

**Department of Economic and Social Affairs**  
Statistics Division

The World's Women 2005  
**Progress in Statistics**



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## DESA

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## Message from the Secretary-General

Ten years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the lack of reliable national statistics on gender issues persists in many parts of the world. In recent years, efforts to monitor the Millennium Development Goals further revealed the inadequacy of those statistics that were available. That is why *The World's Women 2005* focuses on the state and progress of statistics. Based on what countries report to the international statistical system, it analyzes their capacity to produce statistics on gender issues, and highlights progress made in reporting those statistics over the past three decades.

The analysis shows that despite some improvements over the years, much more needs to be done to develop adequate statistics that address gender concerns. This report is intended as a guide to help Governments and other stakeholders strengthen statistical systems, mainstream gender statistics, and further develop concepts and methods for collecting statistics on gender concerns. I urge Governments, non-governmental organizations, researchers, academics and activists around the world to make full use of this valuable tool.



**Kofi A. Annan**  
Secretary-General



## Preface

In accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference of Women in 1995, the United Nations prepares a new issue of *The World's Women* at regular five-year intervals and distributes it widely. The first issue was published in 1991, and the current one, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, is the fourth in the series.

During the 10 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, there has been an increasing demand for sex-disaggregated data and statistical information that adequately reflect the situation of women and men in all aspects of their life. The Platform put gender equality firmly on the policy agenda and laid out the actions required from all stakeholders to improve gender statistics in order to measure and monitor progress towards the achievement of the goals of the Platform.

To monitor progress in gender equality and the advancement of women and to guide policy, it is crucial that reliable and timely statistics be available. Yet official national data on basic demographic and social topics for gender analysis are at times deficient or unavailable. Consequently, much of the trend analysis in the previous editions of *The World's Women* published in 1991, 1995 and 2000 either limited coverage to countries that had reasonably good data over time or relied on national and regional estimates prepared by the international statistical system.

The direction and focus of *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* is on the state of national statistics useful for addressing gender concerns. That focus is necessary in order to know the extent to which official national statistics, as differentiated from internationally prepared estimates, are available to address various gender concerns. The report reviews the current availability of data and assesses progress made in the provision of gender statistics during the past 30 years. It also identifies areas, such as violence against women, power and decision-making and human rights, where statistics are particularly difficult to obtain owing to their nature or to a lack of well-defined and established concepts, definitions and/or methods of data collection. In addition, it offers suggestions for a way forward in building national statistical capacity, mainstreaming gender statistics and developing and refining concepts and methods relevant to the production of gender statistics. The fourth edition of *The World's Women* therefore takes a somewhat different track from its predecessors, looking at progress rather than trends in statistics.

As in the three previous editions of *The World's Women*, non-technical language has been used to make the publication accessible to a large audience and respond to the needs of different users, including policy makers, non-governmental organizations, researchers, academics and gender specialists.

*The World's Women 2005* was prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of DESA

provided substantive support for the report. United Nations Regional Commissions and specialized agencies provided statistics, information and guidance in their respective fields of expertise, including the Population Division of DESA, the International Labour Office, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The Governments of Italy and Germany and the World Food Programme provided financial support for the publication.

Assistance in preparing the report was provided by the following consultants: Lorraine Corner, who drafted some chapters; Tina Johnson, who edited the first drafts; and Nicki Adler and Jim Eschinger, who designed the text pages of this publication.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "José Antonio Ocampo". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

José Antonio Ocampo  
Under-Secretary-General  
for Economic and Social Affairs  
December 2005

## Executive summary

### Why report on progress in statistics?

*The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* focuses on the state of statistics for addressing gender concerns. It reviews the current availability of national data and assesses progress in data reporting from 1975 to 2003, based on the information that national statistical authorities report to the international statistical system.<sup>1</sup> The statistics reviewed include those related to population, health, education and work. Also reviewed in the report is the current state of statistics in some of the relatively newer areas, namely violence against women; poverty; power and decision-making; and human rights.

The focus on official national statistics, as differentiated from internationally prepared estimates, reveals the extent to which Governments are able to produce statistics to address various gender concerns. By so doing, the report provides Governments with the means to assess progress, identify gaps and design strategies to improve the national collection and dissemination of gender statistics needed for policy formulation and programme planning and evaluation.

It is hoped that such assessment of national capacity to report on various topics can assist national statistics offices to obtain the increased budgetary and human resources needed for sustainable improvements in statistics. The assessment can reveal the realistic level of statistical capacity to produce sex-disaggregated Millennium Development Goal indicators at the country level. This would help pinpoint the areas where technical support is most crucial. Gender specialists can also use the report as an advocacy tool for the improvement of gender statistics.

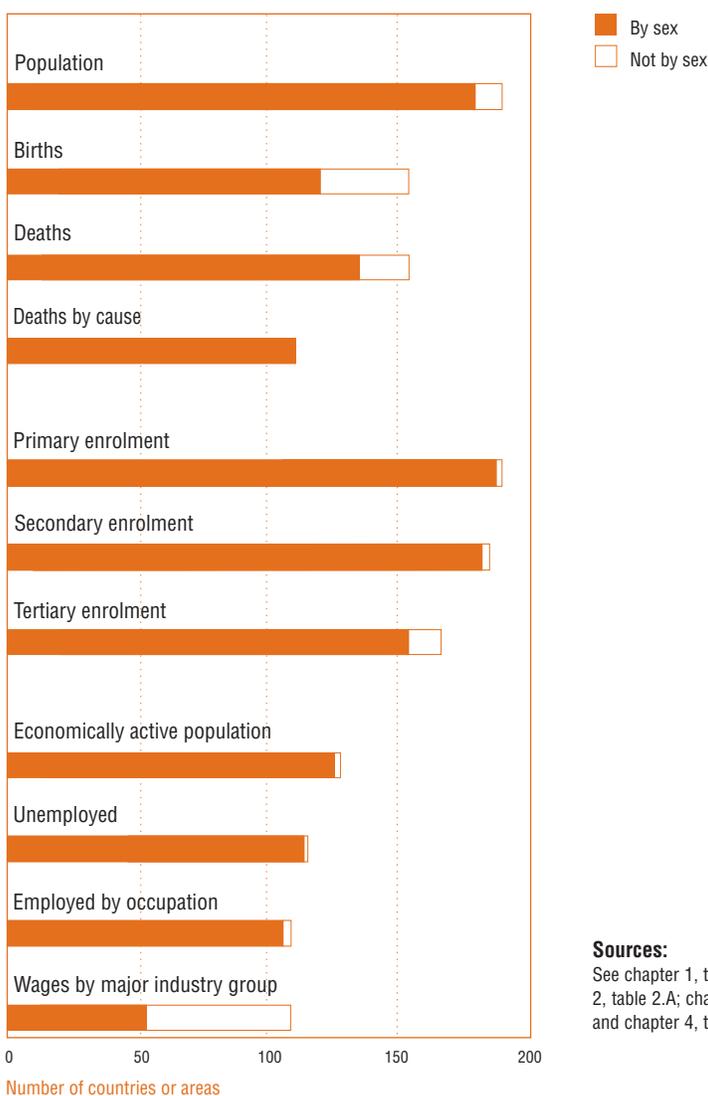
### The current situation 1995-2003

The capacity of countries to report sex-disaggregated official national statistics during the period 1995–2003 has been mixed. This is illustrated by the reporting of 204 countries or areas on some basic topics. Chart A shows the number of countries that have reported data on those topics for at least one year during the period 1995–2003. It also shows the

number that reported the data by sex. As the chart shows, population and enrolment are widely reported, with more than 180 countries reporting population and primary and secondary enrolment. Statistics on births, deaths and economic activity are not as widely reported, with between 100 and 160 countries reporting the data. The large number of countries unable to provide data by sex on wages, births and deaths is a cause for concern.

Chart A

**Number of countries or areas that reported data on selected topics at least once during the period 1995–2003**



**Sources:**

See chapter 1, table 1.A; chapter 2, table 2.A; chapter 3, table 3A; and chapter 4, table 4.A.

Reporting of data varies greatly by geographic region. Europe has the highest reporting and Africa the lowest. Other regions fall between the two extremes. Similarly, the more developed regions report the most data and the least developed countries the least.

The situation in Africa is such that well over half of the countries provided sex-disaggregated data on population and on primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment at least once between 1995 and 2003. However, less than a third were able to provide data on births, deaths and the economic characteristics of the population by sex. Additional details for Africa and the other regions are provided in summary tables available at the end of each chapter. Annex tables A1 to A4 present detailed national data on the same topics.

## A review of three decades 1975-1984, 1985-1994 and 1995-2003

A global review of three decades of reporting by Governments shows fairly limited progress in the reporting of official national statistics worldwide. Assessment of progress for the most recent period is, however, inconclusive owing to delays in national reporting by statistical systems. Countries often take several years or longer to report their most recent statistics. The review finds that to a great extent countries that reported data thirty years ago continue to do so today. Similarly, many countries that did not report thirty years ago still do not report. However, a

number of countries move from reporting in one period to not reporting in the next, and vice versa. On balance, the result is illustrated in chart B below, which shows the reporting of total population, economically active population and number of deaths, by sex and age.

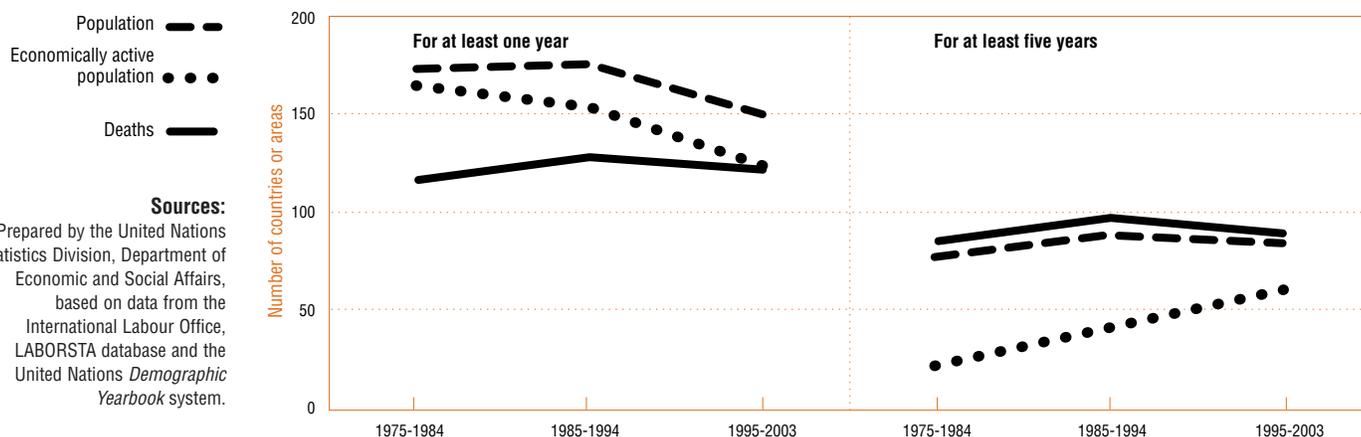
Comparing the two graphs in chart B, it is evident that fewer countries are able to report annual data frequently (i.e. for at least 5 years in a 10-year period<sup>2</sup>) by sex and age. Two types of gaps are evident from the graphs: first, the gap between reporting at least once and frequent reporting, represented by those countries that report data for less than five years in a period; second, the gap representing those countries that did not report at all.

Frequent reporting of annual data on the economically active population by sex and age has increased over the three periods. However, reporting of the economically active population has not yet reached the levels of reporting that are available for total population or for number of deaths.

The report also noted that a number of countries have initiated the collection of data on new topics important to the study of gender. More countries now have some data on violence against women, the participation of women and men in the informal sector and time use of women and men. However, data collection on those issues remains largely ad hoc and has not been incorporated into the regular statistical work programme of the national statistics offices. For developing countries, it is often dependent on external resources or, in some cases, the support of national women's machineries.

Chart B

Number of countries or areas that reported sex- and age-disaggregated statistics for at least one year and for at least five years, for three periods



The limited progress in gender statistics and the differences in availability of such data across regions and across topics is a reflection of three factors:

- Inadequate statistical capacity
- Lack of gender mainstreaming
- Inadequate concepts and methods

## Actions and proposed strategies

To improve gender statistics, it is therefore essential that the following actions be taken:

- Strengthen national statistical systems
- Mainstream gender in all aspects of production of statistics
- Develop and improve concepts and methods where inadequate

Strategies proposed for each action are listed below.

### Action: strengthen national statistical systems

In order to develop and improve gender statistics at the national level, the capacity to produce reliable and timely basic statistics must be present. For many countries in the less developed regions, this is not the case. The situation calls for strengthening the national statistical systems, starting with the national statistics office.

#### Strategy 1. Secure sustained commitment at the highest level to strengthen the national statistical system

Governments should strive to the extent possible to support the programmes listed below, adopting a coordinated approach to produce a core set of socio-economic statistics required for policy formulation and planning. The priorities would vary according to national circumstances.

- Implement at least one population and housing census every 10 years and disseminate the results widely and in a timely manner;
- Establish, strengthen and maintain civil registration and vital statistics systems, strengthen other administrative recording systems and make statistics easily accessible to policy makers and other users;

- Ensure the sustainability of an integrated national survey programme that produces regular and timely statistics to guide policy and that allows population surveys addressing new research topics to be conducted as the need arises.

#### Strategy 2. Maximize the use of official statistics

National statistics offices and line ministries should widely disseminate and promote the use of the statistics that they produce. Users and producers of statistics should strive to consider all available sources of national data and use them to complement each other, as appropriate.

#### Strategy 3. Build capacity among producers of statistics in data presentation

Producers of statistics need to be more proactive in making the value of gender statistics visible to Governments, the public and other stakeholders. Innovative and more user-friendly ways of presenting and disseminating data need to be developed for Government and civil society. Such measures would help widen the use of the data and in the process create a demand for statistics that would strengthen the claim of the statistics office on the national budget.

#### Strategy 4. Develop human resources at all levels in national statistics offices

The success of a national statistics office depends not only on commitments at the highest level but also on the commitment and skills of women and men in the organization. Continuous staff training and skill upgrading is crucial to this success. Women and men should be given the same opportunities for training and advancement. In national statistics offices where women are underrepresented at decision-making levels, increasing their representation should also be an explicit goal.

### Action: mainstream gender in all aspects of the production of statistics

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into national statistics systems has to be systematic; that is, implemented in all aspects of the production of statistics, from the development of concepts and methods for collecting data through the presentation of results. This endeavour requires political will at all levels, not only in national statistics offices but also in statistical services of other government agencies and in all institutions that provide administrative data.

### Strategy 5. Specify the development of gender statistics within the legal framework of official statistics

Of crucial importance to improving the availability of gender statistics are the specification of formal requirements for sex disaggregation and the incorporation of a gender perspective within national statistical legislation that regulates the production and dissemination of official statistics. To expand the range of information available for gender analysis, those requirements need to be established not only for statistics already officially collected by the national statistics office but also for other sources of data, particularly administrative data being collected and disseminated by other government agencies and organizations in the public and private sectors.

### Strategy 6. Support and strengthen gender statistics units

National statistics offices can benefit from setting up a gender statistics unit within their organizations. Such a unit can play a catalytic role in initiating and monitoring the process of mainstreaming a gender perspective into national statistical systems, especially at the early stages. Through their contacts with national machineries for women and non-governmental organizations, gender statistics units facilitate communication between the producers and end users of gender statistics. The units provide information to users and help them understand the uses of existing statistics. At the same time, they can increase the awareness among statisticians of the need to produce and disseminate statistics that address gender concerns and to develop gender statistics in new areas such as violence against women, the informal sector and unpaid work.

### Strategy 7. Foster dialogue between statistical offices and interested stakeholders, including women's groups

Dialogue between national statistics offices and interested stakeholders can enable women's groups and gender advocates to understand, gain access to and use gender statistics more effectively. At the same time, the dialogue can help to increase the capacity of statisticians to identify and understand gender issues and to present data in formats that better address the needs of users.

### Strategy 8. Train producers of statistics to incorporate a gender perspective into their work

One way to achieve gender-mainstreamed statistics is through the provision of regular training courses on gender statistics for general statisticians, either within tertiary training institutions or in national statistics offices. The training should be extended to field personnel and other staff members involved in the production of statistics.

### Strategy 9. Tap existing sources of data and enhance their usefulness for producing gender statistics

Administrative data represent a potential source of gender statistics. Using administrative data to produce needed statistics is a cost-effective approach since the data are already routinely collected by organizations as part of regular administrative processes. With the introduction of appropriate changes in data collection, the results may be used for addressing gender issues. For example, police and court records can be used to understand the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence, but this is possible only if information on the victim's sex and relationship to offender is collected in the primary record.

### Strategy 10. Make official national statistics a required component of international reporting mechanisms

The periodic country reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of the Beijing Platform for Action provide opportunities to promote the use of gender statistics. Utilization of statistics in those reports has been limited to date. Consideration should be given to establishing formal requirements for the inclusion of official national statistics on gender issues in a standardized format in those reports.

## Action: develop and improve concepts and methods

### Strategy 11. Promote collaboration between international and regional organizations and agencies, national statistics offices and academic and research institutions

International and regional organizations and agencies, national statistics offices and academic and research institutions need to work together to mainstream gender in the development and revision of concepts, definitions and methods of collecting data on topics where methods are inadequate. The collaboration extends to all conceptual and methodological issues, including the design of survey questionnaires or modules within questionnaires, the revision of international classifications and standards and the development of analytical methods and appropriate indicators, among others.

## Concluding remarks

At the national level, increasing the coverage of statistics on gender issues and ensuring that concepts and methods incorporate a gender perspective is particularly challenging in view of the human and financial resource constraints faced by most national statistical systems. Resource constraints are particularly severe in the least developed countries, where the most pressing need is to strengthen national statistical systems to produce the most basic statistics in a timely manner.

In the long term, to improve the lives of women and men, statistical systems and budgets at the national as well as international level must bring about the sustained and institutionalized change needed to ensure the availability of quality gender statistics.

## Notes

- 1 In the present report, the term “international statistical system” refers to the statistical databases of the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; the Bureau of Statistics of the International Labour Office; the UNESCO Institute for Statistics; and the World Health Organization.
- 2 Only 9 years in the most recent period (1995-2003) since data for 2004 were not yet available at the time of preparation of the present report.





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## Introduction

Governments recognized the importance of statistics on women for development planning in 1975 at the World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico, and reiterated the relevance of such data at the second world conference in Copenhagen in 1980. Responses by Governments and international agencies led to the first reports and publications with statistics about women.<sup>1</sup>

The recognition that information on men is also needed in order to adequately describe the situation of women has resulted in a shift in focus from statistics on women to one on gender statistics. In 1985, Governments attending the third world conference on women in Nairobi agreed to develop or reorganize their national information systems to compile and disseminate statistics on women and men to better address gender issues.<sup>2</sup> As a result, many national statistical offices and international agencies began preparing user-friendly booklets with statistics that compared the situation of women and men in many aspects of life.<sup>3</sup>

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, urged national, regional and international statistical services to ensure that statistics related to individuals are collected, analysed and presented by sex and age and reflect problems, issues and questions related to women and men.<sup>4</sup> More recently, in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", Governments resolved to provide national statistical offices with the institutional and financial support required to collect, compile and disseminate data disaggregated by sex, age and other factors.<sup>5</sup>

The Commission on the Status of Women, in its ten-year review of the Platform for Action, noted that activities for the advancement of women have been limited by an insufficient understanding of gender equality and gender mainstreaming among government structures, a continuing lack of gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex and age and, in many areas, inadequate methods for assessing progress.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Statistical Commission, at its thirty-sixth session in March 2005, noted that many countries still lack the capacity to produce the statistics necessary for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, and that indicators currently being produced at the national level need to be reviewed.<sup>7</sup>

Against this backdrop of growing pressure for an assessment of countries' capacity to produce the requisite gender statistics, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* examines the extent to which countries are able to provide data in several key areas of concern highlighted by the Beijing Platform for Action. By focusing on national capacity to produce and report gender statistics, *The World's Women 2005* provides Governments and international agencies with crucial information to assess the adequacy of national statistics currently available for policy-making, planning and monitoring. The publication also draws attention to some of the challenges that countries are facing as they strive to meet the growing demand for gender statistics.

## Definitions and methods

### Gender concepts and gender statistics

**Gender** refers to socially constructed differences in attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to the social interactions and relationships between women and men. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in roles and responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

**Gender equality** means equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for women and men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that women's and men's opportunities, rights and responsibilities do not depend on whether they are born female or male. It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration.<sup>9</sup>

**Gender statistics** are statistics that adequately reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in all areas of life. Producing gender statistics entails disaggregating individual data by sex and other characteristics to reveal those differences or inequalities, and collecting data on specific issues that affect one sex more than the other or relate to gender relations between women and men. Gender statistics thus allow for a systematic evaluation of gender issues and of inequalities between women and men. The Beijing Platform for Action outlines the actions that

Governments must take to mainstream a gender perspective into the work of national statistical systems and produce the requisite gender statistics.<sup>10</sup>

**Gender mainstreaming** has been defined by the United Nations as “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal [of mainstreaming] is to achieve gender equality”.<sup>11</sup>

### Statistical capacity and reporting to the United Nations

*The World's Women 2005* reviews and analyses the reporting of statistics on women and men by countries or areas to the international statistical system. The present report focuses on official national data collected by countries either through censuses, administrative records or sample surveys. Based on what is available in the databases of the international statistical system, the statistical capacity of countries to produce and disseminate data broken down by sex and other relevant characteristics is inferred.

Countries or areas that have reported the requisite statistics to the United Nations and its specialized agencies are considered to have reported data to the international statistical system. Thus, the numbers presented here represent the number of countries or areas that reported official national statistics to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, rather than the number that have those statistics. Estimates made by the United Nations or its specialized agencies are not considered in the present report.

### Countries or areas included

The review covers all Member States of the United Nations as of 31 December 2004 and other countries or areas with a population of at least 150,000 in the year 2000. Thus a total of 204 countries or areas are analysed in the report. Countries or areas are grouped into six geographic regions (Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania) and into three development groups (more developed regions, less developed regions excluding the least developed countries and least developed countries) in the pres-

entation and analysis. Annex 2 provides the list of countries and areas in each development group. Countries included in the “least developed countries” category are those established by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. They numbered 50 as of December 2004.<sup>12</sup>

It should be noted that the term “countries” refers to political entities that are independent States. The term “areas” refers to geographical entities that have no independent political status; an area is thus generally a portion of one or more independent States.

In the review of changes over time, the following conventions have been observed with respect to countries that have separated or unified during the period covered:

- A country or area that was part of an entity (country) before that entity dissolved into several countries is considered as having reported its statistics if the former entity of which it is part reported statistics to the United Nations. This would apply, for example, to the countries or areas that were part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the former Czechoslovakia, the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or Ethiopia prior to 1993. Therefore, since the USSR conducted a population and housing census in 1989, countries or areas such as Lithuania, Latvia, Kazakhstan and others that were part of the USSR are all considered as having conducted a census in 1989.
- A country that resulted from the union of two former entities (countries) is considered as having reported its statistics only if all of its constituent entities individually reported statistics to the United Nations before unification. That is the case with Yemen and Germany.

### Population covered

Since population size varies widely among countries, it was decided to present not only the number of countries or areas that have reported the selected statistics reviewed here, but also the proportion of the population of the world, geographic region or development group that those countries or areas represent.

In calculating the proportion of the population covered, population estimates prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations were used.<sup>13</sup>

## Period covered

Considering that national statistical capacity takes a long time to develop, the present report examines progress in the reporting of statistics over a time span of almost 30 years, from 1975 to 2003. For most of the analysis, the time span is subdivided into three periods as follows:

- First period: 1975-1984
- Second period: 1985-1994
- Third period: 1995-2003

In interpreting the results for the most recent period, allowance should be made for the following: (a) the most recent period is shorter than the earlier periods by one year as information for 2004 was still being collected at the time of preparation of the report; and (b) some of the data for the more recent years have not yet been reported by countries to the international statistical system owing to the time lag in data processing and dissemination.

## Frequency of reporting

To analyze the ability of countries or areas to report data to the United Nations system frequently within a period, the following categories were used:

- *Frequent reporting*: countries or areas that reported for at least five years within a period
- *Infrequent reporting*: countries or areas that reported for one to four years within a period
- *Reporting at least once*: countries or areas that reported at least once within a period. This group includes those reporting frequently and those reporting infrequently within a period.

In the case of enrolment data, frequent reporting refers to the reporting of data for at least three out of the six academic years considered, whereas infrequent reporting refers to the reporting of data for one or two of the six academic years considered.

## Sources of data

The sources of data for the present report are official national statistics compiled by the United Nations and its specialized agencies from countries or areas around the world.

### International sources of data

The United Nations and its specialized agencies collect and disseminate information produced by

member countries through various data collection systems. Demographic and social statistics derived from vital statistics systems and population and housing censuses are collected by the United Nations Statistics Division from national statistical authorities. Statistics on diseases, injuries and on causes of death are collected by the World Health Organization from national health authorities. Statistics on student enrolment and other administrative data related to education are collected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization through its Institute for Statistics. Finally, labour and labour-related statistics are collected by the International Labour Office from national authorities responsible for labour statistics. Together, those international sources of official data form part of what is referred to in the present report as the international statistical system. They constitute the main source of data used here to examine countries' ability to produce and report the information needed to monitor the life conditions of women and men.

### National sources of data

At the national level, gender statistics are generally derived from three sources of information: population and housing censuses, administrative record systems and sample surveys.

### Population and housing censuses

A population and housing census is probably the most comprehensive source of data on population in most countries throughout the world. A population census is defined as the total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analysing and publishing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specific time, to all persons in a country or in a well-delimited part of a country.<sup>14</sup>

A population census collects data on basic demographic and social characteristics of the population such as age, sex, marital status, place of birth and place of usual residence. It may also include questions on literacy, school attendance, educational attainment, economic activity status, occupation and number of children ever born, among others. It is, therefore, a rich source of data for examining differences between women and men and for studying specific population subgroups such as elderly women and men or those living in rural areas.

Due to its universal coverage, a census can provide statistics on the smallest geographical subdivision, therefore allowing gender analysis at local levels.

A census also serves the important purpose of providing a sampling frame for surveys. Owing to the scale of operations and costs involved, censuses are carried out at long intervals, usually 10 years. The need for frequent up-to-date information to monitor short-term trends and to guide policy and planning can be served by other sources, such as administrative records and sample surveys.

### Administrative record systems

Administrative records are an important source of information for studying differences between women and men on a broad range of topics. Employment and unemployment statistics, education statistics, health statistics, criminal justice statistics, vital statistics and a myriad of other statistics are periodically produced from administrative records. Since those types of data are produced by organizations in both the public and private sectors, they have the potential to greatly increase the richness and depth of analysis possible on some gender issues not well covered by census or survey data. If an administrative record system operates effectively throughout the country, it can provide frequent data at both national and subnational levels.

One of the most widely used administrative record systems around the world is the civil registration system. Although the primary purpose of civil registration is to meet legal and civil requirements, it is an important source of sex-disaggregated information on births, deaths and marriages. When functioning properly, civil registration systems allow countries to produce periodic reports on vital statistics, such as number of live births by sex; number of deaths by sex and age; number of deaths by cause; marriages by characteristics of bride and groom; and many more.

### Sample surveys

In sample surveys, part of the population of interest (the target population) is selected, or sampled. From the sample, information is collected and the results of the survey generalized to the target population. Sample surveys generally allow more time for each interview than is possible in a census such that any single topic can be explored in greater depth. Consequently, they are often used to obtain comprehensive information on a topic of interest or at a level of detail not suitable for collection through censuses or administrative records.

There are many types of sample surveys, including those conducted on an occasional basis and

those conducted at regular intervals as part of a regular survey programme. When conducted at regular intervals, surveys can be an important source of information over time, thereby facilitating the tracking and monitoring needed for evaluation purposes and helping to inform policy and planning.

It should be pointed out that surveys may not be able to provide results for small local administrative units in the way that censuses and administrative records can. Similarly, depending upon the target population, sample surveys may not be representative of the population at large and may not allow comparisons between population subgroups.

### Uses of the report

*The World's Women 2005* can be used as a reference by national statistical agencies, the international statistical system and other interested stakeholders to assess progress and identify gaps in the collection and reporting of sex-disaggregated data and other data needed to address gender issues.

National statistical agencies may find the report useful to support demands for the allocation of resources to improve their capacity to collect and disseminate the requisite information and to incorporate a gender perspective into all aspects of their work. Similarly, users of statistics in countries with poor data can use the report as a tool for advocating the production of timely and quality statistics to meet their needs.

Governments, researchers, academics, advocacy groups and others in need of statistics for monitoring, planning, advocacy and awareness-raising will find the latest available data in the annex tables.

### Organization of the report

*The World's Women 2005* consists of an executive summary, this introduction, six substantive chapters and a conclusion followed by an annex section.

The substantive chapters review in detail the current reporting by Governments of gender statistics, summarize progress in the last 30 years and point out key challenges that remain to be addressed in the following areas: population, households and families (chapter 1); health (chapter 2); education and training (chapter 3); and work (chapter 4). Chapter 5 reviews existing and potential data sources on violence against women and their development in the last 10 years. Chapter 6 highlights three areas for which gender-sensitive concepts and methods of measurement and data collection are much less devel-

oped: poverty, power and decision-making, and human rights. The conclusion offers a number of strategies to help improve the capacity of national statistical systems to meet the demand for gender statistics.

Most of the basic data presented in the substantive chapters are contained in much greater detail in Annex 1 at the end of the report. The first four tables in the statistical annex contain the data analyzed in the chapters on national reporting of selected statistics to the international statistical system, by country. The remaining six tables in the statistical annex present the most recent statistics and indicators on the situation of women and men in the areas of concern reviewed in the present volume. These data are included to allow comparisons over time with data reported in prior editions of *The World's Women*.

## Notes

- 1 Examples include the four regional handbooks in the *Women of the World* series published between May 1984 and February 1985 by the Office of Women in Development, Bureau of Program and Policy Coordination, United States Agency for International Development, under contract with the United States Bureau of the Census.
- 2 *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), paras. 122 and 130.
- 3 Sweden has been promoting the development and production of gender statistics nationally and globally through technical cooperation and support provided by Statistics Sweden and the Swedish development assistance agency, SIDA. *Women and Men in Sweden: Facts and Figures*, first published in 1985 by Statistics Sweden, has been a model for publications in countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.
- 4 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 206 (a).
- 5 Resolution S-23/3, annex, para. 77.
- 6 *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 7 (E/2005/27 and Corr. 1)*, chap. I, sect. D, resolution 49/4, para. 5.
- 7 See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 4 (E/2005/24)*, chap. VI, para. 24 (a).
- 8 Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, "Gender mainstreaming: strategy for promoting gender equality" (New York, United Nations, August 2001). Available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet1.pdf>.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 206-209.
- 11 Definition of gender mainstreaming adopted by the Economic and Social Council in July 1997. See *Official Records of the General Assembly, 1997, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3/Rev.1 and Add.1)*, chap. IV, sect. A, agreed conclusions 1997/2.
- 12 See <http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrls/ldc/list.htm>
- 13 United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision, Comprehensive CD-Rom edition* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XIII.11).
- 14 *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8 and Corr.), para. 1.1.



## Chapter 1

# Population, households and families

**“... gender inequities have significant influences on, and are in turn influenced by, demographic parameters such as population growth, structure and distribution.”**

Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

Information on population, households and families contributes to a better understanding of gender inequities in many aspects of life. The size and composition of a population can reveal gender differences in migration, births, deaths and related processes. Information on marriages and divorces sheds light on the formation and dissolution of families. Data on households and families can improve understanding of the opportunities and resources available to women and men at different stages in life. Detailed statistics on population, households and families are, therefore, essential for addressing some of the gender concerns voiced at international conferences and summits.

The present chapter reviews the reporting by Governments of statistics on the following four topics: population; births; marriage and divorce; and households.

## Current state of statistics 1995-2003

### Population

The size and sex-age composition (numbers of females and males in various age groups) of a population and how they change over time have important implications for the situation of women and men. They determine to a great extent the current needs of the population and needs that are likely to arise in the future. Information on population by sex and age is also essential for the calculation of rates, ratios, proportions, percentages and other measures used to facilitate comparisons over time and across countries or among subnational groups, including comparisons between women and men.

Population censuses are the primary source of information on the size and composition of the population. Most countries conduct at least one population census every ten years. For the census decade 1995-2004, however, 26 countries or areas out of the

204 included in the present review did not conduct a population census (box 1.1).

To aid policymaking and planning, as well as to provide the population base for calculating annual rates and measures, it is essential that a country estimate periodically its population size. Between censuses, national statistical offices prepare estimates of their country's population, usually disaggregated by sex and age (box 1.2). Ideally, population estimates are produced on an annual basis for use in planning and policy formulation.

#### Box 1.1

##### Census taking worldwide

It is recommended that countries conduct at least one population census every ten years.<sup>a</sup> In the most recent census decade (1995-2004), the vast majority of countries or areas in the world—178 out of 204—conducted a population census. Of the 26 that did not conduct one, most are in Africa, where 16 out of 55 countries or areas did not conduct a census.

	All countries or areas	Conducted a census	Did not conduct a census
World	204	178	26
Africa	55	39	16
North America	27	26	1
South America	13	11	2
Asia	50	44	6
Europe	42	41	1
Oceania	17	17	0

<sup>a</sup> *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, rev. 1* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8), para 1.9.

Between 1995 and 2003 the vast majority of countries—189 out of 204—reported total population at least once. For population data to be most useful in addressing gender concerns, it needs to be

Detailed statistics on population, households and families are essential for addressing gender concerns

For the census decade 1995-2004, 26 countries or areas did not conduct a population census

## Box 1.2

**National population estimates**

To produce a population estimate, information or benchmark population data for a specified date is needed. The data are taken from a census, a population register, compulsory registration, or a large-scale national population survey. Additional information is then used to adjust the benchmark population data and arrive at a current estimate. Some of the more common adjustment methods that countries use include the following:

- **Adjustment by continuous registers.** This is possible in countries that have comprehensive civil or population registration systems. Such systems serve as a basis for producing national population estimates or for evaluating estimates produced using other methods;
- **Adjustment based on the calculated balance of births, deaths and migration.** This method involves adding births and immigrants to and subtracting deaths and out-migrants from the last population count or the latest previous estimate;

- **Adjustment by assumed rate of population increase.** This method is used by some countries that have no reliable information on population change. In this case, the base population may be from a census, a partial registration system or an estimate from a sample survey. To produce a current population estimate, the base population is updated using an assumed rate of population increase.

Types of estimates that national statistical offices prepare include the total population of a country or area and particular groups of the population in the area, classified by sex, age, marital status, employment status, educational attainment, ethnicity, and so on. The most common estimates are of total population disaggregated by sex and age. They are usually produced at the national level and for major administrative subdivisions. An estimate may be evaluated by comparing it with another estimate produced by a different method and, at times, by using different information.

Considerable differences exist among geographic regions and development groups in the reporting of total population by sex and age

further disaggregated by sex and by sex and age. Compared to the number of countries reporting total population, a smaller number reported the information by sex and by sex and age at least once. Indeed, chart 1.1 shows that the number of countries reporting statistics on population at least once decreases as more detailed information is called for. Of the 204 countries or areas, 179 reported total population by

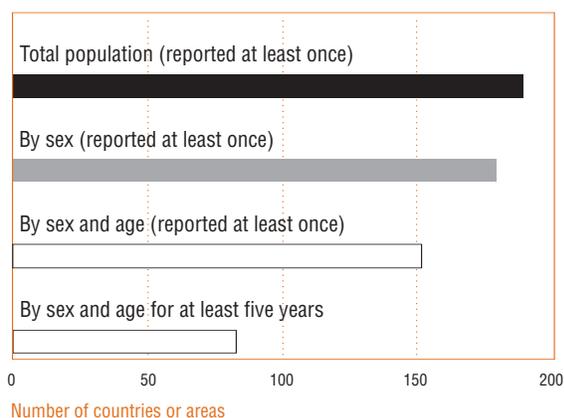
sex at least once and 151 provided the data further disaggregated by age.

Considerable differences exist among geographic regions and development groups in the reporting of total population disaggregated by sex and age at least once. Among the six regions, Africa and Oceania have the smallest relative number of countries or areas reporting such data: 23 of the 55 countries or areas in Africa and 9 of the 17 in Oceania. In terms of development groups, the lowest reporting is among the least developed countries where 17 out of the 50 countries provided total population by sex and age at least once (see table 1.A).

When considering the frequency of reporting, there is a significant drop in the number of countries providing total population by sex and age frequently (at least five out of nine years) compared to the number providing the data at least once. Of the 204 countries or areas reviewed, 83 reported total population by sex and age frequently, representing 66 per cent of the world population (chart 1.1 and table 1.B).

Differences between regions and development groups are also apparent in the case of frequent reporting of total population by sex and age. Again, the geographic regions with the smallest relative

Chart 1.1

**Number of countries or areas that reported population data between 1995 and 2003**

Source:  
Table 1.A

number of countries reporting the information frequently are Africa and Oceania. In Africa, 8 of the 55 countries or areas provided total population by sex and age frequently. The corresponding number in Oceania is 4 out of 17 countries. In terms of development groups, frequent reporting of total population by sex and age is lowest among the least developed countries: just 5 of the 50 countries provided the information for at least five years (see table 1.A).

## Births

One of the key determinants of population change is fertility—the number of births that occur to an individual or in a population. Information on fertility is needed for projecting the rate of population growth or decline. In addition, knowing the number of births taking place within a country and some of their key characteristics such as the sex and place of birth is crucial for informed national policy-making and planning.

For example, an area of concern in some countries is the practice of prenatal sex selection and female infanticide, owing to a strong preference for sons. Prenatal sex selection and female infanticide<sup>1</sup> can lead to a sex ratio at birth that strongly favours males over females. Data on the number of births

by sex can point to those discriminatory practices against girls.

Likewise, statistics on the number of births by age of the mother can be used to monitor changes in the ages at which women tend to have children. Early childbearing is a concern highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action, which notes that pregnancy at very young ages increases the risk of maternal death and of complications during pregnancy and delivery<sup>2</sup>—a problem also faced by women giving birth towards the end of their reproductive years. Furthermore, early childbearing can severely curtail the educational and employment opportunities of women thereby limiting improvements in their educational, economic and social status.<sup>3</sup>

The main source of information on births is the civil registration system of a country. Countries that have a civil registration system derive information on births from vital statistics based on the registration system, even if the civil registration system is known to be deficient (see box 1.3). Countries may also estimate the total number of births from censuses or surveys.

Of the 204 countries or areas included in the review, 111 reported births from a civil registration system said to cover at least 90 per cent of the coun-

Just 5 of the 50 least developed countries provided data on population by sex and age for at least five years

Examining the number of births by sex can point to discriminatory practices against girls

### Box 1.3

#### Civil registration and vital statistics

Statistics on births, deaths and marriages are collectively referred to as **vital statistics**. In most countries, they are compiled from birth certificates, death certificates or marriage certificates that are issued by civil authorities when individuals report births and deaths or apply for a marriage license. The recording of these events is called civil registration. **Civil registration** is defined as the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of occurrence and characteristics of vital events, most notably births, deaths and marriages.

Governments have a vested interest in the proper functioning of the civil registration system: documents issued by civil registrars are legal tenders that entitle the bearer to a number of services such as school enrolment, medical care, family benefit programmes, social protection, pensions and inheritances, among others.

An effective civil registration system provides a continuous and important source of information on fertility, mortality and marriage. For example, the civil

registration system, in issuing a birth certificate, may require information on the characteristics of (a) the mother: age, marital status, nationality, place of birth, place of usual residence, number of previous births, date of last birth, date of marriage, occupation; (b) the father: age, marital status, nationality, place of birth, place of usual residence, occupation; and (c) the child: sex, place and date of birth, birth order. All of the preceding information is transferred to official statistics, which removes individual identifiers (name, personal identification number) and aggregates them into a set of vital statistics. For vital statistics to be most effective as policy tools, there needs to be a well-functioning civil registration system that is universal (i.e., with coverage of at least 90 per cent of all events) and a vital statistics system that produces and disseminates statistical information about births, deaths and marriages in a timely manner.

#### Source:

*Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 2* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.10), paras. 301 and 423.

In many countries, limited coverage can result in a large proportion of births not being counted

At 19 per cent, Asia has the lowest percentage of the regional population living in a country that reported births by sex

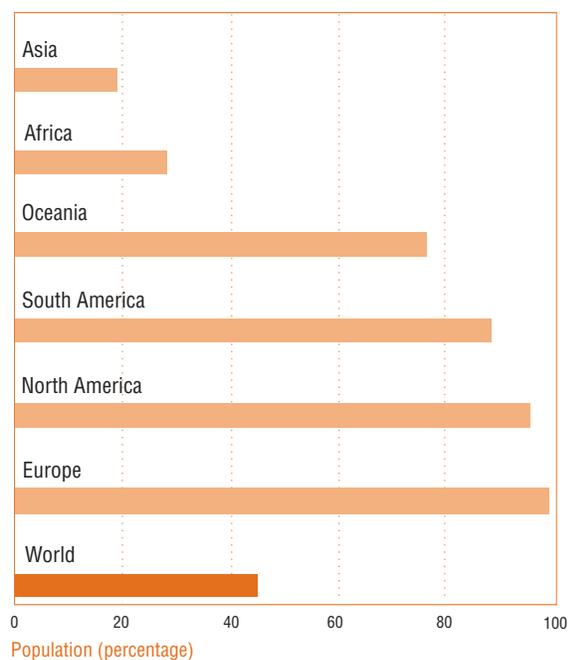
try's total births (see table 1.A). The issue of coverage is crucial to the quality of the information and can vary widely across countries. Some birth registration systems may be limited to births only in urban areas or to those taking place in hospitals. In many countries, limited coverage can result in a large proportion of births not being counted (see box 1.4).

Out of 204 countries or areas, 153 reported the total number of births at least once and 124 reported the information frequently. As in the case with reporting of population statistics, a smaller number of countries reported the more detailed statistics on births compared with the number reporting total births. Out of the 204 countries or areas, 120 reported the number of births by sex and 113 the number of births by age of mother at least once. The pattern of fewer countries reporting detailed birth statistics is observed across all geographic regions and development groups (see table 1.A).

The national reporting of births by sex at least once varies across geographic regions and development groups. Europe, North America and South America have the highest relative number of countries reporting total births by sex at least once whereas Africa and Oceania have the smallest relative num-

Chart 1.2

**Percentage of the population in countries or areas that reported births by sex of child at least once between 1995 and 2003, by region**



Source:  
Table 1.B

#### Box 1.4

##### Setting up a civil registration system: a major commitment

Setting up and maintaining a civil registration system requires a major commitment by the government, if the system is to be continuous and universal. For many countries, the process is incremental. Colombia, for example, initiated a civil registration system in January 1998, after years spent in its development. However, the system has yet to achieve 90 per cent coverage for births and deaths. In Accra, the capital of Ghana, births and deaths are registered when they take place in major hospitals, but not when these events take place elsewhere. At present, less than 30 per cent of births are registered in the country.

ber reporting with 14 out of 55 in Africa and 6 out of 17 in Oceania (see table 1.A). In Asia, 30 out of the 50 countries reported such information. However, among those not reporting are China, India and Indonesia—the three most populous countries in the continent. As a result, at 19 per cent, Asia has the lowest percentage of the regional population living in a country that reported births by sex at least once (chart 1.2).

Among development groups, whereas 45 of the 47 countries in the more developed regions reported births by sex at least once, just 6 of the 50 least developed countries did so. In the less developed regions excluding the least developed countries, 69 of the 107 countries reported the information (see table 1.A).

The pattern of reporting births by age of mother at least once across geographic regions and development groups is similar to that of births by sex (see table 1.A).

#### Marriage and divorce

Marriage and divorce are vital events that have important implications for the situation of women and men, for the organization of society, and for population change. As key events in the formation and dissolution of families, marriage and divorce strongly influence many aspects of the lives of women and men including their access to resources and opportunities and their living arrangements. Detailed statistics on marriage and divorce are, therefore, crucial for revealing disparities between women and men in many areas as well as for planning and for the allocation of programmes and services, including those

related to housing and a wide variety of family benefits.

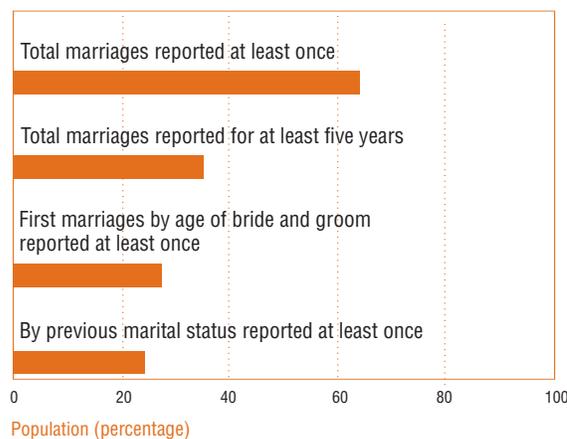
For example, information on first marriages by age of bride and groom is important for monitoring changes in the ages at which women and men first marry and in the age gap between spouses. Early marriage, in particular, is a stated concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.<sup>4</sup> Information on marriages by previous marital status is likewise important for revealing gender differences in remarriage.

Different sources of information are required for statistics to capture the diversity of marriage and divorce practices within and across countries and regions.<sup>5</sup> The results presented below refer to statistics on registered marriages and divorces produced by national vital statistics systems from civil registers of marriages and divorces (see box 1.5). In some cases, information on registered divorces may also be obtained from court records.

At the global level, 134 out of 204 countries or areas reported the total number of marriages at least once and 107 reported such information frequently (table 1.A). A much smaller number of countries reported statistics on marriage disaggregated by characteristics of the bride and groom. For example, 85 countries or areas reported the number of first marriages by age of the bride and groom and 84, the total

Chart 1.3

**Percentage of the population in countries or areas that reported information on marriages between 1995 and 2003**



Source: Table 1.B

number of marriages by previous marital status of the bride and groom. The percentage of the world population in countries that reported such marriage statistics is shown in chart 1.3.

Fewer countries or areas reported total divorces compared to marriages. Of the 204 countries or areas, 119 reported the number of divorces at least once and 94 reported such information frequently (see table 1.A). A smaller number of countries reported divorce statistics further disaggregated by other characteristics—64 reported at least once the total number of divorces by number of dependent children and 78, the total number of divorces by length of marriage. As a result, 23 per cent of the world population is in countries that reported, at least once, those detailed divorce statistics.

Wide differences exist in the reporting of marriage and divorce statistics among geographic regions (see table 1.A). In terms of marriage, all of the countries in Europe, and nearly all of the countries in North America and South America reported total marriages at least once. In Asia, 36 of the 50 countries reported such information at least once. Africa and Oceania have the smallest relative number of countries reporting total marriages: 12 out of 55 in Africa and 9 out of 17 in Oceania. Although about half of the countries in Oceania did not report total marriages at least once, 80 per cent of the continent's population lives in a country reporting such statistics (table 1.B). This is because among those reporting are Australia and New Zealand which together account for 74 per cent of the continent's population.

23 per cent of the world population is in countries that reported detailed divorce statistics

All countries in Europe and nearly all countries in North and South America reported total marriages

Box 1.5

**Definition of marriage and divorce for the production of vital statistics**

The recommended statistical definitions for the production of vital statistics on marriage and divorce are as follows:

**Marriage** is the act, ceremony or process by which the legal relationship of husband and wife is constituted. The legality of the union may be established by civil, religious or other means as recognized by the laws of each country.

**Divorce** is the final legal dissolution of a marriage, that is, that separation of husband and wife that confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious and/or other provisions, according to the laws of each country.

**Source:**

*Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 2* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.10), para. 57.

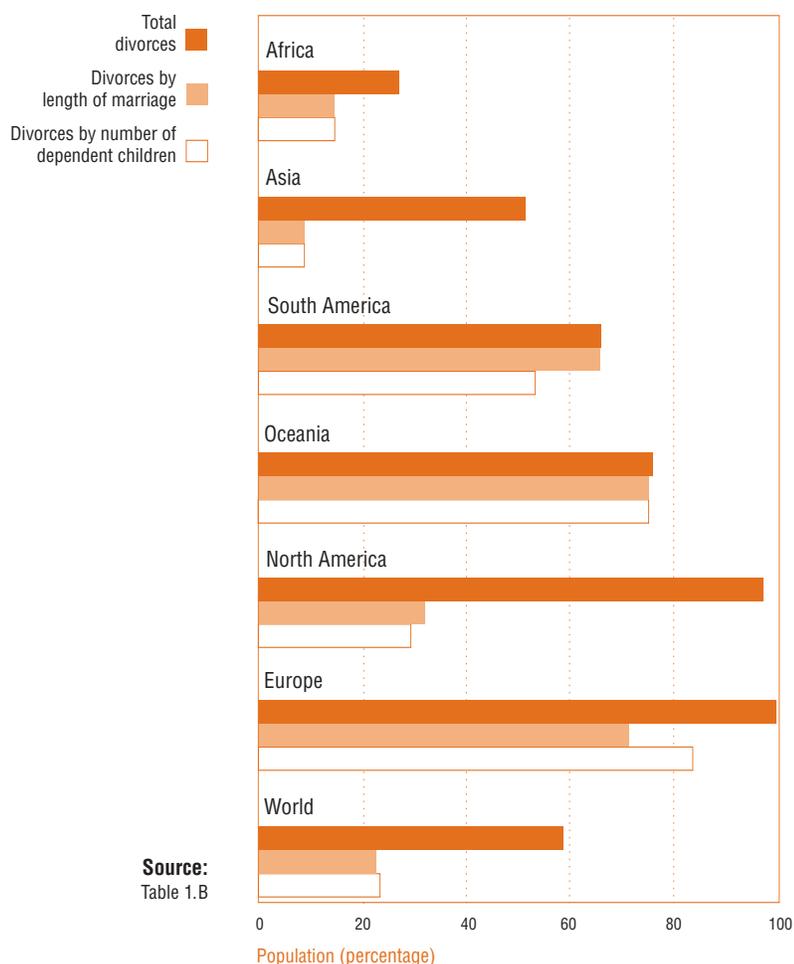
In terms of divorce, the regional variation in reporting follows a similar pattern as that observed for the reporting of marriage statistics, although the levels of reporting are lower (table 1.A). Chart 1.4 shows the percentage of the regional population in countries reporting divorce statistics. In all regions, fewer countries reported divorces by number of dependent children and by length of marriage as compared to the number reporting total divorces (table 1.A).

Among the least developed countries, the reporting of marriage and divorce statistics is rare. Only six and four countries in this group reported, respectively, the total number of marriages and divorces. None of the 50 least developed countries

Among the least developed countries, the reporting of marriage and divorce statistics is rare

Chart 1.4

Percentage of the population in countries or areas that reported total divorces, divorces by length of marriage and divorces by number of dependent children at least once between 1995 and 2003



reported statistics on marriage or divorce beyond total numbers (see table 1.A).

## Households

Statistics on households are required for planning the supply, distribution and allocation of a wide variety of programmes, products and services, including such basic necessities as food and housing. When information such as the sex and age of the household head (see box 1.6 for definition) and the size of the household is available, household statistics can also be used to study gender differences in headship. A rise in female-headed households is a stated concern of the Beijing Platform for Action owing to the association between female-maintained households and poverty.<sup>6</sup>

### Box 1.6

#### Definitions: household and head of household

For data collection purposes, there are two primary definitions of **household**. The most commonly used definition is that based on the housekeeping concept which classifies households as either (a) a one-person household, that is, a person who makes provision for his/her own food or other essentials for living without combining with any other person to form part of a multi-person household, or (b) a multi-person household, that is, a group of two or more persons who make common provision for food or other essentials for living. According to this definition, the persons in the group may pool their incomes and have a common budget to a greater or lesser extent; they may be related or unrelated persons or a combination of both. Alternatively, based on the house-dwelling concept, a household is defined as consisting of all persons living together in a housing unit.

For establishing relationships among household members, a common practice is to first identify the household head or a reference person. The **head of household** is defined as that person in the household who is acknowledged as such by the other members. The **reference person** is chosen solely for the purpose of establishing relationships, with no implication of headship. At present, there is no common definition of reference person. However, it is recommended that the term be used in situations where spouses are considered equal in household authority and responsibility.

#### Source:

*Population and Housing Censuses, Rev.1* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8), paras. 2.61-2.70

For data collection purposes, the concept of “household” is more often used than that of the “family”, and the two do not always overlap. Household information largely comes from population and housing censuses. This information is often complemented by information from household surveys.

Reporting of statistics on households from population censuses since 1995 has been slow. Thus far only 59 countries or areas, representing 43 per cent of the world population, have reported the total number of households from a census. Household data disaggregated by sex and age of the head of household was reported by an even smaller number of countries—42, representing 20 per cent of the world population. Statistics further disaggregated by size of household were reported by 39 countries or areas, representing 19 per cent of the world population (table 1.A and chart 1.5).

In terms of geographic regions, Europe has the highest relative number of countries reporting household statistics followed by Asia; whereas Oceania has the lowest relative number with just one country reporting household statistics from the census since 1995 (table 1.A). North and South America are the regions with the highest percentage of the population living in countries that reported household statistics (chart 1.5). This is primarily because the most populous countries in those regions are among those that reported the information (Canada and the United States in North America, and Brazil in South America).

## Progress in statistics

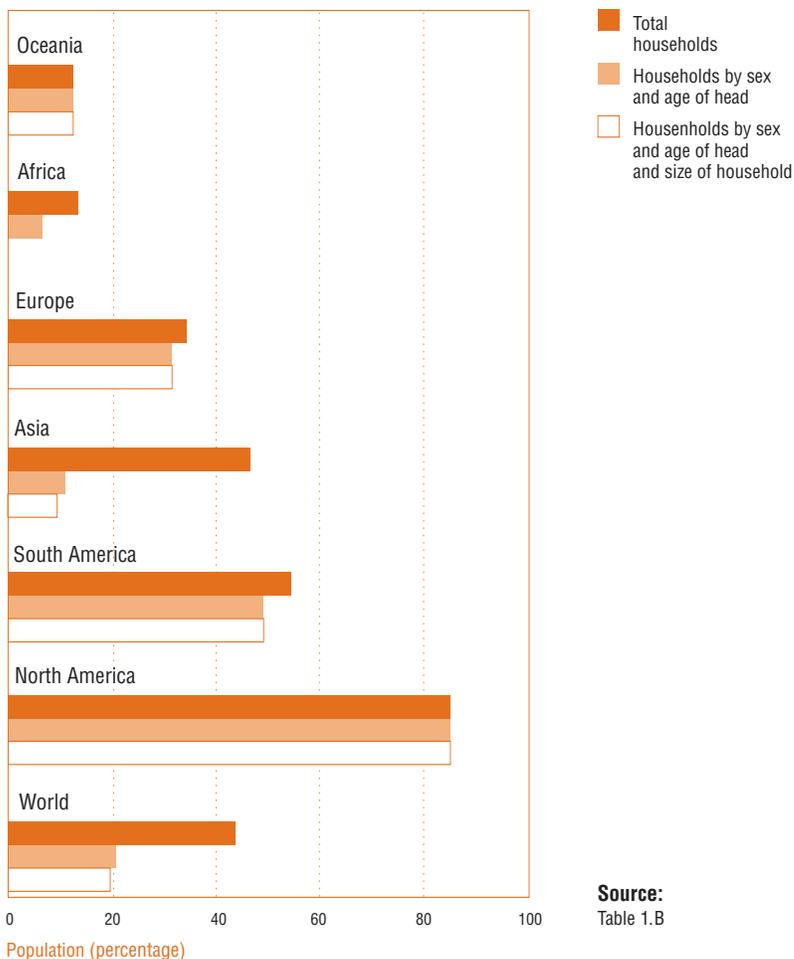
### 1975-2003

#### Population

Reporting of population statistics by sex and age appears to have remained fairly stable between 1975 and 2003. Chart 1.6 shows that a similar number of countries reported total population by sex and age at least once in the first two periods: 175 in 1975-1984 and 176 in 1985-1994. Compared to the first two periods, a smaller number of countries or areas reported such data at least once in the most recent period (1995-2003). However, this is likely the result of the following two factors and, therefore, may not reflect a real decline in reporting. First, the most recent period is shorter by one year compared to the first two periods. Second, data for the more recent years may not have been reported by 2003 due to delays in data processing and reporting.

Chart 1.5

Percentage of the population in countries or areas that reported selected household statistics at least once between 1995 and 2003, by region



Source: Table 1.B

Amidst the overall stability in reporting, improvements are observed in the frequency of reporting across periods. Between the periods 1975-1984 and 1985-1994, the number of countries or areas reporting total population by sex and age frequently increased from 76 to 87. A smaller number of countries or areas—83—reported the information frequently in the most recent period. This is likely due to the factors described above and may not reflect a real decline in frequent reporting over time (chart 1.6).

Indeed, a closer look reveals that between the periods 1985-1994 and 1995-2003, 19 countries or areas progressed from reporting infrequently (1-4 years in the 10-year period) to reporting frequently (at least 5 years).<sup>7</sup> An additional 3 coun-

Reporting of statistics on households from of population censuses has been slow

Reporting of population statistics by sex and age appears to have remained fairly stable between 1975 and 2003

Chart 1.6

**Distribution of countries or areas by frequency of reporting population by sex and age, for three periods**

Frequency of reporting	1975 – 1984		1985 – 1994		1995 – 2003	
	Number of countries or areas	Population (%)	Number of countries or areas	Population (%)	Number of countries or areas	Population (%)
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>100</b>
At least 5 years	76	48	87	51	83	66
1-4 years	99	48	89	45	68	24
Not reported	29	4	28	4	53	10

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

tries (Cambodia, Grenada and Mongolia) progressed from not reporting in the 1985-1994 period to reporting data for at least five years in the most recent period. On the other hand, five countries (Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Chad and Eritrea) that reported frequently in the period 1985-1994 did not report once in the most recent period.

**Births**

National reporting of statistics on births was fairly consistent in the three periods considered. In addition, there are signs of improvement over time in the reporting of total births and of births by sex at least once (chart 1.7). As in the case of population statistics, a shorter most recent period and delays in reporting are likely the reasons behind the decrease in the number of countries reporting total births and births by sex at least once in the most recent period compared to the second period.

Chart 1.7

**Number of countries or areas reporting births at least once and for at least five years, for three periods**

	1975 - 1984	1985 - 1994	1995 - 2003
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>
Total, at least once	150	160	153
By sex, at least once	128	135	120
Total, for at least five years	135	131	124
By sex, for at least five years	99	111	95

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

The trends in frequent reporting of births statistics are mixed. There was a slight decline in the number of countries or areas reporting the total number of births for at least five years between the first and second periods. At the same time, there was an increase in the number of countries reporting births by sex (chart 1.7).

It is important to note that the majority of countries that reported statistics on births frequently did so consistently across all three periods. Of the 204 countries or areas, 118 consistently reported total births for at least five years in each of the three periods. In the case of births by sex, 70 countries consistently reported the information frequently in each of the three periods. At the same time, out of the 204 countries or areas, 29 have never reported total births and 53 have never reported births by sex since 1975 (chart 1.8).

Chart 1.8

**Number of countries or areas that reported frequently and that never reported births in all three periods considered**

	All countries or areas	Frequency of reporting	
		Frequent	Never
Total births	204	118	29
By sex	204	70	53

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

National reporting of statistics on births was fairly consistent in the three periods considered

The majority of countries that reported statistics on births frequently did so consistently across all three periods

## Marriage and divorce

Globally, the reporting of marriage and divorce statistics has changed only slightly since 1975 (chart 1.9). After a peak in reporting in the early 1980s, there has been a slight but steady decline in the number of countries reporting marriage and divorce statistics each year. The steeper decline observed from 1999 onward in chart 1.9 is partially the result of delays in reporting which can range between two and five or more years from the time of data registration.

Since 1975, the gap between the number of countries reporting total marriages each year and the number reporting the more detailed statistics on marriages has remained roughly the same. Each year, less than half of the countries that report total marriages report marriages by previous marital status of bride and groom or first marriages by age of bride and groom.

Likewise, there continues to be a gap in the number of countries each year reporting total marriages and the number reporting total divorces. That gap, however, appears to have become smaller in the more recent years.

## Households

In terms of household information, the global trend in the last three decades has been one of overall

decline in reporting. Between the periods 1975-1984 and 1985-1994, the number of countries or areas reporting at least once total households by sex and age of head from censuses declined from 66 to 53. For the most recent period, the number of countries or areas reporting such data at least once further declined to 42. It is important to note, however, that the time lag in reporting household data is generally longer than for other census data. Household data may not be disseminated for several years after a census is conducted. Countries that conducted their census late in the period would not have had the opportunity to disseminate household data by the end of 2004.

## Challenges

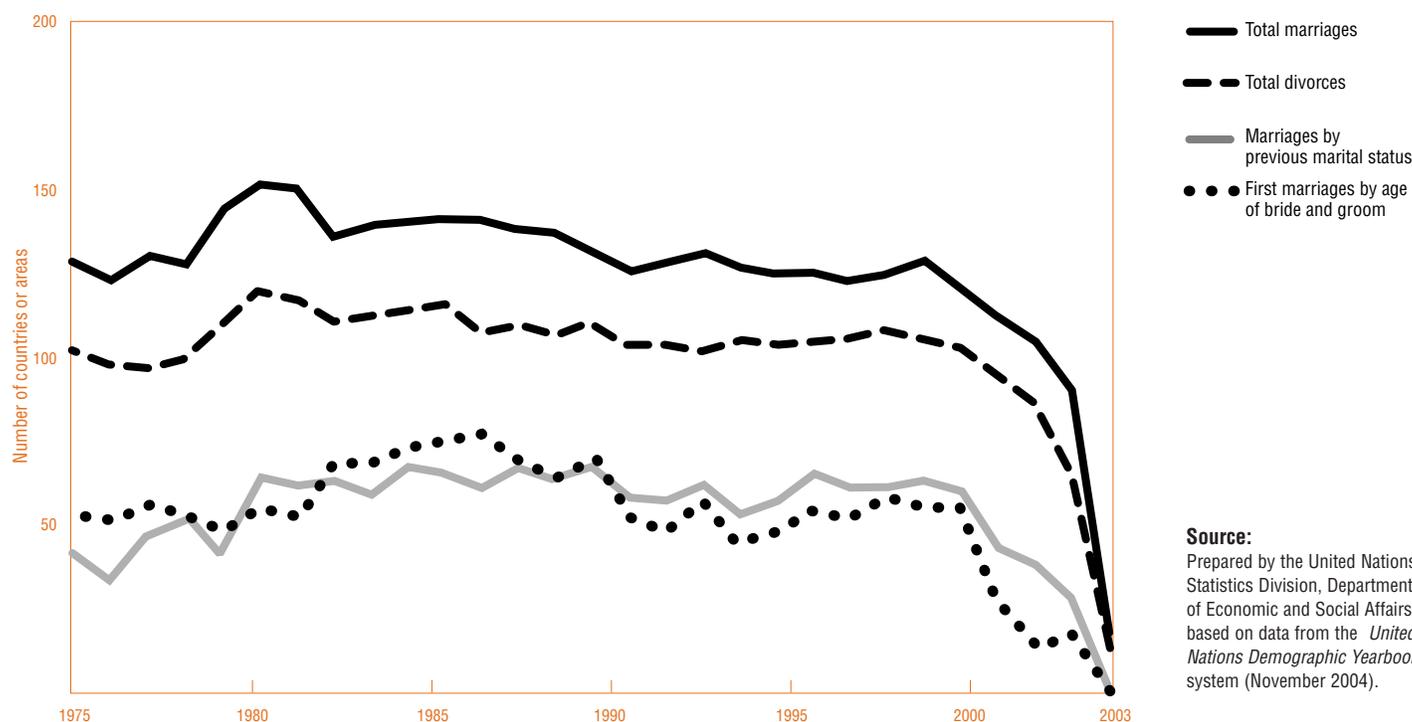
For many countries, developing the capacity to produce basic demographic statistics—and consequently gender statistics—on a regular and timely basis remains a major challenge. At the minimum, this would require the implementation of a population and housing census every 10 years and the setting up and maintenance of a well-functioning civil registration system. Both programmes require extensive resources and long-term commitment from the highest levels of government, which may not be available in the least developed countries.

The reporting of marriage and divorce statistics has changed only slightly since 1975

For many countries, developing the capacity to produce basic demographic statistics remains a major challenge

Chart 1.9

Number of countries or areas that reported statistics on marriages and divorces, from 1975 through 2003



Source: Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the *United Nations Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

A challenge for gender specialists, is to help maximize the value of censuses for gender analysis

Maintaining a civil registration system is a considerable challenge for less developed countries

A population and housing census is one of the most important statistical activities undertaken by Governments. The census can be a rich source of gender statistics—if the concepts, definitions and methods used in the collection and analysis of data are gender-sensitive. A challenge for gender specialists, therefore, is to help maximize the value of censuses for gender analysis by ensuring that a gender perspective is mainstreamed into all stages of the census. The planning of the 2010 round of population censuses provides opportunities for gender specialists and women's groups to assert their information needs and advocate for the use of concepts, definitions and methods that incorporate a gender perspective.

Maintaining a civil registration system that allows the timely and regular production of statistics on births and deaths is a considerable challenge for less developed countries. An effective civil registration and vital statistics system is very costly and its development is a long-term process that resource-poor countries generally find very difficult to sustain. In many of those countries, civil registration systems miss large segments of the population. In some cases, registration is limited to persons residing in urban areas. A practical way for governments seeking to improve the coverage of civil registration systems is to proceed incrementally.

As a component of population change, migration is perhaps even more difficult to measure than births and deaths. With globalization, international migration has grown in importance throughout the world. Concurrent to that, there has been increasing interest in many countries to improve data on international migration. While international guidelines on the collection of data on international migration exist,<sup>8</sup> many concepts and methods need to be further improved and/or elaborated. The fact that women constitute half of international migrants<sup>9</sup> and the differences in personal and migration characteristics between women and men dictate that data collection on migration and migrants be planned with a gender perspective.



Table 1.A  
Number of countries or areas that reported data on selected demographic characteristics, 1995 – 2003

	Geographic region							Development group		
	World	Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>a</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Population</b>										
Total, at least once	189	43	27	13	47	42	17	47	103	39
By sex, at least once	179	35	27	13	47	41	16	46	100	33
By sex and age, at least once	151	23	26	11	43	39	9	44	90	17
By sex and age, for at least five years	83	8	12	6	21	32	4	37	41	5
<b>Births</b>										
Total, at least once	153	22	25	11	39	42	14	47	91	15
From civil registration system <sup>b</sup>	111	9	19	6	26	42	9	47	62	2
Total, for at least five years	124	13	22	10	32	39	8	44	76	4
By sex, at least once	120	14	21	9	30	40	6	45	69	6
By age of mother, at least once	113	8	22	10	27	38	8	43	68	2
<b>Marriages</b>										
Total, at least once	134	12	25	10	36	42	9	47	81	6
Total, for at least five years	107	7	20	8	28	39	5	44	63	0
First marriages by age of bride and groom, at least once	85	5	12	6	21	38	3	42	43	0
By previous marital status, at least once	84	4	15	6	19	36	4	40	44	0
<b>Divorces</b>										
Total, at least once	119	11	25	7	32	39	5	44	71	4
Total, for at least five years	94	5	18	6	25	36	4	40	54	0
By number of dependent children, at least once	64	3	8	2	17	32	2	36	28	0
By length of marriage, at least once	78	4	12	6	20	33	3	37	41	0
<b>Households</b>										
Total, for at least one year	59	5	5	3	22	23	1	27	27	5
By sex and age of head, at least once	42	3	5	1	11	21	1	25	15	2
By sex and age of head and size of household, at least once	39	1	5	1	10	21	1	25	14	0

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

a Excluding the least developed countries.

b Reported births at least once from a civil registration system with 90 per cent or better coverage of births.

**Table 1.B**  
**Percentage of the world and regional populations in countries or areas that reported data on selected demographic characteristics, 1995 – 2003**

	World	Geographic region						Development group		
		Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>a</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Population</b>										
Total, at least once	98	87	100	100	99	100	100	100	99	85
By sex, at least once	97	80	100	100	99	100	100	100	99	79
By sex and age, at least once	90	59	100	98	93	99	79	99	95	38
By sex and age, for at least five years	66	18	73	68	74	76	75	85	69	16
<b>Births</b>										
Total, at least once	68	43	97	98	60	100	98	100	63	41
From civil registration system <sup>b</sup>	30	18	74	23	13	100	79	100	15	0.1
Total, for at least five years	60	26	95	96	52	99	77	99	58	3
By sex, at least once	40	28	96	88	19	99	76	99	29	6
By age of mother, at least once	39	20	97	96	18	98	76	99	28	0
<b>Marriages</b>										
Total, at least once	64	31	97	86	58	100	80	100	59	30
Total, for at least five years	35	14	95	76	15	99	75	99	23	0
First marriages by age of bride and groom, at least once	27	15	34	59	11	100	75	76	18	0
By previous marital status, at least once	24	15	15	66	11	78	75	63	16	0
<b>Divorces</b>										
Total, at least once	59	27	97	66	51	100	76	100	55	11
Total, for at least five years	27	9	36	61	12	98	75	75	18	0
By number of dependent children, at least once	23	14	29	53	9	84	74	66	14	0
By length of marriage, at least once	23	15	32	66	9	71	75	59	16	0
<b>Households</b>										
Total, for at least one year	43	12	85	51	46	34	12	58	45	7
By sex and age of head, at least once	20	6	85	49	10	31	12	56	12	6
By sex and age of head and size of household, at least once	19	0	85	49	9	31	12	56	12	0

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

a Excluding the least developed countries.

b Reported births at least once from a civil registration system with 90 per cent or better coverage of births.

## Notes

- 1 The birth of a female infant subjected to infanticide is often not registered and, therefore, not included in official records.
- 2 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 268.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Marriage and divorce are defined in terms of laws and customs, making it difficult to arrive at universally applicable statistical definitions. In some countries, for example, marriage is governed by civil law, which may or may not be supplemented with religious rites; in other countries, unions by mutual consent, without ceremonial or legal rites, constitute formal and legally binding contracts. Likewise, the laws and regulations relating to divorce range from total prohibition to the granting of divorce in response to a simple statement or desire or intention.
- 5 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 263.
- 6 Ibid., para. 22.
- 7 The 19 countries or areas are: China, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Estonia, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Lithuania, Macao Special Administrative Region of China, Malawi, Republic of Moldova, Morocco, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Slovakia, Tonga, Turkey and Uruguay.
- 8 See *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14).
- 9 *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women and International Migration* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.IV.4).

## Chapter 2

# Health

**“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”**

World Health Organization

The health status of a population is, ironically, often reflected and measured by information about deaths. Data on deaths by sex and age are commonly used to monitor programs and policies aimed at improving health; and also used to calculate age and sex-specific death rates and life expectancies. While women tend to live longer than men, differences in death rates can point to differences in women's and men's position in the household and society, including gender inequality in terms of access to food, health care and other sources of well-being. Death rates by cause help reveal the different patterns of disease for women and men.

The present chapter asks how well countries are doing in providing the basic information needed to monitor the health status of women and men over time. In other words, how countries are faring in terms of reporting their basic health statistics: deaths, illnesses, levels of human functioning and disability. It therefore focuses on the following three main areas:

### 1. Mortality

- a. Total deaths
- b. Infant deaths
- c. Deaths by cause
  - i. Maternal deaths
  - ii. Deaths due to AIDS

### 2. Morbidity

- a. Prevalence of HIV/AIDS

### 3. Human functioning and disability

Deaths are recorded in civil registration systems that are maintained by Governments for purposes of recording and registering vital events (see chapter 1, box 1.3). Information on deaths is then compiled to produce death statistics. In addition, national demographic and health surveys, and sometimes censuses, also provide data on mortality as well as on morbidity, human functioning and disability. Disease registers and surveillance systems are also important sources of data in some countries or areas.

At the international level, official national statistics on mortality are collected by the United Nations Statistics Division. Statistics on morbidity and causes of death are collected by the World Health Organization. Plans are in place for basic data on human functioning and disability to be collected at the international level by the United Nations Statistics Division.

In the period 1995-2003, even basic statistical data such as the number of deaths of women and men and girls and boys are not being reported for many countries or areas. More than a third of the 204 countries or areas examined did not report the number of deaths by sex even once for the period 1995 to 2003. About half did not report deaths by cause, sex and age at least once in the same period. Moreover, from 1975 to 2003 there has been limited progress in the reporting of deaths and their causes.

## Current state of statistics 1995-2003

### Mortality

#### Total deaths

Age and sex-specific death rates are used in calculating life expectancy at birth, which is defined as the average number of years of life a newborn girl or boy is expected to live, if she or he is subject to the age-specific mortality rates prevailing in the year to which the life expectancy refers. In general, women live longer than men, partly for biological reasons, but their natural advantage is significantly reduced in societies where female infant mortality is higher than male infant mortality owing to discrimination against girls. Social and economic disadvantages also have important repercussions in health outcomes.

However, even basic statistical data such as deaths are not available for many countries. In total, 155 countries or areas representing 69 per cent of the world's population reported total number of

Differences in death rates can point to differences in women's and men's position in the household and society

More than a third of all countries or areas do not report the number of deaths by sex. About half do not report deaths by cause, sex and age

155 countries or areas reported total number of deaths at least once during the period 1995-2003

deaths at least once during the period 1995-2003. Fewer countries or areas reported deaths by sex at least once and fewer still reported by sex and age (see chart 2.1).

There are major differences in the reporting of deaths across geographic regions (see chart 2.2 and table 1.B). The region with the lowest proportion of countries or areas reporting deaths by sex is Africa. Only 18 out of 55 countries or areas, comprising 35 per cent of the region's population, reported national

Chart 2.1

#### Number of countries or areas that reported deaths for the period 1995 – 2003

<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Deaths</b>	
Total, at least once	155
By sex, at least once	134
By sex and age, at least once	121
By sex and age, at least five years	88

Source: Table 2.A

data on deaths by sex at least once in the period 1995-2003. In Asia, 33 countries or areas, representing 55 per cent of the region's population, and in Oceania 7 countries or areas, representing 76 per cent of the region's population, reported deaths by sex. The number of countries or areas that reported deaths by sex in the other regions is comparatively higher representing at least 95 per cent of the region's population.

There are a few countries or areas in each region that reported total deaths but did not report them by sex: four in Africa, three in North America, one in South America, seven in Asia, and six in Oceania.<sup>1</sup>

Deaths by sex and age are reported by most countries or areas in North America, South America and Europe. In those regions, the countries or areas reporting the data at least once between 1995 and 2003 account for over 95 per cent of the population of the respective regions.

Substantial differences exist between development groups in the reporting of deaths by sex (chart 2.3). In the more developed regions, all countries reported deaths and did so by sex in the period 1995-2003. In less developed regions, the capacity to report data on deaths is lower, and there is even less capacity to report the data by sex. Excluding the least developed countries, 94 out of the 107 countries or areas in less developed regions reported total deaths and 78 reported deaths by sex in the period 1995-2003. The lowest reporting is among the least developed countries: only 14 of 50 countries reported total deaths, and just 9 of them reported deaths by sex at least once in the same period.

Policymakers and planners increasingly demand that data be annually reported and that these data are current. However, that is not the situation observed in most countries or areas during the period 1995-2003. While 121 out of 204 countries or areas reported deaths by sex and age at least once in the period, only 88 countries or areas reported those data for at least five years out of nine (chart 2.1). Limited reporting is therefore affecting the continuous availability of up-to-date annual information for a number of countries. For recent years the number of countries or areas reporting data is substantially lower than for earlier years. This is largely due to delays in data compilation and dissemination.

#### Infant deaths

According to the Beijing Platform for Action, son preference is one factor that contributes to differen-

Only 14 of 50 least developed countries reported total deaths, and just 9 of them reported deaths by sex

Chart 2.2

#### Number of countries or areas that reported deaths for the period 1995 – 2003, by geographic region

	Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Deaths</b>						
Total, at least once	22	25	13	40	42	13
By sex, at least once	18	22	12	33	42	7
By sex and age, at least once	15	21	11	28	40	6
By sex and age, at least five years	4	15	8	20	36	5

Source: Table 2.A

Chart 2.3

## Number of countries or areas that reported deaths for the period 1995 – 2003, by development group

	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>a</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Deaths</b>			
Total, at least once	47	94	14
By sex, at least once	47	78	9
By sex and age, at least once	45	71	5
By sex and age, at least five years	41	46	1

Source: Table 2.A

<sup>a</sup> Excluding the least developed countries.

tial mortality by sex. As a result, in some countries it is estimated that men outnumber women by 5 in every 100.<sup>2</sup> A preference for sons remains deeply rooted in many societies and girls may have less access to nutrition, preventive care (such as immunization) and health care.<sup>3</sup> Data on infant deaths by sex are needed to see where excess mortality among girls exists so that it can be addressed and eliminated.

While total infant deaths were reported by 143 countries or areas in the period 1995-2003, fewer—114, representing 40 per cent of the world population—reported infant deaths by sex (chart 2.4). The pattern of low reporting in Africa and Asia and high reporting in the other geographic regions, as seen with reporting deaths by sex, also prevails for infant deaths (see table 2.A).

In all regions, there are countries that reported total infant deaths at least once in the period but did not break the data down by sex: seven in Africa, four in North America, two in South America, seven in Asia, two in Europe and seven in Oceania.<sup>4</sup>

### Deaths by cause

In terms of reporting statistics on the cause of death, 110 out of 204 countries or areas, representing 59 per cent of the world population, reported cause of death data at least once in the period 1995-2003, whereas 109 countries or areas, also representing 59 per cent of world population, reported cause of death statistics by sex and age at least once in the same period. However, only 87 countries or areas, representing 53 per cent of the world population, reported data for at least five of the nine years (see tables 2.A and 2.B).

The pattern of low reporting from Africa and Asia and high reporting in the other regions that was observed for all deaths and infant deaths can also be

observed in the reporting of deaths by cause. The region with the lowest proportion of countries or areas reporting deaths by cause, sex and age is Africa.

Countries or areas that reported causes of death did so at a detailed level (see box 2.1 for examples of the causes of death reported). Among the causes reported are maternal deaths and deaths due to injury, as well as deaths caused by AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The following analysis will focus on two major issues for women's health: maternal deaths and deaths caused by AIDS.

The region with the lowest proportion of countries or areas that report deaths by cause, sex and age is Africa

Chart 2.4

## Number of countries or areas that reported infant deaths for the period 1995 – 2003

<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Infant Deaths</b>	
Total, at least once	143
By sex, at least once	114
By sex at least five years	81

Source: Table 2.A

### Maternal deaths

According to the Beijing Platform for Action, complications related to pregnancy and childbirth are among the leading causes of death and morbidity of women of reproductive age in many parts of the developing world.<sup>5</sup> The maternal mortality ratio, or number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, is a widely used indicator of reproductive health. It is an approximation of the risk of death of women for reasons related to pregnancy and childbirth. Maternal mortality ratio is one of the indicators under the Millennium Development Goals for monitoring improvements in maternal health.<sup>6</sup>

## Box 2.1

<b>Main divisions of cause of death and selected subdivisions for presentation of statistics<sup>a</sup></b>	
Disease	ICD-10 code
All causes	A00-Y89
Certain infectious and parasitic diseases	A00-B99
Intestinal infectious diseases	A00-A09
Tuberculosis	A15-A19
Tetanus <sup>b</sup>	A33, A35
Diphtheria	A36
Whooping cough	A37
Meningococcal infection	A39
Septicaemia	A40-A41
Acute poliomyelitis	A80
Measles	B05
Viral hepatitis	B15-B19
Human immunodeficiency virus [HIV] disease	B20-B24
Malaria	B50-B54
Neoplasms	C00-D48
Malignant neoplasms	C00-C97
Malignant neoplasm of lip, oral cavity and pharynx	C00-C14
Malignant neoplasm of oesophagus	C15
Malignant neoplasm of stomach	C16
Malignant neoplasm of colon, rectosigmoid junction, rectum, anus and anal canal	C18-C21
Malignant neoplasm of liver and intrahepatic bile ducts	C22
Malignant neoplasm of pancreas	C25
Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	C33-C34
Malignant neoplasm of female breast	C50
Malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri	C53
Malignant neoplasm of prostate	C61
Malignant neoplasm of lymphoid, haematopoietic and related tissue	C81-C96
Disorders of the blood and blood-forming organs and certain disorders involving the immune mechanism	D50-D89
Anaemias	D50-D64
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	E00-E88
Diabetes mellitus	E10-E14
Malnutrition	E40-E46
Mental and behavioural disorders	F01-F99
Diseases of the nervous system	G00-G98
Diseases of the circulatory system	I00-I99
Acute rheumatic fever and chronic rheumatic heart diseases	I01-I09
Hypertensive diseases	I10-I13
Ischaemic heart diseases	I20-I25
Cerebrovascular diseases	I60-I69

## Box 2.1 continued

Main divisions of cause of death and selected subdivisions for presentation of statistics <sup>a</sup>	
Diseases of arteries, arterioles and capillaries	I70-I79
Diseases of the respiratory system	J00-J98
Influenza	J10-J11
Pneumonia	J12-J18
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	J40-J47
Diseases of the digestive system	K00-K92
Gastric and duodenal ulcer	K25-K27
Diseases of the liver	K70-K76
Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue	M00-M99
Diseases of the genitourinary system	N00-N98
Disorders of kidney and ureter	N00-N28
Hyperplasia of prostate	N40
Pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium	O00-O99
Pregnancy with abortive outcome	O00-O07
Other direct obstetric causes <sup>b</sup>	O10-O92, O95, A34
Indirect obstetric causes	O98-O99
Certain conditions originating in the perinatal period	P00-P96
Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities	Q00-Q99
Symptoms, signs and abnormal clinical and laboratory findings, not elsewhere classified	R00-R99
All other diseases	H00-H95, L00-L98
External causes	V01-Y89
Accidents	V01-X59
Transport accidents	V01-V99
Falls	W00-W19
Accidental drowning and submersion	W65-W74
Exposure to smoke, fire and flames	X00-X09
Accidental poisoning by and exposure to noxious substances	X40-X49
Intentional self-harm	X60-X84
Assault	X85-Y09
All other external causes	Y10-Y89

**Source:**  
United Nations *Demographic Yearbook 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XIII.1), table 21-2, based on the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th revision* (Geneva, 1992).

**a** For a full detailed list of classifications of cause of death and disease, see World Health Organization, *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th revision* (Geneva, 1992).

**b** In ICD-10 obstetrical tetanus is classified to A34 but in this table it is included with the "Other direct obstetric causes".

Reliable estimates of maternal mortality are still difficult to obtain for many countries

Morbidity statistics are difficult to obtain, and countries and international organizations often have to rely on estimates

It is not always possible to obtain estimates of HIV prevalence by sex

Reliable estimates of maternal mortality are still difficult to obtain for many countries (box 2.2). There are often the problems of significant underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths. Even where deaths are derived from a civil registration system with complete coverage,<sup>7</sup> maternal deaths may be missed or not correctly identified, thus compromising the reliability of such statistics. Maternal deaths are hard to identify because information is needed about (a) deaths among women of reproductive age, (b) pregnancy status at or near the time of death and (c) the medical cause of death. The deaths can be misclassified if, for example, the pregnancy status of the woman was not known, or if the cause of death was wrongly attributed or deliveries are outside of a medical health system.

In the period 1995–2003, among the 110 countries reporting deaths by cause, all reported maternal deaths by age at least once. Almost all 110 countries that reported maternal deaths also reported maternal deaths due to abortion. Two countries, Mongolia and the Syrian Arab Republic, reported maternal deaths but did not report deaths due to abortion.

#### Box 2.2

##### The availability of reliable maternal mortality data

Experience in developing international estimates of maternal mortality illustrates the many difficulties that countries face in measuring maternal mortality. The accuracy of data on maternal deaths depends largely on the existence and reliability of national civil registration systems, which are the primary source of data on deaths. Of the 173 countries considered in the preparation of the 2000 estimates, 60 countries (accounting for only 13 per cent of total births worldwide) reported up-to-date maternal mortality statistics based on complete civil registration systems having good attribution of cause of death. For 51 other countries, which together account for 59 per cent of global births, available data from civil registration systems, surveys, censuses and other sources of information were used to derive statistics on maternal mortality for the 2000 estimates. For the remaining 62 countries, covering 27 per cent of the births worldwide, there was no recent national data on maternal mortality that could be used to derive an estimate.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO, *Maternal Mortality in 2000: Estimates Developed by WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2004).

#### Deaths due to AIDS

The number of deaths caused by AIDS, when reported by sex, can highlight male and female differences in the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, only 80 of the 110 countries or areas that reported deaths by cause at least once in the period 1995–2003 reported deaths attributable to AIDS. All countries that reported deaths caused by AIDS in the period 1995–2002<sup>8</sup> reported the data by sex and age.

#### Morbidity

The Beijing Platform for Action notes the devastating effect of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases on women's health, particularly on the health of adolescent girls and young women.<sup>9</sup> HIV prevalence among 15 to 24-year-old pregnant women is one of the indicators for Millennium Development Goal 6, which calls for stopping and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases including tuberculosis. To track the spread and incidence of diseases, accurate statistics on morbidity are necessary. However, morbidity statistics are difficult to obtain, and countries and international organizations often have to rely on estimates. HIV/AIDS statistics are a good example.

#### Prevalence of HIV/AIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) disseminates, on a regular basis, estimates of the prevalence of HIV, but difficulties in obtaining reliable estimates of HIV prevalence have been documented (see box 2.3). Moreover, it is not always possible to obtain estimates of HIV prevalence by sex. Estimates of the number of adults living with HIV/AIDS were available for 149 countries or areas in 2003, but separate estimates for women and men were available for only 128 countries or areas.

UNAIDS also disseminates, on a regular basis, knowledge and behaviour indicators regarding HIV/AIDS. For the preparation of the 2003 UNAIDS progress report,<sup>10</sup> UNAIDS asked countries for breakdowns by sex for a number of key indicators, but fewer than one in five countries provided that information.<sup>11</sup> In the 2004 UNAIDS report, many indicators continue to be unavailable by sex, including estimated prevalence of AIDS among children aged 0–14, estimated deaths due to AIDS, estimated number of orphans due to AIDS and HIV prevalence in groups with high-risk behaviours in capital cities.<sup>12</sup>

## Box 2.3

**Prevalence of HIV/AIDS: data sources and estimation methods**

Determining the prevalence levels of HIV/AIDS presents considerable challenges. The three most common sources of data for estimating HIV prevalence are (a) sentinel surveillance systems that undertake periodic surveys among specific population groups; (b) national population-based surveys; and (c) case reports from health facilities. As the methods and assumptions used to make these estimates have been continually evolving, the estimates cannot be readily compared over time.

There are difficulties in estimating prevalence levels even in regions with high prevalence rates. In sub-Saharan Africa, a subregion with an estimated 66 per cent of the HIV cases worldwide, estimates of HIV/AIDS prevalence are based largely on information gathered from pregnant women attending selected antenatal clinics. The assumption that HIV prevalence among pregnant women is the same as that among both women and men in the surrounding communities may not be valid in all countries. Recently, some improvements have been achieved in the collection of data on HIV prevalence: several countries in sub-Saharan Africa conducted national population-based surveys with HIV testing of respondents, some of which were Demographic and Health Surveys. Examples include Burundi, Kenya, Mali, Niger, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

**Source:**

UNAIDS, *2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva, 2004).

**Human functioning and disability**

The Beijing Platform of Action stresses that diseases of ageing and the interrelationships of ageing and disability among women require particular attention.<sup>13</sup> It requests that action be taken to improve concepts and methods of data collection on the participation of women and men with disabilities.<sup>14</sup>

A considerable number of countries already collect official national statistics on disability. According to the United Nations Statistics Division, at least 80 countries collected such data in the 1990s, and more than 70 countries have included a question on disability in their census since 1995. However, owing to differences in the concepts and methods used in the questions to identify persons with disabilities, prevalence rates are not comparable across countries.

**Progress in statistics 1975-2003**

Overall, little progress has been made in national reporting between 1975 and 2003 for deaths, infant deaths and cause of death statistics in every geographic region. The number of countries or areas reporting deaths by sex and age has remained approximately the same every year. Occasionally, some countries reported total deaths but the data were not disaggregated by sex.

Similarly, lack of progress was observed in the reporting of deaths by cause. In general, countries fall into one of two groups: either they have a strong statistical capacity and have been able to report mortality data almost every year by sex, age and cause; or their reporting capacity is very limited and has not improved since 1975. Moreover, there is a clear association between the national reporting of mortality data by sex and age and the level of development. This is, at least partially, a consequence of the lack of well-functioning civil registration systems that record births and deaths in the less developed regions. However, there have been some notable improvements. There has been better reporting of deaths caused by HIV/AIDS. In addition, the implementation of international programmes such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and Demographic and Health Surveys have contributed to a wider availability of national data on some aspects of mortality, morbidity and disability.

Chart 2.5 displays the number of countries or areas that reported total deaths; deaths by sex; and deaths by sex and age, for each year between 1975 and 2003. From 2000 onwards, the results should be regarded as preliminary, as many countries have delays in the reporting of data. Each year from 1975 to 2000, about 130 countries or areas reported the total number of deaths; about 100 reported deaths by sex; and only about 90 reported deaths by sex and age. Every year, between 20 and 30 countries or areas reported total deaths without reporting deaths by sex.

Some countries reported deaths by sex and age at very sparse intervals; others reported data frequently, i.e. for at least five years in a period. An improvement, albeit small, was observed in the period 1985-1994 (chart 2.6). The number of countries or areas reporting data for at least one year increased from 116 in 1975-1984 to 128 in 1985-1994. Fewer countries have reported the data for 1995-2003, possibly due to delays in reporting caused by the time required to process the data. Similarly, the number of countries or areas that reported data frequently

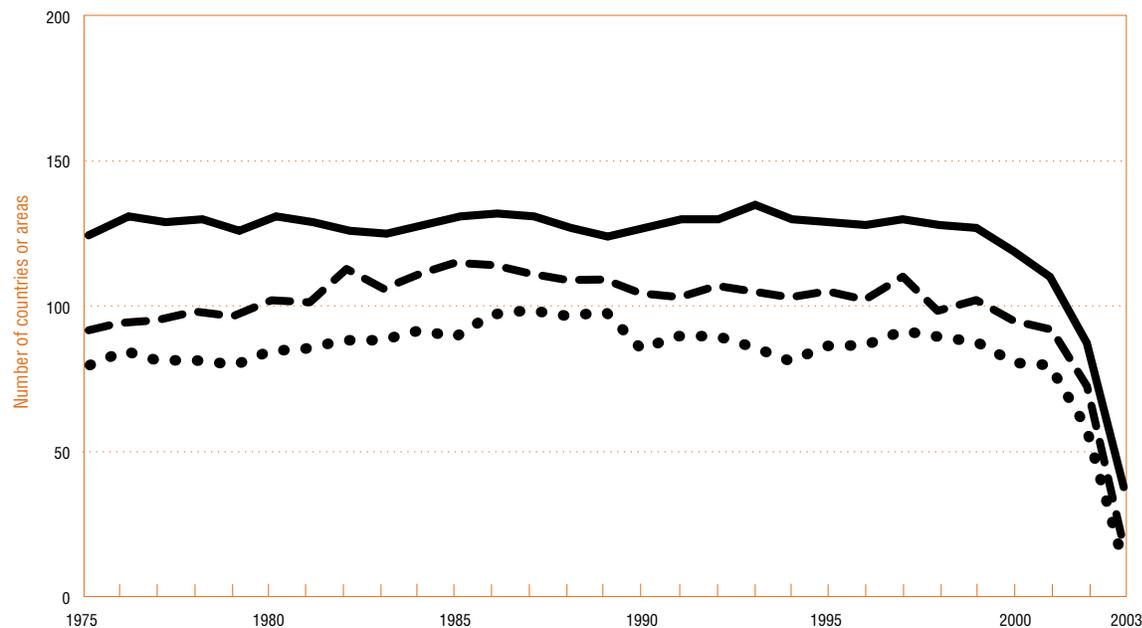
The number of countries reporting deaths due to AIDS by sex to the World Health Organization increased substantially between 1995 and 2000

More than 70 countries have included a question on disability in their census since 1995

Chart 2.5

## Number of countries or areas that reported statistics on deaths, 1975 – 2003

Deaths ———  
Deaths by sex - - -  
Deaths by sex and age •••



## Source:

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

increased from 84 in 1975-1984 to 96 in 1985-1994. Again, a lower number—88—is seen to have reported frequently in 1995-2003.

The number of countries or areas that reported annual deaths by cause, sex and age for at least one year has also remained about the same over the last three decades: 106 in 1975-1984, 109 in 1985-1994 and 109 in 1995-2003. Countries or areas that reported deaths by cause in those three periods usually also provided the data disaggregated by sex and age. It is important to note, however, that there have been improvements in some aspects of reporting over the three periods. For example, during the period

1975-1984, a total of 10 countries or areas reported data disaggregated by sex but not by age.<sup>15</sup> During the periods 1985-1994 and 1995-2003, only one country reported data disaggregated by sex but not by age.<sup>16</sup>

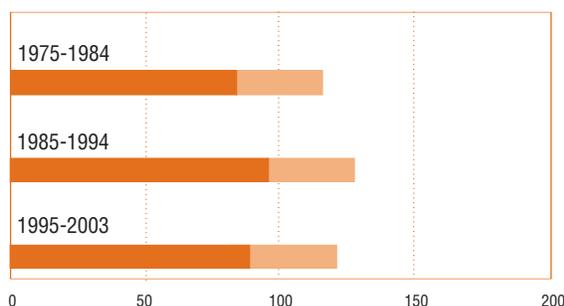
Another area in which there has been improvement is the national reporting of deaths due to AIDS. The number of countries reporting deaths due to AIDS by sex to the World Health Organization increased substantially between 1995 and 2000 (chart 2.7). Among the 87 countries or areas that reported deaths by cause in 1995, only 38 reported deaths caused by AIDS. In the following years the number steadily increased and, in 2000, out of 75 countries or areas that reported deaths by cause, 68, or almost all of them, reported deaths caused by AIDS.<sup>17</sup> The increase in reporting deaths due to AIDS is in part due to the gradual implementation by countries or areas of the Tenth Revision of the International Classification for Diseases (ICD-10), which was published in 1992 and went into effect in 1993. ICD-10 includes HIV as a cause of death, whereas the previous revision (ICD-9) did not.<sup>18</sup>

The availability of data on HIV/AIDS prevalence for adults has improved between 2001, when estimates were available for 132 countries or areas, and 2003, when estimates were available for 149 countries or areas. However, there has been only

Chart 2.6

## Number of countries or areas that reported deaths by sex and age, by number of years data were reported, for three periods.

5+ years ■  
1-4 years ■



## Source:

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

Number of countries or areas

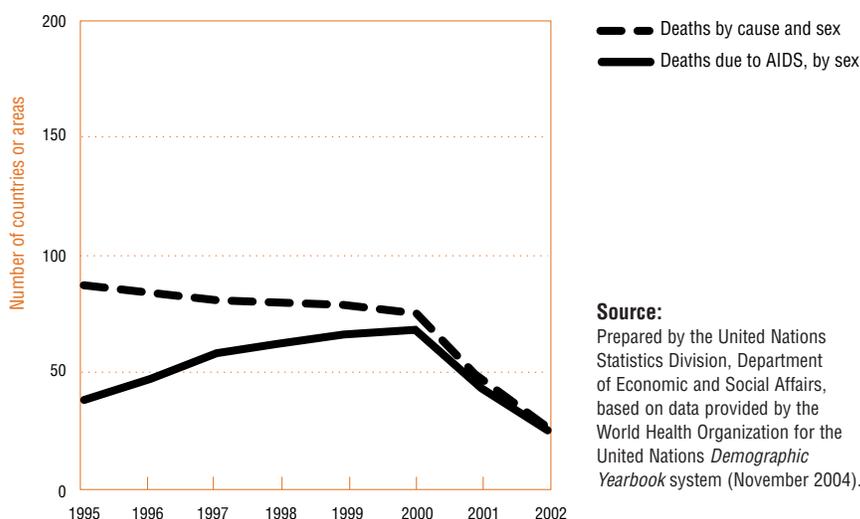
minimal improvement in the availability of data by sex. Estimates of the number of women and men living with HIV/AIDS were available for 127 countries or areas in 2001 and for 128 countries or areas in 2003.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, there has been some improvement in the availability of health-related data in countries that had very little data in the past through international programmes such as Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, which have made it possible to conduct a large number of nationally representative surveys in developing countries (see box 2.4). The surveys focus on many aspects of health and are especially designed to capture data on women and children.

A significant development in the methodological work on disability measurement is the adoption of the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) in 2001.<sup>20</sup> The ICF serves as a framework for developing measures for data collection on disability. Guided by this framework, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics is currently developing measures on disability for use in national censuses and surveys.<sup>21</sup>

Chart 2.7

**Number of countries or areas that reported statistics, by sex, on deaths by cause and deaths due to AIDS, 1995 – 2002**

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data provided by the World Health Organization for the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

## Box 2.4

**Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys**

Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are nationally representative household surveys with large sample sizes that have provided data on the population, health and nutrition of women and children in countries in less developed regions since the 1980s. DHS are meant to be conducted every five years to allow comparisons over time, and the DHS project has coordinated close to 200 surveys in more than 70 countries over the last 20 years. The standard DHS consists of a household questionnaire, which collects information on all members of the household, and a questionnaire for women aged 15-49 years. In general, the surveys include questions on contraception, maternal health, HIV/AIDS and nutrition. Special modules can also be added to questionnaires in order to meet host country and donor data needs. Data from the DHS are available online (see website at the end of the box).

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) is a household survey programme that has assisted countries in filling data gaps for monitoring the situation of children and women. The first round of the MICS was conducted around 1995 in more than 60 countries, and

a second round of surveys was conducted in 2000 for about 65 countries. The MICS includes a set of modules to collect data on the health and nutrition status of women and children, child rights and other areas of concern. It consists of three questionnaires that can be customized to the needs of a country: a household questionnaire, a questionnaire for women 15-49 years of age and a questionnaire on the situation of children under the age of 5 (addressed to the caretaker of the child).

Both DHS and MICS are based on large national samples and in particular cover countries in less developed regions where health data is usually the scarcest. The surveys produce internationally comparable estimates, although countries sometimes modify the questions to meet their national data needs. The surveys do have some limitations, however, because of the age range of the population covered (15-49 for most of the questions related to women) and their lack of coverage of the adult male population (not covered at all in MICS and covered only in some of the DHS surveys).

**Sources:**

See <http://www.measuredhs.com> and <http://www.childinfo.org/>.

Lack of reliable information on the cause of death represents a serious obstacle to monitoring health problems that affect women

The result will be a set of questions that can be used to collect harmonized data across culturally diverse countries.

Another recent development in the area of disability is the international collection and dissemination of statistics on disability by the United Nations Statistics Division. Beginning in 2005, national data including metadata on human functioning and disability will be systematically collected and disseminated through the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*. This initiative will contribute to the availability, at the international level, of disability statistics on women and men.

## Challenges

### Building statistical capacity

The ability of Governments to report health-related statistics by sex and age is closely tied to the existence of comprehensive national statistical systems

The ability of Governments to report health-related statistics by sex and age is closely tied to the existence of comprehensive national statistical systems. A key challenge, therefore, is strengthening those systems in countries where deficiencies in reporting are most apparent. In particular, efforts need to be directed at the development and integration of national civil registration and vital statistics systems.

Civil registers can provide the requisite information on deaths according to sex, age and reported cause of death, among other characteristics. Although a majority of countries have a national civil registration system that records deaths, many are incomplete in their coverage, have late registration or errors in reporting or in classifying the cause of death, especially in the less developed regions and among the least developed countries. Political will and ample resources are needed to improve these aspects of national systems.

Incomplete coverage and late registration limit the ability of Governments to monitor the health of women and men. This is particularly the case with rural women and those who are members of a disadvantaged group, as deaths among them are more likely to go unregistered or to be registered late. Expanding coverage to make it universal requires a concerted effort by Governments to ensure that deaths occurring outside of hospitals, in rural or in remote areas and among disadvantaged groups are properly recorded.

Lack of reliable information on the cause of death represents a serious obstacle to monitoring

health problems that affect women, such as maternal mortality and contagious diseases like HIV/AIDS. Underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths are greatest in countries where maternal mortality is suspected to be highest and where civil registration and vital statistics systems are weakest. To improve the accuracy and reliability of cause of death information, Governments need to establish and standardize reporting and coding practices. Critical to that effort is the provision of training in death certificate completion for those involved in the certification process.

In addition, for information gathered through civil registers to be useful in the design of health policies and programmes that incorporate gender concerns, Governments must also devote resources to the establishment and maintenance of a well-functioning national vital statistics system. Two key challenges here are (a) establishing close integration between the civil registration and vital statistics systems and (b) developing the capacity to produce and disseminate statistics on deaths regularly broken down by sex, age and cause of death.

Close integration between the two systems is vital to ensure that key information from civil registers such as age, sex and cause of death is preserved and used in the production of vital statistics. Such integration requires Governments to allocate resources to streamline and harmonize the technology and processes used by each system, and to establish appropriate channels for communication and collaboration between their respective staffs. The second challenge requires sustained political commitment to maintain the resources needed to support national vital statistics systems.

### Improving concepts and methods of data collection

In the absence of reliable vital statistics, practical and cost-effective approaches are needed in the short term to improve the national availability of data for monitoring the health of women and men. In the case of maternal mortality, several methods of data collection and estimation have been developed. However, maternal mortality ratio is just one indicator of women's reproductive health. There is a pressing need to monitor morbidity and disability due to pregnancy and childbirth—there is currently no systematic reporting of such data internationally. Only

Governments must devote resources to the establishment and maintenance of a well-functioning national vital statistics system

There is a pressing need to monitor morbidity and disability due to pregnancy and childbirth

some related risk factors, such as early child-bearing and adolescent fertility rates, are internationally reported (see chapter 1). In addition, some aspects highlighted in the Beijing Platform of Action, such as unsafe abortions<sup>22</sup>, remain practically unmonitored. In brief, better and more comprehensive data on a wider range of reproductive health outcomes are needed.

Growing interest also exists in the use of population censuses as a source of data to estimate maternal deaths and deaths caused by AIDS in the most affected countries and where death registration is poor or non-existent.<sup>23</sup> Further research is needed to evaluate the usefulness of population censuses in producing reliable information on these issues. At the same time, clear guidelines need to be developed specifying both the types of questions that countries should include in a census to capture deaths due to maternal causes and AIDS and the methods to estimate mortality using those data.

Reliable data on morbidity, health-care practices and access to and use of health-care services are also necessary to fully assess improvements in the health status of women and men. In the case of maternal health, process indicators—i.e. measures of the services the health system is actually providing—such as attendance by skilled health personnel at delivery and utilization of emergency obstetric care facilities can be used for healthcare planning purposes. In the case of HIV/AIDS, research on the links between HIV infection and condom use, sexual and other high-risk behaviour, knowledge of HIV/AIDS, etc. are needed to better understand the spread of the disease and inform efforts to prevent its further spread.

Data on morbidity of women and men from other causes are also scant. When estimates are available, they are seldom available by sex. Even for diseases that have been highlighted by the Millennium Development Goals, such as malaria and tuberculosis, data on prevalence—i.e. the proportion of the population with the disease—often are not available. There are examples of efforts to collect certain morbidity data in countries. For instance, in some countries cancer prevalence is assessed through registries that record all cancer cases;<sup>24</sup> DOTS, the internationally recommended tuberculosis control strategy programme,<sup>25</sup> has also contributed to better monitoring of that disease. However, these efforts are

not widespread. Further methodological work is required to improve the collection, availability and quality of morbidity data.

The concept of human functioning is becoming increasingly important to the study of aging of women and men. An important challenge related to human functioning and disability involves harmonizing the definitions, concepts and methods used in data collection across countries. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health and the disability measures being developed by the Washington Group for inclusion in censuses and national surveys represent important steps towards such harmonization. Further research is needed to test fully the reliability of such new concepts and measures as well as their applicability in different country settings.

Reliable data on morbidity, health-care practices and access to and use of health-care services are necessary to fully assess improvements in the health status of women and men

Further research is needed to test fully the reliability of new disability concepts and measures as well as their applicability in different country settings

Table 2.A  
Number of countries or areas that reported selected mortality statistics, 1995 – 2003

	Geographic region						Development group			
	World	Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>a</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Deaths</b>										
Total, at least once	155	22	25	13	40	42	13	47	94	14
By sex, at least once	134	18	22	12	33	42	7	47	78	9
By sex and age, at least once	121	15	21	11	28	40	6	45	71	5
By sex and age, for at least five years	88	4	15	8	20	36	5	41	46	1
<b>Infant deaths</b>										
Total, at least once	143	19	24	11	35	41	13	46	85	12
By sex, at least once	114	12	20	9	28	39	6	44	63	7
By sex, for at least five years	81	5	13	6	22	31	4	36	44	1
<b>Deaths by cause</b>										
Total, at least once	110	5	22	10	27	39	7	44	63	3
By sex, at least once	110	5	22	10	27	39	7	44	63	3
By sex and age, at least once	109	5	22	10	26	39	7	44	62	3
By sex and age, for at least five years	87	3	16	9	18	37	4	42	44	1

**Sources:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: for deaths and infant deaths, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004); for deaths by cause, based on data from World Health Organization, *WHO Mortality Database* (December 2004).

a Excluding the least developed countries.

Table 2.B

## Percentage of the world and regional populations in countries or areas that reported selected mortality statistics, 1995 – 2003

	World	Geographic region						Development group		
		Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>a</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Deaths</b>										
Total, at least once	69	46	97	100	61	100	98	100	64	47
By sex, at least once	63	35	96	98	55	100	76	100	61	15
By sex and age, at least once	61	33	96	98	52	100	76	100	58	13
By sex and age, for at least five years	33	12	94	88	10	98	75	99	19	0
<b>Infant deaths</b>										
Total, at least once	46	40	97	98	25	100	98	100	32	41
By sex, at least once	40	35	96	88	17	99	76	99	27	18
By sex, for at least five years	28	16	94	78	10	60	75	76	18	0
<b>Deaths by cause</b>										
Total, at least once	59	16	98	97	51	100	78	100	56	1
By sex, at least once	59	16	98	97	51	100	78	100	56	1
By sex and age, at least once	59	16	98	97	51	100	78	100	56	1
By sex and age, for at least five years	53	10	96	97	43	98	77	99	49	0

**Sources:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: for deaths and infant deaths, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004); for deaths by cause, based on data from World Health Organization, *WHO Mortality Database* (December 2004).

a Excluding the least developed countries.

## Notes

- 1 In Africa: Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Mauritania; in North America: Dominica, Jamaica and Netherlands Antilles; in South America: Bolivia; in Asia: Bangladesh, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and United Arab Emirates; in Europe: Albania; in Oceania: Fiji, French Polynesia, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Samoa.
- 2 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), para. 259.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 In Africa: Botswana, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Mauritania, Seychelles and Swaziland; in North America: Dominica, Guadeloupe, Jamaica and Martinique; in South America: Bolivia and Peru; in Asia: Bangladesh, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Oman, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and United Arab Emirates; in Europe: Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; in Oceania: Fiji, French Polynesia, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Samoa.
- 5 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 97.
- 6 "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration" Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/326) annex. Available from [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/mi\\_links.asp](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_links.asp).
- 7 Civil registration systems with 90 per cent or better coverage of deaths.
- 8 Data for 2003 were not available.
- 9 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 98.
- 10 UNAIDS, *Progress Report on the Global Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic 2003* (Geneva, 2003).
- 11 UNAIDS, *2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva, 2004).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 101.
- 14 Ibid. para. 206 (k).
- 15 Belize, Colombia, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia and Seychelles.
- 16 Sri Lanka for some years in 1985-1994 and in 1995-2003.
- 17 From 2000 onwards, the results should be regarded as preliminary as many countries or areas have not yet had enough time to report the data.
- 18 In 1995 only 4 countries had adopted the new standard. By 2003, 75 countries had adopted the new standard. See Mathers et al. *Counting the dead and what they died from: an assessment of the global status of cause of death data*. Bulletin of the World Health Organization 2005, 83: 171-177.
- 19 UNAIDS, *2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva, 2004), p. 189-207.
- 20 World Health Organization, *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (Geneva, 2001).
- 21 For information on the Washington Group and its work, see "Report of the Washington Group on Disability Measurement", note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2003/8).
- 22 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 97.
- 23 "Topics of emerging policy relevance and suggested minimum and essential census topics: implications for updating *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*" (ESA/STAT/AC.98/1), paper presented at the Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, 15-17 September 2004 New York.
- 24 Cancer registries exist in many countries worldwide. See <http://www.iacr.com.fr>.
- 25 DOTS combines five elements: political commitments, microscopy services, drug supplies, surveillance and monitoring systems, and use of highly efficacious regimes.

## Chapter 3

# Education and training

**“Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace.”**

Beijing Platform for Action

The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 recognized that “investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth”, and through the Beijing Platform for Action, called on Governments to ensure equal access to education and to eradicate illiteracy among women.<sup>1</sup> Through the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 Governments reiterated their commitment to achieve universal primary education (Goal 2) and to eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education by 2015 (Goal 3, Target 4). To assess progress towards the attainment of those strategic objectives and goals, women’s and girls’ access to education and educational outcomes must be monitored through the collection, analysis and dissemination of data.

The statistical data reviewed in the present chapter address some of the strategic objectives on education formulated in the Beijing Platform for Action, including the following: to ensure equal access to education; to eradicate illiteracy among women; to improve women’s access to vocational training, science and technology; and the Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3, as stated above.

The capacity of countries to monitor progress towards gender equality in education is assessed below with regard to both access to and outcomes of the educational process, using the following statistics (see box 3.1 for definitions):

### Access to educational services

- Enrolment by level of education, sex and age
- School attendance by sex and age
- Number of teachers by sex

### Outcomes of education experience

- Literacy by sex and age
- Educational attainment by sex and age

National statistical information on access to educational services and their outcomes are collected through (a) school administrative records gathered annually by the school systems and reported to ministries of education; (b) population and housing censuses; and (c) national household or other sample surveys. At the international level, national data on school enrolment and teachers as well as on literacy and educational attainment are reported to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). National census data on school attendance, literacy and educational attainment are reported to the United Nations Statistics Division. Country reporting to international organizations is an indication of national capacity to disseminate education information in a regular and timely way.

Since 1995 most countries or areas have reported the number of students enrolled in primary and secondary school at least once, but only less than a quarter have reported school attendance. Also, fewer than half have reported statistics on literacy and educational attainment from censuses.

## Current state of statistics

### 1995-2003

#### Access to educational services

It is widely believed that millions of young girls never attend school and millions more never complete their education. According to the Beijing Platform for Action, “discrimination in girls’ access to education persists in many areas, owing to customary attitudes, early marriages and pregnancies, inadequate and gender-biased teaching and educational materials, sexual harassment and lack of adequate and physically and otherwise accessible schooling facilities”.<sup>2</sup> In order to assess the continuing validity of these statements and devise appropriate policies, data are needed on enrolment, school attendance and school completion, combined with other information such as the number and qualifications of teachers and the availability of teaching materials.

Women’s and girls’ access to education and educational outcomes must be monitored through the collection, analysis and dissemination of data

Since 1995 most countries have reported the number of students enrolled in primary and secondary school

Fewer than half of the countries have reported statistics on literacy and educational attainment from censuses

## Box 3.1

**Definitions**

**Enrolment** refers to the number of pupils or students officially enrolled or registered in a given grade or level of education, regardless of age. Typically, these data are collected at the beginning of the academic year.

**School attendance** is defined as attendance at any regular accredited educational institution or programme, public or private, for organized learning at any level of education.

**Technical and vocational education** refers to a type of programme that is designed mainly to lead pupils to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade (or class of occupations or trades). Successful completion of such programmes normally leads to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities (e.g. Ministry of Education, employers' associations, etc.) in the country in which it is obtained.

**Teaching staff** (teachers) are persons employed full-time or part-time in an official capacity for the purpose of guiding or directing the learning experience of pupils

and students, irrespective of his/her qualification or the delivery mechanism (i.e. whether face-to-face and/or at a distance). It excludes educational personnel who have no active teaching duties (such as headmasters, headmistresses or principals who do not teach) or who work occasionally or in a voluntary capacity in educational institutions.

**A literate person** is one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life.

**An illiterate person** is one who cannot, with understanding, both read and write such a simple statement.

**Educational attainment** is defined as the highest grade completed within the most advanced level attended in the educational system of the country where the education was received.

**Sources:**

*Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, rev. 1* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8), paras. 2.145, 2.150 and 2.153; and definitions provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

**Enrolment**

Administrative records from the formal education system provide a major source of information on access to education, particularly on official enrolment levels, and are essential for planning the education process in terms of human and economic resources. Enrolment data by level of education and sex are needed to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals of achieving universal primary education (Goal 2) and promoting gender equality (Goal 3).

The present chapter considers data on enrolment from six academic years: 1995/1996, 1996/1997 and 1998/1999 to 2001/2002. The academic year 1997/1998 was excluded owing to a lack of data disseminated by UNESCO following changes in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)<sup>3</sup> system in 1997 and other institutional issues. Data for the years 2002/2003 to 2004/2005 were not yet available at the time when the present analysis was conducted.<sup>4</sup> Countries or areas were considered as being able to report

the number of students enrolled unless the data provided were deemed by UNESCO to be incomplete, inconsistent or to require an adjustment. Because the primary objective of the present analysis is to examine the capacity of Governments to report quality data, estimates and data adjustments by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) are not included in the analysis.<sup>5</sup>

In general, there was a high level of reporting of enrolment data to the international statistical system, with most of the 204 countries or areas reporting the number of children enrolled in both primary and secondary<sup>6</sup> education at least once for the six academic years considered (chart 3.1). Relatively fewer countries or areas reported the number of students in tertiary education.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the countries or areas reporting enrolment data also provided data broken down by sex. Of the total reporting, only 2 did not provide this breakdown for primary education, 3 for secondary education and 12 for tertiary education. In most cases, however, enrolment data by sex was missing for

Most countries reporting enrolment data also provided data broken down by sex

Chart 3.1

**Number of countries or areas that reported enrolment data, by level of education, for the academic years 1995/1996 – 2001/2002<sup>a</sup>**

	Primary	Secondary		Tertiary	
		Total	Vocational	Total	By field
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Enrolment</b>					
Total, at least once	189	185	163	166	127
By sex, at least once	187	182	157	154	118
Total, at least three years	160	151	112	116	63
By sex, at least three years	155	143	104	104	62

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates (November 2004).

<sup>a</sup> The academic year 1997/1998 was excluded from analysis owing to a lack of data.

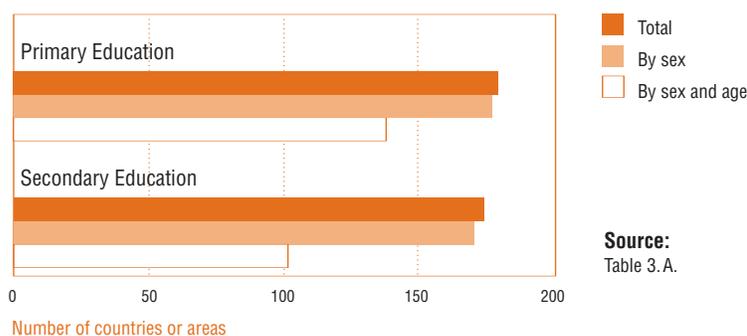
the analysed time period because countries did not report any data on enrolment at all: 15 did not report in the case of primary education, 19 in secondary education and 38 in tertiary education. It is important to note, however, that of the 38 countries or areas not reporting any data on enrolment in tertiary education, 11 do not provide tertiary education within their territories.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, not all the countries or areas reporting enrolment were able to do so frequently (i.e. for at least three out of the six academic years considered) and thus provide timely data necessary for evidence-based policies. Of a total of 204 countries or areas, 155 frequently reported the number of students by sex for primary education, 143 for secondary education and 104 for tertiary education. The population of the concerned countries or areas represents 92, 85 and 59 per cent of the world population respectively. Data for higher instruction seems to have been less systematically collected, processed and disseminated as compared with secondary and primary education.

Analysis by geographic region revealed that most of the countries in each region were able to provide, at least once, enrolment data by sex for primary and secondary education (table 3.A). However, a smaller proportion of countries from Africa, North America and Oceania were able to report enrolment data by sex frequently compared to countries from other geographic regions. In addition, a smaller proportion of the countries from the less developed regions including the least developed countries, were able to provide data frequently compared to countries from more developed regions (table 3.A).

Besides the need for enrolment data to be disaggregated by sex and level of education, monitoring progress towards achieving universal primary education requires that statistics on enrolment be further disaggregated by age of the student or pupil. Available data covering the academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002, shows that while most countries reported the number of girls and of boys in primary education at least once in the four academic years covered, far fewer (138 countries or areas comprising 61 per cent of the world's population) provided enrolment data by sex and age for primary education at least once (chart 3.2 and table 3.B). For secondary education, less than half the world's countries or areas (101) comprising only 30 per cent of its population reported this data by age and sex at least once (table 3.A).

Chart 3.2

**Number of countries or areas that reported enrolment data at least once, by level of education, for the academic years 1998/1999 – 2001/2002**


Data for higher instruction seems to have been less systematically collected, processed and disseminated as compared with secondary and primary education

**Source:**  
Table 3.A.

Striking regional disparities were apparent in the reporting of enrolment data by sex and age

Striking regional disparities were also apparent in the reporting of enrolment data by sex and age. The region with the lowest proportion of countries reporting such data was Oceania, where, out of 17 countries, only 6 reported enrolment data broken down by sex and age for primary education and 5 for secondary education. Africa also showed relatively low levels of reporting with 39 out of 55 countries or areas reporting data on enrolment in primary education by sex and age and with 18 providing similar information for secondary education (table 3.A).

Finally, a special issue highlighted by the Beijing Platform for Action with respect to women's education concerns their access to technical vocational programmes and to fields of study that are traditionally male-dominated. Specifically, the Platform for Action called for improving women's access to vocational training, science and technology to help improve their employment opportunities.<sup>9</sup> This requires further breakdown of enrolment data by field of study, which fewer countries were able to provide (chart 3.1). Data for the six academic years showed that 104 countries or areas frequently provided the numbers of female and of male students enrolled in technical vocational programmes,<sup>10</sup> while only 62 countries or areas frequently provided the number of tertiary students by sex and field of study.

### School attendance

Apart from school administrative records, another way to measure access to education—to know whether girls and boys are in school—is through the use of school attendance questions in population censuses and household surveys. School administrative data typically provide information for only those children who have officially enrolled in school and often provide limited information about children who are enrolled but who are not attending school. School attendance questions from censuses and surveys can fill in that gap by providing information on both school-age children who are participating in education and those who are not.

Moreover, data on school attendance combined with other basic information collected at the same time in a census or survey can give a picture of family and household factors that contribute to gender inequality in access to schooling. Surveys can be particularly useful in examining the factors that limit access to education, as they can accommodate more detailed questions on educational services and outcomes. Box 3.2 highlights some of the advantages and limitations of using household surveys to measure school attendance.

### Box 3.2

#### Household surveys and school attendance

An important feature of household surveys is that they can provide detailed information on the characteristics of school-age children who are not participating in education, their families and the households they belong to. Such data is necessary to examine the factors underlying inequality in school participation. There are often sizeable differences in educational participation depending on the population subgroup. In Guinea, for example, children who live in rural areas or in households that score low on the household asset index, as well as those who have a mother with no education, are much less likely to report having attended school in the last year. Moreover, there are important interactions with residence, well-being and gender. One in eight girls from poor households attends school, compared to one in four boys from poor households.

This type of information is helpful in targeting national policy efforts, although it is important to appreciate that survey data may be weak in relation to severely disadvantaged groups since those groups are frequently underrepresented in household surveys. Poor coverage of such groups as migrants, refugees, the homeless, those in orphanages and other institutions or people from ethnic minorities may affect evaluations of the scope of a problem such as out-of-school children.

Inquiring about attendance at school is also not as straightforward as it might appear, and often surveys will produce markedly different estimates of attendance owing to differences in the methodology or in the survey timing in relation to the school year.

#### Source:

*Global Education Digest 2003: Comparing Education Statistics across the World* (Montreal, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2003).

Between 1995 and 2003, only 40 countries or areas representing a mere 14 per cent of the world's population reported census data on school attendance by sex and age (tables 3.A and 3B). Three additional countries reported census information on school attendance, but did not disaggregate the data by sex or age. Finally, one additional country provided school attendance data by sex, but did not break it down by age.

Important differences in the reporting of census data on school attendance by sex and age were evident among geographic regions and across development groups. Compared to other regions, a greater number of countries or areas from Europe (17 out of

Between 1995 and 2003, only 40 countries or areas representing a mere 14 per cent of the world's population reported census data on school attendance by sex and age

42) and Asia (11 out of 50) reported census data on school attendance broken down by sex and age. By contrast, in Oceania only one out of 17 countries or areas had, by 2003, reported school attendance data by sex and age from the census. In Africa, the figure was three out of 55 countries or areas (table 3.A).

In terms of development groups, greater reporting of census data on school attendance disaggregated by sex and age was apparent among countries in the more developed regions (19 out of 47) compared to countries in the less developed regions excluding the least developed countries, where only 18 out of 107 provided similar data. Reporting was lowest among the least developed countries where only 3 out of 50 countries or areas reported census data on school attendance by sex and age (table 3.A).

Although the worldwide availability of school attendance data by sex and age from censuses is low in general, similar information on this topic can be obtained from national household surveys. For example, data on school attendance by sex and age collected through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) or Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) is available for 74 of the 164 countries that did not report such information from censuses (see chapter 2, box 2.4 for a description of DHS and MICS). Considering school attendance data from those surveys brings the total number of countries with such data broken down by sex and age to 114.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys or Demographic and Health Surveys are a particularly important source of school attendance data in the least developed countries. Of the 50 least developed countries, 36 have data on school attendance disaggregated by sex and age through either MICS or DHS. This brings the total number of least

developed countries with such data from 3 to 39.

## Teachers

The Beijing Platform for Action calls on Governments to “take actions to ensure that female teachers and professors have the same opportunities as and equal status with male teachers and professors”.<sup>11</sup> It also calls for the promotion of non-stereotyped images of women and men through education. In this respect, women teachers are important, serving as role models and helping to attract and retain girls in school. It is therefore important to monitor the prevalence of women teachers at all levels of education. The primary source of information on the number of teachers and proportion of women teachers is the administrative data collected by ministries of education for all three levels of education.<sup>12</sup>

As with the reporting of enrolment, more countries or areas were able to provide data on teachers in primary education than for higher levels of education. For the six academic years considered between 1995/1996 and 2001/2002, 176 countries or areas provided the total number of teachers in primary education at least once, compared to 149 countries or areas providing the number of teachers for tertiary education (chart 3.3).

The number of countries or areas reporting total number of teachers without breaking down the data by sex ranges from 8 for primary education to 23 for tertiary education. In a greater number of cases, data on numbers of female and male teachers is missing for the analysed time period because the countries or areas did not report any data at all: these range from 28 not reporting the number of teachers in primary education to 55 not reporting on tertiary education.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys or Demographic and Health Surveys are a particularly important source of school attendance data in the least developed countries

More countries or areas were able to provide data on teachers in primary education than for higher levels of education

Chart 3.3

Number of countries or areas that reported the number of teachers, by level of education, for the academic years 1995/1996 – 2001/2002<sup>a</sup>

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Teachers</b>			
Total, at least once	176	144	149
By sex, at least once	168	136	126
Total, at least three years	136	75	87
By sex, at least three years	119	64	60

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates (November 2004).

<sup>a</sup> The academic year 1997/1998 was excluded from analysis owing to a lack of data.

Particularly limited is the capacity of countries or areas to report teacher data frequently (chart 3.3). In general, of the countries that reported teacher data by level of education at least once, a much smaller number were able to provide such data frequently. That is the case especially for reports of teachers in secondary and tertiary education. Compared to 119 countries or areas that frequently reported the numbers of female and male teachers in primary education, only 64 and 60 countries or areas respectively provided this data frequently for secondary and tertiary education.

### Education outcomes: literacy and educational attainment

Statistics on literacy and educational attainment by sex and age are reflections of the outcome of the educational process for each generation of women and men. Such information may be used to assess the quality of the labour force, to adjust the national school systems and to evaluate and reformulate policies on lifelong learning for women and men who are in or out of the school system.

According to the Beijing Platform for Action, more than two thirds of the world's 960 million illiterate adults in 1995 were women, and eradicating illiteracy is one of its strategic objectives. Moreover, the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", stated that little progress had been made in eradicating illiteracy and called for a 50 per cent improvement in the levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women. In order to assess whether a 50 per cent improvement in the levels has taken place, it is necessary to know past national levels of literacy and to monitor them on an ongoing basis.

It is important to note that not all the countries or areas that collected statistics on literacy and educational attainment in the 2000 census round have as yet reported them to the United Nations Statistics Division. So far, out of the 178 countries or areas that conducted a census, 77, comprising 64 per cent of the world's population, have reported literacy by sex and age. For educational attainment, only 71 countries or areas, comprising 48 per cent of the world population, have reported the data by sex and age (chart 3.4 and table 3.B). It is, however, expected that more data will come in from the 2000 round of censuses as time goes on.

As in the case of school attendance, comparable data on literacy and educational attainment by

sex and age is available from MICS and DHS for a number of countries that have not reported such data from censuses. For example, 38 countries or areas, comprising 14 per cent of the world population, have survey data on literacy by sex and age, while 60 countries or areas, comprising 38 per cent of the world population have survey data on educational attainment by sex and age. Taking into consideration the availability of literacy and educational attainment data from those surveys, the total number of countries with literacy data by sex and age is 115 and the total with educational attainment data by sex and age is 131 (chart 3.4).

Chart 3.4

**Number of countries or areas for which data on literacy and educational attainment by sex and age are available, by source of data, 1995 – 2003**

Source	Literacy	Educational attainment
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>131</b>
Population census	77	71
DHS or MICS	38 <sup>a</sup>	60 <sup>a</sup>

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004); data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates (April 2005); data from the Demographic and Health Surveys website <http://www.measuredhs.com> (March 2005); and data from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys website <http://www.childinfo.org> (June 2005).

<sup>a</sup> Considers only countries that did not report the data from censuses to the international statistical system for the period 1995-2003.

As is the case with other education statistics, there are notable differences between geographic regions in the reporting of census data on literacy and educational attainment (chart 3.5). The relative number of countries or areas reporting is highest in Europe and Asia and lowest in Africa and Oceania.

In Africa, 39 out of the 55 countries or areas conducted a census between 1995 and 2004, but so far only 14 have reported data by sex and age on literacy and 9 on educational attainment. Most of the existing data on literacy and educational attainment in this region is available from household and other sample surveys: for example, an additional 26 countries or areas in Africa have data by sex and age on literacy and 36 on educational attainment from MICS or DHS.

There are also differences in the reporting of data on literacy and educational attainment among development groups. Most countries in the more

Statistics on literacy and educational attainment by sex and age are reflections of the outcome of the educational process for each generation of women and men

In Africa, 39 out of the 55 countries or areas conducted a census between 1995 and 2004, but so far only 14 have reported data by sex and age on literacy and 9 on educational attainment

Chart 3.5

**Number of countries or areas that conducted a census between 1995 and 2004 and reported data on literacy and educational attainment by sex and age from the censuses, by geographic region**

	Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>17</b>
Conducted a census 1995-2004	39	26	11	44	41	17
Reported literacy	14	7	7	29	16	4
Reported educational attainment	9	6	3	24	25	4

**Source:**  
Table 3.A.

developed regions do not regularly report data on literacy because it is considered virtually universal and thus the information is not collected in their censuses. Nonetheless, those countries report educational attainment data from censuses more than the countries in the less developed regions excluding the least developed countries (tables 3.A and 3.B). The reporting of literacy and educational attainment data from censuses is lowest among the least developed countries. Thirty-four out of the 50 in that group conducted a census between 1995 and 2004, but so far only 12 have reported data by sex and age on literacy and 8 on educational attainment. National household surveys have helped to improve the availability of data on literacy and educational attainment in the least developed countries. Of those that have not yet reported these data from censuses, 23 have data by sex and age on literacy and 30 on educational attainment through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys or Demographic and Health Surveys.

**Progress in statistics 1975-2003**

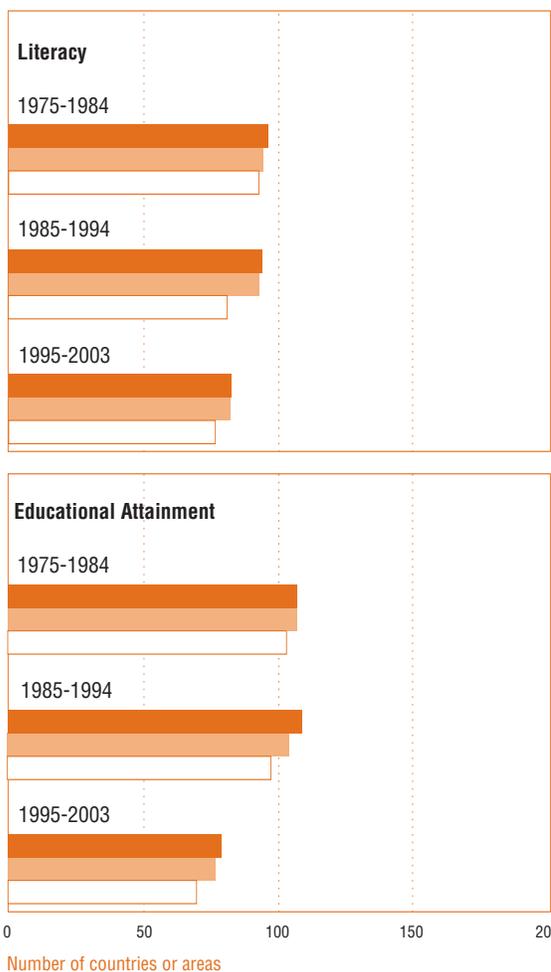
Due to recent changes in the compilation of school administrative data by UNESCO, it is not possible to examine progress over time in the reporting by Governments of statistics on enrolment. In the case of literacy and educational attainment data from censuses, national reporting has been, in some respects, similar in all three periods considered. Since 1975, most of the countries or areas providing census data on educational outcomes have been able to provide it by sex. Likewise, data by sex and age was provided by the majority of countries or areas (chart 3.6).

Although the number of countries or areas that have reported education data from the 2000 census round to the United Nations system is lower than in the previous periods (chart 3.6), that number is expected to increase. First, the countries or areas conducting the census in 2004 were not included in the analysis. Second, the time required

for processing detailed census tabulations reflects on the data reported for the period 1995 to 2003. For example, Mexico and Panama reported educational attainment by sex and age in the 1980 and the 1990

Chart 3.6

**Number of countries or areas that reported data on literacy and educational attainment from censuses, for three periods**



■ Total  
■ By sex  
□ By sex and age

**Source:**  
Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004); and on data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates (April 2005).

census rounds but have so far reported only totals from their 2000 round. Jamaica and Malawi reported educational attainment by both sex and age in the 1980 and 1990 census rounds, but have so far reported only by sex from the 2000 round.

## Challenges

### Reporting and statistical capacity

Reporting reliable data on education by sex to the United Nations system is dependent both on statistical capacity and on the importance attributed to gender issues in education in a country. The present chapter shows that important gaps remain in the reporting of key education statistics needed for national planning and to monitor progress towards national and international goals including the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education (Goal 2) and gender equality and the empowerment of women (Goal 3).

Lack of reporting is greatest for education data from censuses, especially with regard to school attendance. Timeliness in the reporting of the data continues to be a problem for many countries in the less developed regions. The reporting of education data from school administrative records is much better. Nonetheless, important challenges remain in the reporting of official enrolment data and teacher data. For example, statistics on primary enrolment by sex and age are still not available for many countries, which limits the calculation of primary net enrolment ratio used to track progress towards attaining universal primary education. The capacity of countries to provide statistics on the sex distribution of teachers is also quite low, especially with respect to secondary and tertiary levels of education.

To effectively monitor the attainment of Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 and the education objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, efforts need to be directed towards improving the collection of official enrolment data at the national level. In particular, the following data needs to be routinely collected: enrolment data by level of education, sex and age; enrolment in secondary education by type of programme; and enrolment in tertiary education by field of study. Data on the number of teachers by sex at each level of education must also be routinely collected.

In addition, there are important coverage problems for data on enrolment and teachers. Students and teachers in private schools not dependent on the national budget, and in certain religious

schools or in flexible forms of education (such as evening school or distance learning programmes) are sometimes excluded from official counts. Efforts should, therefore, be directed at improving the coverage of education statistics to ensure that data include all relevant institutions and education programmes.

### International comparability of education statistics

The statistics analysed in the present chapter cover the basic aspects of gender equality in education, and they have been reported to the international statistical system for decades. However, more needs to be done with respect to international comparability. Some countries do not classify educational programmes at the same International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels, and certain educational programmes cannot be easily classified within the ISCED system. Definitions—and consequently measurements—of literacy also vary from one country to another. Some countries use self-declaration or proxy measurements of literacy based on educational attainment instead of direct assessment. In contrast, countries where basic literacy is considered virtually universal are using a new concept that relates literacy to improved living conditions (see below). The commitment of Governments and international agencies is needed in order to generate common definitions and measurements.

### New concepts regarding life skills

An increasing number of countries in more developed regions are applying a new concept to assess different levels of literacy skills: functional literacy. While basic literacy is the ability to read and write with understanding a simple statement related to one's daily life, functional literacy is the ability to use literacy for personal development and for the effective functioning of the group or community to which the person belongs.<sup>13</sup> The use of the concept may be beneficial not only in the more developed regions but also in the less developed regions. Women play a key role in improving health, nutrition and education in the family; therefore their ability to seek, read and use information is essential. That ability also plays an important part in empowering women to participate actively and meaningfully in society.

It is necessary to collect data on functional literacy and on scientific and technological knowledge, including computer literacy. The latter is

Reporting data on education by sex is dependent both on statistical capacity and on the importance attributed to gender issues in education

Lack of reporting is greatest for education data from censuses, especially with regard to school attendance

There are coverage problems for data on enrolment and teachers. Students and teachers in private schools and in certain religious schools or in flexible forms of education are sometimes excluded from official counts

required to assess the extent to which girls' and women's access to science and technology and information technology has improved, as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action.

### Quality of education and non-formal education

Data are needed for other aspects of education that are mentioned in the Beijing Platform for Action. Compilation of data at the international level is particularly challenging for such topics as the quality of education and non-formal education. In terms of tracking educational achievement, only a few countries have a system of collecting data through standardized tests. Moreover, not all the elements concerning the quality of education can be easily quantified and transformed into statistics. For example, gender discrimination promoted by curricula and teaching materials or the gender awareness of educators needs to be assessed through more in-depth analysis.

A significant proportion of the world's women are already out of formal schooling, but they should still have the opportunity to acquire more knowledge, capacities and skills. Women with little or no education or women who are unemployed in particular should be able to attend educational and training programmes. Further information—potentially collected through censuses or surveys, but also through administrative records from the private and public sectors—is needed in order to assess women's access to non-formal education such as academic and life skills education offered by non-governmental organizations or vocational training offered by community or private sector groups.

### Education for special groups

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that special support in access to education is needed for some subnational groups, including pregnant adolescents and young mothers, indigenous women and girls, rural and farming women, migrants, refugees, internally displaced women and women with disabilities. Disaggregation of data beyond sex and age are required in order to capture information for those groups. Education data for the subnational groups would show their actual access to and level of education and would support further programmes to meet their education needs. Although the information may currently be collected through censuses or surveys at the national level in some countries, reporting requirements at the international level have yet to be established.

In conclusion, reliable data are required to guide efforts to increase girls' and women's access to education at all levels, from expanding early childhood care and education to providing lifelong learning opportunities for adults. The quality and availability of data on education largely depends on the strength of national statistical systems and the resources at their disposal. For many countries, the capacity to provide complete and timely data on access to and attainment in education needs to be strengthened. Work is also needed on the concepts and statistical standards involved in literacy, life skills, early childhood, educational attainment and educational quality. It will be important to strike a balance between, on the one hand, ensuring that countries improve their capacity to report the basic education statistics reviewed in the present chapter and, on the other hand, broadening and deepening the types of data collected in order to address new and emerging concepts and issues.

The quality and availability of data on education largely depends on the strength of national statistical systems and the resources at their disposal

Compilation of data at the international level is particularly challenging for such topics as the quality of education and non-formal education

Table 3.A  
Number of countries or areas that reported selected education statistics, 1995 – 2003

	Geographic region						Development group			
	World	Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>a</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Access to educational services</b>										
<b>Enrolment in primary education<sup>b</sup></b>										
Total, at least once	189	53	25	13	47	40	11	45	96	48
By sex, at least once	187	52	25	13	46	40	11	45	95	47
By sex and age, at least once <sup>c</sup>	138	39	16	10	33	34	6	39	65	34
By sex, for at least three years	155	41	17	10	41	39	7	44	76	35
<b>Enrolment in secondary education<sup>b</sup></b>										
Total, at least once	185	50	24	13	47	40	11	45	94	46
By sex, at least once	182	50	24	13	45	40	10	45	92	45
By sex and age, at least once <sup>c</sup>	101	18	13	8	27	30	5	32	49	20
By sex, for at least three years	143	35	15	11	38	38	6	43	69	31
Vocational, by sex, for at least three years	104	20	9	6	30	35	4	38	47	19
<b>Enrolment in tertiary education<sup>b</sup></b>										
Total, at least once	166	48	16	12	42	39	9	44	82	40
By sex, at least once	154	45	14	9	40	39	7	44	73	37
By sex, for at least three years	104	20	10	5	30	35	4	40	47	17
By sex and field of study, for at least three years	62	12	3	1	15	29	2	33	19	10
<b>School attendance<sup>d</sup></b>										
Total	44	4	7	4	11	17	1	19	21	4
By sex	41	4	4	4	11	17	1	19	18	4
By sex and age	40	3	4	4	11	17	1	19	18	3
<b>Outcomes of educational experience</b>										
<b>Literacy<sup>d</sup></b>										
Total	82	15	8	7	30	16	6	16	53	13
By sex	81	15	8	7	30	16	5	16	53	12
By sex and age	77	14	7	7	29	16	4	16	49	12
<b>Educational attainment<sup>d</sup></b>										
Total	80	12	10	3	25	25	5	29	42	9
By sex	77	12	8	3	25	25	4	29	39	9
By sex and age	71	9	6	3	24	25	4	29	34	8

**Sources:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on enrolment data (November 2004) and literacy data (April 2005) provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates; and on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

a Excluding the least developed countries.

b Reported data for the academic years 1995/1996 to 2001/2002 (excluding the academic year 1997/1998).

c Reported data at least once for the academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002.

d From population censuses only.

Table 3.B  
Percentage of the world and regional populations in countries or areas that reported selected education statistics, 1995 – 2003

	World	Geographic region						Development group		
		Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>a</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Access to educational services</b>										
<b>Enrolment in primary education<sup>b</sup></b>										
Total, at least once	99	99	99	100	99	99	94	100	99	99
By sex, at least once	99	99	99	100	99	99	94	100	99	99
By sex and age, at least once <sup>c</sup>	61	61	97	77	53	71	93	82	52	78
By sex, for at least three years	92	66	94	98	96	99	93	100	92	83
<b>Enrolment in secondary education<sup>b</sup></b>										
Total, at least once	96	78	98	100	99	99	94	100	96	91
By sex, at least once	96	78	98	100	98	99	94	100	96	91
By sex and age, at least once <sup>c</sup>	30	28	66	85	13	66	31	64	16	58
By sex, for at least three years	85	59	94	100	90	79	93	87	86	77
Vocational, by sex, for at least three years	48	32	29	28	49	78	92	60	44	53
<b>Enrolment in tertiary education<sup>b</sup></b>										
Total, at least once	93	78	97	100	94	99	94	100	92	86
By sex, at least once	69	71	94	87	58	99	93	100	59	78
By sex, for at least three years	59	36	90	69	55	79	92	87	52	51
By sex and field of study, for at least three years	37	22	27	12	39	60	74	52	32	42
<b>School attendance<sup>d</sup></b>										
Total	14	4	86	22	4	25	0	42	8	5
By sex	14	4	85	22	4	25	0	42	7	5
By sex and age	14	2	85	22	4	25	0	42	7	3
<b>Outcomes of educational experience</b>										
<b>Literacy<sup>d</sup></b>										
Total	65	34	27	78	80	40	22	24	83	22
By sex	65	34	27	78	80	40	21	24	83	22
By sex and age	64	32	26	78	80	40	21	24	82	22
<b>Educational attainment<sup>d</sup></b>										
Total	51	31	91	9	54	53	75	61	54	19
By sex	50	31	70	9	54	53	75	61	51	19
By sex and age	48	23	69	9	53	53	75	61	49	17

**Sources:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on enrolment data (November 2004) and literacy data (April 2005) provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates; and on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

a Excluding the least developed countries.

b Reported data for the academic years 1995/1996 to 2001/2002 (excluding the academic year 1997/1998).

c Reported data at least once for the academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002.

d From population censuses only.

## Notes

- 1 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 69, 80(a) and 81(a).
- 2 Ibid., para. 71.
- 3 The ISCED levels were developed by UNESCO in order to define levels of education uniformly across countries and enable the compilation of internationally comparable statistics. ICSED 1997 is available from:  
[http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/isced/ISCED\\_A.pdf](http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/isced/ISCED_A.pdf).
- 4 Analysis of enrolment data for the present report includes data available as of November 2004.
- 5 Where feasible, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) publishes estimates of enrolment data when countries do not report the requisite data; when countries report only totals but not data disaggregated by sex, age or level of education; or when data adjustments are necessary to account for issues such as undercoverage and, occasionally, overcoverage. Although not included in the present analysis, UIS estimates are included in annex table A8 and indicated by the footnote "UIS estimate."
- 6 Countries or areas reporting at least the number of students in general education programmes were counted as being able to provide data.
- 7 Countries or areas reporting at least the number of students enrolled in ISCED level 5A of tertiary education for the academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002 as well as countries reporting at least the number of students enrolled in universities or equivalent institutions for the academic years before 1998 were counted as being able to provide data. See also note 8.
- 8 At the time of the preparation of the present report at least 11 countries or areas did not provide tertiary education within their territory: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Maldives, Monaco, Nauru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.
- 9 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 82.
- 10 It should be noted that not all countries provide vocational education at the secondary level. At the time of preparation of the present report the following countries did not provide such education: Bahamas, Ireland, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Oman, Palau, Philippines, Qatar, Samoa, United Arab Emirates, United States, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Zimbabwe.
- 11 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 83(d).
- 12 Additional data can be found in population censuses and labour force surveys using information on occupations.
- 13 See the definition of "functional literacy" available from:  
<http://www.uis.unesco.org> (April 2005).  
Links: Literacy/Technical guides/Glossary

## Chapter 4

# Work

### “Women contribute to development not only through remunerated work but also through a great deal of unremunerated work.”

Beijing Platform for Action

All over the world, women and men spend the major portion of their lives working. Some of the work may be paid and some may be unpaid. The conditions under which women work, and women's access to employment and productive resources, can differ considerably from those of men. As observed in the Beijing Platform for Action, almost everywhere, women are now working more outside the home, but there has not been a parallel lightening of their responsibility for unremunerated work in the household and community. For women in paid work, obstacles remain that hinder them from achieving their potential, and women are poorly represented in economic decision-making, as well as in certain occupations and sectors. Unemployment and underemployment<sup>1</sup> are serious problems in many countries, especially for women. Where formal employment opportunities are not accessible, women often seek livelihoods for themselves and their dependants in the informal sector, some becoming self-employed or owners of small-scale enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Millennium Development Goals, strategies to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women include advocating women's empowerment in employment. Countries are also called on to develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth and to ensure that girls are given the same opportunities as boys.<sup>3</sup>

To address those concerns, Governments require information on the economically active population, employment, unemployment, occupations, status in employment, wages and related statistics. For effective gender-sensitive planning and evaluation, the data should be generated and disseminated by sex, age and other socio-economic variables as needed. Statistics on the economically active, employed and unemployed populations, and on the distribution of those populations by occupation and by status in employment (i.e. whether employers, own-account workers, employees or contributing family workers), are already collected regularly in many countries, mainly through labour force surveys. These data are also collected in population censuses.

Data on the earnings of women and men are routinely collected in many countries from payroll figures through establishment censuses or surveys,<sup>4</sup> and in some cases from labour force surveys or administrative records.

Official statistics on the labour force and its characteristics are typically collected in a country by the ministry of labour or the national statistical office. At the international level, the International Labour Office is generally responsible for collecting those statistics from national authorities. The United Nations Statistics Division is responsible for collecting from national authorities those statistics on economic characteristics that are derived from population censuses.

On the basis of what has been reported to the international organizations, it is apparent that the worldwide availability of statistics on economic activity, employment and unemployment is far from satisfactory, with slightly more than half of all countries providing data by sex and only roughly a third of all countries doing so with fair regularity. The lack of data has received particular attention in recent years as a result of the monitoring and reporting requirements of the Millennium Development Goals. One positive aspect is that when economically active population, employment and unemployment data are provided, they are almost always disaggregated by sex.

In general, labour force surveys and establishment surveys capture the more formal types of economic activity better than the non-formal types of economic activity. As a result, the economic activities of women are often under-reported. The production of goods and services for household consumption is done by women more than by men. Although included in the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA),<sup>5</sup> work of this nature is often under-recorded. It is believed that women also perform most of the unremunerated domestic and community work that are not part of the SNA and a significant part of the activities in the informal sector of the economy, which tend to be underreported in official statistics. In that light, the Beijing Platform for

The worldwide availability of statistics on economic activity, employment and unemployment is far from satisfactory...

...with slightly more than half of all countries providing data by sex and only roughly a third doing so with fair regularity

For the period 1995 to 2003, a total of 127 out of 204 countries or areas reported the numbers of the economically active population at least once

Action called on countries to improve data collection on the full contribution of women and men to the economy, including their participation in the informal sector, and to conduct regular time-use surveys to measure unremunerated work in quantitative terms.<sup>6</sup>

## Current state of statistics 1995-2003

### The labour force, the unemployed and the employed

#### The labour force

Most Governments attach a high priority to up-to-date information on the labour force (see box 4.1 for

concepts related to the labour force) and the employment and unemployment situation, given the importance of the information in economic planning and monitoring. For many countries, that emphasis is reflected in the breadth and regularity of available statistics on the labour force. For other countries, however, it is a challenge to produce even the most basic of these important statistics. The result is that for the world, for the period 1995 to 2003, a total of 127 out of 204 countries or areas, comprising about 50 per cent of the world population, reported the numbers of the economically active population<sup>7</sup> at least once to the international statistical system. The count includes only countries or areas that provided data on the economically active population from either a survey or a population census.<sup>8</sup> All but two

#### Box 4.1

##### Concepts related to the labour force

The **economically active population** comprises all persons of either sex who furnish or are available to furnish the supply of labour for the production of goods and services, during a specified reference period; that is, it comprises all persons above a specified minimum age who were either employed or unemployed during that time. If the reference period used to define this population is short, for example one week or one day, the term **labour force or currently active population** is used to denote the group. If the reference period is long, for example a year, the term **usually active population** is used.

As defined by the System of National Accounts, the concept of economic activity covers (i) all production oriented to the market; (ii) some types of non-market production, including production and processing of primary products for own consumption; (iii) own-account construction; and (iv) other production of fixed assets for own use. It excludes some unpaid activities, such as unpaid domestic activities and certain types of volunteer community services.<sup>a</sup>

The **employed** population comprises all persons above a specified age who during a specified brief period, either one week or one day, worked for pay or profit, or contributed to a family business (or farm) without receiving any remuneration (i.e. were unpaid).

The **unemployed** population comprises all persons above a specified age who during the reference period were:

- “without work”, that is, were not employed;
- “currently available for work”, that is, were available for paid employment or self-employment; and

- “seeking work”, that is, had taken specific steps in a specified reference period to seek paid employment or self-employment (this condition is relaxed in situations where the conventional means of seeking employment are of limited relevance, where the labour market is largely unorganized or of limited scope, where labour absorption is, at the time, inadequate, or where the labour force is largely self-employed).

Persons **not in the labour force** (or population **not currently active**) comprise all persons who were not classified as employed or unemployed during the brief reference period and hence not currently active, because of any of the following reasons:

- attendance at educational institutions
- engagement in household duties
- retirement or old age
- other reasons such as infirmity, disability or being below a specified age

##### Source:

*Yearbook of Labour Statistics, 2004* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2004); and Commission of the European Communities and others, *System of National Accounts, 1993* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4).

- a Under the Resolution of the thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, it was recommended that all volunteers be classified as not economically active. However, as a result of changes to the SNA in 1993, the treatment of unpaid volunteer community services is no longer as simple; some volunteer activities are included in the concept of economic activity while others are not.

of the 127 countries provided data by sex, and all but four provided them by sex and age (chart 4.1).

In addition to the sex and age composition of the labour force, information on their level of education is important for planners whose task is to provide work opportunities for particular segments

Chart 4.1

**Number of countries or areas that reported economically active population at least once, from either surveys or censuses, 1995 – 2003**

All countries or areas	204
<b>Economically active population</b>	
Total	127
By sex	125
By sex and age	123
By sex, age and education level	69

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005) and from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

of the population, such as young people or women re-entering the labour force after child-rearing. A breakdown by educational level of the economically active population by sex and age is, however, not yet widely available across the world. Only 69 out of 204

countries or areas reported such data to the international statistical system during the period 1995-2003 (chart 4.1).

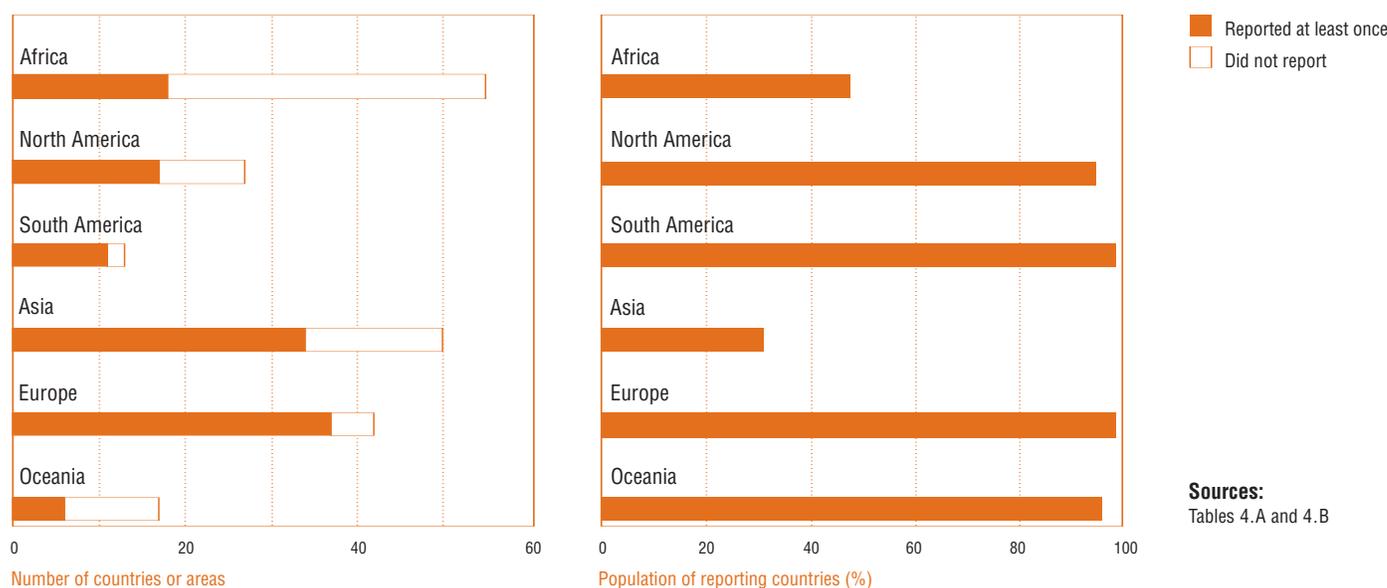
Reporting of the economically active population varies considerably across geographic regions. Nearly all of the countries or areas in Europe and South America reported the data by sex and age at least once in the period 1995-2003. In Europe, 37 countries (out of 42), comprising 98 per cent of the region's population, reported the numbers economically active by sex and age; in South America, 11 countries (out of 13), also comprising 98 per cent of the region's population, reported those statistics (chart 4.2). In North America, 17 countries, comprising 94 per cent of the region's population, reported the data.

More than half of the countries or areas in Asia also reported the economically active population by sex and age (34 out of 50). However, they comprise a mere 31 per cent of the region's population because the two biggest countries in the region, China and India, did not report those data (China constitutes 35 per cent of Asia's population and India 28 per cent). For Oceania, only six of the 17 countries reported the economically active population by age and sex at least once in the period, although they comprise 95 per cent of the region's population (they include Australia and New Zealand, which together constitute 74 per cent of Oceania's population).

Reporting of the economically active population varies considerably across geographic regions

Chart 4.2

**Number of countries or areas that reported economically active population by sex and age at least once for the period 1995 – 2003, and their corresponding proportion of the regional population**



Sources: Tables 4.A and 4.B

For statistics on the labour force to be useful for policy and planning, they have to be current and regularly available

Africa has the lowest level of reporting: only 18 of the 55 countries, representing 47 per cent of the region's population, reported the data.

For statistics on the labour force to be useful for policy and planning, they have to be current and regularly available. At present, relatively few countries have been able to report such statistics frequently (for at least five of the nine years in the period 1995-2003). Only half of the reporting countries or areas (59 out of 123) managed to report the data by sex and age frequently.

A factor contributing to the small number of countries reporting frequently is the inability of many countries to conduct labour force surveys, or to conduct them regularly. At least 10 countries conduct their labour force surveys irregularly, occasionally or at long intervals (every 5 or 10 years). In addition, a large number of countries (25) relied solely on population censuses for labour force statistics, particularly in Asia (11 countries), Africa (5 countries) and Oceania (4 countries) (see annex table A4). Since censuses are conducted only once every 10 years or 5 at best, they can not provide statistics on the labour force at frequent intervals. However, for some countries, census data is all that is available.<sup>9</sup>

The capacity to frequently report labour force by sex and age varies across geographic regions. In Africa, for the period 1995-2003, only one country reported such data frequently (Morocco); in Oceania, only two (Australia and New Zealand) did so. In Asia, only 12 of the 50 countries reported data on the labour force by sex and age frequently, while in North and South America, close to half of the countries did so. Only in Europe did more than half report, with 28 out of 42 countries regularly reporting labour force statistics by sex and age (table 4.A).

The discrepancies in reporting are most pronounced when one compares the more developed regions with the least developed countries. While 33 of the 47 countries in the more developed regions report on the labour force by sex and age frequently, not a single least developed country does so (table 4.A).

### The unemployed population

Compared to the number of countries or areas reporting on the economically active population, the number reporting statistics on total unemployment is slightly lower: 115 out of 204. Those 115 countries comprise 66 per cent of the world population, a higher proportion than for the 127 countries that reported on the economically active population. This

is mainly a result of the reporting by India, which constitutes 17 per cent of the world population, of unemployment but not of the total economically active population. Of the 115 countries or areas that reported total unemployment, all but one provided data by sex, but a much smaller number—96—provided statistics by sex and age (chart 4.3). Again, the count of countries is limited to those that provided data from surveys or censuses.<sup>10</sup>

Chart 4.3

#### Number of countries or areas that reported unemployed population at least once, from either surveys or censuses, 1995 – 2003

All countries or areas	204
<b>Unemployed population</b>	
Total	115
By sex	114
By sex and age	96
By sex and education level	87

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005).

A total of 87 countries reported unemployment data by sex and educational level at least once during the nine-year period 1995-2003. Further breakdown of these statistics by age is necessary if countries are to monitor efforts to develop and implement strategies aimed at providing decent and productive work for their young women and men, as called for in the Millennium Development Goals.

Reporting of data on the unemployed population varies considerably across geographic regions. The pattern of reporting among regions is roughly the same as that of the reporting of the economically active population.

To inform policy, it is crucial that unemployment data be current and regularly available. However, only 72 countries out of 204 are able to provide unemployment data by sex and age frequently, i.e. for at least five out of nine years (table 4.A). This number is slightly higher than that reporting the economically active population (59 countries), which would seem to indicate the importance given by Governments to producing and disseminating unemployment statistics on a regular basis.

The capacity to frequently report data on the unemployed population by sex and age varies across geographic regions. In Africa, only two countries

While 33 of the 47 countries in the more developed regions report on the labour force by sex and age frequently, not a single least developed country does so

Only 72 countries out of 204 provide unemployment data by sex and age frequently

reported such data frequently (Egypt and Morocco). In Oceania, no country besides Australia and New Zealand was able to report unemployment data frequently. In Asia, 14 out of 50 countries reported unemployment by sex and age frequently, but the most populous countries (China, India and Indonesia) are not among those. However, in each of the three remaining regions—Europe and North and South America—more than half of the countries reported the data frequently, with the reporting countries covering more than 90 per cent of each region's population (tables 4.A and 4.B).

Underemployment is another area of particular relevance to women's employment situation, and the Beijing Platform for Action recognized that its measurement needed to be improved.<sup>11</sup> Although more than 50 countries worldwide include time-related underemployment questions in their labour force surveys, data on underemployment are not as yet systematically collected and disseminated at the international level.

## The employed population

### Occupational distribution

The Beijing Platform for Action calls for the elimination of occupational segregation.<sup>12</sup> Although women have slowly been entering occupations that were traditionally male-dominated, many occupations remain sharply divided across gender lines. Information on the distribution of the employed population by sex and occupational group is often utilized to study occupational segregation between the sexes. This information is usually obtained through labour force surveys and population censuses.

Compared to statistics on the numbers economically active, data on occupational distribution is less widely available worldwide. Of the 204 countries or areas analyzed in the present report, 108 provided statistics on the employed population by major occupational group (see box 4.2) at least once for the period 1995-2003. Of that number, 105 were able to provide data by sex, and of those, 68 reported data frequently (table 4.A).

The regional patterns of reporting occupational data are very similar to those observed for the labour force, with more than half the countries of the Americas, Asia and Europe reporting the employed population by occupational group and sex at least once but with fewer countries reporting such data in Africa and Oceania

### Box 4.2

#### Major occupational groups

The 1988 International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88) classifies occupations into 10 major occupational groups:

1. Legislators, senior officials and managers
2. Professionals
3. Technicians and associate professionals
4. Clerks
5. Service workers and shop and market sales workers
6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers
7. Craft and related trade workers
8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers
9. Elementary occupations
0. Armed forces

An earlier classification, the International Standard Classification of Occupations issued in 1968 (ISCO-1968), is still used by many countries and recognizes the following major occupational groups:

- 0/1. Professional, technical and related workers
2. Administrative and managerial workers
3. Clerical and related workers
4. Sales workers
5. Service workers
6. Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters
- 7/8/9. Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers
- Members of the armed forces

#### Source:

*Yearbook of Labour Statistics, 2004*  
(Geneva, International Labour Office, 2004).

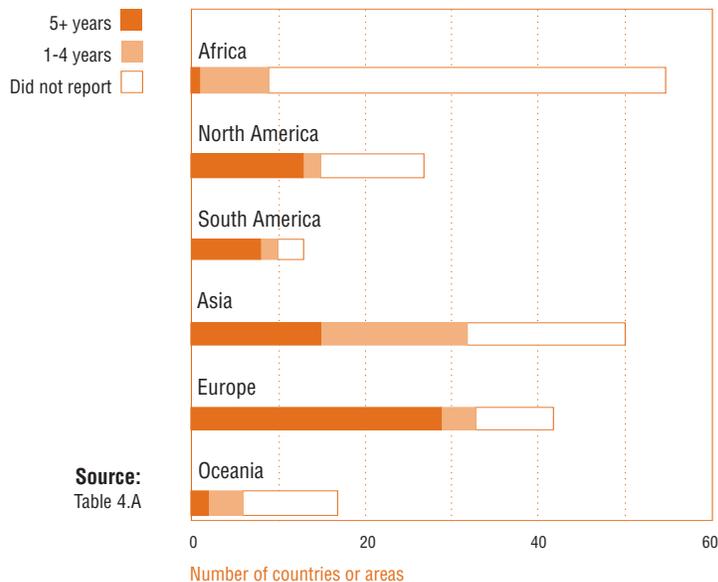
(chart 4.4). The proportion of the population covered by the reporting countries of Asia, however, is only 25 per cent, owing to non-reporting by the three biggest countries in the region. For Africa, only nine countries, representing 23 per cent of the population of the region, reported statistics on the employed population by sex and occupational group. Of those, only one country (Egypt) was able to report the data frequently. In Oceania, only Australia and New Zealand reported occupation data by sex frequently. The only regions where a majority of countries are able to report this data frequently are Europe and South America.

In Asia, 14 out of 50 countries reported unemployment by sex and age frequently, but the most populous countries (China, India and Indonesia) are not among those

More than half the countries of the Americas, Asia and Europe report occupational data but few countries in Africa and Oceania do so

Chart 4.4

**Number of countries or areas that reported employed population by sex and major occupational group, by number of years data were reported during the period 1995 – 2003**



Just over half of the countries reported data by sex and status in employment

The preceding data on employed persons by occupational group refer to either the 10 major occupational groups of the 1988 International Standard Classification of Occupations or the 8 major groups of the earlier classification, the ISCO-1968 (see box 4.2). The data provide an indication of the extent of women's presence in each major occupational group. Using the data, the extent to which women are employed in occupations with authority, influence and decision-making may be analysed by examining their numbers within the major occupational group of legislators, senior officials and managers.<sup>13</sup> However, since the group is very broad, it hides detailed occupational differences between women and men. Women, for example, may be employed at lower levels than men within the same major occupational group. An in-depth examination of occupational segregation between the sexes requires a higher level of detail than that provided by the major groups.

Such detailed data by sex and occupation has been produced by a number of countries from census or survey data and reported to the International Labour Office. The data have been incorporated into the Office's SEGREGAT database.<sup>14</sup> For the period 1995-2003, detailed data are available for 54 coun-

tries or areas, with eight providing multi-year data for a total of 62 occupational data sets. The countries or areas are predominantly European (30), but all regions have some data (Asia 10, Africa 5, North America 4, South America 3, Oceania 2). As many as 43 of the 62 available data sets contain between 100 and 499 occupations, and 3 sets contain more than 500 occupations (provided by Canada and Mauritius from their 1996 and 2000 population censuses, respectively, and by the United States from their 2000 labour force survey). Those data sets provide a rich source of information for studying gender segregation in occupations.

### Distribution by status in employment

In countries or areas with a large agricultural population, many women, especially rural women, work as contributing family workers and are mostly unpaid. Own-account workers also constitute a large portion of the employment of women in countries or areas where the informal sector is an important part of the economy. This type of information is revealed when statistics on the numbers of employed persons, collected through labour force surveys or population censuses, are broken down by sex and status in employment (see box 4.3). However, during the period 1995-2003, just over half of the countries or areas of the world (104 out of 204) have reported data on sex and status in employment for any year to the international statistical system, and a much lower number—64—reported the data for at least five years in the nine-year period.

The patterns of reporting by geographic region roughly resemble those of the occupational data shown in chart 4.4. For Africa the reporting is particularly low—only 13 out of 55 countries reported data by sex at least once in the period and just one (Egypt) was able to report the data for at least five years (table 4.A).

A category in the status in employment classification that is often examined for evidence of gender inequality is employers. The information is sometimes used to show that women are less likely to be employers. In fact, it can be seen from annex table A10 that in no country is the proportion of employers among employed women higher than their corresponding proportion among employed men.

Although 104 countries or areas report statistics on the employed population by sex and status in employment, some combine two or more categories. For example, 11 countries report employers and

## Box 4.3

**Status in employment**

Employment, as defined by the thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (1982), is comprised of two broad categories: **paid employment** and **self-employment**.

**Paid employment** includes persons who during the reference period were either (a) "at work": that is, performed some work for wage or salary, in cash or in kind, or (b) "with a job but not at work": that is, having already worked in their present job, were temporarily not at work and had a formal attachment to their job.

**Self-employment** includes persons who during the reference period were either (a) "at work": that is, performed some work for profit or family gain, in cash or in kind, or (b) "with an enterprise but not at work": that is, with an enterprise that may be a business enterprise, a farm or a service undertaking, but were temporarily not at work for any specific reason.

The International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE), adopted in 1993, classifies jobs with respect to the type of explicit or implicit contract of employment the person has with other persons or organizations. The groups are defined based on the type of economic risk and the type of authority over establishments and other workers that the job incumbent has or will have. There are five major groups: employees, employers, own-account workers, members of producers' cooperatives and contributing family workers.

**Employees** are all those who hold jobs with explicit or implicit employment contracts that give them basic remuneration that is not directly dependent on the revenue of the unit for which they work. Employees are

typically remunerated by wages and salaries, but may also be paid by commission from sales, by piece-rates, bonuses or in-kind payments, such as food, housing or training.

**Employers** are those who, working on their own account or with one or more partners, are self-employed and have engaged on a continuous basis one or more persons to work for them in their business as employees.

**Own-account workers** are those workers who, working on their own account or with one or more partners, are self-employed and have not engaged any employees on a continuous basis.

**Members of producers' cooperatives** are workers who are self-employed in a cooperative producing goods and services, in which each member takes part on an equal footing with other members in all decisions relating to production, sales, investments and the distribution of proceeds.

**Contributing family workers** (referred to in the previous classification as unpaid family workers) are workers who are self-employed in a market-oriented establishment operated by a relative living in the same household, who cannot be regarded as partners because their degree of commitment to the operation of the establishment is not at a level comparable to that of the head of the establishment.

**Source:**

*Yearbook of Labour Statistics, 2004* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2004).

own-account workers as one group, thereby precluding separate analysis of these categories of workers in those countries. Still other combinations of categories are used, and some countries do not report all categories. The result is that the number of countries or areas with data by sex (for at least one year) is reduced to 82 for own-account workers, 92 for employers, 97 for contributing family workers and 102 for employees.

Employees (i.e. those in paid employment jobs), whether women or men, constitute the majority of workers in most countries of the world (see annex table A10). For both women and men, being in paid employment is generally a more desirable sit-

uation than being engaged in unpaid work or in own-account work, provided that working conditions are decent.<sup>15</sup> One of the indicators specified for Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (promote gender equality and empower women) is the "share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector".<sup>16</sup> Women's share of wage employment measures the degree to which women are integrated into the monetary economy. Their share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector measures the degree to which labour markets in the industry and service sectors are open to women, and whether there are the same employment opportunities for women as for men in those sectors.

Women's share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector measures the degree to which labour markets in the industry and service sectors are open to women

The production of the indicator requires data on the number of female and male employees in the non-agricultural sector.<sup>17</sup> The current sources of such data are labour force surveys or labour-related establishment surveys—where they are in place—owing to their generally more frequent execution and more timely release of results compared to censuses. However, based on data available in the International Labour Office database, it is apparent that not many countries or areas are able to produce from those

sources the data needed for calculating the indicator. For the period 1995–2003, only 84 of 204 countries or areas worldwide reported data on wage employment by major industry group for at least one year, and only 74 of them reported data by sex (chart 4.5). Still fewer (61) reported data by sex for at least five of the nine years covered.

The 61 countries or areas that frequently report the number of employees by sex and major industry group are unevenly distributed across geographic regions. Three quarters of all countries in Europe (32 out of 42) are able to provide such data frequently, compared to less than a third of countries in Asia and South America and close to a quarter in North America (chart 4.6). Only three countries in Africa and two in Oceania report those data frequently.

Chart 4.5

**Number of countries or areas that reported wage employment from labour-related establishment surveys or labour force surveys, 1995 – 2003**

	Reported at least once	Reported for at least 5 years
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Wage employment</b>		
By major industry group	84	69
By major industry group and sex	74	61

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (July 2005).

## Wage statistics

As employees, women are still seeking equal pay with men. Closing the gap between women's and men's pay continues to be a major challenge in most parts of the world. To monitor whether and how the gap is closing, it is necessary to have statistics on women's and men's pay.

Most statistics on wages (average earnings or wage rates) are obtained from payroll data collected mainly from establishment censuses or surveys. In the period 1995–2003, a total of 51 countries or areas reported data on wages by major industry group from labour-related establishment surveys and 23 from labour-related establishment censuses. A smaller number of countries derived wage data from labour force surveys, insurance records or administrative reports. With the exception of the labour force surveys, reporting of wages by sex is not prevalent, with at best only half of the reporting countries doing so (chart 4.7).

Comparability of earnings data from different sources is affected by the type of workers covered, the inclusion or exclusion of overtime pay, incentive pay, bonuses, payment in kind and other allowances, as well as the unit of time used (per hour, per day, per week or per month). Furthermore, some sources use average earnings while others use wage rates. International comparability is additionally hampered by differences across countries in the size criterion adopted in their survey or census of establishments. Average earnings of women as a group relative to those of men are, in addition, affected by the relative shares of skilled and unskilled labour and of full-time and part-time workers in each group.

Chart 4.6

**Number of countries or areas that reported wage employment by sex and major industry group, from labour-related establishment surveys or labour force surveys, for at least five years during the period 1995 – 2003**

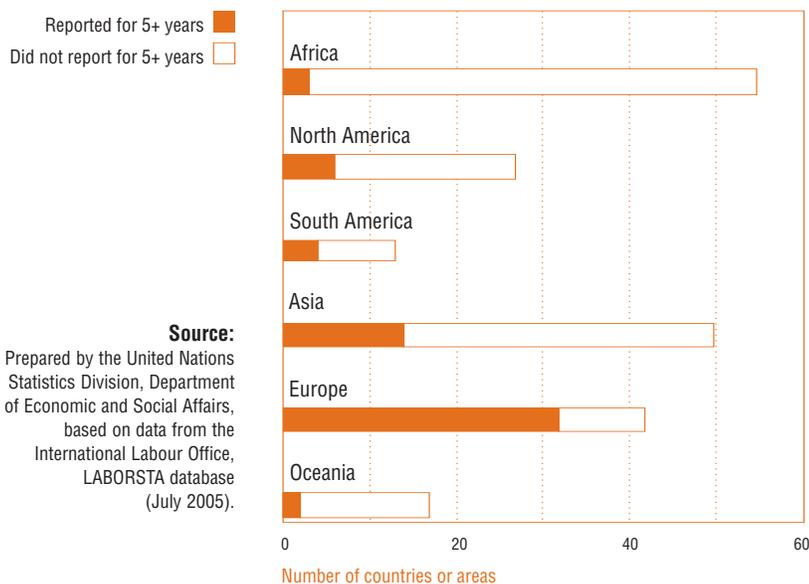


Chart 4.7

**Number of countries or areas that reported data on wages by major industry group and number and percentage that reported data by sex, by source of data, for the period 1995 – 2003**

Source	Number of countries or areas that reported	Number that reported by sex	Percentage that reported by sex
Labour-related establishment survey	51	27	53
Labour-related establishment census	23	8	35
Labour force survey	14	13	93
Insurance records	8	3	38
Administrative reports	7	3	43
Other	11	3	28

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005).

**Note:**

There is multiple counting; i.e. some countries or areas report data from more than one source.

In all, 108 countries or areas reported data on wages by major industry group from any source for the period 1995-2003. However, only 52 of those countries reported them by sex. Countries from Europe and Asia together account for almost three quarters of the available data (chart 4.8).

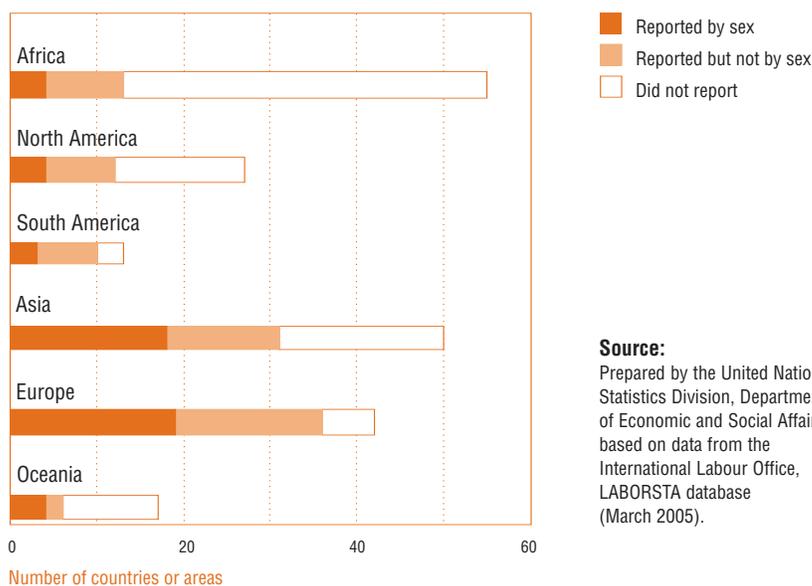
### Informal employment<sup>18</sup>

The informal sector represents an important part of the economy and the labour market in many countries, especially developing and transition countries. In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America, it is a more important source of employment for women than formal employment. Women's collaborative, self-help and traditional practices and initiatives in the informal sector are a vital economic resource.<sup>19</sup>

Following the adoption in 1993 of an international definition of the informal sector covering informal sector enterprises (see box 4.4), many developing and transition countries have produced statistics on employment in this sector (some countries produced the data before the definition was established).<sup>20</sup> However, it is a relatively new concept in official statistics and is still not part of regular data collection in most countries. Collecting accurate and comprehensive information on the informal sector is difficult owing to the wide-ranging activities, non-formal organizational structures and diverse modes of operation involved. Various national sources are usually combined to derive statistics on the sector. The most common data sources are labour force surveys, special informal sector surveys based on a mixed

Chart 4.8

**Number of countries or areas that reported data on wages by major industry group at least once during the period 1995 – 2003**

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005).

household and enterprise survey approach and establishment censuses and surveys.

About 60 countries or areas have produced statistics on employment in the informal sector since 1995, although many of them still did not use the criterion of legal organization of the enterprise. Thus, a total of 28 countries provided data on **employment in the informal sector** using national definitions, and 8 countries<sup>21</sup> (including 6 of the aforementioned 28) were able to provide such data following a harmo-

About 60 countries or areas have produced statistics on employment in the informal sector since 1995

nized definition.<sup>22</sup> Another 18 countries provided data that refer to **employment in small or microenterprises** using national definitions, and 14 countries<sup>23</sup> (including some of the 18 using national definitions) were able to provide data adopting a harmonized definition.<sup>24</sup> Ten other countries provided data on employment in the informal sector using other closely-related concepts, such as household economic activities and unregistered employment, among others.<sup>25</sup>

Following the definition of employment in the informal sector adopted in 1993, most countries exclude producers of goods exclusively for own final

use by the household from their informal sector statistics. Many countries also exclude paid domestic workers employed by households. Both are activities in which women predominate.

Since an enterprise-based definition would not be able to capture all forms of informal employment, a second component was developed based on employment relationships. That led to the adoption in 2003 of a statistical definition of informal employment (see box 4.4). As it is a very new statistical concept, the collection of data on informal employment is still in its infancy at the national and international levels.

#### Box 4.4

##### Informal employment

In 1993, the fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted an international statistical definition of the informal sector, which was linked to the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA). Employment in the informal sector was defined as comprising all persons who, during a given reference period, were employed in at least one informal sector enterprise, irrespective of their status in employment and whether it was their main or secondary job.<sup>a</sup> Informal sector enterprises were defined by the fifteenth Conference as a subsector of the SNA institutional sector “households” on the basis of the following criteria:

- They are enterprises owned by individuals or households, either alone or in partnership with others, that are not constituted as separate legal entities independently of their owners, and for which no complete accounts are available that would permit a financial separation of the production activities of the enterprise from other activities of its owner(s)
- At least some of the goods or services produced are meant for sale or barter
- Their size in terms of employment is below a certain threshold to be determined according to national circumstances,<sup>b</sup> and/or they are not registered under specific forms of national legislation and/or their employees, if any, are not registered
- They are engaged in non-agricultural activities, including secondary non-agricultural activities of enterprises in the agricultural sector

The preceding enterprise-based definition of the informal sector is not able or meant to capture all forms of informal employment. The Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics and others therefore recommended that it be complemented with a broader, job-based definition and measurement of informal employment. In response to this, the seventeenth International Conference of

Labour Statisticians (2003) adopted a statistical definition of informal employment, which complements the earlier resolution by including informal employment outside the informal sector, as follows:

- Employees holding informal jobs<sup>c</sup> in formal sector enterprises or as paid domestic workers employed by households
- Contributing family workers working in formal sector enterprises
- Own-account workers engaged in the production of goods exclusively for own final use by their household (e.g. subsistence farming, do-it-yourself construction of own dwelling), if considered employed according to the definition of employment adopted by the thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians

##### Source:

Based on material provided by the International Labour Office.

**a** “Resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector”, adopted by the fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, January 1993, in *Current International Recommendations of Labour Statistics*, 2000 edition (ILO, Geneva, 2000).

**b** During its third meeting, the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics recommended that for international reporting, the size criterion should be defined as less than five employees (Expert Group on Informal Sector Statistics, “Report of the Third Meeting”, New Delhi, 17-19 May 1999 [Central Statistics Office, New Delhi, 1999]). The Delhi Group was set up in 1997 as an international forum to exchange experience in the measurement of the informal sector, document data collection practices and recommend measures for improving the quality and comparability of informal sector statistics.

**c** Employees are considered to have informal jobs if their employment relationship is, in law or in practice, not subject to national labour regulations, income taxation, social protection or entitlement to certain employment benefits, such as advance notice of dismissal, severance pay or paid annual or sick leave (“Report of the seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians”, Geneva, 24 November-3 December 2003 [Geneva, International Labour Office, 2003]).

## Unpaid work and time-use statistics

The Beijing Platform for Action called on national and international statistical organizations to devise suitable statistical means to recognize and make visible the full extent of the work of women and all their contributions to the national economy, including their contribution in the unremunerated sectors.<sup>26</sup>

The value of time-use studies in examining both paid and unpaid work has been documented in previous issues of *The World's Women*.<sup>27</sup> Time-use studies measure how people spend their time throughout the course of a day, capturing productive activities within and outside of the household. They therefore provide a starting point for better capturing women's and men's paid and unpaid work.

Time-use studies were initially implemented in developed countries. In developing countries, the few time-use studies before 1995 were mainly case studies of either one locality or a few localities and did not cover a 24-hour day. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, however, a number of developing countries have conducted time-use surveys with national coverage to improve the measurement of women's and men's unpaid work.

Since 1995, a total of 7 countries in Africa and 18 in Asia have conducted at least one time-use survey, as have 8 in North America, 3 in South America and 2 in Oceania (chart 4.9). In Europe, at least 29 countries have done so, some of them conducting multiple surveys. For the world overall, at least 67 countries or areas carried out a time-use survey in the period 1995-2004.

Following the recommendation of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the United Nations

Statistics Division has developed a trial International Classification of Activities for Time-use Statistics.<sup>28</sup>

To help countries planning to implement a time-use survey to measure paid and unpaid work, the United Nations has also published a guide to producing statistics on time-use.<sup>29</sup>

## Progress in statistics

### 1975-2003

#### The labour force

In the international statistical system, national labour force statistics were generally already being reported by sex during the period 1975-1984. During that period, 172 out of 204 countries or areas reported the economically active population from censuses or surveys at least once, and all of them also provided the data by sex. The reporting in the next decade, 1985-1994, was slightly lower, with 165 countries having reported and 3 not reporting by sex. For the most recent period, a much lower number of countries (127) reported data, with 2 of them not having reported it by sex.

Of the countries that reported the data by sex, a number did not further break it down by age: 7 in the first period, 8 in the second and 2 in the third (chart 4.10). The much smaller number of reporting countries for the most recent period (1995-2003) is partly due to the fact that this period covers only 9 rather than 10 years. Furthermore, some of the data for recent years were not yet available at the time of preparation of the report, since the processing and disseminating of results, especially of population censuses, requires time.

At least 67 countries or areas carried out a time-use survey in the period 1995-2004

Chart 4.9

#### Countries or areas that have conducted at least one time-use survey since 1995

<b>Africa</b>	7	Benin, Chad, Gambia, Madagascar, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa
<b>North America</b>	8	Canada, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, United States
<b>South America</b>	3	Brazil, Chile, Ecuador
<b>Asia</b>	18	Armenia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Dem. Rep., Mongolia, Nepal, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Oman, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Viet Nam
<b>Europe</b>	29	Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, TFYR Macedonia, United Kingdom
<b>Oceania</b>	2	Australia, New Zealand

#### Sources:

*The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.XVII.14); and information provided by the statistical services of the United Nations regional commissions.

Labour force statistics have to be current to be useful for planning. Unemployment statistics, in particular, are very sensitive to changes in the economic situation and need to be regularly monitored by Governments. Of particular relevance therefore is

whether there is improvement in terms of frequent reporting of labour force statistics (i.e. for at least five years in the period).

For the three time periods considered, there was substantial improvement in terms of the number of countries or areas frequently reporting the economically active population by sex and age. From only 22 countries able to report frequently in the period 1975-1984, the number increased to 40 in 1984-1995 and further to 59 in the current period (chart 4.10). In spite of the improvement, however, the number remains low, representing less than a third of all countries in the world.

Much of the improvement in frequent reporting is a result of the increasing number of countries or areas that produced the statistics from labour force surveys in the latter two periods. Concurrent with that, the reporting of labour force statistics from censuses has declined. The use of official estimates<sup>30</sup> has also decreased significantly. Those changes are shown in chart 4.11.

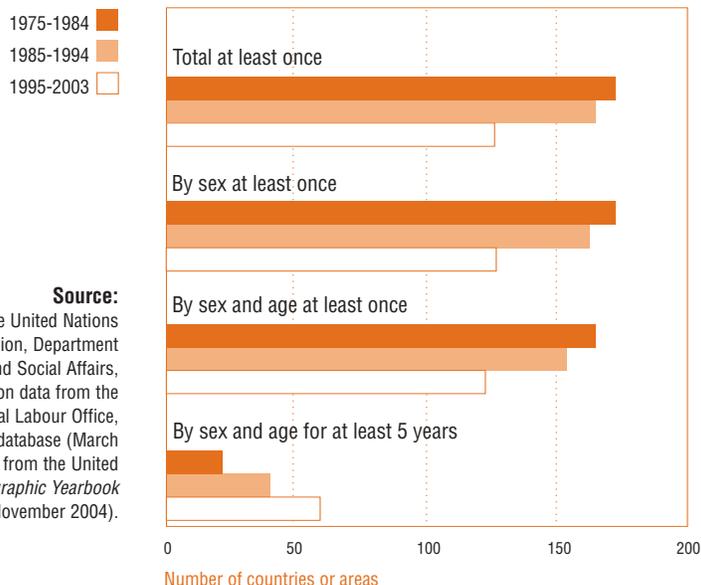
A total of 52 countries or areas reported the economically active population at least once from surveys in the period 1975-1984. By the period 1995-2003, that number had almost doubled (to 98), with the survey replacing the census as the most frequently reported source of data. At the same time, the number of countries or areas reporting data on the economically active population from the census dropped from 162 in the period 1975-1984 to only 69 in the most recent period (1995-2003). The number of countries reporting official estimates also decreased dramatically, from 37 to 13 (note that countries may report data from more than one source).

The labour force survey is a very important source of regular statistics on the economically active population. Disappointingly, even after the improvements of recent years, still only 59 countries have been able to report data on the economically active population by sex and age from this source for at least five out of nine years in the most recent period.

There is considerable variation across geographic regions in the patterns of increase in the use of labour force surveys in the last 30 years (chart 4.12). For three consecutive decades, Europe saw a steady increase in the number of countries reporting labour force data by sex and age at least once from surveys (from 12 countries in the first period to 23 in the second, to 35 in the most recent). More than half of the increase is attributable to transition countries initiating labour force surveys in the 1990s after

Chart 4.10

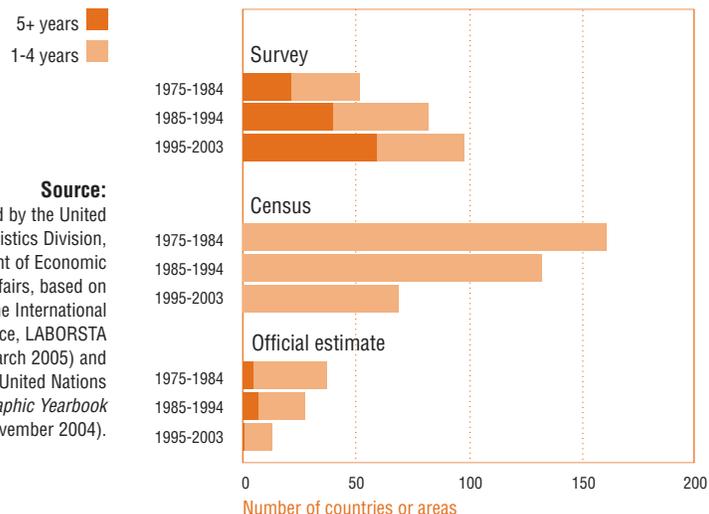
**Number of countries or areas that reported statistics on the economically active population from censuses or surveys, for three periods**



**Source:**  
Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005) and from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

Chart 4.11

**Number of countries or areas that reported economically active population by sex and age, by source, for three periods**



**Source:**  
Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005) and from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

moving towards a market economy. A steady increase was also observed in Africa but with considerably fewer countries involved (5 in the first period, 10 in the second and 13 in the third). In both North and South America, an increase in the number of countries reporting data at least once from surveys occurred in the second period but not in the third, while in Asia the improvement came about later, in the third period.

The improvements, however, did not always translate to frequent reporting, for which improvement was very modest. Only in Europe was there a substantial increase, occurring in the period 1995-2003, when as many as 28 out of 42 countries or areas (up from 11 in 1985-1994) frequently reported the numbers economically active by sex and age from surveys. In Africa, no new country has reported frequently from surveys during the last two periods; to date, Egypt remains the only country in the region that has reported frequently from surveys. Moderate improvements were seen in Asia, North America and South America, where the number of countries or areas able to frequently report this data increased in each period, except for the most recent period in South America.<sup>31</sup> In Oceania, only two countries (Australia and New Zealand) frequently reported from surveys; both began to do so during the second period.

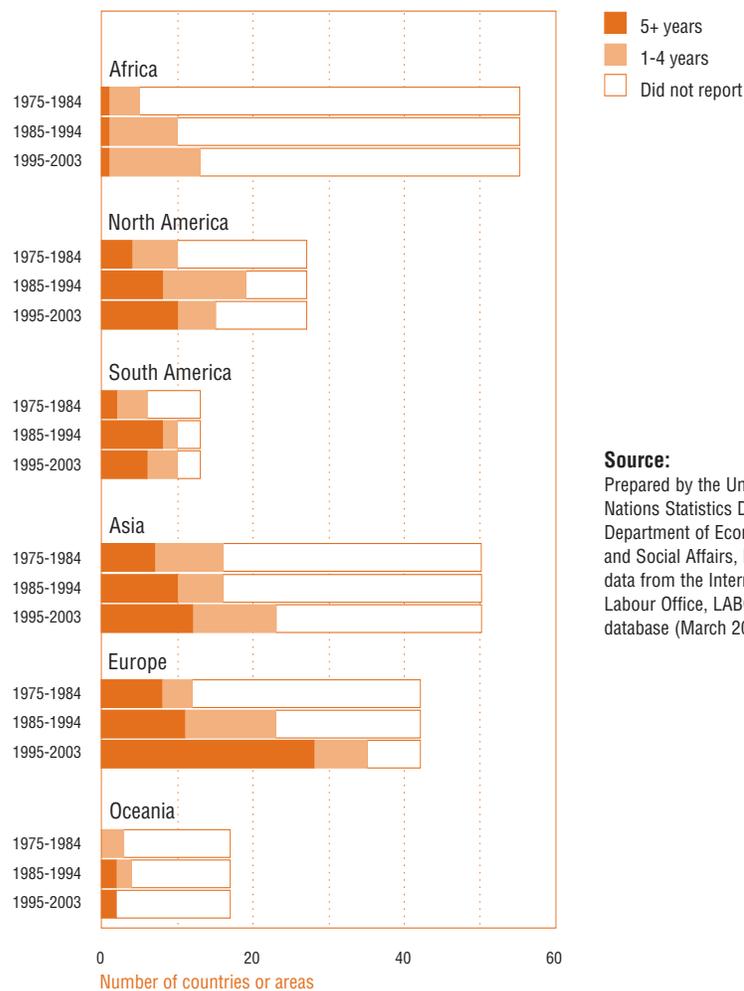
### The unemployed and employed populations

For the unemployed population and the distribution of the employed population by occupation and by status in employment, the trends in reporting of sex-disaggregated data are shown with those for the economically active population in chart 4.13. As already seen earlier, there is a sharp decrease in the number of countries reporting data on the economically active population at least once in the most recent period. Nonetheless, it is still reported by more countries than either the unemployed population or the employed population by occupation or by status in employment.

The biggest improvement by far in reporting among countries is in unemployment. While only 45 countries or areas reported data on unemployed persons by sex at least once in the 1975-1984 period, there are now 114 that do so. The number of countries reporting data on occupation and status in employment of employed persons both decreased slightly from the first to the second period, but increased slightly for status in employ-

Chart 4.12

Number of countries or areas that reported economically active population by sex and age from surveys, for three periods



**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005).

ment in the most recent period. For occupation, there was little change.

The end result is that for the most recent period, between 100 and 125 countries or areas worldwide are able to report sex-disaggregated data at least once on economically active population, unemployed population, employed population by occupation and employed population by status in employment.

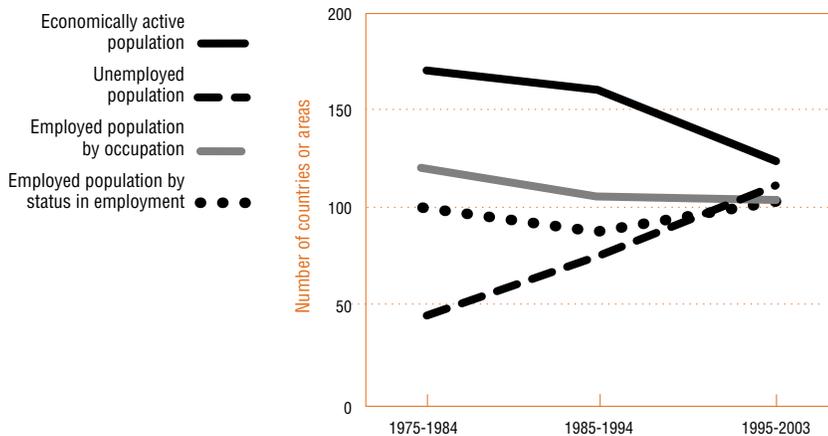
As in the case of economically active population, reporting of survey-based data on both employed and unemployed populations increased significantly with each period, while that from censuses declined dramatically. The much smaller number of countries reporting data from censuses in the

There was substantial improvement in the number of countries or areas frequently reporting the labour force data by sex and age

Europe saw a steady increase in the number of countries reporting labour force data by sex and age from surveys

Chart 4.13

**Number of countries or areas that reported selected characteristics of the labour force by sex at least once from surveys or censuses, for three periods**

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005) and from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

most recent period can be attributed in part to delays in reporting already mentioned earlier. For unemployed population from censuses, there appears to be an increase in reporting, but that should be considered inconclusive because of the extremely small number of countries involved (chart 4.14).

## Wage statistics

Between the first two periods (1975-1984 and 1985-1994), there was a notable increase in the number of countries or areas reporting wage statistics by major industry group as well as the number reporting them by sex. From 57 in the first period, the number of countries or areas reporting wages (average earnings or wage rates) of employees by major industry group increased to 79 in the second period (chart 4.15). At the same time, the number of countries reporting these data by sex increased from 14 in the first period to 23 in the second period. In the most recent period (1995-2003), there was continued improvement in the number of reporting countries (from 79 to 108), and the number reporting the data by sex rose sharply, to 52. However, 52 out of 204 countries is still very low.

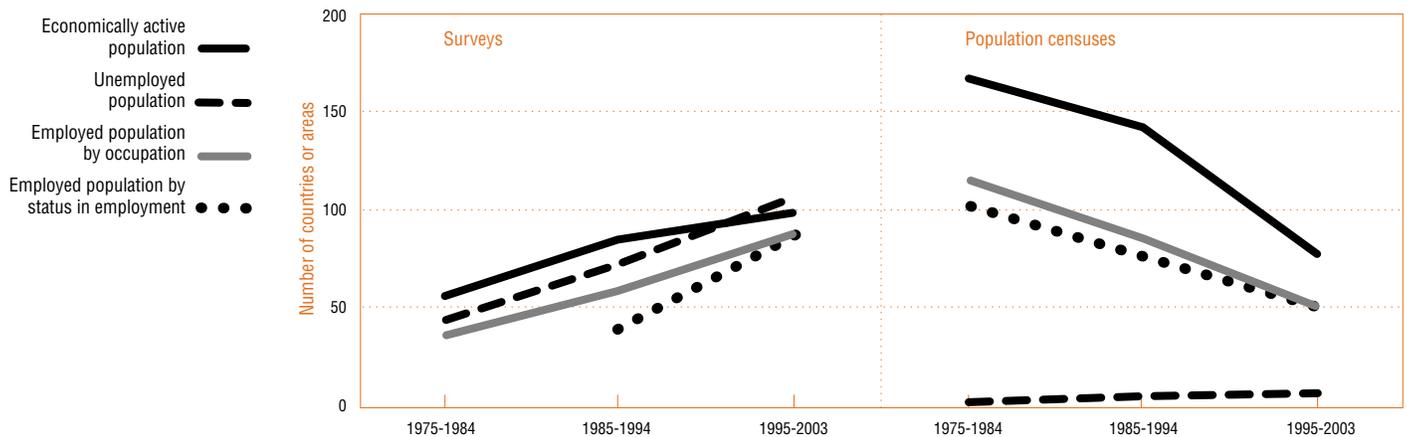
## Statistics related to the Millennium Development Goals

The present section looks specifically at progress made by countries in the reporting of those statistics required to produce two of the indicators specified in the Millennium Development Goals:

- Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- Unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 years, by sex

Chart 4.14

**Number of countries or areas that reported selected characteristics of the labour force by sex at least once, by source, for three periods**

**Source:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005) and from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

### Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

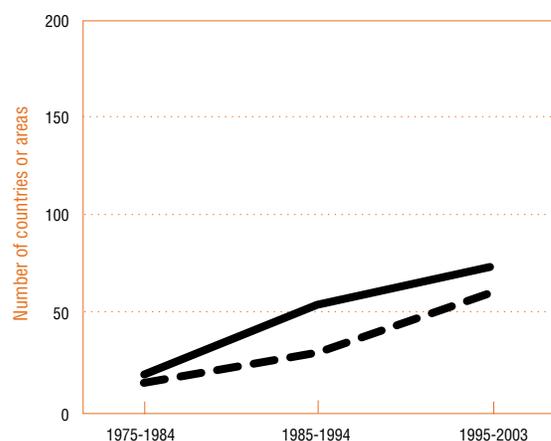
For the indicator on the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, the required statistics are the number of employees among employed persons, broken down by sex and major industry group. The number of countries or areas reporting that data at least once increased substantially from the first period to the third: from 20 in 1975-84 to 74 in 1995-2003 (chart 4.16). The number able to report the data frequently also increased considerably, from 16 in the first period (1975-84) to 61 in the most recent period. In spite of the improvement, however, that number represents less than a third of all countries.

### Unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 years, by sex

For the youth unemployment indicator, the data required are the total numbers unemployed by sex and age. The number of countries reporting that data has increased substantially during the last three periods but remains low. From 22 countries reporting the data at least once in the period 1975-1984, there are now 96 able to do so; however, of those, only 72 report data frequently (chart 4.17).

Chart 4.16

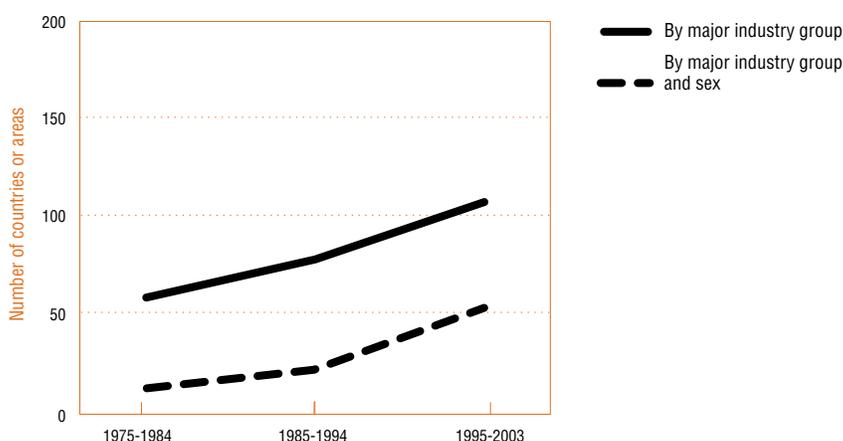
**Number of countries or areas that reported wage employment by sex and major industry group, for three periods**



**Source:** Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (July 2005).

Chart 4.15

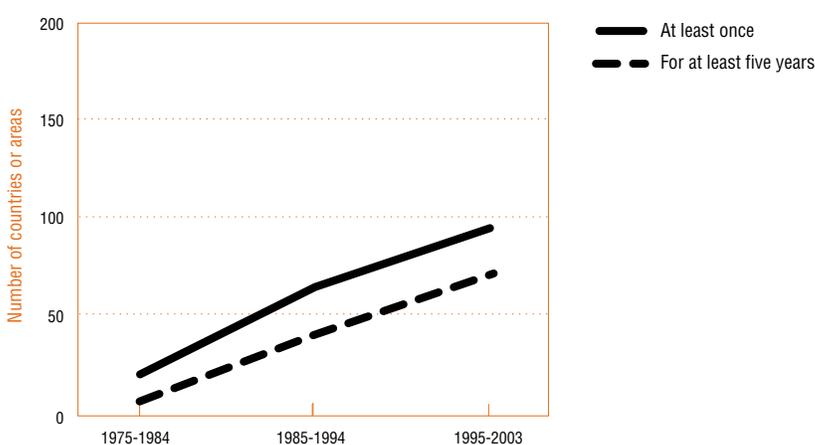
**Number of countries or areas that reported data on wages at least once, for three periods**



**Source:** Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005).

Chart 4.17

**Number of countries or areas that reported unemployment by sex and age, for three periods**



**Source:** Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005).

## Challenges

### Strengthening statistical capacity

The findings reported in the present chapter point to the need for a concerted effort and commitment by Governments to collecting basic labour statistics in countries or areas where the statistics are deficient. In most countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania, no survey programme is in place to furnish data regularly on the labour force and its characteristics (such as employment status, occupations, unemployment and wages) to guide policy. Some countries in Africa and Asia that do conduct labour force or other sample surveys to collect the data still do so irregularly, occasionally or at long intervals, in some cases as far apart as every 10 years.

Thus, in a number of countries, the census is the only source of statistics on the characteristics of the labour force. In those statistically less developed and resource-poor countries, it takes a long time to process the large amount of data that censuses produce. Consequently, the results are often disseminated partially or late, thereby reducing their usefulness for policy and decision-making. For the concerned countries, efforts should be made to improve the availability and timeliness of census results.

At the same time, however, the rapidity of changes in the labour force, employment and unemployment situations point to the need for regular sources of timely data on those topics. More importantly, the complex task of measuring women's work and its associated problems is better addressed by labour force or related household surveys. The existence of a regular and integrated survey programme is imperative for informing policy and addressing gender issues in employment.

The main challenge for the less developed countries is to strengthen their capacity to produce statistics within the limits of their resources. In many cases, international, regional or bilateral donors have stepped in to help countries implement a population census or labour force survey, but their efforts rarely produced long-term results. The focus should be on making a sustainable improvement in the recipient countries' statistical capacity, keeping in mind that capacity building can be a lengthy process and that national resources are limited and Government commitment may fluctuate.

### Mainstreaming gender in labour statistics

A separate but related issue in strengthening statistics is mainstreaming gender in the collection, analysis

and dissemination of statistics on work. Whether obtained through administrative records, household or establishment-based surveys or censuses, most data on the labour force and its characteristics are collected on individuals. Each individual's sex, age and other personal and contextual factors are usually recorded. However, in the processing, analysis or presentation of data, sex and age—not to mention the more detailed characteristics—are often dropped. In order to better reflect gender concerns, countries should ensure that this information is collected and compiled and that the resulting statistics are disaggregated by sex and age as a minimum and, if possible, by the worker's personal and family characteristics (such as marital status, number of children or other family members requiring care) and work environment (such as the existence of childcare facilities) as well. Detailed cross-tabulations, however, will require a large sample size, which many countries may find difficult to implement owing to the significant resources needed.

Of the statistics reviewed in the present chapter, those on wages stand out as being most deficient in terms of availability of sex-disaggregated data. Many countries that produce those statistics from establishment censuses and surveys have not been able to report the data by sex. This is in part due to payrolls of establishments not having recorded the sex of the employee. To improve the situation, all data collection entities, including those that do not produce statistics but have administrative information that can be used by statistical agencies, should be encouraged to record their data in a way that will allow the reporting of wage statistics by sex.

There is a need to ensure that definitions and measurement methods cover and adequately describe all workers and work situations in sufficient detail to allow gender comparisons to be made. In most countries, women are the majority of workers in non-standard work, such as temporary, casual, part-time, contract and home-based work. The methods of measuring those varied types of employment need to be improved and effectively mainstreamed into the regular data collection system.

A critical area that needs improved mainstreaming in the regular data collection system is women's and men's work activities in agriculture. Population censuses and labour force surveys largely overlook and thus under-report women's work in agriculture since it is usually unpaid and often includes activities such as food processing and providing water and fuel that are easily considered part of housework. Improved methods for measuring the

In most countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania, no survey programme is in place to furnish data regularly on the labour force and its characteristics

In a number of countries, the census is the only source of statistics on the characteristics of the labour force

Of the statistics reviewed, those on wages stand out as being most deficient in terms of availability of sex-disaggregated data

There is a need to ensure that definitions and measurement methods cover and adequately describe all workers and work situations

wide range of agricultural activities are needed to better reflect both women's and men's roles in agricultural production and participation in the economy.

Unemployment as currently measured in official statistics often underestimates the actual level of unemployment of women, especially rural women. Unemployment is particularly difficult to define and measure in populations largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, such as in the poorer countries of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Attention is drawn to the need to improve the measurement of women's unemployment, especially in rural areas.

### Improving knowledge and measurement of women's work

Many aspects of women's work are not measured well by mainstream employment statistics as they currently stand. Developing a more comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work and employment through the improvement of data collection on the unremunerated work that is already included in the System of National Accounts (SNA) was stipulated in the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>32</sup> and should continue to be a priority for national, regional and international statistical services. In addition, more knowledge is needed on non-SNA work, employment in the informal economy and income from paid and self-employment, among other topics.

Since the adoption of the Platform for Action, significant methodological work has been undertaken to improve the measurement of employment in the informal sector. However, more needs to be done. Many countries do not collect the data necessary for producing statistics on employment in the informal sector. In others, statistics on the informal sector are collected on an ad hoc basis and survey methodologies change over time so that statistics often cannot be fully compared even within the same country. Countries that do not currently have statistics on informal employment will need technical assistance and training to develop those statistics, while countries that already have statistics on informal employment will need assistance to improve the quality of those statistics, including their international comparability.

A data source that is essential in understanding the various forms of women's and men's work is time-use surveys, which capture both paid and unpaid work. However, such surveys are still not widely conducted in the less developed regions. In addition, methods for conducting time-use surveys need to be further developed and elaborated to suit different situations and contexts. As stated above, the United

Nations Statistics Division has developed the trial International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics, but it needs refinement and has yet to be adopted.

A recent initiative to better cover the various types of economic work that women engage in, especially in the less developed regions, is evidenced in the work of the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. The Task Force recommended the production of indicators that would reflect women's status in employment, while at the same time distinguishing agricultural from non-agricultural employment, and formal and informal employment in the case of employment in the non-agricultural sector.<sup>33</sup>

To derive the recommended indicators requires the total number of employed women and men to be broken down along three dimensions: status in employment, sector (agricultural, non-agricultural) and formal/informal employment in the case of the non-agricultural sector. The task poses a great challenge for developing countries, the majority of which do not currently have the capacity to produce data regularly on informal employment or even on status in employment. At present, less than 40 countries are able to provide such detailed data. Detailed guidelines on how to collect the required data and produce the indicators are needed.

Developing a more comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work and employment should continue to be a priority for national, regional and international statistical services

Methods for conducting time-use surveys need to be further developed and elaborated to suit different situations and contexts

Table 4.A  
Number of countries or areas that reported data<sup>a</sup> on selected economic characteristics, 1995 – 2003

	Geographic region						Development group			
	World	Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>b</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Economically active population</b>										
Total, at least once	127	19	17	11	34	38	8	43	70	14
By sex, at least once	125	18	17	11	34	37	8	42	70	13
By sex and age, at least once	123	18	17	11	34	37	6	42	69	12
By sex and age, for at least five years	59	1	10	6	12	28	2	33	26	0
<b>Unemployed population</b>										
Total, at least once	115	13	19	12	31	35	5	40	66	9
By sex, at least once	114	12	19	12	31	35	5	40	65	9
By sex and age, at least once	96	8	15	9	27	34	3	39	51	6
By sex and age, for at least five years	72	2	14	9	14	31	2	36	36	0
<b>Employed population by occupation</b>										
Total, at least once	108	10	16	10	32	33	7	38	60	10
By sex, at least once	105	9	15	10	32	33	6	38	58	9
By sex, for at least five years	68	1	13	8	15	29	2	34	34	0
<b>Employed population by status in employment</b>										
Total, at least once	106	15	16	9	28	33	5	38	59	9
By sex, at least once	104	13	16	9	28	33	5	38	57	9
By sex, for at least five years	64	1	12	6	14	29	2	34	30	0

**Sources:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005) and from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

a From labour force surveys, household surveys, population censuses or labour-related establishment surveys.

b Excluding the least developed countries.

Table 4.B

Percentage of the world and regional populations in countries or areas that reported data<sup>a</sup> on selected economic characteristics, 1995 – 2003

	World	Geographic region						Development group		
		Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions <sup>b</sup>	Least developed countries
<b>All countries or areas</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Economically active population</b>										
Total, at least once	50	47	94	98	31	99	96	100	36	50
By sex, at least once	50	47	94	98	31	98	96	99	36	50
By sex and age, at least once	50	47	94	98	31	98	95	99	36	50
By sex and age, for at least five years	32	4	90	78	15	85	74	91	20	0
<b>Unemployed population</b>										
Total, at least once	66	33	93	100	60	98	92	99	61	36
By sex, at least once	66	32	93	100	60	98	92	99	61	36
By sex and age, at least once	45	22	91	91	30	97	75	98	33	27
By sex and age, for at least five years	36	12	91	91	16	96	74	97	24	0
<b>Employed population by occupation</b>										
Total, at least once	42	24	91	98	25	88	92	93	29	36
By sex, at least once	42	23	90	98	25	88	75	93	29	35
By sex, for at least five years	34	8	89	95	16	87	74	92	23	0
<b>Employed population by status in employment</b>										
Total, at least once	46	32	93	91	29	88	76	93	34	38
By sex, at least once	45	27	93	91	29	88	76	93	34	33
By sex, for at least five years	30	8	89	40	16	85	74	91	18	0

**Sources:**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the International Labour Office, LABORSTA database (March 2005) and from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

a From labour force surveys, household surveys, population censuses or labour-related establishment surveys.

b Excluding the least developed countries.

## Notes

- 1 Individuals are considered underemployed in any of the following situations, which may coexist: (a) they are working fewer hours than they are able or want to (referred to as “time-related unemployment”); (b) they are earning less than they are willing or able to; (c) their work does not match or make full use of their occupational skills; and/or (d) their working hours are excessive (situations [c] and [d] are described as “inadequate employment”). Source: see International Labour Organization, *Report of the Conference, Sixteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians*, held at Geneva from 6-15 October 1998 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1998), appendix I, resolution 1.
- 2 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 150, 153, 156, 158 and 161.
- 3 See “Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration”, Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/326), paras. 125 and 128.
- 4 Establishment censuses and surveys provide data on the number of workers on establishment payrolls for a specified payroll period or working day in the period; on average earnings from establishment payrolls; on hours of work; and on employment. Statistics derived from establishment surveys do not always distinguish between women and men because such distinction may not be made in the payrolls of the establishments surveyed.
- 5 Commission of the European Communities, *System of National Accounts*, 1993 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4).
- 6 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 206 (e), (g)(i) and (g)(ii).
- 7 In the present report, the terms “economically active population” and “labour force” are used interchangeably. For a fuller explanation of the concepts, see box 4.1.
- 8 Two countries provided only “official estimates” of the economically active population. They are excluded from the count of 127 countries or areas presented here. Official estimates provided by national authorities are based on combined information drawn from one or more sources.
- 9 Labour force surveys in general provide more accurate and detailed data than population censuses owing to the limitations on the number of questions and extent of probing possible in a population census. The census, as a result of its universal coverage, has the advantage of being able to provide statistics for small administrative areas or population subgroups not normally possible in surveys but, as stated, the disadvantage of being conducted in general only once every 10 years.
- 10 For unemployment statistics, employment office records provide an alternative data source. The extent to which statistics from that source represent the general level of unemployment is, however, difficult to ascertain. The statistics typically include persons who register at an employment office, and the reasons for and extent of registration vary within and across countries; in some cases, they are limited to work applicants. Still other countries report “official estimates”, which are usually based on combined information drawn from one or more of the other sources already mentioned. For the period 1995-2003, 16 countries provided unemployment statistics from employment office statistics (eight that covered registered unemployment and eight that covered work applicants) and another nine provided “official estimates”. The 115 countries or areas reported to have unemployment data do not include those 25 countries.
- 11 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 206 (f).
- 12 *Ibid.*, para. 178 (g).
- 13 See, for example, Richard Anker, “Women’s access to occupations with authority, influence and decision-making power: women as legislators, senior officials and managers”, working paper (Geneva, International Labour Office, forthcoming).
- 14 SEGREGAT database can be accessed through [www.ilo.laborsta](http://www.ilo.laborsta).
- 15 The term “decent work” refers to opportunities for “work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men”. See <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/decent.htm> (Geneva, International Labour Office) (4 August 2005).
- 16 “Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration”, Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/326).
- 17 Information on the number of female and male employees in the non-agricultural sector is obtained mainly from labour force surveys or labour-related establishment surveys. Population censuses or establishment censuses may also provide the information. The indicator is calculated from labour force surveys or population censuses using data on the employed population of each sex, cross-classified by status in employment and type of industry. The status in employment category of interest would be “employees”, and the relevant industry groups are all groups other than agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing. If the indicator is calculated from labour force establishment surveys or censuses, the data required are the total number of female and male employees, cross-classified by type of industry. At a minimum, the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors must be separable.

- 18 Based on material provided by the International Labour Office.
- 19 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 162.
- 20 Some results have been reported in *The World's Women 1995: Trends in Statistics* and *The World's Women 2000: Trends in Statistics* (United Nations publications, Sales Nos. E.95.XVII.2 and E.00.XVII.14).
- 21 Barbados (1998), Ethiopia (1999), Georgia (1999), India (2000), Latvia (1999), Peru (1999), Russian Federation (1999) and Turkey (2000).
- 22 The informal sector defined as private unincorporated enterprises (excluding quasi-corporations) that produce at least some of their goods and services for sale or barter, have less than five paid employees, are not registered and are engaged in non-agricultural activities (including professional or technical activities).
- 23 Argentina (1998), Bolivia (1997), Brazil (1999), Chile (2000), Colombia (2000), Costa Rica (2000), Ecuador (2000), Honduras (1999), Mexico (2000), Panama (2000), Paraguay (1996), Peru (2000), Uruguay (1999) and Venezuela (2000).
- 24 Defined as all own-account workers (excluding professionals and technicians) and unpaid family workers, and employers and employees working in establishments with less than 5 or 10 persons engaged, depending on the available information. Paid domestic workers are excluded. Agriculture is excluded.
- 25 For more information, see Ralf Hussmanns and B. du Jeu, "The ILO Compendium of official statistics on employment in the informal sector", STAT working paper No. 1-2002 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2002).
- 26 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 68 (b).
- 27 *The World's Women 1990: Trends in Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.3); *The World's Women 1995: Trends in Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2); and *The World's Women 2000: Trends in Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.XVII.14).
- 28 The trial International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS), which is published as an annex in the *Guide to Producing Statistics on Time Use: Measuring Paid and Unpaid Work* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.XVII.7) and available from the United Nations Statistics Division website "Allocation of time and time use", <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/tuse/tu3.aspx>.
- 29 *Guide to Producing Statistics on Time Use: Measuring Paid and Unpaid Work* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.XVII.7).
- 30 National authorities sometimes provide "official estimates" to the international statistical system. These estimates are usually based on combined information drawn from one or more sources.
- 31 Suriname and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) reported data at least five times in 1985-1994 but provided data for only two and four years respectively in the most recent period.
- 32 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 206 (f).
- 33 Millennium Project, *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (London, Earthscan, 2005).



## Chapter 5

# Violence against women

**“Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.”**

Beijing Platform for Action

In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture, impeding their right to participate fully in society. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.<sup>1</sup> Some groups of women, such as those belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, women migrants, those living in poverty, those in institutions or in detention, those with disabilities, elderly women, displaced women and those in situations of armed conflict, are particularly vulnerable to violence. Women may also be vulnerable to violence perpetrated by persons in positions of authority in both conflict and non-conflict situations.<sup>2</sup>

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, violence against women encompasses the following:

- a. violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- b. violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; and
- c. violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

The goal of combating and eliminating violence against women and trafficking in women was set out and elaborated as early as 1985 in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.<sup>4</sup> This goal has been reiterated in many international instruments thereafter, such as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights,<sup>5</sup> the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>6</sup> and the United Nations Millennium Declaration.<sup>7</sup>

However, efforts to elaborate programmes, design intervention strategies and monitor changes to fulfil the stated objectives have been hampered by the absence or lack of adequate statistics. Recognizing the importance of data for the aforementioned purposes, the Platform for Action called on national, regional and international statistical services to develop improved data by sex and age on the victims and perpetrators of all forms of violence against women. It also called on Governments and relevant organizations to promote research, collect data and compile statistics relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women.<sup>8</sup> The United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality has suggested that an indicator on the prevalence of intimate partner violence be added to assess progress towards Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women).<sup>9</sup>

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, as a result of national and international resolve to improve data concerning violence against women, there have been considerable improvements in statistics on intimate partner violence, that is, violence perpetrated by an intimate partner (whether married or cohabiting), a boyfriend or a former intimate partner or boyfriend. However, reliable statistics on many other forms of violence against women, including trafficking in women and girls and violence against women by agents of the State, remain scarce. This lack of data continues to be a concern at the national, regional and international levels.

Efforts to elaborate programmes, design intervention strategies and monitor changes have been hampered by the absence or lack of adequate statistics

There have been considerable improvements in statistics on intimate partner violence; however, reliable statistics on many other forms of violence against women remain scarce

There is currently no official international data collection on violence against women

Most countries do not have an official or established system of statistics on violence against women, and there is currently no official international data collection on violence against women. However, some of the official statistics on crime and the operations of the criminal justice system regularly collected by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime from national authorities have some relevance to the study of violence against women. For example, one of the types of crime for which statistics are collected is rape; however, those statistics are not collected by sex of the victim.

## Current state of statistics

Data on violence against women may be obtained from two broad sources: surveys and administrative records

At the national level, data on violence against women may be obtained from two broad sources: surveys and administrative records (for a general description of surveys and administrative records, see “National sources of data” in the Introduction). Data may be obtained from specialized surveys that are conducted specifically to collect detailed information on violence against women, or from a general or multipurpose survey, typically through the inclusion of a module on violence against women. Data may also be obtained from administrative records, which refer to data that are generated by organizations or agencies in the exercise of their regular functions and that form the basis of administrative statistics. The most organized of the administrative statistics are those generated by the criminal justice system (in the form of police and court statistics). Other administrative records include those collected by the health sector and by various types of organizations that provide services to women who are victims of violence.

The first part of this section describes the above-mentioned sources of data for violence against women. The second part focuses on data issues relating to trafficking in women, the complexity of which demands separate consideration.

## Sources of data on violence against women

### Surveys

Population-based specialized surveys collecting detailed information on violence against women, when properly designed and conducted, provide reliable statistics on the prevalence of various forms of violence against women and girls, including those occurring in the family or within the general community. Most surveys examine in detail a woman's experience of violence, such as its nature, history, causes and consequences, thereby providing a wealth of information on the character and dynamics of the

form of violence being studied and allowing the identification of risk factors and correlates of violence. Some of the surveys are designed, in addition, to obtain a better understanding of ways in which women use the criminal justice system and social services in their communities.<sup>10</sup>

In general, specialized surveys dedicated to studying violence against women are relatively expensive. Few countries can afford to carry them out annually or at frequent intervals (i.e. every five years or less). An alternative to a specialized or full-fledged survey on violence against women is to obtain data on the issue through an existing general survey, such as a social or other multipurpose survey. This involves adding a number of questions or a module on violence against women to those surveys. The statistics on prevalence of violence obtained with this approach may not be as reliable as those obtained using specialized surveys since the relatively smaller number of questions in the former does not allow as many opportunities for disclosure of violence. However, the lower cost of that approach makes it a practical solution in many settings.

Surveys on violence against women may focus on just one type of violence, such as intimate partner violence, or cover multiple types of violence including those that occur in the household (for example, abuse of girl-children, elderly women and domestic workers and other non-spousal violence) as well as those occurring in the general community. The latter may include rape, physical assault, sexual assault and sexual harassment. The violence measured may be limited to physical violence or include sexual and/or psychological violence as well.

The extent to which surveys capture the actual prevalence of a given type of violence can vary considerably and may depend on factors such as the following:

- the type of survey, that is, whether it is designed specifically to measure one or more forms of violence against women (specialized surveys) or designed for other purposes but including some questions on violence against women as a small section or a separate module.
- the number and type of questions used to identify victims of violence (multiple questions or a single question).
- the order and wording of the questions.
- the approach for administering the survey, for example, face-to-face interview, telephone interview or self-administered questionnaire.

A problem observed in connection with statistics on violence is the considerable range of prevalence statistics obtained from different surveys, even within the same country. That is to be expected when surveys use different approaches or designs. In addition to the factors stated above, surveys may also differ in the types and forms of violence covered, the reference period used, the range of victim-perpetrator relationships included (e.g. married partners only, all intimate partners, household members only, etc.), the survey population (i.e. the target population covered, in terms of geographic, demographic and social characteristics) and other characteristics.<sup>11</sup>

The adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action has led to an increase in the number of surveys on violence against women. Several countries, including Australia, Canada and the United States, regularly conduct population-based crime victimization surveys that include questions on violence against women. Many other countries have also conducted population-based surveys that collect information on one or more types of violence against women. In all, at least 68 countries in the world have carried out a survey on violence against women since 1995, and at least 38 of those countries had a survey that covered the entire country (chart 5.1)

At present the most widely collected information from surveys on violence against women relates to intimate partner violence. Prevalence studies on intimate partner violence have now been conducted in more than 50 countries.<sup>12</sup>

Population-based surveys have also been utilized in research on female genital cutting (FGC)<sup>13</sup>, a

practice known to have harmful effects on girls and women and common in many societies in the northern part of sub-Saharan Africa, some societies in the Middle East and some diaspora communities in the West.<sup>14</sup> Data on FGC has, for example, been collected in Yemen and 15 countries in Africa between 1989 and 2002 through a module in the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)<sup>15</sup> (for a description of the DHS, see box 2.4 in chapter 2). In societies where female genital cutting is practised, sample surveys conducted at regular intervals can show changes over time in its prevalence and practice, as well as changes in individual perceptions. This information is important to programme specialists designing interventions to eliminate this harmful practice.

### Police and court statistics

Another important source of statistics on violence against women is administrative records kept by the police and the criminal justice system as part of regular administrative processes. When a victim comes before the police to report a crime, or when that action leads to a charge filed in court, a record is made containing factual information on the crime. However, police and court records are necessarily based on the law, such as the penal or criminal code, family violence law, domestic violence law and trafficking law. If there is no law that qualifies or specifies acts of violence against women as a crime, then there is no basis for filing a complaint.

Even where a law exists, it is widely recognized that only a small proportion of the crimes of violence against women makes their way into the administrative records of criminal justice systems and that police or court statistics grossly understate the levels of violence against women. This is true of violence against women both in the home and in the general community.

Violence against women and girls that occurs within the family or within the home is tolerated in many contexts.<sup>16</sup> Incidences of spousal abuse, including marital rape, and physical and sexual abuse of girl-children and women by family members are seldom reported to the police for this and other reasons, including a fear of reprisal, stigma, distrust of the police or legal system, fear of putting the offending family member in trouble and a lack of knowledge of legal rights. In addition to the reluctance of victims to come forward, there may be some uncertainty on the part of the police and courts in pursuing the charges brought before them owing to the lack of legislation or strategies to enforce existing laws.

At least 68 countries in the world have carried out a survey on violence against women since 1995

At present the most widely collected information from surveys on violence against women relates to intimate partner violence

Only a small proportion of the crimes of violence against women makes their way into the administrative records of criminal justice systems

#### Chart 5.1

**Number of countries or areas that have conducted at least one survey on violence against women, 1995 – 2004**

Geographic region	At least one survey	At least one survey with national coverage
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>38</b>
Africa	13	4
North America	11	10
South America	8	5
Asia	15	8
Europe	17	8
Oceania	4	3

#### Source:

United Nations regional commissions; Demographic and Health Surveys; International Violence against Women Survey; and WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence.

Although the situation is changing in some contexts with the enactment or better enforcement of legislation to combat domestic violence, in others the process is slow or has yet to be initiated.<sup>17</sup>

Violence against women in the general community is likewise subject to underreporting. Many women victims of rape, physical and sexual assault and sexual harassment do not report those crimes to the criminal justice system for some of the same reasons cited above, in addition to the fear of not being believed or even of being blamed. This state of affairs reflects the lack of a supportive environment within which women and girls can report, free from embarrassment or the fear of retaliation, acts of violence against them.

Thus, police and court-based crime statistics are of limited value as far as reflecting the overall magnitude of violence against women. Nevertheless, administrative records systematically kept by the police and by criminal and civil courts are a valuable source of data for tracking victims' use of their services and the system's response to the problem. Criminal justice systems have regular government budgets and the advantage of being highly organized, with an established mechanism for regular statistical reporting. Most countries already regularly disseminate statistics on national crime and crime rates by type of crime. The additional cost to produce statistics on crimes involving violence against women, therefore, is relatively low.

However, the way in which the data are currently collected in many countries often omits the recording of the victim's sex and age and the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, making it impossible to identify information specific to violence against women or to distinguish violence by intimate partners, family members or acquaintances from that perpetrated by strangers. At present, the most common types of crime statistics produced and disseminated by countries that relate to violence against women are those on rape, physical assault, sexual assault, intentional homicide and non-intentional homicide. Often, however, the statistics are not disaggregated by the sex or age of the victim.

To obtain statistics specific to violence against women and girls, information on the sex and age of the victim needs to be recorded for all such crimes. In addition, information on the relationship between offender and victim is needed to identify intimate partner violence and other violence within the home. Where such information is recorded, police and court statistics can provide the number of cases of different forms of violence against women that come

before or are processed by them, including violence occurring in the home, insofar as they are identifiable. Examples of statistics that can be produced are the number of incidents involving different forms of violence against women (in totality or by type) reported to the police; the number of persons charged; the number of legal complaints filed; and the number of civil injunctions, restraining orders and similar injunctions<sup>18</sup> applied for. In many countries, police and court systems are now sensitized to the issue of violence against women: for example, police stations may have special women's units or family protection units. In such cases, a more gender-sensitive system of record keeping could result in better information on victims, perpetrators and the circumstances of the violence reported.

In addition, since police and court statistics are usually available over time, they may be used to analyse changes in the way society views violence against women. For example, an increase in reported cases may reflect a heightened awareness of the unacceptability of domestic and other forms of violence against women, leading to increased willingness on the part of victims to report an incident to the police. It could also indicate more sensitivity and increased responsiveness on the part of the police and the justice system to violence against women.

A very different but useful set of administrative data from the police, prosecution and court systems that have some relevance to violence against women are the statistics on the sex composition of their personnel. Gender balance within police, legal and judicial personnel, especially at the higher levels, often has an impact on, and is a reflection of, the sensitivity or responsiveness of the criminal justice system to crimes against women, including different forms of violence against women.

### Administrative statistics from the health sector

The health sector is another source of statistics on various forms of violence, since women who sustain injuries or otherwise require treatment may go to hospital emergency rooms, family clinics, or physicians and other health-care providers. However, in the case of intimate partner violence or other forms of violence by family members, some women may not identify such violence as the underlying cause of their injury; even if they did, the health-care provider may not always record that fact. Obtaining and recording such information is complicated by issues of privacy and confidentiality, as well as by ethical considerations.<sup>19</sup>

Crime statistics produced by countries such as those on rape, physical assault and sexual assault are often not disaggregated by the sex or age of the victim

Whereas the criminal and civil justice systems may be obligated to record, classify and report statistics of violence against women, it is often not mandatory for the health-care system to record and report cases of violence. Moreover, the types of information kept by health providers are very diverse and often not comparable across institutions or over time owing to the lack of a standardized system for recording and processing the information. However, efforts to improve injury surveillance are underway in some countries, including documenting the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

As with the police and legal systems, the cases that become known to health services are but a fraction of all cases of violence against women, in all likelihood limited to violence that resulted in serious physical injuries. In addition, health services are not accessible in many developing countries, especially in rural areas.

One source that can potentially be tapped for some information on violence against women is statistics on deaths by sex, age and cause. Those statistics are already produced by countries as vital statistics and are based on information from death certificates.<sup>20</sup> Where death registration is complete and reliable, statistics on deaths by sex, age and cause (in particular, external causes), or even just deaths by sex and age, can potentially provide information on certain forms of violence against women and girls.

For example, infant deaths or infant mortality rates broken down by sex from vital statistics systems or derived from other sources may be examined to detect evidence of the practice of female infanticide or discrimination against girls. In general, male babies are more susceptible to death than female babies. Thus, when statistics show more baby girls than boys dying in a population or subpopulation, there is reason to suspect that female infanticide, or at least son preference manifesting itself in the neglect, deprivation and discriminatory treatment of infant girls, is being practised. Based on the number of countries that have reported infant mortality by sex, it is possible to examine the statistics for 114 countries of the world (see chapter 2).

Where death statistics by sex, age and cause are reliable, they can also provide an indication of the presence of dowry deaths or so-called "honour" killings, although those events are known to be grossly underreported.<sup>21</sup> Deaths of women in the age groups most susceptible to such deaths can be examined, focusing on deaths reported as caused by homicide, suicides, accidents and the like. However, several problems present themselves with the use of

this source. First, the cause of such deaths may be recorded as something entirely different. Second, in countries where such forms of violence are more likely to be practised, vital statistics on deaths are often inadequate.

### Administrative records from other types of service providers

Public and private agencies, including non-governmental organizations, provide a wide range of support services to women victims of violence, including emergency shelters or refuges, crisis centres, sexual assault phone lines, and legal counsel and legal aid services. As in the case of the police and health-care providers, the persons seeking support services are likely to be a tiny fraction of all women who have experienced violence.

Although providers of the services collect information about the women they assist and, to various degrees, their clients' experience of violence, the type of information collected is very diverse. Provision of statistics is generally not a priority of service providers, so information is seldom systematically collated, processed or reported. In the absence of a mechanism to consolidate information from the various organizations in a meaningful way over time and across type of service provided, the information often remains fragmented and accessible only within the confines of the individual organizations.

### Grappling with statistics on trafficking in women and girls<sup>22</sup>

The wide range of activities and the multiplicity of actors involved in the process of human trafficking, coupled with the clandestine and undercover nature of the activities and their possible links to organized crime and corruption, make the measurement of trafficking complex and problematic. At present, comprehensive and reliable statistics on trafficking in women and girls are not available.

Estimates on the volume of trafficking may be derived by combining information from several sources, or may be based solely on statistics pertaining to a particular stage in the trafficking process that is the area of responsibility of the organization or programme producing them. Data on trafficking in women may be collected by organizations with responsibility for crime prevention, prosecution and law enforcement or by those providing protection and assistance to victims, among others. The quality and focus of the data vary according to the financial resources and priorities of the organizations producing them and the concepts, definitions and methods

The multiplicity of actors involved in the process of human trafficking makes the measurement of trafficking complex and problematic

At present, comprehensive and reliable statistics on trafficking in women and girls are not available

employed. In short, statistics are being produced by numerous agencies with an interest in the area of human trafficking, but there is no single body to systematically gather, harmonize and effectively utilize them.

The adoption by the General Assembly in November 2000 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, provided the international community with an agreed definition of human trafficking. The definition, given below, provides a broad and inclusive framework for studying trafficking in women and girls.

Trafficking in persons means “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”.<sup>23</sup>

However, using the definition for the purpose of data collection is still a problem. Thus far, only a few countries have begun to systematically collect data on trafficking, and it is still common in many countries to mingle data relating to trafficking, smuggling and irregular migration.

In general, data on human trafficking can originate from (a) source or origin areas, where data on missing people can be used; (b) different stages of the process of movement, where for example border crossing statistics and border apprehension data provide a basis for estimates; and (c) the destination, where law enforcement agencies, health professionals, researchers or intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations assisting victims may collect and provide useful data.

Some source, transit and destination countries collect some of the types of data listed above; however, data collection is seldom systematic. The lack of adequate and specific legislation on trafficking in women results in the absence of official criminal justice statistics on trafficking cases, in terms of both the number of crimes recorded by the police and the number of persons prosecuted or convicted. Registers kept by authorities and organizations of the victims that they assist tend to be fragmentary and not coordinated. Given the fragmentary and non-repre-

sentative nature of the available data, researchers and trafficking experts find it difficult to provide reliable national, regional or global estimates of the number of women and girls trafficked.

There are, however, several initiatives to gather global data on human trafficking, of both women and men, and they are described below. Among the most frequently quoted global numbers of human trafficking are those published by official United States sources. Since 2001, the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons has published annual reports providing country narratives that describe the scope and nature of the trafficking problem in the respective countries, as well as government efforts to combat trafficking. The Protection Project at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies also collects and disseminates information about trafficking, especially of women and children.

A global database on trafficking trends, established under the Global Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, systematically collects and collates information on trafficking in persons. A broad range of sources is scrutinized for information on trafficking trends and routes, characteristics of victims and offenders, and criminal justice responses. The main sources include official reports from Governments, information disseminated by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, research reports, conference material and media reports.

The International Organization for Migration’s *Counter-Trafficking Module* database is a compilation of information from the Organization’s counter-trafficking programmes. The database draws on detailed interviews of victims who were assisted through the Organization’s counter-trafficking activities worldwide. The quantitative and qualitative data collected contribute to a better understanding of the socio-economic profile and background of victims, their recruitment and trafficking process and their exploitation in the destination countries.

## Progress in statistics

Considerable progress has been made in the past ten years in the development of methodology and procedures for data collection on violence against women, particularly on intimate partner violence. While comparing data across countries and regions is still a problem, the situation is also improving. The years following the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, have witnessed multiple initiatives to develop and collect internationally com-

Statistics on human trafficking are being produced by numerous agencies, but there is no single body to gather, harmonize and effectively utilize them

The lack of adequate and specific legislation on trafficking in women results in the absence of official criminal justice statistics on trafficking

parable statistics on violence against women through standardized survey methods.

The World Health Organization (WHO) spearheaded the effort through its Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence (see box 5.1). Launched in 1998, the study has been implemented in at least 10 countries.

Another international initiative is the International Violence against Women Survey (IVAWS), coordinated by the European Institute for Crime

#### Box 5.1

##### **WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence**

The World Health Organization launched the Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence in 1998. The study aims (a) to obtain reliable estimates of the prevalence of different forms of violence, particularly those inflicted by intimate partners; (b) to document the association of intimate partner violence with health outcomes and other aspects of women's lives; (c) to examine factors that may protect women from or make them vulnerable to intimate partner violence; and (d) to document the strategies and services that women use to deal with such violence. In carrying out the study, WHO made use of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, allowing the qualitative findings to inform the development of the core questionnaire for the study's quantitative component. In most countries, the quantitative component consists of a cross-sectional, population-based household survey conducted in two sites: the capital or other large city and a province with rural and urban populations.

The WHO Multi-Country Study has been implemented in at least 10 culturally diverse countries in Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America. Domestic violence research projects based on the WHO study methodology have also been conducted in several other countries.

Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI) (see box 5.2). So far, IVAWS has been administered in 11 countries, both developed and developing, and funding assistance is being sought to ensure the participation of additional developing countries and countries in transition.

The Demographic and Health Surveys, supported by Macro International Inc., collect data on violence against women through a domestic violence module. The module includes in-depth questions

#### Box 5.2

##### **The International Violence against Women Survey (IVAWS)**

The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control affiliated with the United Nations, with inputs from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and Statistics Canada, initiated the International Violence against Women Survey project in 2001. IVAWS is an international comparative survey specifically designed to study men's violence against women, especially intimate partner violence and sexual assault. It aims to promote and implement research on violence against women in countries around the world and to assess the level of victimization of women in those countries using a standardized methodology and questionnaire, making possible cross-cultural comparisons on the subject.

The IVAWS is conducted within a crime victimization framework and has relied largely on the network, infrastructure and methodology of the International Crime Victim Survey.<sup>a</sup> The information it provides is expected to provide inputs for the development of specific criminal justice approaches.

<sup>a</sup> The International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS) provide information on crime and victimization through a standard questionnaire, the results of which are internationally comparable. To ensure this, all aspects of the methodology have been standardized to the maximum possible extent (See [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/research\\_icvs.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/research_icvs.html)).

to enable the assessment of the prevalence and inter-generational consequences of domestic and other violence against women in the household context. Since 1995, at least 11 countries implementing the Demographic and Health Surveys have included the domestic violence module.

Both the WHO Multi-Country Study and the International Violence against Women Survey brought together international agencies, national researchers and statistical offices experienced in conducting surveys on violence against women to develop and design the study protocol and questionnaire, to support the country teams and to facilitate the analysis. Carrying out the research in culturally diverse countries gave the World Health Organization and the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control a better understanding of the realities of conducting surveys on violence against women in various contexts. By participating in research on violence against women under the

An important development in recent years is the increased attention paid to ethical and safety issues associated with research on intimate partner violence

Efforts should be made to promote the implementation of surveys on violence against women within the framework of official statistics

Researchers need to find methods to improve the disclosure of violence in generalized surveys

umbrella of an internationally coordinated study, countries gained valuable experience in all aspects of survey planning and operations on this sensitive subject and improved their technical capacity for collecting internationally comparable data on the subject.

An important development in recent years relating to surveys on violence against women is the increased attention paid to ethical and safety issues associated with research on intimate partner violence. The World Health Organization emphasizes the importance of ensuring the safety of both respondents and field staff and has developed safety and ethical guidelines for conducting research on domestic violence.<sup>24</sup> The guidelines have been adopted by other organizations carrying out surveys in this area. The World Health Organization has also produced ethical and safety recommendations for interviewing trafficked women.<sup>25</sup>

A positive trend that has emerged in relation to research on violence against women is the building of partnerships and strong consultation processes among policy-setting institutions, service providers and development cooperation entities. For example, in the case of the WHO Multi-Country Study, country research teams included national organizations that have been addressing violence against women, as well as a multi-stakeholder consultative committee to guide the study's implementation. The committees comprise individuals from key government departments and from non-governmental organizations. The ongoing process of consultation created a sense of commitment among the participants and contributed to the data being linked to advocacy and policy making. In Latin America, dialogue between the users and producers of information was instrumental to the success of various studies on violence against women in the region, and to the effective use of the study results.<sup>26</sup>

## Challenges

### Strengthening statistical capacity

Countries need to develop their capacity to collect, process and disseminate quality data on violence against women. Many countries that lack knowledge of the scope and extent of domestic and other violence against women do not have the capacity to carry out a specialized national survey on the issue. For those countries, the possibility of collecting data on violence against women through an existing multi-purpose survey can be considered. However, where international support can be secured, it is

desirable to implement a baseline specialized survey with technical assistance provided by external sources. The WHO Multi-Country Study and the International Violence against Women Survey present good opportunities for such collaboration.

More importantly, efforts should be made to promote the implementation of surveys on violence against women within the framework of official statistics: in other words, to mainstream them into the country's regular statistics programme.

For many countries, records kept by the police and the courts are often weak and uneven. There is a need to strengthen their recording and processing systems to enable them to produce reliable statistics with comprehensive national coverage. However, in many countries, the required financial and human resources may not be available.

### Improving survey methods

The relatively lower cost of collecting data on violence against women through existing multi-purpose national surveys has made that approach an attractive option for many countries, and it will no doubt continue to be used. Its main disadvantage is that the disclosure of violence is not as high as in the case of specialized surveys. One of the ways to improve disclosure is to include a separate module—with an adequate number of well-tested questions—rather than just to add a few questions. Another is to provide additional training to the interviewers normally engaged in large-scale surveys, including training on ethical and safety issues related to this type of research. Such training can be very costly, however, and not always practical owing to the large number of interviewers involved. Researchers need to find other innovative methods to improve the disclosure of violence in generalized surveys.

In general, research is also needed on how other factors, such as the approach used for administering the survey, the order and wording of questions, the number and type of questions asked, interviewer characteristics and the like affect disclosure or otherwise have an impact on the survey findings.

### Improving administrative data

As mentioned above, police and court data collection systems in many countries do not always record the sex and age of the victim or the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, making it impossible to identify cases of intimate partner violence or other violence against women or girls within the family. Attention has to be paid to the collection of informa-

tion so that the records include all information necessary to identify the various types of violence against women. That, however, can be accomplished only if legislation exists that clearly specifies violence against women as a crime and that punishes and redresses the wrongs done to women and girls who are subjected to any form of violence, whether in the home, the workplace, the community or society.

Administrative records kept by other types of organizations (for example, non-governmental organizations) providing victim assistance are particularly problematic. In most cases, information is dispersed and is not subject to standardized collection procedures or inter-institutional cross-checking. Furthermore, there is no single institution to consolidate the information. The lack of an integrated information system makes it difficult to know, for instance, how many times the same woman has sought care, what kind of care was received, who provided it, where and when it was provided and whether such visits were associated with the same act of violence or the same aggressor. As a result, it is impossible to trace either the history of violence affecting each woman who seeks help or the assistance that was actually received.

For the information to be useful for statistical purposes, an integrated database or information system linking data from the various organizations has to be in place. Information from the organizations must be systematically and consistently transferred to the database and periodically processed and disseminated. This is easier said than done, however, as there is no institution that governs all of the different types of service providers. Moreover, the types of data collected are very diverse.

To improve the coverage of administrative data on violence against women, there has to be an enabling environment for victims of violence to seek help. This includes creating or strengthening institutional mechanisms so that women and girls can report acts of violence, file charges or seek refuge in a safe, confidential and supportive environment that is easily accessible. Women victims of violence will also be encouraged to seek help if they know that they will have access to the mechanisms of justice and to just and effective remedies as provided by law for the harm they have suffered. In that connection, law enforcement officers, police personnel and judicial, medical and social workers need to be given training to increase their understanding and knowledge of the causes, consequences and mechanisms of violence against women so that fair treatment of female victims can be assured.

### Complementary use of data sources

Surveys and a variety of administrative data together can provide a more complete picture of violence against women. Surveys provide comprehensive information on various aspects of such violence, while administrative statistics from the criminal justice system can be regularly produced and disseminated at the national level. Other administrative statistics produced by various organizations shed light on women's use of their services and the response of those organizations to specific aspects of violence against women. The main challenge to the complementary use of survey data and administrative records is the absence of a common language among different sources. Concepts, classifications, time frames and many other aspects of the data gathered differ across sources. Finding a way of harmonizing concepts used in specialized surveys, criminal justice statistics and other administrative records requires time and innovation, but it is not impossible.

A holistic and multisectoral response to the problem of violence against women at the State level is the best route to the integration, harmonization and utilization of data sources. Such an approach would bring together the various actors—in law enforcement, the judiciary, education, health and social services, and community and women's organizations—to design and implement a holistic response that addresses both the prevention and treatment of violence from the perspective of the victim, including addressing information needs in an integrated way. Such response is particularly urgent in the case of trafficking in women and girls owing to the multiplicity of actors involved.

### Areas requiring more attention

Statistics on most types of violence specified under the three general classes of violence against women (see definition at the beginning of the chapter) are still either not available or inadequate. In the first class, violence occurring in the family, areas for which reliable statistics are not available or are limited in coverage include sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, "honour" killings, female genital cutting and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation. There is a need to find effective methods of collecting those data, for example through population-based surveys. For dowry-related violence and "honour" killings, other methods have to be explored because the relatively rare occurrences of those forms of violence among

The main challenge to the complementary use of survey data and administrative records is the absence of a common language among different sources

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Statistics on most types of violence against women are still either not available or inadequate

the general population may not be captured in a sample; in addition, many of the victims would no longer be alive to be sampled. Methods that might be explored include the analysis of police records or homicide reports, if available.

Population-based surveys on violence against women may not adequately cover women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, women migrants, elderly women or other groups of women who are particularly vulnerable to violence. Since they are a relatively small proportion of the population and tend to be harder to reach, those groups of women are often not present in big enough numbers in the sample to allow separate analysis to be made of them. In some surveys, the specification of the target population intentionally excludes certain groups. For example, many surveys of intimate partner violence have focused on women of reproductive age (15-49) because they are the group most likely to be exposed to violence and are most frequently the targets of ongoing surveys such as the DHS. Such surveys, therefore, do not capture the experience of older women who also experience violence, including from intimate partners. In order to study violence against the above-mentioned groups of women, researchers have to ensure that those groups are included in adequate numbers in the sample.

For the second general class, violence occurring within the general community, statistics on certain areas are still scarce. Sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions, in prisons and in other institutions are forms of violence that have existed for a long time but are only beginning to be publicly or seriously addressed. Statistics on those issues therefore tend to be scarce and limited in scope. Methods for collecting comprehensive data on sexual harassment need to be developed.

Much more also has to be done to find better methods of data collection related to trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation, forced marriage and forced labour. Integrating data on human trafficking produced by various organizations presents a huge challenge, as by definition those sources of data often include different subsets of trafficked women. The introduction of national rapporteurs on trafficking, a measure that has been taken in several countries in the European Union, may help in coordinating data collection on trafficking and in integrating and utilizing the information from the various sectors.

With respect to the last class of violence against women, that perpetrated or condoned by the State, reliable statistics on the extent of violence are particularly difficult to obtain. This is especially true where armed conflict, foreign occupation, wars of aggression and civil wars are present. Obtaining statistics on those forms of violence continues to be a major challenge.

Methods for collecting comprehensive data on sexual harassment need to be developed

Integrating data on human trafficking produced by various organizations presents a huge challenge, as by definition those sources of data often include different subsets of trafficked women

## Notes

- 1 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 112 and 117.
- 2 *Ibid.*, paras. 116 and 121.
- 3 General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993, article 1.
- 4 *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), paras. 231, 245, 258, 271 and 287-291.
- 5 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/23), para. 18.
- 6 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, sect. D, "Violence against women".
- 7 See General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000, para. 25.
- 8 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 206(j) and 129(a).
- 9 Millennium Project, *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (London, Earthscan, 2005).
- 10 For example, Statistics Canada included this feature in its Violence against Women Survey, 1993, and its General Social Survey on Victimization, 1999.
- 11 "Report of the expert group meeting on violence against women: a statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches to overcoming them" (Geneva, 11-14 April 2005, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe and the World Health Organization). The report elaborates on the characteristics of population-based surveys carried out to date.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Female genital cutting or female genital mutilation refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural or other non-medical reasons (from Female Genital Mutilation. A Joint WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Statement, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1997).
- 14 See "Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence against Women", Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/2002/83), para. 15.
- 15 P. Stanley Yoder, Nouredine Abderrahim and Arlinda Zhuzhuni, "Female genital cutting in the Demographic and Health Surveys: a critical and comparative analysis", DHS Comparative Reports No. 7 (Calverton, Maryland, ORC Macro, 2004).
- 16 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 117.
- 17 In her 1994-2003 review (E/CN.4/2003/75.Add.1), the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, highlighted some problems of law enforcement in almost all of the reviewed States, citing a total of 79 countries that have no (or unknown) legislation against domestic violence. Marital rape is recognized specifically as a crime in only 51 countries in so far as information is available (see "Violence against women: new challenges – Beijing at 10: putting policy into practice", International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW progress report, available from <http://www.un-instraw.org/en/images/stories/Beijing/violenceagainstwomen.pdf>).
- 18 In some countries, civil injunctions – also known as peace bonds, restraining orders or domestic violence orders – bar partners from coming into contact with the victim. They can include other conditions such as drug and alcohol or weapons prohibitions. Other types of injunctions can have the violent partner removed from the home.
- 19 See "Report of the expert group meeting on violence against women: a statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches to overcoming them" (Geneva, 11-14 April 2005, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe and the World Health Organization).
- 20 See remarks on national data sources in the Introduction to the report and box 1.3 "Civil registration and vital statistics" in chapter 1.
- 21 See "Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence against Women", Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/2002/83), para. 23.
- 22 This section is based largely on the following three papers: "Human trafficking and statistics: the state of the art", paper prepared by Nicole Suter, Heikki Mattila and Frank Laczko, International Organization for Migration, Economic Commission for Europe Work Session on Gender Statistics, Geneva, 18-20 October 2004, Working Paper No. 15; Frank Laczko and Marco Gramigna, "Developing better indicators of human trafficking", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol. X, No. 1 (Summer/Fall 2003); and Kristina Kangaspunta, "Collecting data on human trafficking", paper prepared for the panel on remaining challenges in relation to statistics and indicators, forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, 28 February-11 March 2005 (Geneva, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).
- 23 General Assembly resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000, annex II, article 3(a).
- 24 See, for example, World Health Organization, "Putting women first: ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women" (WHO/FCH/GWH/01.1).
- 25 Cathy Zimmerman and Charlotte Watts, *WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2003). The recommendations have been translated into Armenian, Bosnian, Croatian, Japanese, Serbian, Romanian and Russian.
- 26 See, for example, Diane Almeras and others, *Violence against Women in Couples: Latin America and the Caribbean - A Proposal for Measuring its Incidence and Trends*, Mujer y Desarrollo Series, No. 40 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.G.56).



## Chapter 6

# Poverty, decision-making and human rights

**“The empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty.”**

**“Equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women.”**

**“Women’s rights are human rights.”**

Beijing Platform for Action

Chapter 6 reviews deficiencies and gaps in the collection, dissemination, presentation and use of data in the following three areas of concern highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- Women and poverty
- Women in power and decision-making
- Human rights of women

**Women and poverty.** The Beijing Platform for Action calls on Governments to ensure equal access of women and men to resources, opportunities and public services as a strategy for the eradication of poverty.<sup>1</sup> To support that strategic objective, the Platform for Action stresses the need to collect sex and age-disaggregated data on poverty and all aspects of economic activity. It also underscores the need to develop qualitative and quantitative statistical indicators to facilitate the assessment of economic performance from a gender perspective.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the Platform calls for the improvement of the concepts and methods of data collection on the measurement of poverty among women and men.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Millennium Declaration places a priority on the eradication of poverty. Governments have agreed that the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment is an effective strategy to achieve that goal.<sup>4</sup>

**Women in power and decision-making.** The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes the goal of equal participation by women and men in political decision-making. It calls on Governments to monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women at all levels in the public and private sectors through the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data.<sup>5</sup> Increasing women’s representation in political office is now a widely held development goal. It is an indicator for tracking progress towards the Millennium Development Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women).

**Human rights of women.** In the Beijing Declaration, Governments affirmed their commitment to promote and protect the human rights of women through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>6</sup> The need for better methods to collect, collate and analyse data related to women’s human rights was underlined in the Platform for Action.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the United Nations Millennium Declaration emphasized the need to respect and fully uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reminded Governments that economic, social and cultural rights were at the heart of all the Millennium Development Goals, including that of promoting gender equality and empowering women (Goal 3).<sup>8</sup> More recently, the Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session recognized that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfilment of obligations under the Convention were mutually reinforcing and essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals.<sup>9</sup>

Various sources can be used to obtain information on the three areas of concern examined in the present chapter. Some gender-sensitive poverty statistics have been derived from household surveys. Data on women in power and decision-making and human rights can be derived from administrative records, censuses or surveys.

### Current state of statistics

In many countries, mainstream statistical agencies and programmes do not routinely collect, present and disseminate statistics on women and poverty, women in power and decision-making and the human rights of women. Regular and sustained collection and reporting of data in the above-mentioned areas has been constrained by a lack of statistical capacity. Poorly developed methodologies have also limited the use of existing data to examine gender-based differences in these critical areas of concern.

The Platform for Action stresses the need to collect sex and age-disaggregated data on poverty and all aspects of economic activity

The need for better methods to collect, collate and analyse data related to women’s human rights was underlined in the Platform for Action

Mainstream statistical agencies and programmes do not routinely collect, present and disseminate statistics on women and poverty, women in power and decision-making and the human rights of women

### Women and poverty

It is generally recognized that poverty is a multidimensional phenomena. Nevertheless, in the measurement of poverty, priority is given to its economic dimension. The primary sources of national poverty statistics are, consequently, income and expenditure data collected through household surveys; those data are used as indirect measures of access to opportunities and resources by household members. Reliance on such data, however, has proved inadequate for capturing differences in poverty among women and men since it focuses on poverty estimates for households rather than on those for individuals. Such estimates do not readily show sex differences in patterns of distribution of food, income and the like, nor do they reveal the experience of poverty by individual women and men within households.

In addition, poverty statistics based on income and expenditure data do not assign an economic value to unpaid domestic work or to caregiving activities that are most often performed by women. Failure to value those unremunerated activities introduces a significant bias in poverty statistics and may lead to underestimating the level of poverty experienced by women and by single-parent households, especially those headed by women. The underestimation can occur for two key reasons: first, unpaid domestic work and caregiving activities performed by women in dual parent households are an economic asset not readily available to single parent households who may instead need to purchase those services from the market. Second, the unremunerated activities also have a direct effect on women's time, limiting their ability to participate in other activities, including wage employment, education and training, and leisure.<sup>10</sup>

However, despite the limitations, data collected through household surveys can be and have been used to provide preliminary evidence of the extent to which women may be at a greater risk of experiencing poverty as compared with men. Examples include the work carried out by the Women and Development Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (see box 6.1) and by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which analysed survey data from countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>11</sup>

The Millennium Project has also contributed to improvements in the use of existing data on women and poverty, as reflected in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2005 review of gender in national reports on the

Millennium Development Goals.<sup>12</sup> The review found that 22 per cent of the reports included indicators for poverty by sex.

Although differences in poverty among women and men can at times be demonstrated using information available through standard household surveys, there is a need for new concepts, instruments and methodologies designed specifically to measure those differences. For instance, the concept of "time poverty" has been advanced as an alternative approach that captures both the social and economic dimensions of poverty. It can be analysed on the basis of data from time-use surveys that show how women and men apportion their time between various income-earning and other tasks (see also chapter 4). Since 1995, at least 67 countries or areas have conducted a time-use survey. However, time-use surveys are not yet widely conducted by countries around the world.

Women's participation in the informal sector is an important coping strategy for households in poverty, and in that regard the work of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics is of particular interest. At its sixth meeting, the Group specifically considered the linkages of informal sector statistics with income and expenditure and poverty statistics. The Group's 2004-2005 work programme included identification, definition and development of a core set of indicators on informal sector and informal employment in line with the importance placed on informal employment by the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality of the United Nations Millennium Project.<sup>13</sup>

### Women in power and decision-making

The major source of statistics concerning women in power and decision-making is personnel data from administrative records. However, most of the available data, particularly from the private sector, are neither collated nor disseminated owing to the absence of official reporting requirements. The collection and dissemination of statistics by Governments on women's participation in decision-making tends to be ad hoc and in response to specific demands such as the preparation of national reports for the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or the response to the Secretary-General's questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

As a result, monitoring and analysis of women's participation in decision-making has been largely focused on the most visible senior levels in the

It is generally recognized that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomena. Nevertheless, in the measurement of poverty, priority is given to its economic dimension

Data collected through household surveys can be used to provide evidence of the extent to which women may be at a greater risk of poverty as compared with men

Monitoring and analysis of women's participation in decision-making has been largely focused on the most visible senior levels in the public sector and in national politics

## Box 6.1

**Assessing gender differences in poverty through existing household surveys**

Although data from standard household surveys are, for the most part, inadequate for examining gender differences in poverty, novel approaches have been developed that show various ways in which existing data can be used to document disparities in poverty between women and men. An example is the recent work by the Women and Development Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).<sup>a</sup>

Based mainly on existing data from Demographic and Health Surveys, the analysis carried out by the Commission shows how household income and expenditure data can be combined with various kinds of information to address three main questions regarding women and poverty: first, whether women are at a greater risk of living in poor households as compared with men; second, whether female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty than those headed by men; and third, whether women are, in general, more vulnerable to poverty than men.

To address the first question, the ECLAC study combined household income and expenditure data with information on household size and composition to reveal differences in the proportion of women and men living in poor households versus those living in non-poor households. Through this type of analysis the study was able to document that, throughout the region, women are at a greater risk of living in poor households than men. Further analysis by age and place of residence revealed

that this is particularly the case for women in the economically active years (aged 20 to 59) in both urban and rural areas.

To address the second question, the ECLAC study disaggregated information on household headship by sex to compare the proportion of women-headed and men-headed households that are poor. Results showed that female headship was more common among extremely poor households than among non-poor households in most countries of the region.

Finally, to address the third question, information about own income was introduced into the analysis as a measure of economic dependency that can place women and men at greater risk of becoming poor. This type of analysis revealed that a greater proportion of women over the age of 15 did not have their own income compared to men and that a greater proportion of the women with no income lived in poor rather than in non-poor households.

Overall, the study by the Commission illustrates the ways in which basic data routinely collected through household surveys—the age, sex and economic status of household members combined with information on household size, composition and headship—can be used to gauge gender differences in poverty.

<sup>a</sup> "Poverty and inequality from a gender perspective", in *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2002-2003* (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.03.II.G.185).

public sector and in national politics. For example, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) compiles information on the participation of women in national parliaments through surveys and studies conducted among its member parliaments. Topics covered include the distribution of seats between women and men in national parliaments, women's suffrage and women's exercise of the right to vote. The statistics on women's participation in national parliaments are updated regularly and disseminated through the Union's website (see box 6.2).

Some data on women's participation in local government have also been collected by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), an international organization whose membership comprises individual cities and national associations of local governments from 112 countries. Data on the proportion of women serving as elected representatives, councillors

and mayors in more than 70 countries was collected through a survey conducted by the organization in 2003. The data collection effort is part of the organization's Global Programme on Women in Local Decision-Making and is currently being disseminated through its website.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to information from administrative records, occupation data from labour force surveys have also been used to analyse gender disparities in access to decision-making positions. The proportion of women in occupations that usually involve decision-making, such as legislators, senior officials and managers, can provide an indication of gender differentials in access to decision-making (see also chapter 4). For example, the International Labour Office publication, *Breaking through the Glass Ceiling - Women in Management: Update 2004*, makes extensive use of statistics on occupations from

the Office's Yearbook of Labour Statistics to explore women's access to decision-making in the public and private sectors through employment in managerial jobs.<sup>15</sup>

#### Box 6.2

##### Data on women in political decision-making from the Inter-Parliamentary Union

On the occasion of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2005), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women, published an informational poster entitled *Women in Politics: 2005*. The poster provides data on the proportion of women in ministerial ranks, in parliaments and in the highest decision-making bodies (women who are Heads of State or Government and women who are presiding officers of parliamentary bodies). The Union has also published historical information in "Women in politics: 1945-2005", an information kit that presents data on women's participation in politics over the past 60 years, including the following:

1. A historical table on the presence of women in national parliaments;
2. Progress and setbacks of women in national parliaments between 1995 and 2005;
3. Women in the two parliamentary regional assemblies elected by direct suffrage: the Central American Parliament and the European Parliament;
4. A chronology of women Heads of State or Government between 1945 and 2005;
5. An overview of women in the executive and legislative branches;
6. Ten years in review: trends of women in parliaments worldwide.

##### Source:

<http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm> (8 August 2005).

Key sources of evidence on discrimination and exclusion are process-oriented data from administrative records collected by government and private agencies

Monitoring the full implementation of all human rights instruments requires the collection of data, broken down by sex, age and other key characteristics, on many aspects of every day life

The lack of reporting requirements has limited the dissemination of existing administrative data

### Human rights of women

Monitoring the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, requires the collection of data, broken down by sex, age and other key characteristics, on many aspects of every day life. The Convention is a comprehensive treaty on women's human rights, calling for equality between women and men in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. As of 18 March 2005, the Convention had

been ratified or acceded to by 180 countries—over 90 per cent of the member States of the United Nations. Governments that ratify the convention agree to take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men that lead to discrimination or exclusion on the basis of sex.

Even though many countries have taken steps to incorporate the rights covered under the Convention and other human rights treaties in their Constitutions and legislations, the realization of these rights can be guaranteed only when discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex are made evident through monitoring and are removed through policies and programmes (box 6.3). Key sources of evidence on discrimination and exclusion are process-oriented data from administrative records collected by government and private agencies. Additional sources of information include population and housing censuses and sample surveys.

Previous chapters in the present report review the availability of data broken down by sex and age that can be used to document, in four key areas, inequalities in the enjoyment of basic human rights and freedoms between women and men. For example, data on deaths and diseases (chapter 2) can reveal inequalities between women and men in the effective enjoyment of the right to health; data on enrolment and literacy (chapter 3) can provide evidence concerning the effective enjoyment of the right to education; and data on the economically active population and on earnings can shed light on the effective enjoyment of the rights to employment and equal remuneration (chapter 4). The data reviewed in previous chapters are used primarily to monitor inequalities in outcomes between women and men. To implement all human rights effectively, additional information is needed to identify the discriminatory practices that lead to such inequalities. This could be best accomplished with the use of process data from administrative records.

However, efforts to use administrative data to monitor human rights have been constrained in a number of ways. Only a few countries have established official reporting requirements to integrate such data collection into national statistical systems. The lack of reporting requirements has limited the dissemination of existing administrative data. Even when data is disseminated, data by sex are either not collected or, although sex is included in the primary record, omitted from the tabulations. For

## Box 6.3

**Sex-based discrimination and basic human rights**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women defines sex-based discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (article 1).<sup>a</sup>

Key political, economic, social, cultural and civil rights covered in major international human rights treaties include the following:<sup>b</sup>

- Right to non-discrimination
- Right to employment
- Right to equal remuneration
- Right to social security
- Right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit
- Right to adequate standard of living
- Right to adequate housing
- Right to ownership of, access to and control over land
- Right to health
- Right to education
- Right to participate in cultural life
- Right to equal participation in public and political life
- Voting rights
- Right to nationality

In addition, rights of particular importance to women such as reproductive rights, including access to reproductive health care services and family planning, are covered under the Convention. Other rights explicitly covered under the Convention are those relating to issues that affect women disproportionately, such as trafficking and exploitation through prostitution (article 6), and those issues faced by women in rural areas (article 14).

<sup>a</sup> United Nations *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378. Also available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*; and *The United Nations Human Rights Treaty System: An Introduction to the Core Human Rights Treaties and Treaty Bodies*, Fact Sheet No. 30 (Geneva, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2005).

example, data on access to credit, ownership of businesses and utilization of commercial services, which are needed to monitor gender equality in economic rights, are routinely collected by banks, government institutions and other lending agencies. However, the information is not usually reported by sex. As a result, although public and private sector credit, microenterprise and business development programmes initiated in response to the Beijing Platform for Action have specifically targeted women, it is difficult to know how successful they have been since the lack of sex-disaggregated data restricts the identification and monitoring of discrimination in those areas.

In other cases, the requisite data are not yet being systematically collected. For example, it is now widely recognized that the rights to adequate housing and to equal ownership of, access to and control over land are central to the empowerment of women. However, owing to customary practices, deficient land and housing registers, and poor documentation of property transfers and sales, little information exists for monitoring discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex in the channels of property acquisition (inheritance, purchase or transfers from the State).

The information that exists reveals significant inequalities between women and men in the effective enjoyment of the rights to ownership of land and housing in many parts of the world.<sup>16</sup> The available information comes from housing and agricultural censuses and from household surveys that collect information on legal ownership of land and housing by sex of owner. Few censuses, however, collect that information. In Africa and Asia most of the information on land tenure comes from household surveys, such as the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS), but the information is available for only a few countries.

In addition, there is a lack of data, both from administrative and other sources, to monitor the rights of some groups of women who may be particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, including women who are members of minority and indigenous groups, migrant women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities and those living in institutions. One exception is data on women and men who are living under refugee status, which are being compiled by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from national Governments. Such information as sex, age

There is a lack of data to monitor the rights of some groups of women who may be particularly vulnerable to human rights violations

and other basic characteristics of refugees are being collected, compiled and disseminated once a year through the UNHCR website and a series of publications, including the UNHCR *Statistical Yearbook*.<sup>17</sup>

UNHCR also compiles information on women and men who are members of other vulnerable groups, including asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and returnees. However, coverage of those groups, and therefore of women living under those circumstances, is limited owing to poor registration by Governments. Similarly, in industrialized countries, where the host country is solely responsible for refugee registration, statistics on the age and sex of asylum-seekers and of refugees in particular are generally not available.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, little information exists to monitor acts of violence against women, which the Platform for Action recognizes as violating and impairing or nullifying the enjoyment by women of their human rights and freedoms (see also chapter 5).<sup>19</sup> In general, information about domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence, is more widely available than information about other forms of violence against women such as trafficking, exploitation, sexual harassment and abuse, forced prostitution and violence perpetrated or condoned by the State. Nevertheless, the available information is scant and thereby severely limits the ability of Governments to guarantee the basic human rights and freedoms of women in general, and of women who are members of disadvantaged groups in particular.

## Progress in statistics

Progress in the availability of the sex-disaggregated data that are required to monitor women's status in the areas of poverty, power and decision-making and human rights has been slow. Most publications that include statistics on women and men use data collected and collated for other purposes, usually by methods that are not sensitive to the potential impact on data of gender biases and stereotypes.

Nevertheless, analysts have to some extent been able to address gender concerns using data sources that were not necessarily developed for that purpose. Those sources include household budget and expenditure surveys, informal sector surveys and time-use surveys to examine gender-based differences in poverty; labour force surveys to examine women's access to decision-making positions; Demographic and Health Surveys to gauge human right violations in the case of domestic violence; and the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study surveys to doc-

ument gender-based inequalities in the right to ownership of land through differences in land tenure by sex. Most new data collection exercises in less developed regions have been donor funded and implemented by national statistical offices in partnership with international agencies.

Several global initiatives call for improvement in national data sources to better address the issue of women and poverty. They include further development of time-use surveys and satellite accounts associated with the System of National Accounts.<sup>20</sup> The subgroup on poverty and hunger of the Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators stated the need to develop ways to further analyse the gender dimension of poverty.<sup>21</sup>

Initiatives to improve the quality of data for monitoring the human rights of women are also underway. One example is the collaborative effort between the World Health Organization, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the European Women's Lobby and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to strengthen data collection on the topic of violence against women (see also chapter 5).

Some improvements have also been achieved in the collection and use of administrative data, although progress varies by sector according to demand and technical capacity. Active gender budgeting groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America have achieved some success in using administrative data to monitor the implementation of local and national budgets from a gender perspective. In doing so, they have influenced both the collection and the dissemination of administrative and budget data.<sup>22</sup>

With respect to monitoring the human rights of women in particularly vulnerable situations, improvements have been made in the collection and reporting of data by sex, age and other characteristics of those living under refugee status. Between 1994 and 2003 the number of countries reporting data to UNHCR on their refugee populations, disaggregated by sex and age, increased from 71 to 120. Since 2003, UNHCR has also begun to collect detailed statistics on refugee camps, including demographic profiles and indicators on education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and shelter. The data facilitate monitoring the enjoyment of basic human rights by refugees, including refugee women and girls.<sup>23</sup>

Conceptually, a number of countries are now moving away from a focus on collecting and reporting sex-disaggregated statistics per se towards a broader aim of incorporating or mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of national statistics

Progress in the availability of data required to monitor women's poverty, power and decision-making and human rights has been slow

A number of countries are now moving towards a broader aim of mainstreaming gender in the work of national statistics systems

systems. The move towards gender statistics has important implications for the revision of concepts, definitions and methods used in the collection and reporting of information in all areas of concern reviewed in the present report, and is critical for improving the availability of data in the areas of

poverty, power and decision-making and human rights. Experimental work by a small number of countries, including some in less developed regions, brings out the potential benefits to be gained from incorporating a gender perspective in data collection and associated statistical products (see box 6.4).

#### Box 6.4

##### Incorporating a gender perspective in statistics

The National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) in Mexico was among the first national statistical agencies to adopt a comprehensive approach to mainstreaming gender in statistics. Beginning in 1995, with the Beijing Platform for Action as a guide, INEGI initiated a plan to provide information by sex in every product generated from population censuses, household surveys and administrative records. It also initiated a review of the processes of statistics production from conceptual frameworks and instruments through the processing and dissemination of results. Among the data collection exercises that needed to incorporate a gender perspective were the National Demographic Dynamics Survey, the National Employment Survey and the National Household Income and Expenditure Survey. A system of 1,638 indicators covering nine topics was developed to monitor implementation of a national programme under the Platform for Action. INEGI also provides regular courses to raise gender awareness among general statisticians and, with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the National Institute for Women, organized six regional meetings on gender statistics between 1997 and 2004.

Two other examples of mainstreaming gender in national statistics come from India and Nepal, where the national statistics offices initiated comprehensive processes to incorporate a gender perspective in all aspects of the 2001 national population and housing censuses. In India, a special unit was established to oversee gender issues and to sensitize, through training and discussions, the census functionaries and staff involved in the supervision and conduct of the 2001 census. Steps were also taken to increase public awareness of women's contributions in various economic activities. As a result of those and other activities, compared to the 1991 census, in 2001 there was an increase in the reported female-to-male sex ratio (number of females per 1,000 males) in 77 per cent of districts, suggesting better enumeration of young girls and elderly women. Higher female labour force participation rates as com-

pared with the 1991 census also indicate improvement in the quality of data on women's labour force participation. Special efforts were also made to present the data from a gender perspective. For example, a special section entitled "How Indian Women Live" was added to the census report under "Where and How People Live".

The process in Nepal was part of a larger exercise by the Central Bureau of Statistics to improve the quality of census data. The process was supported by the European Union and involved a United Nations inter-agency group. Activities included gender-orientation workshops for senior and mid-level census management; the establishment of four gender-oriented technical committees, including one to review the questionnaire and manuals and one to review the occupation and industry classifications used; mobilization of female field personnel; training for enumerators; a census media campaign promoting the gender perspective to respondents; and generation of both sex-disaggregated data and special tabulations on gender issues. Gender-specific questions on ownership of housing, land and livestock were added to establish the sex of the owner. The existing occupation and industry classifications were found to be gender biased—with occupations and industries dominated by men classified and specified at more refined levels than those in which women predominated—and were replaced by a new standard classification. Following lobbying by women's groups, the census also implemented the 1993 revision of the System of National Accounts and the International Labour Organization standard of economic activity and work participation to a much greater extent than previous censuses.

##### Sources:

"Report of Mexico", Economic Commission for Europe Work Session on Gender Statistics, Geneva, 18-20 October 2004, Working Paper No. 36; J.K. Banthia, "Engendering the census: the Indian experiment and experiences", in *Engendering Population Census in South and West Asia: Collected Papers* (Kathmandu, UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for South and West Asia, 2004); and Government of Nepal, Central Bureau of Statistics, "Population census 2001 of Nepal: census engendering experiences", in *Engendering Population Census in South and West Asia: Collected Papers* (Kathmandu, UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for South and West Asia, 2004).

Procedures for the collection of data in the areas of poverty, power and decision-making and human rights are still in the development stage

## Challenges

Major challenges remain in the collection of data on all three areas of concern reviewed in the present chapter. In general, procedures for the collection of data in the areas of poverty, power and decision-making and human rights at the national level are still in the development stage. As a result, there is as yet no agreement on the international collection of statistics on these topics.

### Women and poverty

The basic challenge for analysis on issues related to women and poverty is the lack of data on the level and incidence of poverty among individual women and men. The existing data do not allow for the examination of differences in the distribution and consumption patterns of individuals within households. Alternative data to address this challenge are already being considered. For example, indirect poverty indicators, such as the consumption of specific goods (for example, items of clothing) that can be linked to individuals and are therefore available by sex, have been piloted in household surveys in some countries with limited success. A second alternative that offers more potential is the use of data on time poverty collected through time-use surveys. However, as stated earlier, at the present time not many countries carry out time-use surveys, especially in the less developed regions where the levels of poverty are greatest.

Underlying the general lack of adequate gender-sensitive data on poverty are also conceptual and methodological challenges that require attention. From a gender perspective, much of the economic data used in poverty analysis are deficient owing to poor recognition of women's economic contributions and/or to conceptual limitations that exclude key elements of women's work. Much of women's unpaid household work and family care are defined as non-market production and are therefore excluded from the System of National Accounts, whereas the same work done by women for other households is defined as market production and counts as economic activity.

Finally, although poverty is recognized to have both social and economic dimensions, poverty measurement and analysis tend to focus on the economic aspects. Both qualitative analyses and quantitative methods need to be used in measuring and assessing poverty. Such analyses would reflect factors related to the way in which poor people view themselves, the

perception of poverty among poor women and men and the way in which they identify and express their needs. Analysing poverty both quantitatively and qualitatively would thus bring visibility to the non-material aspects of poverty.

### Women in power and decision-making

Monitoring women's participation in decision-making in the public arena poses a challenge for statistical systems primarily because most of the relevant data are held by decision-making institutions that do not normally compile and collate the information and are not formally required to report it. Those institutions include parliaments, political parties, state and local governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Even information on the number of women and men occupying high-level decision-making positions within national statistical offices, needed for monitoring the process of incorporating a gender perspective in statistics, is not systematically compiled or disseminated.

An additional difficulty has been the lack of data on lower levels of decision-making and on the processes that provide access to positions of power. Statistics are now generally available on women's participation in parliament and at the highest and most visible levels of decision-making in the public sector and, to a lesser extent, in the private sector. However, data on women and men at the lower levels of decision-making, which provide the career path to the higher levels, are often still not readily available in many countries. For example, the Equal Opportunity Commission in the United Kingdom has noted the lack of a method to classify seniority so that women's career progression (or the lack of it) can be compared with men's.<sup>24</sup>

The more subtle elements of human resource development, such as on-the-job training and mentoring, which contribute to access to positions of power and authority, provide a particular challenge. Monitoring those processes is essential for the development of intervention policies and programmes to overcome the exclusion of women early in their careers and thus have an impact on their access to the highest levels of decision-making. One way to monitor such elements is through better and more extensive use of qualitative data, microstudies and case studies. Qualitative data can enhance the understanding and analysis of quantitative data, while microstudies enable exploration of gender issues not covered by mainstream sources.

Data on women and men at the lower levels of decision-making are not readily available

Although poverty is recognized to have both social and economic dimensions, poverty measurement and analysis tend to focus on the economic aspects

## Human rights of women

A major challenge to improve the monitoring of human rights is that of collecting, processing and disseminating gender-sensitive process-oriented data. One way to address this challenge is to demand accountability and transparency of government and private agencies by requiring them to produce and publicly disseminate relevant statistics from administrative records generated as part of the routine performance of their functions. The statistics should be disaggregated by sex and by other key characteristics.

A related challenge is that of improving the availability of information on women who are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations such as those who are members of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, those living in poverty and those living in rural areas. This requires a concerted effort by Governments to ensure that existing data collection systems properly cover the above-mentioned groups. At the same time there is a need to ensure that information about membership in a disadvantaged group, such as one defined by race, ethnicity, caste or indigenous group affiliation, place of residence and socio-economic status, are also collected and disseminated.

Similarly, there is a dire need to improve the availability of information on the women and men who are internally displaced or who are stateless. Although significant improvements have been made in the availability of sex-disaggregated data on refugee populations, most of the available information refers to officially recognized refugees in countries where the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees plays an operational role. Women and men who live in their own country of birth but who are considered to be stateless, who have been internally displaced or who were refugees but have recently returned as part of a resettlement programme are often not properly registered and are therefore underrepresented in existing data from UNHCR and other sources. Improving the registration of those groups requires a concerted effort between Governments and national and international non-governmental agencies to establish a registration system that complies with international standards, particularly that of confidentiality of data.

## General outlook

Overall, improving the availability of the statistics needed for monitoring gender inequalities in poverty, decision-making and human rights depends primarily on activities at the national level. In the face of resource constraints and the limitations of conventional statistics, countries need to maximize the use of a wider range of existing data sources.

In particular, administrative statistics based on data collected outside national statistics offices by government agencies, including the criminal justice system, and by the private sector, including banks, could expand the limited availability of information in the three critical areas of concern. Sex-disaggregated administrative statistics are already used extensively in the education sector; they are used to a lesser extent in the health sector, by gender budgeting initiatives and by women's groups promoting greater participation in politics and governance among women. To expand the use of administrative data for monitoring and planning in the areas of poverty, power and decision-making, and human rights, formal requirements to collect and report data by sex and age have to be institutionalized. Increasing the use of such data may also create incentives for those responsible for their collection, quality and presentation, with consequent benefits to other potential users and to the overall quality of governance.

In the face of resource constraints and the limitations of conventional statistics, countries need to maximize the use of a wider range of existing data sources

To expand the use of administrative data, formal requirements to collect and report data by sex and age have to be institutionalized

## Notes

- 1 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 47.
- 2 Ibid., para. 68(a).
- 3 Ibid., para. 206(h).
- 4 See General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000.
- 5 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 190(e).
- 6 Ibid., annex I, item 8, and annex II, strategic objective I.1.
- 7 Ibid., chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 208(a).
- 8 "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration", report of the Secretary-General (A/56/326), paras. 196-202 and annex.
- 9 *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 7 (E/2005/27 and Corr.1)*, chap. I, section A, para. 4.
- 10 Vivian Milosavljevic, "El enfoque de género y la medición de la pobreza", paper presented at the expert meeting on poverty and gender, Santiago, Chile, 12-13 August 2003, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/International Labour Organization.
- 11 "Women and poverty", in *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2), chap. 5, box.
- 12 "Looking for equality: a gender review of national MDG reports, 2005", report prepared for the United Nations Development Programme, Bureau of Development Policy.
- 13 See "Report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics", note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2005/10).
- 14 See <http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/> (18 August 2005).
- 15 <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/F267981337/> (18 August 2005).
- 16 See United Nations Millennium Project, "Guarantee women's property and inheritance rights", in *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (London, Earthscan, 2005).
- 17 <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics> (2 September 2005).
- 18 Information provided to the United Nations Statistics Division by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (January 2005).
- 19 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 112.
- 20 Commission of the European Communities, System of National Accounts, 1993 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4).
- 21 "Indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals and for follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields", report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2005/20), annex, para. 4.
- 22 *A learning programme in action: UNIFEM gender responsive budgeting programme. Mid-term review summary report* (New York, United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2004).
- 23 Information provided to the United Nations Statistics Division by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (January 2005).
- 24 United Kingdom, Equal Opportunities Commission, "Gender statistics for the 21st century: challenges and priorities", Economic Commission for Europe Work Session on Gender Statistics, Geneva, 18-20 October 2004, Working Paper No. 2, para. 9.

## Chapter 7

# Conclusion

The statistical review presented in the preceding chapters points to mixed progress in the capacity of countries to produce and report sex-disaggregated data and data on key gender issues of concern to women and men. Similarly, progress on statistical methodology has been mixed: there have been encouraging developments in statistical methodology in certain areas of concern but not in others.

As a result, there is a lack of sex-disaggregated data on many of the topics covered by the present report. The extent of data reporting varies by geographic region. In general, Europe reports the most data and Africa reports the least. The other regions—Asia, North America, South America and Oceania—fall between the two extremes. The differences in reporting are even more pronounced when regions and countries are categorized as “more developed regions”, “less developed regions excluding the least developed countries” and “least developed countries”, with the more developed regions providing the most data and the least developed countries the least.

In addition to varying by region, the extent of data reporting varies by topic. The same region (or country) may have relatively comprehensive data on certain topics but not on others, with more countries usually reporting on the more basic topics as compared with the number reporting on new and emerging issues. Furthermore, data availability decreases as more detail is called for, such as disaggregation by sex, age and other social characteristics.

The general lack of data necessary to address gender issues and the differences in availability of such data across regions and across topics is a reflection of three factors:

- Inadequate statistical capacity
- Lack of gender mainstreaming
- Inadequate concepts and methods

To improve gender statistics, it is crucial that all three factors be addressed. The actions proposed to address those factors can thus be categorized as follows:

- Strengthening national statistical systems
- Mainstreaming gender in all aspects of the production of statistics
- Developing and improving concepts and methods

Many strategies exist to improve statistics on the world's women and men. The list below is not exhaustive but represents the basic strategies that should be considered for each action. Gender mainstreaming necessarily cuts across all activities: both the strengthening of statistical systems and the development of concepts and methods need to be designed and implemented from a gender perspective.

### Strengthening national statistical systems

In order to develop and improve gender statistics at the national level, the capacity to produce reliable and timely basic statistics must be present. For many countries in the less developed regions, this is not the case. The situation calls for strengthening the national statistical systems, starting with the national statistics office.

#### Strategy 1. Secure sustained commitment at the highest level of Government to strengthen the national statistical system

Governments should strive to the extent possible to support the programmes listed below, adopting a coordinated approach to produce a core set of socio-economic statistics required for policy formulation and planning. The priorities would vary according to national circumstances.

- a. Implement at least one population and housing census every 10 years and disseminate the results widely and in a timely manner;
- b. Establish, strengthen and maintain civil registration and vital statistics systems, strengthen other administrative recording systems and make statistics easily accessible to policy makers and other users;
- c. Ensure the sustainability of an integrated national survey programme that produces regular and timely statistics to guide policy and that allows population surveys addressing new research topics to be conducted as the need arises.

### Strategy 2. Maximize the use of official statistics

National statistics offices and line ministries should widely disseminate and promote the use of all statistics that they produce. Both producers and users of statistics should strive to consider all available sources of data and use them complementarily as appropriate for their purposes. Since data from different sources are typically collected using different approaches and time frames, they are not expected to replicate each other. Rather, they collectively provide a more complete picture of the topic under study. In addition, evaluation of a data source can be, and often is, carried out using other relevant sources of data. Such complementary use of diverse sources of data leads to a better understanding of their various advantages and disadvantages and opens the way to improving or strengthening each source.

### Strategy 3. Build capacity among producers of statistics in data presentation

Although it is Governments that ultimately provide resources, national statistics offices can do much to increase the willingness of Governments to support statistical systems. Producers of statistics need to be more proactive in making the value of gender statistics visible to Governments, the public and other stakeholders. Innovative and more user-friendly ways of presenting and disseminating data need to be developed for Government and civil society, in forms that are appropriate for a wide range of purposes, including policy-making, planning and programming, and monitoring and evaluation, as well as public education, advocacy and lobbying. Taking such steps would help widen the use of the data and in the process create a demand for statistics that would strengthen the claim of the statistics office on the national budget.

### Strategy 4. Develop human resources at all levels in national statistics offices

The success of a national statistics office depends not only on commitments at the highest level but also on the commitment and skills of women and men in the organization. Continuous staff training and skill upgrading is crucial to this success. Women and men should be given the same opportunities for training and advancement. In national statistics offices where women are underrepresented at decision-making levels, increasing their representation should also be an explicit goal.

## Mainstreaming gender in all aspects of the production of statistics

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into national statistical systems has to be systematic: it must be implemented in all aspects of the production of statistics, from the development of concepts and methods for collecting data to the presentation of results. This endeavour requires political will at all levels, not only in national statistics offices but also in the statistical services of other government agencies and in all institutions that provide administrative data. Gender mainstreaming includes ensuring that the following occur:<sup>1</sup>

- Population statistics are systematically collected, collated, analysed and presented by sex and age
- Other relevant characteristics that define potential forms of discrimination, such as race, ethnicity, disability status, place of residence and socio-economic status, are likewise collected, collated, analysed and presented
- Concepts, definitions and methods used in the collection, production and analysis of data are developed to reflect gender issues and gender disparities in society
- Statistics are produced with the full participation of women and men
- Information is disseminated and presented in ways that are easily accessible to users
- Producers and users of statistics, including women's groups, work together to review regularly the adequacy of the official statistical system and its coverage of gender issues

Some strategies for mainstreaming gender in statistics are presented below.

### Strategy 5. Specify the development of gender statistics within the legal framework of official statistics

Of crucial importance to improving the availability of gender statistics is the specification of formal requirements for sex-disaggregation and the incorporation of a gender perspective within national statistical legislation that regulates the production and dissemination of official statistics.

To expand the range of information available for gender analysis, the requirements need to be established not only for statistics already officially

collected by the national statistics office but also for other sources of data, particularly administrative data being collected and disseminated by other government agencies and organizations in the public and private sectors.

In addition, legislation can be especially important in establishing standards for transparency in data systems. Freedom-of-information legislation can empower civil society groups, including women's groups, to gain access to administrative data, within the principles and rules of privacy and confidentiality.

### Strategy 6. Support and strengthen gender statistics units

National statistics offices can benefit from setting up a gender statistics unit within their organizations. Such a unit can play a catalytic role in initiating and monitoring the process of mainstreaming a gender perspective into national statistical systems, especially at the early stages. Through their contacts with national machineries for women and non-governmental organizations, gender statistics units facilitate communication between the producers and end users of gender statistics. The units provide information to users and help them understand the uses of existing statistics. At the same time, they can increase the awareness among statisticians of the need to produce or disseminate statistics that address gender concerns and to develop gender statistics in new areas such as violence against women, the informal sector and unpaid work.

National statistics offices should strengthen the technical capacity of gender statistics units and as much as possible integrate their activities into the regular statistical work programme.

### Strategy 7. Foster dialogue between statistics offices and interested stakeholders, including women's groups

Dialogue between national statistics offices and interested stakeholders can enable women's groups and gender advocates to understand, gain access to and use gender statistics more effectively. Women's groups need statistics to monitor, advocate and lobby for gender-sensitive policies and to hold Governments accountable to commitments they have made, both nationally and as signatories to such international agreements as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At the

same time, the dialogue can help to increase the capacity of statisticians to identify and understand gender issues and to present data in formats that better address the needs of users.

National machineries for women and other user groups, including NGOs, can also be effective in gathering support for collecting statistics in new areas and in raising awareness of the need for revision of concepts, definitions and methods of data collection. Indeed, in many cases involving gender mainstreaming of statistics, the need for change has first been voiced by women's groups, who may continue to play an important role in the actual mainstreaming activities. The experiences of India and Nepal in incorporating gender concerns into the conduct of their 2001 censuses are examples of how women's groups and the national statistics office can work together. The 2010 round of the population and housing censuses creates a significant opportunity for dialogue between statistics offices and interested stakeholders to improve the overall statistical base on women and men through activities at the national level.

### Strategy 8. Train producers of statistics to incorporate a gender perspective into their work

One way to achieve gender-mainstreamed statistics is through the provision of regular training courses on gender statistics for general statisticians, either within tertiary training institutions or in national statistics offices.

The training should be extended to field personnel and other staff members involved in the production of statistics. Gender statistics units can also participate in the training.

### Strategy 9. Tap existing sources of data and enhance their usefulness for producing gender statistics

Administrative data, much of which is currently underutilized, represent a potential source of gender statistics. Using administrative data to produce needed statistics is a cost-effective approach since these data are already routinely collected by organizations as part of regular administrative processes. National statistical systems may already include a wide range of such data collected by the Government and other agencies for various purposes. With the introduction of appropriate changes in the methods of collecting and processing information, the resulting data can be

compiled into statistics for addressing gender issues. For example, police and court records can be used to understand the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence, but this is possible only if information on the victim's sex and relationship to offender is collected in the primary record.

Other potential sources of administrative data are personnel records, credit and banking records, and land and housing registers. For some of those sources, statistics may have been produced but not disseminated separately by sex; for others, statistics may not have been produced at all from the primary records. Information on sex is often available in the primary records, allowing the production of sex-disaggregated statistics for monitoring gender equality in access to resources and opportunities, such as access to decision-making positions, access to and utilization of commercial services and credit, and access to land and housing.

For all of the above administrative data, the collection of additional information on the primary record and the production and dissemination of statistics from those records may require legislation. These activities would in all cases have to be governed by the rules and principles of privacy and confidentiality.

Statistics on agriculture, industry, business, the environment, finance, trade and transport represent additional potential sources of gender statistics. Although women and men often have different interests in and access to resources in those areas, the differences are not readily obvious because the individual is typically not the unit of data collection. However, in some cases, sex can be recorded as a characteristic of the primary unit of data collection, thereby increasing the value of the data for gender analysis. For example, in transport surveys information on the sex of the traveller can be included to enable analysis of gender differences in travel patterns.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Strategy 10. Make official national statistics a required component of international reporting mechanisms**

The periodic country reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of the Beijing Platform for Action provide opportunities to promote the production and reporting of more standardized and harmonized gender statistics. Utilization of statistics in the country reports has

been limited to date. Consideration should be given to establishing formal requirements for the inclusion of official national statistics on gender issues in a standardized format in those reports.

### **Developing and improving concepts and methods**

#### **Strategy 11. Promote collaboration between international and regional organizations and agencies, national statistics offices and academic and research institutions**

International and regional organizations and agencies, national statistics offices and academic and research institutions need to work together to mainstream gender in the development and revision of concepts, definitions and methods of collecting data on topics where methods are inadequate. The collaboration extends to all methodological issues, including the design of survey questionnaires or modules within questionnaires, the revision of international classifications and standards and the development of analytical methods and appropriate indicators, among others.

Some of the areas identified in the present report as requiring further development of concepts and methods are statistics on migration, poverty, human rights, violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, time use, informal employment, unpaid work, morbidity, disability, access to health services and access to positions of power and decision-making.

### **Concluding remarks**

Ten years after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, limited progress has been made in producing the statistics needed to monitor implementation of the Platform for Action and of the goals of other international conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals. Consequently, a more comprehensive approach to improving gender statistics is required. Gender-sensitive concepts, definitions and methods of data collection, presentation and dissemination are necessary not only in demographic and social statistics but also throughout entire statistical systems. New data sources must be developed and existing sources adapted in order to provide comprehensive statistics that reflect the situation and concerns of women and men equally.

At the national level, increasing the coverage of statistics on gender issues and ensuring that concepts and methods incorporate a gender perspective is particularly challenging in view of the human and financial resource constraints faced by most national statistical systems. Resource constraints are particularly severe in the least developed countries, where the most pressing need is to strengthen national statistical systems to produce the most basic statistics in a timely manner.

In the long term, to improve the lives of women and men, statistical systems and budgets at the national as well as international level must bring about the sustained and institutionalized change needed to ensure the availability of quality gender statistics.

## Notes

- 1 *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para 206; and *Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview*, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (United Nations, New York, 2002), available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/e65237.pdf>.
- 2 See United Kingdom, Equal Opportunities Commission, "Gender statistics for the 21st century: challenges and priorities", Economic Commission for Europe Work Session on Gender Statistics, Geneva, 18-20 October 2004, Working Paper No. 2, para. 10.

