

Recommendations for Measuring Older Populations in Institutions



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Recommendations for Measuring Older Populations in Institutions

Prepared by the Task Force on Measuring
Older Populations in Institutions



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Preface

As populations across the UNECE region and throughout the world grow older, it becomes increasingly important both to produce statistics on topics of specific relevance to ageing and older people, and to ensure adequate, representative coverage of older people in the production of statistics on all topic areas. With this in mind, a UNECE Task Force produced the *Recommendations on Ageing-related Statistics*, published in 2016. Among the priority areas identified for future work in those recommendations was the issue of how to approach the inclusion in statistics of older people who are not part of a private household, but who instead live in an institution.

Statistics on social and demographic topics are typically produced from surveys of private households. For many statistics this is suitable, especially when balanced against the additional costs that the coverage of institutional populations would entail. In ageing populations, however, it becomes necessary to consider how bias might be introduced into statistics as a result of excluding the older populations living in institutions; by virtue of the absolute size of such populations, their size relative to the total population, and the degree to which their characteristics vary systematically from those of the population of older people in private households. While such bias is recognized, views on what to do about it vary widely, as evidenced by strongly-expressed and polarized comments received during consultation on the *Recommendations on Ageing-related Statistics*.

In view of this evident need for guidance on the subject, in 2017 the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) established a Task Force on Measuring Older Populations in Institutions. The objectives of the Task Force were to consider the definitions and classifications of 'institution' and 'institutional populations' as they pertain to older people; and to provide guidelines for statistical offices on whether, when and how to include such populations in the production of statistics on ageing-related topics. The Task Force was asked to review current approaches and identify good practices; to provide estimates of the extent to which exclusion of institutional populations biases ageing-related statistics; and to formulate recommendations for the treatment of institutional populations of older persons in social surveys and other data sources to produce ageing-related statistics.

The Conference of European Statisticians endorsed the *Recommendations for Measuring Older Populations in Institutions* at its 67th plenary session in June 2019.

Acknowledgements

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The Conference of European Statisticians endorsed the Recommendations at its 67th plenary session in June 2019.

The Recommendations were developed and agreed upon by the entire Task Force. Each chapter was drafted by a team under the leadership of one or more individuals, as follows: Definitions of older populations in institutions, Alessandra Battisti; Assessing bias arising from omission of older populations in institutions from surveys, Jan-Lucas Schanze with Abigail Webster and Alessandra Battisti; Design of instruments and survey methods to collect information on older populations in institutions, Anna Troitskaya and Svetlana Nikitina; Methods for measuring older populations in institutions using administrative data, Andrés Felipe Copete; Ethical considerations for collecting information on older populations in institutions, Steve Smallwood, Alina Grigoryan and Hannes Spreitzer.

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