

## **Maryland Daily Record (Baltimore, USA)**

United Nations, 100 countries to celebrate World Statistics Day

by Capital News Service

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Those crime statistics in your county's annual reports don't compile themselves. And where do you think those average-normal seasonal temperatures come from? Well, the United Nations thinks it's time everyone recognizes the statistics, and statisticians, that power our world.

More than 100 countries will celebrate the U.N.'s first World Statistics Day on Wednesday to strengthen awareness and trust in official statistics and acknowledge statisticians' public service.

And Oct. 20 is the perfect day to celebrate, the U.N. decided, because the date is striking: Using European-style date order, Wednesday is 20-10-2010.

This alone shows that statisticians have a sense of humor.

Despite the stereotypes, all statisticians don't sit at a desk crunching numbers all day with a pad and pen in hand, said Andrew Wright, a crime mapping analyst who gives information to the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention.

"I think it's probably viewed by the general public as boring," Wright said. "They don't realize the power statistics have."

Wright is part of a Washington College program that analyzes crime data for law enforcement agencies across Maryland.

Statisticians go beyond raw numbers to use statistics as analytical tools that have real applications, Wright said. This is especially true in law enforcement, which uses statistics to modify practices to reduce crime and to measure whether these changes produce results, he said.

Gov. Martin O'Malley is "big on statistics" and uses them to make decisions, Wright said.

Here's a good statistic: Maryland employed about 9.2 percent of the country's statisticians with 2,675 employed in 2008, the most recent year data are available, according to occupational projections from Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

And statistics help promote world peace, so says U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, who commended statisticians for carrying out "an essential public service."

“On this first World Statistics Day, I encourage the international community to work with the United Nations to enable all countries to meet their statistical needs,” Ban Ki-Moon said in a written statement. “Let us all acknowledge the crucial role of statistics in fulfilling our global mission of development and peace.”

Raising the profile of statisticians and awareness among users and producers of statistics are several U.N. objectives for World Statistics Day, which has the theme “Celebrating the Many Achievements of Official Statistics.”

The U.N. also hopes the day will lead to more quality data from statisticians, said Yacob Zewoldi, chief of the demographic statistics section of the U.N. Statistics Division.

Many countries around the world are conducting their population censuses this year, which is one reason for the date, according to the U.N. Statistics Division.

The U.S. completed surveys for its decennial census in July.

Celebrating statistics is a big deal in some countries, Zewoldi said. For example, the Philippines is celebrating its 21st annual National Statistics Month.

“This is the first time there’s participation worldwide,” Zewoldi said.

The United States will hold a federal statistical agency open house Wednesday on Capitol Hill to celebrate.

The Maryland State Data Center does not have any official plans for the holiday, but manager Jane Traynham said she hopes it will get more people interested in statistics.

“People tend to rely on Wikipedia or Google for information instead of using statistics,” Traynham said. World Statistics Day is about “telling people how this is a really important aspect of our lives and getting people interested in [statistics] again.”

In September, the Census Bureau recognized Traynham for her work in advertising and encouraging participation for the 2010 census and for the center’s involvement with the federal bureau.

Traynham especially hopes more young people will get involved in the census and statistics in general.

Census Bureau Director Robert Groves will celebrate World Statistics Day by speaking to a math class of Eastern High School seniors in Washington, D.C., to highlight the importance of statistics.

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