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**Revising the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations  
for Population and Housing Censuses for the 2030 round:****Economic characteristics****Developing the Recommendations on Economic  
Characteristics: part 1****Note by the Conference of European Statisticians Task Force  
on Economic Characteristics\*\*\****Summary*

This document includes the first three sections of the draft chapter on Economic Characteristics 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 the entire chapter in comparison to the Recommendations for the previous, 2020 round. The proposed text for the remaining three sections of the chapter is presented in document ECE/CES/GE.41/2024/6. The two documents are intended to be read in conjunction with one-another. The main purpose of the two documents 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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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.

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## 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.
2. Section II of this document summarizes the changes introduced in the chapter on economic characteristics, in comparison with the Recommendations for the previous, 2020 round. Section III gives a high-level overview of the draft chapter.
3. Section IV presents the first three sections of the draft chapter on economic characteristics for the CES Recommendations for the 2030 round of population and housing censuses. These sections cover an introduction to the chapter, a conceptual framework for work statistics, and labour force status. The subsequent three sections of the draft chapter are presented in document ECE/CES/GE.41/2024/6, covering characteristics of jobs and/or establishments, participation in own-use production of goods, and informal employment. The two documents are intended to be read in conjunction with one-another.
4. The main purpose of the two documents 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.
5. The chapter is updated and aligned with the 2030 United Nations Statistics Department Principles and Recommendations (2030 UNSD P&R), and all definitions are identical. The recommendations are also aligned with the most recent Resolutions from the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) and the revised System of National Accounts (SNA). The changes from the 2020 CESR are minor. However, the chapter is restructured in line with the 2030 UNSD P&R. Informal employment is introduced based on the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) Resolution from 2023 concerning statistics on informal employment, while four topics are no longer covered, i.e. “number of persons working in the local unit of the establishment”, “duration of job search”, “main source of livelihood” and “socio-economic group”. The exclusion of these non-core topics is based on the results from the Comprehensive Survey 2023 indicating that these variables were not relevant for the census.
6. The chapter on economic characteristics covers the productive activities of persons as e.g. aspects of labour market participation, labour market characteristics, occupation, etc. Combined with other information in the census this enables formulation and planning of a range of economic and social policy.
7. The chapter has been updated based on a redrafting of the 2020 Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations (CESR). All definitions in the chapter are aligned with the 2030 United Nation Statistics Division Principles and Recommendations (2030 UNSD P&R). The structure of the chapter is changed compared to the 2020 CESR, and reflects the structure of the relevant chapter of the 2030 UNSD P&R.
8. The recommendations in the chapter are also aligned with the most recent Resolutions from the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) and the revised System of National Accounts (SNA). Countries are recommended to always use the most updated versions of international standards.
9. From the Comprehensive Survey 2023, the Task Force noted that about one third of the countries – all from Europe – collected the necessary information on economic characteristics from registers or administrative records, about half of the countries conducted a full enumeration, in some of the countries complemented by administrative data, while the rest of countries collected the data mainly from sample surveys. For several countries there seems to be a move to a census based on administrative records. This may challenge some of the definitions and recommendations, and, thus, for international comparability, it is desirable that countries provide detailed information on the definitions and methodology used.

## II. Summary of changes from the 2020 Recommendations

10. The changes from the 2020 CESR are minor. However, as mentioned in the Introduction, the chapter is restructured in line with the 2030 UNSD P&R. Compared to the 2020 Recommendations the text is simplified. One new topic is introduced, *Informal employment*, based on the Resolution from the 21<sup>st</sup> ICLS in October 20023 concerning statistics on informal employment. In addition, four non-core topics are excluded, i.e. (i) “Number of persons working in the local unit of the establishment”, (ii) “Duration of job search”, (iii) “Main source of livelihood”, and (iv) “Socio-economic group”. The exclusion of these non-core topics is based on the comments from the Comprehensive Survey 2023 indicating that no countries collected data on these variables. Table 1 gives a summary of the changes for each sub-section of the chapter.

Table 1  
**Areas of substantial change**

| <i>Topics (content of the chapter)</i>                      | <i>Changes from 2020 Recommendations</i>   |
|---|--|
| Introduction  | Minor editorial changes  |
| Conceptual framework for work statistics                    | The discussion of working time within the conceptual framework is new. Except this, the text is covering the “Reference concepts for work statistics” in the 2020 CESR.  |
| Work  | Updated text to align with the revised System of National Accounts (SNA). The section on form of work is extended with persons in unpaid trainee work.   |
| Working time  | Based on the restructuring of the chapter in line with the 2030 UNSD P&R and to make a clearer link between work and working time, this aspect is discussed directly after “work”. However, the introductory discussion is linked to the definitions that come later in the chapter.   |
| Population coverage and age limits                          | Minor editorial changes in the text.   |
| Labour force status (core topic)                            | Covering the same issues as the “Labour force status” in 2020 CESR. The definition is simplified.  |
| Employed persons  | Persons who work to produce goods mainly/exclusively for own final use is no longer included in the concept of employment. Other changes in this section are editorial, with the aim to simplify and shorten.  |
| Unemployed persons  | No changes in definition, but editorial changes, e.g. to the paragraph discussing the treatment of specific groups. The text is extended with two paragraphs underlining the importance of separate identification of unemployment and labour underutilization as well as the usefulness of distinguishing first-time jobseeker. |
| Persons outside the labour force                            | The definition is elaborated. Otherwise, only minor editorial changes to the text.   |
| Characteristics of jobs and/or establishments (core topics) | Text and definition of jobs are aligned with the 2030 UNSD P&R, however shortened a bit.   |
| Status in employment (core topic)                           | The definition is elaborated. The paragraphs are updated with the most recent resolution from the ICLS. Most important is the inclusion of employment categories based on authority and the elaboration of these categories.   |
| Occupation (core topic)                                     | The definition and text are edited and simplified.   |

| <i>Topics (content of the chapter)</i>  | <i>Changes from 2020 Recommendations</i>   |
|---|--|
| Industry (core topic)   | The definition is elaborated. The text is simplified compared to the 2020 CESR.  |
| Place of work   | The definition is identical to the first paragraph under “Place of work” in 2020 CESR. In the 2020 CESR, a definition of “type of place of work” was included. This is now deleted (in accordance with the 2030 UNSD P&R)). Otherwise, there are few changes from the 2020 CESR text on “Place of work”, and “Type of place of work”.                                  |
| Institutional sector of employment  | Minor changes from the 2020 CESR.  |
| Working time  | Consists of two definitions, hours actually worked (new) and hours usually worked. These are aligned with the 2030 UNSD P&R. If countries find it relevant to include working time, reference is given to the UNSD P&R for details.  |
| Income  | Only minor changes from the 2020 CESR.   |
| Participation in own-use production of goods (core topic)                             | Has been changed from non-core to core topic. However, the text is mainly in line with the text in the 2020 CESR. It should be noted that persons (only) engaged in production for own final use is no longer part of employment.  |
| Informal employment   | Definitions of informal employment adopted at the 21 <sup>st</sup> ICLS in October 2023 is included in line with the recommendations in 2030 UNSD P&R. Since this is a none-core topic, countries that deem it relevant to include in their census are referred to the 2030 UNSD P&R for further details.  |
| Topics (non-core) in the 2020 CESR which are not included in the 2030 recommendations | Based on the alignment with the 2030 UNSD P&R and the results from the survey showing that some variables were not relevant for their census, the following topics are no longer covered:<br>Number of persons working in the local unit of the establishment<br>Duration of job search<br>Main source of livelihood<br>Socio-economic group (derived non-core topics) |

### III. Overview of the chapter

11. The structure of the chapter:
  1. Introduction
  2. Conceptual framework for work statistics
    - a. Work
    - b. Working time
    - c. Population coverage and age limits
  3. Labour force status (core topic)
    - a. Employed persons
    - b. Unemployed persons
    - c. Persons outside the labour force
  4. Characteristics of jobs and/or establishments

- a. Status in employment (core topic)
  - b. Occupation (core topic)
  - c. Industry (core topic)
  - d. Place of work
  - e. Institutional sector of employment
  - f. Working time
  - g. Income
- 5. Participation in own-use production of goods (core topic)
  - 6. Informal employment

## A. Core and non-core topics

12. The core- and non-core topics are listed in table 2.

Table 2

### Economic characteristics – Core and non-core topics

| <i>Core topics</i>  | <i>Non-core topics</i>  |
|---|---|
| Labour force status   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Employed persons</li> <li>b. Unemployed persons</li> <li>c. Persons outside the labour force</li> </ul> |   |
| Characteristics of jobs and/or establishments   | Characteristics of jobs and/or establishments   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Status in employment</li> <li>b. Occupation</li> <li>c. Industry</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Place of work</li> <li>e. Institutional sector of employment</li> <li>f. Working time</li> <li>g. Income</li> </ul> |
| Participation in own-use production of goods (previously included within the concept of employment)   | Informal employment (new)   |

## B. Key recommendations

13. Recommendations related to core topics are:

(a) *Employed persons*: Information on two categories of persons (over a certain age limit) in employment, should be collected, i.e. employed persons at work and employed persons “not at work” due to working-time arrangements. Use of the one-hour criterion is recommended and will serve to ensure coverage of all types of job. It should be noted that persons who work to produce goods mainly/exclusively for own final use is no longer included in the concept of employment;

(b) *Unemployed persons*: Identifying an unemployed person should satisfy the three criteria i) “not in employment” assessed to a short reference period, ii) “seeking employment” during a specified recent reference time, and iii) “currently available” to start a job in the present;

(c) *Persons outside the labour force*: Persons outside the labour force may be classified by the degree of labour market attachment, i.e. (a) “unavailable jobseekers, (b) available potential jobseekers, (c) willing non-jobseekers, and (d) others, i.e. neither seeking employment nor currently available and do not want employment. Together with

unemployment, the *potential labour force* computed as the sum of (a) plus (b) is a key measure of labour underutilization. Separate identification of underutilized persons should support the assessment of the different types of underutilizations affecting labour markets across setting and be more targeted for policymaking;

(d) *Status in employment*: A recommended approach to minimize burden and costs while still obtaining key statistics is to limit the identification of ISCE-18 (*International Classification of Status in Employment*) to selected aggregated categories based on authority. This includes identifying employers, independent workers without employees, and contributing family workers. Countries that rely on the direct use of administrative records for the classification of persons according to *status in employment*, may find that the group *contributing family workers* and *dependent contractors* cannot be separately identified. For these countries employment categories based on risk (ISCE-18-R) is recommended, identifying at least the two main categories; workers in employment for profit and workers in employment for pay;

(e) *Occupation*: For international comparison, it is recommended that countries make it possible to prepare tabulation in accordance with the latest revision of the *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO) or a related national classification;

(f) *Industry*: Also, for purposes of international comparisons, it is recommended that countries compile information on industry according to the latest revision of the *International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities* (ISIC) or related classifications, which for example for EU-countries would be the most recent *Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community* (NACE);

(g) *Participation in own-use production of goods (new core topic)*: Information on any activity to produce goods for own final use (such as foodstuffs from agriculture, fishing, gathering water and foodstuff etc), whether this is the main or secondary activity of a person, should be collected. This was previously included in the concept of employment. To ensure complete coverage of this topic, the census questions should be applied to all persons above a specified age, irrespective of their labour force status. Countries relying administrative records as the main source in their censuses, will normally lack information on unpaid activities, and will need to survey this specifically (e.g. in the labour force survey).

14. Other general recommendations are:

(a) Countries are recommended to use the most recent and updated versions of international standards in their census;

(b) Since sources used in the census will differ between countries, and international comparability is promoted, it is recommended that countries provide detailed information on definitions and methodology used.

15. In deciding which topics relating to the economic characteristics of the population to include in the population census, countries will need to assess the existence of other sources of the statistics and their complementary uses. The aim should be to cover the core topics needed as benchmark information, for the preparation of sample frames, and to provide essential statistics for small areas and small population groups, and for small occupation and industry groups, as relevant in the national context.

## **IV. Draft text for the chapter on economic characteristics for the Recommendations for the 2030 round of population and housing censuses<sup>1,2</sup>**

### **A. Introduction**

16. Statistics on the economic characteristics of persons are needed from population censuses for many reasons. Information on the productive activities of persons is vital to establish a comprehensive picture of the economic structure of a country, and the work patterns, labour market participation, and extent of labour underutilization of its population. This information, when combined with other personal, household and dwelling characteristics collected in the census, enable assessments of the socio-economic situation of persons and households, which are essential to inform the formulation and planning of a wide range of economic and social policies and programmes related to employment creation, poverty reduction, work-life balance, vocational education and training, provision of social security and other social benefits, gender equality and social inclusion.

17. Such statistics can be obtained from a traditional census or other sources such as household-based surveys, business surveys or administrative records. These other sources can have certain limitations. Household surveys, especially labour force surveys, are particularly well suited for generating a broad range of statistics on the economic characteristics of the population at aggregate levels, such as national and broad regional groupings. Data obtained from labour force surveys, however, are subject to sampling error and, therefore, rarely provide reliable estimates for small areas, small population groups, or detailed groups of industries and occupations. In contrast population censuses can provide certain core statistics at the lowest levels of aggregation for such small population groups and for detailed occupation and industry groups. Business surveys and administrative records e.g. may have good quality of occupational and industry coding. However, they may not have the same comprehensiveness in population activity coverage, generally excluding productive activities that are informal or unpaid.

18. As a growing number of countries seem to be moving towards a census where economic characteristics are based on administrative records, it is recommended that countries provide accurate and detailed information on the definitions and methodology they have used for on each variable.

19. The population census provides benchmark information to which statistics from other sources can be related. Population censuses likewise provide the sample frames for most household-based surveys, including labour force surveys.

20. In deciding which topics relating to the economic characteristics of the population to include in the population census, countries will need to assess the existence of other sources of the statistics and their complementary uses. The aim should be to cover the core topics needed as benchmark information, for the preparation of sample frames, and to provide essential statistics for small areas and small population groups, and for small occupation and industry groups, as relevant in the national context. In some countries, they are moving to an administrative census or based on administrative data in connection with economic and social variables. In this case, it is desirable that countries provide accurate and detailed information on the definitions and methodology they used for census purposes on each variable.

21. International resolutions and guidelines to produce statistics relating to the economic characteristics of the population are adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) and endorsed by the Governing Body of the International Labour

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<sup>1</sup> Note that cross-references internal to this chapter are given as references to the corresponding paragraph according to the numbering used in the present paper. It is understood that the cross-referenced paragraph numbers will differ in the final, published version of the complete Recommendations.

<sup>2</sup> First three parts only. The following three parts are contained in document ECE/CES/GE.41/2024/6.

Organization (ILO).<sup>3</sup> Recommendations on topics amenable for inclusion in population censuses are discussed in general in Box 1.

## B. Conceptual framework for work statistics

### 1. Work

*Measurement of the economic characteristics of the population is based on the conceptual framework for work statistics (see box 1). In this framework, work is defined for reference purposes as “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”.*

*Box 1. New international recommendations concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization*

*In October 2013, the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted the Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization.<sup>4</sup> This Resolution replaced the previous international recommendations relating to the measurement of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment dating from 1982 (13th ICLS) and related guidelines.*

*These new standards adopted at the 19th ICLS introduced a number of important revisions, among which are: a conceptual framework for work statistics consistent with the System of National Accounts; guidelines for separately measuring different forms of work, including a more targeted definition of employment as “work for pay or profit”, and for expanding the range of measures of labour underutilization beyond the traditional unemployment. New terminology was also introduced, as relevant, and terms considered to be out-of-date, particularly the “economically active/inactive population” were replaced with “labour force/outside the labour force”.*

*Participation in activities as own-use production work, unpaid trainee work and volunteer work are not considered employment in the 19th ICLS and should be measured through the defined forms of work<sup>5</sup>.*

*Countries are encouraged to develop their statistical system to cover work statistics, including statistics on the labour force, based on their specific national needs and resources. In the case of the measures affected by the 19th ICLS Resolution it is of utmost importance that the institutions and persons responsible for planning and managing the production of statistics on the economic characteristics of the population develop a strategic and coordinated approach that takes into account all official sources of the statistics, including the population census, labour force survey and other household-based surveys and administrative records. Data users will need to be kept well informed of the process, including by widely disseminating the relevant metadata and by maintaining parallel series for a specified period following their implementation.*

22. The integrated framework of the System of National Accounts<sup>6</sup> confines the concept of labour input to the input to the production activities within the SNA production boundary, although in the extended accounts on unpaid household service work a broader concept of

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.ilo.org/stat>. The complete labour statistics standards are available at: <http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/standards-and-guidelines/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> See *Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization*, adopted by the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, October 2013), available at: [http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/19/WCMS\\_230304/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/19/WCMS_230304/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>5</sup> The Resolution concerning statistics of work relationships, adopted at the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, October 2018), Paragraph 59.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *System of National Accounts 2025* (New York, forthcoming), chapter 16.



production is applied. On the other hand, the various forms of work identified in the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization, as presented in figure 1, can be aligned to either the general production boundary, when all forms of work are included, or the SNA production boundary, when direct volunteer work providing services and the production of services by households for own final use are excluded. Exceptions are owner-occupied housing services and the production of domestic and personal services by employing paid domestic staff. In this respect, it is worth noting that activities may move in and out the SNA production boundary. For example, due to digitalisation, one can observe changes from households buying services from travel agencies to arranging travel themselves, or using the services provided by supermarkets to using self-service checkouts. On the other hand, one can observe a trend of purchasing services which were traditionally produced by households themselves, e.g., using the services of kindergartens instead of taking care of children at home. Whatever the case, there is a clear link between what is defined as production in the SNA and the notion of labour.

23. The conceptual framework for work statistics identifies five mutually exclusive forms of work (type of productive activity) for separate measurement, see figure 1. These forms of work are distinguished on the basis of the intended destination of the production for own final use; or for the use of others, i.e. other economic units, and the nature of the transaction i.e. monetary or non-monetary transactions, and transfers, as follows:

- (a) Own-use production work, comprising production of goods and services for own final use;
- (b) Employment work, comprising work performed for others for pay or profit;
- (c) Unpaid trainee work, comprising work performed for others without pay to acquire workplace experience or skills;
- (d) Volunteer work, comprising non-compulsory work performed for others without pay;
- (e) Other work activities, including activities as unpaid community service and work by prisoners, when ordered by a court or similar authority, and unpaid military or alternative civilian service, which may be treated as a distinct form of work for measurement (such as compulsory work performed without pay for others).

Figure 1

**Forms of work and the System of National Accounts**

| <i>Intended destination of production</i> | <i>for own final use</i>                                     |          | <i>for use by others</i>                   |                            |                              |                                |                         |
|---|--|----------|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
|   | <b>Own-use production work</b>                               |          | <b>Employment (work for pay or profit)</b> | <b>Unpaid trainee work</b> | <b>Other work activities</b> | <b>Volunteer work</b>          |                         |
| <i>Forms of work</i>                      | of services  | of goods |  |                            |                              | in market and non-market units | in households producing |
|   |  |          |  |                            | goods                        | services                       |                         |
| <i>Relation to SNA</i>                    | <i>Activities within the SNA production boundary</i>         |          |  |                            |                              |                                |                         |
|   | <i>Activities inside the SNA General production boundary</i> |          |  |                            |                              |                                |                         |

24. During a given reference period, persons may engage in one or more forms of work in parallel or consecutively, that is, persons may be employed, volunteering, doing unpaid trainee work or producing for own final use, in any combination.

25. To meet different objectives, countries may measure the economic characteristics of the population in the census with respect to their participation in one or in several forms of work. In particular, this may include measurement of:

(a) Persons in employment is essential as part of the preparation of labour force statistics that include unemployment and other measures of labour underutilization. It is needed to assess the labour market participation of the population, and to classify the population according to their labour force status in a short reference period (see paragraphs 24–26, 501–509); and

(b) Persons in own-use production of goods is especially important in countries where particular groups of the population engage in agriculture, fishing or hunting and gathering for own final consumption, including for subsistence (see paragraphs 93–98, 564–569), and to enable integration of the population census with the agricultural census (see CESR chapter IX);

(c) Persons in unpaid trainee work may be advisable where unpaid apprenticeships, internships and traineeships may be a main mechanism of labour market entry for particular groups such as youths or for specific occupations such as mechanics or tailors, given their likely overall small size in the country and limited availability of alternative statistical sources.

26. Given the need for detailed probing, the measurement of participation in own-use provision of services, unpaid trainee work, and volunteer work is more appropriate through household surveys or, if desired, through the census by means of a long form applied to a sub-set of the population<sup>7</sup>.

27. Additional information may also be collected in the population census in order to classify the population according to their main form of work based on self-declaration, in a short or long reference period.

## 2. Working time

*The concept of working time comprises<sup>8</sup>. Working time relates to each form of work.*

28. The number of persons engaged in a given form of work provides only a very rough estimate of the volume of work performed, particularly when the work is performed on a part-time, casual or occasional basis. Information on working time is necessary to prepare estimates of the volume of work or labour input for complete national production accounts. It is also essential to support the design, monitoring and evaluation of economic, social and labour market policies and programmes targeting labour market flexibility, work-life balance and conditions of work, including situations of underemployment due to insufficient working time (that is, time-related underemployment) and of excessive working time.

29. The population census can serve to provide information on two measures of working time in particular: hours usually worked and hours actually worked, see definitions in paragraph 92. Where the census is the only available data source it may as a minimum incorporate a single question on hours usually worked for persons in employment and for persons in own-use production of goods, as relevant (see paragraph 93). The inclusion of hours usually worked can be useful for countries concerned about the relevance for some users of the one-hour criterion in the definition of employment.

## 3. Population coverage and age limits

30. Information on the economic characteristics of the population should in principle cover the entire population, regardless of country origin, citizenship or geographic location of their place of work. In practice, a lower age limit is usually set in accordance with the

<sup>7</sup> For more details see *Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization*, adopted by the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 2013), paragraphs 22(c) and 37–39.

<sup>8</sup> *Resolution concerning the measurement of working time*, adopted by the Eighteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 2008).

conditions in the country.<sup>9</sup> For compiling child labour statistics, the relevant international standards identify the target population as all persons in the age group from 5 to 17 years<sup>10</sup>. Countries in which many children participate in employment or in other forms of work, including in agriculture, will need to select a lower minimum age than countries where work of children is uncommon. Census tabulations of economic characteristics should at least distinguish between persons under 15 years of age and those 15 years of age and over.

31. In general, an upper age limit for measurement of economic characteristics of the population is not recommended, so as to permit comprehensive coverage of work activities of the adult population and to examine transition between employment and retirement. Many people continue to be engaged in different forms of work beyond retirement age and the numbers involved are likely to increase as a result of factors associated with the “ageing” of the population. Countries may, however, wish to balance the cost of collecting and processing information relating to the productive activities of elderly persons (those aged 75 years or more) and the additional response burden imposed on them against the significance and reliability of the information provided.

### C. Labour force status (core topic)

*Persons may be classified in a short reference period according to their labour force status as being ‘employed’, ‘unemployed’, or ‘outside the labour force’ as defined below in sections (a), (b) and (c).*

32. A classification of persons by their labour force status provides important information about their relation to the labour market, in particular to work for pay or profit, in a short reference period. The three categories of labour force status, i.e. employed, unemployed or outside the labour market, are mutually exclusive and exhaustive. While even during a short period persons may be engaged in multiple activities, to establish their labour force status, priority is given to employment over the other forms of work, and over unemployment; and to unemployment over outside the labour force, see figure 2. Thus, for example:

(a) A volunteer worker who also has a part-time employee job should be classified as employed;

(b) A person growing crops for own final use and who is also seeking and available for employment should be classified as unemployed; and

(c) A person who has a part-time job, working only a few hours for pay and who is also seeking another job, should be classified as employed.

33. The sum of persons in employment plus persons in unemployment comprises the labour force.<sup>11</sup>

34. The labour force status of persons is established with regards to a short reference period of seven days or one week, which may be the previous seven days, the last completed calendar week, or a specified recent fixed week. For comparability purposes, it is particularly useful to apply a short-reference period with the same total duration (such as a reference week) for the census as for the national labour force survey, if any. This short reference period serves to provide a snap-shot picture of labour market participation in the country around the time of the census. As such, the labour force, that is, persons in employment plus persons in unemployment, reflects the supply of labour for the production of goods and services in exchange for pay or profit at a specified point in time. Seasonal variations in employment and unemployment levels, which may be significant both in industrialized and in developing economies, will not be captured. Assessments of such temporal variations in work patterns

<sup>9</sup> *Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization*, adopted by the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 2013), para. 65.

<sup>10</sup> *Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization*, adopted by the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 2013), para. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Formerly also referred to as "currently active population".

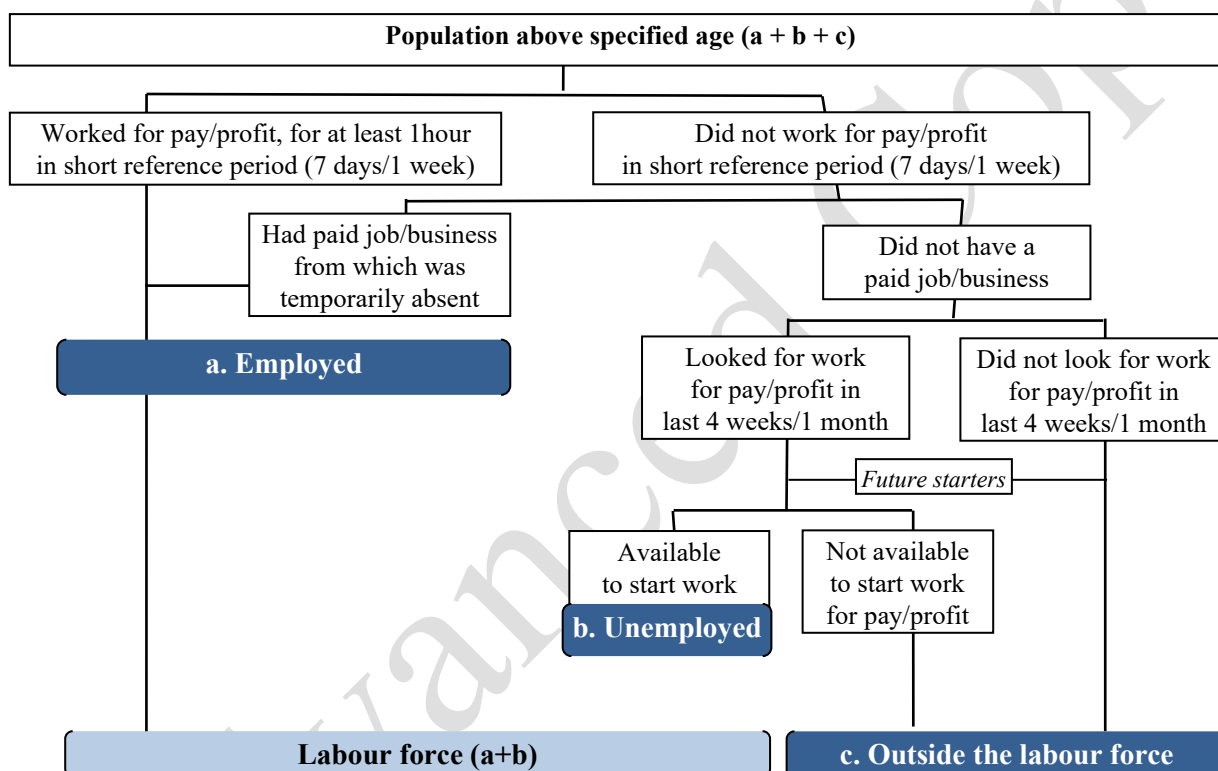
are more adequately captured through sub-annual household surveys (for example monthly, quarterly).

35. If probing questions in an interview or using detailed questions in a self-administered census questionnaire, the determination of the labour force status of a person may be influenced by respondents’ or enumerators’ subjective understanding of the concepts of employment and unemployment. In this regard, particular attention should be given to special groups for which the determination of the labour force status may be difficult, e.g. youths, women and elderly persons after the normal age of retirement, and those working as contributing family members. To reduce underreporting, enumerators need to be explicitly instructed, or the questionnaires specifically designed.

36. Given the importance of reliable data on labour force status, serious consideration should be given to minimizing classification errors.

Figure 2

**Classification of working age population by labour force status**



**1. Employed persons**

*Persons in employment are all those above the specified age who, during a short reference period of seven days or one week, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit. The notion “for pay or profit” refers to work done as part of a transaction in exchange for remuneration payable in the form of wages or salaries for time worked or work done or in the form of profits derived through market transactions from the goods and services produced. It includes remuneration in cash or in kind, whether actually received or not, payable directly to the person performing the work or indirectly to a household or family member.*

37. Two categories of persons in employment are:

- (a) Employed persons “at work,” that is, who worked for pay or profit for at least one hour; and
- (b) Employed persons “not at work” due to working-time arrangements (such as shift work, flexitime and compensatory leave for overtime) or to a “temporary absence” from a job for pay or profit.

38. Use of the one-hour criterion serves to ensure coverage of all types of job, including part-time, temporary or casual jobs, thereby supporting identification of all persons in employment and analysis of their working conditions.

39. Persons on 'temporary absence' from a job, including employees or self-employed should be considered in employment, provided that they were 'not at work' for a short duration and maintained a job attachment during the absence. The existence of a job attachment should be established on the basis of the reason for the absence and, in the case of certain reasons, the continued receipt of remuneration or the total duration of the absence (in general not greater than three months<sup>12</sup>). Reasons for absence include:

(a) Those where job attachment is generally maintained, and thus, do not require further probing, such as sick leave due to own illness or injury (included occupational); public holidays, vacation or annual leave; and periods of maternity or paternity leave as specified by legislation; and

(b) Those requiring further assessment of continued receipt of remuneration or total duration including parental leave, educational leave, care for others, other personal absences, strikes or lockouts, reduction in economic activity (for example temporary lay-off, slack work), disorganization or suspension of work (for example due to bad weather, mechanical, electrical or communication breakdown, problems with Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and shortage of raw materials or fuels).

**(a) Treatment of specific groups**

40. According to international standards, the following groups of persons should be classified as in employment, see 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS (International Conference of Labour Statisticians):

(a) Persons with a job for pay or profit who, during the reference period were on training or skills-enhancement activities required by their job or for another job in the same economic unit;

(b) Apprentices, interns and trainees who receive remuneration in cash or in kind;

(c) Persons who work for pay or profit through employment promotion programmes;

(d) Persons who work for their own economic units to produce goods mainly for sale or barter, even if part of the output is consumed by the household or family;

(e) Persons with seasonal jobs during the off-season, if they continue to perform some tasks and duties for the job, excluding, however, the fulfilment of legal or administrative obligations (for example, pay taxes);

(f) Persons who either work in a market unit operated by a family member living in the same or in another household (that is, contributing family workers) or perform tasks or duties of an employee job held by a family member living in the same or in another household;

(g) Regular members of the armed forces and persons on military or alternative civilian service who perform this work for pay in cash or in kind.<sup>13</sup>

41. Excluded from employment are:

(a) Apprentices, interns and trainees who work without pay in cash or in kind (that is, persons engaged in unpaid trainee work);

(b) Participants in skills training or retraining schemes within employment promotion programmes, when not engaged in the production process of an economic unit;

<sup>12</sup> According to 19th ICLS paragraph 29 c-i, the threshold may be greater than three months if the return to employment in the same economic unit is guaranteed.

<sup>13</sup> See International Standard Classification of Occupations: ISCO-08/ International Labour Office - Geneva: ILO, 2012. p. 357.

(c) Persons who are required to perform work as a condition of continued receipt of a government social benefit such as unemployment insurance;

(d) Persons with seasonal jobs during the off season, if they cease to perform the tasks and duties of the job;

(e) Persons who retain a right to return to the same economic unit but who were absent for reasons specified in paragraph 39b, when the total duration of the absence exceeds the specified threshold or if the test of receipt of remuneration is not fulfilled;

(f) Persons on indefinite lay-off who do not have an assurance of return to employment with the same economic unit;

(g) Persons who work to produce goods intended mainly or exclusively for consumption or use by the household or family, even if a surplus or part of the output is sold or bartered (that is, own-use production of goods, see paragraphs 98–102);

(h) Household members who provide unpaid services for consumption or use by their household (that is, own-use provision of services);

(i) Persons who work voluntarily and without pay to produce goods or services through or for other economic units, including market, non-market units and households (that is, volunteer work).

42. Information should be given in the census reports describing how the above-mentioned groups and other relevant groups were treated.

## 2. Unemployed persons

*Unemployed persons are all those above the specified age who (a) were not in employment, (b) carried out activities to seek employment during a specified recent period and (c) were currently available to take up employment given a job opportunity.*

43. To be classified as unemployed, a person must satisfy all of the three criteria, where:

(a) “Not in employment” (that is, not engaged in work for pay or profit) is assessed with respect to the short reference period for the measurement of employment as defined in paragraph 24501;

(b) To “seek employment” refers to any activity, when carried out during a specified recent period comprising the last four weeks prior to enumeration or calendar month, for the purpose of finding a job or setting up a business or agricultural undertaking. This includes also part-time, informal, temporary, seasonal or casual employment, paid apprenticeships, internships or traineeships, within the national territory or abroad. Examples of such activities are:

- Arranging for financial resources;
- Applying for permits or licences;
- Looking for land, premises, machinery, supplies or farming inputs;
- Seeking the assistance of friends, relatives or other types of intermediaries;
- Registering with, or contacting, public or private employment services;
- Applying to employers directly, or checking at worksites, farms, factory gates, markets or other assembly places;
- Placing or answering, newspaper or online job advertisements; and
- Placing or updating résumés on professional or social networking sites online;

(c) “Currently available” serves as a test of readiness to start a job in the present, assessed with respect to the same short reference period that is used to measure employment. Depending on national circumstances, the reference period may be extended to include a

short subsequent period not exceeding two weeks in total, so as to ensure adequate coverage of unemployment situations among different population groups.<sup>14</sup>

44. Unemployment has been one of the most widely used measures of labour underutilization. However, it only captures persons in situations of complete lack of work for pay or profit, and where opportunities for job search exist. In circumstances where there are few channels for seeking employment or where labour markets are limited in scope, or when labour absorption is inadequate, unemployment will not capture fully all persons with an unmet need for employment. Separate identification of underutilized persons (included in the potential labour force, see paragraph 49) supports better assessment of the different types of underutilization affecting labour markets across settings, and more targeted policymaking.

45. It may be useful to distinguish first-time jobseekers, who have never worked before, from other jobseekers in the classification of the unemployed. To do so, however, may require an additional question regarding previous work experience, which may impose too much of a burden for a population census.

**(a) Treatment of specific groups**

46. Also classified as unemployed according to international standards are:

(a) Future starters, defined as persons “not in employment” and “currently available” who did not “seek employment” because they had already made arrangements to start a job within a short subsequent period, set according to the general length of waiting time for starting a new job in the national context but generally not greater than three months);

(b) Participants in skills training or retraining schemes, within employment promotion programmes, who on that basis were “not in employment”, not “currently available”, and did not “seek employment” because they had a job offer to start within a short subsequent period generally not greater than three months;

(c) Persons “not in employment” who carried out activities to migrate abroad in order to work for pay or profit but who were still waiting for the opportunity to leave;

(d) In accordance with the priority rules to establish their labour force status, persons who during the reference period were mainly students, homemakers, pensioners, registered unemployed or engaged in forms of work other than employment (for example, own-use production work, volunteer work) and who at the same time were “not in employment”, carried out activities to “seek employment” and were “currently available”, as defined above, should be classified in unemployment. Information should be given in the census reports on how persons in these and other specific groups were treated.

**3. Persons outside the labour force**

*Persons outside the labour force comprise all those in the working-age population, who in the short reference period were neither employed nor unemployed as defined above, including persons below the minimum age specified for the collection of economic characteristics.*

47. Different classifications of persons outside the labour force may be used for analytical purposes. Particularly useful for informing labour market and social policies and programmes are classifications by degree of labour market attachment and by main reason for not entering the labour force. These alternative classifications can be derived from the same questions used to identify the unemployed and may be used separately or in combination to enable further analysis.

<sup>14</sup> In EU countries, the reference period to assess “current availability” comprises the reference week and the subsequent two weeks.

48. Persons outside the labour force may be classified by the degree of labour market attachment into the following groups:

- (a) *Unavailable jobseekers*, that is, those “seeking employment” but not “currently available”;
- (b) *Available potential jobseekers*, that is, those not “seeking employment” but “currently available”;
- (c) *Willing non-jobseekers*, that is, those neither “seeking employment” nor “currently available” but who want employment;
- (d) *Others*, that is, persons neither “seeking employment” nor “currently available” who do not want employment.

49. The classification of persons outside the labour force by degree of labour market attachment allows identification of the potential labour force, computed as the sum of (a) unavailable jobseekers plus (b) available potential job seekers. Together with unemployment, the potential labour force is a key measure of labour underutilization. It is relevant both in more and less developed settings, especially

- (a) Where the conventional means of seeking employment are of limited relevance;
- (b) Where the labour market is largely unorganized or of limited scope;
- (c) When labour absorption is, at the time, inadequate; or
- (d) Where persons are largely self-employed.

50. Although not a part of the potential labour force, the group (c) above represents a group of persons outside the labour force with an expressed interest in employment and is particularly relevant for social and gender analysis in specific contexts.

51. Persons outside the labour force may also be classified by their main activity or reason for not entering the labour market. Some persons may be classifiable in more than one category. In such situations, priority should be given to the possible categories in the following order:

52. *Attending an educational institution* refers to persons outside the labour force, who attended any regular educational institution, public or private, for systematic instruction at any level of education, or were on temporary absence from the institution for relevant reasons corresponding to those specified for employed persons “not at work”.

53. *Performing unpaid household services* refers to persons outside the labour force engaged in the unpaid provision of services for their own household, such as spouses and other relatives responsible for the care and management of the home, children and elderly people. Domestic and personal services provided by domestic employees working *for pay* in somebody else’s home are considered as employed in line with the definition of employed persons.

54. *Retiring on pension or capital income* refers to persons outside the labour force who receive income from property or investments, interests, rents, royalties or pensions from former employment.

55. *Other reasons* refer to all persons outside the labour force who do not fall into any of the above categories, for example, children not attending school, those receiving public aid or private support and persons with disabilities.

56. Additional reasons for not entering the labour force that are considered particularly important at national or regional level, such as “engaged in own-use production of goods” should also be taken into account in the classification of population outside the labour force.



## V. Conclusion

57. The first three sections of the draft recommendations on economic characteristics for the 2030 round of population and housing censuses are presented for comments and discussion.

58. This proposal should be read in conjunction with document ECE/CES/GE.41/2024/6 containing the subsequent three sections of the chapter.

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