

United Nations Expert Group Meeting on
Measuring the Economically Active Population in Censuses
5-9 November 2007, New York

Report of the Expert Group Meeting
on
Measuring the Economically Active Population in Censuses

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I. Introduction

Background and objective of the meeting

1. The United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Measuring the Economically Active Population in Censuses was convened in New York on 5-9 November 2007. It was organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in collaboration with the Bureau of Statistics of the International Labour Office (ILO).
2. The objective of the meeting was to review the draft Handbook on Measuring the Economically Active Population in Censuses. This is one of several handbooks being produced to support the activities of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses.
3. The draft Handbook is an update of a technical report entitled *Collection of Economic Characteristics in Population Censuses*, which was prepared jointly by UNSD and ILO in 2002. The Handbook takes into account recent developments in the concepts, methods and classifications related to the measurement and characterization of the economically active population, as reflected in the *Principles and Recommendations for the Population and Housing Census, Revision 2*¹ adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2007.
4. The meeting brought together 13 experts from national statistical offices, the consultant responsible for preparing the draft Handbook, as well as representatives from UNFPA and UNESCWA. (See Annex 1 for the list of participants.)

Opening of the meeting

5. The Meeting was opened by Mr. Jean Michel Durr, Chief of the Demographic Statistics Section, on behalf of Mr. Paul Cheung, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division. (See Annex 2 for the statement of Mr. Cheung.)
6. Mr. David Hunter, Senior Statistician of the Bureau of Statistics, ILO, made a statement on behalf of Mr. Sylvester Young, Director of the Bureau.

Organization of the meeting

7. The meeting was dedicated to the review of the draft Handbook. The draft document was reviewed from beginning to end, section by section. Prior to discussion, each chapter was briefly introduced by either the Consultant or ILO. Experts brought out parts of the text that were unclear or contentious and made concrete suggestions for changes, with the purpose of improving and clarifying the text.
8. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Edwin St. Catherine (St. Lucia), Mr. Geoff Bowlby (Canada), Mr. Gazi Shbaikat (Jordan), and Ms. Marilyn Thomas (United Kingdom). The Rapporteur for the meeting was Ms. Grace Bediako (Ghana).

¹ United Nations publication, forthcoming.

II. Summary of discussions

9. Many suggestions were offered for improving the draft Handbook and clarification was sought on many parts of the draft. Many of the points raised were straightforward for which solutions were quickly agreed upon, but others sparked some discussion. Only the more salient discussions are included in this summary. Comments are organized such that general ones pertaining to the entire Handbook are presented first, under the heading 'General Points'. These are followed by discussions for each part of the Handbook (Parts One through Six; and Annexes).

General points

10. There was a general discussion on how to best present the Handbook, mainly as to whether it should be self-contained or a supplementary document to the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Rev. 2²* and related publications. Some felt that the *P&R* should not be repeated in the Handbook. It was pointed out that some of the material in the draft Handbook do not address issues specifically relevant to economic characteristics in particular but are rather general issues for population censuses. After discussion, there was a general agreement that general context is essential to some users but that some of it may be abridged or streamlined. The group agreed that the Handbook should be self-contained, since users may not have access to the referenced publications.

11. Related to this, experts felt that some degree of repetition within the Handbook may be helpful, since users of the Handbook typically use it as a reference, reading it selectively, and not from cover to cover. However, it was noted that for many cases, it would be more appropriate to make cross references to previously stated facts.

12. Where examples of questions are given, some experts felt that there was a need to make more explicit to the reader which are the good examples and which ones are not recommended. The discussion concluded that this should be taken into consideration in the revision, and that more good practices relative to bad practices should be included.

13. Another comment on examples was that when an example is in a language other than the language of the Handbook, it should be presented in both the original and translated languages.

14. Experts commended the comprehensiveness of the Handbook but noted that for training it would be too much material. A question was raised as to the possibility of preparing a short version for training purposes. A possibility would be to prepare a training package summarizing the document and presenting important points.

15. Several places in the Handbook reporting the number of countries with data on specific economic characteristics required updating. It was agreed that UNSD try to

² United Nations publication, forthcoming.

update the counts and that if updates can not be made in time, a general statement be made instead, with a footnote showing the number of countries from the old study.

16. For the sample questions in the last part of each section presented as ‘untested, hypothetical question(s)’, the group agreed that the Handbook will recommend that the questions be tested and adapted to national circumstances. The questions will therefore come under a heading ‘hypothetical question, recommended for testing and use in countries’.

Part One (chapters 1-2)

17. On the uses of the Handbook, it was suggested that a brief text be added as to why the Handbook is needed. Additionally, it should also state why we want to measure economic characteristics in a census. Some experts argued that such text can serve as an advocacy point.

18. The use of census data, including economic characteristics data, for poverty mapping was raised and discussed at length. It was decided to add that statistics on economic characteristics can provide a useful input for poverty mapping (in para. 26).

19. The ability of the census to capture small groups or rare occupations adequately was discussed. It was generally agreed that the census had the potential to capture small groups but that this potential was rarely achieved due to limitations imposed by enumerator training, coding bias and non-response or non-reporting by small marginalized groups. Experts requested that the paragraph (para 31) be modified to reflect these concerns.

20. There was a call for guidance on how to explain the difference in results on economic activity between the census and household surveys. Experts felt that the Handbook should at least mention that explanations need to be given at the time of the release of results to the public, as discrepancies can lead to problems of credibility for the national statistical organization. Interview methods (mail vs. face-to-face interview), extent of interviewer training, varying definitions and covered population were some of the reasons mentioned for the discrepant figures between the census and the labour force surveys. In this connection, it was also mentioned that it was important to mention some limitations of measuring economic characteristics in censuses.

21. Suggestions were made to include in the Handbook mention of other modes of data collection besides the traditional census (for example, through population registers), as well as other formats of data collection besides paper collection (for example, Internet). Experts felt that although these methods are not common, they have to be added in the Handbook.

22. There was substantial amount of discussion on the mechanisms for user consultation and how to deal with the issue of raising the expectation of users by opening doors to them and not being able to accommodate their demands. One way is to educate users on other available sources of statistics for their need. It was suggested that the Handbook

text be modified to help census planners find the right balance and strategy regarding user consultation.

23. Training of interviewers was seen by many experts as a very important factor in enhancing the quality of a census. It is, in particular, a major issue when dealing with economic characteristics. It was suggested to put such a statement in the beginning of the section on training and to underline the importance of improving it.

24. Several experts noted that there is a need to emphasize the importance of validating census results by checking them against external data, more specifically labour force survey or other household survey results.

25. There was a suggestion to add that the category “Other, specify” is not a true category, but that written (open-ended) answers therein have to be coded and processed. It is important in pilot tests to get this information in order to determine the need to create new pre-coded answer categories.

Part Two (chapters 3-5)

26. As part of the general discussion on measurement frameworks, experts expressed concern as to whether the revision of the 1993 SNA would affect the content of the current draft and were reassured that there would be no inconsistencies arising from changes to the present SNA. A question on how to treat unsolicited services elicited some discussion. There was recognition that there are some grey areas bordering on economic activity but is not economic activity. Another issue that generated much discussion was the inclusion of some types of volunteer work in the SNA. The conclusion was that countries should be guided by international standards (the SNA) in determining which activities are within the production boundary and which ones are not.

27. The importance of the reference period in defining economic activity was reiterated, and it was suggested that the Handbook provide a stronger recommendation and guidance on the choice between current and usual activity (current activity was preferred), as well as on the reference period to use (7 days).

28. There was some discussion on the practice of using a different reference period for employment and unemployment, for example one week for the question on employment and four weeks for the question on actively seeking work (one of the criteria for identifying unemployed). Some experts felt that for consistency the same reference period should be applied for both questions. However, it appeared that the use of a different reference period is practiced in some countries for measuring unemployment, thus it was agreed that this practice be recognized in the Handbook.

29. There was a comment on the labour force framework presented in Diagram 2, specifically concerning the box ‘Had no work and wanted to work’. Some experts believe it should be simply ‘Had no work’, noting that wanting to work is a separate criterion. It was agreed that the diagram would be reviewed and adjusted, with attention to its operationability.

30. The paragraph on the treatment of ‘temporary absence’ in the case of persons engaged in seasonal activities sparked a discussion on the conditions under which seasonal workers should be included as employed. In particular, paragraph 164 (a) states that during the off season, seasonal workers ‘should not be included as employed unless the employer continues to pay *most* of their wages or salary’. The general opinion was that seasonal workers should be regarded as employed even in the off season as long as the employer continues to pay *some* salary even if it is substantially less than during the season, and the suggestion was therefore to remove the phrase ‘most of’. It was pointed out, however, that in fact Eurostat recommends a 50% threshold, so that when the salary in the off season is less than half of the full salary (in season), then questions on unemployment would be asked. In view of this the agreement was to add a footnote to explain what is done in some countries, to be confirmed after consulting ILO reference and the Eurostat directive.

31. A suggestion was made to add in the section elaborating on categories of employment that present problems of identification (paragraph 166) those workers who live in collective housing units or institutions (such as prisons). It is important that this group of workers is covered by the census, as such persons are most likely to be excluded from the scope of the labour force and other household surveys.

32. There was considerable discussion on the effect of including as economic activity activities such as collecting firewood and fetching water, which are included in the production boundary of the 1993 SNA. An expert felt that the inclusion of these activities would produce distortions in the measurement of employed and unemployed populations. A suggestion was to use an approach that would allow the estimation of employment excluding these activities *and* including these activities. This approach would require asking respondents first about work as in the ‘classic definition’ and, when no work was declared, to follow with a separate question on activities like collecting firewood, etc. The activities to be included in the second question would vary depending on the country.

33. One expert argued that the decision to make a separate question of the ‘non-classic’ activities should be left to the country, as the country alone would know the degree of importance of these ‘non-classic’ activities in their country and the cost-effectiveness of an additional question. There was a suggestion to add in the text that labour force surveys may add questions but that censuses should make sure that all activities specified in the SNA are covered; that is, to be comprehensive when formulating the question on employment. Some text may be added in the draft recognizing the need for additional questions to detect all of the employed.

34. There was a comment made on the operational definition of the employed as persons who have worked one hour last week, as most people may have a problem considering persons as active who worked only one hour. It was clarified that the one hour criterion is useful in order to count casual workers; because it is widely understood and has the same meaning in any context, as opposed to say one day; and because national accounts recommendations follow this criterion. Another expert suggested that while one-hour work is used as a threshold to define employment, hours of work data can be used to define or identify workers that various users are interested in.

35. Experts suggested that some text be added that acknowledges that hypothetical questions (such as whether respondent would be available to work if offered a job) are difficult to answer, and that proxy respondents are not able to answer them for another household member. Another issue raised was that such questions may cause a respondent to think that a job is actually going to be offered, therefore has to be addressed in the Handbook.

36. It was agreed that the Introduction to chapter 5, Usual economic activity status, emphasize the importance of measuring usual activity and explain the utility of this approach, despite the fact that it is not commonly used. There was also a suggestion to give guidance on when to use the current activity and usual activity approaches in censuses, in what situations each approach is useful, their limitations and how the data would compare using one approach versus the other. A reorganization of the Introduction section was suggested and agreed on by the experts.

37. It was suggested to add some paragraphs on the impact of the timing of the census on the measurement of the economically active population, as it is not covered in the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses. In choosing the census date(s) it should be kept in mind, for example, that internal consistency of usual activity with school attendance would be useful, as is the timing of the census to coincide with the time of year when economic activity is high.

Part Three (chapters 6-8)

38. On the section on occupation, there was a discussion concerning whether references to ISCO-88 should be updated to ISCO-08. It was pointed out that countries that were already planning their censuses should be in no rush to use the ISCO-08 as it could lead to potential quality issues. Therefore the suggestion was to keep the reference to the ISCO-88 in paragraph 301 with a note stating that ISCO-08 will be adopted soon. For the Handbook, ILO will provide the number of groups for ISCO-08 once it is officially adopted.

39. Regarding paragraph 309, experts agreed on the importance of getting detailed answers to the questions on occupation, for example name of job, main tasks performed in job, etc. It was felt that the current text should be amended to reflect this view.

40. On place of work, there was a discussion about groups whose place of work is difficult to classify such as construction workers who move around different sites, taxi drivers who report back to a fixed base location, market stall vendors who pack up at the end of day and so on. One expert noted that the definitions under each type of place of work were not adopted by labour statisticians through the ICLS and suggested that this be stated in a footnote. It was agreed that more explanations are needed to clarify the underlying principle or rules on how various types of place of work should be defined. In the end, it was agreed that the exact wording on place of work from the *Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses, Rev. 2* be used in paragraph 320.

41. It was pointed out by one expert that the use of information collected on the type of place of work, particularly the information on category of “no fixed place of work” can give some useful indication on informal type of enterprises and this should be reflected in the text.

42. The experts emphasized the importance of information on geographic location of work for various purposes, such as the study of commuting pattern between home and work as well as the pattern of internal and international migration. Another use of this information is for matching the addresses to business or establishment registers thereby obtaining the industry coding. It was felt that the importance of collecting information on geographic location of work should be elaborated further in the text.

43. Some cautionary remarks were offered regarding the collection of data on geographic location of work. Some experts noted that asking exact addresses for the place of work is feasible in some countries but not in others. One expert stated that in his country respondents are sensitive to the question on the exact address of place of work, leading to a low response rate. Another reason is that in many cases the question is answered by a household member who may not know the exact address of the place of work of all members of the household. Furthermore, for developing countries that do not have a system of formal addresses, providing exact address for work could be difficult. It was therefore suggested by the experts that a sentence be introduced in the text on the benefit and uses of a question on the exact address of place of work. In addition, the difficulties should be discussed in the text and a recommendation be provided stating that whenever it is not feasible to collect exact address of work, information on the smallest geographic division where the work is located should be collected.

44. On section A (Industry) of chapter 7, there was a suggestion to include some examples with pre-coded answers in order to balance the presentation of the examples. The case of Indonesia was offered as a possible example, as was a reference to the Australian census questionnaire in the annex.

45. As in the case of occupation, the importance of having a detailed answer to the question on industry was stressed by the experts. It was pointed out that the goal was to collect as much information as possible during the census so that useful information on industry could be derived later. It was felt the current text should be revised or amended to reflect the above discussion (para. 346).

46. After some discussion about how to deal with the repetitiveness of examples F.4 and F.6, which are similar to E.4 and E.6, it was agreed to keep all examples but to make cross references to similar examples in other parts of the text.

47. One expert had a suggestion on how to improve the hypothetical example F.6. It was agreed that the example needed elaboration and that the expert provide his suggested hypothetical example to the Consultant.

48. During discussion about the collection of information on sector of employment, experts noted that in paragraph 351, it is stated that only three countries had attempted to

collect information on sector of employment. The experts pointed out that this number could be misleading as it probably counted only countries that included a direct question on this topic. It was however not unusual that this topic was collected partially or indirectly (e.g. derived from using name and address of the employer and comparing this information with business registries) and was therefore disguised under other questions. It was suggested that the Handbook take note of this fact.

49. Experts noted that there are different kinds of semi-governmental or parastatal organizations within countries. For example, there are corporations partially supported by the government but operate independently. There are also companies under complete control of government or under partial supervision. It was suggested that more guidance be added to clarify the boundaries between public and private sector. One suggestion was to consult the SNA to make sure that the classifications in the Handbook are consistent with the SNA. The Consultant noted that the categories 1, 2 and 4 in paragraph 352 do not distinguish between public and private sectors, and that a sentence may be added in paragraph 353 indicating that some of the institutional category sectors need distinguish between public and private sectors. It was explained that the purpose of the institutional sector question was to derive information on the size of the general government as well as on government controlled financial and non-financial sectors. It was thought useful to provide this explanation in the text.

50. On section C, Informal sector, there was a request to provide further explanation on diagram 5, conceptual framework for informal employment.

51. It was agreed that the expert from Mexico provide the series of questions to replace the current hypothetical example H.5

52. There was a discussion on the treatment in the text of businesses having complete sets of accounts but being unincorporated. Since no agreement could be achieved on this question during the meeting, it was suggested that a consultation be made with SNA experts.

53. It was agreed to change the title of chapter 8 to 'Working Time and Income', the name of the two sections it covers. It was also suggested that it be reflected upfront that the chapter's topics cover all jobs, in particular in paragraphs 416 and 419.

54. Experts expressed concern regarding the use of the term 'working time' for capturing time spent in activities within and outside of the SNA production boundary. Experts agreed to change footnote 87 and paragraph 428 to reflect this concern. It was proposed to refer in the text to the measurement of working time as well as time spent in activities outside of the SNA boundary. ILO proposed to draft a revised footnote 87 after the March 2008 Conference (ICLS) based on the adopted resolution.

55. Regarding the distinction between actual hours worked and usual/normal hours worked, ILO noted that the recommendation for censuses is to collect actual hours worked. It was agreed that the Handbook recommend this explicitly in paragraph 422. At the same time, the text should note that some countries may have reasons to collect

usual/normal hours, adding a sentence explaining the uses of data on usual/normal hours of work. In addition, the text should address the collection of these data (usual/normal hours) in reference to seasonal jobs. It was also pointed out that there are slight differences in the meaning of ‘usual’ and ‘normal’ hours. The text should be reviewed to make sure that these terms are properly used. The Consultant pointed out that the terminology in use is ‘normal’ rather than ‘usual’.

56. The Experts worked on restructuring paragraph 428, and agreed to split it into three separate paragraphs. The first paragraph would refer to the desirability of asking and recording the actual number of hours worked; the second to the fact that some countries however use pre-coded ranges; and the last, that it is not recommended that a question using the categories part-time and full-time be used on the questionnaire.

57. On section B. Income, it was suggested to edit the text of paragraph 431 to coincide with the exact wording of the *Principles and Recommendations*. It was further agreed that the paragraph should also reflect international experiences on the collection of data on income through population censuses.

58. Experts felt that paragraph 432 should be edited to include the definition of cash income, noting that cash income also includes checks, money orders, cash deposits, etc. They also suggested that the operational definition of income given in paragraph 435 explicitly state that income refers to gross income, and to clearly distinguish between employment and non-employment income. It was also suggested that the second part of paragraph 435 include a definition of household income.

59. A discussion on the difficulty of collecting detailed data on secondary employment through censuses concluded with the suggestion to add a sentence to paragraph 441, preferably borrowing from the *Principles and Recommendations*, warning of the difficulty and risks associated with collecting information on secondary activity in censuses.

60. There was some discussion on the examples. In particular, example J.3 needs to have an explanation of how the information collected is to be used, and a note stating that the example may not be appropriate for use in some countries. Example J.5 needs to be revised and an example on the collection of *individual* income data will be added by the Consultant.

Part Four (chapter 9)

61. Some discussion surrounded paragraph 470, with experts noting that the issue needs to be investigated. For example, it was pointed out that it is unlikely that persons aged 15 and under are employers.

62. Experts proposed the addition of a section before section C. Dissemination, to cover the missing issue of checks and assessment of data quality before dissemination. A paragraph would state the need for data verification and quality assessment, to be followed by a paragraph listing different options and techniques, such as checking

coefficients of variation, the involvement of subject matter experts in the evaluation of data and the production of test tables at various geographic levels to identify errors. In light of this revision, it was suggested that the section on data processing and dissemination in chapter 2 be revisited to ensure that validation is covered there as well.

63. In the section on microdata (paragraph 506), there was a suggestion to add a reference to a Statistical Commission document addressing this issue. On confidentiality and data security (paragraph 507), a qualifying sentence might be added to exercise caution with the release of information on occupation and income for small areas.

64. It was suggested by an expert that somewhere in the section on dissemination it should be stated that tables or topics may be released in parts without waiting for the completion of all results, otherwise data can become stale.

65. On section E. Metadata, experts felt that a sentence should be added stating the need to release the results of data quality assessment with the metadata.

Part Five (chapters 10-11)

66. At the outset, it was clarified that chapters 10 and 11 both take into account the latest revisions of ISCO and ISIC, although the former has not been adopted. (ISIC has been adopted but not yet published.)

67. The issue of comparison with previous censuses was brought up in connection with a change of occupation classification to ISCO-08. The suggestion was to insert a paragraph discussing how to deal with analysis over time when there has been a change in classifications.

68. In para. 552, the issue of using short-cuts in coding applies both to office coders as well as field coders (interviewers), although it happens to a lesser extent with field coders. It was suggested to add this point in the paragraph.

69. For consistency with the rest of the Handbook, it was suggested to remove the names of the two countries in para 560; however, others thought that it is alright to leave the names of the two countries in this particular case, since the cases are well documented and it is useful to know that these experiences exist in countries with good reputations.

70. There was a comment that in paragraph 558 (c) where it is stated that the number of jobs in a group defined at an aggregate level may at times be smaller than that of a group defined at a lower level (in another high-level group), there should be a clear message that coding at the high level could lead to a substantial loss of information.

71. Some experts suggested that where appropriate (for example, paras. 583 and 586), OCR should be replaced by ICR (intelligent character recognition). Others called for the reduction of the use of acronyms in the text (e.g., OCR, AC, CAC, etc.)

72. A suggestion was made to give more detail on section 12, the use of automatic or computer assisted coding. ILO will try to look for and insert references to both. What was

thought useful would be if there is a list of different types of automatic coding and the different names they are known by, as well as a description of each. It might mention two types: (a) read and write –generating key words + automatically assign code (ACTR type) and (b) based on typing and generating codes from description (auto-completion). Some possible references to check are the UNECE document and other recent literature on the subject. Countries can be contacted for input.

73. The meeting agreed that wording will be introduced into the document about the need for enumerators to write clearly and in the box when automatic coding is to be used. A possible location for this text is para. 588.

Part Six (chapters 12-18)

74. There was some disagreement to the first sentence in para. 679 about the use of the words ‘focused’, ‘precise’ and ‘economical’ in describing establishment surveys. Likewise, there was some disagreement on the first sentence of para. 682, which states that establishment surveys may be more economical and timely than household surveys. The experience of at least one country in attendance is that establishment surveys were more expensive. Another comment was that establishment surveys are not always more timely. The consultant agreed to adjust the text accordingly, specifically removing the words precise and economical from para. 679 and the word timely from para. 682.

75. In the list of the shortcomings of administrative sources (para. 686), it was suggested to add that statistics from these sources are often not timely.

76. With reference to para. 690, participants discussed the importance of revising ratio estimates (in labour force surveys) when population benchmark data change as a result of a new population census. The group agreed that the last sentence of the paragraph should be revised to state that all results from the labour force survey should be weighted properly, and to refer to chapter 16 for the methods of weighting. Some new text would have to be introduced in chapter 16.

77. A discussion ensued on synchronizing the timing of censuses and surveys. Some countries interrupt their labour force surveys during a census year, when census operations tend to take up almost all of the resources of the statistical office. This causes a break in the labor force time series. There was a suggestion to mention this in para. 697, as well as in chapter 2 under census administration.

78. In the paragraph on linkages between surveys (para. 709), a suggestion was made to insert text regarding the use of survey-census linkage studies to study survey non-response and characteristics of survey non-responders.

79. In para. 796, it was pointed out that some countries have used socio-economic variables (e.g., income, geographic division, sector) for stratification. This should be mentioned, and a footnote should be introduced to caution that if these variables are used for different surveys, one must be careful in choosing the stratification variables so that it allows for the flexibility to be used in surveys that are not on economic activity.

80. There was a proposal to change the title of chapter 15 to reflect the use of population census as a frame not just for censuses and surveys of agriculture but also for small-scale household-based economic units.

81. A footnote was suggested for para. 822 to indicate that sampling strategy based on uneven distribution assumes some sort of stability in the geographic and industrial distribution of small-scale economic units, when in fact this is not the case. In this connection, a few words in the last sentence of para. 840 also need to be changed.

82. A proposal to change the title of chapter 16 was agreed on by the group.

83. The group agreed that a new section (one paragraph) containing text on back revision of estimates, earlier suggested as footnote to para. 690, be added after para. 874.

84. A cross reference to the information on back revision was proposed to be inserted at the end of para. 866, with a footnote providing technical material for guidance on intercensal population estimates and projections (asking the UN Population Division for the reference).

85. Participants agreed that some text on the comparability of census and surveys with respect to concepts, definitions and classifications should be added because such differences could affect the evaluation of surveys against census data (para. 875). In this context, it was noted that publicity and awareness campaigns conducted for the census may affect the results, for example in one country it resulted in higher economic activity rates reported for women (compared to surveys which did not have the benefit of publicity).

86. It was also agreed to mention in this chapter the use of census data to assess non-response bias in labour force surveys, and a suggestion was to add in para. 885 a sentence or footnote to reference the new text introduced in para. 709.

87. There was some discussion on the use of the term ‘slippage’ to refer to the difference between population estimated from labor force surveys and in censuses. It was agreed to add a sentence at the end of para. 889 to introduce this term.

88. There was extensive discussion on local area/small area estimation. It was agreed that chapter 18 would be enhanced by including examples of local area or small area estimation such as from the US Local area unemployment statistics and the World Bank poverty mapping. It was also agreed that additional references to current work in the area be added (e.g., in footnote 118). Some experts, however, expressed reservations on this work and suggested that a section be added on limitations of small area statistics after para. 893. Some examples of drawbacks are that small area estimates can be biased if modeling is poor and that results may not be congruent with local anecdote. The conclusion is that efforts to produce small area estimates should be thoroughly examined due to limitations to produce characteristics of small domains based on the techniques described. However, the group agreed that small area estimation can maximize the benefit of asking economic characteristics questions in a census and increase incentives

to enhance conceptual integration and coordination between the census and labour force survey, thereby enhancing the overall labour market information system.

89. The use of the term ‘employment status’ in para. 907 and diagram 6 was questioned by the group. After some discussion, the experts thought that this should be replaced by the term ‘activity status’.

Annexes

90. Discussion on national census questionnaires given as examples in the Annex touched on the issue of language presentation (original language and/or translated), the content of the introductory paragraphs for each group of questionnaires, and the possibility of updating and improving regional representation of the examples. There was also concern about the readability of some of the questionnaires. It was agreed that UNSD review the annex, addressing the issues and concerns raised.

91. It was further suggested that UNSD inform countries as a matter of courtesy that their questionnaire is being reproduced in the Handbook.

III. Recommendations

92. The Group felt that the draft Handbook was well-written and provided a good overview of labour statistics from the population census. A number of detailed suggestions for revision of the draft were made by the Group. A summary of comments and recommendations follows.

General points

93. Experts agreed that the Handbook should be a self-contained document, as it is often essential to provide context and since the referenced documents may not be easily accessible to users. It is desirable to repeat important points within the Handbook, so that users reading only one part of the Handbook do not miss them. In many cases, it will be necessary to make cross-references.

94. The Handbook will focus on internationally agreed definitions and classifications. However, where necessary, it was agreed that the Handbook acknowledge regional variations.

95. The Experts endorsed the structure of presentation on questions used on specific topics in the census. It was felt that there was need to conclude each section with a recommendation on best practice. Where such practice was not currently available from a national census, the desirable question(s) may be recommended, with clear indication that these are hypothetical and countries are encouraged to test them for consideration in their census.

Specific points

96. The Handbook should provide guidance on how differences in estimates from census and sample surveys should be presented, defended, and explained. A paragraph should be added to this effect. Harmonizing the concepts, definitions, classifications, etc. between these two sources would help narrow the discrepancy.

97. It is necessary to emphasize that concepts and definitions used in the labour force survey be comparable to those used in the census. To the extent possible this requirement should be repeated in most chapters. In the same vein, it was noted that the experience from labour force surveys should help guide the planning and organization of the census, as it relates to the collection of data on the employed and unemployed and their characteristics.

98. The Handbook should mention the importance of validating census results against external data like those from the labor force survey as well as administrative data and provide guidance or references.

99. The utility of usual activity and current activity concepts should be further explained. It was suggested that the Handbook provide guidance on which approach to use in censuses, giving reasons and situations in which each approach is beneficial.

100. The Handbook should clarify further the different reference periods used for measuring employment, availability for work and job search.
101. The concept of temporary absence (especially from layoffs) needs further elaboration, reflecting the notion of long and short absences.
102. The issue of testing of definitions of concepts and questions to establish the most suitable form for the country was to be stressed.
103. While stressing the importance of producer-user consultations, some caution was raised with regards to discussions with users, who may be more concerned about very specific issues rather than with the broader set of issues. Their demands may weigh heavily on the process and detract from the key objectives of these consultations. The Handbook should provide some warning and also acknowledgement of how to manage users' expectations and provide examples of how this may be done, for example through the technical advisory committees, getting the right balance in the user perspectives, setting parameters for producer-user consultation sessions, etc.
104. Training of enumerators and supervisors was deemed as one of the most critical factors affecting the quality of data from the census, especially on economic characteristics, and can be an important source of differences with the sample survey data. It should be emphasized in several parts of the Handbook as relevant, and in particular in relation to management of the census.

Further work

105. It was recommended that a short version of the Handbook be produced for training purposes. ILO should consider producing a training compendium on this subject, as is being done for some of the ICLS resolutions.
106. An analysis of country practices and a report on the number of countries that field specific census topics, produced by UNSD, was found to be extremely useful. It was suggested that UNSD update the 1975-1984 study on national practices in the collection of census data on economic activity and related characteristics.
107. There is little understanding of the reasons for non-economic activity or for why people report not being available for work. This topic is relevant not only to the actual labour force but also to the potential labour force. It was recommended that ILO develop methods and specific indicators to guide such a study.
108. Other ways of asking availability for work questions need to be explored, because of the current dependence on hypothetical phrasing (e.g., "would you be available if a job was offered").
109. It was noted that the Section on "place of work" was based on concepts and definitions that had not been formally adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). Given the importance of this topic not only for labour statistics but also for migration, it would be useful for ILO to develop standards on this topic. Other

topics that required further investigation and development were travel time to work and labour migration.

110. To achieve comparability with the SNA, activities such as fetching water and collecting firewood are considered economic activity and may have implications on the measure of unemployment. To deal with this, the Group exhorted the ILO to consider the development of supplementary measures of employment and unemployment.

111. In view of the urgency of providing guidance to countries on measurement of economic activity in the 2010 round of census, now under way, it was proposed that the revised draft should be completed by end November 2007. The expert group might be given another chance to review the corrections made in the document, and this should be done by circulating the document reflecting “tracked changes”. New paragraphs and major rewrite of paragraphs would be sent separately to the Experts for comments as proposals for revised document by 21 November 2007, and Experts would have one week within which to provide any further comments or inputs.

Annex 1. List of Participants

No.	Country/ Organization	Participant name and address
1.	Canada	Mr. Geoff Bowlby Director Labour Statistics Statistics Canada Ottawa, Canada
2.	China	Ms. Hu Ying, Senior Statistician Division of Employment Department of Population and Employment Statistics National Bureau of Statistics Beijing, China
3.	Ghana	Dr. Grace Bediako Government Statistician Ghana Statistical Service Accra, Ghana
4.	India	Mr. Anand Kumar Nijhara Joint Director c/o Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India New Delhi, India
5.	Jordan	Mr. Gazi Shbaikat Director General Department of Statistics of Jordan Amman, Jordan
6.	Jordan	Ms. Batoul Obaid Head of Statistical Methods and Unit Sampling Department of Statistics of Jordan Amman, Jordan
7.	Malaysia	Ms. Nazaria Baharudin Director of Manpower and Social Statistics Division Department of Statistics, Malaysia Putrajaya, Malaysia
8.	Mexico	Mr. Rodrigo Negrete Director of Socio-Demographic Statistics INEGI Aguascalientes, Mexico
9.	Niger	Mr. Ibrahima Soumaila Director of Coordination and Statistics Development de l'Institut National de la Statistique Ministere de l'Economie et des Finances Niamey, Niger

10.	Saint Lucia	Edwin St. Catherine Director of Statistics Government Statistics Department Castries, Saint Lucia
11.	Serbia	Mr. Slavko Kampuran Head of Department for EU integration Belgrade, Serbia
12.	Turkey	Mr. Enver Tasti Head of Department of Social Statistics Turkish Statistical Institute Ankara, Turkey
13.	United Kingdom	Dr. Marilyn Thomas Labour Force Survey Manager Office for National Statistics Newport, United Kingdom
14.	Consultant	Mr. Robert Pember Consultant in labour statistics Bungendore, Australia
UN Regional Commissions		
15.	ESCWA	Ms. Fathia AbdelFadil Team Leader /Statistics Division/SD UNESCWA Beirut, Lebanon
International Agencies		
16.	UNFPA	Ms Kourtoum Nacro Technical Advisor Population and Development Branch Technical Support Division United Nations Population Fund New York, NY
17.	ILO	Mr. David Hunter Senior Statistician Bureau of Statistics International Labour Office Geneva, Switzerland
United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)		
18.	UNSD	Mr. Jean Michel Durr Chief Demographic Statistics Section
19.	UNSD	Ms. Erlinda Go Acting Chief Social and Housing Statistics Section
20.	UNSD	Mr. Diego Rumiany Associate Statistician Social and Housing Statistics Section

Annex 2. Organization of Work

Day 1: 9:00 – 10:00 am	Registration
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Opening of meeting
10:30 am – 1:00 pm	GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT HANDBOOK Structure, orientation, focus PART ONE Review - General Issues Chapter 1. Focus and content Chapter 2. Planning and design of population censuses PART ONE Wrap up, conclusions, recommendations
2:30 pm – 6:00 pm	PART TWO Review - Measurement of economic characteristics in a population census Chapter 3. Measurement frameworks
Day 2: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm	PART TWO Review (continued) Chapter 4. The currently economically active population Chapter 5. Usual economic activity status PART TWO Wrap up, conclusions, recommendations
2:30 pm – 6:00 pm	PART THREE Review – Measurement of characteristics of jobs, establishments and persons Chapter 6. Descriptive characteristics for the main job Chapter 7. Descriptive characteristics of the establishment
Day 3: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm	PART THREE Review (continued) Chapter 8. Person totals PART THREE Wrap up and conclusions/recommendations PART FOUR Review – Data processing, tabulation, analysis and dissemination Chapter 9. Data processing, tabulation, ... PART FOUR Wrap up, conclusions, recommendations
2:30 pm – 6:00 pm	PART FIVE Review – Coding of occupations and industry Chapter 10. Preparations for coding occupation and industry Chapter 11. The development and use of coding indexes PART FIVE Wrap up, conclusions, recommendations

Day 4: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm	PART SIX Review – Using population censuses to improve labour force and related statistics Chapter 12. Types of data collection on the labour force and other economic characteristics Chapter 13. Labour force survey structure and arrangements Chapter 14. Sampling and related uses of census information
2:30 pm – 6:00 pm	PART SIX Review (continued) Chapter 15. The population census as a frame for economic and agricultural surveys and censuses Chapter 16. Use of data for the production of survey estimates Chapter 17. The census as a basis for evaluating survey data Chapter 18. Combined uses of census and survey data: current estimates for small domains PART SIX Wrap up, conclusions, recommendations
Day 5: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm	ANNEXES Review ANNEXES Wrap up, conclusions, recommendations
2:30 pm – 6:00 pm	FINAL COMMENTS AND RECAP Gaps, consolidated recommendations, next steps List of contributors and contributions