is defined as age at last birthday, that is, the difference between the date of birth and the date of the census, expressed in completed solar years. The age-classification used in this table is the following: under 1 year, 1-4 years, 5-year age groups through 75-79, and 80 years and over.

The urban/rural classification is that provided by each country or area; it is presumed to be based on the national definitions of urban population that have been set forth at the end of table 6 of the *Demographic Yearbook 2002* (For reference, please see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2002/Introduction.pdf> for more information).

Reliability of data: No special reliability codes have been used in connection with this table.

Limitations: Statistics on native and foreign-born population by age and sex are subject to the same qualifications which have been set forth for population statistics in general in section 3 of the Technical Notes for the regular *Demographic Yearbook 2002*.

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 sub-groups 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.

Non-residents temporarily present in a country at the time of a census are almost all foreign born. However, there is considerable variation among census as to whether or not individual categories of non-residents are included in the census. Their omission or inclusion may produce lack of comparability in census data between censuses of the foreign-born population or between those for different countries. A related source of variation is the difference observed between countries in defining the native-born population.

In terms of international comparability, one of the most important defects of data on country of birth, is the variation in the classification schemes used, and in the detail tabulated, for the foreign-born. Some countries show only the simple dichotomy, native-born and foreign-born (these data appear in table 2 of the *Demographic Yearbook Special Census Topic Volume 3*); others give data in detail for countries of particular interest, such as those adjacent to them or those countries related to them through bonds of commonwealth or union, while combining other areas into a larger whole, often without regard to continental boundaries; still others show uniform detail for all continents. Such lack of uniformity and detail in the classification hampers use of the data, as well as its regrouping for special regional studies.

Another problem arises from the changing boundaries of countries where persons have been born and the difficulties of designating the exact "country of birth". Not all countries or areas classify country of birth according to national boundaries existing at the time of the census. Even where it is planned to follow this practice, the procedures employed may not produce uniform results. Neither the enumerator nor the

¹ Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14. Para. 146

respondent may have a sufficiently precise knowledge of boundary changes to insure an accurate return. Collection of information on locality as well as country of birth, and subsequent allocation to country at the schedule editing stage, may also not produce consistent classification because of the difficulty of identifying the localities reported by respondents.

Because these are statistics classified according to age, they are subject to the limitations with respect to accuracy of reported ages similar to those already discussed in section 3.1.3 of the Technical Notes and in the Technical Notes for table 7 of the *Demographic Yearbook* 2002. The absence of frequencies in the unknown age group does not necessarily indicate completely accurate reporting and tabulation of the age item. It is often an indication that the unknowns have been eliminated by assigning ages to them before tabulation, or by proportionate distribution after tabulation.

Despite these limitations statistics by country of birth and sex can provide a crude measure of the volume and sources of migration during an indefinite number of years prior to the census. Since they do not take account of deaths among incoming groups since immigration, or of subsequent emigration, they do not provide precise measures of the amount of migration but only indicate the tendency. For more accurate measures, data for two or more censuses, cross-classified by age and other characteristics, are essential.

Earlier data: Foreign-born population by age and sex has been shown previously in issues of the *Demographic Yearbook* featuring population census statistics as the special topic. This series updates information published in the previous issue as indicated in the Index.