



IPS Paper

Improving statistics on international labour migration at the global level: Standards, data availability and global estimates

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Brief Description

Statistics on international labour migration are among the most challenging data to produce.

International migrant workers represent a small share of the population and comprise a wide diversity of groups, making it not only difficult to define statistically but also difficult to capture in data collections not specifically designed for this purpose.

Regular data sources including population censuses, household surveys and administrative records usually provide only a partial picture of international labour migration in a country.

As international migration becomes more integrated as a catalyst for development in global accords including the UN Global Compact on Migration, the SDG 2030 agenda, and the ILO Fair Migration Agenda, the need for comprehensive, reliable and regular statistics on the different groups of migrant workers has become more pressing.

The ILO, as the UN specialized agency devoted to promoting social justice and decent work, has since its founding in 1919, promoted the rights of migrant workers through the setting of international standards for the governance of labour migration and protection of migrant workers.

Towards promoting evidence-based policy making, the ILO has further established a global programme of work to improve the availability and quality of labour migration statistics at national, regional and global levels.

Key areas of work include statistical standard setting through the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS); annual compilation of a core set of official national statistics and indicators for global dissemination; preparation of global and regional estimates on international migrant workers; and technical assistance and capacity building targeting producers as well as users of international labour migration statistics.

This paper provides an overview of ILOs programme of work to close the data gap on international labour migration for informed policymaking.

Abstract

Statistics on international labour migration are among the most challenging data to produce. International migrant workers represent a small share of the population and comprise a wide diversity of groups, making it not only difficult to define statistically but also difficult to capture in data collections not specifically designed for this purpose. Regular data sources including population censuses, household surveys and administrative records usually provide only a partial picture of international labour migration in a country. As international migration becomes more integrated as a catalyst for development in global accords including the UN Global Compact on Migration, the SDG 2030 agenda, and the ILO Fair Migration Agenda, the need for comprehensive, reliable and regular statistics on the different groups of migrant workers has become more pressing. The ILO, as the UN specialized agency devoted to promoting social justice and decent work, has since its founding in 1919, promoted the rights of migrant workers through the setting of international standards for the governance of labour migration and protection of migrant workers. Towards promoting evidence-based policy making, the ILO has further established a global programme of work to improve the availability and quality of labour migration statistics at national, regional and global levels. Key areas of work include statistical standard setting through the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS); annual compilation of a core set of official national statistics and indicators for global dissemination; preparation of global and regional estimates on international migrant workers; and technical assistance and capacity building targeting producers as well as users of international labour migration statistics. This paper provides an overview of ILOs programme of work to close the data gap on international labour migration for informed policymaking.

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