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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE  
Department of Statistics



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## **Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration**

## Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration

### Preamble

The 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS),

In response to the resolution concerning further work on labour migration statistics adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (2013),

Recalling the implications of the ILO Constitution (1919), the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) and the accompanying Migration for Employment Recommendation (Revised), 1949 (No. 86), the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (1967), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) and the accompanying Migrant Workers Recommendation, 1975 (No. 151), the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990), the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto (2003), the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended, the outcomes of the Tripartite Meeting on Issues relating to Migrant Fishers (2017) and relevant international and regional instruments, in particular the General Agreement on Trade in Services (1995), mode 4,

Following up the resolution concerning fair and effective labour migration governance (2017), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (2015) and the Report of the Director-General entitled *Fair migration: Setting an ILO agenda* (2014),

Having reviewed the relevant texts of the Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1 (1998), adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission, the resolution concerning statistics of child labour adopted by the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2008, the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008, the resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS in 2013, and the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 3 (2017), adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

Recognizing that while a significant majority of international migrants are migrant workers, international labour migration is a broader phenomenon than what is covered by the Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1, that there is, therefore, a need for international recommendations on all aspects of international labour migration, that the lack of comprehensive statistical information regarding international labour migration and its impact on national development has hindered the effective integration of labour migration into national development strategies, and that the absence of international standards regarding concepts, definitions and methodologies for the measurement of international labour migration and migrant workers continues to be a major obstacle to the production of harmonized statistics,

Recognizing that legal authorities in countries may have a mandate to regulate international migration to and from their territories, and that the registration conducted to administer and enforce such regulations may serve as a basis for statistics,

Acknowledging the ILO rights-based approach to labour migration, that the methods and measures concerning international labour migration and migrant workers in a given country will depend on the national context and policy priorities and specific user needs, and that their implementation will therefore, to a certain extent, be determined by national circumstances,

Endorses this 18<sup>th</sup> day of October 2018 the following guidelines and encourages countries to test the conceptual framework on which they are based.

## Objectives and scope

1. International labour migration is a rising policy priority and there is a need to respond equitably to the interests of countries of origin and countries of destination, as well as to the interests of migrant workers. To be effective, policies must be based on strong evidence, including the number of international migrant workers involved, their characteristics and their employment patterns. International labour migration may take the form of international labour mobility, as temporary or short-term movement of persons across countries for employment-related purposes in the context of the free movements of workers in regional economic communities.
2. The term *international labour migration* is used in the present guidelines as a generic term to refer, in general, to concepts related to the process and outcome of international labour migration and, in particular, to the following three concepts:
  - (a) international migrant workers;
  - (b) for-work international migrants;
  - (c) return international migrant workers.
3. These guidelines aim at supporting countries to develop their national statistics on international labour migration and at encouraging them to test the conceptual framework suggested in the guidelines.
4. In general, statistics of international labour migration should cover the reference population, comprising all persons who are usual residents of the country, regardless of sex, country of origin or citizenship (nationality), in line with the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 3 (2017). For the purpose of these guidelines, the reference population also includes persons who are not usual residents in the country but who are, nevertheless, in the labour force or potential labour force or any other forms of work in that country, such as frontier workers, seasonal workers, itinerant workers, documented and undocumented migrant workers, project-tied workers, specified-employment workers, seafarers and workers on an offshore installation.<sup>1</sup> Refugees and asylum-seekers may be members of the labour force in the

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<sup>1</sup> International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990), Article 2.

destination country, but their reason for leaving the country of origin is purportedly to seek international protection and is not to seek work.

5. In countries with a significant inflow of short-term or temporary migrant workers, employment statistics should be supplemented, to the extent possible, by information on the employment characteristics of non-usual residents working in the national territory, so as to permit analysis of their situation and their impact on the labour market.
6. The common concepts and definitions recommended in the present guidelines are coherent with the current international standards and guidelines on the subject of statistics on work adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS, the Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1 (1998), and the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 3 (2017).
7. A primary concern of the ILO is to identify and measure stocks and flows of international migrant workers, and on that basis to promote measures to protect them through a rights-based approach. It is important to promote labour migration that improves the welfare of migrant workers and their families both in their country of origin and in their country of destination.
8. The purpose of these guidelines is to help countries to develop their national statistical system by collecting comparable statistics on international labour migration in order to provide an improved information base for the various users, taking account of specific national needs and circumstances. Such a system should be designed to achieve a number of objectives, in particular to obtain a better understanding of the migration process; to assess the socio-demographic characteristics and conditions of work and the equitable treatment of different groups of international migrant workers; and to study the relative status of the disadvantaged groups of international migrant workers that are of specific policy concern.
9. To achieve these objectives, the integrated national statistical system should be developed in consultation with the various users of the statistics and, to the extent possible, in harmony with the collection of other economic, demographic and social statistics. Choices regarding the concepts and topics covered and their different frequencies of measurement and/or reporting will depend on their national relevance and the resources available. Each country should establish an appropriate strategy for data collection and statistical reporting that ensures the progress and sustainability of the system.
10. In developing their statistics on international labour migration, countries should endeavour to incorporate the guidelines recommended below in order to promote international comparability and to permit the evaluation of trends and differences in the magnitude, patterns and consequences, for countries and individuals, of the stocks and flows of international migrant workers.

## Concepts and definitions

### ***Resident population***

11. In line with the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 3, the *resident population* of a country comprises all persons who are *usual residents* of the country, regardless of sex, national origin, citizenship or geographic location of their place of work. This includes stateless persons and non-citizens who are usual residents but have no documentation of residence. It also includes usual residents who work outside the country (e.g. frontier workers, seasonal workers, other short-term migrant workers, volunteer workers and nomads).

### ***Resident producer units***

12. In line with the System of National Accounts, a *resident producer unit* is an economic unit whose principal function is the production of goods and services and whose centre of economic interest is within the economic territory of a given country.

### ***International migrants***

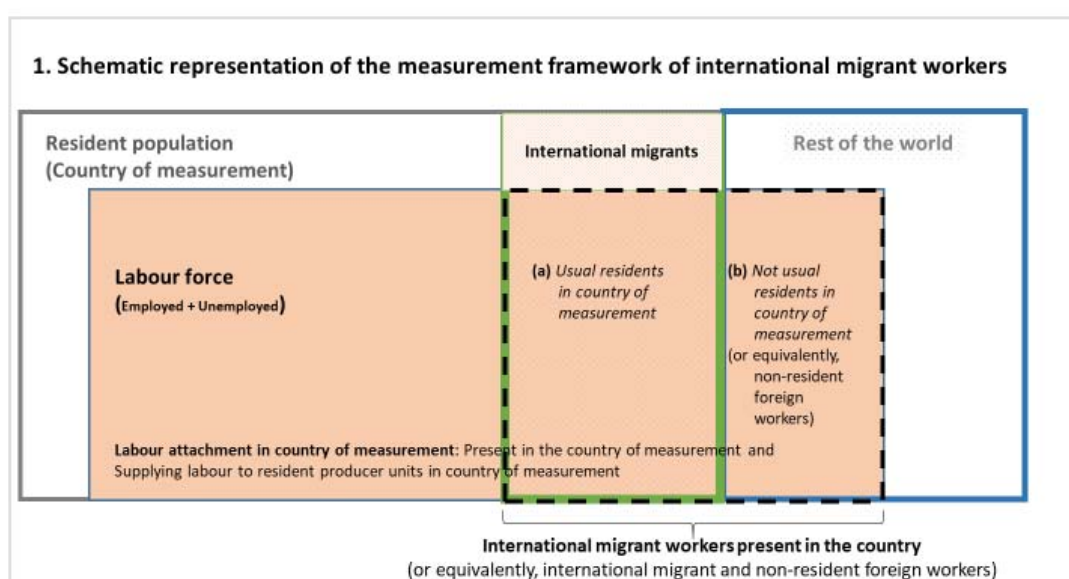
13. *International migrants* include all those residents of a given country who have ever changed their country of usual residence. For the purpose of practical measurement and in line with United Nations recommendations, international migrants may be measured as “all persons who are usual residents of that country and who are citizens of another country (foreign population) or whose place of birth is located in another country (foreign-born population)”. In particular:

- (a) the *foreign-born population* of a country includes all persons who have that country as the country of their usual residence and whose place of birth is located in another country. They correspond to the stock of international migrants who have migrated at least once in their life and currently reside outside their country of birth. People born outside their country of current residence but who are citizens of that country at birth (e.g. born abroad of national parent(s) living abroad) are sometimes excluded from the count of foreign-born population. The recorded country of birth refers to the geographical entity at the time of data collection. Native born persons can be nationals or foreign citizens or both;
- (b) the *foreign population of a country* includes all persons who do not have citizenship of the country of their usual residence. It includes resident stateless persons. It excludes international migrants who have acquired citizenship of their country of usual residence. The foreign population can be foreign-born or native-born.

## ***International migrant workers***

14. The concept of *international migrant workers* is meant to measure the current labour attachment of international migrants in a country, irrespective of the initial purpose of migration, and of others who are not usual residents of the country but have current labour attachment in the country of measurement. In this context, the terms “international migrant workers” and “international migrant and non-resident foreign workers” are equivalent. They are defined, for statistical purposes, as all persons of working age present in the country of measurement who are in one of the following two categories:
- (a) *usual residents*: international migrants who, during a specified reference period, were in the labour force of the country of their usual residence, either in employment or in unemployment;
  - (b) *not usual residents, or non-resident foreign workers*: persons who, during a specified reference period, were not usual residents of the country but were present in the country and had labour attachment to the country, i.e., were either in employment supplying labour to resident producer units of that country or were seeking employment in that country.
15. From the perspective of the country of usual residence, category 14(b) of international migrant workers (not usual residents, or non-resident foreign workers) may be called “residents working abroad”. From the perspective of the country of citizenship, resident citizens working abroad and non-resident citizens working abroad (in the sense of being in the labour force of the country of their current usual residence) may be called “citizens working abroad”. Similarly, from the perspective of the country of birth, resident native-born persons working abroad and non-resident native-born persons working abroad may be called “native-born persons working abroad”.
16. The concepts of “working age population”, “labour force”, “employment” and “unemployment” are defined in line with the latest international standards concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization, as follows:
- (a) the *working age population* is determined on the basis of a specified lower age limit (taking into consideration the minimum age for employment or the age of completion of compulsory schooling), with no upper age limit. Where relevant, the lower age limit may be extended to separately measure the labour attachment of international migrant children and of non-resident children below the working age;
  - (b) the *labour force* is defined as persons of working age who were either in employment or in unemployment during the specified reference period;
  - (c) *persons in employment* are defined as all those of working age who, during the specified reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit;
  - (d) *persons in unemployment* are defined as all those of working age who were not in employment, carried out activities to seek employment during the specified reference period and were currently available to take up employment given a job opportunity.

17. Depending on policy objectives, countries may wish to also include among international migrant workers persons who, during the specified reference period, were in the potential labour force or were engaged in unpaid forms of work, as defined in the latest international standards on the topics. The extension of the scope of labour attachment to the potential labour force may be particularly relevant in cases where some international migrants are not allowed to work for pay or profit or are subject to restrictions limiting the type or location of work. For the purpose of international comparisons, data on different categories of labour attachment and different forms of work of international migrant workers should be presented separately.
18. The specified reference period should, in principle, be short, such as seven days or one week. The measurement of different forms of work may, however, use different lengths of time around the reference period, such as four weeks or a calendar month for own-use production of goods, unpaid trainee work and volunteer work, and one or more 24-hour days within a seven-day or one-week period for own-use provision of services.
19. The main elements of the measurement of international migrant workers are presented in the diagram below.



20. The following categories of workers are included as international migrant workers. The categories are not exhaustive and mutually exclusive, and are not meant to be measured separately in all circumstances. The list is meant to illustrate the particular categories of workers that are included within the scope of international migrant workers:

- (a) frontier workers, who are not usual residents of the country of measurement but have been granted permission to be employed on a continuous basis in that country provided they depart at regular and short intervals (daily or weekly) from the country;

- (b) seasonal workers, who are not usual residents of the country of employment, whose work by its character is dependent on seasonal conditions and is performed during part of the year;
- (c) itinerant workers, who are not usual residents of the country of measurement but travel to the country for short periods for work-related reasons;
- (d) project-tied workers, who are admitted to the country of employment for a defined period of employment solely on a specific project being carried out in that country by their employer;
- (e) specified-employment workers, who have been sent by their employer, such as a multinational enterprise, for a restricted and defined period of time to the country of employment to undertake a specific assignment or duty, or to undertake work that requires professional, commercial, technical or other highly specialized skills or work that is transitory or brief, and who are required to depart from the country of employment either at the expiration of their authorized period of stay or earlier if they no longer undertake that specified assignment or duty or engage in that work;
- (f) self-employed workers, who are engaged in a remunerated activity otherwise than under a contract of employment and who earn their living through their activity normally working alone or together with members of their family, also including any other migrant worker recognized as self-employed by applicable legislation of the country of employment or bilateral or multilateral agreements;
- (g) seafarers, including fishermen employed on a vessel which is registered in the country of measurement, of which the workers are not nationals;
- (h) workers employed on an offshore installation that is under the jurisdiction of the country of measurement, of which the workers are not nationals;
- (i) foreign domestic workers engaged by resident employers;
- (j) foreign students who entered the country on the declared purpose of studying but then were working or seeking work or combining work and study;
- (k) international travellers on tourism trips whose main purpose is to be employed in the country of visit and receive compensation for the labour input provided;
- (l) working or seeking work refugees and asylum-seekers, irrespective of authorization to work during processing of refugee status or sanctuary request;
- (m) forcibly displaced persons across borders due to natural or human-made disasters, working or seeking work in the country of displacement;
- (n) persons trafficked across international borders for forced labour or labour exploitation.

21. *Excluded* as international migrant workers are:

- (a) foreign military and diplomatic personnel;
- (b) international travellers on tourism trips undertaking work in the country of visit that is incidental to the trip (i.e. not its main purpose);
- (c) staff of call centres in non-resident production units and others providing services from a foreign location.



## ***For-work international migrants***

22. The concept of *for-work international migrants* is intended to measure the movements of persons from one country to another for the purpose of undertaking or seeking work. For statistical purposes, for-work international migrants are all international migrants as defined in paragraph 14 above covering category 14(a) (usual residents) as well as category 14(b) (not usual residents), who entered the country of measurement during a specific reference period for the purpose of undertaking or seeking employment and whose intention was documented or declared at the time of entry to the country. In particular:

- (a) the specified reference period for the measurement of for-work international migrants should be long, such as the previous 12 months or the previous calendar year;
- (b) for-work international migrants are distinguished from other international migrants who enter the country primarily for reasons not related to undertaking or seeking employment. In both cases, the distinction refers to the time of entry and not to the current situation of the person;
- (c) the term “undertaking or seeking employment” is understood to mean engaging in employment or seeking and being available for employment, in line with the definitions of employment, unemployment and potential labour force of 19th ICLS Resolution I. Undertaking or seeking employment may not be the only reason or the main reason for entry in the country. It suffices for it to be one of the documented or declared reasons. Where relevant and feasible, countries may wish to extend the measurement to a broader concept of “undertaking or seeking work” that would include forms of work other than employment, such as “unpaid trainee work”, “volunteer work” or “own-use production work”;
- (d) the term “documented or declared” is understood to mean documented in official immigration registers or declared to relevant immigration authorities.

## ***Return international migrant workers***

23. The concept of *return international migrant workers* is intended to provide a basis for measuring the work experience of persons returning after being international migrant workers abroad. For the country of measurement, return international migrant workers are defined as all current residents of the country who were previously international migrant workers in another country or countries. In particular:

- (a) the measurement of return international migrant workers does not depend on the current labour force status of persons in the country of current residence. Return international migrant workers may include persons currently outside the labour force or outside the potential labour force, or persons no longer engaged in any form of work in the country of current residence;
- (b) return international migrant workers include those current residents of the country of measurement who were working abroad without being usual residents of the country

- in which they worked (corresponding to category 14(b) (not usual residents) of international migrant workers as given above);
- (c) it is recommended that the chosen minimum duration of labour attachment abroad for a person to be considered as a return international migrant worker be relatively short, such as 6 months, calculated on a cumulative basis for workers with repeated spells of migration;
  - (d) it is recommended that the reference period for the date of return, i.e., the maximum time elapsed since the return of the person to the country of current residence for them to be included in the count (stock) of return international migrant workers in that country, should be relatively long, such as last 12 months or last 5 years, or it may be left open and then classified by date of return.

## **Classifications**

24. International labour migration is characterized by its directionality, duration and nature. Directionality distinguishes between entry and exit of international migrant workers. Duration refers to the duration of stay in the country of labour attachment. Nature of international labour migration refers to its permanent or temporary character.

### Directionality

25. International migrant workers may be classified by country of labour attachment and country of origin. In particular:
- (a) *country of labour attachment* is the country in which the international migrant worker was supplying labour to resident producer unit(s) during the specified reference period used for measurement. For category 14(a) (usual residents) of international migrant workers, the country of labour attachment is the same as the country of usual residence. For category 14(b) (not usual residents) of international migrant workers, the country of labour attachment differs from the country of usual residence;
  - (b) depending on the definition used for measurement purposes (category 14(a) or 14 (b) of international migrant workers), the *country of origin* of the international migrant worker may refer to the country of birth, the country of citizenship or the country of previous usual residence. For category 14(b) (not usual residents) of international migrant workers, the country of origin may usually refer to the country of current usual residence; alternatively, it may refer to the country of birth or the country of citizenship.
26. For-work international migrants may be classified by country of origin and country of destination. In particular:
- (a) as for international migrant workers, the *country of origin* of for-work international migrants may be the country of birth, the country of citizenship or the country of previous usual residence, depending on the definition of international migrants used for measurement purposes;

(b) the *country of destination* of for-work international migrants refers to the country which the migrant entered to undertake or seek employment.

27. For-work international migrants may transit through one or more countries in their movement from country of origin to country of destination. For-work migrant workers may be classified by *country or countries of transit* retrospectively, when the country of destination has been reached. For a country to be considered as a country of transit, the minimum length of stay in that country should be at least 4 weeks during which the worker had been undertaking or seeking work. If the duration of stay was beyond a certain maximum threshold, the country should be considered not as a country of transit but as a country of previous labour attachment. The maximum threshold may be determined in line with the national circumstances and policy priorities of the country.
28. Return international migrant workers may be classified by *country of previous labour attachment*. The country of previous labour attachment refers to the country in which the return international migrant was previously an international migrant worker. In the case that the return international migrant had more than one country of previous labour attachment, the country of last labour attachment or the country of longest labour attachment, or a combination of the two criteria, may be used for classification purposes.

#### Duration of stay

29. International migrant workers, for-work international migrants and return international migrant workers may be classified according to duration of stay in the country of current labour attachment. Return international migrant workers may also be classified according to duration of stay and duration of labour attachment in the country of previous labour attachment, including periods the person was in that country but temporarily had no labour attachment.
30. For international migrant workers, *duration of stay* is the length of elapsed time spent in the country of labour attachment. It includes periods during which the international migrant worker was temporarily absent from his or her work or had temporarily no labour attachment in the country. The term *elapsed time* refers to the fact that the international migrant worker is still present in the country of labour attachment and the duration of stay, at the time of measurement, may be incomplete.
31. The following categories of international migrant workers may be distinguished in terms of duration of stay:
- (a) *long-term international migrant workers*, that is, international migrant workers whose duration of stay in the country of labour attachment has been one year or more (12 months or more). Where relevant, long-term international migrant workers may be sub-divided to distinguish between those with duration of stay of less than 5 years, and those with duration of stay of 5 years or more;
  - (b) *short-term international migrant workers*, that is, international migrant workers whose cumulative duration of stay in the country of labour attachment has been of limited duration, i.e., less than 12 months;

(c) for certain policy purposes, it may also be relevant to separately identify *seasonal international migrant workers* (category 20(b) of international migrant workers), whose work by its character is dependent on seasonal conditions and is performed during only a part of the year. Similar considerations for separate identification may also apply to *frontier workers* and *itinerant workers* (categories 20(a) and 20(c) of international migrant workers).

Within the three categories 31(a), 31(b) and 31(c), international migrant workers may be further classified for analytical purposes by *duration of labour attachment*, distinguishing between duration of employment and duration of unemployment, and, where relevant, duration in other forms of work or activities.

32. In the case of for-work international migrant workers, the duration of stay refers to the duration of intended stay and the country of labour attachment refers to the country of destination.

33. In the case of return international migrant workers, the country of labour attachment is the country of previous labour attachment and the duration of stay refers to the duration of the completed stay in that country. For certain policy and analytical purposes, it may also be relevant to classify return international migrant workers according to the cumulative duration of stay in all countries of previous labour attachment.

#### Permanent or temporary nature

34. For-work international migrants may be classified according to the permanent or temporary nature of their intended stay in the country of labour attachment at the time of entry, as follows:

(a) *permanent for-work international migrants*, that is, for-work international migrants with the intention of settling for a lifetime in the country of labour attachment or country of destination. For practical purposes, in the case of employees with labour contracts, permanent for-work international migrants may be defined on the basis of the duration of the labour contract, such as those with labour contracts with a duration of 5 years or more. From the perspective of the country of citizenship, when different from the country of labour attachment or country of destination, permanent for-work international migrants may be regarded as “citizens working abroad with no intention of returning to the country of citizenship”. Similarly, from the perspective of the country of birth, when different from the country of labour attachment or country of destination, permanent for-work international migrants may be regarded as “native-born persons working abroad with no intention of returning to the country of birth”;

(b) *temporary for-work international migrants*, that is, for-work international migrants entering the country of labour attachment or country of destination with the intention of stay for a limited period of time period, which may be less or more than 12 months. The time restriction may be voluntary on the part of worker or due to the needs of the employing organization. For practical purposes, in the case of employees with labour

contracts, temporary for-work international migrants may be defined on basis of the duration of the labour contract. From the perspective of the country of citizenship, when different from the country of labour attachment or country of destination, temporary for-work international migrants may be regarded as “citizens working abroad with the intention of returning to the country of citizenship”. Similarly, from the perspective of the country of birth, when different from the country of labour attachment or country of destination, temporary for-work international migrants may be regarded as “native-born persons working abroad with the intention of returning to the country of birth”;

35. Where relevant and feasible, international migrant workers may also be classified as permanent and temporary international migrant workers on the basis of nature of intended stay as in the case of for-work international migrants. It should be noted that in the case of international migrant workers, there may be categories who cannot be adequately classified as permanent or temporary international migrant workers due to the nature of their labour migration. One particular group comprises *circular international migrant workers*, that is, international migrant workers involved in multiple movements between country of origin and country of labour attachment within a specified period of time, such as 12 months. This group includes category 14 (b) (not usual residents) of international migrant workers.

### ***Statistics of stocks and flows***

36. The statistics of stocks and flows provide information on the numbers of international migrant workers present in the country and the changes in their migrant status and work status, as follows:
- (a) the *stock of international migrant workers* is the number of international migrant workers present in the country of measurement at a given time, as defined in categories 14(a) and 14 (b) set out above;
  - (b) the *inflow of for-work international migrants* is the number of for-work international migrants who entered in the country of measurement during the reference period specified in paragraph 22(a) above;
  - (c) the *inflow of international migrant workers* is the sum of: (i) the number of international migrants already present in the country of measurement before the beginning of the specified reference period, who were outside the labour force at the beginning of the reference period but entered the labour force of the country of measurement during the reference period; (ii) the inflow of international migrants who entered the country of measurement during the reference period – whether as for-work international migrants or for whatever other reason – and entered the labour force of the country of measurement during the reference period; (iii) non-residents of the country of measurement who became non-resident international migrant workers in the country during the reference period. The inflow of international migrant workers *includes* the inflow of for-work international migrants who entered the country of measurement during the reference period and had labour attachment in that country at some time during the reference period. It *excludes*, however, the inflow of for-work international migrants who entered the country of measurement

during the reference period but have remained without labour attachment in that country throughout the reference period;

- (d) the *outflow of international migrant workers* is the sum of: (i) the number of international migrant workers who left the country of measurement (or died) during the specified reference period; (ii) the number of international migrant workers who remained in the country of measurement but left the labour force of the country during the reference period; and (iii) non-resident international migrant workers in the country of measurement whose labour attachment in that country terminated during the reference period, for whatever reason. The outflow of international migrant workers *excludes* for-work international migrants in the country of measurement who left that country (or died) during the reference period, without having had labour attachment in the country at any time during the reference period.

While the three categories (i), (ii) and (iii) in subparagraphs 36(c) and 36(d) are needed to ensure that the statistics of inflow and outflow of international migrant workers are consistent with those on the change in the stock of international migrant workers, it is important to distinguish between the migrant flows (category (ii)) and the labour force flows (categories (i) and (iii)) representing the entries and exits to and from the labour force.

37. The *change in the stock of international migrant workers* during a given period of time is equal to the inflow of international migrant workers during that period minus the outflow of international migrant workers during that same period. If the stock has increased, there has been a *net inflow of international migrant workers*; if the stock has decreased, there has been a *net outflow of international migrant workers* during the given period.

38. The main statistics of stocks and flows of return international migrant workers are:

- (a) the *stock of return international migrant workers* is the total number of return international migrant workers in the country of measurement at a given point of time, as defined in paragraph 23 above;
- (b) the *inflow of return international migrant workers* is the number of return international migrant workers returning to the country of measurement during a certain specified period of time.

39. In countries where there is a significant movement of return international migrant workers to other countries (or to certain specified countries), it may be relevant to also compile statistics of *outflow of return international migrant workers*, defined as the number of return international migrant workers who leave the country of measurement for another country during a given period for work or other reasons.

### **Core indicators**

40. Each country should select a set of indicators to monitor the process of international labour migration affecting the country. For international reporting, the following set of core indicators is proposed.

41. The core indicators of international migrant workers are:

- (a) the stock of international migrant workers at the mid-point of the reporting period, distinguishing between categories 14(a) (usual residents) and 14(b) (not usual residents) of international migrant workers;
- (b) the labour force participation rate, the employment-to-population ratio and the unemployment rate of international migrants, as defined in paragraph 16 above. Since category 14(a) of international migrant workers refers to usual residents in the country of labour attachment, by definition, the corresponding categories 16(a), 16(b), 16(c) and 16(d) cover only residents:

$$\text{Labour force participation rate} = \frac{\text{International migrant workers, category 14(a), 16(b)}}{\text{International migrants of working age, category 16(a)}}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Employment – to – population ratio} \\ = \frac{\text{Employed international migrant workers, category 14(a), 16(c)}}{\text{International migrants of working age, category 16(a)}} \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Unemployment rate} = \frac{\text{Unemployed international migrant workers, category 14(a), 16(d)}}{\text{International migrant workers, category 14(a), 16(b)}}$$

- (c) in countries with a significant number of category 14(b) (not usual residents) of international migrant workers, the modified labour force participation rate, the employment-to-population ratio and the unemployment rate may be calculated by adding the number of category 14(b) international migrant workers to both the numerator and the denominator of the indicators of international migrant workers;
- (d) where “labour attachment” in the definition of international migrant workers is extended to cover the potential labour force and unpaid forms of work, the indicators of international migrant workers should distinguish between the different forms of labour attachment and corresponding rates and ratios should be calculated, as appropriate;
- (e) in countries with a significant number of child international migrant workers, an appropriate lower age limit may be used in defining the working age population and the corresponding population of international migrant workers for the purpose of calculating the labour force participation rate and the employment-to-population ratio of international migrant workers.

42. The core indicators of the inflow of for-work international migrants are:

- (a) inflow of for-work international migrants during the reference period chosen in paragraph 22(a), identifying separately the number of temporary, and where relevant, the number of circular for-work international migrants as defined in paragraphs 34 and 35;
- (b) the share of inflow of for-work international migrants in the total inflow of international migrants during the reference period, irrespective of the reason for migration.

43. The core indicators of return international migrant workers are:

- (a) the stock of return international migrant workers at mid-point of the reference period chosen under paragraph 23(a) above;
- (b) the share of return international migrant workers in the working age population of the country of measurement at mid-point of the same reference period;
- (c) the inflow of return international migrant workers in the country of measurement during the reference period chosen under paragraph 38(b) above.

44. The core indicators should be disaggregated by sex and, where relevant, by country of origin, country of destination, country of labour attachment or country of previous labour attachment, in line with the definitions given in paragraphs 25 to 28 above. Where relevant and feasible, the core indicators may be extended to reflect on other aspects of labour underutilization of international migrant workers, in particular, time-related underemployment and other forms of underemployment.

45. To enable measurement of trends, the core indicators should be reported at the national level on a regular basis and, where relevant and feasible, on a frequent basis, such as annually, quarterly or monthly, as appropriate.

## **Data collection**

### ***Items of data collection and tabulation***

46. The items of data collection should provide comprehensive information for the various users of the statistics of international labour migration, taking into account specific national needs and circumstances. The information should cover data on the main socio-demographic characteristics and the migrant status and work status of international migrant workers, for-work international migrants and return international migrant workers. The main items of data collection include:

(a) *main socio-demographic characteristics:*

- sex
- age or date of birth
- marital status
- level of education attained
- type of living quarters (private household, collective or institutional household, other type of living quarters, non-residential accommodation)
- country of birth and country of birth of parent(s)
- country of citizenship
- country of usual residence
- country of last usual residence (or country of previous labour attachment for return international migrant workers)



- proficiency (speaking, reading, writing) in a language of the country of labour attachment

(b) *main migration characteristics:*

- purpose of migration (declared or documented reason for first entry into the country, specifically the country of actual or intended labour attachment); and also, for return international migrant workers, the main reason for last departure from the country of previous labour attachment
- type of visa, residence permit, work permit
- permanent, temporary or circular nature of migration
- duration of stay: date of first entry into the country of labour attachment; and also, for return international migrant workers, date of last departure from the country
- any restrictions in the rights to residence in the country of actual or intended labour attachment (such as concerning place of residence, duration of stay, mobility)

(c) *main work characteristics:*

- labour force status (employed, unemployed, outside the labour force)
- branch of economic activity
- occupation
- status in employment
- working time, including hours usually worked, contractual hours of work
- duration of employment in months or years
- employment-related income
- remittances sent outside the country of labour attachment
- social security entitlements in the country of labour attachment
- any restrictions of the right to employment (e.g. concerning undertaking or seeking work, changing employer or work performed)

*Labour force status* refers to the current situation of international migrant workers and for-work international migrants and to the last situation of return international migrant workers in the country of previous labour attachment. The *main work characteristics* refer to the current main job of employed international migrant workers and for-work international migrants and to the last job of return international migrant workers in the country of previous labour attachment.

47. The concepts and categories of the items of data collection should adhere or be convertible to the latest international statistical standards where they exist, such as the Recommendations on statistics of international migration, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE), and the ICLS standards on statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization, working time and employment-related income.

48. Where “labour attachment” in the definition of international migrant workers covers the potential labour force and unpaid forms of work, the list of items of data collection should be extended to include elements for the measurement of potential labour, forms of work and their characteristics, such as degree of labour market attachment, type of economic unit (market units/non-market units) and working time in different forms of work, as appropriate.
49. Similarly, where the age limit of the working age population is lowered to cover international child migrant workers, the list of items of data collection should be extended to obtain relevant information on the child’s living and working conditions, including school attendance, engagement in unpaid domestic services or household chores, exposure to hazardous working conditions and risk of other worst forms of child labour, in line with the latest ICLS standards on statistics of child labour.
50. Depending on policy concerns, additional data items may be collected, such as on past migration and work history; family relationships and characteristics of family members; particular categories of international migrant workers, such as one or more of those listed under paragraph 20 above; or special topics, such as occupational injuries, the informal sector and informal employment, and labour exploitation and forced labour of international migrant workers, in line with the latest ICLS standards on the respective topics, namely, statistics of occupational injuries (resulting from occupational accidents), statistics of employment in the informal sector and informal employment and statistics of forced labour, etc.
51. In general, the periodicity of data collection depends on the statistical needs and capacity of the statistical infrastructure in the country of measurement. The periodicity of data collection may not be the same for all items of data collection. At a minimum, the periodicity of the main items of data collection should be sufficient to provide the information required for the core indicators specified in paragraphs 40 to 45 above.
52. The items of data collection described above give rise to a multitude of tabulations and cross-tabulations of data on international migrant workers, for-work international migrants and return international migrant workers. The choice and details of the tabulation plan depend on policy concerns, as well as on the representativeness, data quality and sample size of the underlying inquiry if the data are based on sample surveys, and on the availability, population coverage and suitability for statistical purposes of the information if the data are based on administrative records. The main tabulations should provide the information required to derive the core indicators specified in paragraphs 40 to 45 above.
53. For the purpose of international comparisons, countries that use the country of birth as the criterion for identifying international migrants may wish to tabulate relevant populations by country of citizenship and country of previous usual residence. Similarly, countries that use the country of citizenship as the criterion for identifying international migrants may wish to tabulate relevant populations by country of birth and country of previous usual residence. Finally, countries that use change in the country of usual

residence as the criterion for identifying international migrants may wish to tabulate the relevant populations by country of citizenship and country of birth.

### **Data sources**

54. Information on different aspects of international labour migration and categories of international migrant workers may come from diverse sources. These different statistical sources should be treated as complementary, to be used in combination in order to derive comprehensive sets of statistics to the extent possible. It is useful to distinguish the sources of stock and flow statistics as follows:

- (a) *sources generating stock statistics*: population censuses; household surveys, in particular labour force surveys (especially relevant for certain groups, e.g. category 14(a) (usual residents) of international migrant workers); specialized migration and demographic surveys; surveys limited to, or focused on, particular populations or domains (such as surveys near international borders, surveys of refugee camps); and establishment census and sample surveys;
- (b) *sources generating flow statistics*: border registrations; statistics of residence permits issued; statistics of work permits issued, statistics of visas issued; departure registrations; and household surveys;
- (c) *sources that can generate both flow and stock statistics*: population registers; household surveys, registers of foreigners; tax and social security registrations; and registrations for use of utilities (e.g. phone, electricity);
- (d) *other sources*: certain groups of international migrant workers who are in need of international protection may require special surveys with targeted samples due to their particular characteristics and circumstances. Appropriate administrative sources of data, where available, may supplement targeted sample surveys or may even serve as an alternative to such surveys.

### **Measurement issues**

55. Within each data source, special methodologies should be developed to deal with the particular measurement issues concerning international labour migration. For example:

- (a) in measuring category 14(a) (usual residents) of international migrant workers, using household surveys, such as labour force surveys, it is essential that information on migrant status and work status be collected and matched at the level of individuals. Data collection instruments should be developed to permit such linkage;
- (b) similarly, in measuring returned international migrant workers using household surveys such as labour force surveys, data collection instruments should be developed to collect and permit linkage between data on past or last migrant status and corresponding past or last work status in the country of labour attachment at the level of individuals;

- (c) in measuring category 14(b) (not usual residents) of international migrant workers, using administrative records of work permits or survey data at the place of work in the country of measurement, special methodologies should be developed to avoid double-counting of individuals (e.g. counting all admissions rather than only first-time entries during the reference period) and to take into account situations in which the worker has multiple employers or is engaged in more than one establishment. Results may be compared with corresponding data obtained from household surveys, such as labour force surveys conducted in the country of usual residents;
- (d) similarly, in measuring the inflow of for-work international migrants or the outflow of international migrant workers using administrative sources, special care should be taken to strengthen these sources to ensure, to the extent possible, the accuracy of the information in order to adequately identify target populations;
- (e) finally, in measuring particular subcategories of international migrant workers, such as undocumented workers or externally displaced workers living and working in camps, special sampling procedures should be developed that are capable of capturing significant and representative samples of these elusive populations, which are often covered only partly or not at all in conventional censuses and sample surveys.

### ***ILO global estimates***

56. International labour migration is a rising policy priority. To be effective, international labour migration policies must be grounded in robust evidence. For this purpose, data on the number of international migrant workers, their distribution by sector of economic activity and their work status are urgently needed. In order to fill this knowledge gap, the ILO developed a comprehensive methodology for global and regional estimates of migrant workers and generated estimates with the reference year 2013. That methodology has been further improved and used to generate new global estimates with the reference year 2017, which are due for publication in 2018 and should be updated periodically. The quality of global estimates depends on the completeness and quality of the source data available from countries, requiring persistent effort to improve those sources.

### ***ILO database***

57. The ILO International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) database is currently hosted as a special collection within the ILOSTAT database and is freely available to users online. The database focuses on:
- (a) providing an openly available, relevant and comprehensive information source to enable evidence-based policy-making on international labour migration;
  - (b) mapping the existing data sources that countries collect, including their quality, scope, completeness and comparability and possible weaknesses that can be filled through capacity-building;
  - (c) defining a set of relevant tables on international labour migration as a standard reference-point for future data collection and reporting, as well as for assessing ongoing capacity-building efforts.

58. The ILO is gradually extending the ILMS database to cover all ILO member States. All data are gender-disaggregated.

## **Future actions**

### ***ILO methodological work***

59. The ILO, in collaboration with interested countries, international and regional organizations, and workers' and employers' representatives, should continue methodological work relating to these guidelines, in particular, on appropriate methodologies for capturing and collecting data on the main categories and subcategories of international migrant workers, for-work international migrants, and return international migrant workers. The ILO should report the progress of its work to future sessions of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians, as appropriate.
60. To promote the implementation of these guidelines, the ILO should carry out its work through the collaborative mechanism, focused on:
- (a) wide dissemination and communication of these guidelines;
  - (b) sharing good practices among countries;
  - (c) technical assistance through training and capacity-building, especially for national statistical agencies and relevant statistical services in line ministries;
  - (d) implementation of conceptual and methodological work;
  - (e) improved harmonization between multiple data sources, both administrative and statistical, which is essential for producing more reliable global, regional and national estimates of labour migration;
  - (f) better coordination between users and producers of labour migration information, involving social partners when determining national and international data needs;
  - (g) mainstreaming the labour migration module in labour force surveys and national censuses, as appropriate, to ensure the quality of the resulting statistics, as relevant to the national context;
  - (h) analysis and presentation of statistics on international labour migration and migrant workers, supported by appropriate technical notes;
  - (i) collaboration with the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and contribution to the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (as adopted).

### ***ILO technical assistance***

61. The ILO should expand its technical assistance on labour migration statistics to support the implementation of these guidelines by member countries. Such technical assistance should include the provision of technical advice and training that are targeted to enhance national capacities, where required, and the provision of financial support to countries for labour migration data collection and analysis, to the extent possible.