Measurement of Migration in Cameroonian General Population and Housing Censuses

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ABSTRACT

Migration statistics are indispensable for population estimates, for development planning and evaluation of migration policies. With fertility on a decline worldwide, migration is going to play an even greater role in Population change. This explains why the United Nations and the Government of Cameroon continuously place emphasis on improvement in the quality and quantity of statistics on migration. Even though migration statistics come from various sources, in a statistically deficient country such as Cameroon, the main is the General Population and Housing Census (GPHC). This study examines the questionnaires of the various GPHCs to examine the changing emphasis on migration and compliance with the UN recommendations on migration questions to be included in censuses in Cameroon starting from the first to the most recent. During the first and second GPHCs of Cameroon carried out in 1976 and 1987 respectively, very limited information was collected on migration. The third GPHC carried in 2015, came with remarkable innovations in the measurement of migration especially international migration. Unfortunately in this census, no question was included to measure the extent of brain drain and causes of internal migration. These preoccupations are planned to be taken care of in the Fourth GPHC of 2026. However, no question has been included on the migration generation status which provides information on the diversity of the population enumerated. Questions on migrants' parents' places of birth as recommended by the UN 2018 Marrakech Pact on Migration give a clue on how children of immigrants are integrating into their new society. The key conclusion is that migration statistics in Cameroon are deficit and of irregular availability due to the irregular nature of census taking. There is need to complement migration data in Cameroon with more detailed and comprehensive data derived from regular surveys.

Keywords: migration, population change, measurement, development planning, censuses

INTRODUCTION

Among the three components of population change (fertility, mortality and migration), migration can be considered as the orphan is terms of data availability. However, migration issues are gaining prominence and many data collection operations in Cameroon notably the Cameroon Household Survey collect information on migration. This is so because quality data on internal and international migration alongside data on fertility and mortality are important for preparing accurate estimates of population for planning, for resource allocation and to determine migration policies. The 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Agenda emphasizes the importance of migration. 30 of the 244 indicators of this agenda make reference to migration and five of them concern migration directly.

Despite the importance of migration, information on it is deficit especially in statistically undeveloped countries such as Cameroon. The deficiency of data from administrative sources and the irregularity of surveys that have components that collect information on migration make General Population and Housing Censuses which are more exhaustive an important source of migration data. All of Cameroon's General Population and Housing Censuses starting with the first that was carried out in 1976 have a component that collects some information on migration. While the first and second censuses, collected data essentially on internal migration, the third (2005) and the fourth that will soon be realized include components that capture both internal and

international migrations. This study brings out the various questions on migration in Cameroon's censuses and the innovations introduced from one census to another.

The introduction of migration questions in censuses is important for the collection of more comprehensive national and international migration data. Censuses provide more disaggregation by migration status than any other source and they ensure that "no migrant is left behind". The UN principles for Population and Housing Censuses encourage countries to continue to include questions that identify migrants by country of birth, country of citizenship and year of arrival in General Population and Housing Censuses.

Why Measure Migration?

Migration is one of the three components of population change together with fertility and mortality. Apart from being one of the components of population change, migration and migration statistics are important in many different situations:

-Migration statistics are needed to assess the role of migrants in labour markets, including what jobs they do and how heavily employers depend on them. In Cameroon for example, statistics show that the fishing sector is dominated by immigrants from West Africa (3rd GPHC). This is useful information that is necessary for any policy geared at bringing more national into the fishing sector.

-Migrants are expected to use public services. In this regard, statistics on migration especially immigration are of interest to those planning service provision and understanding the impacts of migration policies.

Statistics on migration are needed to measure the impacts of migration policies on the number of migrants admitted and their composition by sex, skills, administrative unit of origin, country of origin, etc.

-Statistics on migration are needed to assess the social impacts of migration on communities ('churn ' and pace of change). These statistics are needed in order evaluate the impacts of migration on other variables of population growth (mortality and fertility).

Statistics on migration are required alongside information on mortality and fertility for making population estimates and projections. The lack of sufficient information on migration has led to the consideration of net migration in Cameroon as being zero. This is not always true, thus the resulting population projects are usually not very accurate.

Migration Statistics are needed for many other reasons including the analysis of voting patterns, the assessment of remittances, for diplomatic reasons, etc.

Advantages and limitations of Using Censuses to Measure Migration

A population census is a major source of data on the international and internal migration migrant stock, which can be enumerated as the foreign-born population or out-migrants, that is, the number of foreign citizens in a country or persons living outside their districts of birth. It is also possible for the population census to capture information on place of residence of people at a specific date, typically one or five years before enumeration, thus allowing the possibility of obtaining the number of international migrants and internal migrants who arrived during the period considered and remained in the country or a district different from that of their birth until the time of enumeration.

Information on "country of birth" or 'district of birth' is usually collected by questions on place of birth. These questions capture the district or province (or other geographic division detail) if the person was born in the country, or the country of birth if the person was born abroad. Information on "citizenship" has been gathered by asking the questions in various ways. Some censuses only ask whether a person is a citizen of the country or not (a foreigner). Many ask what country of citizenship a person has, and sometimes also how the citizenship was acquired, such as whether by birth or naturalization, and/or whether a person has multiple citizenships. In Cameroonian censuses, information is collected on countries of birth and countries of citizenship. No information is collected on the mode of acquisition of nationality.

Another topic that is recommended is "the year or period of arrival in the country" for foreign-born persons. For internal migrants, the year of arrival and duration of stay in a district is collected. Information derived from this topic can be used to distinguish between migrants who recently arrived and those who arrived a long time ago, which is important for analyzing the integration of migrants into their new societies. In national censuses, the question may be asked to foreign-born persons only or to persons who have lived abroad regardless of their country of birth, if returned migrants are also of policy interest. In Cameroonian censuses, the question relates to the latest arrival in Cameroon from abroad or from a district in Cameroon.

There are other questions that are relevant to international migration, which are not considered core topics by the United Nations, but have been included in some national population censuses. The questions include emigration of former household members, returned migrants, country(s) of birth of parents, and previous.

Population censuses are widely recognized as the major source of statistics for international migrant stock (stock of foreign-born and stock of foreigners and internal migrants). However, certain data collected in population censuses can also be exploited to produce rough estimates of international migration flow for specific periods, ending with the time of the census. Together with population data from a previous census, net migration flow for the period between the two censuses can be estimated. Net migration may be estimated for a series of successive census pairs to examine trends in net migration over the decades. For more recent indicators of immigration flow, the census uses a question on place of residence at a specified time in the past. This allows the possibility of obtaining the number of international migrants and internal migrants who arrived during the period considered and remained in the country or districts different from those of their birth until the time of enumeration. The most common time frames used in recent censuses are five years and one year prior to the census.

The advantages of using censuses to measure international migration are associated with the nature of population censuses. The principle of universal coverage by censuses ensures better coverage of the migrant population. Relative uniformity in question formulations ensures better data comparability across countries. Censuses collecting a variety of socio-demographic information offer potential for characterizing international migrants in terms of certain basic demographic and socioeconomic characteristics included in the census questionnaire. For instance, censuses allow for a comparison of access to housing, employment, and social services between migrants and non-migrants.

At the same time, censuses have several limitations in measuring international and internal migration. First, data are not frequently available, usually only once in 10 years. In Cameroon, the ten-year period is not even respected. The first population census was carried in 1976, the second in 1987, 11 years after the first, the second in 2005, 18 and the half years after the second and the fourth that was scheduled for 2015 is still to take place. Secondly, because censuses can accommodate only a limited number of questions related to migration, they cannot provide the detailed information needed for a meaningful analysis of the causes or consequences of both internal and international migration. Thirdly, because censuses capture only people in the country at the time of the census, they cannot provide a complete or detailed characterization of international flows of people. Lastly, the population census, by its very nature, cannot provide reliable information on emigration from a country. Estimates of net immigration can be derived for the inter-census period by using census data on the total population, taking into account births and deaths that occurred during the same period

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Integrating Migration into the United Nations Development Agenda

The inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has far-reaching implications for the collection of migration data. Improving migration statistics, once the exclusive domain of statisticians, has now become a priority for policy makers and planners at the national, regional, and global levels. The SDGs include one migration-specific target (10.7), which calls on countries to "facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of well-planned migration policies." In addition, there are several migration-related targets, including target 3c (retention of health workers in developing countries), target 4b (provision of scholarships for study abroad), targets 5.2, 8.7, and 16.2 (combating human trafficking), target 8.8 (respecting labor standards for migrant workers), target 10c

(lowering the costs of transmitting remittances), and target 17.18 (disaggregating data by migratory status). A third group of targets are those that, although they do not refer to migration per se, nevertheless have an impact on migration or migrants, not least due to the target to disaggregate data by migratory status. Examples include targets that relate to poverty reduction, education, health, and peaceful societies. The commitment of the 2030

Agenda to "leave no one behind" has significant implications for data collection: policy makers and statisticians will no longer be able to "hide behind averages." The ambition of the 2030 Agenda is that through disaggregation by migratory status, policy makers, civil society, and the general public are able to monitor the outcomes of the SDGs and targets for migrants and non-migrants, thus allowing for assessment of the relative success of national development policies. By April 2016, the United Nations Statistical Commission was expected to adopt the indicator framework for the SDGs, as developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine how migration concerns have been captured in general population and housing censuses in Cameroon from the first that was carried out in 1976 to the fourth that will soon be realized.

Specifically, this study seeks to show:

- how internal and international migrations are measured in Cameroon's General Population and Housing Censuses;
- the changes in emphasizes on migration in various censuses in Cameroon and how these changes relate to state preoccupations in relation to migration.
- the level of compliance of various General Population and Housing Censuses of Cameroon in meeting the United Nations recommendations in terms of capturing migration;
- the socio-economic and political importance of migration statistics

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The methodology for this study consists of identifying questions that aim at measuring internal and international migrations in the three past GPHCs that Cameroon have realized as well as the planned 4th GPHC whose questionnaire is already available. An identification of the various questions introduced in different censuses in Cameroon enables the analysis of the evolution of emphasis on migration in Cameroon.

The various questions included on these questionnaires to capture

In order to verify for progress in capturing key and optional components of migration, this study ends by comparing the aspects recommended by the UN and those covered by Cameroonian censuses. This is done by comparing the UN Standard Questions on International Migration

Definition of key Migration Concepts and Variables

Migration

In all General Population and Housing Censuses carried out in Cameroon, internal migration involves crossing at the boundary of the smallest administrative unit, a subdivision to take up residence in another or with the intention changing residence for at least six (6) months. However, movements within subdivisions of large urban areas such as Douala, Yaounde, Bamenda, Bafoussam, etc are not considered as migratory moves. On the other hand, crossing of an international boundary with the intention of changing residence is considered as international migration. Information on place of birth, duration of stay at current place of residence or place of residence at a specified date are used to measure migration

International migration is measured by tracking migration outflows from Cameroon and immigrants into Cameroon.

Place of Usual Residence

The place of usual of residence in Cameroonian censuses is the place at which a person has lived or intends to live for at least six months not including temporary absences for holidays or work assignments

Place of Birth

Place of birth in censuses in Cameroon is supposed to refer to the subdivision or country (for persons born out of Cameroon) where the mother usually lived at the time of birth. Usually, it is the geographic unit (subdivision or country) which the birth actually took place.

Duration of residence

Duration of residence is defined as the number of completed years that a person has spent in a given subdivision, the smallest administrative unit in Cameroon. It is usually asked with place of previous residence. **It is not the duration of stay in a particular housing unit.** From this information, cross-sectional estimates of internal and international migration flows can be generated.

Place of Previous Residence and Place of Residence at a Specified Date in the Past

The place of previous residence usually in Cameroon's censuses is the subdivision or the foreign country in which the individual resided immediately prior to migrating into the subdivision of current usual residence. The place of residence at a specified time in the past is 5 years before each census and ten years before. Information on place of residence at specific a date five years before a census is useful for the analysis of current migration and that of ten years is necessary for the capture of inter-census migration.

Reasons for Migration

A question on the main reason for migration in a census is very useful in a system with weak immigrant registration such as Cameroon's. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2007) recommends that questions on migration should include a response category –"forced displacement to help identify the size and characteristics of the refuge population. This is what the forthcoming 4th GPHC intends to do.

Capture of Internal Migration and Immigration

The key concerns of Cameroon in relation to migration immediately after independence were with rural exodus and immigration especially from neighboring Nigeria. This may explain why migration questions during the first two censuses that were realized in 1976 and 1987 concerned only these aspects of migration.

Tables 1: Questions and Modalities Considered for Capturing Internal Migration/Immigration in GPHC of Cameroon

Question/Response Categories	Collected or not during a census			
	1st GPHC (1976)	2nd GPHC(1987)	3rd GPHC (2005)	*4th GPHC-2026
Question- Place of birth	Collected	Collected	Collected	Collected
Modalities-Subdivisions of Cameroon and other countries				
Question-Place of usual residence	Collected	Collected	Collected	Collected
Modalities- Subdivisions of Cameroon and other countries				

Question-Place of previous residence	Collected	Collected	Collected	Collected
Modalities-Subdivisions of Cameroon and other countries				
Question: Place of usual residence 5years before a census	Not collected	Collected	Collected	Collected
Modalities- Place of Cameroon and other countries				
Question: Place of usual residence during the last census	Not Collected	Collected	Collected	collected
Modalities- Subdivision of Cameroon and other countries				
Question: Main reason for migration to the subdivision of current usual residence or Cameroon for persons of other nationalities or return migrants	Not collected	Not Collected	Not Collected	Collected
Modalities- Search for job, Education, Health, Marriage, Family reunion, family conflicts, loss of job, retirement, eviction from previous place for residence for major construction works, disasters, land conflicts, armed conflicts, others (specify)……				
Question: Duration of residence at the current subdivision of usual residence or Cameroon for foreigners and returnees in completed years	Not included	Collected	Collected	Collected

Source: Questionnaires of the First, Second, Third and Fourth GPHCs of Cameroon

During Cameroon's first General Population and Housing Census, no question was asked to determine the place of usual residence at specified dates in the past. This reduces its importance in determining migration flows. However, it contains questions that were useful for measuring the stock of migrants both internal migrants and immigrants found in Cameroon. Subsequent censuses were able to close the gap.

As a result of massive forced displacements of populations by the Boko Harm terrorist group and insecurity created by the Anglophone Separatists Crisis, a question has been introduced in the soon to be conducted 4th GPHC to capture this forced migration. Apart from capturing this category of migration, this question will also capture the stock of refugees that come into Cameroon from Nigeria and the Central African Republic. This is the first time a question is introduced the captures the motives for internal migration and immigration into Cameroon.

Capture of International Migration-Emigration

For a long time, questions on emigration were judged to be of little importance in Cameroonian censuses. However, the economic crisis that negatively affected Cameroon starting from the mid-1980s which accompanied by massive emigration provoked the introduction of questions on emigration starting with the 2005 GPHC. These questions seek to answer the following questions: why are peopling leaving, where do they go to, who are they in terms of age, education and professional qualification?

Table2: Questions to Capture Emigration from Cameroon in GPHCs

Question/Response Categories	Considered or Not during a Census			
	Ist GPHC (1976)	2nd GPHC(1987)	3rd GPHC (2005)	4th GPHC(2026)
Question: Country of Destination Modalities: All other countries except Cameroon	Not considered	Not considered	Considered	Considered
Question: Main Reason for emigration Modalities: Studies, search for work, work, marriage, family reunion, medical evacuation,	Not considered	Not considered	Considered	Considered

family conflicts, others				
Question: Year of departure Modalities: Every single five years before the census date	Not considered	Not considered	Considered	Considered
Question; Age at the time of departure in completed years	Not considered	Not considered	Considered	Considered
Question: Sex of Emigrant Modalities: Male or Female	Not considered	Not considered	Not considered	considered
Question: Educational Level of emigrant Modalities :None, Primary, Secondary, Higher, Don't know	Not considered	Not considered	Not considered	considered
Question: Nationality of Emigrant from the household five years before the census Modalities: All nationalities including Cameroon	Not considered	Not considered	Not considered	considered
Occupation at the time of departure	Not considered	Not considered	Not considered	considered

Source: Questionnaires of the First, Second, Third and Fourth GPHC of Cameroon

During the first two GPHCs of Cameroon carried out in 1976 and 1987, no questions were introduced to capture emigration. However, as a result of the severe economic crisis that rocked Cameroon starting from the later part of the 1980s and extending for almost a decade, emigration concerns became important. Question to capture where the many people living Cameroon go to, why they live and their age-sex composition were necessary. This concern was taken up for the first time in the 3rd GPHC that was carried in 2005. During the 4th GPHC of 2026, a question has been introduced that to capture brain drain. This question concerns the educational level of emigrants. Inaccuracies may be involved in responses provided on emigrants because information on emigration is provided by proxies.

Alignment of the Capture of Migration in Cameroonian Censuses with UN Recommendations

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development2 seeks to ensure that "no one is left behind". To monitor progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for vulnerable groups, including international migrants, SDG 17.18 calls for the disaggregation for data, including by migratory status. 3 The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration4 calls on Member States to strengthen international migration data by improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate, reliable, comparable data, disaggregated by sex, age, migration status and other characteristics. The Global Compact also calls for integrating migration-related topics in national censuses, such as country of birth, country of birth of parents, country of citizenship, country of residence five years prior to the census, most recent arrival date and reason for migrating. In response to the demand for accurate migration data, this UN Statistics Division provides guidance for improving the quality and comparability of international migration statistics collected through national population censuses and household surveys. It was prepared on the basis of a comprehensive review of national census questionnaires for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. While this guidance note draws primarily from experience of national censuses, much of its content also applies to household surveys (Statistics Division of the UNDESA, 2108.)

Table 3: UN Standard Questionnaires on International Migration and their Adoption in Cameroonian Censuses

Questions on migration recommended by the UN	Census in which it was included	Observation
1. Place of birth	Asked in censuses	-For Cameroonian, this question captures the subdivision of birth and by implication the division and region of birth

		-For non-Cameroonians, the question captures the Country of birth without going into details on where the birth took place within the country
Country of Citizenship	Asked in all censuses	Modality on No citizenship (stateless) recommended by the UN has never been included in any of the 4 censuses
Place of birth of parents	Not captured in any of the censuses	This question seeks to capture the specific place of birth of parents of nationals within the country and the country of birth of foreigners with the inclusion of country of birth unknown
Ever resided abroad	Never captured in any of the four censuses	
(asked to persons who are over one year old and citizens of the country where data are being collected.		This question is asked to persons who are over one year and who are citizens
Question-Has X ever lived outside this country for period lasting at least 12months?		Modalities for this question are yes or no. If yes, the country of residence abroad is requested. However, this can by captured for respondents whose place of previous residence was another country. For those who were abroad, arrived and resided in subdivision in Cameroon and later changed residence, residence abroad cannot be captured in any of the censuses.
Modalities are-Yes/No/Don't know.		
If yes, name the country		
Household members living abroad-	This was captured only for the 2005 and 2026	After realizing that many people were living Cameroon, this question was introduced in a Cameroonian census for the first time in 2005. Initially modalities such as level od education and occupation at the time of departure were not included but with the 2026, they were included.
(Ask of the household head or reference person).		
Question- In the last five years, has any former of this household left to live abroad for at least 12 months and is still living there now?		
Modalities- Yes/No		
If yes, list them by name and a specify age at departure, sex, years and month of departure, country of departure, main reason for departure, level of education, occupation at departure, main reason for migrating (employment including military service, education/training, marriage, family reunion or family formation, forced displacement(refugees, asylum seekers, temporary protection, etc.), other reason specify…..		
Year or period of arrival in the country for foreign born persons or return migrants. For persons in another country ask the following question-	Asked for the 2005 and 2026 censuses without specifying the year or month of arrival in	The years or the months of arrival in Cameroon have never been asked in any of the four censuses but the duration of stay was requested for both the 2005 and 2026 Censuses
In which year and month did X first arrived this country and has lived or intend to live for at least a year? Year------ Month-------		

Don't know	Cameroon.	
In cases where people immigrate many times (foreign born or return migrants), ask the following questions- In which year and month did X last arrived this country and has lived or intend to live for at least a year? Year------ Month------- Don't know		
Acquisition of citizenship for citizens of this country including dual nationalities		
Questions		
-Have you had the citizenship of this country since birth?		
Yes or No		
-If yes, how did you obtain the citizenship of this country?		
-What is your previous country of citizenship (specify according to present borders.)		

Among the six questions proposed for inclusion in General Population and Housing Censuses by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration signed in Marrakech Morocco in December, 2018, (UN 2018), the place of birth of the father and the mother of respondents has never be included in a Cameroonian Census. The place of birth of the father and that of the mother help to determine the country or subdivision, division or region in Cameroon in which each respondent's parents were born. When used in conjunction with information on the place of the respondent's birth, it helps in deriving the migration generation status and thereby establishes whether the person is in the first, second or third generation or more. Migration generation status provides information on the diversity of the population enumerated and gives a clue on how children of immigrants are integrating into their new society. Parents' countries of birth allow for analysis of the long term and intergenerational impacts of migration, consequently, the children of migrants are lost once the leave their parents' homes (Sumption,2019).

Even though a question has been introduced on country of citizenship in Cameroonian censuses, the modality to capture stales persons recommended by the UN has never been considered. Though optional, the question proposed by the UN to capture the mode of acquisition of nationality of the country of residence has not been inserted into any of Cameroons four GPHCs. The capture of return migration through censuses in Cameroon is inadequate as can only be captured to some extent through the place of previous residence. Without a specific question on return migration status, return migration or residence abroad can be underestimated especially when many return migrants change subdivision of residence at once after arriving Cameroon.

CONCLUSION

Over the years, significant efforts have been made to include questions to capture new migration concerns in General Population and Housing Censuses in Cameroon. From very limited concerns on migration in the first two censuses, the third and fourth censuses have expanded the scope of the capture of migration to include motives, destinations and some characteristics of emigrants that left Cameroon five years before the head counts for these censuses. However, the very irregular nature of census taking in Cameroon (the 2nd GPHC was realized 11years after the first, the 3rd 18.5 years after the third and the forth that was supposed to be carried in 2005 is already 4 years late) makes it impossible to capture migration in real time. Due to its very complex nature, censuses cannot collect detailed information on migration. This means that census information on migration need to be supplemented by information from surveys which are scarce and irregular in Cameroon. Considering the increasing importance of migration statistics for development planning and the formulation of migration policies, urgent efforts must be made to improve on the quality and regularity of migration data collection in Cameroon. In forthcoming censuses, efforts need to be made to include a questions on the places of birth of parents as recommended by the 2018, Marrakech Global Compact for Orderly, Safe

and Regular Migration. This will further light on this important phenomenon and the role and integration of intergenerational migrants in their host societies.

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