



The World's Women 2005 Progress in Statistics



United Nations

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UN calls for added statistical capacities to back-up push for women's rights, development

(UNITED NATIONS NEW YORK, 18 January) Continued improvement in data collection and reporting are key factors not only in charting the situation of the world's women, but also in advancing their situation, says a report released today by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

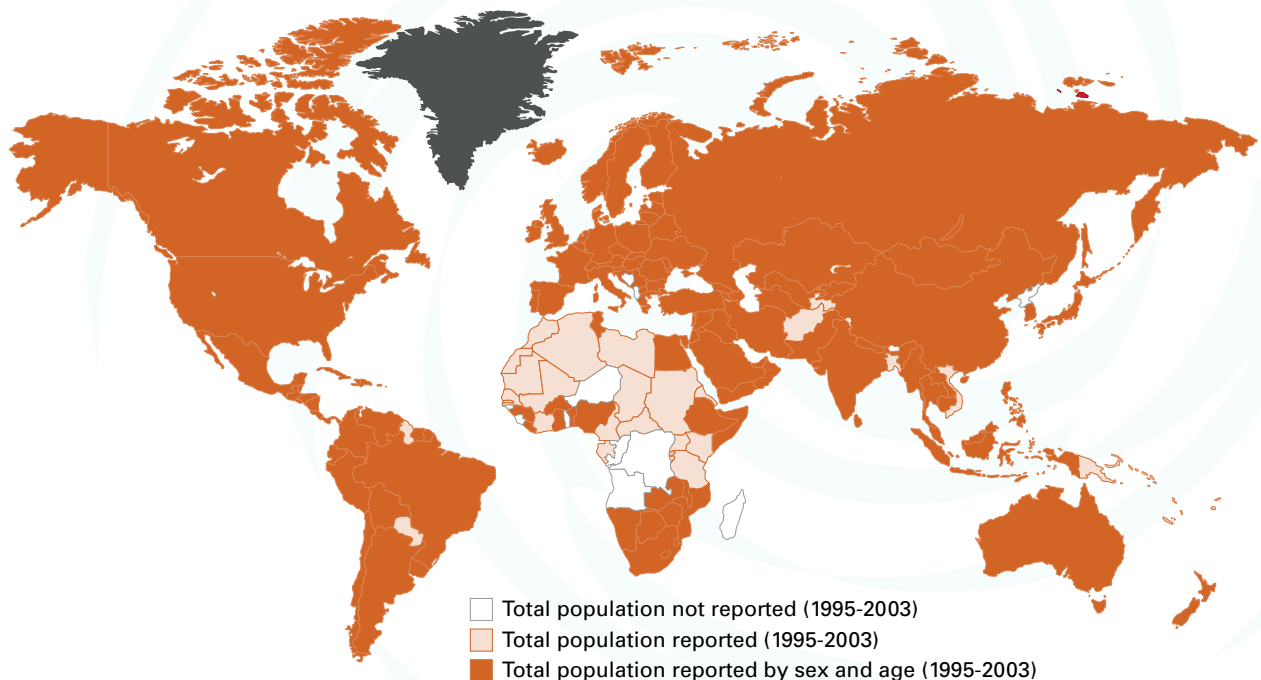
"Statistics are unsung yet essential ingredients for economic and social progress," UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, José Antonio Ocampo, said at the launch of the UN study on the state of statistics on women. "One of the most pronounced shortcomings in this area — with the most damaging effects — appears in the collection of data disaggregated by sex and of data focusing on gender issues."

The United Nations plays a leadership role within the global statistical community, collecting, compiling, reporting and analyzing data.

"Assistance in building national statistical capacity is a crucial part of UN efforts to help all countries track and thereby advance progress in achieving their development goals," added Under-Secretary-General Ocampo.

*The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics** sets out a blueprint for improvement in the availability of data in the areas of demographics, health, education, work, violence against women, poverty, human rights and decision-making.

Figure 1: More countries or areas report total population than report total population disaggregated by sex and age.



Support for statistics

Analyzing statistics gathered by 204 countries, the report provides a realistic assessment of national capacities to report on these and other topics — providing a means to raise the priority given to national statistical offices.

Perhaps the most critical indicator of statistical capacity at the country level is the conducting of a national census. The report, prepared by the Statistics Division of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), shows that 26 out of 204 countries surveyed have not been able to carry out a census within the most recent ten-year period (16 in sub-Saharan Africa).

“For population data to be most useful in addressing gender concerns, it needs to be further disaggregated by sex and age,” the report states. While nearly all countries or areas provided total population data to the United Nations, less than three-quarters of the countries analyzed provided population data disaggregated by sex and age in the period 1995-2003.

The report recommends that governments conduct at least one census every ten years. It also recommends countries establish, strengthen and maintain civil registration and vital statistics systems and strengthen other administrative recording systems. In order to improve gender statistics, countries should ensure the sustainability of an integrated national survey programme. Information from these sources should be made widely available to the public and policy makers in a timely manner so that it can be fully utilized.

To improve the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics in particular, the report recommends that governments foster dialogue between national statistical offices and stakeholders such as women’s groups to identify and better understand gender issues, as well as to enable these groups to understand and more effectively use available statistics.

“Commitment to the Millennium Development Goals has been a prod to improved statistical collection,” said Mary Chamie, Chief of the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch of UN DESA’s Statistics Division. “But big gaps in reporting remain, and we want to assist governments and donors to close them.”

UN recommendations will be taken up this year by intergovernmental bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Social Development and the Statistical Commission.

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* *World’s Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/17), United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.05.XVII.7, ISBN 92-1-161482-1 For more information see: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/wwpub.htm>

The World’s Women report is prepared by the Statistics Division of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) at regular five-year intervals starting in 1991. The three previous issues compiled and analyzed data on women’s status world wide. Previous issues noted a lack of available official statistics disaggregated by sex. Therefore *The World’s Women 2005* uniquely reviews and analyses the current availability of data and assesses progress made in the provision of national statistics, as opposed to internationally prepared estimates, relevant to gender concerns during the past 30 years. The first Annex table reports on the availability of national statistics of key gender concerns. The second Annex table provides updated figures for many of the indicators presented in *The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, plus some additional relevant indicators of the status of women and men.