



Economic Commission for Europe**Conference of European Statisticians****Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses****Twenty-sixth Meeting**

Geneva, 2–4 October 2024

Item 2 (e) of the provisional agenda

**Revising the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations
for Population and Housing Censuses for the 2030 round:****Population concepts and related definitions****Developing the Recommendations on Population Concepts
and Related Definitions****Note by the Conference of European Statisticians Task Force
on Population Concepts and Related Definitions*,*****Summary*

This document includes the draft chapter on Population Bases for the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Recommendations for the 2030 round of population and housing censuses, and a summary of the changes introduced in comparison to the Recommendations for the previous, 2020 round. The main purpose of the document is to elicit comments and suggestions from national census experts on the proposed text, to ensure that it reflects the needs and priorities of national statistical offices and the latest developments in the topic area.

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** This document was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



I. Introduction

1. Every ten years the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) issues Recommendations to guide countries in conducting their population and housing censuses. The Recommendations are developed by expert task forces overseen by the CES Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses. The task force on population concepts and related definitions has the remit to review the chapter on Population Bases in the 2020 Recommendations, with a particular focus on the relevance and feasibility of the usual residence definition considering the current tendency in many CES countries towards register-based censuses.
2. Section II of this document summarizes the changes introduced in the Population Bases chapter, in comparison with the Recommendations for the previous, 2020 round.
3. Section III presents the draft chapter on Population Bases for the CES Recommendations for the 2030 round of population and housing censuses.
4. The main purpose of the document is to elicit comments and suggestions from national census experts on the proposed draft text, to ensure that it reflects the needs and priorities of national statistical offices.

II. Summary of changes from the 2020 Recommendations

5. The task force reviewed the text of the Population Bases chapter from the 2020 Recommendations (CESR2020) in detail, and made a number of linguistic changes which, while perhaps appearing minor, add clarity to the expression. For example, the term 'administrative registers' used in the definition of enumeration in CESR2020 is replaced by 'administrative sources or population registers' in this proposed text. Several references to 'qualifying adjectives' for delimiting a population base in CESR2020 are replaced by 'qualifying characteristics', a more readily understandable term, which also better reflects the fact that such characteristics may not be adjectives in all languages. Other minor linguistic changes bring the text in line with United Nations guidance on gender-sensitive language, and adjustments are made to use more appropriate terminology for older persons and persons living in communal establishments.
6. More substantial changes to the content of the chapter include:
 - (a) Addition of a reference to supplementary population bases, such as daytime or workplace, along with a link to further information;
 - (b) Removal of two diagrams illustrating the relationships between different population concepts and an application of the ideas contained therein. The task force considered that the existing diagrams did not add explanatory value and could only be understood by reading the lengthy footnote;
 - (c) Emphasis added to the distinction between 'census reference time' (the moment to which census data refer) and 'census day/period' (the time during which the census is carried out), noting the common risk that these are confused and the necessity of guarding against this confusion in both internal and external communication;
 - (d) Addition of a discussion of 'signs of life' methodology to determine actual presence in a registered place of residence, in countries using a register-based approach for their census. References to more detailed sources of guidance are also added;
 - (e) Addition of a clear instruction to avoid including in the usually-resident count, those who are living abroad for a year or more; noting that while some countries wish to count such absent persons during the conduct of their census, it is essential to clarify to both respondents and enumerators that they are to be enumerated separately so as to be able to distinguish them in the data and exclude them from the count of usual residents;
 - (f) More detail added to the discussion of enumerating temporarily absent persons, including a suggestion of follow-up visits to apparently-occupied dwellings in which no contact was made on a first visit;

(g) Recognition of the fact that some countries have national legislation either proscribing or obliging adjustment of population estimates following post-enumeration assessments of under- or overcoverage.

7. One section of the chapter which generated significant discussion among members of the task force was the section describing particular ‘edge cases’ of groups where uncertainty may arise about their inclusion in or exclusion from the usual resident count. Changes in this section include the following:

(a) Irregular and undocumented migrants are now listed separately from asylum seekers. The clarification that the intention is not to distinguish these groups separately, but to ensure that they are enumerated and included in the population count, has been included as a sentence referring to both groups;

(b) For children aged one year or less, the text has been altered to refer to the residency status of the infant themselves rather than that of their family, albeit noting that this is determined by the intention of the household members with whom they live (which may or may not be their family);

(c) In both the list of inclusions and the list of exclusions, the items referring to stays of exactly one year, or one day less than a year, have been removed, as it is considered that these items are already obvious from the definition itself, and do not need to be restated;

(d) Similarly, a paragraph describing the correct treatment of short-term and long-term international migrants has been deleted, as it was considered to be self-explanatory from the definition itself and did not need to be further spelled out.

8. The table summarizing treatment of workers and students living away from home for 12 months or more was studied carefully and reviewed by the task force. The term ‘family home’ has been replaced by ‘principal home’ (for which a definition has also been added), in recognition of the fact that while a return to a family home might be the most common arrangement, it is by no mean the only one. Some students, for example, may move between term-time and out-of-term homes but live alone, or with housemates, in both homes. The title of the table is adjusted to make clear that it is offering guidelines for *determining* the usual residence status of those concerned.

III. Draft text for the chapter on Population Bases for the Recommendations for the 2030 round of population and housing censuses

A. Introduction

1. General definitions

9. The recommendations and conventions set out in this chapter have been prepared with a view to ensuring that the census allocates each person to one, and only one, place of usual residence. This is important in an international context in order to avoid persons either being counted in the populations of more than one country or not being counted at all. The same principle applies in a national context. The following paragraphs provide definitions that should be applied in the context of census operations.

10. *‘Enumeration’ means the act of collecting data about a person (or household), irrespective of whether this occurs with the direct participation of that person (or household) through a field operation, or indirectly using data that is already recorded in administrative sources or population registers.*

11. *‘Population’ is any set of persons attributed to a geographic entity who meet defined criteria at a specified reference time; these criteria should help to identify the qualifying characteristics that clarify which particular population is being referred to (such as the usually resident population or the working population).*

12. To meet national requirements, a country may have an interest in various ‘populations’. To facilitate clarity in international comparisons, it is recommended that the descriptions of these populations (in terms of qualifying characteristics, and their associated adjectives and labels) make use of terminology and meanings that are as close as possible to the meanings used in the international context.

13. A country may wish to enumerate all persons present in their territory and/or supposedly belonging to the population of interest. The ‘*population to be enumerated*’ is the set of persons whom the country decides should be covered by the census, regardless of their subsequent exclusion from any specific population count, as defined below. The ‘*enumerated population base*’ is composed of those persons who have *actually been enumerated*. This may or may not equate to the target population (the population to be enumerated); that is, the coverage of the census may represent either an under-count or an over-count.

14. *The ‘population base’ is the population used for the compilation of statistical aggregates in a particular tabulation. This may be a sub-set, or the whole, of the ‘population to be enumerated’. A country may adopt more than one population base (for different statistical purposes), but one of these should always be the population base used for international comparison purposes (most often the ‘usually resident’ population).*

15. For particular statistical needs, countries may wish to adopt an additional or supplementary¹ population base – such as the daytime or workplace population. This should be seen as an addition to the population bases used for international comparison purposes, and not an alternative.

16. A ‘population count’ is the aggregate obtained by the simple addition of individual records from the enumerated population base. A ‘population estimate’ is the aggregate obtained as the outcome of a statistical method of estimation. Therefore, both the population count and the population estimate refer to a specific population base and are empirical measures.

17. *The ‘census reference time’ is the time to which any information collected in a census refers. It can be either a precise moment of a day, usually midnight (‘census reference moment’), or a period of time (‘census reference period’), or a day selected as indicative of a period (‘census reference average day’). Some topics will refer to a particular moment (providing stock data), others to a period (flow data), and usually the census reference period includes the census reference time. The ‘census day/period’ is the day/period in which a census is carried out. There is a risk that this will be confused with the census reference time, and countries should guard against this in the internal and external documentation of the census.*

2. Recommended population base

18. *The ‘place of usual residence’ is the geographic place where the enumerated person usually spends their daily rest, assessed over a defined period including the census reference time.*

19. The population base to be used for international comparison purposes is the ‘usually resident population’. The ‘*usually resident population*’ of a country is composed of those persons who have their place of usual residence in the country at the census reference time and have lived, or intend to live, there for a continuous period of at least 12 months. A ‘continuous period’ means that absences (from the country of usual residence) whose durations are shorter than 12 months do not affect the country of usual residence. The same criteria apply for any relevant territorial division (being the place of usual residence) within the country.

¹ See: In-depth review of use cases for supplementary population bases.
Conference of European Statisticians Seventy-second plenary session, June 2024
https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/ECE_CES_2024_04_E.pdf

20. If a country cannot adopt the usually resident population as its population base (or as one of its population bases), it should put all possible efforts into producing estimates that are as close as possible to the usually resident population using its own population base(s).

21. *As part of the estimation process in register-based censuses, whenever reference is made to actual geographic places for the usually resident population base, it could be replaced by the registered place of residence. In practice, an increasing number of register-based countries apply additional estimation methods often denoted as 'signs of life'. These methods typically link various administrative or other auxiliary data sources to obtain an indication of actual presence of persons in the place where they are registered. Several relevant international guidelines mention signs-of-life methods as a good practice.²*

22. On the basis of the definition of the place of usual residence, persons usually resident in the place of enumeration but absent, or expected to be absent, at the census reference time for less than one year should be considered as 'temporarily absent persons' and thus included in the total population.

23. The group of '*absent persons living abroad*' (former members of a household who now live or are expected to live in another country) for one year or more can be particularly important in countries experiencing high levels of emigration. Some countries try to estimate emigration in the census by collecting data on these persons, for instance using an emigration module in the questionnaire. Previous experiences³ have shown that the census is unlikely to provide an accurate count of the total number of emigrants residing abroad. However, such an approach may provide some information on sub-sets of emigrants, such as those who emigrated recently and/or those who have close family ties in the country.

24. If data on absent persons living abroad for one year or more are to be collected through the census, their information (in terms of numbers and characteristics) should be distinguished clearly from the information collected for the usually resident population. Every effort should be made to avoid these absent persons living abroad from being included in the usually resident population. This may include, for example, listing absent persons living abroad on a separate section of any census enumeration form, with clear instructions to both respondents and enumerators.

25. A total usually resident population count for each territorial division would normally be compiled by adding persons who are usually resident and present to those who are usually resident but temporarily absent. However, it is not always possible to collect information about persons absent from their place of usual residence, particularly if a whole household is temporarily absent at the census reference time. Provision must therefore be made to collect information about such persons at the place where they are found at the census reference time, and if necessary 'transfer' them to their place or territorial division of usual residence, using the information recorded about their place of residence. This may be done, for example, by including in the census enumeration all persons and households present on the census day, and assigning them to their correct place of usual residence using the information collected. Alternatively, or in parallel, a follow-up visit by enumerators to apparently occupied dwellings where there was previously no contact with residents may allow information to be collected on persons and households who are usually resident at that census reference time but were temporarily absent on census day. Care must be taken in such processes to avoid double enumeration whereby a person or household is incorrectly recorded as usually resident at more than one address.

26. Each country should compile a figure for the total usually resident population, and the detailed tabulations should in general be provided on this basis. In those countries where the total population figure has been adjusted for under- or over-enumeration (usually measured by use of a post-enumeration survey or by comparison with other sources), both the

² See e.g. Guidelines on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses (UNECE, 2018); Guidelines for Assessing the Quality of Administrative Sources for Use in Censuses (UNECE, 2021).

³ See: Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses UN Statistical Commission, Forty-eighth session, March 2017 <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/48th-session/documents/BG-4a-Migration-Handbook-E.pdf>

enumerated figure (the population count) and the adjusted population figure (the population estimate) should be shown and described. However, national legislation may prevent this or, conversely, make it an obligation. The detailed tabulations may, however, be based only on the population that was actually enumerated.

27. The composition of the usually resident population should be described in detail in the census report(s). As far as is possible given the census data sources and methodologies adopted by a country, the total usually resident population should include all persons who have their usual residence in the country or relevant territorial division, regardless of their legal status.

3. Particular cases

28. There are various population groups for which some uncertainty may arise about their inclusion in the usually resident population of a country. The following persons should be *included*:

(a) Persons present at the census reference time to whom the concept of usual residence does not apply (such as nomads, vagrants, etc.), irrespective of whether or not they meet the 12-month criterion;

(b) Persons who regularly live in more than one country during a year, if they are present at the census reference time;

(c) National military, naval and diplomatic personnel and their families, located outside the country, irrespective of their duration of stay abroad;

(d) Foreign persons working within the country for international businesses or organizations (but not including foreign diplomats or military forces) and their families, provided that they meet the criteria for the usual residence in the country;

(e) Seafarers and people working on fishing boats usually resident in the country but at sea at the census reference time (including those who have no place of residence other than their quarters aboard ship);

(f) Irregular or undocumented migrants, who are foreigners and who are staying in a country without the appropriate documentation, provided that they meet the criteria for the usual residence in the country;

(g) Asylum seekers and persons who have applied for, or been granted, refugee status or similar types of international protections, regardless of the type of living quarters in which they are residing, provided that they meet the criteria for usual residence in the country;

(h) Children born in the twelve months before the census reference time and who, at the census reference time, are expected to be resident in the country for 12 months or more based on the intention of the household members with whom they live.

For (f) and (g) above, the intention is not to distinguish these persons separately, but rather to ensure that they are not missed from the enumeration.

29. The following persons should instead be *excluded* from the usually resident population of a country:

(a) Persons who regularly live in more than one country during a year, if the reporting country is NOT the one where they live most of the time, irrespective of whether or not they are present in the reporting country at the census reference time; and

(b) Foreign military, naval and diplomatic personnel and their families, located in the country, regardless of their duration of stay.

30. For persons who, at the census reference time, have spent, or are likely to spend, twelve months or more living in a communal establishment or institution, the institution should be taken as the place of usual residence. Examples of persons living in institutions include patients in hospices or long-stay hospitals, persons in nursing homes or convalescent homes, prisoners and those in juvenile detention centres.

31. It may be particularly problematic to determine the country of usual residence or the place of usual residence within the country for persons who work/study away from home.

32. The principal home may be defined as an address to which a person retains an established link, even if this is not their current place of usual residence as defined in paragraph 18. This is particularly relevant in the case of persons who study or work away from home. The established link with the principal home may be on the basis of one or more factors, such as past and intended future usual residence at that address, or the ongoing usual residence at that address of members of the person's family nucleus.

33. The table summarizes the recommended guidelines of classification for students and workers who live away from the principal home for 12 months or more. For the sake of conformity with the global Principles and Recommendations on population and housing censuses issued by UNSD,⁴ students in tertiary education should be allocated to their term-time address, when studying within the country. When studying abroad they should not be included in the population of the country of their principal home, since their place of usual residence should be the term-time address in the country in which they study, even if they are regularly returning to the principal home. However, it is acknowledged that in some countries there may be considerations (such as higher coverage during field enumeration, or a particularly large number of emigrating students) that would justify the allocation of these students to their principal home.

34. There are other population groups for which some uncertainty may arise in defining their place of usual residence within the country. The recommended conventional treatment of these cases is as follows:

(a) For persons without a usual residence, such as homeless or roofless persons, nomads, itinerant migrants and workers, the place of usual residence should be taken to be the place of enumeration;

(b) When a person regularly lives in more than one residence within the country during the year, the place of usual residence should be the place where the person spends most of their time, or their registered place of residence, irrespective of whether or not the person is present in that place at the census reference time;

(c) A child who alternates between two households within the country (for instance after their parents have separated or divorced) should consider the household where they spend the majority of the time, or their registered place of residence, as their place of usual residence. Where an equal amount of time is spent with both parents, the place of usual residence should be the same of that of the parent/household with whom the child is living at the census reference time.

35. For the national military, naval and diplomatic service personnel and their families located outside the country the following classification rules should be applied:

(a) If they are residing abroad for less than 12 months and they are intending to return to the place of departure, they should be allocated within the country in accordance with the rules for usual residence. In particular, they could be allocated to (by decreasing order of priority):

(i) The principal home address within the country, if any; or

(ii) The duty station within the country to which they were attached before leaving;

(b) If they are residing abroad for at least 12 months or if they are not intending to return to the place of departure (although returning to the country within a 12-month period), they should be attributed to a 'virtual place' (extra-region) of the country of departure.

⁴ DRAFTING NOTE: To be updated when new UNSD publication available, and coherence checked – Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses.

Table
Guidelines for determining usual residence status of workers and students living away from the principal home or 12 months or more

<i>Category</i>	<i>Place of work/study</i>	<i>Regular* return to principal home</i>	<i>Inclusion in the usually resident population of the country</i>	<i>Place of usual residence within the country</i>
Workers	In the country	Yes	Yes	Principal home
		No	Yes	Own address
	Abroad	Yes	Yes	Principal home
		No	No	None
Children in a family nucleus** in education below tertiary level***	In the country	Yes	Yes	Principal home
		No	Yes	Principal home
	Abroad	Yes	Yes	Principal home
		No	Yes	Principal home
Adults in a family nucleus** in education below tertiary level***	In the country	Yes	Yes	Principal home
		No	Yes	Term-time address [^]
	Abroad	Yes	Yes	Principal home
		No	No	None
Persons not in a family nucleus** in education below tertiary level***	In the country	Not applicable	According to usual rules	According to usual rules
	Abroad	Not applicable	According to usual rules	According to usual rules
Students in tertiary education ****	In the country	Yes	Yes	Term-time address [^]
		No	Yes	Term-time address [^]
	Abroad	Yes	No	None
		No	No	None
Student workers	Persons who study and work at the same time will be allocated to the pertinent country/geographic division according to the rules for students or workers depending on which activity – work or study – is considered the main activity.			

Comments:

* ‘Regular’ is taken to mean more than twice each month (such as twice a week, weekly, etc.).

** See paragraph [Error! Reference source not found.] for definition of family nucleus.

*** ISCED 2011 levels 0–4.

**** ISCED 2011 levels 5–8.

[^] Term-time address is the address at which a schoolchild or student lives while attending their studies. This may or may not be the same as their principal address.

IV. Conclusion

36. The draft recommendations on population bases for the 2030 round of population and housing censuses are presented for comments and discussion.
