

A newsletter from East View highlighting census data from around the world

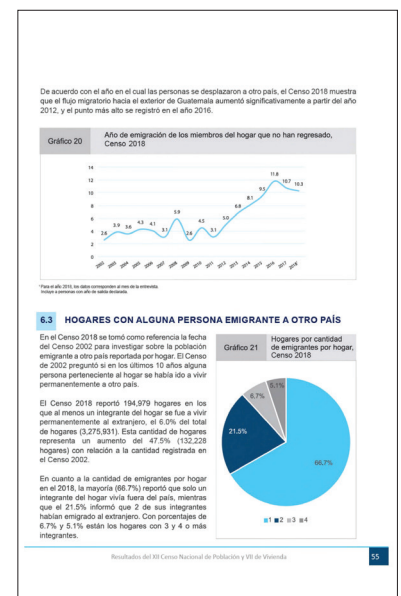
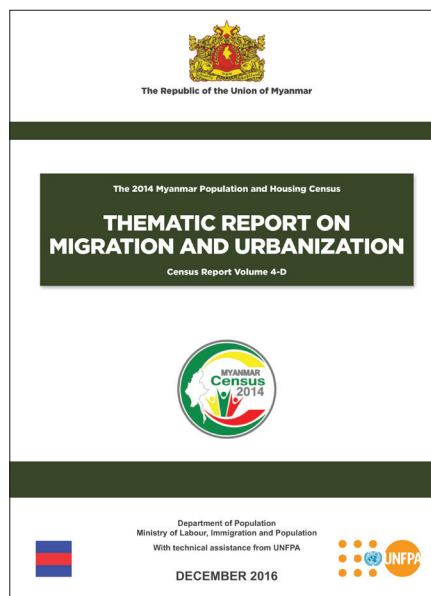
MIGRATION DATA IN CENSUS PUBLICATIONS

According to the United Nations, 281 million people lived outside their country of origin in 2020. This data represents a steady increase over the past two decades. There are numerous social, political, and environmental reasons for international migration, and tracking the movement of people requires a broad perspective on push and pull factors worldwide.

While censuses cannot entirely capture dynamic movements, they remain the primary source for analyzing large-scale flows across time and space.

The universal coverage of a census facilitates the enumeration of all residents in a country who might not be recorded in other administrative registers due to their legal status. Moreover, complementary questions on the socioeconomic characteristics of individuals allow cross-tabulation of migrant characteristics in a given country. However, more specific questions on citizenship, residential status, and country of birth often cause controversy. France's 2025 census, for example, has sparked a recent debate. The new optional question, "Where were your parents born?" was deemed dangerous by its critics, while INSEE (the French national statistics office) pointed out that this type of data is confidential and used to understand diversity and measure inequalities.

While such controversies are now common in many developed countries, a significant number of countries have included questions related to country of birth, nationality, and duration of stay in their decennial censuses since the 2010s. Many countries also publish thematic reports on migration based on census data. For example, the 2019 census publications from Kenya include an analytical report on migration, which provides detailed data on the country's net migration. Other countries that have included questions related to immigration and published reports in their most recent censuses include Madagascar, Guatemala, Malawi, Eswatini, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Myanmar, and Tunisia.



Myanmar, 2014. Census Results. v04-D. Migration, Urbanization. <https://gca.eastview.com/CENSUS-2403914B0.1.1> (left) and Guatemala, 2018. Census Results, p. 55. <https://gca.eastview.com/CENSUS-2416088B0.1.68> (right)

Leveraging GCA to Analyze Global Migration Dynamics

Many developed countries rely on international migration to offset the decline in fertility rates, and census data is an indispensable tool for comprehending migration dynamics. A truly international phenomenon demands a global perspective for research and analysis. The collection and sharing of international migration data improves the analysis of statistical information and support the development of public policies. Historical and current census publications from around the world are easily accessible on the Global Census Archive platform. Researchers can explore the data through questionnaires, tabular data, atlases, and GIS data to gain valuable insights into migration trends and their impact on societies worldwide.

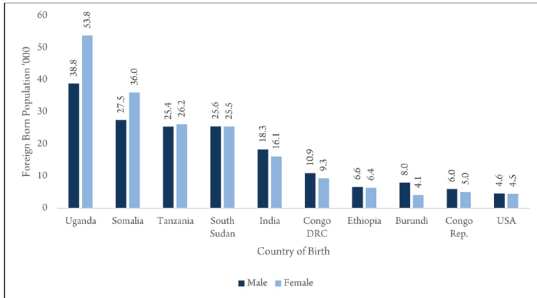


Figure 4.3: Immigrants by Sex and Country of Birth, 2019

4.3.1 Immigrants Population by Age and Major Urban Centers

Table 4.1 below presents the share of immigrants by age and major urban centers. A major urban centre was defined as an area with a population size of more than 150,000 persons. More than 50 percent (54.4 percent) of the immigrants were enumerated in the major urban centers in the country. Nairobi City hosted the bulk of this population with seven in ten of the immigrants living in Nairobi. The profile of this group of persons was generally young people of age 39 years and below in all the urban centers; majority were in age group 20 - 39 years, except Nakuru where the largest share were below 19 years.

Kenya, 2019. Census Results. v08. Migration, p. 37. <https://gca.eastview.com/CENSUS-2461335B0.1.53>

Further reading on census data and migration:

- INSEE Blog, "En 2025 le questionnaire du recensement évolue et ce n'est pas si fréquent": <https://blog.insee.fr/en-2025-le-questionnaire-du-recensement-evolue/>
- Our World in Data, "How do countries measure immigration, and how accurate is this data?": <https://ourworldindata.org/countries-measure-immigration-accurate-data>
- United Nations Global Migration Database: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/global-migration-database>
- United Nations Statistics Division, "Handbook on Measuring International Migration Through Population Censuses": <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/international-migration/2022-UNSD-Handbook-Meas-Intern-Migration-E.pdf>



The East View **Global Census Archive**® (GCA) is an innovative program to collect official data and publications issued by the national census authorities of more than 200 countries, from the early 19th century to the present day, providing a key resource for scholars and analysts to find current and historical census data to support critical research into our changing world. GCA provides a single platform experience to explore the world's census publications: all countries and regions, the complete depth of published census materials, including original census publications in e-book form, as well as modern tabular data in Excel format and GIS files for advanced users.