



Regional Training Workshop on Transition to Register-based Approaches for Population and Housing Censuses

Ankara, Türkiye

12-15 June 2023 (09:00-17:00, UTC+3)

Background

The population and housing census is the most complex undertaking of a National Statistical Office (NSO), involving massive amounts of time, resources, coordination and collaboration for its planning, design and implementation. In return, it generates a wealth of data for national and subnational planning and policymaking. Census data also assists with monitoring the progress towards global commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals and the pledge to Leave No One Behind, as well as regional goals such as the Declaration to "[Get everyone in the picture](#)" in Asia and the Pacific.

With the growing demand for quality, timely and granular statistics and in the face of serious challenges arising from resource constraints, declining response rates, and disasters like the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSOs are keen to explore alternative methods of collecting census data. Increasing the ability to exploit administrative data, either to support a traditional census or to carry out a combined or register-based census, provides an opportunity to improve data quality, reduce costs of census operations and produce more timely information. While transitioning to a register-based census is appealing to many countries, it is necessary to proceed cautiously to minimise any disruption in census results.

In recent years, several relevant initiatives have been launched by many regional and international agencies to support countries in using administrative data in censuses. This



training workshop, in a valuable partnership, built on past efforts to strengthen the capacity of participating countries.

Objective

The training workshop aimed to strengthen participants' capacity on how to plan a transition from a traditional census to other approaches involving the use of administrative registers and gradually increase the use of administrative data for producing census data.

Participants and Facilitators

The training workshop was attended by 31 participants (22 male and 9 female) from twelve countries, including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan. The majority of participants were from the NSOs (28 participants), and the remainder were from administrative data holders. Additionally, there were over ten attendees from the UNFPA country offices, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC).

The training workshop was facilitated by Ms Fiona Willis-Nunez, Statistician, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE); Ms Afsaneh Yazdani, Statistician, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); Ms Sinovia Moonie, Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP); Mr Eduard Jongstra, Regional Adviser on Population and Development, UNFPA's Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office; Ms Meryem Demirci, Interregional Advisor, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD); Mr Seiffe Tadesse, Statistician, UNSD.

Partners

- SESRIC hosted the training workshop and provided full logistical planning and support. They also facilitated simultaneous interpretation into Russian, which was funded through the funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative (D4H) Project: "Supporting improvements to civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in Asia and the Pacific (Phase III)".
- The ECO secretariat translated into Russian the workshop training material as well as a relevant resource, the "UNFPA eLearning material on Transitioning to a Register-Based Census".
- The training workshop included a half-day study tour, which was sponsored by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat).



- Participation expenses were covered through funding from D4H Project, the United Nations Development Accounts Tranche 14, UNFPA and UNSD.
- The substantive core team who planned, designed and facilitated the training workshop included ECE, ESCAP, SIAP, UNFPA¹, and UNSD.

Training Workshop Proceedings

Mr Syed Tahir Mahmud, Researcher at SESRIC, moderated the opening session. The training workshop was opened by a video recording of the remarks by Ms Rachael Beaven, Director of the ESCAP Statistics Division. Following that, Ms Meryem Demirci, Interregional Adviser of UNSD; Ambassador Jandos Asanov, Deputy Secretary General of the ECO; and Dr Ahmet Öztürk, Senior Researcher of SESRIC, delivered their welcoming remarks. The participants then introduced themselves and highlighted their expectations from the workshop. Finally, Ms Afsaneh Yazdani, Statistician at ESCAP Statistics Division, presented the training workshop objectives and approach.

During the four days of the training workshop (four sessions/six hours each day), various aspects of using administrative data for census purposes, including the concepts and features of register-based approaches for the census, the requirements, challenges, opportunities, and processes involved, were covered and discussed thoroughly. General recommendations were also brought to the attention of participating countries. The presentations included:

- Overview of the importance of population and housing censuses and the evolution of census approaches over time
- Overview of the UNFPA Register-Based Census eLearning Course
- Core aspects of a census
- Register-based approaches for population and housing censuses: rationale and definitions of the key concepts
- Use of administrative data to support the implementation of traditional censuses
- Generic model for the transition from a traditional census to register-based approaches
- Facilitating the transition to a register-based census
- Types of administrative registers

¹ The UNFPA team included UNFPA Technical Division, the UNFPA's Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, and the UNFPA's Asia and the Pacific Regional Office. Additionally, the UNFPA country teams in Belarus, Iran (Islamic Republic of), and Moldova supported and facilitated the participation of these countries in the workshop.



- Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: the foundation of population registers
- Data integration and transforming administrative data to census data
- Quality assessment of administrative data sources
- General recommendations for a smooth transition.

The training workshop included presentations on five success stories from Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and the United Kingdom to familiarise the participants with the practical side of using administrative data for census purposes. Additionally, on the third day, a half-day study tour to TurkStat was conducted. TurkStat is one of the pioneers in applying register-based approaches in Asia and the Pacific region, and the study tour provided comprehensive knowledge of Türkiye's transition from a traditional to a register-based census, which could be beneficial to workshop participants in their similar journey.

The training workshop also offered the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience among participating countries. Each country team delivered a presentation on their censuses and the challenges involved in the use of administrative data. Country presentations were followed by lively Q&A and discussion.

Prior to the workshop, a newly developed tool, the "Self-assessment questionnaire on the readiness to use administrative data for census purposes", was distributed among participating countries for their completion. The results of the questionnaire were presented during the workshop, and participating countries were invited to discuss and comment on the usefulness of the questionnaire. The feedback received from the participants was quite positive, and participants made suggestions for improving the questionnaire for future use.

On the last day of the training workshop, each country team was invited to discuss the situation in their country and propose actions for their country's transition to increased use of administrative data for censuses based on the knowledge acquired and lessons learned. The result of the group discussions was presented and discussed at the plenary session.

Then an evaluation survey was conducted, and the participants provided their feedback on different aspects of the training workshop; the summary of the results is available in [Appendix A](#). Finally, certificates of participation were distributed, and the workshop was concluded.

Training Workshop Outcome

- The training workshop enhanced the technical capacity of the participants on various aspects involved in the use of administrative data for census purposes and raised their awareness of the precautions necessary for a smooth transition to register-based approaches. Through the presentations and discussions on success stories, as well as the



study tour to TurkStat, their knowledge of the practical aspects was increased.

- The training workshop facilitated sharing of national experiences and best practices by the participating countries. Participants also had the opportunity to network with their peers and learn from each other.
- The training workshop encouraged outlining the scenario for each country's transition to the increased use of administrative data for censuses. On the last day, each country team drafted a list of proposed actions, which may be considered by their NSOs as a basis to develop a road map for their journey.
- The self-assessment questionnaire on the readiness to use administrative data for census purposes was demonstrated to be fit for the purpose, with minor adjustments proposed by participating countries.
- The substantive core team obtained an overview of the situation in participating countries, which may be beneficial for planning future complementary supports.
- The training workshop was very well received by the participants. According to the results of the evaluation survey ([Appendix A](#)), the participants highly assessed the training workshop in terms of relevance to their needs and expectations, the effectiveness of the approach as well as administrative and logistical arrangements. The participants also expressed a keen interest in an increased number of similar workshops on this topic.

Suggestions for a way forward

- The NSOs of the participating countries are encouraged to consider the general recommendations and exploit the enhanced capacity of participants to outline a road map for the increased use of administrative data in their censuses.
- The substantive core team should review the suggestions by participating countries on the "Self-assessment questionnaire on the readiness to use administrative data for census purposes" and take further actions to improve, finalise and introduce it as a tool that other countries can use.
- The substantive core team may seek opportunities to replicate the training workshop for other regions and/or sub-regions, with study tour(s) to other statistical systems pioneering the use of administrative data, such as the Republic of Korea and Singapore.
- The substantive core team may review the situation in participating countries and plan for complementary actions, such as providing in-country support as possible.



Appendix A – Summary of Training Workshop Evaluation Survey



Appendix B – Photo Gallery

Training Workshop Opening (12 June 2023)



TurkStat Study Tour (14 June 2023)



Training Workshop Closing (12 June 2023)



For information, please visit the event page website at [Regional Training Workshop on Transition to Register-based Approaches for Population and Housing Censuses | ESCAP \(unescap.org\)](https://www.unescap.org/training-workshop-on-transition-to-register-based-approaches-for-population-and-housing-censuses).

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