



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 July 2023

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses

Twenty-fifth Meeting

Geneva, 20–22 September 2023

Item 4 (f) of the provisional agenda

Revising the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses for the 2030 round:

Economic characteristics

Preliminary progress report of the Conference of European Statisticians Census Task Force on Economic Characteristics

Note by the CES Task Force on Economic Characteristics*

Summary

Economic characteristics collected via censuses are of great interest because they allow assessment of the socio-economic situation of households. This information is important for social policy and planning purposes and in recent years has gained even higher attention with the focus on indicators for measuring wellbeing. This report presents the outcomes of the discussions of the Task Force on Economic Characteristics and the proposed revision to the questionnaire on national practices, which will inform the revised set of CES recommendations for the 2030 round of housing and population censuses.

The last section of the paper includes specific questions for discussion on which the Task Force would like to receive feedback from the meeting.

* Prepared by Ann Lisbet Brathaug, Statistics Norway—Chair of the Task Force.

Note: The designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



I. Introduction

1. Every ten years the Conference of European Statistics (CES) issues a set of set of recommendations to guide countries in conducting the population and housing censuses. The most recent recommendations are from 2020. The next version of the CES Recommendations is due to be published in 2025, giving time for countries to prepare for the 2030 Census.
2. Since there is more or less a continuous change in technology, and techniques for collecting and processing, new data sources, new standards and classifications in different areas, the Recommendation for the Population and Housing Censuses needs to be revised and aligned accordingly. In addition, new social realities and country needs should be taken into account.
3. This report introduces the observations and reflections of the Task Force on Economic Characteristics, which covers the productive activities of persons e.g. labour market characteristics, occupation, etc. The reflections are based on the discussions during the revision of the economic characteristics part of the questionnaire on national practises. The last section includes questions for discussion on which the Task Force would like to receive feedback from the meeting participants.

II. Economic characteristics

4. Economic characteristics, combined with other personal, household and dwelling characteristics collected in the census, enable the assessment of the socio-economic situation of persons and households which is important for social policy and planning purposes. Furthermore, they will provide useful insight into a variety of wellbeing indicators which are recommended in the forthcoming revisions of macroeconomic statistics standards, such as the System of National Accounts.
5. The economic characteristics considered by the Task Force are:
 - (a) Labour force status (employment and unemployment);
 - (b) Employment status;
 - (c) Occupation/‘type of work’;
 - (d) Industry/branch of economic activity;
 - (e) Place of work (location and type);
 - (f) Non-core topics, e.g. hours worked, source of livelihood, household income etc).
6. Collection of information on economic characteristics should follow established standards and classifications. Therefore both the Recommendations and census techniques need to be updated and aligned with the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards; the *International Standard Classification of Status in Employment* (ISCE) and the *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO), as well as with the *International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities* (ISIC), that is either ISIC-Rev.4 or the *Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community* (NACE rev.2). The last two of these standards are presently under revision.
7. The International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) provides an important framework when defining employers and employees etc. In the 2020 CES Recommendations reference is made to the 19th ISCL of 2013. An updated version of this was adopted at the 20th ICSL in 2018. This update needs to be taken into account in the revised Recommendations. The ICLS meets every five years and the 21st Conference will take place in October 2023. New resolutions from this conference may also impact the 2030 CES Recommendations.
8. In addition, the concept of work should be aligned with the general production boundary as defined in the System of National Accounts (SNA), ensuring integration between work statistics and production statistics. The present version of the SNA was

adopted in 2008 (2008 SNA) and is now under revision. The updated SNA is planned for 2025 (2025 SNA).

A. Labour Force status

9. Labour force status is divided into employed or unemployed. Outside the labour force are i) those attending an educational institution, ii) pension or capital income recipients, iii) those performing unpaid household services and iv) “others”. A question for Census Week participants is: *will this classification of labour force status (2-digit level) cover what you expect?*

10. The Task Force considers that it is of interest to know whether the countries use a minimum or maximum age limit for the collection of information on activity status. We are also asking for feedback on whether there are other population groups for which information on economic activity status is missing. Another question for Census Week participants is therefore: *Would you have any recommendations to the Task Force in relation to age limits and specific population groups?*

B. Employment status

11. The definition of employed persons is defined according to ICLS standards. The Task Force made proposals for the CES-wide questionnaire to collect information on whether the following groups are to be considered employed in countries' censuses:

- (a) Apprentices, interns and trainees who receive pay in cash or in kind;
- (b) Apprentices, interns and trainees who did not receive pay in cash or in kind;
- (c) Volunteers carrying out unpaid work through a non-profit organization;
- (d) Farmers producing crops that are mainly intended for the use of the household but where a surplus is sold;
- (e) Persons with seasonal jobs during off-seasons;
- (f) Unpaid contributing family workers;
- (g) Persons who, during the reference period had a different main activity (e.g. mainly students, homemakers, pensioners, registered unemployed) but at the same time carried out work for pay or profit in the reference period;
- (h) Members of the armed forces.

12. The intention of these questions is to test the boundaries between employed and unemployed and to see if it is possible to identify the different groups in practice. Any comment on this issue would be welcomed by the Task force.

C. Occupation/'type of work'

13. Occupation refers to the type of work done (explicit or implicit in the employment contract) in the main job by the persons employed. The CES recommends that the employed population should be classified using the latest version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

14. Some questions to participants in the present meeting are: Do you find the reference to ISCO relevant for national purposes or do you use a national standard classification? If you use a national standard, how important do you think it is to map to ISCO for international comparability purposes?

D. Industry/branch of economic activity

15. This subsection refers to the kind of production or activity undertaken by the establishment in which the main job of the employed person is located. For international comparability it is recommended that the countries compile information on industry according to the latest the version of ISIC/NACE classification.

E. Location of place of work (core) and type of place of work (non-core)

16. In the present CES Recommendations the ‘place of work’ is the location in which an employed person performs his/her job or where an unemployed person last performed a job. This should be distinguished from the ‘type of place of work’ which refers to the nature of the workplace, i.e. works at home or other workplaces, whether fixed or otherwise. It is noted that the latter is useful for analysis of employment characteristics, while the combination of the two is used mainly to study commuting issues. The topic ‘location of place of work’ is discussed in the chapter of the Recommendations on Geographic characteristics (paragraphs 440–445).

17. In the recent years it has been observed that employees are becoming less attached to a fixed working place. During the Covid-19 pandemic teleworking became the ‘new normal’ in several branches. With the globalization and digitalization of society, we also observe a growing number of employees working for a foreign company but living in their homeplace. The person is employed but is not part of the domestic employment; rather, he/she is part of employment abroad and may/may not commute regularly. The location of work is probably growing in importance as an economic characteristic for analyzing the labour market, communication patterns etc. The Task Force is eager to hear participants’ views: *do ‘location of place of work’ and ‘type of place of work’ capture adequately the modern forms of ‘place of work’, and are there other issues that would be of interest to study?*

F. Non-core topics

18. The non-core topics listed in the 2020 CES Recommendations are:

- (a) Institutional sector;
- (b) Type of place of work (discussed in section E);
- (c) Number of persons working in the local unit of the establishment;
- (d) Hours usually worked;
- (e) Duration of job search;
- (f) Persons in own-use production of goods;
- (g) Main source of livelihood;
- (h) Household income;
- (i) Socio-economic group.

19. The Task force is interested to know whether countries gather information on other economic characteristics via their census? *Do you find other topics missing from the list (e.g. informal employment)?*

III. Summary

20. In this first report, the Task Force on Economic Characteristics has listed several questions to be discussed more in-depth. These are:

- (a) Labour force status: *Are there other population groups for which information on economic activity status is missing (apart from possible age limits)?*

(b) Employment status: It is of interest to test the boundaries between employed and unemployed and if it is possible to identify different groups in practice. Any comment on this issue would be welcomed by the Task Force.

(c) Occupation/'type of work': *Do you find the reference to ISCO relevant for national purposes or do you use a national standard classification? If you use a national standard, how important do you think it is to map to ISCO for international comparability reasons?*

(d) Location of place of work and type of place of work: *do 'location of place of work' and 'type of place of work' capture adequately the modern forms of 'place of work', and are there other issues that would be of interest to study?*

(e) Non-core topics: Are there specific topics apart from the ones listed in paragraph 18 that should be included as non-core topics for economic characteristics in the CES Recommendations?
