



PREPARING FOR THE 2020 ROUND OF INTERNATIONAL CENSUSES: REFLECTING SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC, METHODOLOGICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

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Abstract

As part of the UN's World Census Programme for the next decennial period 2015-2024, both the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) in New York, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in Geneva are revising their respective sets of principles and recommendations for conducting the next round of censuses of population and housing. This paper notes progress on these revisions to date and reports on those issues and topics where there have been notable changes from the recommendations for the 2010 round. Despite the increasing availability of a variety of data sources that are potentially accessible to national statistical agencies, censuses of population and housing continue to play an essential role in the development both of policy and management of public administration by national governments, and in all elements of national statistical systems. In many countries the census is the only reliable source of multivariate statistical information for small areas and small population groups. Both sets of recommendations reflect changes in the socio-demographic profile of national populations, particularly in relation to the increase in international economic migration, and the evolving concepts of usual residence and economic activity. The recommendations also review changes in the methodological approaches to collecting census information, noting the move, particularly in some European countries, away from the traditional concept of a universal, individual and simultaneous enumeration to using information taken from pre-existing administrative registers and other data sources, in an attempt to reduce both costs and public perceptions of intrusiveness. Technological developments and solutions, particularly in the field of geographic information and data processing systems, are discussed against the background of continuing moves to outsource elements of the census operation to agencies with more specialised technical expertise. The importance of ensuring and evaluating the quality and cost-effectiveness of the census, particularly in measuring the coverage and quality of the statistical data produced, is recognised as a vital component of the census operation.

Keywords: population census; principles and recommendations; data sources.