



## ► Room document: 17\*

Recent global developments and proposed updates to the 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration



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# 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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1. In October 2018, the 20<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) endorsed the *Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration* to help countries improve the knowledge base by providing a core set of common concepts, definitions, and initial measurement guidance on which to base their national statistics programmes on the topic. As the first set of global statistical recommendations dedicated to international labour migration, the Guidelines recognized the need to test the conceptual framework on which they are based and called on the ILO in collaboration with interested countries, international and regional organizations, and workers' and employers' representatives, "[to] continue methodological work relating to these guidelines..., [and to] report progress to future sessions of the ICLS."
2. The Guidelines were endorsed at a time of growing global recognition that international migration can play an important role as a catalyst for equitable development, and that quality data is necessary to achieve this goal. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 December of the same year, placed as first objective the commitment to "collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies" and highlighted among priority actions the need to further develop the existing statistical standards, including the statistical definition of an international migrant.
3. Since then, several developments with implications for the Guidelines have taken place in the international statistical recommendations on closely related domains. This includes the recent adoption by the United Nations Statistics Commission (UNSC) of an updated conceptual framework and indicator set for statistics of international migration and international temporary mobility (2021, 2023), recommendations on refugee statistics (2018), and on statelessness statistics (2023). Similarly, work to improve measurement of trade in services, particularly Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) has highlighted ambiguities in the Guidelines concerning the treatment of specific groups, namely, cross-border service-suppliers, which have become more prominent with the expansion of trade liberalization and regional economic integration.
4. In parallel, over the past 5 years the ILO, together with partner countries and organizations, advanced work to test and validate the Guidelines through continued conceptual development, documentation of country case studies and survey pilot tests. The ILO further undertook a review of country practices, covering the main sources being utilized for statistics of international labour migration. This work generated evidence to further specify the type of guidance needed in the Guidelines. It also has served to identify gaps and areas requiring refinement and clarification.
5. This room document describes these developments and their implications for the Guidelines. A set of revisions are put forward. Given the extent of the revisions and the need for up-to-date Guidelines, ILO proposes to undertake in 2024 additional consultations with the ILO Technical Working Group on International Labour Migration Statistics with a view to finalize the text of the revised Guidelines for publication in 2025. **The Conference is invited to comment on this proposal.**
6. The room document is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a summary of the Guidelines. This is followed by an overview of the recent changes in related international statistical standards (Section 3), the experience accumulated over the past 5 years to validate the Guidelines (Section 4), and the main insights drawn from national practice (Section 5). Section 6 lists the areas requiring an

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<sup>1</sup> The report was prepared by Elisa M. Benes, Senior Labour Migration Statistician, ILO Statistics Department.

update, the objectives of the revision, and proposes a timeframe to complete the consultations. Section 7 describes the proposed revisions. Annex I contains the revised draft text of the Guidelines. Annex II includes a glossary of reference concepts defined in related statistical standards.

## 2. The 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines at a glance

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7. When endorsed in 2018, the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines introduced the very first set of internationally agreed recommendations dedicated to support countries in developing their statistics on international labour migration. At the time, the main reference statistical standards were the UN *1998 Recommendations of Statistics of International Migration, rev 1*, the UN *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, rev 3.*, and the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS *Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization*. These three standards provided relevant concepts, operational definitions and measurement guidance, however, none addressed specifically or in a cohesive manner the elements necessary to establish comprehensive national programmes of statistics of international labour migration as needed to inform labour migration policy.
8. To address this gap in statistical standards, the Guidelines outline the specific objectives to be met by statistics of international labour migration, as “to obtain a better understanding of the migration process; to assess the socio-demographic characteristics and conditions of work and the equitable treatment of different groups of international migrant workers; and to study the relative status of disadvantaged groups of international migrant workers that are of specific policy concern” (para. 8).
9. Going beyond the scope of the UN 1998 recommendations, the Guidelines draw attention to the fact “that international labour migration may take the form of international labour mobility” to include within the scope of the statistics “temporary or short-term movement of persons across countries for employment-related purposes” (para. 1).
10. The Guidelines further specify three components of international labour migration, for which separate statistics are required to support monitoring and policymaking (para. 2):
  - (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 (para. 14).
  - (b) *For-work international migrants*: international migrants (usual and non-usual residents) who entered the country [...] for the purpose of undertaking or seeking employment, as documented or declared at the time of entry in the country (para. 22).
  - (c) *Return international migrants*: current residents who were previously international migrant workers in another country, as residents or non-residents of the country in which they worked, with a minimum cumulative work experience of 6 months (para. 23).
11. A fourth group, *Citizens or native-born persons working abroad*, is recognized in the Guidelines as of critical relevance for future methodological development but it is not defined or elaborated on.
12. In defining the above three components of international labour migration, the Guidelines use as basis core concepts specified in the related statistical standards highlighted in paragraph 7, above. These include, in particular, the concepts of international migrant, resident population, country of usual residence, labour force, employment, unemployment, and resident producer units, among others.
13. While drawing on the existing statistical standards, the Guidelines expand the interpretation of *international migrant* to include not only persons who change country of usual residence (as per the 1998 recommendations), but also those who do not change country of usual residence. This is done

consistently across the three components of international labour migration, with the aim to include within scope groups of workers undertaking short-term moves, such as frontier workers, seasonal workers and other workers crossing international borders for short periods of stay at a time. The aim of this extension was to ensure the statistics made visible the situation of these workers for monitoring and to inform policy, following the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (UN, 1990).

14. Additionally, the Guidelines introduce the concept of *labour attachment* to determine whether a person is an international migrant worker. Although not defined, this concept is operationalized differently for stocks and flows, reflecting the different stages of the labour migration process, and to take into account data limitations. In the case of stocks, *labour attachment* refers to being engaged in the labour force (as employed or unemployed) in a destination country, to maintain coherence with labour force statistics. In the case of flows, it refers to entering the destination country with the declared or documented purpose to work. The Guidelines further outline how to reconcile labour migration stocks and flows, highlighting the need to distinguish between migration flows (i.e. entries/exits to/from the country) and labour flows (i.e. entries/exits to/from the labour force).
15. The Guidelines also highlight priority classifications to support analysis and understanding of the process of international labour migration, the main data collection items and core statistics and indicators, including flows and stocks. The different data sources that can serve as basis to produce stock and flows are listed, underscoring the need to treat these as complementary. Some of the main measurement issues are also highlighted, as is the work of the ILO and future actions.

### 3. Developments in related statistical standards

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#### 3.1. International migration and mobility statistics

16. A year after the endorsement of the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines, the UN launched the revision of the *1998 Recommendations of Statistics of International Migration, rev 1* on which the Guidelines are partly based. The review process is still ongoing, with the new set of recommendations expected by 2025. Nevertheless, given the high interest in global guidance on the topic, two key components of the revision have now been approved by the UN Statistics Commission: the *Conceptual frameworks and concepts and definitions on international migration* (2021), and the *Set of indicators for international migration and temporary mobility* (2023). The ILO has been a member of the Expert Group<sup>2</sup> tasked to undertake the revision since its creation and is currently co-Chair of the Group for the period 2022-24. Similar processes are now ongoing to update the international recommendations on population and housing censuses, where the concept of “usual residence” is operationalized. This work is taking place in preparation for the 2030 round of population and housing censuses due to begin in 2025.
17. The revisions to the 1998 Recommendations approved to-date introduce several important changes with implications for the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines. Most relevant are (a) the expansion of the recommendations to situate *international migration* as a sub-set of *international mobility*, (b) the new recognition of *international temporary mobility* and, (c) the inclusion of concepts, definitions, priority indicators and related guidance, to generate separate statistics for both, *international migration* and *international temporary mobility*, based on a unified conceptual framework of *international mobility*.
18. The new concept of *international mobility* is defined as all movements that cross international borders within a year. It aims to include within scope, all types of movements across borders regardless of purpose or the duration of stay in the destination country. As in the previous 1998 recommendations, *international migration* continues to be defined as a change in the country of residence (previously referred to as country of usual residence), and thus, it is a subset of international mobility. The new concept of *international temporary mobility* is introduced to refer to movements across international borders that do not result in a change in the country of residence (i.e. with a stay less than the minimum duration of residency requirement). As such, international migration and international temporary mobility are complementary terms that together encompass all international mobility.
19. In contrast to the 1998 Recommendations, the revised framework no longer recognizes the categories of visitors, short-term migrants and long-term migrants. These categories served to distinguish international moves based on the duration of stay in the destination country. The visitors category referred to stays below 3 months; short-term migrants captured stays between 3 and less than 12 months; and long-term migrants was assigned to stays of 12 months or more. In the new framework, emphasis is placed instead on distinguishing between different population movements based on whether they result in a change in the *country of residence*, effectively consolidating the categories of visitors and short-term migrants under the scope of *international temporary mobility*.
20. *Country of residence* remains central to identify international migrants and is also the basis to distinguish international migration from international temporary mobility. *Country of residence* continues to be defined as the country where the person has lived (or intended/granted to 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. So far, the choice between

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<sup>2</sup> UN Expert Group on International Migration Statistics.



the two interpretations of residence is left to countries. Nevertheless, there is recognition that such flexibility will continue to impact the international comparability of statistics on international migration, and consequently on international temporary mobility. For now, the revised recommendations emphasize the use of consistent definitions across sources, *within* national statistical systems.

21. To compile statistics on international migration and international temporary mobility, the revised framework highlights the need to specify two populations: the *resident population* and the *temporary (non-resident) population*, and to align the measurement of international migration with the measurement of the resident population. Distinguishing these two populations allows to maintain consistency between stocks and flows of international migration, and separately, between stocks and flows of international temporary mobility. This is fundamental to ensure the framework serves to generate data needed to assess the contribution of international migration to resident population change, as part of population statistics.
22. The revised framework further provides updated definitions for different groups and associated flows, distinguishing those that apply to international migration (i.e. persons who change country of residence) including: immigrants, emigrants, and returned migrants, and those for temporary population mobility, including among others: frontier workers, seasonal workers, and other types of temporary workers. It also recommends cross-tabulation of immigrants and emigrants by both place of birth and citizenship status, to identify four population subgroups: native-born citizens, native-born foreign citizens, foreign-born citizens and foreign-born foreign citizens.
23. The indicator set approved in 2023 illustrates the uses of the revised conceptual framework to generate core stock and flow statistics separately for international migration and temporary mobility. Among the indicators recommended as core are: the stock of immigrants, immigrant flows (inflow) and emigrant flows (outflow), including disaggregation by labour force status for stocks and reason for move in the case of flows. Indicators on international temporary mobility are recommended as additional and include, for different categories among which are frontier workers and seasonal workers: the stock foreign citizens temporarily present, stock of national citizens temporarily absent, inflow of foreign citizens entering the country temporarily, and outflow of residents departing the country for temporary stays abroad (distinguishing between citizens and foreign citizens).
24. The indicator set also includes 6 core and 4 additional indicators under the policy area 5 “Empower labour migrants” drawn from the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines and from among the recommended SDG indicators under Goals 8 (Decent work), 5 (Gender equality), and 10 (Reduced inequalities). Six cross-cutting indicators relating to irregular migration are also highlighted, as additional, however, without disaggregation relevant to labour migration.
25. These revisions are important for the Guidelines because they provide a basis to further formalize the conceptual framework underlying statistics of international labour mobility, now recognizing the wide scope of population movements relevant to inform labour migration and labour market policies, as the Guidelines underscore. They also provide clarity on the different reference populations to be distinguished to maintain coherence with closely related statistical domains, in particular population, migration, and mobility statistics, as well as labor statistics which also uses as primary reference the resident population.
26. It is also expected that the introduction of the concept of *international temporary mobility*, that replaces the previous breakdown between visitors, short-term migrants, and, (a part) of long-term migrants, could support a more consistent statistical treatment of groups such as frontier workers, seasonal migrant workers and others on temporary mobility, which can range widely in the length of stay in the destination country, from daily or weekly visits among frontier workers; two and up to

five months for those on working holiday schemes; one and up to 7 or 9 months among seasonal workers; up to 11 months for seafarers and others, thus promoting international comparability in the statistics relating to these groups, regardless of differences in the duration of stay in the destination country.<sup>3</sup>

## 3.2. Refugee and statelessness statistics

27. Significant developments have also taken place recently in the statistical standards to support the inclusion of refugees and related populations in official statistics, including across different domains. To date, the UNSC has approved *International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics –IRRS* (2018), *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics –IRIS* (2020), and *International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics –IROSS* (2023). These recommendations provide statistical frameworks, definitions and classifications for the different groups covered, and outline the priority data items, sources and guidance on data integration and statistical coordination, including on protecting confidentiality and data sharing, to enable the production of official statistics on these populations as part of national statistical systems.
28. IRRS recognizes that the identification and statistical treatment of refugees, asylum seekers and related populations in data collection is complex owing to the context of displacement giving rise to these population movements across international borders. Regarding their treatment as international migrants, and as part of the immigrant population, IRRS states that “refugees and asylum seekers, whether having commenced the formal procedures of asylum or not, should be included in the total population count if they meet the criterion of residence (para. 145). This recommendation is further elaborated in the revised UN framework which states that “refugees and persons in refugee like situations should generally be accounted for as international migrants for statistical purposes and added to the resident population of their country of asylum.” (para. 40).
29. IRRS further underscores the importance of data to monitor the integration of refugees in the [host] country of destination, or in the country of origin for those who are returnees. In the area of economic and labour market integration, the indicators highlighted comprise essential labour force statistics, including selected SDG indicators, such as the labour force participation rate, employment to population ratio, unemployment rate, share of youth neither in employment, education or training (NEET), share in informal employment, and share in child labour. Priority topics include status in employment, occupation, industry, type of contract, full-time/part-time employment, earnings, occupational injuries, skills mismatches, recognition of foreign qualifications, main obstacles in finding a job, participation in work support programmes and training, among others.
30. In the case of stateless persons, IRRS defines them as “a person who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law” (para. 28). IROSS notes that in most cases stateless persons have been born in their country of residence but are stateless or without a recognized nationality status because they have faced difficulties obtaining proof of citizenship. Thus, IRRS recommends that stateless persons who have never crossed international borders be treated as part of the native-born resident population and not be classified as immigrants in their own country of birth. Consequently, “stateless persons and those without a recognized nationality status should be considered as part of the stock of immigrants within a country’s resident population if they have changed their country of residence during their lifetime” (para. 83). As a group which faces significant challenges in terms of legal recognition and rights, IRRS further emphasizes the importance of ensuring that statistics can be disaggregated separately for stateless persons to

<sup>3</sup> Consistent statistical treatment of these groups of workers engaged in temporary labour mobility may be impacted where the concept of residence may be defined with reference to a short duration of stay (e.g. 3 months, 6 months).

determine their size and assess their situation vis-à-vis other population groups. With respect to labour, essential data recommended include labour force participation, status in employment, occupation and industry.

31. Two additional cases are also of note. These are *asylum seekers in transit* and *displaced people in transit across international borders*, which are to be treated as part of the temporary non-resident population in the country of transit and, thus as part of international temporary mobility (UN, 2023, para. 86).
32. Overall, the recently approved IRRS and IRROS provide guidance that will serve to further clarify the recommendations contained in the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines regarding the coverage and statistical treatment of refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and other related groups in national programmes of statistics on international labour migration and mobility. They will also contribute to further specifying the priority data items needed to support their separate identification and to monitor their labour market integration vis-à-vis other migrants and non-migrants, the data sources and requirements to ensure data confidentiality and promote statistical coordination.

### 3.3. Trade in services statistics

33. Although predating the endorsement of the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines, developments in the international recommendations for statistics of international trade in services are also of relevance to the revision of the Guidelines, in particular the measurement of Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).
34. Mode 4 (presence of natural persons) refers to services traded by individuals of one [country] through their presence in the territory of another (UN, 2012). It covers persons (i.e. service suppliers) who cross international borders to provide services on a “service contract” and subsequently return to their home country (UNECE, 2018). This can include workers in different types of work relationships, including employees, temporary agency workers, consultants and self-employed persons.
35. The UN Manual on Statistics of international Trade in Services (MSITS) 2010 identifies four main groups comprising Mode 4 (presence of natural persons):
  - (a) Contractual service suppliers as self-employed –who cross international borders in the context of a service contract with a service consumer in the country of destination;
  - (b) Contractual service suppliers as employees –sent by their employer to deliver a service in the country of destination in the context of a contract between their employer and a service consumer;
  - (c) Intra-corporate transfers and foreign employees directly recruited by foreign established companies (e.g. through their subsidiaries);
  - (d) Service sellers –attempting to establish contractual relationships for a service contract and persons responsible for setting up commercial presence (UN, 2012).
36. A common characteristic among these groups of cross-border service-suppliers is that the economic unit that employs them, be it their own unit in the case of self-employed persons or that of their employer in the case of employees and temporary agency workers, is not located in the country of destination. Nevertheless, these groups are relevant in the context of statistics of international labour mobility, because they cross international borders to be engaged in the provision of a service.

As such, they are engaged in work (i.e production of goods and/or the provision of services) in the country of destination.

37. Some of these forms of labour mobility have become particularly important in the context of global trade liberalization and regional economic and labour market integration. For example, within the EU, *posted workers* are employees sent by their employer to carry out a service in another EU Member States on a temporary basis, in the context of a contract of services, an intragroup posting or a hiring out through a temporary agency (De Wispelaere et.al., 2022). While their employer remains in the country of origin, they contribute to the provision of services and are entitled to a set of core rights in force in their country of destination. These types of arrangements have also become increasingly common globally particularly in industries such as agriculture, construction, accommodation and food services, telecommunications, computer and information services, among others.
38. Explicit guidance on the treatment of these groups in the context of statistics of international labour mobility is important, particularly when the duration of stay does not result in a change in the country of residence. In principle such cases would fall under the category of “non-resident foreign workers” (or “resident working abroad” from a country of origin perspective). At present, however, their inclusion is unclear. This is because the Guidelines define non-resident foreign workers with reference to “supplying labour to resident producer units of that country” (para. 14(b)) which would technically exclude them. Nevertheless, some examples of workers that could fall under this category are listed as included within scope in paragraph 20 of the Guidelines (ILO, 2018a).
39. The specification of Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services and accompanying statistical recommendations provide important insights to further develop and clarify the conceptual framework, scope and definitions for statistics of international labour migration and mobility contained in the Guidelines, particularly with respect to the treatment of service suppliers engaged in international temporary mobility. The UNECE Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility has further elaborated on the data requirements to generate statistics on these groups, the characteristics and disaggregation needed, and potential data sources (UNECE, 2018).
40. More generally, the recommendations for trade in services statistics highlight the need to make more explicit in the Guidelines the relationships between the workers crossing international borders, the country in which the workers are considered to be resident (or non-resident), the economic unit that employs them or which they own or operate, the economic unit where they carry out the work (which may or may not be the same as is the case of agency workers), and the country(ies) where the economic territory of those economic units is located.

## 4. Validation of 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines

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41. In parallel to the developments in related statistical standards, over the past 5 years the ILO implemented a programme of work with the overarching aim to validate the Guidelines, document practices, identify gaps, and areas for revision and update. The programme of work included continued conceptual work to assess the soundness of the main definitions included in the Guidelines; consultation and coordination with expert groups, including the ILO Technical Working Group on International Labour Migration Statistics, the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility, and the UN Expert Group on Migration Statistics; survey pilot tests organized in collaboration with selected partner countries and organizations; and a review of national practices and in-depth case studies (see section 5).
42. Additional insights were accumulated through ILO's technical assistance and capacity-building activities. This included workshops to raise awareness about the Guidelines and build capacity on core concepts, definitions, data sources and priority indicators; technical support to countries with the integration of the topic in population censuses; technical support with the design and implementation of specialized surveys and/or modules focusing on immigrant workers, return international migrant workers and/or former household members who emigrated in a recent past period; processing and analysis of survey data to generate labour force estimates disaggregated by international migrant status and assessments of their statistical precision; and guidance on the integration of international labour migration in national labour market information systems.
43. Overall, following their endorsement, the Guidelines have played an important role in raising awareness globally about the need for statistics on international labour migration. They also served to generate interest among data producers in many countries on how to produce statistics on different priority groups and how to set up national programmes for statistics on the topic. The experience and evidence accumulated over the last five years underscored the complex nature of the topic and the different challenges faced by countries with different international migration and mobility contexts, statistical infrastructure, and resources. They also shed light on different aspects of the Guidelines that require updating and expansion to meet the demand for statistical guidance.

### 4.1. Concepts and operational definitions

44. Conceptual work to validate the definitions provided in the Guidelines was undertaken through theoretical numerical illustrations. This work revealed a few issues with the definitions of the three components included in the Guidelines. These issues were presented and discussed with the ILO technical Working Group on International Migration Statistics during its 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting on 17-19 November 2020<sup>4</sup>. The conceptual issues identified also introduced challenges in measurement documented through the pilot tests and in the context of technical support to countries on survey implementation.

#### 4.1.1. International migrant workers

45. The concept and definition of international migrant workers, as included in the Guidelines, brings together two separate categories: (a) those usually resident, and (b) those not-usually resident, from the perspective of country of measurement. The numerical exercises revealed that including the two

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<sup>4</sup> ILO. Revised report following the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group on Labour Migration Statistics, online, 17-19 November 2020. unpublished

groups under one single definition can lead to problems of double counting international migrant workers, as the categories are not mutually exclusive. This issue arises due to the conflation in the reference populations. Labour force statistics are produced with respect to the resident population (ILO, 2013, para. 60). As a result, residents of a country, employed in a neighboring country are counted as part of the resident labour force and thus as current sub-group (a) (resident) international migrant workers if they are foreign born or foreign citizens. At the same time, they would also be counted as current sub-group (b) residents working abroad because their job is located in a neighboring country.

46. A second case where an issue can arise is in the context of multiple-job holding. Persons may hold multiple jobs which can be located across different countries. For example: a foreign-born person can have a job in his/her country of residence and a second job in a neighboring country, as a seasonal or frontier worker. Such persons thus would also be in sub-group (a) and in sub-group (b), on the basis of different jobs.
47. These illustrations clarify that categories (a) and (b) are not mutually exclusive nor additive at the level of persons or workers. Including the two categories under a single aggregate concept creates problems with attempts to aggregate these two groups. Additionally, for monitoring and policy formulation purposes, it would be important to maintain separate identification and reporting of statistics on the two groups. Separating the two sub-groups conceptually and relating them to the corresponding reference populations (resident population and temporary (non-resident) population), as now outlined in the revised UN framework, would address these issues and also enhance the coherence of labour migration statistics with labour force and population statistics.

#### 4.1.2. Return international migrant workers

48. A similar issue was documented in the definition of return international migrant worker which currently includes two sub-groups: (a) those who previously worked (or looked for work) abroad and changed country of residence and (b) those who previously worked (or looked for work) abroad but did not change country of residence. Again, the problem arises when considering the case of persons who previously worked (or looked for work) abroad but did not change country of residence. In this case their inclusion among return international migrant workers can lead to their inconsistent classification in two different groups from the perspective of country of origin, are they would also fall in the category of residents working abroad.
49. This problem can also be resolved by separating the two subgroups and restricting the definition of return international migrant worker only to those persons who actually changed country of residence and have since re-established their residence back in the country of origin. That is, current residents of the country of measurement who were previously resident in another country where they worked or looked for work.
50. The survey pilot tests and technical support to countries also documented this conceptual problem when operationalizing the current definition. The treatment of category (b) as described in para 48., as return international migrant worker increases the risk of double counting such workers during data collection. This is because a part of these workers ends up being identified as currently employed with a place of work located in another country (i.e., residents working abroad), and again as return migrant workers in the corresponding survey module.
51. A second measurement challenge was documented with the inclusion of a minimum threshold of cumulative work experience abroad as part of the definition of return international migrant worker. The Guidelines specify that “the chosen minimum duration of labour attachment abroad [...] be short, such as 6 months, calculated on a cumulative basis for workers with repeated spells of



migration” (para 22(c)). Inclusion of this threshold as part of the definition significantly increases the complexity of the survey questionnaire design, adding burden and increasing survey costs as it essentially requires inclusion of migration/mobility and labour histories. It also creates inconsistent treatment between return migrants who worked for a short duration abroad and those who never found employment (unemployed).

52. The identified issues can be addressed by separating the two groups and restricting the definition of return international migrant worker to those who changed country of residence (category a), and by removing the duration threshold from the definition. Information on the accumulated work experience abroad (or duration of job search abroad) can be rather captured as an additional characteristic of return international migrant workers, as is the practice in labour force statistics more generally (e.g. duration of employment, duration of job search, etc.).

### 4.1.3. For-work international migrants

53. In the case of for-work international migrants, a different type of problem was noted with the current definition. The Guidelines define for-work international migrants as “all international migrants who entered the country [...] for the purpose to undertake work”. As with the previous components, the definition of for-work international migrants also attempts to include all movements regardless of duration of stay. This creates a problem as the concept of international migrants, defined in the UN recommendations, refers only to those persons who change country of residence. As a result, the definition of for-work international migrants is conceptually unclear.
54. This issue can be resolved by splitting the groups and providing separate definitions suitable to measure flows with reference to the resident population and the temporary (non-resident) population.

## 4.2. Terminology and communication challenges

55. Beyond the conceptual and measurement issues documented, several challenges were identified with the communication of the Guidelines in the context of capacity-building and the provision of technical support. One of the main challenges related to the use of very closely related terms to refer to different scopes and elements of the Guidelines. For example, the terms international labour migration and migrant worker are used as general terms to refer to the broad scope of interest. A very closely related term “international migrant worker” is used to refer to the specific group of immigrant workers, using a country of destination perspective. This introduces confusion in the scope of the Guidelines and also results in an unintentional emphasis on the recommendations relevant for measurement from a country of destination perspective.
56. A second communication issue arises from the inconsistent use of terminology that is also used in closely related statistical domains. This relates to the use of the term migration and migrant to refer to mobility more generally. These terms have a long-established use and narrower definition in the field of demography and population statistics, referring to movements that result in a change in country of residence as discussed in previous sections. Inconsistent use of these terms in closely related statistical domains impacts not only communication of the Guidelines, but also its implementation at country level, contributing to problems of misunderstanding as well as additional challenges for producers of official statistics to communicate these statistics as part of their dissemination activities.
57. A third challenge impacting communication of the Guidelines is the lack of statistical definitions for reference concepts in the framework, in particular for international labour migration and labour attachment.

58. These communication issues can be addressed by formalizing the conceptual framework for statistics on the topic, providing definitions suitable for statistical uses for core concepts, harmonizing the use of terms that are shared with closely related domains of statistics.



## 5. Insights from national practices

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59. The conceptual and measurement activities undertaken to validate the Guidelines were complemented with a global review of national practices and documentation of selected country case studies. The global ILO review of country practices served to document the national data sources used, or available, to produce statistics on international labour migration, the country priorities to produce statistics on this topic, the main challenges, plans and needs. One of the aims was to shed light on the type of guidance needed to promote progressive development of national data collection programmes on the topic given the current situation. The review 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, over the period 2015-2023. The detailed results are described in a separate room document<sup>5</sup>.
60. The in-depth country case studies aimed at documenting different aspects relevant to the implementation of the Guidelines. These included: mapping and assessments of different data sources vis a vis the Guidelines (Chile, Colombia); numerical comparisons of different data sources to assess coverage and inform the combined use of sources for estimation purposes (Korea, Philippines, Turkey); and documentation of procedures to enable statistical use of administrative data sources (Korea, Turkey). The case studies are being made available through the ILOSTAT website<sup>6</sup>. The UNECE Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility, further contributed to the documentation of country case studies (Israel, Italy, Mexico and Norway) with an assessment of data availability for the main measures highlighted in the Guidelines, and the sources available for this purpose (UNECE, 2018).

### 5.1. Different national priorities

61. The ILO review documented that countries have different priorities with respect to the groups relating to international labour migration for which they need statistics the most. The differences were most apparent by country income-grouping reflecting the direction of international migration flows most prevalent.
62. Overall, international migrant workers resident in the country were identified as the top priority for high- and middle-income countries, whereas nationals residing and working abroad were the top priority for low-income countries, and the second highest priority 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 compared to high income and low-income countries. Workers in international temporary labour mobility were reported as a priority by a smaller number of countries overall. Nevertheless, among these groups, the highest priority was assigned to frontier workers coming into the country, closely followed by seasonal migrant workers going abroad, and by frontier workers departing the country.
63. These documented differences in priorities point to the importance of integrating guidance that is flexible and suitable for measurement from either a country of origin or country of destination perspectives. The Guidelines currently provide most recommendations regarding the top priority group, that is international migrant workers resident in the country, followed by return international

<sup>5</sup> See Room Document 16. National practices in producing statistics on international labour migration. 21st ICLS, Geneva 11-20 October.

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/concepts-and-definitions/description-international-labour-migration-statistics/>

migrant workers. While the Guidelines acknowledge the relevance of statistics on nationals working abroad, they do not currently provide definitions or guidance on this group. Similarly, while frontier workers and seasonal migrant workers are listed among important groups, the guidance is currently embedded under the main groups of international migrant workers and return international migrant workers.

64. The need for more flexible guidance to meet different priorities can be addressed by introducing basic guidance on missing topics, specifically on emigrant workers, and by providing separate guidance on priority groups engaging in international temporary labour mobility. In the case of emigrant workers, there is a need nevertheless to recognize the challenges and limitations in its measurement from a country of origin perspective. In parallel, it would be useful to highlight the value of data sharing across countries and international reporting of data on immigrant workers by country of origin (country of birth and/or country of citizenship), as an alternative source, through sharing of mirror statistics, to generate statistics on emigrants working abroad.

## 5.2. Different availability and use of main data sources

65. The ILO review further documented differences in the availability and use of the different main sources of statistics on the topic. Overall, when considered together, the three main types of sources, population censuses, household surveys and administrative sources, recognized in the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines as central to produce a comprehensive set of statistics on stocks and flows of international labour migration, are in place to support their combined use in close to half of the countries globally (46%). This is most common among high- and upper-income countries. Whereas among lower middle- and low-income countries the most common situation is to have only one type of source available in the country, most often the population census.
66. Most countries (113) have a recent population census (2020 round) that can generate stock measures of international migrant workers and their characteristics. Over half of the countries (66) also include a question on the country of place of work that can be used to generate estimates of the stock of residents working abroad. Likewise, an important number of countries include a question on ever resided abroad (57 countries) that can support identification of return international migrants, and on households with former members who emigrated in a recent past period (39 countries). Although not directly supporting estimates of return international migrant workers or of emigrants working abroad, census data on these topics can be included in sampling frames to support efficient design of household surveys, where more detailed information on the economic characteristics of these groups can be collected to generate stock data and support analysis.
67. Most countries (119) also have established labour force surveys conducted on a more frequent basis, with core questions integrated to identify international migrants. About half of these countries (62) report using the LFS to produce core labour force indicators disaggregated by international migrant status, with overall acceptable levels of precision. This is the case predominantly among high- and upper-middle income countries, and to a lesser extent lower-middle income countries. Among these countries, a few indicate also having applied specific measures to improve the LFS design to produce statistics by international migrant status 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. For the remaining countries, the review indicated that LFS data cannot support disaggregation by international migrant status due to limited precision, and coverage of the migrant population remains to be assessed.

68. The review also identified that a few of the countries not using the LFS for this purpose, have alternative sources to generate comparable statistics for international migrant workers through specialized migration surveys and through the combined use of administrative records. The findings indicate, however, that specialized migration surveys are not widely established as part of national data collection programmes, with only 22 countries having conducted a specialized migration survey in the 2015-2023 period, and about half of those countries doing so on a regular basis, with very different periodicities from annual to every ten years. Nevertheless, for countries that reported conducting a specialized migration survey, the findings point to their versatility to cover a wide range of topics, priority groups and target geographic areas.
69. For administrative records, the results paint a diverse picture, but reveal that these sources are not yet fully utilized to meet data needs relating to international labour migration. Population registers are available in about half of the countries (66 countries) and are most common among high-income countries. About three quarters of those countries include international migrants, and slightly over half can identify international migrant workers using the population register. A smaller number of countries maintain separate registers of foreign citizens resident in the country (43), or of foreign citizens working in the country (34), mostly high- and middle-income countries, but less than half use those registers for statistical purposes. A small number of countries further maintain specific registers for frontier workers (25), seasonal workers (28) and for other temporary workers (28), from a country of destination perspective. Less frequent are registers for these workers from a country of origin perspective. With respect to the coverage of refugees and asylum seekers, different practices are also observed with about half of the countries with national population registers including them, and a larger number of countries (44) keeping a separate register specific to this group of international migrants.
70. More widely available appear to be records of border entries and/or exits (83 countries) and records work permits (82 countries). In the case of border entries, not all countries that compile these data separately identify employment as reason for arrival, which is necessary for this source to serve for statistics of international labour migration, and only about one third of countries use this source to generate statistics on inflows by reason for arrival, separately identifying employment. In the case of work permit records, current use for statistical purposes is rather limited, at around 50 percent of countries that report them. Additionally, the review documented very limited use of border records and work permits for outflows relating to labour migration and for stocks of nationals working abroad.
71. These findings point to the need for guidance on the specific value of each main source as part of national programmes of statistics of international labour migration and mobility, and their combined use to meet the need for different data and for different components of international labour migration, with different frequencies of collection and/or reporting.

### 5.3. Need for combination of sources

72. Complementing the findings from the ILO review, the country case studies made evident the need to use multiple sources to generate quality statistics on the topic. A strategy that combines different data sources is needed even to produce estimates for a single component, such as the stock of international migrant workers.
73. For example, the country case studies illustrated the potential quality issues that can impact population census data due to under-coverage of selected groups of international migrants and highlighted the value of using different sources to compare estimates for different categories of migrants and identify the groups impacted by coverage issues. Population registers and register based censuses can also exclude important sub-groups of international migrants, including those

in irregular situations, and can be affected by problems of over-coverage, due to duplicate records or when persons departing do not de-register. To address such data quality issues, some countries use data from registers covering specific populations, from vital statistics, social security registers, or border collection to adjust for under- or over-coverage, due to missing de-registration of emigrants or deaths. Other administrative sources can also be used to identify “presence signals” that can support to account or adjust for under- and/or over-coverage. Among the different sources reported are registers from tax authorities, social security, employment, education, and health.

74. In addition to improving data quality, the case studies documented the combined use of different sources, including administrative and survey-based sources, to expand the range of information available and its frequency. For example, some countries with population registers, link information from survey-based sources to expand the range of information available for international migrants, including data from labour force surveys. Countries also use the population census to generate benchmark stock data on international migrant workers at long intervals and combine this with the use of household surveys at more frequent intervals to update stock data and/or to provide more detailed characteristics regarding the employment, migration, or mobility patterns, and/or living conditions of different priority groups including international migrant workers, return international migrant workers and emigrant workers.
75. The case studies further illustrated the value of establishing regular specialized migration surveys on international migrants usually resident conducted at frequent intervals in countries where this group represents a significant share in the working age population. In such cases, using a comparable design with the national labour force survey is essential to enable comparisons of the labour force participation between migrants and non-migrants. As described previously, many other countries are using the national labour force survey to generate core labour force statistics disaggregated by international migrant status, and some countries have introduced different methodological adjustments, in the survey design and/or during the estimation, to improve the quality of such estimates.
76. Different approaches are used to combine data sources, with some countries linking selected data at individual level using unique identifiers, while others use data from different sources at aggregate level to compare estimates and determine the adjustments required.
77. The Guidelines currently recognize the importance of using the different data sources on a complementary basis. This initial guidance can be expanded to recognize the potential uses of combining different sources, including to assess the quality of each source, to inform adjustments needed, to produce estimates that take account of the different sources, to expand the range of information available, and to meet demand for different data with different periodicities.

## 5.4. Need for coordination, cooperation and data sharing

78. The ILO review of national practices and the case-studies further underscored the importance of interagency coordination, cooperation and data sharing to promote the combined use of different data sources for statistics of international labour migration. This is particularly the case to enable the use of administrative data sources for statistical purposes. The findings from the ILO review revealed that multiple agencies are generally responsible for different administrative sources that can be particularly valuable to produce statistics of international labour migration. The relevant agencies depend on the national context, but often include agencies such as Civil registration offices, Ministry of Interior, Migration Departments, Police Departments, Ministry of Labour, Refugee Agencies, National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and others.

79. The findings further revealed that in many countries, NSOs are not interacting with relevant agencies to support the development of administrative sources for statistical purposes. In fact, after insufficient financial resources, countries identified a lack of interagency coordination as the second biggest challenge impacting progress. Lack of access to administrative sources followed closely as one of the top challenges impacting in particular the production of statistics on flows relating to international labour migration. Consequently, countries identified advocacy to promote sharing of administrative data as the type of support most needed at global level.
80. Overall, these findings point to the need to strengthen the guidance included in the Guidelines regarding inter-agency cooperation and data sharing, with a particular focus on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes, and their role as part of national programmes for statistics of international labour migration.

## 6. Towards revised Guidelines

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### 6.1. Areas requiring revision

**81.** In light of the recent developments in related international statistical standards, the issues identified and the accumulated evidence, ILO sees the need to revise and expand the existing text of the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines. Revisions and expanded guidance are needed in various sections of the Guidelines, in particular with respect to:

- (a) Reference concepts, terms and definitions to further formalize the conceptual framework for statistics of international labour mobility and to clarify its relation to the updated UN framework for statistics of international migration and mobility and to relevant frameworks used in economic statistics, including trade in services;
- (b) Concepts and definitions relating to the components of international labour migration to address issues identified with the three definitions provided for international migrant workers, for-work international migrants and return international migrant workers;
- (c) Guidance to clarify the treatment of particular groups including refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, as well as different groups of cross-border service providers;
- (d) New concepts, terms and definitions to meet the need for initial guidance on priority groups of relevance for countries with an important outflow of emigrant workers;
- (e) Expanded guidance to support setting priorities for data collection, reporting and use of different sources, including through inter-agency cooperation, coordination and data sharing, taking into consideration the national context;
- (f) Expanded guidance on methodological issues to take into consideration in producing statistics on the different priority groups using different data sources.

### 6.2. Objectives of the revision

**82.** The overarching aim of this revision is to maintain and enhance the relevance of the Guidelines to support countries in establishing and/or strengthening their national programmes of statistics on international labour mobility. More specifically, the revision seeks to:

- (a) Ensure the continued coherence of the Guidelines with the recent updates introduced in closely related international statistical standards;
- (b) Improve the relevance of the Guidelines for countries with different labour migration contexts, statistical capacities, and resources;
- (c) Facilitate the communication and uptake of the Guidelines;
- (d) Promote further conceptual and methodological development in this field of official statistics.

### 6.3. Timeframe to finalize the revision

83. Owing to the substantial scope of the revision, ILO proposes to undertake during 2024 an additional round of consultations with the ILO Working Group on International Labour Migration Statistics. The proposed consultations will serve to address and clarify any potential ambiguities, enrich the guidance as relevant, and finalize the text of the revisions, with a view to publish the revised Guidelines by mid-2025 at the latest.
84. The proposed timeframe will also serve to consider and integrate, as relevant, any additional major changes stemming from the ongoing revision of the *UN 1998 Recommendations of Statistics of International Migration, rev 1.* and the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses rev. 3*, which are due to be completed in the period 2024-2025.
85. The consultations will also serve to elaborate a programme of work to address additional areas requiring development over a longer timeframe.

### 6.4. Longer-term work

86. Expanding the global guidance to support the development of statistics on international labour mobility will require a longer-term programme of work. The following areas may be considered as priority for future development:
  - (a) Further conceptual development to enhance the integration of statistics of international labour mobility, with labour force and work statistics, and with economic statistics, including elaboration on the relationship between international temporary labour mobility and the economic units involved, both as employer units and as place of work, as well as further conceptualization of job search and unemployment in the context of international labour migration and international temporary labour mobility.
  - (b) Further specification of different sets of flow measures, covering different statistical units (e.g. events, persons), and/or different operationalization of the criterion of labour attachment (e.g. declared employment vs confirmed employment), to meet different user needs and support progressive strengthening of flow statistics in different contexts.
  - (c) Methodological developments, including in measurement, estimation and/or modelling, relating to the use and/or combination of different sources to generate and/or adjust estimates relating to the different priority groups of international workers, including immigrant (migrant) workers, emigrant workers, return international migrant workers, frontier workers, seasonal workers, cross-border service suppliers.
  - (d) Development of (a) classification(s) of different forms of international temporary labour mobility, and of alternative analytical classifications to shed light on different migration and mobility patterns (permanent, non-permanent) of international workers, and/or types of restrictions in the rights to employment, and/or rights to residence.



## 7. Draft revisions proposed

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87. The ILO has prepared a draft revised text of the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Guidelines that aims to address the key issues identified and reflect the recent developments in related statistical standards, and accumulated experience. This section summarizes the revisions proposed. The draft revised text is included in Annex I. Annex II provides the accompanying glossary containing the latest definitions of concepts included in the Guidelines, but defined elsewhere, as reference.

### 7.1. Preamble

88. The preamble has been revised to introduce updated references to relevant international instruments, including the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018) and the different international statistical standards approved by the UN Statistical Commission after endorsement of the Guidelines which have been taken into consideration during the revision process.
89. The revised text also introduces new reference terms and concepts defined in later sections of the Guidelines, namely, international labour mobility, international temporary labour mobility and international workers.

### 7.2. Objectives

90. The existing section on “Objectives and scope” has been split into two sections, to accommodate an expanded section that formalizes the conceptual framework underlying statistics of international labour migration and mobility. The new shorter section on “Objectives” provides the rationale and lists the main objectives of national data collection programmes for statistics of international labour migration and mobility.
91. The section retains the priority objectives outlined in the existing Guidelines and expands them by adding as fourth objective the use of the statistics to assess the impacts and contributions of international labour migration and temporary labour mobility to labour markets. It also retains text explaining the purpose of the Guidelines and the need for continued testing and validation.

### 7.3. Reference concepts and scope

92. A new section on “Reference concepts and scope” is introduced to formalize the conceptual framework and define several reference concepts for statistics of international labour mobility. To this end, new text is introduced to:
- (a) situate international labour migration within the broader scope of international labour mobility;
  - (b) provide conceptual definitions of international labour mobility, and its components: international labour migration and international temporary labour mobility, for statistical purposes;
  - (c) define the concept of labour attachment as an integral element of the framework;



- (d) establish the relation between the framework for statistics of international labour mobility and the updated UN Framework for statistics of international migration and mobility; and
- (e) outline the relation between international labour migration, international temporary labour mobility, and key concepts relevant to labour force and economic statistics.

93. The new concepts of international labour mobility and international temporary labour mobility, as well as the concept of international labour migration are defined for statistical purposes, using an approach that is consistent with the UN definitions of international mobility, international migration and international temporary mobility. As a result, international labour mobility is a sub-set of international mobility, whereas international labour migration is a sub-set of international migration, and international temporary labour mobility is a sub-set of international temporary mobility (see diagram I included in the draft revised Guidelines).
94. The concept of labour attachment is defined in such a way to enable coherence with labour force statistics, and to allow different operationalization in the case of measures of stocks and of flows. More specifically, labour attachment is defined as “engagement or intention to engage in the production of goods or the provision of services in exchange for remuneration” in the country of destination. Thus, it is linked to employment. The phrase “intention to engage” allows its operationalization in the case of flow statistics derived using different administrative sources such as border data, visa or work permits, that capture a declared intention to be employed. It also allows its subsequent operationalization with reference to unemployment or job search.
95. The text further establishes the relationship of labour attachment to the country of destination with reference to two concepts, the:
- (a) *resident labour force*, and
  - (b) *non-resident labour force*.
96. The concept of *resident labour force* refers to being counted as employed or unemployed, in line with the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (ILO, 2013). This ensures consistency with labour force statistics.
97. The *non-resident labour force* is a new concept introduced as part of the conceptual framework to specify the inclusion of different groups of workers engaged in international temporary labour mobility more clearly. It is defined as a mirror concept to the resident labour force but in reference to persons present in the country of destination, as part of the temporary (non-resident) population. As such, non-residents employed are persons temporarily present, who engage in the production of goods or in the provision of services in exchange for remuneration in the country of destination.
98. The text attempts to further clarify that persons with a labour attachment in the country of destination can include workers in any type of work relationship (i.e. as independent or dependent workers) with an economic unit in the country of destination, in the country of origin (i.e. residence) or in a third country. This clarification serves to clarify the inclusion within the scope of the framework of persons engaged in temporary international labour migration. That is, persons:
- (a) Employed by an economic unit in the destination country (e.g. employees)
  - (b) Employed by an economic unit in the country of origin (or in a third country), but placed to work in an economic unit in the destination country (e.g. agency worker, posted worker)

- (c) Employed by an economic unit in the country of origin (or in a third country), sent to provide a service (in exchange for remuneration) to an economic unit in the country of destination (e.g. cross-border service supplier)
- (d) Self-employed in the country of origin, who crosses international borders and engages in (a part of) the production of goods or in the provision of services in the country of destination (e.g. cross-border self-employed service provider, cross-border self-employed producer of goods).

99. Tying the concept of labour attachment to the production of goods and/or the provision of services in exchange for remuneration in the country of destination is important. This allows the framework to include cross-border service suppliers within the scope of international labour mobility, considering trade in services through Mode 4 (presence of natural persons) and at the same time exclude persons crossing international borders but not contributing to production in the country of destination, as well as persons contributing to production in the destination country, but not crossing borders (i.e., remote workers).
100. The scope of statistics of international labour mobility is further specified to include stocks and flows for different priority groups. These priority groups replace the three components defined in the existing Guidelines (international migrant workers, for-work international migrants and return international migrant workers). Additional measurement guidance has been included under the specific operational definitions for each group recommending measurement and reporting of statistics for selected sub-groups in some cases (e.g., frontier workers as a sub-group of non-resident workers), taking account of policy relevance and also measurement challenges (see Section 7.4).
101. The newly introduced priority groups cover the existing three components but split them to separate the sub-category that entails a change in the country of residence (i.e. international labour migration), from the sub-category that does not (i.e. international temporary labour mobility). This separation serves to address the issues identified with the existing concepts and definitions; and enables coherence with the updated UN framework for statistics on international migration and mobility. It also supports different prioritization, as per their relevance in the national context, in line with the findings from the ILO review of national practices (see Section 5).
102. In addition, a new fourth group is introduced “emigrant workers” to provide initial guidance relevant to countries for whom emigration is a topic of policy priority, and to promote further methodological work to improve the potential sources and measurement approaches to develop statistics on this group of policy interest. Again, this follows the findings from the ILO review of national practices (see Section 5).
103. To the extent possible, the names used to refer to the different stocks include terms that are consistent with those included in the updated UN framework (i.e., immigrant, emigrant, returned migrant). This is done not only to facilitate communication, but also because these groups are later defined as a sub-group of the relevant migrant category (e.g., immigrant (migrant) workers as a sub-category of immigrants), ensuring coherence across statistical frameworks and measurement.
104. The newly introduced stocks relating to international temporary labour mobility are named to highlight the reference population they refer to (e.g., non-resident workers, residents working abroad). For flows, the names used retain the approach established in the existing Guidelines (i.e., for-work), adding to it reference to the relevant population (e.g., inflow of for-work migrants, inflow of for-work non-residents).
105. Finally, *international worker* is introduced as an overarching statistical term to refer to the different priority groups as a whole, to facilitate communication.

- 106.** New text has also been included to specify the relevant reference populations, distinguishing between the resident population and the temporary (non-resident) population, in line with the updated UN framework. A diagram (II) illustrates the different groups and measures (stock/flow) specified and their relationship to the reference populations, using the perspective of the country of measurement. The section retains existing text underscoring the rights-based approach to avoid exclusions based on sex, age, and other characteristics of relevance in the context of international labour mobility.
- 107.** As in the current text, the proposed revised Guidelines recognize that the scope of the framework may be extended to also capture the potential labour force in the case of international migrants who want and are available to work but cannot find employment, and to generate statistics on international workers engaged in different forms of unpaid work, such as international volunteer workers or immigrants in unpaid provision of services for own final use.

## 7.4. Measures and priority groups

- 108.** The name of this section has been changed from “Concepts and definitions” to “Measures and priority groups”. This is done to reflect more clearly the contents of the section and considering the new reference concepts and definitions included in the previous section. Additionally, core concepts referenced in the Guidelines, but defined by other international statistical standards have been removed from this section and included in a separate glossary (see Annex II). This will allow ILO to maintain the glossary up to date, given the ongoing revision of the relevant statistical standards where many of these concepts are defined.
- 109.** As revised, the section introduces basic definitions of stocks and flows, as well as operational definitions for the priority groups listed in the previous section. To facilitate understanding, all operational definitions are consistently specified using the perspective of the country of measurement. As a result, definitions for priority groups or measures which could be considered as mirror concepts when seen from different perspectives (origin / destination), may appear repetitive. This approach was taken to reduce communication and interpretation problems, by limiting the need to transform mirror definitions to suit different perspectives.
- 110.** The general definitions provided for stocks and for flows aim to clarify the distinction between these two types of measures and to provide the interpretation of the criterion of “labour attachment” applicable in each case.
- (a) For all stock measures defined, the criterion is operationalized in terms of being counted in the (resident or non-resident) labour force as employed or unemployed.
  - (b) For all flow measures defined, the criterion is operationalized in terms of moves for work related reasons, that is, with the purpose to engage in any type of employment or to seek employment, including self-employment, as documented or declared at the time of entry to or exit from the country of measurement.
- 111.** The distinction in the operationalization of the criterion of “labour attachment” between stocks and flows takes into consideration the timing in the migration or mobility process that the measure is meant to refer to and the types of source data most used to generate the two types of measures.
- 112.** Not all persons who enter a country with a declared purpose to work, actually become employed. At the same time, not all that become employed or unemployed in the country of destination, arrive with such a purpose. Additionally, beyond demographic events (i.e., deaths), labour flows, in and

out of different labour force statuses, and population flows between non-residents and residents also impact the size of the stock of international migrant workers, without these entailing a movement across international borders. As a result, stocks and flows relating to international labour migration (and international temporary labour mobility) do not have a direct one-to-one correspondence. This is indicated in the revised text, but not elaborated compared to the current Guidelines, and suggested as part of longer-term work in Section 6.4. Longer-term work is proposed to further develop flow measures that focus on status changes, to specify flow measures that reconcile directly with stock measures.

**113.** Operational definitions are provided for the following 9 priority groups:

- (a) relating to international labour migration:
  - (i) Stock of immigrant (migrant) workers
  - (ii) Stock of emigrant workers
  - (iii) Stock of returned international migrant workers
  - (iv) Inflow of for-work migrants
  - (v) Outflow of for-work migrants
- (b) relating to international temporary labour mobility:
  - (i) Stock of non-resident workers
  - (ii) Stock of residents working abroad
  - (iii) Inflow of for-work non-residents
  - (iv) Outflow of for-work residents

**114.** All operational definitions relating to international labour migration use as reference the corresponding group of international migrants as defined in the revised 2021 UN conceptual frameworks and concepts and definitions on international migration (see Annex II: Glossary). That is, immigrant (migrant) workers are defined as a sub-group of immigrants, emigrant workers are defined as a sub-group of emigrants, returned international migrant workers are defined as a sub-group of returned international migrants, and (inflows/outflows of) for-work migrants as a subset of (inflows/outflows) of international migrants (which comprises immigrants and emigrants, respectively). This serves to ensure coherence across domains of statistics. It also promotes common use of relevant data sources and statistical infrastructure to the extent possible, and clarity in communicating the statistics.

**115.** Under each operational definition, guidance has been added on the inclusion or exclusion of cases that may create ambiguity or where accumulated experience has shown inconsistencies in their treatment. The cases listed are not meant to be comprehensive. Among the cases highlighted are those relating to the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons, in line with the recently approved international recommendations for statistics on these population groups. Frontier workers, seasonal workers, different types of cross-border service providers, and others crossing borders for stays below the threshold specified to change residence status in the country of measurement are now explicitly listed under the priority groups relating to international temporary labour mobility.

**116.** In the case of the stock of emigrant workers and of returned international migrant workers, new guidance is included underscoring the option to restrict measurement with reference to citizens and to movements taking place within a recent past period (e.g., recent emigrant/returned workers who are citizens of the country of measurement). This takes into consideration the value of data on recent

migration events for policy purposes, the main interest of governments in focusing on the labour migration of their citizens, the challenges in measuring events over a long timeframe, particularly in the case of emigrant workers, and the need to prioritize resource allocation.

117. An important new element to highlight in the case of priority groups relating to international temporary labour mobility, is the reference population. In this case, all measures are defined with reference either to residents or temporary (non-residents) in the country of measurement, as relevant (i.e. outflows with reference to residents, inflows with reference to non-residents). This means that the measures include both citizens and non-citizens (or native born and foreign-born persons). From a policy perspective, the temporary movements of both groups for work related reasons are important to the country of measurement, because they relate either to the resident population (accessing jobs and income abroad to make a living in their country of residence), or to its labour market (non-residents coming to contribute to production in the country).
  - (a) resident workers departing for work purposes, regardless of whether they are citizens or not, are part of the resident population of the country. Statistics on their situation are needed for national planning, resource allocation, and to monitor their situation.
  - (b) non-resident workers coming into the country of measurement have an impact on the labour market, regardless of whether they are citizens or not, and it is important to measure their contributions to the economy and monitor their situation.
118. In a later section of the Guidelines (Core indicators and tabulations) guidance is included recommending to separately tabulate and/or report statistics relating to international temporary labour mobility by citizenship status.

## 7.5. Items of data collection or compilation

119. A new section on items of data collection or compilation has been brought forward in the Guidelines. The contents of this section consolidate existing guidance included under two previous headings: Classifications and Items of data collection and tabulation.
120. In the new consolidated section, the items of data collection have been slightly reorganized to emphasize different levels of priority and intended use. Items necessary for identification purposes are listed first. These are data items that should be collected or compiled to enable identification of different groups of international workers. The essential data items “country of labour attachment”, and “type of labour attachment” can have different interpretations depending on the priority group being measured. In these cases, the Guidelines specify which interpretation applies to which priority group and measure.
121. Specific guidance to enable identification of refugees has also been added, with the inclusion of two minimum data items, reason for move, separately identifying displacement reasons, and legal status, in line with the International Recommendations for Refugee Statistics (EU, UN, 2018).
122. Essential cross-classifying variables are listed next. These include cross-cutting socio-demographic data items relevant to all groups of international workers such as sex, date of birth or age, level of education attained, language proficiency, type of living quarters among others.
123. Priority employment and economic characteristics follow, with a focus on essential characteristics of the most recent (or last) job in the country of labour attachment, which may be the current job for immigrant workers. Priority characteristics include those needed to assess the integration of international workers in the labour market, including status in employment,

occupation branch of economic activity, place (country) of the economic unit of employment and location (country) of place of work. The latter two data items have been newly included to support classifications of different groups of international workers by location of the employing economic unit and the economic unit where the work takes place, and to support integration, as relevant, with labour force and economic statistics.

124. Additional data items regarding different aspects of the working conditions of international workers are also listed, for collection or compilation, as feasible through selected data sources. New topics listed include: type of employment agreement, duration of work agreement, duration of employment in the economic unit, and formal/informal nature of the job, all in line with the relevant ICLS resolutions concerning work relationships (ICSE-18), and the forthcoming update of the statistical standards relating to informality. These new data items have been included in replacement of the guidance in the existing Guidelines regarding the priority classification by duration of stay, to ensure the relevant data items are considered for collection and/or compilation, and to establish coherence with the measurement of these topics in labour force statistics, following ICSE-18.
125. Priority migration-related data items recommended, as feasible depending on the data source, include: recruitment costs, type of visa, work permit, duration of stay and frequency of travel, associated rights and restrictions relating to work and/or residency, to enable analysis of the migration and mobility patterns of international workers. Existing recommendations in the Guidelines regarding the classification of international workers by permanent or temporary nature of the move have been consolidated under this section and paragraphs, to ensure the requisite data items are considered in data collection or compilation plans.
126. The existing recommendations to adhere to the latest international statistical classifications are retained and expanded to include ICSE-18 and the forthcoming resolution on informality. Additional recommendations regarding extensions to unpaid forms of work, and child labour are retained, as are those relating to special topics, with new guidance recommending compilation at longer intervals.

## 7.6. Core indicators and tabulations

127. The section on core indicators has been updated to define main indicators with reference to the priority groups specified in previous sections, separating indicators relating to international labour migration (presented first) from those relating to international temporary labour mobility (presented second). It has also been expanded to include new guidance on recommended tabulations.
128. New guidance has been included to support countries in setting priorities regarding the indicators to produce and their frequency of reporting. Existing guidance on recommended cross-cutting disaggregation variables is retained and brought forward for added emphasis.
129. Core indicators refer to totals and shares. In the case of indicators relating to international labour migration, the shares are computed with reference to the resident working age population. In the case of inflows and outflows, guidance prioritizes totals for selected groups of workers as relevant and feasible and shares with reference to the total inflow of working age migrants and the total outflow of working age emigrants, respectively.
130. The priority indicators relating to international temporary labour mobility refer to totals for selected categories of workers as relevant in the national context. Additionally, only for residents working abroad, shares with reference to the resident working age population and resident employment, are recommended.



131. The section also provides general guidance on priority tabulations with reference to the data items recommended. Additionally, for countries with a sizeable immigrant population, including refugees and asylum seekers, separate tabulations of their labour force characteristics are recommended to enable comparisons with the native-born or national citizen population.

## 7.7. Periodicity of data collection and reporting

132. This section includes expanded guidance on recommended frequencies of data collection and reporting. The section starts with the existing guidance included in the Guidelines calling for annual and sub-annual reporting. It then provides new guidance for selected situations, including for
- (a) countries with a sizeable immigrant population, to report on an annual basis priority labour force statistics for different groups of immigrants to support comparisons with the native-born and/or the national citizen population.
  - (b) countries with immigrant workers residing in collective living quarters, to report on an annual basis sectoral employment statistics disaggregated by international migrant status, and on a less frequent but regular basis, such as every 3 years, more detailed statistics on their working and living conditions.
  - (c) Countries without continuous or frequent data collection systems, to produce priority stocks and flows every 3 or up to 5 years.

## 7.8. Data sources

133. The section on data sources has been expanded to include general guidance on the potential uses of the main sources of statistics of international labour migration. Specific guidance is included regarding the population census, population registers, records of border entries and/or exits, work permits, household surveys with a particular focus on specialized migration surveys and labour force surveys, establishment surveys, and other potential sources in particular administrative records that can compile information on the employment of migrant populations, including tax registers, social security records, labour inspection records, other health related records and education records.
134. The section retains emphasis on the importance to promote the combined use of these sources and introduces additional guidance to support countries in establishing national data collection programmes based on the various sources. Activities highlighted to establish such programmes include strengthened user-producer consultation, increased coordination and cooperation among agencies responsible for the different sources, expanded access and use of administrative sources for statistical purposes, and data quality assessment and documentation.

## 7.9. Measurement issues

135. The section on measurement issues has been expanded to describe some of the major methodological challenges that impact the quality of data derived using the different main types of sources. Issues are highlighted for data derived from population censuses, population registers, and household surveys. Beyond these data sources, measurement issues are also highlighted for the particular case of emigrant workers. This group is highlighted given its proposed new inclusion in the Guidelines, and the well-known challenges with collecting data on this topic from a country of origin perspective.

136. Further work will be needed to expand on issues relating to the combination of data sources, and to estimation methodologies.

## 7.10. International reporting

137. A new section on international reporting is included to contribute to expanding the global dissemination of a core set of official national statistics on stocks and flow relating to international labour migration. The priority indicators listed are a sub-set of the recommended minimum list of indicators and are also a sub-set of the indicators that ILO already compiles annually from countries for dissemination through the ILO ILMS database. They include indicators exclusively with reference to international labour migration.
138. These indicators also serve as input for the regular updating of the ILO global estimates of international migrant workers.

## 7.11. ILO work

139. ILO's work and mandate to continue advancing the development and global availability of statistics on the topic is now consolidated under one single section. The section incorporates previous items listed under Future actions, covering ILO methodological work and ILO technical assistance, ILO global estimates and ILO database.
140. The areas of work listed cover the same scope as in the existing Guidelines, with new added emphasis on high-level advocacy to promote user-producer and producer-producer coordination and data sharing, and timely preparation of practical guidance.



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## 9. Annex I: Draft revised Guidelines

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### Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration and mobility

#### Preamble

The 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS),

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

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

In follow-up to the Resolution concerning fair and effective labour migration governance adopted by the 106th session of the International Labour Conference (2017), the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and the Report of the Director-General entitled *Fair migration: Setting an ILO agenda* (2014),

Having reviewed the relevant texts of the revised conceptual framework on international migration and mobility and related concepts and definitions (2021), the set of Indicators for international migration and temporary mobility (2023), the International recommendations on refugee statistics (2021), and the International recommendations on statelessness statistics (2023) approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 52nd and 54th sessions; the resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (2013) and the resolution concerning statistics of child labour (2008) adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) at its 19th and 18th sessions; and the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 39th session (2008).

Recognizing that international workers are a significant component of international migration and mobility, that the lack of comprehensive statistical information regarding international labour migration and mobility and its impact on national development has hindered the effective integration of labour migration into national development strategies, and that the absence of dedicated international standards regarding concepts, definitions and methodologies for the measurement of international labour migration and temporary labour mobility, continues to be a major obstacle to the production of harmonized and policy-relevant statistics,

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

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

Endorses this XX day of October 2023 the following revised guidelines, in substitution for the guidelines of 2018, and encourages countries to continue to test the conceptual framework on which they are based.

## Objectives

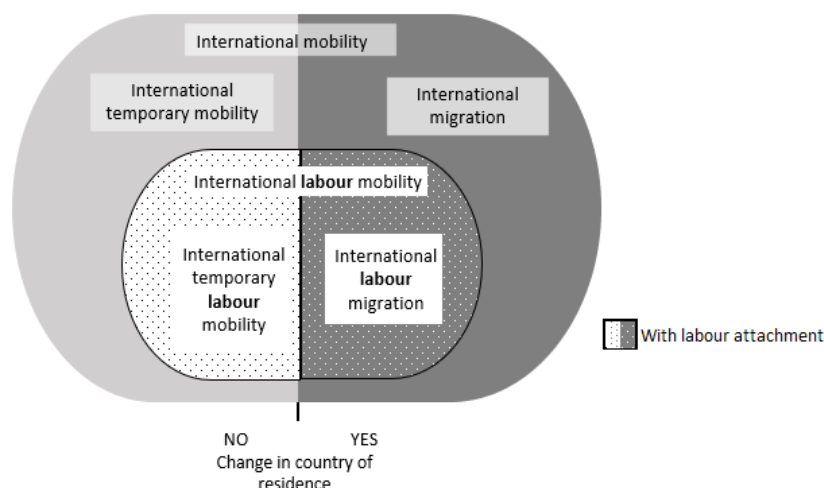
1. International labour mobility is a rising policy priority and there is a need to respond equitably to the interests of countries of origin and countries of destination, employers, as well as to the interests of all migrant workers. To be effective, policies must be based on strong evidence, including the number of workers involved, their characteristics, employment situation, working conditions and mobility patterns, at different stages of the process, including pre-departure, transit, arrival, stay, integration, return and re-integration.
2. The purpose of these guidelines is to help countries develop their national programmes of statistics of international labour mobility to provide an improved information base for the various users, taking account of specific national needs and circumstances. Such programmes should be designed to achieve several objectives, in particular:
  - a. to obtain a better understanding of the different stages of the labour mobility process;
  - b. to assess the socio-demographic characteristics, conditions of work and the equitable treatment of different groups of international workers;
  - c. to study the relative status of disadvantaged groups that are of specific policy concern; and
  - d. to assess the impacts and contributions of international labour migration and of international temporary labour mobility to labour markets at local, national, regional and global levels.
3. To achieve these objectives, such programmes should be developed in consultation with the various users of the statistics and, to the extent possible, in harmony with the collection of other labour, migration, population, economic, and social statistics. Choices regarding the priority groups and topics covered and their different frequencies of measurement and/or reporting will depend on their national relevance and the resources available. Each country should establish an appropriate strategy for data collection and statistical reporting that ensures progress and sustainability.
4. In developing their statistics on international labour mobility, countries should endeavour to continue to test and incorporate the guidelines recommended below.

## Reference concepts and scope

5. The term *international labour mobility* refers to all movements of persons that cross international borders and involve a labour attachment in the country of destination. It is used in these guidelines as a reference concept to define the scope of statistics related to the processes and outcomes of international labour migration and of international temporary labour mobility, defined as:
  - a. *International labour migration*: all movements of persons across international borders that involve a labour attachment in the destination country and result in a change of country of residence,

- b. *International temporary labour mobility*: all movements of persons across international borders that involve a labour attachment in the destination country but do not result in a change of country of residence.
6. As such, international labour mobility and its components, are a sub-set of international mobility and its components, as shown in diagram 1.

Diagram 1. Conceptual relation between international mobility and international labour mobility.



7. The concept of *labour attachment* refers to engagement, or intention to engage, in the production of goods and/or the provision of services in exchange for remuneration (i.e., employment) in the country of destination. Persons who cross international borders may have a labour attachment in the country of destination as part of the country's *resident labour force* or the *non-resident labour force* where,
- Resident labour force* refers to residents who are counted as employed or unemployed, in line with the latest statistical standards on the topic.
  - Non-resident labour force* refers to non-residents, present, who engage or intend to engage in the production of goods and/or the provision of services, in exchange for remuneration, in the country.
8. Persons who cross international borders and establish a labour attachment in the country of destination may have a work relationship, as independent or dependent workers, with an economic unit resident in the country of destination, in the country of origin, or in a third country.
9. The term *international worker* is used as an overarching term to refer to the different population groups of policy priority for the development of statistics of international labour mobility.
10. Within this scope, statistics of international labour mobility should comprise stocks and flows relating to different groups of international workers of policy priority and their characteristics, at different stages of the international mobility process.
11. These guidelines provide concepts, operational definitions, measurement and reporting guidance to support countries in developing statistics on stocks and flows for the following priority groups of international workers, and/or selected sub-groups, as relevant in the national context:

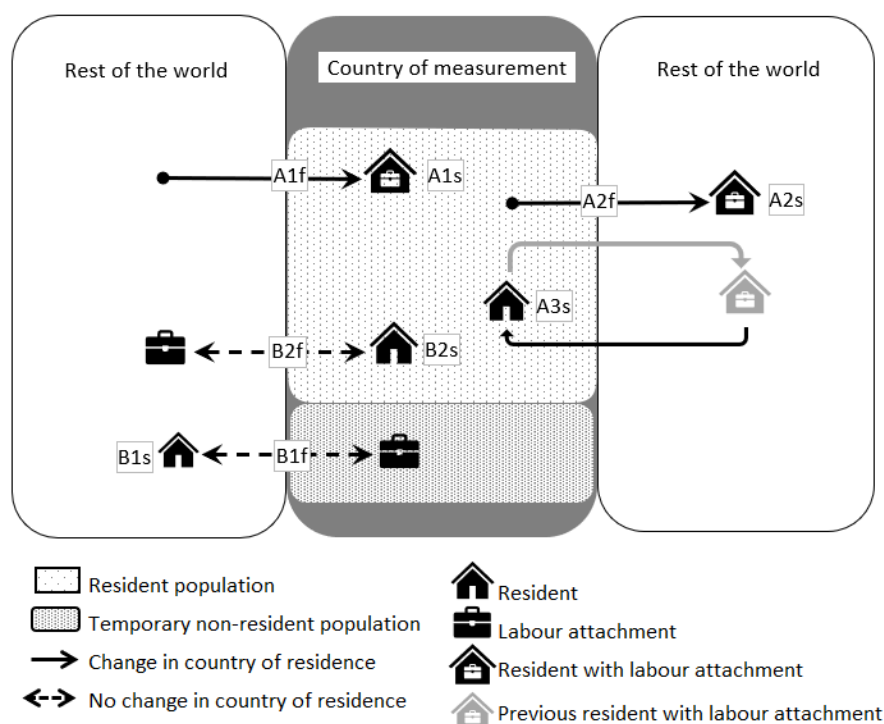
<i>A. International labour migration</i>	<i>B. International temporary labour mobility</i>
<i>Stocks</i>	
A1s. Immigrant (migrant) workers	B1s. Non-resident workers
A2s. Emigrant workers	B2s. Residents working abroad
A3s. Returned international migrant workers	

### Flows

A1f. Inflow of for-work migrants	B1f. Inflow of for-work non-residents
A2f. Outflow of for-work migrants	B2f. Outflow of for-work residents

12. The scope of statistics of international labour mobility may be further extended to capture *labour attachment* in the country of destination with reference to unpaid forms of work, such as own-use production work, volunteer work, unpaid trainee work, to generate separate statistics on special populations such as international volunteer workers or immigrants in unpaid care work, as per their national relevance to inform different policy needs.
13. In general, statistics of international labour migration should refer to the *resident population*, whereas statistics of international temporary labour mobility may refer to the *temporary (non-resident) population*, in the case of: (B1s) the stock of non-residents workers, and (B1f) the inflow of for-work non-residents; or to the *resident population* in the case of (B2s) the stock of residents working abroad, and (B2f) the outflow of for-work residents, see Diagram 2.

Diagram 2. Priority groups and measures of international workers.



14. In principle, and in line with a rights-based approach, the scope of national programmes of statistics of international labour mobility should have as reference population all persons that meet the criteria to be counted as *residents* or *temporary (non-residents)*, as relevant, regardless of sex, age, type of living quarters, place of birth, citizenship status, status as refugee or asylum seeker, the regular or irregular status of their arrival or stay, or the formal or informal nature of their employment.

## Measures and priority groups

15. The priority groups specified in these guidelines build on reference concepts defined in related international statistical standards. These include definitions of the resident population, temporary (non-resident)

population, international migrant, immigrant, emigrant, returned international migrant, working age population, labour force, employment, unemployment, potential labour force, resident producer units, among others. The latest definitions of these concepts are maintained in a glossary accompanying these guidelines. Countries are encouraged to apply these concepts in a consistent manner across the different sources of statistics of international labour mobility, to support their coherent development as part of the national statistical system.

16. International labour mobility is characterized by a diversity of flows, with countries becoming origin, destination and/or transit for different groups of international workers. The concepts and operational definitions presented in these guidelines are specified from the perspective of the country of measurement and differ by type of measure (stock or flow).

### **Stocks**

17. Stock measures reflect the size of the specified population group at a single point in time (i.e. the reference date).
18. For all measures of stocks provided in these guidelines, the criterion of “labour attachment” should be interpreted as referring to engagement in the (resident or non-resident) labour force in the country of destination, as specified in paragraph 7.
19. Statistics on stocks may be produced with respect to immigrant (migrant) workers, emigrant workers, returned international migrant workers, and for selected categories of non-residents workers and of residents working abroad.

### **Flows**

20. Flow measures are intended to provide information on the size and direction of movements of persons across international borders for labour related reasons over a particular period.
21. As introduced in these guidelines, flow measures refer to the number of persons of the specified group,
  - a. Arriving/entering (inflow) to establish a labour attachment in the country of measurement; or
  - b. Departing/exiting (outflow) the country of measurement to establish a labour attachment abroad,
 over the course of a specified period of observation. The specified period of observation may be short, such as a month or a quarter, or long such as twelve months or a calendar year.
22. For all flow measures, the criterion of “labour attachment” is interpreted as referring to moves for work-related reasons; that is, with the purpose to engage in any type of employment or to seek employment, including self-employment, as documented or declared at the time of entry to or exit from the country of measurement.
23. “Work-related reasons” may not be the only reason nor the main reason for entry to or exit from the country of measurement. It suffices for it to be one of the documented or declared reasons.
  - a. The term “documented or declared” is understood to mean documented in official immigration registers or declared to relevant immigration authorities.
  - b. Nevertheless, in cases where the purpose of the move is not documented or declared at the time of entry or exit, the criterion of “labour attachment” may be established retrospectively, through self-declaration. In all cases, it should refer to the purpose at the time of the move (entry or exit).



24. Statistics on inflows and outflows may be produced with respect to for-work migrants, and for selected categories of for-work residents and for-work non-residents, including arriving and/or departing frontier workers, seasonal workers, business travellers, posted workers, self-employed service providers and others as relevant in the national context.
25. Stocks and flows relating to international labour mobility do not have a direct one-to-one correspondence. The stock of immigrant workers is impacted by flows relating to international migration (including for-work migration), flows relating to other demographic events (deaths), flows relating to changes in residence status (non-resident, resident), and flows between different labour force statuses (employed, unemployed, outside labour force).

*Priority groups relating to international labour migration*

### **Stock of immigrant (migrant) workers**

26. The stock of immigrant workers (also referred to as *migrant workers*) is intended to provide information on the size of the immigrant worker population resident in the country of measurement at a given point in time, irrespective of their date of arrival to the country.
27. For statistical purposes, the *stock of immigrant (migrant) workers* is defined as all immigrants of working age resident in the country of measurement who, at a specified point in time, had a *labour attachment* in the country. Where the term:
  - a. “immigrants” refers to foreign-born persons (or foreign citizens) resident in the country of measurement, in line with the latest statistical standards on international migration; and
  - b. “labour attachment” refers to being in the resident labour force, as specified in paragraph 7a.
28. Regardless of the criterion chosen to define the immigrant population (i.e., place of birth or citizenship status), countries should endeavour to compile information on both criteria to enable identification of different population sub-groups of relevance in the national context (e.g., foreign-born foreign citizens, foreign-born citizens, native-born foreign citizens).
29. Where relevant, the lower age limit may be extended to separately measure the labour attachment of *immigrant* children below the working age, in line with the latest international recommendations on statistics of child labour;
30. Depending on policy objectives, the scope of labour attachment may be extended to also include persons in the potential labour force. This extension may be relevant *during periods of economic downturns* and in cases where some groups of immigrants are not allowed to take up employment or are subject to restrictions limiting the type or location of jobs they are allowed to engage in.
31. The following *special* categories of workers are included as *immigrant* workers when *they meet the criteria to be counted as part of the resident population in the country of measurement*. Foreign-born persons (or foreign citizens) who are,
  - a. project-tied or specified-employment workers, admitted to the country for a defined prolonged period of employment solely on a specific project or to undertake a specific assignment or duty being carried out in the country by their employer;
  - b. self-employed workers, regardless of the formal or informal nature of their self-employment activity;
  - c. seafarers, including fishermen, employed on a vessel which is registered in the country of measurement;

- d. workers employed on an offshore installation that is under the jurisdiction of the country of measurement;
- e. domestic workers engaged by resident employers;
- f. students who entered the country on the declared purpose of studying **and become employed or unemployed**, including while continuing their studies;
- g. refugees and asylum-seekers, who become **employed or unemployed**, irrespective of authorization to work during processing of refugee status or sanctuary request;
- h. forcibly displaced persons across borders due to natural or human-made disasters, who become **employed or unemployed**;
- i. persons trafficked across international borders for forced labour or labour exploitation.

32. *Excluded* as **immigrant** workers are:

- a. foreign military and diplomatic personnel **stationed in the country of measurement**;
- b. foreign-born (or foreign citizen) workers present in the country in the context of international temporary labour mobility;
- c. workers providing services to resident producer units from a foreign location without crossing international borders (e.g. remote workers);
- d. workers who are stateless or with undetermined citizenship status born in the country of measurement, in line with the international recommendations on statelessness statistics.

### **Stock of emigrant workers**

33. The stock of emigrant workers aims to provide a basis for assessing the size of the native-born (and/or national citizen) population who left the country of measurement and is currently residing and working abroad.
34. For statistical purposes, the *stock emigrant workers* is defined as all emigrants of working age who, at a specified point in time, were residents in a country other than the country of measurement and had a *labour attachment* in their country of residence. Where the term:
- a. “emigrants” refers to native-born persons (or national citizens) of the country of measurement who left the country and are currently residents in another country, in line with the latest statistical standards on international migration;
  - b. “labour attachment” refers to being in the resident labour force, as specified in paragraph 7a, of their country of residence.
35. Countries may restrict measurement to emigrant workers who are citizens of the country of measurement and who departed within a recent past period, such as the previous 5 or 10 years.
36. Included are:
- a. emigrant workers, in any type of employment, including self-employment, informal employment, part-time or casual employment;
  - b. emigrant workers, while on visit in the country of measurement; and

- c. emigrant workers, residing abroad and employed in a third country in the context of international temporary labour mobility.

37. Excluded are:

- a. Residents working abroad in the context of international temporary labour mobility.

**Stock of returned international migrant workers**

38. The stock of returned international migrant workers is intended to provide information on the size of the native-born (and/or national citizen) population currently living in the country of measurement, with previous experience residing and working abroad.
39. For statistical purposes, the *stock of returned international migrant workers* are defined as all persons who, at a specified point in time, were counted as returned international migrants and who had a previous labour attachment while residing in a country other than the country of measurement. Where the term:
- a. “returned international migrant” refers to persons, who having previously resided in the country, emigrated (i.e. changed country of residence), and subsequently came back to reside in the country of measurement, in line with the latest statistical standards on international migration;
  - b. “previous labour attachment” refers to having been engaged, at any point in the past, in the resident labour force, as specified in paragraph 7a., of a country other than the country of measurement.
40. Countries may decide to restrict measurement to returned international migrant workers who are citizens of the country of measurement, and who returned within a recent past period, such as the last 12 months or the last 5 years.
41. The identification of returned international migrant workers does not depend on the current labour force status of persons in the country of measurement. Return international migrant workers may include persons currently employed, unemployed, or outside the labour force in the country of measurement.
42. Excluded as return international migrant workers are:
- a. Persons currently residing abroad, on visit in the country of measurement, regardless of whether or not they have ended their employment abroad;
  - b. Residents with current or previous employment experience abroad exclusively in the context of international temporary labour mobility (e.g., frontier workers, seasonal migrant workers, etc);

**Inflow of for-work migrants**

43. The *inflow of for-work migrants* is intended to provide information on the number of migrants arriving with the intention to work and reside in the country of measurement over the course of a specified period.
44. For statistical purposes, the inflow of for-work migrants is defined as all foreign-born persons (or foreign citizens) of working age who, over the course of a specified period, arrived to the country of measurement to establish a labour attachment and become part of the resident population of the country. Where,
- a. the reference period should be long such as the previous 12 months or calendar year.
  - b. “labour attachment” refers to moves for work-related reasons, as specified in paragraphs 22 and 23 above.

45. Statistics on the inflow of for-work migrants may be compiled and reported separately for different categories of for-work migrants, such as by type of work permit, visa type, or employment programme, as relevant and feasible in the national context.
46. Excluded from the inflow of for-work migrants are:
  - a. foreign military and diplomatic personnel arriving to be stationed in the country of measurement;
  - b. non-residents entering the country of measurement in the context of international temporary labour mobility, such as frontier workers, seasonal workers, and others arriving with an intended duration of stay below the minimum required to become part of the resident population of the country of measurement;

### **Outflow of for-work migrants**

47. The *outflow of for-work migrants* is intended to provide information on the number of persons emigrating from the country of measurement over the course of a specified period with the intention to work abroad.
48. For statistical purposes, the outflow of for-work migrants is defined as all native-born persons (or national citizens) of working age resident in the country of measurement who, over the course of a specified reference period, left the country to reside and establish a labour attachment in another country. Where,
  - a. the reference period should be long such as the previous 12 months or calendar year.
  - b. "labour attachment" refers to moves for work-related reasons, as specified in paragraphs 22 and 23 above.
49. Statistics on the outflow of for-work migrants may be compiled and reported separately for different categories of for-work migrants, such as by type of work permit, visa type, or employment programme as relevant and feasible in the national context.
50. Excluded from the outflow of for-work migrants are:
  - a. national military and diplomatic personnel departing the country of measurement to be stationed abroad;
  - b. residents departing the country of measurement in the context of international temporary labour mobility, such as frontier workers, seasonal workers, and others departing for short durations for (a cumulative) period below the threshold specified to change residence status in the country of measurement;

*Priority groups relating to international temporary labour mobility*

**Stock of non-resident workers**

51. The stock of non-resident workers is intended to provide information on the size of the temporary population engaged or seeking to be engaged in work in the country, such as frontier workers, seasonal migrant workers, circular migrant workers, among others.
52. For statistical purposes, the *stock of non-resident workers*, is defined as all persons of working age, regardless place of birth or citizenship status, resident in a country other than the country of measurement who, at a specified point in time, were present and had a labour attachment in the country of measurement. Where the terms:
  - a. the specified point in time (or reference date) should take account of the prevalent patterns of international temporary labour mobility in the country, including seasonality;
  - b. "labour attachment" refers to being in the non-resident labour force, as specified in paragraph 7b.
53. As relevant in the national context, countries may decide to restrict measurement to non-resident workers who are foreign citizens in the country of measurement (i.e., non-resident foreign worker).
54. Statistics on the stock of non-resident workers may be compiled and reported separately for different categories of non-resident workers, such as frontier workers, seasonal workers, posted workers, cross-border service suppliers, as relevant and feasible in the national context.
55. Depending on national relevance, countries may include in the stock of non-resident workers, persons while in transit to another country of destination, who were present and had a labour attachment in the country of measurement at the specified point in time. Such persons, when the elapsed duration of stay meets the minimum threshold to be considered resident in the country of measurement should be instead counted in the stock of immigrant workers, defined in paragraph 27.
56. The following categories of workers are included as non-resident workers, when the duration of stay is below the threshold to be considered resident in the country of measurement. Non-residents who are,
  - a. frontier workers, i.e. who enter the country at frequent and short intervals (daily or weekly) to work or seek employment;
  - b. seasonal workers, who enter the country to be employed in jobs whose character is dependent on seasonal conditions and is performed during part of the year;
  - c. itinerant workers, who enter the country to be employed or seek employment on an itinerant basis;
  - d. seafarers, including fishermen employed on a vessel which is registered the country measurement;
  - e. project-tied workers, specified-employment workers, **posted workers**, **temporary agency workers** who enter the country of measurement for a short defined period of employment to undertake a specific project, assignment or duty being carried out in the country by their employer;
  - f. **Self-employed service providers**, who enter the country of measurement to deliver a service for which he/she receives remuneration
57. Excluded as non-residents workers are,
  - a. **Persons seeking employment from abroad without travelling to the country;**

- b. Persons resident in another country, working in resident producer units of the country of measurement, established abroad (e.g. embassies, military bases, scientific installations, etc);
- c. Persons who enter the country exclusively to acquire inputs for their self-employment activity abroad;

### **Stock of residents working abroad**

58. The stock of residents working abroad is intended to provide information on the size of the population resident in the country who cross international borders to work or look for work abroad, such as frontier workers, seasonal migrant workers, circular migrant workers, among others.
59. For statistical purposes, the *stock of residents working abroad* is defined as all persons of working age, regardless of their country of birth or citizenship status, resident in the country of measurement who, at a specified point in time, had a labour attachment in a country other than the country of measurement. Where the terms:
- a. the specified point in time (or reference date) should take account of the prevalent patterns of international temporary labour mobility in the country, including seasonality.
  - b. "labour attachment" refers to being in the non-resident labour force, as specified in paragraph 7(b), of a country other than the country of measurement;
60. Statistics on the stock of residents working abroad may be compiled and reported separately for different categories of workers, such as frontier workers, seasonal workers, posted workers, cross-border service suppliers, as relevant and feasible in the national context.
61. The following categories of workers are included as residents working abroad when the duration of stay abroad is below the threshold specified to change residence status in the country of measurement. Persons resident in the country of measurement who are,
- a. frontier workers, i.e. who cross international borders at frequent and short intervals (daily or weekly) to work or seek employment in neighboring countries;
  - b. seasonal workers, who cross international borders to be employed in jobs whose character is dependent on seasonal conditions and is performed during part of the year;
  - c. itinerant workers, who cross international borders to be employed or seek employment in neighbouring countries on an itinerant basis;
  - d. seafarers, including fishermen employed on a vessel which is registered in a country other than the country of measurement;
  - e. project-tied workers, specified-employment workers, posted workers, temporary agency workers who travel outside the country of measurement for a short defined period of employment to undertake a specific project, assignment or duty being carried out abroad by their employer;
  - f. Self-employed service providers, who travel outside the country of measurement to deliver a service for which he/she receives remuneration.
62. Excluded as residents working abroad are,
- a. Residents seeking employment abroad without crossing international borders;

- b. Residents working on a remote basis, without crossing international borders, for a non-resident economic unit based abroad
- c. Residents who cross international borders exclusively to acquire inputs for their self-employment activity.

### **Inflow of for-work non-residents**

- 63. The inflow of for-work non-residents is intended to provide information on the size of the temporary population arriving in the country of measurement for short periods at a time with the intention to work.
- 64. For statistical purposes, the *inflow of for-work non-residents* is defined as all persons of working age resident in a country other than the country of measurement who, over the course of a specified reference period, travelled for (a) short period(s) to the country of measurement to establish a labour attachment in the country. Where the term:
  - a. The specified “reference period” may be short such as a month or a quarter, or long, such as 12 months or a calendar year, and take account of the prevalent patterns of international temporary labour mobility in the country, including seasonality.
  - b. “travelled for short periods” should be interpreted as undertaking, within the specified reference period, one or more trips across international borders for a (cumulative) duration of stay less than limit established to change country of residence.
  - c. “labour attachment” refers to moves for work-related reasons, as specified in paragraphs 22 and 23.
- 65. As relevant in the national context, countries may decide to restrict measurement to the inflow of for-work non-residents who are foreign citizens in the country of measurement.
- 66. Statistics on the inflow of for-work non-residents may be compiled and reported separately for different categories of for-work non-residents, such as by type of work permit or visa type, or work programme (eg. seasonal worker, frontier worker, posted worker, job seeker), as relevant and feasible in the national context.
- 67. Included and excluded in the inflow of for-work residents are the groups specified respectively, in paragraphs 56 and 57, when the duration of stay in the country is below the threshold specified to change residence status in the country of measurement.

### Outflow of for-work residents

68. The outflow of for-work residents is intended to provide information on the number of residents departing the country of measurement for short periods at a time with the intention to work abroad.
69. For statistical purposes, the *outflow of for-work residents* is defined as all persons of working age resident in the country of measurement who, over the course of specified reference period, travelled for (a) short period(s) to establish a labour attachment in another country. Where:
  - a. the specified “reference period” may be short such as a month or a quarter, or long, such as 12 months or a calendar year, and take account of the prevalent patterns of international temporary labour mobility in the country, including seasonality.
  - b. “travelled for short periods” should be interpreted as undertaking, within the specified reference period, one or more trips across international borders for a (cumulative) duration of stay less than limit established to change country of residence.
  - c. labour attachment” refers to moves for work-related reasons, as specified in paragraphs 22 and 23.
70. Statistics on the outflow of for-work residents may be compiled and reported separately for different categories of for-work residents, such as by type of work permit, visa type, or work programme (eg. seasonal worker, border worker, posted worker, job seeker), as relevant and feasible in the national context.
71. Included and excluded in the outflow of for-work residents are the groups specified respectively, in paragraphs 61 and 62, when the duration of stay abroad is below the threshold specified to change residence status in the country of measurement.

### Items of data collection or compilation

72. The items of data collection should provide comprehensive information for the various users of the statistics of international labour migration and international temporary labour mobility, taking into account specific national needs and circumstances.
73. To enable basic identification of the different priority groups of international workers, the different sources for statistics of international labour migration and international temporary labour mobility need to include or be able to generate information on the following minimum data items, as relevant and feasible:
  - a. country of current residence;
  - b. country of birth;
  - c. citizenship status;
  - d. country(ies) of citizenship;
  - e. country of labour attachment;
  - f. labour attachment type;
  - g. country of previous residence (for returned international migrant workers);
  - h. country of next residence or destination (for emigrant workers, outflow of for-work migrants, outflow of for-work residents);
  - i. date of (most recent) arrival and/or departure;



- j. duration of stay.

74. "Country of labour attachment" refers to the:

- a. country of *current* labour attachment for: immigrant workers, emigrant workers, residents working abroad and non-residents workers;
- b. country of *declared, documented or reported* labour attachment for: inflow of for-work migrants, outflow of for-work migrants, inflow of for-work non-residents, and outflow of for-work residents;
- c. country of *last* labour attachment for returned international migrant workers.

75. "labour attachment type" refers to the:

- a. *labour force status*, distinguishing between (resident or non-resident) employed and unemployed, in the country of labour attachment at a specified reference period of measurement for: immigrant workers, emigrant workers, non-residents workers, and residents working abroad;
- b. *reason for move*, distinguishing between employment, job search, business and professional purposes, as declared, documented or reported at the time of entry or exit for: inflow of for-work migrants, outflow of for-work migrants, inflow of for-work non-residents, and outflow of for-work residents;
- c. *previous employment experience* while residing abroad, for return international migrant workers.

76. "Duration of stay" is determined with reference to the (current/last/next) country of labour attachment and may be measured as elapsed, completed, or intended duration of stay depending on the data source.

77. To support separate identification of refugees, asylum seekers and related groups, in addition to the above minimum core data items, as feasible and relevant, information is needed on the reason for move and legal status, in line with the latest recommendations for refugee statistics, as follows:

- a. reason for move, identifying cases due to "forced displacement" such as violence, conflict, fear of persecution, human right violations, etc.
- b. legal status, including: recognized legal status in the country, status of application for international protection, intent to apply for international protection, outcome of application for international protection, etc.

78. To support assessments of the main socio-demographic characteristics of the different priority groups, essential data items to be included or generated through the different data sources include: sex, date of birth or age, marital status, level of education attained, proficiency (speaking, reading, writing) in a language of the country of labour attachment, and, as relevant, type of living quarters in the destination country.

79. To enable classification and analysis of the different priority groups by characteristics of their employment, working conditions and related economic characteristics in the country of labour attachment, data items to be collected or generated for the current (or most recent) job in the country of labour attachment, include as a priority: branch of economic activity, occupation, status in employment, location (i.e., country) of economic unit of employment and location (i.e., country) of place of work. Additional characteristics as feasible depending on the data source, include hours usually worked, contractual hours of work, type of employment agreement, duration of work agreement, duration of employment in the economic unit, formal/informal nature of the job, employment-related income, occupational injuries, recruitment costs, social security entitlements in the country of labour attachment and remittances sent outside the country of labour attachment.

80. For assessments of the process of international labour migration and/or temporary labour mobility, and its impact on international workers and their situation, priority data items to be included or generated, as complement to the minimum data items specified above, include with reference to the most recent or current migration or move: type of visa, residence permit, work permit, duration of stay, and frequency of travel, as relevant and feasible, to support classification and analysis of different groups of international workers by pattern of migration or mobility (i.e., permanent, temporary including seasonal, circular, etc.), type of restrictions in the right to employment (e.g. concerning undertaking or seeking work, changing employer or work performed), and by type of restrictions in the rights to residence in the country of actual or intended labour attachment.
81. The items of data collection should adhere or be convertible to the latest international statistical standards where they exist, such as the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships, including the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE).
82. Where the scope of statistics has been extended to include the potential labour force and/or those engaged in forms of unpaid work, the list of items of data collection should be extended to support identification of the potential labour force, and/or of participation and time spent in the relevant forms of unpaid work and their characteristics, as appropriate.
83. Similarly, where the age limit of the working age population is lowered in data collection to cover international child migrant workers, the list of items should be extended to obtain relevant information on the child's living and working conditions, including school attendance, engagement in unpaid domestic services or household chores, exposure to hazardous working conditions and risk of other worst forms of child labour, in line with the latest ICLS standards on statistics of child labour.
84. Depending on policy concerns, additional data items to be collected or generated at longer intervals, include special topics such as past migration and employment history, family relationships and characteristics of family members, labour exploitation and forced labour of international migrant workers, in line with the latest statistical standards on the respective topics.

## Core indicators and tabulations

85. Each country should select a set of indicators that serves the principal needs of the various users of statistics of international labour migration and international temporary labour mobility, considering the national context and priorities, and the different reporting periodicities as outlined in the next section.
86. The selected indicators should be computed for the specified priority group or sub-group, as feasible, and disaggregated by sex, specified broad age groups (including separate categories for youth), broad level of educational attainment, and other relevant characteristics taking account of the quality of the estimates.
87. Core indicators for stocks include the numbers (stocks) and shares with respect to the resident working age population, at a specified point in time, for:
  - a. Immigrant (migrant) workers;
  - b. emigrant workers (or recent emigrant citizens working abroad); and
  - c. returned international migrant workers (or recent returned international migrant workers who are citizens);

88. For immigrant workers, basic stock indicators should be complemented with indicators relating to the labour force participation rate, the employment-to-population ratio and the unemployment rate, computed as:

$$\text{Labour force participation rate} = \frac{\text{Immigrant workers in the labour force}}{\text{Immigrants of working age}}$$

$$\text{Employment – to – population ratio} = \frac{\text{Employed immigrant workers}}{\text{Immigrants of working age}}$$

$$\text{Unemployment rate} = \frac{\text{Unemployed immigrant workers}}{\text{Immigrant workers in the labour force}}$$

89. Where the scope of labour attachment is extended to cover the potential labour force and/or different forms of unpaid work, separate indicators of labour underutilization and/or participation and time-spent in different forms of unpaid work for the immigrant population should be calculated, in line with the latest statistical standards on the topic, as appropriate.
90. In countries with a significant number of child immigrant workers, separate indicators on immigrant children in employment should be computed, in line with the latest statistical standards on child labour.
91. Core indicators for flows include the total (in number of persons), for the group and for selected categories of worker as relevant and feasible, and shares with respect to the total inflow of working age migrants and total outflow of working age emigrants, respectively, over a specified period, relating to:
- Inflow of for-work migrants
  - Outflow of for-work migrants
92. In countries where international temporary labour mobility constitutes an important component of national or regional labour markets, the following additional core indicators may be considered, disaggregated by citizenship status as relevant:
- residents working abroad, total for selected categories of worker (e.g. frontier worker, seasonal worker, posted worker, self-employed service supplier), share in the working age population, and share in employment, at a specified point in time;
  - non-resident workers, total for selected categories of worker (e.g. frontier worker, seasonal worker, posted worker, self-employed service supplier), at a specified point in time;
  - outflow of for-work residents, total for selected categories of worker (e.g. frontier worker, seasonal worker, posted worker, self-employed service supplier), over the specified reference period;
  - inflow of for-work non-residents, total for selected categories of worker (e.g. frontier worker, seasonal worker, posted worker, self-employed service supplier), over the specified reference period.
93. To support analysis and inform policy, tabulations relating to the different priority groups of international workers, as relevant, should be prepared to shed light on their (a) socio-demographic characteristics, (b) labour force and employment characteristics, and (c) migration characteristics, covering the data items outlined in the previous section.
94. For comparisons of the situation of immigrant workers vis-à-vis non-migrants, to the extent possible, countries with a sizeable share of immigrant population, including refugees and/or asylum seekers, should strive to disaggregate core labour force and employment statistics separately for different groups of the

immigrant population, including for refugees and/or asylum seekers as relevant, to support comparisons among different subgroups of immigrants and with the native-born and/or national citizen population, including on labour force status, occupation, industry, status in employment, formal/informal job, working time, income from employment, and other priority topics, taking account of the representativity and statistical precision of the estimates.

95. For international comparisons, countries that use country of birth as the criterion for identifying immigrant workers should endeavor to tabulate relevant populations by country of citizenship. Similarly, countries that use country of citizenship as the criterion should endeavor to tabulate relevant populations by country of birth.

## Periodicity of data collection and reporting

96. To enable monitoring of trends, the core indicators should be reported at the national level on a regular basis and, where relevant [considering the national context](#), on a frequent basis, such as,
  - a. annually for stocks of [immigrant workers](#) and flows of [for-work migrants](#), and
  - b. annually, quarterly, or monthly, for stocks and flows relating to relevant groups of residents working abroad and/or non-resident workers (e.g., frontier workers, seasonal workers, posted workers).
97. Countries with a sizeable share of immigrant population resident in the national territory, including refugees and/or asylum seekers, should endeavor to report on an annual basis, selected labour force statistics disaggregated by international migrant status and other essential characteristics, considering the representativeness and precision of the estimates.
98. Countries where immigrant workers are concentrated in selected industries where migrants staying in collective living quarters is commonplace, such as in agriculture, tourism, mining, construction, should endeavor to report on an annual basis, sectoral employment statistics disaggregated by international migrant status, covering workers living in group accommodation. In-depth special reports may also be disseminated at less frequent intervals, such as every 3 years, on the working and living conditions of immigrants living in group quarter accommodation.
99. Countries where data on emigration and return international migration of workers is a priority, may consider reporting stocks of emigrant workers and of returned international migrant workers every 3 and up to 5 years.
100. Where the main data sources of international labour migration and/or international temporary labour mobility are not yet established to support annual monitoring, countries should endeavor to develop and/or strengthen these sources to produce, as relevant in the national context, stocks of priority groups of international workers, with a minimum frequency of every 3 and up to 5 years. In such cases, flow statistics for priority groups in the country may be produced for dissemination with reference to the same year as stocks.

## Data sources

101. Statistics on different aspects of [international labour mobility and priority groups of international workers](#) may come from diverse sources. These different statistical sources should be treated as complementary, to be used in combination to derive comprehensive sets of statistics to the extent possible.

- a. *Population censuses* are especially well suited to provide estimates of the stock of immigrant workers and their characteristics, including those living in private households and in collective living quarters, and at a low level of geography. They can also be used to produce stock estimates of residents working abroad and to determine the size and geographic distribution of the population that ever resided abroad and of households with emigrant members. These data can be used for preparing sampling frames for surveys, such as specialized migration surveys and labour force surveys, to improve the efficiency of survey samples and the coverage of different groups of international workers, including immigrant workers, emigrant workers and/or return international migrant workers, and for calibration purposes.
- b. *Population registers, registers of foreigners, registers of foreign workers, registers of refugees and asylum seekers, registers of nationals abroad*, where established, can serve to provide stock and flow data on an annual basis regarding the registered immigrant population and/or the migration of nationals, including emigration and return migration. To serve for statistics of international labour migration, it is important that the register(s) be linked or enable linking with other administrative or survey sources that capture information about the employment of the immigrant or emigrant population. This can include linking the population register(s) with tax and social security records, work permits, visa permits for special categories of workers, labour force surveys, and specialized migration surveys, among others. Population registers can also serve as sampling frames to improve or complement the coverage of surveys targeting different groups of international workers.
- c. *Records of border entries/exits*, where available, can be an important source for statistics on the inflow and outflow of for-work migrants, and the inflow and outflow of for-work non-residents. For this purpose, it is important that border records of entries and exists document for all travellers, in addition to basic sociodemographic characteristics, the main purpose of travel, distinguishing at a minimum the categories “employment” and “business and professional” from other reasons, as well as the intended duration of stay, country of origin and destination, country of residence, citizenship, and other selected characteristics such as status in employment, occupation and industry as feasible, in line with the most recent international recommendations for tourism statistics. Border records can also be an important source to improve the quality of population registers, for example to adjust for missing de-registrations of emigrants.
- d. *Visa permits and work permits* can also be an important source for statistics on the stock, inflow and outflow of for-work migrants for particular categories of workers and work programmes, including frontier workers, seasonal migrant workers, high skilled workers, etc. When combined with population registers and border records, they can expand their use by providing information relating to the employment of the registered population. This information can be further used in the design of survey samples to ensure coverage of international workers with different types of visas or work permits. Data from visa and work permits also can enable analysis by type of migration pattern (permanent, temporary), by type of restrictions in the right to employment or in the right to residence.
- e. *National household surveys*, when conducted on a regular and frequent basis can serve to monitor changes in the stock of different groups of international workers and can be designed to generate statistics on inflows and outflows to complement administrative data sources when these are limited in coverage. Specialized migration surveys can serve to generate detailed information on a variety of labour topics, including labour force participation, employment characteristics and working conditions, migrant recruitment costs, occupational injuries, reintegration of return migrant workers, emigration and remittances, among others. National labour force surveys can also be an important data source, particularly in countries with a sizeable share of immigrants, or where residents working

abroad are commonplace. In such cases, to adequately monitor the labour market, labour force surveys need to be designed to ensure adequate representation of the immigrant population, and if no other source is in place, to support disaggregation of key labour force statistics by international migrant status and/or estimation of the stock of residents working abroad and their characteristics, as relevant. Certain groups of international workers in need of international protection may require special surveys with targeted samples due to their particular characteristics and circumstances. These can include surveys in border regions, surveys of refugee camps, among others.

- f. Establishment census and surveys are an important source of statistics on employment, earnings, time paid for, labour cost. As such, they can be an important source for statistics on the employment and working conditions of immigrant workers and non-resident workers.
- g. *Other sources* in particular administrative sources can play an important role in national programmes of statistics of international labour migration. These include registers from tax authorities, social security systems, labour inspection and health systems, and education, which can serve to confirm the employment status of international migrants and provide additional relevant information on their situation, especially when linked or combined with population registers or surveys.

102. National programmes for statistics of international labour migration and mobility should aim to utilize the different available sources, considering their fit for purpose to generate statistics on stocks and/or flows of the different priority groups of international workers, as relevant in the national context. To this end, countries are encouraged to:

- a. rely on user-producer consultation in determining the national data needs and priorities;
- b. identify and assess the quality, comparability and complementary use of the different available data sources;
- c. establish and/or maintain national mechanisms to promote coordination and cooperation among relevant ministries, agencies and administrations responsible for the different data sources;
- d. expand access and use for statistical purposes of the different relevant administrative sources while ensuring data confidentiality; and
- e. document the rules and methods used for the combined use, including integration, of the different data sources to produce statistics on stocks and/or flows of the different priority groups relating to international labour migration and mobility.

## Measurement issues

103. The quality of data on international labour migration and mobility generated through the different data sources can be impacted by a variety of factors, including methodological choices. To maximize the potential use of these sources for statistics on international labour migration, the following issues may be considered, as relevant in the national context.

- a. *Population census* data on international labour migration can be impacted by quality issues due to under-coverage, non-response, as well as sampling errors. To minimize these, core questions necessary to identify international migrants and their economic characteristics should be asked at individual level to all persons enumerated, regardless of type of living quarters, including collective living quarters such as worker camps, refugee and IDP camps, hostels, group dormitories, and atypical living quarters such as places of work. Care should be taken when considering the use of sampling for these topics, as this may impact the use of the census to generate statistics with

adequate coverage and/or levels of precision. Planning should include measures to minimize the potential for non-participation due to language barriers, deliberate avoidance or misreporting, through sensitization campaigns, outreach and multi-language capabilities.

- b. *Population register data* can be subject to errors of over- or under-coverage. To minimize these, countries should integrate methods for regular updating of the register including through linking with other sources, in particular civil registration and border collection to identify cases of deaths, new arrivals and departures. For this purpose, to the extent possible, it is recommended to establish a unified identification system across different data sources. When multiple administrative sources are available, “signs of life” methods can also be used to improve the quality of estimates derived from population registers.
- c. *Household survey data* on international labour migration can be impacted by coverage bias and issues with limited precision of the estimates. To minimize these issues, household surveys covering topics relating to international labour migration should use sample designs that take account of the distribution, concentration and size of the migrant population(s) of interest in the territory. Where a significant share of international migrant workers resides in collective living quarters, including worker camps or refugee and IDP camps, household surveys should be complemented with comparable data collection for the migrant population in collective living quarters. This may be achieved through the use of multiple sampling frames, or through a strategy that combines establishment and/or administrative data with person or household survey data for different topics of interest.
- d. *Statistics on emigrant workers* are particular challenging to produce from a country of origin perspective. Measurement through survey-based sources, including population censuses and household surveys will generally only capture those emigrants who continue to have ties to a household in the country. Emigrants departing from unipersonal households will be omitted as well as those where the full household has emigrated. Additionally, data quality can be impacted due to the reliance on proxy responses from household members. Measurement through administrative records such as population registers, registers of nationals resident abroad, or registers of nationals issued permits to work abroad, will only capture those who reported their emigration, a primary source of error in population registers, or those emigrating through formal or managed labour migration channels. For these reasons, statistics of emigrant workers should be restricted to the population departing in a recent past period, and be accompanied by clear metadata describing the source coverage and limitations. As an alternative, mirror statistics of immigrants by country of birth or citizenship, as compiled by major destination countries may be considered.

## International reporting

104. To improve the global availability of statistics of international labour migration, countries should aim to routinely report statistics, in particular, on

- a. stock indicators for the working age population, employment, unemployment and labour force by international migrant status, based on a place of birth and/or citizenship status criterion, sex, and, to the extent possible, by broad levels of educational attainment and by main age ranges;
- b. stock indicators of employment by international migrant status, based on a place of birth and/or citizenship status criterion, sex, status in employment and broad categories economic activity, and occupation;



- c. stock indicators of the working age immigrant population and of employed immigrants by sex and by the top five countries of origin (i.e., country of birth or citizenship);
- d. Inflow of working age migrants by sex and broad levels of educational attainment;
- e. Inflow of working age migrants by sex and top five countries of origin (i.e., country of birth or citizenship);
- f. Inflow of for-work migrants by sex, and broad categories of economic activity and occupation;
- g. Outflow of for-work nationals by sex, country of destination, broad levels of educational attainment, and broad categories of economic activity and occupation.

105. The classifications applied should adhere to, or be convertible to, the most recent version of international standard classifications, such as the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), and the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE).

106. To enhance and promote the transparency and comparability of statistics reported internationally, countries are urged to compile and disseminate adequate information on the source, coverage and methodologies used, including national concepts, definitions, and reference periods, noting any departures from the relevant international statistical standards.

## ILO work

107. The ILO, in collaboration with interested countries, international and regional organizations, and workers' and employers' representatives, should continue work relating to these guidelines. The ILO should report the progress of its work to future sessions of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians, as appropriate.

108. To promote the implementation of these guidelines, the ILO should carry out its work through the collaborative mechanism, focused on:

- a. wide dissemination and communication of these guidelines;
- b. further conceptual and methodological work including testing as relevant;
- c. identification and sharing of good practice among countries;
- d. timely development of practical guidance and model data collection or compilation instruments;
- e. advocacy for better coordination and data sharing among different producers and users of labour migration data, involving social partners when determining national and international data needs;
- f. technical assistance through advisory services, training and capacity-building, especially for national statistical agencies and relevant statistical services in line ministries;
- g. continued annual compilation and dissemination of priority statistics on the topic through the ILO ILMS database;
- h. regular updating of global and regional estimates on immigrant workers based on accumulated country data for high level advocacy and research;
- i. analysis and presentation of statistics on international labour mobility, supported by appropriate technical notes.





## 10. Annex II: Glossary of reference concepts

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### International mobility, migration, and temporary mobility

As per the revised UN *Conceptual frameworks and concepts and definitions on international migration* (2021)

1. **Resident population:** Individuals who either (a) have lived most of the last 12 months within a given year, or have intentions to stay (or granted to stay) for at least 6 months, or (b) have lived at least 12 months within a given year or intentions to stay for at least 12 months, not including temporary absence for holidays or work assignments,
2. **Temporary (non-resident) population:** All persons who stayed or intend to stay (or granted to stay) in the country for less than the minimum required for residency in a particular year.
3. **International mobility:** All movements that cross international borders within a given year.
4. **International migration:** All movements resulting in a change in the country of residence (a subset of international mobility) within a given year.
5. **International temporary mobility:** All movements that cross international borders that do not result in a change in the country of residence.
6. **International migrant:** Person who has changed his or her country of residence and established new residence in the country [of measurement] within a given year. International migrant can be either “immigrant” or “emigrant” and include those with national or foreign citizenships.
7. **Immigrant population (stock)**<sup>7</sup>: Includes all persons who reside in the country who are either born in another country or who do not hold national citizenship including stateless persons at a given point in time.
8. **Emigrant population (stock):** Includes all national citizens or persons who were born in the country and are residing in another country at a given point in time.
9. **Returned migrants (stock):** Persons who previously resided in the country of measurement who emigrated and subsequently came back to live in the country and stayed or intended to stay for the minimum duration required for residence.
10. **Returned native-born migrants (stock):** Native-born persons who previously resided in the country of measurement who emigrated and subsequently came back to live in the country and stayed or intended to stay for the minimum duration required for residence.
11. **Immigration (flow):** Includes all persons entering the country and becoming part of the resident population within a given year, including persons with national or foreign citizenships or stateless persons.
12. **Emigration (flow):** Includes all persons leaving the country to become part of another country's resident population within a given year, including persons with national or foreign citizenships or stateless persons.

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<sup>7</sup> An issue has been raised with the current definition, and an alternative in line with the Recommendations for Statelessness statistics has been proposed as follows: All persons who reside in the country of measurement at a given time and who were born in another country (regardless of citizenship).

13. **Returning citizens (flow):** Includes all national citizens who previously resided in another country and become resident of the country in a given year
14. **Returning native-born population (flow):** Includes all native-born persons who previously resided in another country and become residents of the country in a given year.
15. **Foreign-born population (stock):** All persons who reside in the country at a particular time who were born in another country.
16. **Native-born population (stock):** All persons who reside in the country at a particular time who were born in the same country.
17. **Foreign citizen population (stock)**<sup>8</sup>: All persons who reside in the country at a particular time who do not hold national citizenship, including those without citizenship.
18. **National citizen population (stock):** Includes all persons who reside in the country at a particular time who have national citizenship.

## Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons

As per the *International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics –IRRS* (2018) and the *International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics –IROSS* (2023).

19. **Refugees:** Persons who have current refugee status, granted either before arrival or upon arrival in the receiving country. According to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, a refugee is a person “who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”
20. **Asylum seekers:** Persons who have filed an application for asylum in a country other than their own and whose claims have not yet been determined.
21. **Stateless person:** According to the 1954 Convention, a stateless person is “a person who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law”.
22. **Persons with undetermined nationality:** Persons in situations where a preliminary review has shown that it is not yet known whether they possess a nationality or are stateless.

## Work, labour force, employment, and unemployment

As per the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (2013).

23. **Work** comprises any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use.
24. **Employment work** comprises work performed for others in exchange for pay or profit.
25. **Persons in employment** are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit.

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<sup>8</sup> An issue has been raised with the current definition, and an alternative in line with the Recommendations for Statelessness statistics has been proposed.

26. **Persons in unemployment** are defined as all those of working age who were not in employment, carried out activities to seek employment during a specified recent period and were currently available to take up employment.
27. **Labour force:** The sum of persons in employment and in unemployment.

## Independent worker, dependent worker

As per the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships (2018).

28. **Independent workers** own the economic unit for which they work and control its activities. They may work on their own account or in partnership with other independent workers and may or may not provide work for others. They include employers and independent workers without employees.
29. **Dependent workers** are workers who do not have complete authority or control over the economic unit for which they work. If they are in employment for profit they have no employees, and do not make the most important decisions about the activities of the economic unit for which they work. They include dependent contractors, employees, and contributing family workers.

## Resident producer unit, economic territory

As per the 2008 System of National Accounts.

30. **Resident producer unit** is an economic unit whose principal function is the production of goods and services and whose centre of economic interest is within the economic territory of a given country.
31. **Economic territory** refers to the area under the effective economic control of a single government. It includes the land area, airspace, territorial waters, including jurisdiction over fishing rights and rights to fuels or minerals. In a maritime territory, the economic territory includes islands that belong to the territory. The economic territory also includes territorial enclaves in the rest of the world. These are clearly demarcated land areas (such as embassies, consulates, military bases, scientific stations, information or immigration offices, aid agencies, central bank representative offices with diplomatic immunity, etc.) located in other territories and used by governments that own or rent them for diplomatic, military, scientific, or other purposes with the formal agreement of governments of the territories where the land areas are physically located.

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