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National practices in producing statistics on international labour migration

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1.   Introduction[1]

1. This report presents the results of a global review prepared by the ILO on the status of national practices to produce statistics of international labour migration (ILM). It documents the main different data sources available at country level, the methods used to identify different groups of international migrant workers, the topics covered, their frequency and other methodological aspects. The review centres on three main types of data sources: population censuses, household surveys, including specialized migration surveys and labour force surveys, and administrative records covering population registers, records of border entries and exits, and work permits.

2. The review forms part of the ILO's programme of work to advance methodological work relating to the *Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration* endorsed by the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2018. The main objective of the review is to shed light on the status of official statistics of international labour migration, contribute to identify good practice, data gaps, and opportunities to promote their further development. More specifically, the report aims to document the:

    (a)   global availability of different sources to produce core statistics of international labour migration;

    (b)   country practices to integrate the topic in the different sources and their implications with respect to cross-country comparability and data quality;

    (c)   degree to which the country practices align with the 20th ICLS Guidelines and related international statistical recommendations;

    (d)   national data priorities, challenges, plans and support needs, and

    (e)   global reporting of priority statistics of international labour migration.

3. The findings will serve to inform ILO's future activities on the topic, including its programme of capacity building and technical support to promote the implementation of the 20th ICLS Guidelines, as well as its programme of ILMS data compilation and dissemination to expand the global availability of official statistics on international labour migration.

4. The report is structured as follows: Section 2 highlights the policy-relevance of statistics on international labour migration and provides an overview of the 20th ICLS Guidelines that promote their development. Section 3 describes the scope of the ILO review and the methodology used. Section 4 describes the national availability of the main potential sources of statistics of international labour migration. Sections 5 through 7 discuss the main findings focusing on each specific source, starting with population censuses (5), household surveys (6) and finally administrative sources (7). Section 8 sheds light on national data priorities, challenges, plans, and support needed to improve the statistics in the medium term. Section 9 complements the picture with an overview of data availability at global level, highlighting data and indicators reported by countries to the ILO and disseminated through ILOSTAT. Concluding remarks provide a reflection on the current state of statistics of international labour migration and its implications for ILO's work.

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2. Rationale, priority statistics and reference concepts

5. Labour migration policies informed by good quality data play a critical role in ensuring the rights and protection of international migrant workers during the migration process, their labour market integration and access to decent work opportunities in countries of destination and their return and reintegration back into their countries of origin. The collection and dissemination of official statistics on international labour migration are essential for informed policymaking, effective management of migration flows, and to monitor progress towards achieving equitable development.

6. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized the role that international migration can play to reduce global inequalities and included target 10.7 to direct countries' efforts towards facilitating orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people. More recent, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which provides a framework for shaping policies and practices to address the complex challenges of migration, emphasizes the importance of collecting and sharing disaggregated data on migration to inform policies and programs. Objective 6 further emphasizes the commitment to facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work for all migrant workers.

7. To support countries in meeting the growing demand for data on international labour migration, in 2018 the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) endorsed the first set of Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration. The Guidelines exhort countries to develop their national programmes of statistics on the topic based on a common set of recommendations that promote consistency, cross-country comparability, and enhanced data quality with a view to support monitoring and evaluation of trends, informed policymaking, research and analysis.

8. The Guidelines provide reference concepts, definitions, and related recommendations to produce a core set of statistics on stocks and flows of the different components of international labour migration, both from a country of origin and country of destination perspectives. To achieve this, the following three groups are defined:

> (a) International migrant workers: international migrants (foreign-born or foreign citizen) who are either (i) in the labour force of the country where they are usual residents, or (ii) have labour attachment in a country where they are not usual residents.
>
> (b) For-work international migrants: persons who entered the country for the purpose to work, as declared or documented at the time of entry in or exit from the country (e.g. register of border entries/exists, visa or work permits)
>
> (c) Return international migrants: current resident (native-born persons or citizens) who previously were international migrant workers in another country.

9. A fourth group recognized in the Guidelines as of critical relevance for future methodological development are "Citizens or native-born persons working abroad" from a country of origin perspective.

10. The definitions advanced by the Guidelines share a common scope with the revised UN framework for migration and mobility statistics (2021), by recognizing the importance of developing statistics on international migrant workers who change country of usual residence, as well as those who do not, such as frontier workers, seasonal migrant workers, posted workers and similar. They also build on common criteria for identification purposes.

11. Two important criteria for measurement purposes described in the Guidelines are:

    (a)   Country of "usual" residence: country where the person has lived (or intended live) for either (a) *most of* the last 12 months (i.e., at least 6 months and one day) or (b) *at least* the last 12 months –not including short absences for holidays or work assignments; in line with the UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (2017), and

    (b)   Labour attachment: operationalized differently for stocks and flows to reflect the different stages of the labour migration process. In the case of stocks, labour attachment refers to being engaged in the *labour force* (as employed or unemployed) in the destination country, in line with the 19th ICLS Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (2013), to maintain coherence with labour force statistics. In the case of flows, it refers to reason for the move specified as for the purpose to work, as declared or documented at the time of entry/exit.

12. The Guidelines further specify the set of priority indicators needed for monitoring and policy formulation purposes, recommending countries to adapt the indicator set based on the national context. As part of the set, core indicators recommended include:

    (a)   the stock of international migrant workers at the mid-point of the reporting period, distinguishing between categories usual residents and not usual residents of international migrant workers; and

    (b)   the labour force participation rate, the employment-to-population ratio and the unemployment rate of international migrants.

13. Core indicators of the inflow of for-work international migrants recommended include:

    (a)   inflow of for-work international migrants during the reference period, identifying separately the number of temporary, and where relevant, the number of circular for-work international migrants; and

    (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.

14. Finally, core indicators of return international migrant workers recommended are:

    (a)   the stock of return international migrant workers at mid-point of the reference period;

    (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; and

    (c)   the inflow of return international migrant workers in the country of measurement during the reference period.

15. These indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by country of origin, country of destination, country of labour attachment or country of previous labour attachment. Moreover, the information should cover data on the main socio-demographic characteristics (sex, age, level of education attained) and work characteristics as relevant (labour force status, branch of economic activity, occupation, status in employment, employment-related income).

16. The Guidelines further recognize that information on different aspects of international labour migration and categories of international migrant workers may come from diverse sources. They recommend these different statistical sources be treated as complementary, to be used in combination to derive comprehensive sets of statistics to the extent possible. It recognizes as key sources for,

(a) Stock statistics: population censuses; household surveys, in particular labour force surveys; 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) Flow statistics: border registrations; statistics of residence permits issued; statistics of work permits issued, statistics of visas issued; departure registrations; and household surveys;

(c) Stock and flow statistics: population registers; household surveys, registers of foreigners; tax and social security registrations; and registrations for use of utilities (e.g., phone, electricity).

3. Scope and methodology

17. To assess the availability of the different main sources of statistics of international labour migration, the ILO review covers a 9-year period from 2015 through 2023. This allows us to document country practices relating to the 2020 round of population and housing census, as well as the implementation of different national household surveys, in particular specialized migration surveys and labour force surveys (LFS), and three main types of administrative sources: population registers, records of border entries and/or exits, and work permits issued to foreigners employed in the country and/or to nationals working abroad.

3.1. Methodology

18. The review uses as basis two special inquiries sent by the ILO to National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in preparation for the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians. The ILO inquiry on country practices in statistics of international labour migration (ILMS Inquiry) completed between December 2022 and April 2023, and the ILO Inquiry on country practices in national Labour Force Surveys (LFS Inquiry) completed between July – August 2023.

    (a) The ILMS Inquiry aimed to capture information relating to country practices in population censuses, specialized migration surveys and administrative records, with a focus on whether countries use these sources to capture information necessary to produce stocks and/or flows relevant to monitor international labour migration, the groups of workers covered, the criteria to identify them and essential characteristics captured, as well as selected methodological features relevant to each source. The ILO Inquiry also requested NSO's to report on the main challenges faced, priority groups for which statistics are needed, and plans to improve the availability and quality of the statistics.

    (b) The LFS Inquiry captured among other information, the NSO's use of the national LFS to produce core labour force statistics and indicators disaggregated by international migrant status, the approach used to enable this, the frequency of reporting LFS data disaggregated by international migrant status, the self-assessed quality of such data, other migration related topics covered in the LFS, and future plans.

19. Answers to the ILO special Inquiries were complemented with metadata reported by countries to the ILO through its annual ILMS data compilation mechanism[2]; a desk review of methodological documents, such as questionnaires, technical notes, etc. submitted by countries to the ILO or made available through online publications; as well as an analysis of the most recent LFS microdata shared by countries with the ILO. The review of national practices was completed in July 2023.

20. Finally, reporting of priority statistics of ILM and their global availability is assessed through an analysis of the ILO's ILMS database, which compiles these data from countries through an annual data compilation mechanism and the processing of LFS microdata shared by countries with ILO.

21. Results of this review are shown by regional and income-level country groupings, which are highlighted using the ILO geographical classification of countries and territories.

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[2] See : https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/concepts-and-definitions/description-international-labour-migration-statistics/

3.2. Geographic coverage

22. In total, the review of national practices covered 131 countries or 67 percent of countries worldwide. Of these, 115 countries replied to the ILO ILMS Inquiry, while 120 replied to the LFS inquiry. In addition, the ILO desk review served to incorporate 16 countries to expand the overall coverage and diversity of contexts reflected in the review (see Table 1).

23. The best represented regions are Asia and the Pacific (29 countries) and Europe and Central Asia (41 countries), each with a country coverage of almost 75 percent. This is followed by Africa with 35 countries, representing 65 percent of the region. In the case of the Americas, 19 countries are included, covering more than half of the region. For Arab States, 5 countries were included through the ILO inquiries and 2 through the ILO desk review, for a coverage of 58 percent. High-income countries are the best covered, while the lowest coverage is among low-income countries.

▶ **Table 1. Countries included in the ILO review, by approach and coverage rate**

Region/Income group	Countries contacted	Responding countries		ILO desk review	Total countries covered	Coverage rate
		ILMS Inquiry	**LFS Inquiry**			
Total	**196**	**115**	**120**	**16**	**131**	**67%**
By region						
Africa	54	31	31	4	**35**	**65%**
Americas	36	15	18	4	**19**	**53%**
Arab States	12	5	7	2	**7**	**58%**
Asia and the Pacific	39	27	25	2	**29**	**74%**
Europe and Central Asia	55	37	39	4	**41**	**75%**
By income group						
High income	60	38	41	7	**45**	**75%**
Upper-middle income	55	31	37	4	**35**	**64%**
Lower-middle income	53	33	30	3	**36**	**68%**
Low income	28	13	12	2	**15**	**54%**

4.   National availability of potential main data sources

24. As underscored in the 20th ICLS Guidelines, production of a core set of statistics on stocks and flows relating to international labour migration depends on the availability and combined use of different sources. This is essential as, for the most part, to date, not one single source can produce information on flows and stocks covering the different groups of international migrant workers of interest and their characteristics.

25. The review revealed that the most common potential source for statistics on the topic available in countries is the population census, with close to 92 percent of reporting countries indicating having conducted a census during the 2020 round. This is followed by national labour force surveys, available in 91 percent of the countries covered[3]. Registers from border entries and/or exists together with data from work permits are the third most commonly available source at global level (66.4 %). Population registers are available only in about half of the countries covered (51.9%) with a highest presence among countries in Europe and Central Asia (65.9%), and more generally high-income countries (60%), while only one sixth of countries (16.8%) reported having conducted a specialized migration survey during the 9-year period reviewed.

▶ Table 2. Share of countries by region/income group reporting different data sources, 2015-2023

Region/Income group	Number of countries covered	Population census (%)	Household surveys (%)		Population registers (%)	Border entries and/or exits (%)	Work permits (%)
			Specialized migration survey	Labour Force Survey			
Total	**131**	**91.6**	**16.8**	**90.8**	**51.9**	**66.4**	**66.4**
By region							
Africa	**35**	91.4	20.0	74.3	45.7	74.3	65.7
Americas	**19**	100.0	26.3	100.0	42.1	94.7	63.2
Arab States	**7**	57.1	0.0	85.7	71.4	42.9	42.9
Asia and the Pacific	**29**	89.7	10.3	75.9	41.4	69.0	65.5
Europe, Central Asia	**41**	95.1	17.1	100.0	65.9	48.8	73.2
By income group							
High income	**45**	95.6	15.6	100.0	60.0	55.6	75.6
Upper-middle income	**35**	94.3	20.0	34.3	54.3	80.0	65.7
Lower-middle income	**36**	91.7	19.4	77.8	44.4	63.9	58.3
Low income	**15**	73.3	6.7	100.0	40.0	73.3	60.0

26. Not all the sources reported as available are being used to generate statistics on international labour migration. Their coverage of the topic and use for this purpose is explored in the next sections. However, assessing the extent to which the core potential sources are available in countries provides an indication of the existing statistical infrastructure and opportunities to integrate the

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[3] As reported through the special ILO LFS Inquiry. Wider availability of LFS covering migration related variables has been documented through the ILO ILMS microdata repository. This is explored further in Section 6 on Household surveys, and in Section 9 on National data reporting.

topic of international labour migration as part of the national statistical system, and the type of guidance that may be needed to support this process.

27. Looking more closely at the combination of sources available at country level, the review indicates that slightly less than half of the countries covered (45.8%) report having the three different types of sources (i.e., population census, administrative records, and household surveys) available in the country. This is highest in Europe and Central Asia (63.4 %) and the Americas (57%), while none of the low-income countries covered indicated having all three types of sources available. The next most common situation at global level are countries reporting only one type of source available (22%). This is most common among reporting Arab States (57%) and low-income countries (40%). Having a population census and at least one type of administrative source is the third most common pattern with 18 percent of covered countries globally reporting this situation.

28. Overall, these findings indicate that core data sources that are generally the foundation to develop statistics on stocks and flows relating to international labour migration are in place in around half of the countries globally, and that most countries have a core source that could serve to generate stock data, such as a recent population census. However, the findings also indicate that there may be important gaps in core national data sources that could be utilized to meet this purpose. This is particularly the case for specialized migration surveys, which are specifically designed to target the migrant population and generate detailed information on their characteristics and situation, including on working conditions and fair recruitment, not generally available through other sources.

▶ **Table 3. Share of countries with different types of potential sources available for ILMS, 2015-2023.**

Region/Income group	Total of countries covered	All types of sources (%)	Census and		Survey and admin source(s) (%)	Only 1 source type (%)
			Survey(s) (%)	Admin. Source(s) (%)		
Total	**131**	**45.8**	**9.9**	**18.3**	**3.8**	**22.1**
By region						
Africa	**35**	34.3	14.3	28.6	2.9	28.6
Americas	**19**	57.9	0.0	21.1	0.0	15.8
Arab States	**7**	0.0	0.0	14.3	28.6	57.1
Asia and the Pacific	**29**	37.9	10.3	24.1	3.4	13.8
Europe and Central Asia	**41**	63.4	12.2	4.9	2.4	19.5
By income group						
High income	**45**	64.4	8.9	8.9	2.2	15.6
Upper-middle income	**35**	51.4	2.9	25.7	2.9	22.9
Lower-middle income	**36**	36.1	16.7	19.4	5.6	22.2
Low income	**15**	0.0	13.3	26.7	6.7	40.0

5. Population census

29. Population censuses play an important role in supporting the production of statistics on international labour migration. The UN Principles and recommendations for population census, rev 3. (UN P&R rev 3.) defines the population census as "the total process of planning, collecting, compiling, evaluating, disseminating and analysing demographic, economic and social data at the smallest geographic level pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well-delimited part of a country."

30. Universal population coverage and/or emphasis on providing statistics for small areas and small population groups is what makes the population census particularly important for statistics on international labour migration. The 20th ICLS recognizes the population census as a main source for statistics on the stock of international migrant workers resident in the country and their detailed characteristics.

31. The UN P&R rev 3. highlights the core and additional topics to be included in population censuses. These cover a wide range of social, demographic, economic and housing characteristics, among which are the topics necessary to identify and produce estimates of the stock of international migrant workers, in particular:

      (a)   country of birth,

      (b)   country of citizenship,

      (c)   year or period of arrival and

      (d)   labour force status (i.e. employed, unemployed, outside the labour force).

32. Other census topics recommended that are particularly important to support disaggregation of statistics on international migrant workers include:

      (a)   geographic location of place of residence or stay;

      (b)   type of living quarters, including private households and collective living quarters;

      (c)   age, sex, marital status, level of education attained;

      (d)   status in employment, occupation, industry, hours worked, and type of place of work.

33. Additionally, among additional topics, particularly useful to identify residents working abroad is the topic of geographic location of place of work.

34. The UN Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses (2020, UN) further underscores other topics valuable to expand the relevance of the population census for statistics of international labour migration, including:

      (a)   Main reason for migration, useful to identify those moving for work related reasons, and persons moving because of forced displacement, which supports identification of refugees;

      (b)   Residence abroad, place of residence 1 or 5 years before the census, useful to identify return international migrants and to estimate flows in the absence of other sources; and

(c)   Emigration of former household members, including year of departure, age, sex, country of emigration, main reason for emigration.

35. Although these additional topics do not directly generate data specific to international labour migration, they play an important role in generating data for benchmarking and to support development of sampling frames to improve the design and targeting of surveys covering different populations of interest, such as return international migrants and households with former emigrant members.

5.1.   Identification of international migrant workers in censuses

36. Among the countries covered in the review, most included the core recommended questions to support identification of international migrants (117 countries) using either "country of birth" and/or "country of citizenship" as criterion. Likewise, most countries included the necessary questions to classify the population by their labour force status. Only four countries in Asia and the Pacific, two in Europe and Central Asia, and one in the Americas did not include the necessary questions during the 2020 round of population censuses. Overall, 94 percent of the countries covered globally is currently able to generate estimates of the stock of international migrant workers in the country using as basis their most recent population and housing census (Table 4).

▶ **Table 4. Questions to identify international migrant workers, 2020 Census (number of countries).**

Region/ Income group	Countries with census	Includes relevant questions on		Share identifying international migrant workers
		international migrants (country of birth / citizenship)	labour force status	
Total	**120**	**117**	**113**	**94.2**
By region				
Africa	**32**	32	32	**100.0**
Americas	**19**	19	18	**94.7**
Arab States	**4**	4	4	**100.0**
Asia and the Pacific	**26**	23	22	**84.6**
Europe and Central Asia	**39**	39	37	**94.9**
By income group				
High income	**43**	43	41	**95.3**
Upper-middle income	**33**	33	31	**93.9**
Lower-middle income	**33**	30	30	**90.9**
Low income	**11**	11	11	**100.0**

37. As shown in figure 1, despite potential differences in the criterion used to identify international migrant status, by country of birth or country of citizenship, the review indicates most countries do include both criteria in the population census. This can support estimations of the stock of international migrant workers according to the two criteria and enhance cross-country comparability of census results. It also supports cross-classification of the two criteria for analysis

of the international migrant worker population by sub-groups relevant for policy formulation (e.g. foreign-born foreign citizens and foreign-born nationalized citizens).

▶ **Figure 1. Criteria to identify international migrants, 2020 Census (number of countries).**

5.2. Census approach

38. The specific approach used to conduct the population census varies by country depending on many factors including available resources, technology, and existence of comprehensive population registers and other sources. These methodological differences could impact the coverage of different groups of international migrants, and the range of characteristics that may be generated through the population census. Among reporting countries, 93 percent gave information on the approach used in their most recent census (see Table 5).

▶ **Table 5. Population census approach, 2020 Census (number of countries).**

Region/ Income group	Countries With census	Full field enumeration		Register-based census			Other
		with no use of register information	with use of register information as frame or control	with census field data collection	with use of existing survey data for selected variables	with no use of survey data	
Total	**120**	**52**	**16**	**19**	**1**	**13**	**11**
By region							
Africa	**32**	8		1			6
Americas	**19**	13	1	2		1	1
Arab States	**4**	2				2	
Asia and the Pacific	**26**	12	2	8			
Europe and Central Asia	**39**	8	5	8	1	10	4
By income group							
High income	**43**	10	4	9	1	12	4
Upper-middle income	**33**	22	4	3		1	1
Lower-middle income	**33**	14	6	6			4
Low income	**11**	6	2	1			2

39. The most common census approach (52 countries) is full field enumeration with no use of register information for all regions and income groups, except for Europe and Central Asia. A combination of register data and field data collection is the second most common approach, especially in Europe and Asia and the Pacific (19 countries). Next is the use of full field enumeration with use of register

information as frame (16 countries) and the use of a register-based census with no additional survey data collected or compiled, which is the most common approach among high-income countries. The rest of the countries combine different approaches (11); among them, two have rolling censuses.

5.3. Population counts

40. The enumeration approach and type of population counts produced can also impact who is included in the reference population for the census, and ultimately the estimates of the stock of international migrant workers derived from the population census. A "population count" may be a subset of or the whole of the enumerated population. A country may have one or more population counts, all derived from the enumerated population. According to the UN P&R, rev 3., the two main population counts are:

   (a)   Population present count: Based on the place where persons are found on the census reference date, usually the dwelling where they spend census night. Non-residents present in the country at the time of the census will be included but residents of the country who are absent at that time are excluded.

   (b)   Usual resident population count: Based on the place of usual residence of the person, where countries have flexibility on how to interpret the international recommendations.

41. Although countries will determine the definition of a usual resident according to their own circumstances, it is recommended that in defining a usual resident and the place of usual residence, countries interpret the concept of majority of time within a year, according to one of the following two criteria:

   (a)   The place at which the person has lived continuously for most of the last 12 months (that is, for at least six months and one day), not including temporary absences for holidays or work assignments, or intends to live for at least six months;

   (b)   The place at which the person has lived continuously for at least the last 12 months, not including temporary absences for holidays or work assignments, or intends to live for at least 12 months.

42. Among other population counts possible is a service population count, relevant where a significant proportion of the population providing or using services in an area is not usual resident of that area. Types of service population counts include daytime populations, workplace populations and visitor populations. In some countries there may also be an interest in foreign service populations, consisting of foreign residents who cross the border regularly to provide or consume services. For international labour migration, service population counts referring to workplace populations and non-residents crossing borders to provide services are particularly relevant.

43. The ILO review indicates that for the 2020 census round, most countries can produce the two main types of population counts, for the present and usually resident populations (see figure 3). Being able to produce counts for both population concepts can be useful for international labour migration as it allows assessment of the size of the non-resident population present in the country and their migrant and economic characteristics. This can include non-residents working in the country, such as seasonal workers, posted workers, frontier workers and persons in similar types of employment that involve their presence in the country for short periods at a time. While such data will refer only to the census period, it can still provide a snapshot picture of the size, geographic

distribution and characteristics of these groups of migrant workers for which limited information is generally available.

▶ **Figure 2. Countries able to produce counts for the present and resident populations, 2020 Census.**
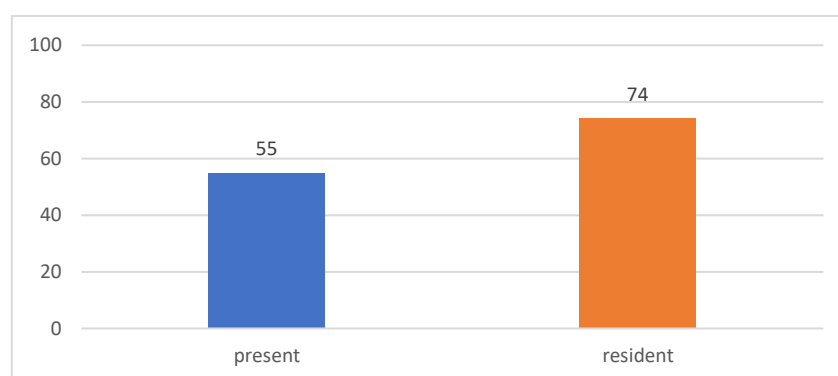
44. Among countries that report producing counts of the resident population, deeper analysis shows significant variability in the treatment of residents who were temporarily absent from the country during the census period (see Table 6). In total, 49 countries can produce census population counts with reference to the usually resident population including those temporarily absent as recommended. This is most prevalent in Europe, and among high income countries.

▶ **Table 6. Type of population counts, 2020 Census (number of countries).**

| Region/Income group | Countries with census | Present | | | (Usually) resident | | Other |
		Only	and resident, excluding absent	and resident, including absent	including absent	excluding absent	
Total	**120**	**21**	**11**	**34**	**15**	**29**	**10**
By region							
Africa	**32**	6		4	7	10	5
Americas	**19**	4	1	1	3	8	2
Arab States	**4**	2	2				
Asia and the Pacific	**26**	7	8	6	1	3	1
Europe, Central Asia	**39**	2		23	4	8	2
By income group							
High income	**43**	3	5	23	4	7	1
Upper-middle income	**33**	7	2	5	3	13	3
Lower-middle income	**33**	8	4	5	7	5	4
Low income	**11**	3		1	1	4	2

45. A slightly smaller number of countries (40 countries) producing resident population counts, however, indicate that they exclude those temporarily absent from the population census enumeration. This seems to be most common among countries in Africa and Asia and the Pacific. For international labour migration, including residents temporarily absent can improve coverage of residents working abroad, who may be more likely to be among those temporarily absent during the census reference period.

46. Assessment of the criteria used to define the usually resident population also varies across countries. In general, the factors considered are actual duration of stay, intention to stay for a specified period, legal right of stay (including citizenship), and listing in national register(s).

▶ **Table 7. Criteria to define the population resident in the country, 2020 Census (number of countries).**

Region / Income group	Countries with census	Actual duration of stay				Only intention to stay	Other
		Only	and intention to stay	and legal right of stay	and listing in national register(s)		
Total	**120**	**20**	**51**	**6**	**6**	**3**	**7**
By region							
Africa	**32**	5	17	1		1	1
Americas	**19**	3	6	1		1	2
Arab States	**4**	1	2		1		
Asia and the Pacific	**26**	8	7	2		1	
Europe and Central Asia	**39**	3	19	2	5		4
By income group							
High income	**43**	6	17	3	4	1	5
Upper-middle income	**33**	4	14		2	2	2
Lower-middle income	**33**	7	16	2			
Low income	**11**	3	4	1			

47. Of the 120 countries, 93 provided information on the criteria used for defining the usual resident population (see Table 7). Overall, a specified duration of stay is the predominant criteria used by most reporting countries (90%), alone or in combination with other requirements such as intention to stay (55 percent), legal right to stay (7%) or listing in national registers (7%). Only a few countries indicated using other criteria and not combining this with duration of stay. In line with the UN P&R rev. 3., actual and intended duration of stay is the most frequently used approach, particularly in Africa and in Europe and Central Asia.

48. Despite the apparent convergence in the use of duration of stay as main criterion to identify the resident population, significant variability exists in the duration threshold used by countries for this purpose (see Figure 3). This variability impacts the consistency in who is included and excluded within the population counts produced by national censuses, particularly for foreign-born or foreign citizens who are recent arrivals and those staying for less than 12 months in the country. Overall, about 50% of countries use a threshold around 6 months with two variants (more than 6 months and 6 months or more), The next most common threshold used by countries is 12 months or more, applied by 42 percent of countries, mostly in Europe and Central Asia following an EU Council regulation.[4] Of the remaining countries 8 percent use a threshold set at 3 months or more.

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[4] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R1260&from=EN

▶ **Figure 3. Duration thresholds used to define the resident population, 2020 Census (% of countries).**
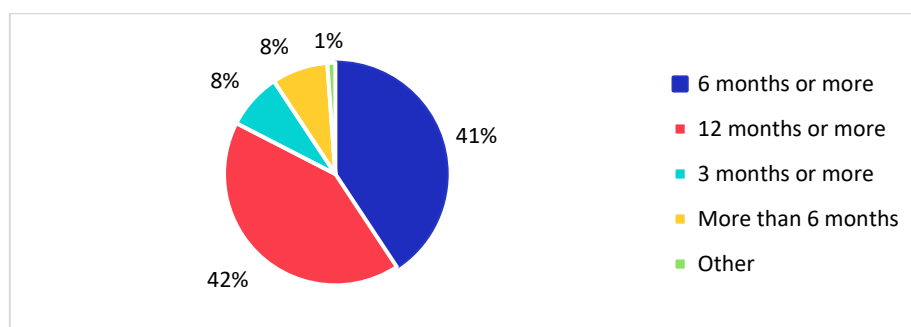
5.4.   International migrant worker characteristics

49. Beyond identifying and producing stocks of international migrant workers, many countries capture relevant additional variables that support analysis of their socio-demographic, migration and economic characteristics, in line with the UN P&R rev 3. (see Table 8). In the case of migration, the most common characteristic captured (after country of birth and country of citizenship) was year of arrival to the country (79 countries), followed by previous country of residence and duration of stay in the country (77 and 66 countries, respectively), and country of residence N years before (59 countries). Reason for arrival, by contrast is among the least captured characteristics, with only 40 countries confirming that they included this variable during the 2020 census round. Core recommended economic characteristics, by contrast, are widely included in the census, especially occupation and branch of economic activity, captured by the vast majority of countries (106 and 104, respectively). These data are particularly valuable as they enable assessments of the detailed occupations and industries where international migrant workers concentrate.

▶ **Table 8. Characteristics of international migrant workers captured, 2020 Census (number of countries).**

Region/Income group	Yes	No	Don't know/ No answer
Migration characteristics			
Year of arrival to country	79	16	18
Previous country of residence	77	24	12
Duration of stay in country	66	29	18
Country of residence N* years before	59	31	23
Reason for arrival	47	40	26
Economic characteristics			
Occupation	106	2	5
Branch of economic activity (industry)	104	2	7
Main/Usual activity	95	3	15

5.5. Other migrant populations of interest

50. Beyond information on international migrant workers living in the country, the population census can also serve to provide information on other populations relevant to support national programmes of statistics on international labour migration. This includes information on residents working abroad, return international migrants and on households with former members who have emigrated, which can serve to support development of sampling frames for surveys targeting these populations. Overall, 66 countries included a question on the country of place of work, which can serve to generate statistics and information on the geographic distribution of residents working abroad. In addition, 57 countries indicated including a question on ever lived abroad particularly useful to identify return migrants among the native-born population. Finally, 39 countries reported including a section to capture information on former household members who moved abroad (see Figure 4).

▶ **Figure 4. Other migrant populations topics included, 2020 Census (number of countries).**
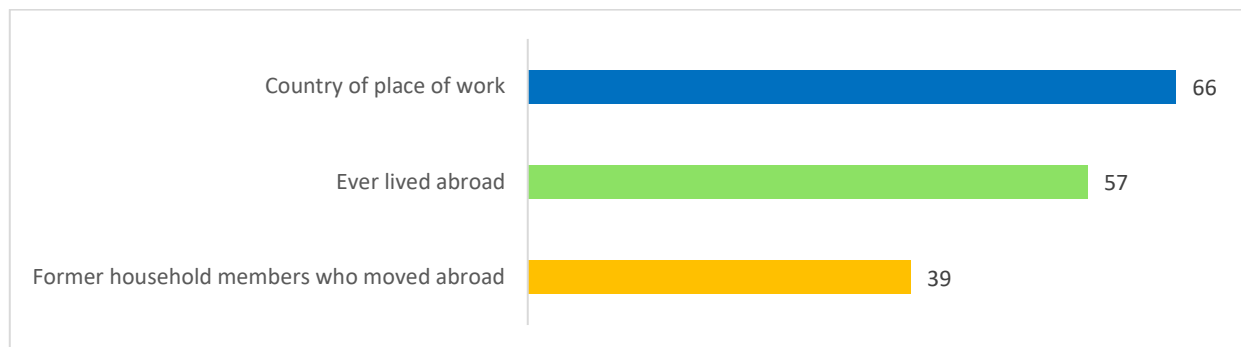
5.6. Coverage of collective living quarters

51. The universality of the census makes it a unique source for statistics on international migrant workers particularly in countries where they may tend to reside in different types of collective living quarters. This situation is not uncommon, especially among migrant workers engaged in industries such as agriculture, mining, construction, or tourism. Recent arrivals and migrant workers travelling alone, without their family, are also likely to stay in hostels, boarding houses, guest accommodation, or to live together in groups of unrelated adults. While many censuses may list the population residing in collective living quarters, information on their socio-demographic and economic characteristics is needed at the individual level to identify those who are international migrant workers. Certainly, the presence and relevance of the population in collective living quarters in the total population and among the migrant population varies depending on the national context. Nevertheless, it is useful to examine to what extent countries extend the questions needed to identify international migrant workers to this population and to capture their detailed socio-demographic and economic characteristics, and which sub-groups are covered.

52. Table 9 shows the number of countries that asked the core questions to identify international migrant workers by type of living quarters. It shows that most countries (76) asked the relevant individual level questions to the total population living in private households and in collective living quarters. Nevertheless, about one quarter of countries (32) only asked those questions to the population living in private households. This practice was most common in Africa and Asia and the Pacific, and among middle income countries.

▶ **Table 9. Population asked core questions to identify international migrant workers by type of living quarters, 2020 Census (number of countries).**

Region / Income group	Countries with a census	Total population in		A sample of population in	
		private households only	private households and collective living quarters	private households only	private households and collective living quarters
Total	**120**	**32**	**76**	**3**	**3**
By region					
Africa	**32**	11	21		
Americas	**19**	3	12	2	1
Arab States	**4**		4		
Asia and the Pacific	**26**	11	10		1
Europe and Central Asia	**39**	7	29	1	1
By income group					
High income	**43**	10	27	1	3
Upper-middle income	**33**	6	24	2	
Lower-middle income	**33**	13	17		
Low income	**11**	3	8		

53. Table 10 provides a more detailed look at the groups living in collective quarters which have been asked the core questions to identify international migrant workers at individual level. It shows that in most cases, this refers to the population staying in institutions, hotels, rooming houses, and similar (72 countries), a group most frequently covered by countries in Europe and Central Asia, and Africa, and among high-income and upper-middle income countries. This is followed by workers' camps (51 countries), again most frequently covered by countries in Europe and Central Asia, and Africa. Finally, the third group included are refugee and IDP camps (39 countries).

▶ **Table 10. Population in collective living quarters asked core questions to identify international migrant workers, 2020 Census (number of countries).**

Region / Income group	Countries with a census	Population in collective living quarters		
		Workers' camps	Refugee, IDP camps	Others (Institutions, hotels, rooming houses,)
Total	**79**	**51**	**39**	**72**
By region				
Africa	**21**	14	11	20
Americas	**13**	9	6	13
Arab States	**4**	4	3	4
Asia and the Pacific	**11**	8	3	10
Europe and Central Asia	**30**	16	16	25
By income group				
High income	**30**	15	13	25
Upper-middle income	**24**	17	13	23
Lower-middle income	**17**	12	8	17
Low income	**8**	7	5	7

5.7.   Sampling in population censuses

54. Use of sampling in the population census is one option that countries may employ as a cost-saving strategy, and/or for topics for which information may only be needed at high levels of aggregation. When questions on migration or economic characteristics are asked only to a sample of the population, this may impact the use of the census to produce statistics on international labour migration and to support detailed analysis of the characteristics of migrant workers, by their geographic distribution in the country, country of birth, year of arrival, detailed occupations, and industry groups where they concentrate, with an adequate level of precision. This can further affect gender analysis, owing to the uneven sex ratios often observed among migrant workers, with statistics on women migrant workers more impacted by high standard errors.

55. Table 9 above, shows that only a few countries (6) report having asked the core questions to a sample of the population, a practice reported by a few countries in the Americas, Europe and Central Asia, and Asia and the Pacific. Further examination of the use of sampling by census approach indicates that this may also be a practice particularly concentrated among countries that combine register-based census with census field data collection (not shown).

5.8.   Harnessing the 2020 Census for ILM statistics

56. Overall, the ILO review indicates that globally the population census will continue to be a main source of data for statistics of international labour migration in the future, particularly to generate estimates of the stock of international migrant workers, and to support detailed analysis of their migration, living arrangements, socio-demographic and employment characteristics. For most countries, the 2020 round of population censuses can be an important source to produce detailed statistics of international migrant workers by country of birth, country of citizenship, and year or period of arrival, as well as by detailed characteristics of their employment, including the occupations and industries in which they work.

57. Census data can also play an important role to support the next decade of household surveys targeting different migrant populations, in particular international migrants living in the country, and for some countries, residents working abroad, returned international migrants, and households with former members who emigrated in a past period. For this purpose, it will be important to consider processing and including relevant migration variables that identify these groups in updated national sampling frames derived from the population census.

58. Analysis and publication of statistics on international migrants and international migrant workers by country of birth and country of citizenship can also be an important contribution to improve the global and national availability of data on emigrants and citizens living abroad, a topic of high priority for many countries but very challenging to measure from a country of origin perspective.

59. In terms of cross-country comparability, differences are particularly evident in the definition of usual residence applied by countries, with respect to the minimum duration threshold used. Beyond impacting the comparability of estimates of the stock of international migrant workers resident in countries, these differences impact the consistency in the treatment of populations involved in international temporary mobility, including seasonal migrant workers, posted workers, cross-border service suppliers, and others with similar employment patterns across international borders. This could result either in their double counting across countries of origin and destination, or their omission altogether from statistics derived from the population census. The exclusion of usual residents temporarily absent from the country during the census reference period similarly can affects estimates of international migrant workers resident in the country, and the coverage of statistics on residents working abroad that could be derived from the population census.

6. Household surveys

60. National sample household surveys play a central role in national statistical systems as a main source of official data on a wide range of topics needed for monitoring and to inform policy formulation and planning. For international labour migration, specialized migration surveys and labour force surveys are two main potential sources to generate priority indicators and statistics on a more frequent basis, in intercensal years, as part of national data collection programmes on the topic. The 20th ICLS Guidelines recognize their value particularly to generate stock statistics, including for specific populations or areas.

61. Specialized migration surveys have the advantage that they are designed specifically to cover the target migrant population of interest in a way that supports the production of nationally representative statistics on their size and characteristics. They also provide opportunity to collect more detailed information, for immigrants: on their labour market participation, barriers to employment and working conditions, generally not available from other sources, and on other related topics, including education, skills and living conditions; for return international migrants: on their labour migration experience abroad, and their return and reintegration in the country; for households with former members who are emigrants: on the characteristics of the emigrants, their migration and their continued interaction with the household of origin, including their remittance behaviour. In countries with significant movements of persons across borders and/or transit across the territory, specially designed migration surveys can also be implemented to shed light on their socio-demographic characteristics, international mobility patterns, relation to the labour market, and other topics.

62. Labour force surveys (LFS) can take different forms and names across countries but share the main objective to generate the official labour force statistics of the country. Albeit sub-regional differences, these surveys are generally well established across most countries as one of the major surveys conducted on a regular and frequent, including continuous, basis as part of the national statistical system. Labour force surveys are generally designed to produce reliable statistics for the resident population living in private households. This population scope excludes international migrant workers in collective living quarters and non-residents working in the country. Nevertheless, for the resident population in private households, national LFS in principle should cover and be representative of all residents, including international migrants.

63. Good coverage in the LFS of international migrant workers resident in the country is important to generate sound labour force statistics reflecting the structure and dynamics of the labour market. This is important even if the international migrant population represents a relatively small share of the total population, as their employment patterns tend to differ from those of non-migrants –with international migrant workers concentrating in selected industries and occupations, and having more dynamic flows in and out of employment. Additionally, where a significant proportion of migrant workers and/or special populations of international migrants such as refugees, reside in collective living quarters, the use of dual or multiple frames to collect selected labour force data comparable with the LFS and/or use of a combination of sources is important to generate comprehensive labour force statistics in line with the 19th ICLS resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (2013).

64. Beyond coverage and representation, for countries with shares of international migrants resident in the country above a certain level, the relevance of generating statistics on their labour market situation and working conditions on a regular basis, in line with the 20th ICLS Guidelines, needs to be considered. Different data collection or compilation strategies may be used, including expanding

the measurement objectives and reviewing sampling design of LFS to support disaggregation of key labour force indicators by international migrant status, or establishing a specialized survey on the living conditions of international migrants, that generates comparable statistics to the LFS, to support comparisons among migrant and non-migrant populations.

6.1. Specialized migration surveys

65. The ILO review indicated that globally, only 22 of the responding countries conducted a specialized migration survey in the period 2015-2023 (see Table 11)[5]. Of these only 17 countries included the minimum core questions to identify international migrant workers.

▶ **Table 11. Identification of international migrant workers in specialized migration surveys (number of countries).**

Region/ Income group	Countries reporting a specialized migration survey	Includes relevant questions for	
		international migrant (country of birth/ citizenship)	Labour force status
Total	**22**	**22**	**17**
By region			
Africa	**7**	7	6
Americas	**5**	5	5
Arab States			
Asia and the Pacific	**3**	3	2
Europe and Central Asia	**7**	7	4
By income group			
High income	**7**	7	5
Upper-middle income	**7**	7	6
Lower-middle income	**7**	7	6
Low income	**1**	1	

66. Most of these surveys were implemented in countries in Africa, Europe and Central Asia and carried recently, in 2021 and 2022 (see Figure 5).

▶ **Figure 5. Specialized migration surveys by year of implementation (number of countries).**

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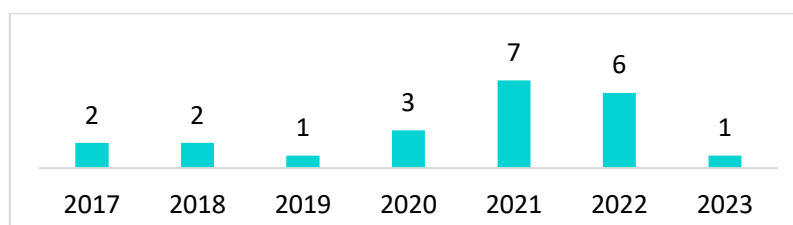
[5] This excludes specific surveys conducted on the impacts of the covid-19 pandemic among migrant populations, during the period of the review. These numbers likely underestimate the number of countries conducting specialized migration surveys or modules. Additional research is needed to document more widely national practices with the conduct of specialized migration surveys.

67. Among countries identifying international migrant workers in the specialized migration survey, most base the identification of international migrants using a country of birth criterion (20 countries). Nevertheless, over two thirds (15 countries) include both criteria, country of birth and country of citizenship. (see Figure 6).

▶ **Figure 6. Criteria to identify international migrants in specialized migration surveys (number of countries).**

Inludes both criteria	15
Country of citizenship	17
Country of birth	20
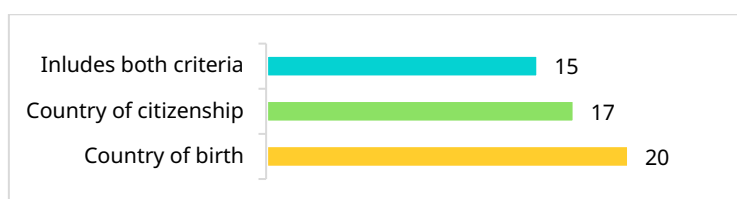
68. While most specialized migration surveys reported had a national coverage (68%), a third were restricted to border cities, provinces with specific characteristics (e.g. where cultivation is intensive), or to main cities, and urban areas only. Surveys targeting specific areas were predominantly reported by countries in Africa and among lower-middle income countries (see Figure 7).

▶ **Figure 7. Geographic coverage of specialized migration surveys (% of surveys).**

- National 68%
- Border regions, specific provinces 23%
- Main city(ies) or metropolitan areas 4%
- Urban areas only 5%
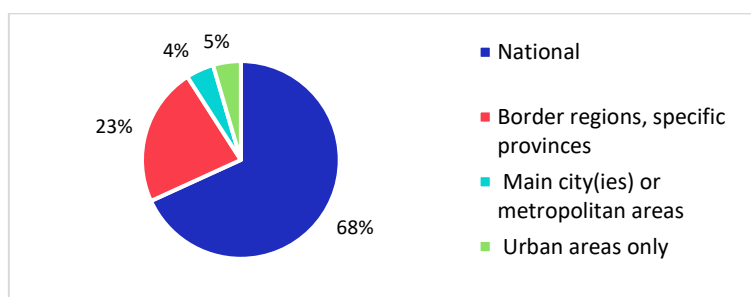
69. Countries with specialized migration surveys reported very different periodicities of implementation (see Figure 8). Only 3 countries (14%), all high-income, reported having an annual specialized migration survey. One third of countries (36%) reported conducting the survey on a regular basis, with periodicities ranging from 4 to 10 years. The remaining countries, especially in Africa and lower-middle income countries, reported that the survey does not have an established frequency or that it was conducted on a pilot basis (two in Europe, one in Africa and one in the Americas).

▶ **Figure 8. Periodicity of specialized migration surveys (% of surveys)**

- Every N years 36%
- Ad hoc (without established frequency) 32%
- Pilot Survey 18%
- Annual 14%
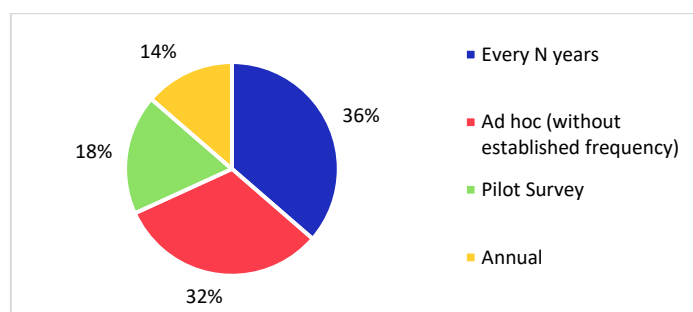
70. In terms of the components of international labour migration outlined in the 20th ICLS Guidelines, all reported specialized migration surveys covered international migrants resident in the country. In addition, half also captured information on return international migrants, and close to one third

included as a topic the emigration of former household members. Very few additionally captured international temporary mobility of usual residents (see Figure 9).

▶ **Figure 9. Components of international labour migration captured in specialized migration surveys (number of countries).**
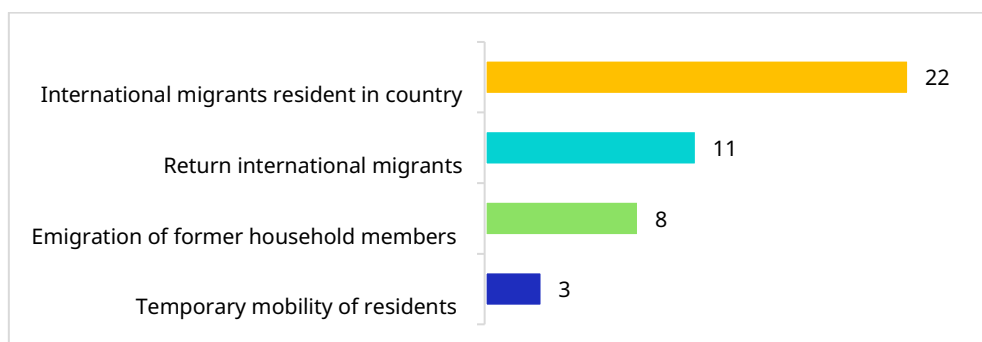

6.1.1. International migrants in the country

71. Beyond the variables necessary to identify international migrant workers, the specialized surveys reported also included core variables recommended by the 20th ICLS Guidelines to support analysis of their migration characteristics. This includes year of arrival and reason for arrival, and participation in the labour market, including their labour force status, as employed, unemployed or outside the labour force, the main or usual activity, and characteristics of the employed including branch of economic activity, occupation, and status in employment although to a lesser extent (see Table 12). Less than half of the countries, however, included priority topics important to assess working conditions and fair recruitment, in line with the SDG 2030 agenda, particularly earnings and migrant recruitment costs. For the latter, practical guidelines for measurement became available only at the end of 2019.[6]

▶ **Table 12. International migrant characteristics in specialized migration surveys (number of countries).**

Topic	Yes	No	Don't know/ No answer
Migration-related variables			
Country of birth	19	1	1
Year of arrival to country	18	1	2
Reason for arrival	17	1	3
Country of citizenship	16	4	1
Labour-related variables			
Labour force status	17	1	3
Main/Usual activity	17	1	3
Branch of economic activity (industry)	16	2	3
Occupation	15	3	3
Status in employment (employee, self-employed)	13	4	3
Earnings	9	6	6
Recruitment costs	4	8	9

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[6] See : https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_670175.pdf

6.1.2. Return international migrants

72. The topic of return international migration was included in specialized migration surveys primarily among countries in Africa. As in the case of international migrants in the country, most surveys covering return international migration included the minimum questions to identify return international migrant workers as well as essential characteristics of their migration and work experience abroad. These include, country of destination, reason for return, date of return, date or period of departure from the origin country. The reason for departure, important to identify, among return international migrants, those who left for the purpose to work is less frequently included. Regarding employment abroad, main characteristics of the job abroad include occupation and industry, and to a lesser extent earnings and recruitment costs (see Table 13).

▶ **Table 13. Return migrant characteristics in specialized migration surveys (number of countries).**

Topic	Yes	No	Don't know/ No answer
Migration-related variables			
Country of destination	9	2	
Reason for return	9	1	1
Date of return to origin country	9	1	1
Date/period of departure from origin country	8	2	1
Reason for departure	7	3	1
Labour-related variables			
Employment abroad	8	3	
Occupation of job abroad	7	4	
Industry of job abroad	6	4	1
Earnings	5	5	1
Recruitment costs	4	5	2

6.1.3. Emigration of former household members

73. In the case of information on the emigration of former household members, most countries reporting having included the topic in the specialized migration survey, captured sufficient information to identify the sub-group of emigrants working abroad. This includes their status as employed abroad, the country of destination, the reason for departure, and to a lesser extent the branch of economic activity (see table 14).

74. While measuring characteristics of this group through household surveys in origin countries faces important data quality challenges, the information gathered nevertheless can shed light on the characteristics of emigrants who retain ties to households in the country, the characteristics of those households, the geographic areas where they are concentrated, differences in migration corridors and profiles of migrants departing by levels of education, sex, age groups and other relevant characteristics, regardless of whether the departure is through regular or irregular channels, the mode of departure, and other such characteristics otherwise unavailable through administrative or other sources.

▶ **Table 14. Emigrant characteristics in specialized migration surveys (number of countries).**

Topic	Yes	No	Don't know/ No answer
Employment abroad	7		1
Country of destination	7	1	
Reason for departure	6	2	
Branch of economic activity (industry)	5	1	2

6.1.4. International temporary mobility of usual household members

75. Only three countries reported capturing information on the international temporary mobility of residents. All were upper-middle income countries and focused on capturing seasonal migrant workers (2 countries), frontier workers and seafarers (1 country).

▶ **Table 15. Groups of residents working abroad in specialized migration surveys (number of countries).**

Topic	Yes	No	Don't know/ No answer
Seasonal migrant workers	2	1	
Frontier workers	1	2	
Seafarer (including fishermen)	1		2

6.2. Labour force surveys

76. Analysis of the potential and actual use of labour force surveys (LFS) as part of national programmes for statistics of international labour migration was conducted using two separate sources. First, the special ILO LFS inquiry sent to national statistical offices (NSOs) in July-August 2023, included a module on current national practices reporting main indicators derived from the labour force survey disaggregated by international migrant status. The results of this inquiry are presented first. Second, an assessment of the most recent LFS microdata made available by countries to the ILO was conducted to compute relative sampling errors of selected main indicators when disaggregated by international migrant status, for surveys including country of birth and/or country of citizenship as a background characteristic. These findings are reported last.

6.2.1. Country use of LFS to report LF data by migrant status

77. Of the 120 countries completing the special ILO LFS inquiry, slightly more than half (62) reported using the national LFS to produce key labour force statistics disaggregated by international migrant status. This share is highest among responding countries in Asia and the Pacific (60%) and Africa (58%). Nevertheless, the largest number of countries reporting LFS statistics disaggregated by migrant status are high-income countries (26), including countries from Europe and Central Asia, and Asia and the Pacific (see Table 16). This practice was least reported among countries in the Americas and Arab States.

▶ **Table 16. Countries producing LFS statistics by international migrant status.**

Region/Income group	Countries in LFS Inquiry	Reports LFS statistics by migrant status	%
Total	**120**	**62**	**51.7**
By region			
Africa	**31**	18	58.1
Americas	**18**	8	44.4
Arab States	**7**	3	42.9
Asia and the Pacific	**25**	15	60.0
Europe and Central Asia	**39**	18	46.2
By income group			
High income	**41**	23	56.1
Upper-middle income	**37**	16	43.2
Lower-middle income	**30**	16	53.3
Low income	**12**	7	58.3

6.2.2. Strategies to support disaggregation of LF data by migrant status

78. Countries use a variety of strategies to support disaggregation of key labour force statistics by international migrant status and to generate more detailed information on the labour market situation and working conditions of international migrant workers. Most common is the direct inclusion of the minimum core questions on country of birth and/or country of citizenship, reported by 58 countries. This is followed by inclusion of special add-on modules targeting international migrants, a strategy reported by 20 countries, primarily among countries in Europe and Central Asia, and with reference to the European LFS ad-hoc module on the Labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants[7]. A third strategy reported involves using the LFS to identify households or persons with relevant migrant characteristics and conducting separate surveys on international migration, reported by 10 countries. Among other approaches reported was the combination of LFS data with administrative sources (see Figure 10).

▶ **Figure 10. Approaches to support disaggregation of LFS core statistics by international migrant status.**

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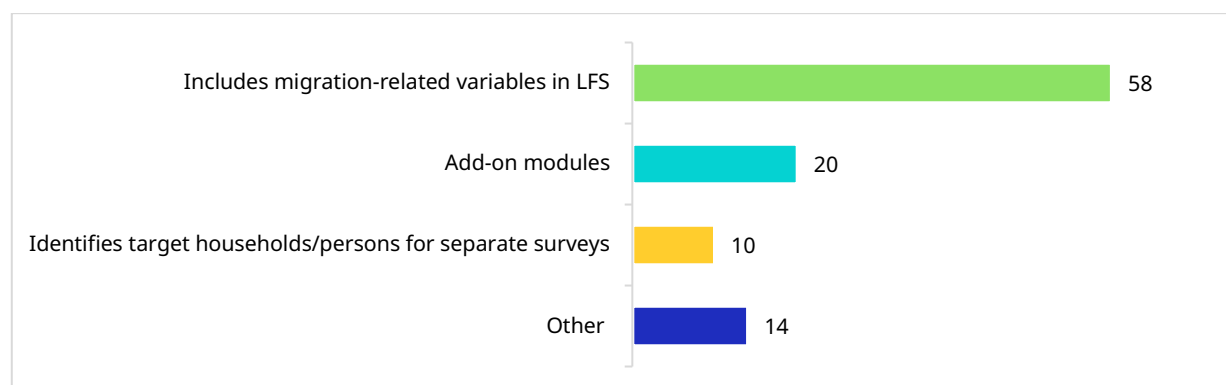
[7] See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/lfso_21_esms.htm

6.2.3. Periodicity of reporting LF data by migrant status

79. Publishing key labour force statistics disaggregated by international migrant status is done mainly on an ad-hoc manner (17 countries) in countries in Asia and the Pacific and Africa and lower-middle income countries. By contrast, high income countries, including countries in Europe and Central Asia, report publishing core labour force data by migrant status on a regular, sub-annual, or annual basis (see Table 17). Among those indicating sub-annual reporting, the most common frequency was quarterly dissemination.

▶ **Table 17. Periodicity of reporting core LFS data by international migrant status (number of countries).**

Region/Income group	Reports LFS statistics by migrant status	Sub-annual	Annual	Every N years	Ad-hoc
Total	**62**	**16**	**15**	**5**	**17**
By region					
Africa	**18**	3	4	2	6
Americas	**8**	3	2		1
Arab States	**3**		1		1
Asia and the Pacific	**15**	2	1	3	7
Europe and Central Asia	**18**	8	7		2
By income group					
High income	**23**	11	8		1
Upper-middle income	**16**	2	3	4	5
Lower-middle income	**16**	1	2		9
Low income	**7**	2	2	1	2

6.2.4. Adjustments to LFS surveys and estimates

80. NSOs were asked if any measures have been integrated in the LFS sample to improve coverage of international migrants in the survey, and/or the precision of key labour force estimates by international migrant status. Only 11 out of the 61 countries publishing migrant disaggregated statistics reported to have applied these kinds of measures. Almost all such countries reported the use of stratification variables related to international migrants as part of the sampling design of the survey. One country reported to have revised the sampling design of the survey for this purpose.

81. Additionally, 16 countries reported to have taken measures to calibrate or adjust key labour force estimates to take into account international migration. Some countries used the number of migrants in the country for the calculation of expansion factors and for weighting, and others have carried out poststratification adjustments considering the duration of stay, nationality, and type of residence permit of migrants.

6.2.5. Self-rated quality of LFS data by migrant status

82. Additionally, NSOs rated the overall quality of key labour force estimates disaggregated by international migrant status produced from the LFS. Table 18 shows the results of this rating by region and income group. Half of the countries that replied to this question, find that the level of quality of their disseminated labour force estimates disaggregated by international migrant status is Acceptable. This was the most common rating among countries from Europe and Central Asia and countries from Africa. About one third of countries reporting LF data by international migrant status

consider that their estimates have an overall good quality (17) and only 8 countries rated the quality as very good. Additionally, 3 countries reported to have estimates of poor quality, two in Africa and one in Asia and the Pacific.

▶ **Table 18. Self-rated quality of core LFS indicators by migrant status (number of countries).**

Region/Income group	Reports LFS statistics by migrant status	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Poor
Total	**62**	**8**	**17**	**28**	**3**
By region					
Africa	**18**	2	5	8	2
Americas	**8**	1	1	4	
Arab States	**3**	1	2		
Asia and the Pacific	**15**	3	2	6	1
Europe and Central Asia	**18**	1	7	10	
By income group					
High income	**23**	3	9	9	
Upper-middle income	**16**	2	1	10	1
Lower-middle income	**16**	2	4	6	2
Low income	**7**	1	3	3	

6.2.6. LFS use for other priority groups relating to international labour migration

83. Countries were further asked whether they use the LFS to produce separate statistics on the labour force characteristics of four specific groups, detailed in Figure 11. Results indicate that 24 countries use their LFS to produce statistics for residents working abroad, using the question on place of residence. This is followed by return international migrant workers, reported by 18 countries. Additionally, ten countries reported using the LFS to produce statistics on the labour force characteristics of former household members living abroad. Finally, only seven countries reported using the LFS to produce statistics on the labour market situation of refugees and/or asylum seekers.

▶ **Figure 11. LFS use to generate labour force statistics for priority groups (number of countries).**
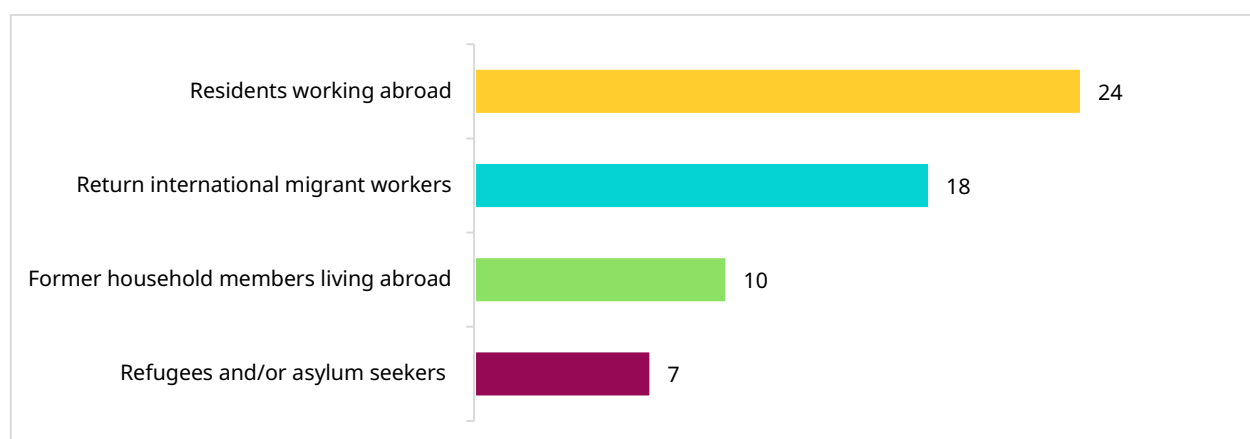
6.2.7. Plans to support disaggregation of LF data by migrant status

84. Countries that reported not using the LFS to produce key official labour force statistics disaggregated by international migrant status were asked whether they have any plans in the next 5 years to expand the use of the LFS to support this. Slightly over one fourth of countries (28%) indicated that they have concrete plans to enable disaggregation of LF data by international migrant status, another fourth (28%) indicated they do not plan to do this. The majority, however, indicated not having decided yet (44%) (see Figure 12).
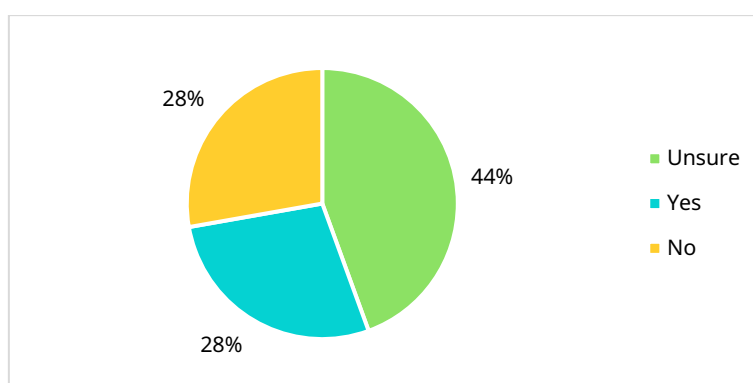
▶ **Figure 12. Plans to expand use of LFS to disaggregate core labour force statistics by migrant status**

85. Among those not currently using the LFS to produce core labour force statistics disaggregated by international migrant status, 25 countries reported having another source for this purpose. Other sources reported mainly include administrative records and population registers (11), specialized migration surveys (4), the population census (3) and other household surveys (7).

6.2.8. Precision of core LFS estimates by international migrant status

86. To complement the assessment of the potential role of LFS to generate disaggregated key labour force statistics by international migrant status, ILO undertook a review of the LFS microdata sets made available by countries. The review focused on the most recent national LFS microdata set available for each country, during the period 2015-2023, as of July 2023.

▶ **Table 19. Most recent country LFS microdata available in the ILO LFS microdata repository**

Region/Income group	With questions on migrant status	With sampling design information	%
Total	**119**	**93**	**78.2**
By region			
Africa	26	25	96.2
Americas	19	16	84.2
Arab States	6	3	50.0
Asia and the Pacific	22	17	77.3
Europe and Central Asia	46	32	69.6
By income group			
High income	46	30	65.2
Upper-middle income	12	11	91.7
Lower-middle income	28	25	89.3
Low income	33	27	81.8

87. The review identified 119 countries that include in the LFS the core recommended questions to compute a variable for international migrant status, namely country of birth and/or country of citizenship. Of these, 93 LFS microdata sets also include relevant variables and metadata documenting the characteristics of the surveys' sampling design to support computation of relative standard errors considering the multistage survey design (see Table 19). A first evaluation revealed that about one fourth of the identified LFS (27) yield less than 300 observations (unweighted) of international migrants, making it difficult to support any further disaggregation of international migrants by labour force status and sex (see Figure 13).

▶ **Figure 13. LFS by number of unweighted observations of international migrants (number of countries, most recent LFS).**
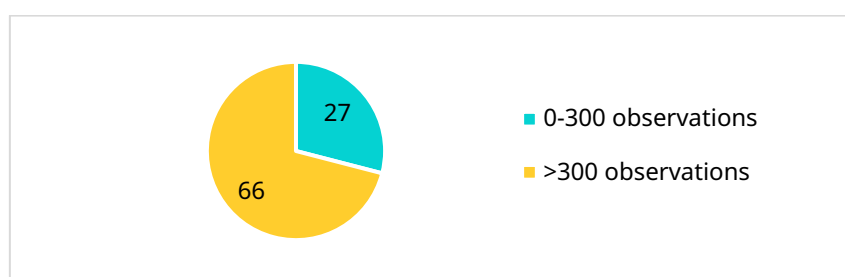
88. Further analysis centred on the computation of relative standard errors (RSE) for basic estimates of the share of international migrants and the share of international migrants in employment. The results of this exercise revealed that RSEs are for the most part below 20% for these two estimates, considered acceptable, in all regions, particularly in high-income countries, and for countries in Europe and Central Asia and the Americas (see Table 20).

▶ **Table 20. Level of precision around estimates of international migrants and international migrants in employment (number of countries, most recent LFS).**

Region/Income group	RSE, estimate of international migrants			RSE, estimate of international migrants in employment		
	0-20%	21-30%	>30%	0-20%	21-30%	>30%
Total	**83**	**7**	**3**	**79**	**10**	**4**
By region						
Africa	21	3	1	19	4	2
Americas	16			16		
Arab States	2	1		2	1	
Asia and the Pacific	14	1	2	12	3	2
Europe and Central Asia	30	2		30	2	
By income group						
High income	30			30		
Upper-middle income	24	3		22	5	
Lower-middle income	20	2	3	19	3	3
Low income	9	2		8	2	1

89. Further disaggregation of the share of international migrants in employment by sex, shows at global level, a loss of precision, which impacts to a greater degree the estimates for migrant women in employment, reflecting the uneven sex distribution among international migrant workers prevalent in many countries. (see Table 21a).

▶ **Table 21a. Uneven loss of precision for estimates of international migrants in employment by sex (number of countries, most recent LFS).**

Estimate	RSE		
	0-20%	21-30%	>30%
Share of International migrants	83	7	3
Share of International migrants in employment	79	10	4
Share of International male migrants in employment	**74**	**13**	**6**
Shae of International female migrants in employment	**67**	**15**	**11**

90. Examination by region and income group shows that the higher loss of precision for estimates of migrant women in employment impacts countries in all regions and in all income groups (see table 21b).

▶ **Table 21b. Differences in precision levels for estimates of international migrants in employment by sex (number of countries, most recent LFS).**

Region/Income group	RSE, estimate of international MALE migrants in employment			RSE, estimate of international FEMALE migrants in employment		
	0-20%	21-30%	>30%	0-20%	21-30%	>30%
Total	**74**	**13**	**6**	**67**	**15**	**11**
By region						
Africa	18	4	3	15	6	4
Americas	15	1		14	2	
Arab States	2	1		2		1
Asia and the Pacific	10	5	2	9	5	3
Europe and Central Asia	29	2	1	27	2	3
By income group						
High income	30			29		1
Upper-middle income	20	6	1	19	5	3
Lower-middle income	17	5	3	13	8	4
Low income	7	2	2	6	2	3

91. Other breakdowns, such as by broad skill level of occupation are further impacted with estimates for selected categories of skill level from a higher number of countries reaching RSEs above 20% and 30% considered no longer sufficiently reliable, even without the requisite disaggregation by sex (see table 22).

▶ **Table 22. Loss of precision for estimates of international migrants in employment by occupation skill level (number of countries, most recent LFS).**

Estimate	RSE		
	0-20%	21-30%	>30%
Skill level 1 (low)	52	9	29
Skill level 2 (medium)	69	13	9
Skill levels 3 and 4 (high)	55	17	19
Not elsewhere classified	15	9	30

92. Overall, the preliminary assessment of precision levels for basic estimates of international migrants in employment by sex derived from available LFS data indicates that this source could be used for this purpose, as part of national programmes of statistics on international labour migration by about half of the countries covered. The results provide a similar picture to that based on the NSO self-rated assessment of LFS data quality for core indicators disaggregated by international migrant status. Further disaggregation, however, for example by essential employment characteristics such as status in employment, occupation or industry will be accompanied by additional loss of precision around the estimates, as shown in the case of disaggregation by occupation skill level. Other quality dimensions have yet to be assessed, in particular coverage. It was not possible in this assessment to explore possible quality problems relating to issues due to under-coverage of the international migrant population in LFS.

6.3.   Harnessing household surveys for ILM statistics

93. The findings of the ILO review have made evident important gaps regarding the integration of national household surveys as part of a strategy to produce statistics of international labour migration. The use of specialized migration surveys, in particular, appears to be rather limited across countries, with a mix of ad-hoc and regular implementation at long intervals ranging from four to ten years. Nevertheless, for countries that reported conducting a specialized migration survey, findings point to their versatility to cover a wide range of groups relevant to international labour migration, including immigrant workers, emigrants working abroad, and different groups of residents engaged in international temporary mobility, including frontier workers and seasonal workers, as well as geographic coverage, as relevant in the national context.

94. Labour force surveys appear to be more consistently tapped by half of the countries in the review as a source to generate core labour force statistics disaggregated by international migrant status, for the resident population living in private households. Basic assessments of data quality, including self-rating by NSOs and through computation of relative standard errors for available LFS microdata, indicate that, for headline indicators, the LFS in many countries could yield estimates with acceptable levels of precision, although with lower quality for estimates of international migrant women in employment. Further disaggregation, for example, by essential characteristics of employment such as status in employment, occupation, or industry, or by basic socio-demographic characteristics such as age-group, however, is likely to impact the potential use of the LFS for this purpose. In addition, the current assessment has not taken into consideration issues relating to the coverage of international migrants in the LFS.

95. The review identified several good practices implemented by countries to improve the coverage and efficiency of the LFS to support the production of core labour force statistics by international migrant status. These include the inclusion and use of stratification variables relating to international migration in the sampling design of the survey, a re-design of the survey, and weighting and post-stratification adjustments using external data specific to the characteristics of international migrants to account for identified coverage gaps in the LFS. It also revealed that some countries are using the LFS to generate statistics on residents working abroad, as a mechanism to integrate dedicated modules relating to labour migration topics, to target separate dedicated surveys on migration, and to link labour force data with data from other sources, in particular administrative records to generate labour statistics relating to international migrants.

96. The potential role that the LFS and specialized migration surveys can play in national data collection programmes on statistics of ILM will depend on the national context, in particular the relative relevance of the different components of international labour migration in the country (i.e. immigration, outmigration, return migration of workers, and/or international temporary labour

mobility), the existence of other sources and the statistical infrastructure and resources available. Nevertheless, it is clear that household surveys have an important role to play as part of the national strategy to generate data on a regular basis, on the size and situation of international migrant workers and their contributions to the national labour market, in line with the 19th ICLS Resolution on statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (2013) and the 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration (2018).

7.   Administrative data sources

97. Administrative data cover a wide range of information collected by different government departments and organizations for the purposes of registration, transaction and record keeping, usually during the delivery of a service (Eurostat, 2019). As administrative records have become more available across countries, there is a growing demand to promote their statistical uses as part of the modernization of national statistical systems. The use of administrative sources is known to have many advantages, particularly with respect to cost-efficiency, long-term sustainability, and timeliness.

98. In the case of international labour migration, the 20th ICLS Guidelines recognize administrative data sources as an important component of national programmes of statistics on the topic because of the unique role they can play to produce statistics on flows, including inflows and outflows, and for the regular updating of statistics on stocks of international migrant workers, and of special groups of interest. Many administrative data sources can contribute to producing statistics of international labour migration. The main types can be grouped into three categories: (a) administrative population registers, (b) collection of information at the border, and (c) administrative records of work permits (foreign workers and/or nationals working abroad).

99. National population registers, where established, can serve to generate statistics on changes in the resident population due to inflows and/or outflows relating to international migration. Additionally, registers covering special populations, such as registers of refugees and asylum-seekers, registers of foreigners, or registers of nationals abroad, can also be used to generate stock and flow statistics for the groups covered. To expand their use for labour migration statistics, beyond producing information on the general migrant population, registers need to integrate or be linked to other sources providing information on the employment characteristics of the registered migrants, such as data from income tax registers, social security registers, visa types, work permits, labour force surveys, etc.

100.   Collection of information at the border, or "border collection", gathers information at ports of entry into and departure from a country, regardless of whether they are actually located at the border. They usually include airports and other sites at which persons formally enter or leave a national territory (GMG, 2017). These data can contribute to producing statistics relating to inflows or outflows of international labour migration when among the information captured are the main purpose of travel distinguishing employment purposes, and business and professional travel purposes, duration of stay, country of origin and country of destination, as well as priority socio-demographic characteristics of the travellers including sex, age, status in employment, occupation, and other essential characteristics in line with the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics (UN, 2010).

101.   Collection of information derived from the issuance of work permits can serve to generate statistics on inflows of foreign workers; and those derived from the official clearance of departing citizens to work abroad can also contribute to better understanding out-flows for work purposes. This information can contribute to producing statistics of international labour migration for particular groups of workers, for example by type of programme (e.g. seasonal workers, domestic workers) and/or by type of skill level of the worker.

102.   Administrative records generally refer to the event being recorded (e.g. border entry, visa issuance, permit renewal, act of registration) rather than the person, thus requiring a process of transformation to serve the purpose of generating statistics about different population groups. Additionally, as a by-product of administrative processes, data derived from administrative sources

will only refer to the population covered or serviced. Where administrative requirements do not exist to document the international movement of selected groups of persons and workers, or where irregular cross-border movements, overstays, and/or informal employment are common, a strategy that relies on a combination of data sources to generate statistics of international labour migration is required.

103.   Furthermore, as an inherent product of administrative processes, different administrative data sources are generally under the responsibility and management of various institutions, predominantly belonging to the government sector. Strong coordination and collaboration across institutions, as well as infrastructure covering legal, data management and data security aspects, are thus necessary to promote and expand the statistical uses of these sources for international labour migration.

7.1.   National availability of administrative sources

104.   As described in Section 1, among the key administrative sources covered in the ILO review, the most frequently reported sources available at global level are registers of border entries and/or exists and sources covering work permits (66.4% of countries for each source type). Less available globally are population registers (51.2% of countries). Regional and income-grouping differences in the availability of these sources are apparent. The highest share of countries reporting having population registers were in Arab States and Europe and Central Asia, making this source most available among high-income countries. By contrast records from border entries and/exists seem to have the lowest availability among these same countries. Border data sources are most available among countries in the Americas and Africa, while countries from Asia and the Pacific report as most available work permit data sources.

▶ **Table 23. Availability of key sources of administrative data (% of countries).**

Region/Income group	Number of countries covered	Population registers (%)	Border entries and/or exits (%)	Work permits (%)
Total	**131**	**51.9**	**66.4**	**66.4**
By region				
Africa	**35**	45.7	74.3	65.7
Americas	**19**	42.1	94.7	63.2
Arab States	**7**	71.4	42.9	42.9
Asia and the Pacific	**29**	41.4	69.0	65.5
Europe, Central Asia	**41**	65.9	48.8	73.2
By income group				
High income	**45**	60.0	55.6	75.6
Upper-middle income	**35**	54.3	80.0	65.7
Lower-middle income	**36**	44.4	63.9	58.3
Low income	**15**	40.0	73.3	60.0

7.2. Responsible agencies for administrative sources for ILM statistics

105. The ILO review indicates that several government institutions are responsible for the main administrative sources with potential use to generate statistics of international labour migration.

106. Globally, in the case of population registers (see Figure 14), Ministries of Interior and Civil Registration Offices are responsible for national population registers in slightly over half of the countries covered (Figure 14a). For registers targeting specific migrant populations, Migration Departments are the primary responsible agency in about one quarter of the countries covered (Figures 14b, c and, d). Nevertheless, Ministries of Interior are also responsible for these specific registers in a significant number of countries. In the case of registers of foreign citizens working in the country (Figure 14d), about one third of countries report the Ministry of Labour as the responsible agency. For the specific case of registers of refugees and asylum seekers (Figure 15b), about one third of countries report a National Refugee or Asylum agency as responsible. Other agencies reported by a few countries as responsible for population registers include Police Offices and the National Statistics Office.

▶ **Figure 14. National agencies responsible for different population registers.**

a. National Population Register

b. Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

c. Register of Foreign Citizens Resident

d. Register of Foreign Citizens Employed
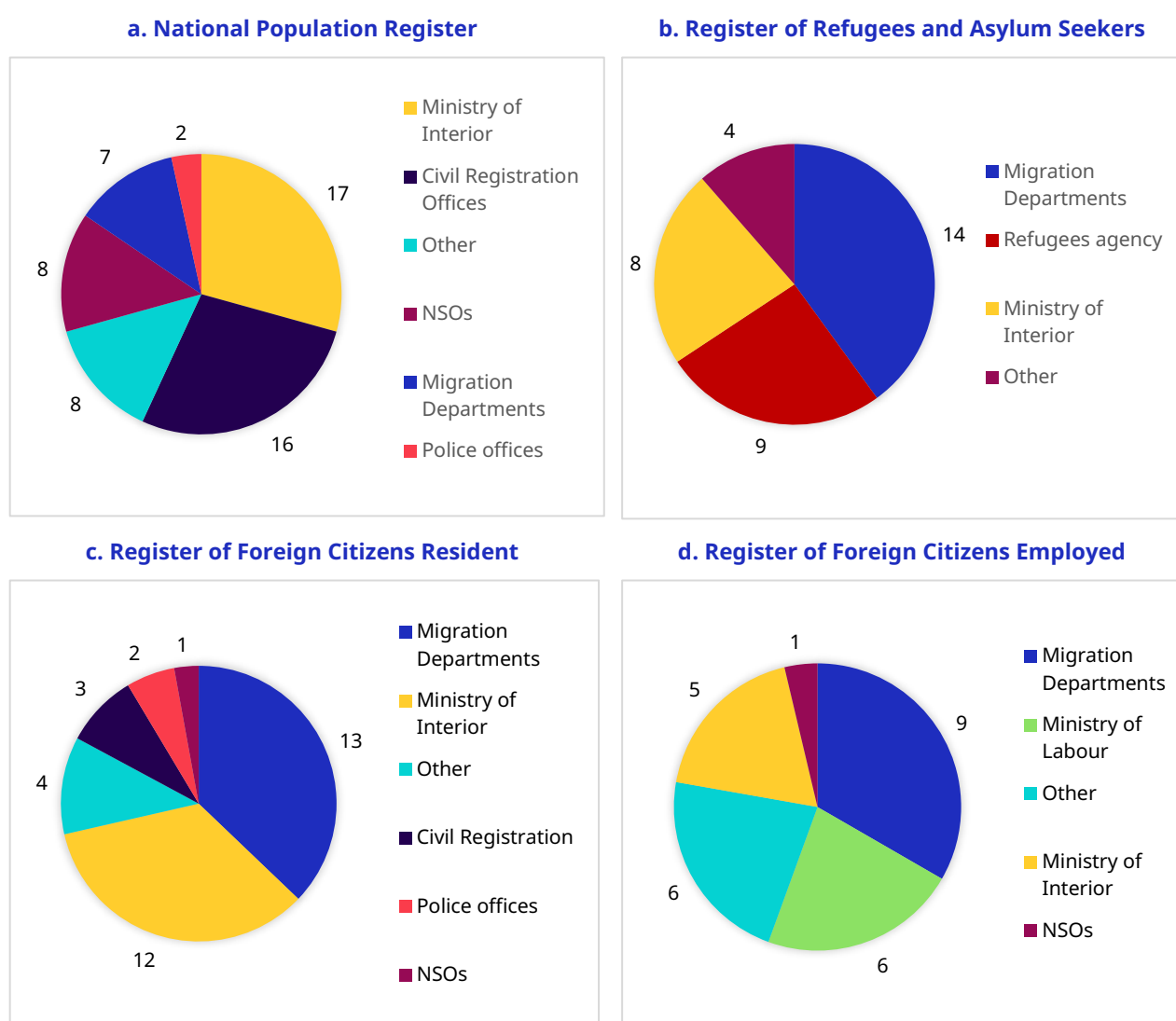
107. In the case of border records of entries and/or exits, the primary agencies responsible include Migration Departments, Police Offices and Ministries of Interior. Together these three agencies are reported as the responsible national institution by close to 90 percent of the countries covered. The National Statistics Office is nevertheless mentioned by a few countries as the responsible agency (see Figure 15).

▶ **Figure 15. National agencies responsible for compiling data on border records of entries and/or exits.**
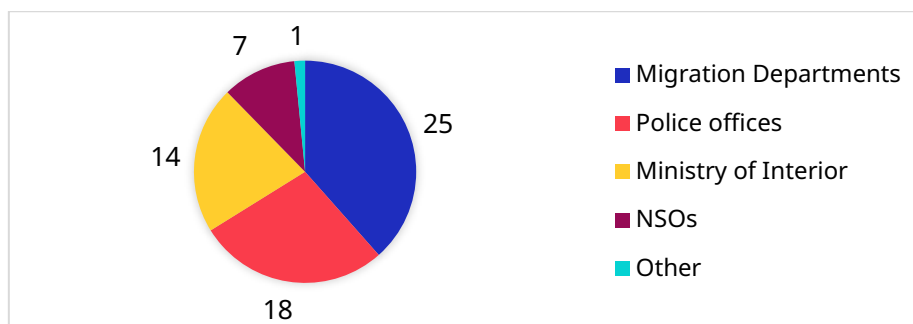
108. For work permit data, close to half of the countries indicate that Ministry of Labour is the responsible agency, while Migration Departments are responsible in about 30 percent of countries. Other responsible agencies mentioned include the Ministry of Interior, the National Statistics Office and Police Offices (see Figure 16).

▶ **Figure 16. National agencies responsible for compiling data on work permits.**
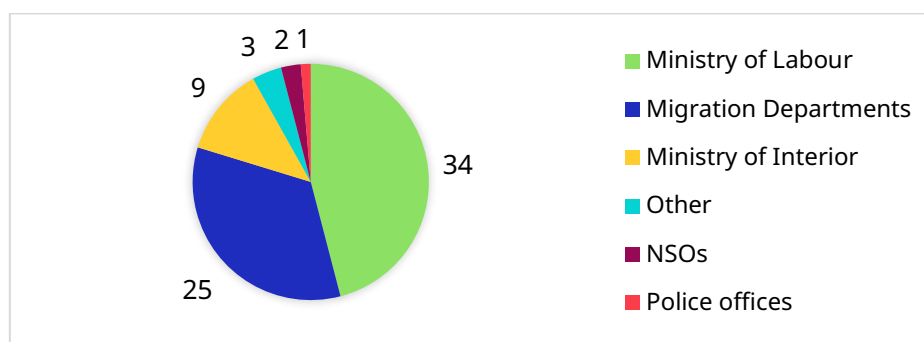
7.3. Population registers

7.3.1. National population register

109. Among countries with a national population register, three quarters (75.8%) include and can separately identify foreign-citizens resident in the country. A smaller share, but still over half of the countries (56.1%) can separately identify the population of foreign citizens working in the country using this source. Finally, less than half of the countries with a population register include and can separately identify refugees and asylum seekers in the country through the National population register (see Table 24). This pattern is present across all regions and income groups.

110. The highest number of countries where the national population register includes and can separately identify foreign citizens working in the country are in Europe and Central Asia (70.4%)

and the Americas (62.5%). Whereas only one fourth of countries in Asia and the Pacific (25%) where a National population register exists can use it to identify foreign citizens working in the country.

▶ **Table 24. National population registers by type of migrant population covered (number and share of countries)**

Region / Income group	Countries with National population registers (N)	Migrant population groups covered		
		Foreign-citizens resident in the country (%)	Foreign citizens working in the country (%)	Refugees and asylum seekers in the country (%)
Total	**66**	**75.8**	**56.1**	**47.0**
By region				
Africa	**15**	66.7	53.3	46.7
Americas	**8**	75.0	62.5	50.0
Arab States	**4**	75.0	50.0	25.0
Asia and the Pacific	**12**	50.0	25.0	8.3
Europe and Central Asia	**27**	92.6	70.4	66.7
By income group				
High income	**25**	80.0	64.0	52.0
Upper-middle income	**19**	84.2	68.4	52.6
Lower-middle income	**16**	68.8	37.5	31.3
Low income	**6**	50.0	33.3	50.0

7.3.2. Registers of migrant populations

111. Aside national population registers, about one third of countries included in the ILO review reported having specific registers covering different migrant populations. Most common are dedicated registers of foreign citizens resident in the country (43 countries), followed by registers of refugees and asylum seekers (40 countries). Less frequent are specific registers of foreign citizens working in the country (34 countries). In all cases, these three registers are most commonly reported by countries in Europe and Central Asia, and among upper-middle and high income countries (see table 25).

112. In all cases, the number of countries that can use these dedicated registers of migrant populations for statistical purposes drops compared to number of countries that report their existence. This is particularly the case for registers of foreign citizens working in the country, for which only half of those available (52.9%) are reportedly being used for statistical purposes. Asia and the Pacific appears to be the region where these registers are least utilized for statistical purposes. In terms of involvement of the National Statistics Office in producing statistics from these registers, although not always involved, the highest shares of countries where the NSO is involved are in Africa and Europe and Central Asia, across all three sources.

▶ **Table 25. Registers of migrant populations by type, use for statistical purposes and NSO involvement.**

Region / Income group	Register of foreign citizens resident in the country:			Register of foreign citizens working in the country:			Register of refugees and asylum seekers:		
	Total	Used for statistics	NSO involved	Total	Used for statistics	NSO involved	Total	Used for statistics	NSO involved
Total	**43**	**26**	**16**	**34**	**18**	**9**	**40**	**28**	**10**
By region									
Africa	**9**	6	6	**9**	5	4	**10**	6	4
Americas	**6**	5	2	**3**	3	1	**5**	5	1
Arab States	**1**			**1**			**1**		
Asia and the Pacific	**8**	2	1	**8**	3	1	**4**	1	
Europe, Central Asia	**19**	13	7	**13**	7	3	**20**	16	5
By income group									
High income	**17**	11	6	**11**	6	1	**16**	14	4
Upper-middle income	**13**	9	3	**10**	6	4	**11**	8	2
Lower-middle income	**9**	2	3	**9**	3	1	**8**	2	1
Low income	**4**	4	4	**4**	3	3	**5**	4	3

7.3.3. Registers of nationals abroad

113.   Less than one third of countries (38) covered in the review reported having a register of nationals resident abroad. Those most frequently reporting these registers were high and upper middle-income countries. Less than half of the registers reported are being used for statistical purposes, and involvement from NSOs is also limited (see table 26).

114.   In the case of registers of nationals *employed* abroad, only about one sixth of countries covered in the review (22) reported having such registers, and they are most common among lower-middle income countries. Very limited statistical use was reported with only 30% being used and few NSOs involved in this process.

▶ **Table 26. Registers of nationals abroad by type, use for statistical purposes and NSO involvement.**

Region / Income group	Register of nationals resident abroad			Register of nationals employed abroad		
	Total	Used for statistics	NSO involved	Total	Used for statistics	NSO involved
Total	**38**	**16**	**12**	**22**	**7**	**5**
By region						
Africa	**7**	2	3	**7**	2	3
Americas	**6**	2	2	**2**	1	
Arab States	**2**			**2**	1	1
Asia and the Pacific	**9**	3	1	**9**	3	1
Europe and Central Asia	**14**	9	6	**2**		
By income group						
High income	**16**	8	5	**5**	1	
Upper-middle income	**10**	4	3	**3**	1	1
Lower-middle income	**8**	3	2	**10**	4	2
Low income	**4**	1	2	**4**	1	2

7.3.4. Registers for cross-border workers

115. The ILO review identified the existence of additional dedicated registers covering selected categories of cross-border workers. These include frontier workers, seasonal workers, and persons crossing international borders as part of other temporary work schemes (see Table 27).

116. Most common are registers of foreign nationals employed in the country (i.e. as country of destination). These were reported by 44 countries, although covering different groups, as relevant in the national context. These registers were most commonly reported by high-income countries, particularly from Europe and Central Asia, followed by countries in Africa. Less frequently available are registers of resident nationals employed abroad, reported by 24 countries, again covering different groups of temporary international workers.

▶ **Table 27. Registers of cross-border workers.**

Region / Income group	Foreign nationals employed in country (44)			Resident nationals employed abroad (24)		
	frontier workers	seasonal workers	other temporary work schemes	frontier workers	seasonal workers	other temporary work schemes
Total	**25**	**28**	**28**	**14**	**14**	**10**
By region						
Africa	7	6	7	4	4	6
Americas	3	2	4		2	
Arab States	1	1	1			
Asia and the Pacific	4	4	7	3	5	2
Europe and Central Asia	10	15	9	7	3	2
By income group						
High income	11	17	13	7	3	2
Upper-middle income	6	5	7	1	3	1
Lower-middle income	5	5	5	4	7	4
Low income	3	1	3	2	1	3

7.4. Records of border entries/exits

117. Among the administrative sources covered in the ILO review, border entries and exits were the highest reported as available by countries (83 countries), particularly in Africa and Asia and the Pacific. Of these however, only slightly over half (45 countries) capture separately employment as a main purpose for travel, and about a quarter (27 countries) indicates using those data to produce statistics. In most of these countries, the NSO is involved in this process (see Figure 17).

▶ **Figure 17. Availability and use of border entry / exit data for statistics on ILM (number of countries).**

Compiles border entry/exit data	83
Identifies employment as reason	45
Produces statistics	27
NSO involved	21
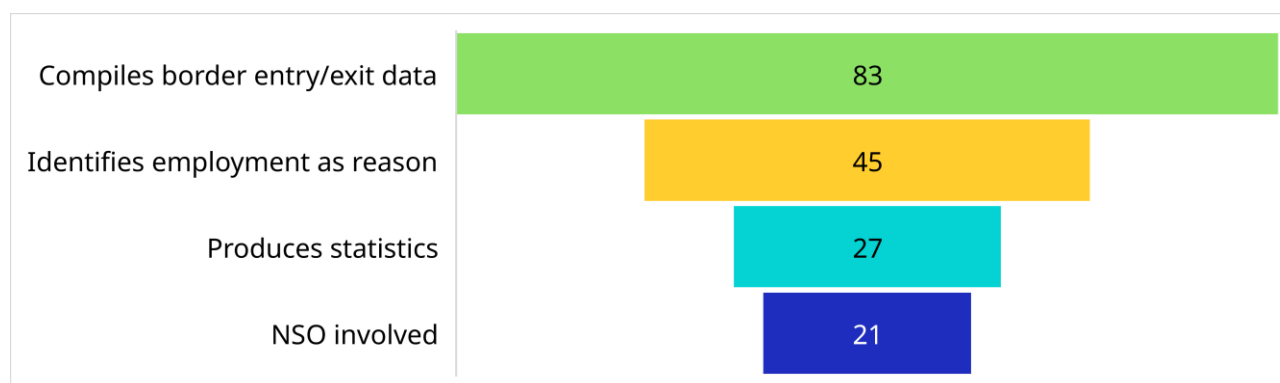
118.   Separate identification of employment as main purpose of travel is highest among upper-middle income countries, and among countries in the Americas and Arab States (67% in each of the regions) (see Figure 18). Countries in Europe and Central Asia, and high-income countries report, both the lowest levels of availability of this data source and, where available, the lowest share separately identifying employment as main purpose of travel (42% and 43% respectively).

▶ **Figure 18. Share of countries with available border collection that separately identify employment as main purpose of travel (entries and/or exits).**

Category	Value
Total	54
Africa	57
Americas	66
Arab States	66
Asia and the Pacific	50
Europe and Central Asia	42
High income	43
Upper-middle income	69
Lower-middle income	52
Low income	45
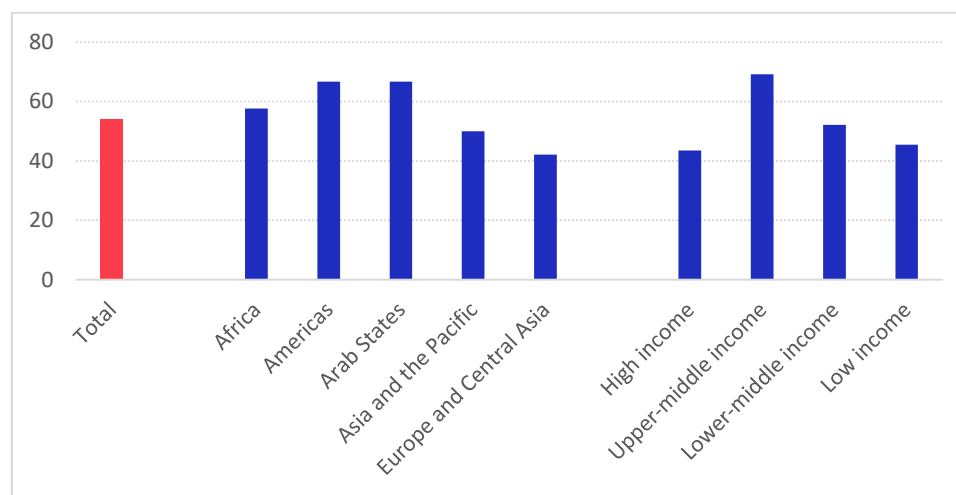
119.   In general, both compilation of border data and recording of main purpose of travel is higher for arrivals, compared to departures. In the case of arrivals data, at global level of 63 countries that compile such data, 40 capture employment as a main purpose for travel, and 25 produce statistics relevant to international labour migration using these data. That is, less than half of the countries that compile arrival data currently use it for statistical purposes relating to labour migration (see table 28). A similar pattern is observed for departure data with a much lower number of countries across all regions and income-groups reporting their use for statistical purposes (not shown).

▶ **Table 28. Availability and use of arrivals data for statistics on inflows of migrants for employment reasons.**

Region / Income group	Compiles		Produces statistics	
	Arrivals of foreign-born/foreign citizens	Identifies employment as reason of arrival	Inflows of foreign-born/ foreign citizens	Inflows by reason of arrival (identifying employment)
Total	**63**	**40**	**43**	**25**
By region				
Africa	20	15	8	6
Americas	13	9	13	6
Arab States	3	2	3	2
Asia and the Pacific	13	7	8	6
Europe and Central Asia	14	7	11	5
By income group				
High income	15	8	13	6
Upper-middle income	23	16	18	12
Lower-middle income	16	10	7	4
Low income	9	6	5	3

7.5. Records of work permits

120. Work permit records were the second highest type of administrative source reported as available by countries (82), and overall, the type of administrative source most utilized for statistical purposes, while NSO involvement was among the lowest reported (13 countries).

▶ **Figure 19. Availability and use of work permit data for statistics on ILM (number of countries).**
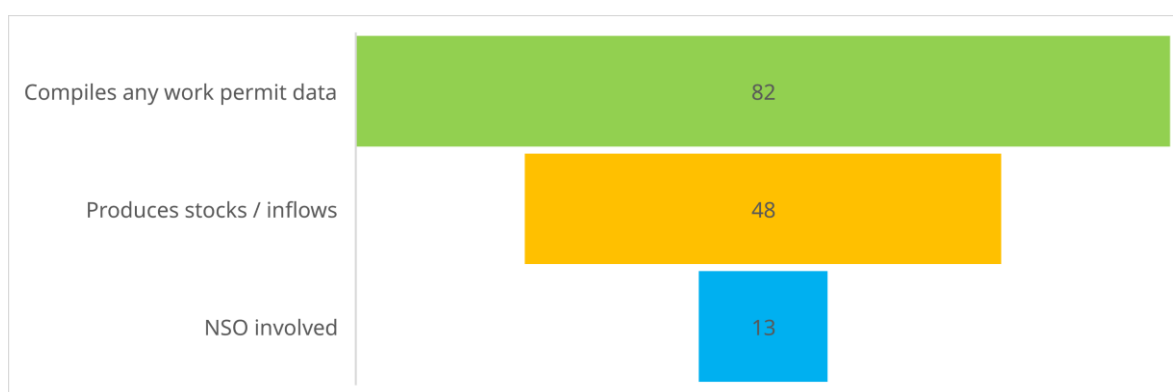
121. Among the different types of work permit data (see Table 29), the most compiled by countries are inflows, referring to new work permits issued to foreign nationals in a given year (69 countries). Closely following are stocks, referring to annual counts of valid work permits issued to foreigners, compiled by 68 countries at global level. Both of these data (stocks and inflows) are also the most used for statistical purposes with over 80 percent of countries that report compiling these data, also indicating they produce statistics from it.

122. A very different picture is observed in the case of outflows, referring to new work permits issued to nationals working abroad in a given year. Overall, these data are the least reported as available

of all data sources assessed. In total only 21 countries report compiling outflows from work permits, and about half (12 countries) report using them to produce statistics.

▶ **Table 29. Availability and use of work permit data for statistics of ILM (number of countries).**

Region / Income group	Total	STOCKS - Annual count of valid work permits issued to foreigners		INFLOWS - New work permits issued to foreigners in a given year		OUTFLOWS - New work permits issued to nationals working abroad in a given year	
		Data compiled	Statistics produced	Data compiled	Statistics produced	Data compiled	Statistics produced
Total	**82**	**68**	**48**	**69**	**48**	**21**	**12**
By region							
Africa	**22**	18	12	18	13	8	5
Americas	**10**	8	3	8	4		
Arab States	**3**	3	3	3	3	1	1
Asia and the Pacific	**18**	16	13	16	12	7	4
Europe and Central Asia	**29**	23	17	24	16	5	2
By income group							
High income	**31**	24	20	26	20	2	1
Upper-middle income	**22**	21	11	20	10	6	2
Lower-middle income	**20**	15	12	15	12	9	7
Low income	**9**	8	5	8	6	4	2

7.6. NSO involvement in statistical use of administrative data

123. Most of the administrative data reported as available in the ILO review, are under the responsibility of different government institutions. In some countries, National Statistics Offices reported being involved in the production of statistics derived from those sources. Those involved reported contributing to a wide range of activities, including:

(a) Data integration and enhancement: NSOs reported to collaborate with relevant government agencies to integrate and combine administrative data from various sources.

(b) Methodology development: NSOs reported developing methodologies to process, clean, and transform administrative data into statistical information. This includes dealing with issues related to data quality, consistency, and comparability to ensure that administrative data can be effectively used for statistical purposes.

(c) Quality control and validation: NSOs reported applying quality control procedures to administrative data to identify and correct errors, inconsistencies, and anomalies.

(d) Statistical analysis: NSOs indicated using administrative data to perform various types of statistical analyses, including generating descriptive statistics,

conducting trend analyses, and identifying patterns and correlations in the data.

(e)   Migrant population statistics: NSOs reported using administrative data to compile migrant population and demographic statistics, and to produce labour market indicators, employment rates, and other relevant statistics.

(f)   Data sharing and collaboration: NSOs indicated they collaborate with other government agencies and international organization to share data and expertise.

(g)   Capacity building: NSOs reported providing training and capacity-building to relevant government agencies to enhance their understanding of statistical requirements and data quality standards.

(h)   Reporting and dissemination: NSOs indicated they incorporate administrative data into official statistical publications and databases and disseminate statistical outputs.

7.7.   Harnessing administrative sources for ILM statistics

124.   Overall, the findings from the ILO review reveal a rather diverse picture in the availability of the different main administrative sources for statistics of international labour migration in countries. Population registers are the least available globally, and most common in countries in Europe and Central Asia, and among high-income countries. More widely available appear to be records of border entries and records of work permits. However, not all those sources cover migrant workers or include information relevant to be utilized for statistics relating to international labour migration. Current use of these sources for statistical purposes is relatively low, with shares of statistical use around 50% or lower. Similarly, NSO involvement in producing those statistics appears to be low. Additionally, important gaps are documented in the availability of sources to generate statistics on outflows relating to labour migration, as evidenced in the case border data and work permit data, and for stocks of nationals working abroad.

125.   Developments taking place in the management of administrative data and the process of modernization of official statistics are generating opportunities to expand the use of administrative data for statistical purposes that serve policy. In the context of international labour migration, the limited current use of these data points to important opportunities towards the future. Several institutions are involved in the management of these sources and, where NSOs are involved, findings show that they contribute with a wide range of activities that serve to build capacity, to strengthen the national statistical system, and to improve the availability and overall quality of national official statistics on the topic. This requires strong and ongoing inter-agency collaboration, coordination, and data sharing.

8.   Country data priorities, challenges and needs

126.   One of the objectives of the ILO inquiry was to shed light on national data priorities regarding the different components of international labour migration; their plans and areas where NSOs see the most challenges to improve their official statistics on the topic; and the types of global level resources deemed the most useful to support countries in achieving this goal.

8.1.   Priority groups for ILM statistics as per the national context

127.   In terms of priority groups, the ILO review showed that measuring international migrant workers resident in the country is the top priority for high- and middle-income countries. By contrast for low-income countries, nationals living and working abroad are of highest priority. This category of workers was also ranked as having very high priority by upper-middle and lower-middle income countries, making it the second highest ranked group overall. Return international migrant workers ranked third overall in terms of priority, with higher ratings among lower- and upper-middle income countries (see Table 30).

128.   Temporary or short-term movement of persons across countries for employment-related purposes, such as frontier and seasonal migrant workers, ranked lower overall among all country income groupings. Nevertheless, among these groups involved in temporary movements, frontier workers entering or departing the country had the highest priority, particularly for lower-middle income countries. Seasonal workers, particularly those departing the country also ranked comparatively high, particularly among high-income and upper-middle income countries.

▶ **Table 30. Groups of international migrant workers for which statistics are needed by level of priority and country income-group (number of countries)**

Priority group	Income group				Total
	High income	**Upper-middle income**	**Lower-middle income**	**Low income**	
International migrants resident and working in country	**21**	**23**	**24**	9	**77**
Nationals living and working abroad	11	22	23	**11**	67
Return international migrant workers	9	15	21	9	54
Frontier workers (coming into the country)	9	8	11	5	33
Seasonal migrant workers (going abroad)	9	9	8	4	30
Frontier workers (going abroad)	7	7	11	4	29
Seasonal migrant workers (coming into the country)	8	8	6	3	25
Other short term migrant workers (coming into the country)	8	5	8	3	24
Other short term migrant workers (going to work abroad)	1	6	9	3	19

8.2. NSOs plans to improve ILM statistics

129. Close to half of the countries covered (56) reported having concrete plans to strengthen their official statistics on the topic in the next 5 years (up to 2027). Among the plans highlighted, the redesign of existing household surveys to include international migrant workers was the most reported (18 countries). This was followed by plans to strengthen the collaboration across agencies to generate statistics using administrative records (15 countries). Implementing a specialized migration survey was mentioned by 11 countries, but as such it was the planned activity the least reported (see Figure 20).

▶ **Figure 20. Concrete plans in the next 5 years to improve official ILM statistics (number of countries)**
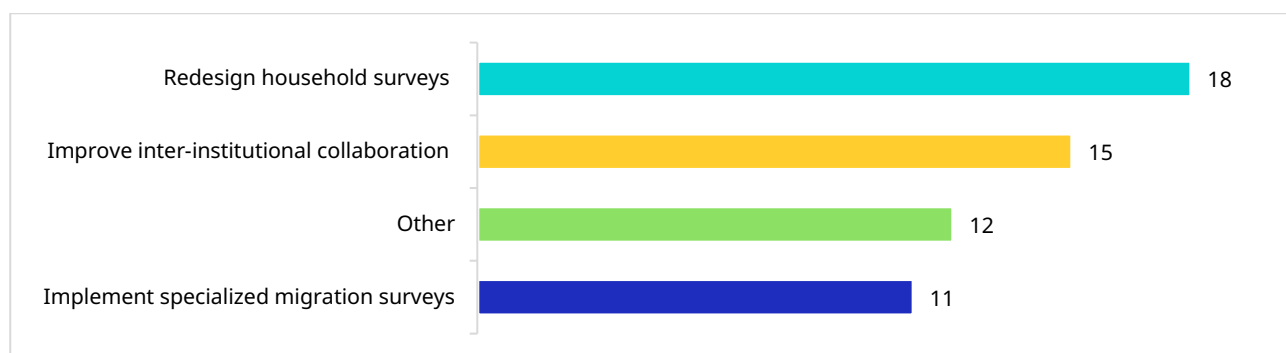

8.3. Challenges faced to produce or improve ILM statistics

130. Owing to the significant differences in the availability of sources to generate flows compared to stock data, the ILO inquiry asked NSOs to report separately the main challenges they face to produce statistics on each. Table 31 and Table 32 show the main challenges faced to produce stock and flow statistics, respectively, as ranked by NSOs.

131. The findings revealed, however, that the most common top three challenges impacting the production of stock and flow statistics on international labour migration are very similar (see Figure 21). Ranking as the most common number one challenge is the lack of available funding for the topic, an issue particularly highlighted by middle- and low-income countries. Ranking high also for both stocks and flows are quality issues with existing data, which is the number two challenge for flows, and number three in the case of stocks. The third challenge, although seemingly different, points to a common problem with inter-agency collaboration. This challenge ranks number two for stocks, and number three for flows with specific reference to a lack of access to administrative data by NSOs, and which is closely followed by insufficient interagency coordination (see table 32).

▶ **Figure 21. Top 3 challenges to improve stock and flow ILM data.**
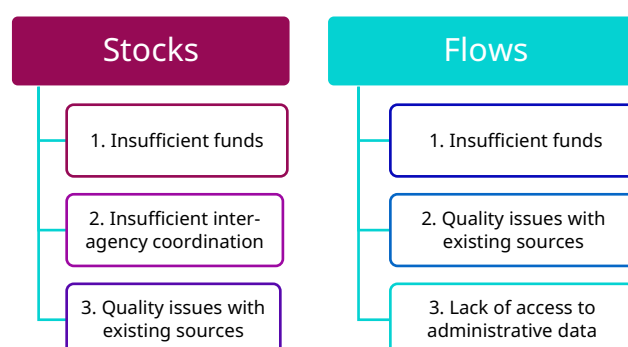
132. Despite the commonalities, there are some differences in the challenges highlighted by countries from different income groupings (see Tables 31 and 32).

▶ **Table 31. Challenges to produce or improve official statistics on STOCKS of international migrant workers (number of countries).**

Region / Income group	Income group				Total
	High income	Upper-middle income	Lower-middle income	Low income	
Insufficient funds available for the topic	5	15	**19**	**10**	**49**
Insufficient interagency coordination	6	14	18	9	47
Quality issues with existing sources or data	**7**	**16**	15	6	44
Lack of suitable methodological guidance	3	11	13	4	31
Insufficient demand for data from key stakeholders	2	12	10	4	28
Insufficient expertise to plan or collect stock data	4	8	10	4	26
Unclear or unsuitable concepts and definitions	5	7	8	2	22
Insufficient expertise to produce statistics on stocks	2	8	8	3	21
Insufficient coordination among relevant NSO units	2	6	8	5	21

▶ **Table 32. Challenges to produce or improve official statistics on FLOWS of international migrant workers (number of countries).**

Region / Income group	Income group				Total
	High income	Upper-middle income	Lower-middle income	Low income	
Insufficient funds available for the topic	6	14	20	**10**	**50**
Quality issues with existing sources or data	**8**	**15**	18	7	48
Lack of access by NSO to relevant administrative sources	5	12	**21**	9	47
Insufficient interagency coordination	7	14	16	9	46
Lack of suitable methodological guidance	3	13	14	3	33
Insufficient expertise to compile flow data	3	9	14	4	30
Insufficient demand for data from key stakeholders	1	11	11	4	27
Insufficient expertise to produce statistics on flows	3	8	11	3	25
Unclear or unsuitable concepts and definitions	4	7	8	3	22
Insufficient coordination among relevant NSO units	1	6	7	6	20

133. It is important to note that at least 20 NSOs reported as their greatest challenge an insufficient coordination among their own units. Statistics of international labour migration is a topic that can

straddle across different substantive departments within NSOs. As it also requires use of multiple data sources, this can add complexity in terms of internal organizational management and planning.

8.4. Global resources needed to improve ILM statistics

134.   To support longer-term improvements in statistics of international labour migration, most of the reporting countries consider as highest priority global advocacy to promote sharing of administrative data, maintained by different government institutions, with the NSO. This is the case both for high and low-income countries. This is followed by programmes of capacity building, including knowledge-sharing, reported the most by upper-middle income countries, and different types of guidance to measure and report ILM statistics, with guidance on estimation methodologies ranked highest by lower-middle income countries. For high income country priority guidance required relates to the use of administrative data sources.

▶ **Table 33. Global level resources by level of priority to improve ILM statistics (number of countries).**

Region / Income group	Income group				Total
	High income	Upper-middle income	Lower-middle income	Low income	
Advocacy to promote sharing of administrative data	**16**	22	20	**12**	**70**
Capacity building, including knowledge-sharing	11	**24**	22	**12**	69
Guidance on estimation methodologies	9	22	**25**	11	67
Guidance on methods for survey-based sources	9	20	22	12	63
Guidance on use of administrative data sources	14	19	19	11	63
Improved internationally agreed concepts and definitions	11	19	15	8	53
Guidance on specifying priority indicators	8	13	19	8	48
Guidance on data tabulation, analysis and reporting	6	11	12	6	35

9. National data reporting and global dissemination

135. As part of its mandate, the ILO compiles from countries a core set of statistics of international labour migration, which are made available through its dedicated International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) database[8] accessible through ILOSTAT.

136. Following endorsement of the Guidelines on International Labour Migration Statistics by the 20th ICLS, ILO scaled up its efforts to expand its ILMS database with the launch in 2018 of a dedicated questionnaire sent annually in September to labour migration focal points from national statistical offices and line ministries to compile available data for the previous year. Data compiled through this main channel is complemented with data obtained by processing country survey microdata, particularly from LFS, shared by countries with ILO; and other tabulations received from partner organizations and countries.

137. Until October 2018, the database consisted of 19 indicators drawn from ad-hoc sub-regional data compilations. Following its expansion, the global ILMS database comprises 64 indicator tables covering stocks, inflows, and outflows relating to international labour migration. Of these, 35 indicators are reported by countries and 29 (rates and ratios) are computed by ILO using the country reported data.

138. As of April 2023, the ILMS database provides data on international labour migration for 172 countries (compared to 27 countries prior to 2018). Despite the notable progress, important data gaps remain, especially for low and lower-middle income countries, predominantly migrant sending countries, which face significant data collection challenges; and inflow and outflow indicators continue to be very scarce globally.

9.1. Country reporting of ILM statistics for global dissemination

139. Looking at the period from 2015 to 2022, the ILO ILMS database holds national data on international labour migration from a total of 160 countries covering all world regions (see Table 34). The years for which there is most data are 2017 and 2018. This likely reflects the endorsement of the Guidelines and the launching of the global ILMS data compilation system in 2018. During more recent years, particularly in 2020 and 2021, data availability was severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Data for year 2022 is limited at present, reflecting the time of writing of this report, before the launch of the annual data compilation cycle to take place in late September.

140. The regions with the most recent data available are Europe and Central Asia, and Asia and the Pacific, with 43 and 19 countries in 2021, respectively. These regions are followed by 13 countries in the Americas region, 10 in Africa, and 5 Arab States. When considering income groups, it becomes evident that high and upper-middle income countries have reported more than 70 percent of the available ILMS indicators each year from 2015 to 2021.

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[8] See: https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/labour-migration/

▶ **Table 34. Country data available in ILO ILMS database by reference year, 2015-2022**

Region / Income group	Total	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**160**	**96**	**91**	**107**	**108**	**96**	**94**	**90**	**44**
By region									
Africa	**41**	8	6	17	15	16	16	10	2
Americas	**24**	16	17	19	19	15	15	13	7
Arab States	**7**			3	4	3	3	5	1
Asia and the Pacific	**38**	24	20	20	22	19	18	19	2
Europe, Central Asia	**50**	48	48	48	48	43	42	43	32
By income group									
High income	**52**	44	43	46	46	44	42	44	32
Upper-middle income	**44**	26	29	30	32	26	27	26	9
Lower-middle income	**44**	22	17	22	20	21	16	16	2
Low income	**20**	4	2	9	10	5	9	4	1

9.2.   National ILM data available globally by topic

141.   Country data is organized under three main topics in the ILO ILMS database. The first two topics, MST and MFL, provide indicators from a country of destination perspective with reference to international migrants resident in the country, covering stocks and flows. The third topic, MNA, uses a country of origin perspective to bring together selected indicators regarding nationals abroad and return international migrants, including stocks and flows:

      (a)   MST: Stock indicators relating to international migrant workers

      (b)   MFL: Flow indicators relating to international migrant workers

      (c)   MNA: Stock and flow indicators relating to nationals abroad and return migrants

142.   Most country data currently available falls under the MST topic, which includes 48 stock indicators. This is followed by country data under the MFL topic, which includes 9 flow indicators. Finally, the MNA topic holds the lowest number of country data and the smallest number of indicators (7). (See Annex I for a list of indicators by topics).

143.   Overall, indicators on international migrant stocks (MST) are available for 156 countries. By contrast indicators on international migrant flows (MFL) are only available for 64 countries, and indicators on nationals abroad and return migrants (MNA) are available for 57 countries. Countries in all regions and income groups report more data on stocks than flows of international migrant workers. Regions such as Africa, Americas and Arab States, as well as low-income countries, have limited data on flows (i.e. inflow of international migrant workers) and on stocks and outflows of nationals abroad (see Table 35).

▶ **Table 35. Country data availability in the ILO ILMS database by topic, 2015-2022.**

Region / Income group	Total	Topic		
		STOCKS International migrant workers (MST)	FLOWS International migrant workers (MFL)	STOCKS/FLOWS Nationals abroad & Return migrants (MNA)
Total	**160**	**156**	**64**	**57**
By region				
Africa	**41**	40	11	7
Americas	**24**	24	6	1
Arab States	**7**	7	1	
Asia and the Pacific	**38**	35	15	18
Europe and Central Asia	**50**	50	31	31
By income group				
High income	**52**	52	26	25
Upper-middle income	**44**	44	16	10
Lower-middle income	**44**	41	16	17
Low income	**20**	19	6	5

9.3. National ILM data available globally by source

144.   Country data available in the ILO ILMS database comes from a variety of sources (see Table 36). Stock indicators are primarily available from national labour force surveys (LFS), followed by population censuses. This trend is observed in all regions and income groups. 119 out of the 156 countries with available migrant worker stock (MST) indicators use LFS data, representing more than 75 percent of countries. Household income/expenditure surveys are used by 19 percent of the countries and population censuses by 21 percent.

145.   These patterns reflect the higher frequency of national labour force surveys compared to other survey-based sources and to the population census. The limited number of countries for which census data is available reflects the recent establishment of the ILMS database in 2018. Current efforts are underway to compile from countries new stock data derived from the 2020 Round of population and housing censuses, which has the potential to greatly expand the geographic coverage of national data available globally, on the stock of international migrant workers resident in countries and their essential characteristics.

146.   Administrative records are less used to produce indicators on stocks, with 18 percent of countries using the following types of records: population registers (7), employment office records (3) and other administrative records and related sources (18). Official estimates of the stock of international migrant workers (not derived using a single specific source) are used by fifteen countries, mostly from Europe and Central Asia, and high-income countries more generally.

▶ **Table 36. STOCK data on international migrant workers (MST) by source, ILO ILMS database, 2015-2022.**

Region / Income group	Household surveys			Pop. census	Administrative records			Official estimates	Establishment survey
	LFS	HIES	Other		Pop. register	Employment office records	Other		
Total	**119**	**30**	**15**	**33**	**7**	**3**	**18**	**15**	**2**
By region									
Africa	26	15	6	4				2	
Americas	19	2	5	5				1	
Arab States	6							1	
Asia and the Pacific	22	11	2	18		3	7	5	
Europe, Central Asia	46	2	2	6	7		11	6	2
By income group									
High income	46	5	3	14	5	1	9	9	2
Upper-middle income	33	6	5	9	2	1	4	2	
Lower-middle income	28	10	4	7		1	5	3	
Low income	12	9	3	3				1	

147. Country data on inflows of international migrant workers (MFL) come primarily from administrative data sources, such as population registers, employment offices records and other administrative sources, especially in Europe and Asia and the Pacific, and high-income countries. Americas and Africa usually provide MFL indicators from household surveys and population census data, being the LFS the mostly used (see Table 37).

▶ **Table 37. FLOW data on international migrant workers (MFL) by source, ILO ILMS database, 2015-2022.**

Region / Income group	Household surveys		Pop. Census	Administrative records				Official estimates
	LFS	Other		Pop. register	Employment office records	Records of work permits	Other	
Total	**13**	**3**	**8**	**9**	**3**	**1**	**23**	**16**
By region								
Africa	3	2	2			1	1	2
Americas	2		3					2
Arab States								1
Asia and the Pacific	4	1	2		3		8	3
Europe, Central Asia	4		1	9			14	8
By income group								
High income	3	1	2	8			9	9
Upper-middle income	6		3	1	1		6	3
Lower-middle income	3	1	1		2	1	7	3
Low income	1	1	2				1	1

148. A similar pattern is observed for country of origin indicators (MNA) that include stock and outflows of nationals abroad and return migrants (see Table 38). Most data to produce these indicators comes from administrative records (40 countries). This is a trend in all regions and income

groups. The second most important source globally for MNA indicators is official estimates, with 17 countries reporting this as main source. Results by income grouping indicate that among high income countries the population register is the primary source for statistics on nationals abroad and return migrants, whereas middle and low-income countries rely more on other administrative sources and on the labour force survey.

▶ **Table 38. STOCK and FLOW data for nationals abroad and return migrants (MNA) by source, ILO ILMS database, 2015-2022.**

Region / Income group	Household surveys			Pop. Census	Administrative records				Official estimates
	LFS	HIES	OTHER		Pop. register	Employment office records	Border entries and exits	Other	
Total	**10**	**2**	**1**	**7**	**11**	**4**	**1**	**24**	**17**
By region									
Africa	2			2			1	3	1
Americas									1
Arab States									
Asia and the Pacific	3			2		4		13	5
Europe and Central Asia	5	2	1	3	11			9	10
By income group									
High income	1		1	2	10			6	10
Upper-middle income	3	1		1	1	1		5	3
Lower-middle income	4	1		3		3	1	11	3
Low income	2			1				2	1

149.   Overall, except for census data, the global availability of official national data on stocks relating to international labour migration reflects to a large extent the availability and use of these sources at country level, as documented in the previous sections. This is not so the case for flow statistics, for which limited data from border collections, work permits, and registers is currently being reported by countries for global dissemination.

10. Summary and conclusions

150. The ILO review of national practices served to shed light on the current global availability and use of different data sources for statistics of international labour migration. It considered three main types of sources: the population census, household surveys –in particular, specialized migration surveys and labour force surveys, and administrative sources covering population registers, records of border entries and exits, and records of work permits.

151. The results revealed that these three types of sources, considered as the foundation to produce a comprehensive set of statistics on stocks and flows of international labour migration, are in place for their combined use in only around half of the countries globally. The results also indicate that there are important differences in the availability of sources to generate statistics on stocks compared to flows. Most countries have a recent population census (2020 round) that can be used to generate stock measures as well as detailed analysis of the main characteristics of international migrant workers. Most countries also have established labour force surveys conducted on a more frequent basis, with basic questions integrated to identify international migrants. However, for around half of those countries, the LFS data cannot support disaggregation of core headline indicators by international migrant status due to limited precision, and the coverage of international migrant workers in LFS also needs to be assessed. More so, the findings indicate that specialized migration surveys are not widely established as part of national data collection plans.

152. For administrative records, the results paint a diverse picture, but also reveal that these sources are not yet being fully utilized to meet data needs relating to international labour migration. Population registers are the least available globally, and most common among high-income countries. More widely available appear to be records of border entries and of work permits. However, not all those sources cover migrant workers or include information relevant to be utilized for statistics relating to international labour migration. Current use of these sources for statistical purposes is limited, around 50% or lower. Similarly, NSO involvement in producing those statistics appears to be low. Additionally, important gaps are documented in the availability of sources for outflows relating to labour migration, as evidenced in the case of border data and work permit data, and for stocks of nationals working abroad.

153. Country reporting of these data for global dissemination reveals a similar picture, except in the case of population censuses, for which ILO has recently launched efforts to compile stock data from the 2020 census round. At global level, as seen through the ILO ILMS database, stock indicators are primarily available from national labour force surveys (LFS), followed by population censuses. Population registers are predominantly used by high-income countries to report stock data. Global reporting of flow data is much more limited compared to those reported as available at country level and derived from a variety of administrative records or produced as official estimates.

154. The documented gaps in the availability and use of these different sources, at national and global levels, point to important opportunities towards the future. The review of national practices shows that most countries can utilize their recent population census to generate estimates of the stock of international migrant workers, their detailed socio-demographic and economic characteristics, and their detailed geographic distribution in the country. In turn, these census data can be utilized in the preparation of updated sampling frames to support improvements in the coverage and precision of existing national labour force surveys and/or in the design of specialized migration surveys targeting migrant populations, and for calibration purposes.

155. To this end, several countries shared good practices implemented such as including migration-relevant variables in the sampling frame to support their use as stratification variables for survey

sample design, use of census and administrative data for calibration purposes, in the calculation of weights and as post-stratification adjustments to account for the structure of the migrant population by relevant characteristics. Similarly, although few, the countries implementing specialized migration surveys made evident their versatility to target different migrant populations of interest and different geographic areas, as well as their potential use as part of a strategy to produce core statistics on the characteristics and working situation of international migrants (and emigrant migrants in some cases), at longer intervals but on a regular basis, as independent surveys or as surveys linked to the LFS in various ways, including as an add-on module.

156.   In the case of administrative sources, the country practices underscore the importance of including the foreign population resident in the country in the national population register or the establishment and maintenance of registers dedicated to different groups of migrants, and linking information on their employment situation, to enable their use for statistics on international labour migration, alone or in combination with other sources. Or to serve as frame to enable or improve coverage of particular migrant populations in surveys, such as refugees. Similarly, in the case of records of border entries and exits, the review highlights the importance of recording the purpose of visit, and separately identifying employment purposes to serve as a source for statistics on the topic. More importantly, for administrative records, the need for inter-agency coordination and collaboration to expand their use for statistics, is evident. Where NSOs are involved in such collaborations, they contribute with a wide range of activities that serve to build capacity, to strengthen the national statistical system, and to improve the availability and overall quality of national official statistics on the topic.

157.   Towards the future, the review documents significant activity, with close to half of the NSOs indicating they have concrete plans to strengthen their official statistics on the topic in the next 5 years including by redesigning an existing household survey to include international migrant workers, strengthening inter-agency collaboration to improve the statistical use of administrative records, and/or implementing a specialized migration survey, among other activities. Priority groups vary by country income-grouping reflecting the different migration flows most prevalent. International migrant workers resident in the country is the top priority for high- and middle-income countries, whereas nationals living and working abroad is the top priority for low-income countries, and a high priority more generally for middle-income countries. Return international migrant workers ranked third overall in terms of priority, with higher ratings among lower- and upper-middle income countries. Workers in international temporary labour mobility were reported as a priority by a smaller number of countries overall.

158.   Key challenges highlighted by NSOs to improve these data, and that require addressing are: (a) a lack of funding for the topic, rated number one by most countries except high-income countries; (b) quality issues with existing sources; and (c) insufficient inter-agency coordination, including a lack of access to administrative data sources by NSOs. Consequently, the global resources and support identified as most relevant include global advocacy to promote sharing of administrative data; capacity building, including knowledge-sharing, and guidance particularly with respect to estimation methodologies and the use of administrative data sources.

159.   These findings point to the need for a global programme of work that promotes methodological development, documentation of good practice, preparation of global guidance and knowledge sharing, and at the same time raises awareness at the high level about the value of official statistics on the topic, and advocates for resource allocation, user-producer collaboration, and data sharing, particularly with respect to administrative data sources.

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Annex: List of indicators, ILO ILMS database

ID	Indicator
	MST
1086	Working-age population by sex, education and citizenship
1089	Working-age population by sex, education and place of birth
1077	Working-age population by sex, age and citizenship
1078	Working-age population by sex, age and place of birth
1081	Foreign-born working-age population by sex and country of birth
1080	Non-citizen working-age population by sex and country of citizenship
1511	Labour force participation rate by sex, education and citizenship
1510	Labour force by sex, education and citizenship
1508	Labour force participation rate by sex, education and place of birth
1506	Labour force by sex, education and place of birth
1137	Labour force participation rate by sex, age and citizenship
1118	Labour force by sex, age and citizenship
1135	Labour force participation rate by sex, age and place of birth
1117	Labour force by sex, age and place of birth
1079	Employment by sex, status in employment and citizenship
1082	Employment by sex, status in employment and place of birth
1087	Employment by sex, occupation and citizenship
1076	Employment by sex, occupation and place of birth
1500	Employment-to-population ratio by sex, education and citizenship
1502	Employment by sex, education and citizenship
1503	Employment-to-population ratio by sex, education and place of birth
1498	Employment by sex, education and place of birth
1088	Employment by sex, economic activity and citizenship
1085	Employment by sex, economic activity and place of birth
1138	Employment-to-population ratio by sex, age and citizenship
1120	Employment by sex, age and citizenship
1128	Employment-to-population ratio by sex, age and place of birth
1119	Employment by sex, age and place of birth
1075	Employed foreign-born persons by sex and country of birth
1083	Employed non-citizens by sex and country of citizenship
1092	Mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and citizenship
1091	Mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and place of birth
1513	Unemployment rate by sex, education and citizenship
1505	Unemployment by sex, education and citizenship
1507	Unemployment rate by sex, education and place of birth
1501	Unemployment by sex, education and place of birth
1127	Unemployment rate by sex, age and citizenship
1122	Unemployment by sex, age and citizenship
1129	Unemployment rate by sex, age and place of birth
1121	Unemployment by sex, age and place of birth
1509	Inactivity rate by sex, age, education and citizenship
1515	Persons outside the labour force by sex, education and citizenship
1512	Inactivity rate by sex, education and place of birth
1514	Persons outside the labour force by sex, education and place of birth
1499	Inactivity rate by sex, age and citizenship
1124	Persons outside the labour force by sex, age and citizenship
1504	Inactivity rate by sex, age and place of birth
1123	Persons outside the labour force by sex, age and place of birth
	MFL
530	Inflow of working-age migrants by sex and education
1095	Inflow of working-age non-citizens by sex and education
1100	Inflow of working-age non-citizens by sex and country of citizenship
1096	Inflow of foreign-born working-age population by sex and education
1099	Inflow of foreign-born working-age population by sex and country of birth
1098	Inflow of foreign-born employed persons by sex and occupation
1097	Inflow of foreign-born employed persons by sex and economic activity
1102	Inflow of employed non-citizens by sex and occupation
1101	Inflow of employed non-citizens by sex and economic activity
	MNA
887	Inflow of nationals returned from abroad by sex and country of previous residence
533	Stock of nationals abroad by sex and country of residence
534	Outflow of nationals by sex and country of destination
739	Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and occupation
738	Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and education
583	Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and economic activity
582	Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and country of destination