



International
Labour
Organization



THE **SOUTHERN**

AFRICAN



MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

PROJECT

**Southern Africa and Indian Ocean
labour migration indicators**

As labour migration flows continue to steadily increase in the Southern African and Indian Ocean (SA-IO) region, the need for coherence among key policy areas such as labour migration, employment, and education and training has become essential to both the protection of migrant workers' rights, and addressing economic and labour market demands in the region. In this context, Southern African countries have made the development of evidence-based policies on labour migration part of their priorities in reporting on progress on various Agenda 2063/SDG targets, as well as through adopting and implementing regional initiatives such as the SADC Labour Migration Policy Framework and Action Plan,¹ or nascent and upcoming COMESA labour migration data strengthening initiatives. The SADC Action Plan recognizes the need to collect quality information on employment trends and decent work deficits among migrant workers as well as the resident population, which is comparable across countries and over time. Combining comparable data on labour migration with existing mechanisms for skills recognition and matching at the regional level will also create new opportunities to support implementation of the Action Plan.

Thus, accurate, robust and timely data collected in line with international standards is necessary to develop effective labour migration policies, essential to improving the welfare of international migrant workers and to address the challenges related to international labour migration, globally and at the national level. The 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) endorsed the Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration² (hereafter the Guidelines) in October 2018, to provide international recommendations regarding concepts, definitions and methodologies for the measurement of international labour migration, the lack of which being a significant obstacle to the production of comparable and harmonised statistics. The guidelines clarify definitions and concepts covered by the generic term International labour migration, as well as integrate the concepts of labour market attachment and country of measurement in the analytical framework. The Guidelines are accompanied by a flexible set of labour migration questions produced by the ILO, which can be easily appended to existing censuses or household surveys, in particular to Labour Force Surveys. The aim of these questions is to identify migrants, and in ideal cases, migration flows. The Guidelines are also in line with guidance produced by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN-DESA) on improving statistics on international migration.³

The most often used source of data on labour migration include population censuses, household surveys, and administrative records. Population censuses are a major source of data on the stock of foreign-born and the stock of foreigners in a country, and are the most widely available source of comparable information on international migration. In some cases they can also provide information on who came into the country recently, making it possible to calculate net migration rates and flows. Despite their universal coverage and (in principle) inclusiveness of undocumented migrants however, censuses are usually only held at 10-year intervals, making them quickly outdated when looking at short-term flows, and might not collect information on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of individuals to the level of detail required for effective labour migration governance.

1 These priorities are reflected in the African Union Commission's (AUC) biennial report on data on labour migration in Africa, as part of data component of the adopted the Joint African Union Commission/ International Labour Office/International Organization for Migration/United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Labour Migration Programme of Africa (JMLP). The JMLP aims to achieve an effective intra-regional regime of labour migration and mobility for development and integration with the required good governance in Africa.

2 ILO. 2018. Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration. ICLS/20/2018/Guidelines. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meeting-document/wcms_648922.pdf

3 UN-DESA. 2020. [draft] Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses. New York: 2020. Retrieved from: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/international-migration/2020-Handbook-Migration-and-Censuses-E.pdf>

Labour force surveys (LFS) collect data from a sample of households, ideally at regular intervals, to obtain labour market information such as labour force status, educational attainment, industry and occupation of employment, status in employment, and wages. In many countries, labour force surveys are the main source of labour market data for labour market and other public policies, including international labour migration/mobility policies. As long as they are based on sampling methods which are nationally representative and can identify migrant populations in specific national contexts, these surveys can be used to estimate the stock of international migrant workers in the labour force, as well as annual inflows, and to generate key labour market indicators. For origin countries, the LFS can be used to estimate outflows of migrant workers, as well as stocks of return migrants according to key labour market characteristics.

Labour force surveys in the Southern African and Indian Ocean region might be difficult to compare due to widely different data collection timeframes, as well as geographical and population coverage parameters in samples. As an example, while some countries conduct annual or even quarterly surveys, others do not run LFSs at regular intervals and might only conduct them when a policy need arises. Furthermore, some sampling designs might exclude resident non-nationals or institutionalized populations, or might unintentionally exclude those who do not speak the official language(s). The definitions of labour market indicators might also vary among countries, and the types of questions asked to arrive at employment estimates can vary in ways that make regional level comparisons difficult, if not impossible. Specialized international migration surveys have more flexibility than an LFS to identify migrant workers, and can more easily include the required number of questions, but they tend to be much more expensive and hence conducted much less frequently.

Administrative records include population registers and special types of registers covering foreigners and other specific groups of persons, such as asylum seekers or refugees. Such records are kept by institutions for administrative purposes, but depending on their quality and coverage of the target population, can be used to produce relevant statistics on the target population. Relevant registers for labour migration indicators would include those where changes in countries of residence are recorded.

The AUC also promotes a continental approach to harmonizing labour market data and statistics, which includes labour migration.⁴ The Southern African Migration Management (SAMB) project aims to support this effort towards regional comparability of labour and labour migration statistics in the SA-IO region, in line with international, continental, and regional statistical standards such as UN-DESA guidance, the ICLS Guidelines, the AUC Labour Market Indicators Guidelines, as well as the SADC Labour Migration Policy Framework and Action Plan, by building on already existing efforts, such as to implement a SADC migration module in labour force surveys in all Member States.

4 AUC. 2017. Guidelines for producing labour market indicators from existing data. Retrieved from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/32846-doc-guidelines_for_producing_labour_market_indicators.pdf

► International Labour Migration Database

Where the ILO cannot produce indicators based on microdata shared by Member States directly, it relies on aggregate tables submitted by national institutions, to produce the International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) database, which publishes a series of 51 labour migration indicators/tables at the national level and in line with the Guidelines, disaggregated by various categories (such as age, gender, employment status, occupation, economic sector, place of birth, and citizenship). The 51 indicators are divided into three modules on international migrant stock, international migrant flows, and citizens abroad (the 20 tables included in the ILM Questionnaire, used to calculate all 51 tables, are listed in Box 1).

Box 1. International Labour Migration Statistics Questionnaire: Tables

Module A: International Migrant Stock

- 1.1. Population by sex, age, and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.2. Working-age population by sex, labour force status, and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.3. Working-age population by sex, education, and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.4. Foreign-born/non-citizen population by sex and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.5. Employed foreign-born/non-citizens persons by sex and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.6. Employment by sex, economic activity, and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.7. Employment by sex, occupation, and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.8. Employment by sex, status in employment, and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.9. Mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and place of birth/citizenship

Module B: International Migrant Flow

- 1.1 Inflow of foreign-born/non-citizen population by sex and place of birth/citizenship
- 1.1 Inflow of foreign-born/non-citizen working-age population by sex and education
- 1.1 Inflow of foreign-born/non-citizen working-age population by sex and economic activity
- 1.1 Inflow of foreign-born/non-citizens employed persons by sex and occupation

Module C: Citizens Abroad

- 1.1 Stock of citizens abroad by sex and place of residence
- 1.1 Inflow of citizens returned from abroad by sex and place of previous residence
- 1.1 Outflow of citizens by sex and place of destination
- 1.1 Outflow of citizens for employment by sex and place of destination
- 1.1 Outflow of citizens for employment by sex and education
- 1.1 Outflow of citizens for employment by sex and economic activity
- 1.1 Outflow of citizens for employment by sex and occupation

Source: ILO. *Statistics on international labour migration*, ILO, Geneva
 From: <https://ilostat ilo.org/topics/labour-migration/>

Southern African data in the ILMS is limited. None of the tables in the database has data for all 16 SA-IO countries. While some tables have data from up to thirteen countries, most have only seven and a few just one or two. Moreover, data is not necessarily available for the same years for all countries, meaning cross-national comparisons are difficult to make. Indicators relating to citizenship tend to have greater coverage than indicators relating to place

of birth, even though the latter would be preferable, as it more widely available.⁵ The primary data source used for the ILMS is the LFS. Other surveys are used in some countries (such as Integrated Household Surveys and Household Income and Expenditure Surveys), while census data is only occasionally incorporated. The content of the database reflects national data submitted to the ILO, and only very few African countries have submitted data based on administrative records. In the SA-IO region, only one country has submitted information based on administrative records to the ILMS.

► Minimum (core) labour migration indicators

Alongside ILO's existing Decent Work Indicators (DWI)⁶ and Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM),⁷ producing a set of indicators to measure labour migration trends will provide an essential resource for effective, responsive, and evidence-based labour and labour migration governance at national and regional levels. The Guidelines provides recommendations and a basis for a set of indicators which is internationally comparable (disaggregated by sex, age group and, where relevant, by country of origin, country of destination, country of labour attachment or country of previous labour attachment).

The following list gives a general description of proposed minimum indicators for the SA-IO region (Box 2 lists the data items required to calculate the full set of indicators). Given that the availability of labour migration statistics in the SA-IO region is relatively weak, indicators are divided into two categories: basic and intermediate/advanced indicators, which respectively require progressively more complete and recurring data collection. The intermediate/advanced indicators build on previous ones, meaning that countries that can produce intermediate/advanced indicators should also be able to produce basic indicators. Ideally, countries should be able to complete all the tables listed in Box 1, but at a minimum, with the support of SAMM, countries should be able to report on these basic indicators, and can expand on indicators as national capacity to collect more complete and recurring labour market and labour migration data improves.

Basic (Census, administrative records, and household surveys)

- Share of foreign-born (or non-citizens) in the working-age population
- Stock of international migrant workers⁸ by main countries of origin⁹
- Labour force participation rate of foreign-born (or non-citizens) working-age population
- Employment-to-population ratio of foreign-born (or non-citizens) working-age population
- Unemployment rate of foreign-born (or non-citizens) working-age population

5 Place of birth as a criterion for identifying migrant workers is also preferable because, unlike citizenship, it does not change over time thus allowing for identification of all migrants. This includes naturalized citizens, and more easily allows for capturing those for which a change of country of residence actually happened.

6 ILO. 2013. Decent Work Indicators: Guidelines for producers and users of statistical and legal framework indicators. ILO: Geneva. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/publication/wcms_229374.pdf

7 ILO. 2015. Key Indicators of the Labour Market. ILO: Geneva. Retrieved from: <https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/research-and-databases/kilm/lang--en/index.htm>

8 The concept of international migrant workers is meant to measure the current labour attachment of international migrants in a country, irrespective of the initial purpose of migration, and of others who are not usual residents of the country but have current labour attachment in the country of measurement. See 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning statistics for labour migration (ILO, 2018).

9 Either country of birth or country of citizenship.

Intermediate/Advanced (Quarterly/regular labour force survey with migration module)

- Inflow of for-work international migrants
- Share of for-work international migrants in the total inflow of international migrants
- Stock of return international migrant workers ¹⁰ in the country of measurement
- Share of return international migrant workers in the working age population of the country of measurement
- Inflow of return international migrant workers in the country of measurement

► Expanded (supplementary) labour migration indicators

The minimum indicators can, depending on national capacity and the needs/interests of policymakers, be expanded to other relevant indicators (through f.e. a LFS module, administrative data, or special surveys), such as:

- **Labour market characteristics and working conditions of international migrant workers**, including:
 - educational attainment;
 - status in employment;
 - economic sector;
 - occupation;
 - working hours;
 - wages;
 - rest periods and other contractual conditions;
 - occupational safety and health protection; and
 - social security coverage of migrant workers.
- **vulnerability to labour exploitation**, including:
 - recruitment costs, in line with SDG indicator 10.7.1;
 - incidence of trafficking in persons or smuggling of migrants; and
 - forced labour.
- **Refugees in the labour market**, including indicators such as:
 - share of refugees in the labour force;
 - refugee employment ratios; and
 - refugee employment duration.

¹⁰ Whether a Census is appropriate for this indicator depends on whether individual-level information on previous country of residence or previous country of labour market attachment is included or can be derived.

► Statistical data items for minimum and extended indicators

The *Guidelines* also propose a detailed list of statistical items to be included in data collection instruments that would allow the *minimum indicators* on labour migration to be calculated at national levels. These items are listed in Box 2.

Box 2. Data items for indicators on international labour migration (bold items are required for minimum indicators)

(a) Main socio-demographic characteristics:

- **sex**
- **age or date of birth**
- marital status
- level of education attained
- type of living quarters (private household, collective or institutional household, other type of living quarters, non-residential accommodation)
- **country of birth and country of birth of parent(s)**
- **country of citizenship**
- **country of usual residence**
- **country of last usual residence (or country of previous labour attachment for return international migrant workers)**
- proficiency (speaking, reading, writing) in a language of the country of labour attachment

(b) Main migration characteristics:

- **purpose of migration (declared or documented reason for first entry into the country, specifically the country of actual or intended labour attachment) and also, for return international migrant workers, the main reason for last departure from the country of previous labour attachment**
- type of visa, residence permit, work permit
- permanent, temporary, or circular nature of migration
- duration of stay: date of first entry into the country of labour attachment and also, for return international migrant workers, date of last departure from the country
- any restrictions in the rights to residence in the country of actual or intended labour attachment (such as concerning place of residence, duration of stay, mobility)

(c) Main work characteristics:

- **labour force status (employed, unemployed, outside the labour force)**
- status in employment
- branch of economic activity
- occupation
- working time, including hours usually worked, contractual hours of work
- duration of employment in months or years
- employment-related income
- remittances sent outside the country of labour attachment
- social security entitlements in the country of labour attachment
- any restrictions of the right to employment (e.g., concerning undertaking or seeking work, changing employer or work performed)



For more information, please contact:

Jesse Mertens

Technical Officer, labour migration and data
ILO Country Office for Zambia, Malawi, and
Mozambique

samm-project@ilo.org