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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2010 ROUND OF POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES IN THE ECE REGION. ETHNO-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Submitted by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office [*]

Proposed introductory text to the chapter:

1. Questions regarding ethno-cultural characteristics of the population are of increasing relevance to countries of the UN/ECE region as a result of migration processes and in the context of migration, integration and minority policies.

2. Countries with a diverse population in terms of culture and origin may wish to collect information on the ethnic affiliation of the population and/or on language and/or religious groups.

3. They may also wish to collect information on the ethno-cultural characteristics of parents and grand-parents (ancestry) to gain a deeper understanding of the origins of the population and of integration processes.

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[*] Paper prepared by Werner Haug as a Chair of the Task Force on international migration and ethno-cultural characteristics.

4. Affiliation with certain ethnic groups is distinct from affiliation with language and/or religious groups, although overlaps are frequent. The combined collection and analysis of data on ethnic affiliation, language and/or religion is particularly informative for the understanding of cultural diversity.

5. Questions on ethno-cultural characteristics have subjective dimensions and groups are often small. The free and open declaration of the respondents is therefore of essential importance.

6. Register data are only of limited relevance to the topic and can at best cover certain aspects, e.g. the formal membership of a church or religious community or the official language of communication between the government and households in a multilingual setting.

7. It is recommended to closely associate representatives of ethnic, language and religious groups in the drafting of census questionnaires, the definition of classification procedures and the conduct of censuses among minority populations to assure the correct understanding of the questions and the full participation of the population.

I.   Ethnic group

Text of the 2000 recommendations

Ethnic group (non-core topic)

1. Some countries may wish to collect information on the ethnic and/or national composition of their population. Ethnic groups (and/or national groups) are made up of persons who consider themselves as having a same origin and/or culture, which may appear in linguistic and/or religious and/or other characteristics, which differ from those of the rest of the population. It depends on the historical and political circumstances whether countries consider such groups as ethnic groups and/or national groups.

2. Persons should be free to declare to which ethnic group and/or national group they belong.

Observations regarding the 2000 round of censuses and proposals for change

29 countries in the region (63%) asked questions on ethnic and national group in the 2000 round of censuses. 2 countries restricted the question to certain subpopulations, 2 asked in addition for ancestry and race.
Questions regarding ethnicity are of increasing relevance to countries as a result of migration processes and minority policies. At the same time, it is increasingly recognized that the question is complex and multifaceted. The topic should therefore receive more attention than in the past and the recommendations should be more explicit and detailed.

Proposals:

–   Improve definition of ethnic group: include a reference to regional or national origin, customs, race, way of life.
–   Underline the difference between ethnic group, language and religious group and the need to ask separate questions.
–   Introduce a reference to the possibility of multiple answers to certain questions.
–   Reaffirm the right of self-declaration.

– Introduce a reference to the need for an open (not precoded) answer box for self-declaration and the identification of small groups.
– Drop the distinction between national and ethnic group. Consider national group as a subcategory of ethnic group.
– Underline the need to explicit the way in which the ethnic belonging of children from mixed couples is determined.
– Underline the need to document and explicit in the census instructions and reports the basic criteria and the classification procedures used.
– Include a reference to possible questions on the ethnic origin of parents and grandparents (ancestry).

Ethnic affiliation (non core topic)

1. *Multiethnic countries with long established minorities and/or recently arrived immigrant populations may wish to collect information on the ethnic affiliation of the population or of certain subgroups of the population.*

2. *Some countries may also consider collecting data on ancestry and ethnic origin of parents and grandparents. In this case the reporting of one or more origins should be allowed.*

3. *Countries may consider some ethnic groups as "national groups" with special characteristics compared to other ethnic groups.*

4. *Affiliation with an ethnic group is based on a shared understanding of its history and territorial origins (regional, national) as well as on particular cultural characteristics (language and/or religion and/or specific customs and ways of life). In some countries, physical characteristics (color, race) are used as proxies for ethnic affiliation.*

5. *Data on ethnic affiliation should not be confounded with data on citizenship or nationality. The use of the term nationality in place of ethnic affiliation should therefore be avoided.*

6. *Ethnic affiliation has necessarily a subjective dimension and some ethnic groups are very small. Information on ethnic affiliation should therefore always be based on the free self-declaration of a person and questionnaires should include an open question.*

7. *Countries should document the basic criteria and classification procedures for ethnic affiliation and inform the respondents and data users about the scientific and socio-political concepts on which they are based.*

8. *Countries should in particular explain the rules that are applied to determine the ethnic affiliation of children from ethnically mixed couples.*

II.   Language

Text of the 2000 recommendations

Language (non-core topic)

3.   Some countries may wish to collect data on languages. Most relevant are:
   a) Mother tongue, defined as the first language(s) spoken in early childhood;
   b) Main language, defined as the language which the person commands best;
   c) Language(s) most currently spoken at home and/or at work;
   d) Knowledge of language(s), defined as the ability to speak and/or write one or more designated languages.

It is suggested to ask at least two questions, namely question a) or b) and question c). If under question c), only one option is to be chosen, it is preferable to enquire about the language most currently spoken at home.

Observations regarding the 2000 round of censuses and proposals for change

35 countries in the region (76%) asked questions on language in the 2000 round of censuses. The 2000 recommendations were much more detailed than in the case of ethnic group and religion and distinguished four different questions. 21 countries asked for mother tongue (a), 3 for main language (b), 11 for the most spoken language (c) and 19 for the knowledge of languages (d). Some countries limited the question to certain minority languages or the use of the majority language.

The degree of detail of the 2000 recommendations seems sufficient but more precision is possible. The proposed priorities for questions were not always followed. A reference to the classification of languages would be useful to enhance international comparability.

Proposals:

− Drop the proposed priorities for main language before mother tongue and spoken language before knowledge of languages.
− Include a reference to the need for multilingual questionnaires and interviewers.
− Introduce a reference to the need for open answer boxes to identify small language groups.
− Include a reference to the possibility of multiple answers to certain questions.
− Underline the need to document and explicit in the census instructions and reports the criteria and classification procedures used.

Proposed revised text for the 2010 recommendations

Language (non core topic)

1. *Multilingual countries and countries with immigrant populations may wish to collect data on language. Depending on the information needs, the following data may be collected:*
   a) *Mother tongue, defined as the first language spoken in early childhood;*
   b) *Main language, defined as the language which the person commands best;*
   c) *Language(s) most currently spoken at home and/or work;*
   d) *Knowledge of language(s), defined as the ability to speak and/or write one or more designated languages.*

2. *Data on a) and b) will generally refer to one language only. Data on c) and d) refer to several languages and questions have to allow for multiple answers.*

3. *It is recommended to ask more than one question regarding language and to combine one question from the first group (a, b) with at least one question from the second group (c, d).*

4. *Many language groups are small. It is therefore recommended to include an open answer box at least in questions from the first group (a,b).*

5. *In multilingual countries questionnaires should be made available in several languages (as official questionnaires or translations of official questionnaires) and all respondents should have the opportunity to answer in a language which they command.*

6. *Countries should explain in the census instructions and during data collection the chosen concepts and definitions and document the classification procedures for languages.*

III.   Religion

Text of the 2000 recommendations

Religion (non-core topic)

4. Some countries may wish to collect data on religion. Most relevant are:
   a) Formal membership of a church or a religious community;
   b) Participation in the life of a church or a religious community;
   c) Religious belief.
Where only one question is asked, it is suggested that data be collected on "formal membership of a church or a religious community", allowing respondents to state "none".

Observations regarding the 2000 round of censuses and proposals for change

24 countries in the region (52%) asked questions on religion in the 2000 round. Three different questions were distinguished. 6 countries asked for formal membership of a community or church (a), no country asked for participation in the life of a church or community (b), 9 countries asked for religious belief or preference (c). 9 countries choose a slightly different concept referring to identification with communities or denominations. The proposed priority for question a) in the case of a single question was not followed

The recommendations should be revised, taking into account the practice of the countries.

Proposals :

− Drop the priority for the question on formal membership.
− Introduce new questions on identification with denominations and communities and on the denomination in which a person was brought up.
− Drop the question on participation in the life of communities.
− Introduce a reference to the need for open answer boxes to identify small religious groups and subgroups.
− Reaffirm the right of self declaration and the right to state "none".
− Include a reference to the possible use of register data for formal membership.
− Underline the need to document and explicit in the census reports the criteria and classification procedures used.
− Add a proposal for a classification of religious groups (only major groups).

Proposed revised text for the 2010 recommendations

Religion (non core topic)

1. *Countries that are traditionally multi -denominational or accept large immigrant groups of different denominational background may also wish to collect data on religion. Depending on the specific circumstances and information needs, the following data may be collected:*
   a) Formal membership of a church or a religious community;
   b) Identification with a certain community or denomination;
   c) Religious belief;
   d) Religious denomination in which a person was brought up.

2. *In all four approaches respondents should be allowed to state "none".*

3. *Countries should explain in the census instructions and during data collection the chosen concepts and definitions and document the classification procedu res for religious denominations and communities.*

4. *Data regarding a) can be based on administrative data. Data regarding b), c) and d) should always be based on the free self-declaration of a person and questionnaires should include open questions.*

5. *The following classification of churches and communities is recommended:*
   A.   *Christian churches and communities*
   B.   *Islamic communities*
   C.   *Jewish communities*
   D.   *Buddhist communities*
   E.   *Hindu communities*
   F.   *Other churches and communities*