

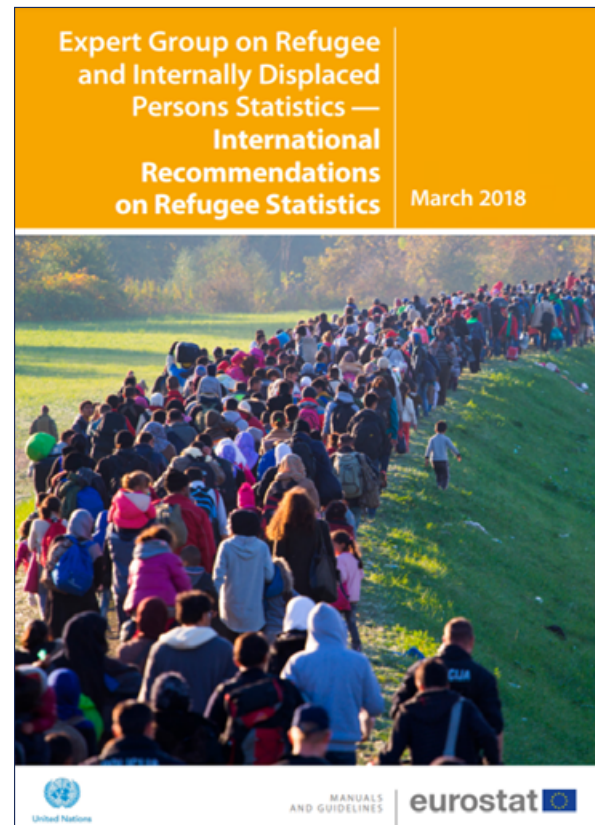
Recommendations at a Glance:

The International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics

Introduction

The [International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#) aims to assist countries and international organizations in shaping high-quality statistics on refugees. They were developed collaboratively by affected countries alongside regional and international experts, as part of the [Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics \(EGRISS\)](#).

Efforts to standardize international migration statistics began several decades ago, including through the development and subsequent revisions of Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration. However, these guidelines did not fully address forced displacement. The IRRS is the **first comprehensive globally recognized framework** designed to help produce more reliable and internationally comparable statistics on refugees. Statistics that are crucial for contributing to the **Sustainable Development Agenda 2030** and implementation of the **Global Compact on Refugees**.



This document provides an overview of the IRRS, summarizing its key elements. Designed for senior managers from National Statistical Offices, other Government institutions, as well as regional and international organizations, it underscores the significance of these Recommendations, encourages their utilization in practice, and introduces complementary EGRISS resources to further facilitate efforts to pursue statistical inclusion of refugees.

WHAT DOES THE IRRS COVER?

The IRRS presents a comprehensive set of statistical recommendations organized through the following chapters:

- Legal framework
- Defining refugee populations for statistics
- Measuring the number of refugees
- Measuring the integration of refugees
- Coordination and strengthening statistical systems

Like the [International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics](#) (IRIS) and the [International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics](#) (IROSS), the IRRS are aligned to existing statistical guidance such as those concerning migration, population & housing census, and civil registration and vital statistics systems. They are also used to inform subsequent revisions of these currently in production.

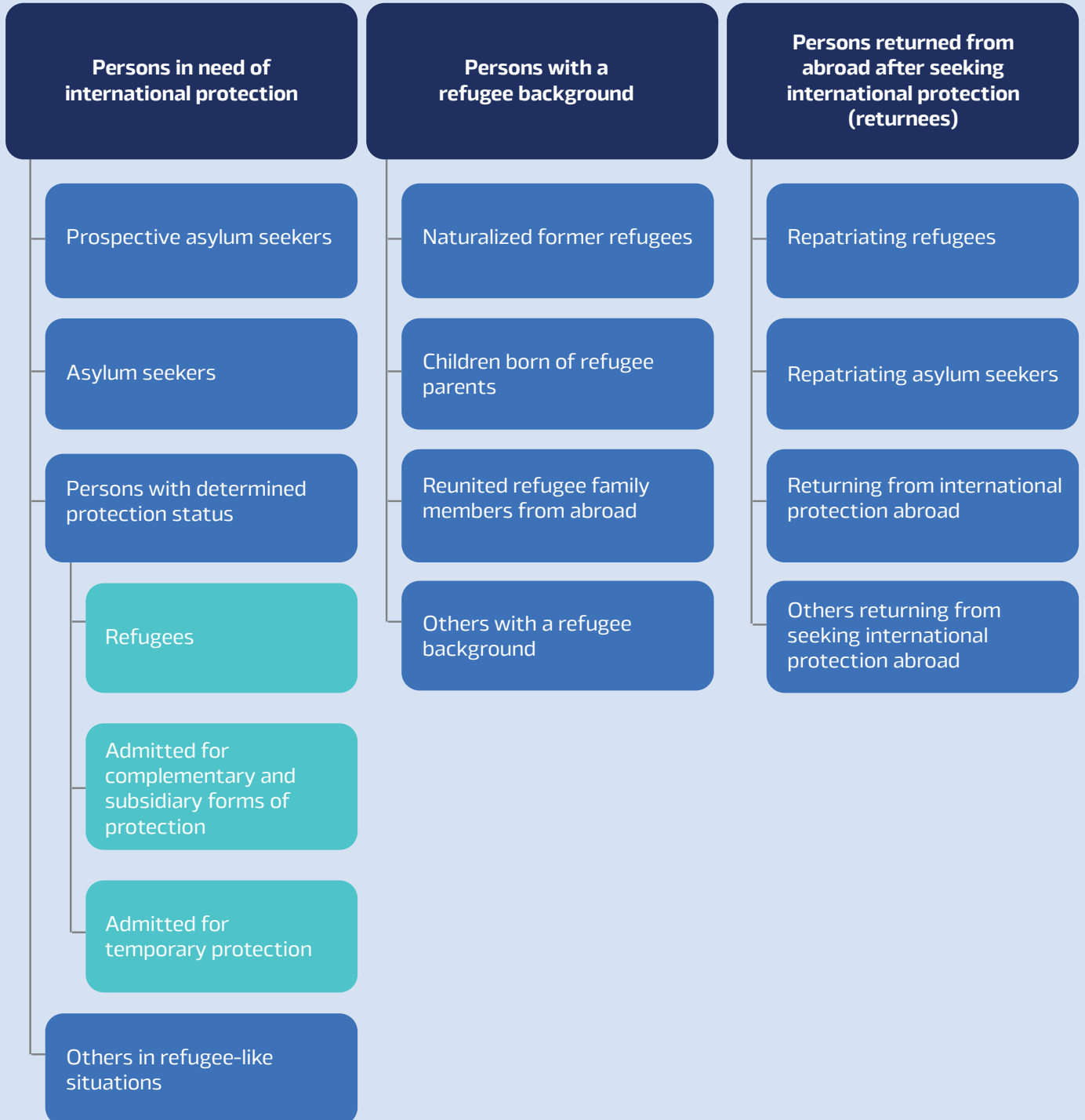
The refugee statistical framework

In international law, the term “refugee” is defined by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Article 1) and its 1967 Protocol as a person “*who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country*”. The refugee statistical framework is **rooted in this legal definition**, with adaptations made for its application in data collection processes, to provide **a clear and inclusive framework** for all countries to use for statistical purposes.

The IRRS seeks to develop a statistical framework for **refugee and refugee-related populations**, which consists of three groups:

- **Persons in need of international protection:** This includes individuals in a country other than their own who are seeking or who have received international protection. It is further divided into four sub-categories, as outlined in the diagram below, including refugees and asylum-seekers.
- **Persons with a refugee background:** This comprises persons who are not currently in need of international protection but who have a refugee background. It is further divided into four sub-categories, as outlined in the diagram below, including children born to refugee parents.
- **Persons returned from abroad after seeking international protection:** This includes those returning to their home country after seeking international protection abroad. It is further divided into four sub-categories, as outlined in the diagram below, including repatriated refugees.

The Refugee Statistical Framework



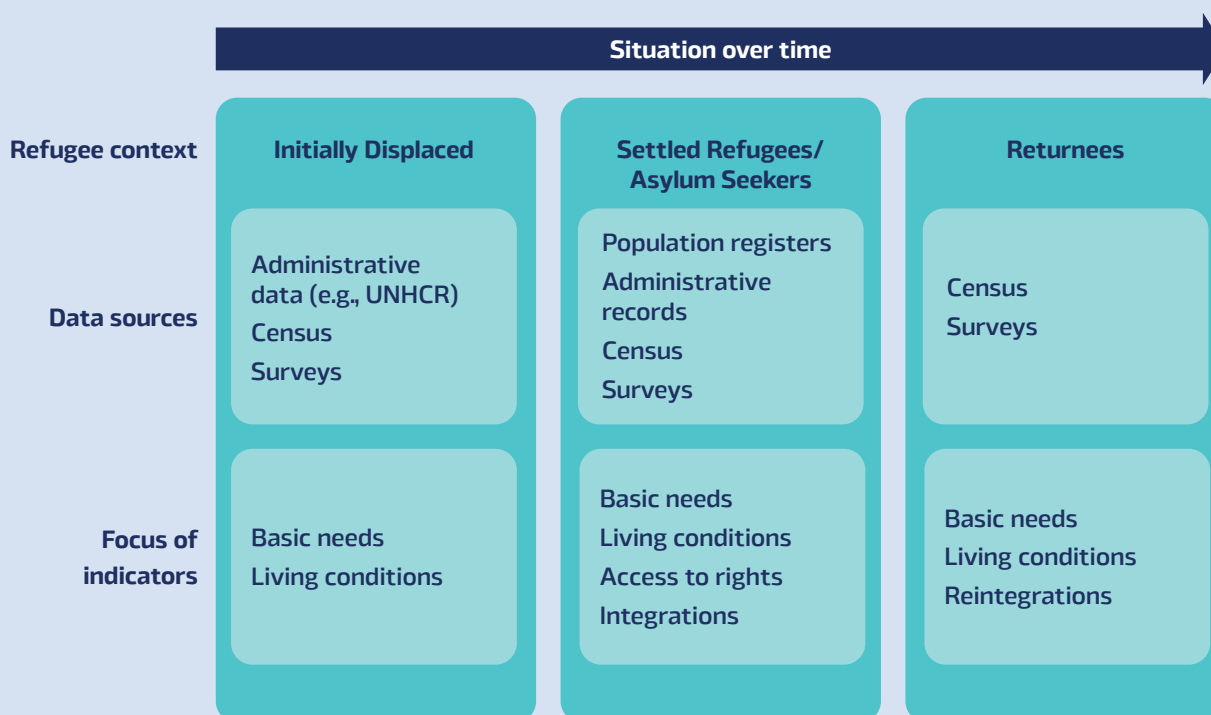
Variables, statistics & indicators

The IRRS presents an extensive list of **stock and flow** statistics as well as tabulations on refugee and refugee-related populations that countries are encouraged to produce. These statistics should be **disaggregated** by sex and age, and where feasible, by country of birth and ethnicity or other relevant variables. The specific statistics and tabulations to be produced will depend on the priorities of each country. The possibility of producing them also rests on the type of information collected, available data sources as well as the statistical capacity of the country.

The production of refugee statistics must also provide information on the **basic needs, living conditions, and integration** of the different population groups. To support these efforts, three distinct contexts that relate to phases of displacement are outlined:

1. **Initial Displacement:** Statistics on recently displaced persons, residing in camps or host communities, require administrative, census, and survey data focused on immediate needs and living conditions.
2. **Settled Status:** As refugees settle through asylum claims, statistics should come from population registers, administrative records, censuses, and surveys. These should reflect their ongoing needs, living conditions, and access to rights and level of integration.
3. **Return to the Country of Origin:** For returnees, data should come from censuses and surveys, with measurements focusing on basic needs, living conditions, and reintegration.

DATA SOURCES AND FOCUS OF INDICATORS PER PHASE OF DISPLACEMENT



When measuring the immediate and ongoing needs of refugee and refugee-related populations, it is important to **compare their situation with those of the non-refugee migrant population or host community**. To facilitate this the use of standardized indicators, especially those that will enable global comparison, are recommended. The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** indicators are an important resource in this regard. Ideally, relevant SDG indicators could be disaggregated by refugee and refugee-related population groups as defined by the IRIS.

The recommended indicators for measuring the integration of refugee and refugee-related populations align with the SDGs, though the correlation is not always direct.

RECOMMENDED CHARACTERISTICS TO MEASURE



LEGAL RIGHTS



ECONOMIC FACTORS



CIVIL RIGHTS



SOCIAL INCLUSION



DEMOGRAPHICS AND MIGRATION



HEALTH



EDUCATION

Data sources

Recommendations on the use of both **traditional** and **non-traditional data sources** are included in the IRRS. These include population and housing censuses, sample surveys, and administrative data systems and registries, as well as the use of big data and spatial data. Moreover, **data integration** efforts are crucial for combining the strengths of different data sources by filling critical data gaps and reducing response burdens. The below table provides an overview of the main data sources that can be used and how they can be adjusted to strengthen their potential as data sources for refugee statistics.

SUMMARY OF DATA SOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

	Using data source to collect data on refugee persons	Recommendations to improve the use of data source to collect refugee data
Population and Housing Census (IRRS – chapter 4; paras 135-155)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census can describe the stock and demographic composition of refugee and refugee related populations. • Census can provide data on housing and living conditions of refugees and enable comparisons to other population groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include all three core migration topics (country of birth, country of citizenship, and year or period of arrival). • Include “reason for migration” as an additional core topic to identify probable refugees. • Include persons living in refugee camps, reception centres, temporary structures, and collective accommodation.
Sample Surveys (IRRS – chapter 4; paras 156-195)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample surveys can track changes over time, help assess flows, and enable comparisons with other demographic groups. • Sample surveys provide insights into demographic, socio-economic characteristics, migration history, living conditions, perceptions, attitudes, and levels of integration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core survey topics for identifying refugees should include country of birth, citizenship, acquisition of citizenship, period of arrival, and reason for migration. • Samples should include refugee and related populations living in camps, reception centers, and non-camp dwellings as appropriate.
Administrative Data & Sectoral Registers - including registers of UNHCR and UNRWA (IRRS – chapter 4; paras 196-228)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative data and sectoral registers can capture both the stock of refugee and refugee related populations, and offer insights into areas such as health, education, and employment. • Administrative records and registers track the entire asylum application process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that national statistical offices (NSOs) have guaranteed access to specific administrative databases related to refugees. • Establish precise registration and deregistration rules between statistical and administrative agencies. • Implement a common Personal Identification Number (PIN) for refugees and asylum seekers.
Spatial and Big Data (IRRS – chapter 4; para 229-241)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geo-coordinates obtained from surveys or censuses significantly enrich administrative and survey datasets by linking them to map-based information. • Big data provides insights from high-frequency, unstructured data generated in digital environments, which is useful for predicting and tracking aggregate flows and trends in real time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate spatial data with administrative and survey data and expand the use of Geographic Information Systems relevant to refugees' needs. • Work towards reducing selection biases inherent in big data sources by creating legal frameworks, diversifying data providers and validating data to ensure it accurately represents the refugee populations.

Statistical coordination

Building on the **central role of the NSO** in coordinating the national statistical system (NSS), the IRRS provides recommendations for how refugee statistics can be better incorporated into the NSS. The essential principles guiding statistical coordination at all levels include **independence, coordination, credibility, confidentiality, and dissemination**.

The key national coordination recommendations include:

- **Coordination:** NSOs should lead and coordinate the NSS to ensure consistency and efficiency across various relevant data-collecting agencies, harmonizing standards, and methodologies to strengthen refugee statistics.
- **Inclusion in statistical strategies:** Integrate refugee statistics into National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) or similar frameworks with the aim to embed these statistics in national planning, produce user-responsive refugee data, integrate sectors into the national statistical system, enhance coordination, and address data challenges.
- **Legal foundation:** Establish a robust legal framework that defines the responsibilities of those involved in collecting, analyzing and disseminating refugee statistics. Implement legal provisions to enable data access while ensuring confidentiality and privacy protections.
- **Partnerships:** Strengthen collaborative efforts through memoranda of understanding, working groups, and interagency committees with entities like UNHCR and UNRWA to facilitate data sharing and cooperation.
- **Data quality:** Ensure that refugee statistics are disseminated transparently and responsibly, with a focus on timeliness and accessibility. Regular quality assessments and adherence to international statistical standards are necessary to maintain data credibility and reliability.

The recommendations for enhancing regional and international coordination concerning refugee statistics include the **adoption and enforcement of standardized statistical** methodologies to ensure consistent data collection and reporting across regions. Additionally, regional bodies are encouraged to provide **technical support, guidance, and capacity-building** for member states to help align their data collection practices with these standards and improve refugee statistics at the national level.

Conclusion

This “Recommendations At A Glance” offers insight into the IRRS, why it is important and what it contains. It has also consolidated information on additional resources made available through EGRISS. The below next steps could be considered relevant for you and your institution:

- **Share and disseminate** the IRRS (and this document) within your institution and with relevant partners to inform discussions and planning of activities to strengthen national statistics on refugees.
- **Assess existing data and data gaps on refugees** in your national context and become familiar with relevant national legislation, policies and stakeholders to better understand the opportunities to address gaps and challenges.
- **Consult resources and networks** available at national, regional or international levels, including those provided by the EGRISS and good practice from other countries working to improve refugee statistics in their national contexts.

For more information on these products/initiatives or if you would like to request support to implement the Recommendations in your context, please feel free to reach out to the EGRISS Secretariat (egrisstats@unhcr.org).

WHAT IS EGRISS?

The **Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS)** was established by the UN Statistical Commission in 2016. Through its members - a growing collection of countries who work alongside international and regional organizations – the group has successfully developed International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics (IRRS), IDP Statistics (IRIS) and Statelessness Statistics (IROSS), which were endorsed in 2018, 2020 and 2023 respectively.

Now working to promote and support the implementation of these Recommendations, EGRISS has made several resources available, including an E-learning course and a Compilers' Manual. The **E-learning course**, designed for NSO practitioners and others working with refugee, IDP, and statelessness statistics, offers interactive content, including videos and exercises, making the content of the IRRS, IRIS and IROSS more accessible. The course is free-of-charge and participants who complete it receive an official certificate. The **Compilers' Manual** supplements the IRRS and IRIS, providing hands-on guidance for practitioners organized through identified use cases (e.g. inclusion of refugees and IDPs in a national census). The Compilers' Manual will be regularly updated, with future revisions to also cover IROSS implementation.

In addition, EGRISS worked with the IAEG-SDG to identify **12 priority SDG indicators** that should be disaggregated by forced displacement status. These priority indicators are also relevant for both displacement and/or in situ statelessness contexts. Furthermore, the IROSS identifies four additional indicators pertinent to statelessness. Countries are encouraged, as part of their statistical inclusion efforts, to incorporate these indicators to enable visibility of refugees, IDPs and stateless person in the SDGs.

EGRISS monitors statistical projects related to refugees, IDPs, and statelessness within national statistical systems (NSSs) and/or the use of the international recommendations through the **Global Annual Inclusion (GAIN) Survey**. To complement the quantitative global overview, EGRISS' monitoring efforts also include the development of **case studies** that document experiences from countries and institutions using the International Recommendations.

