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**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe  
Statistical Division**

# **Measuring Hard-to-Count Migration Populations: Importance, Definitions, and Categories**

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“Towards a More Comprehensive, Reliable and Regionally  
Comparable Data on Migration in the Russian Federation and the  
Broader Region”,

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# Goals of Project

- ❖ Suitland Working Group Task Force
  - Relevance of hard-to-count migrants in different countries
  - Compare definitions of hard-to-count migrants at the national and international level
  - Factors that influence the data collection of hard-to-count migrant populations



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# Who are Hard-to-Count Migrants?

- ❖ Short-term migrants
- ❖ Circular migrants
- ❖ Irregular migrants
- ❖ Transit migrants
- ❖ Trafficked person
- ❖ Refugees
- ❖ Asylum seekers



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# UNECE Questionnaire on International Migration Statistics

- ❖ Questions from Section 2
  - Conducted in 2008
    - ◆ UNECE and other countries
- ❖ Questions on...
  - Relevance
  - Measurement
  - Producers
  - Sources
  - Producers of estimates

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# Short-term Migrants

- ❖ Most frequently collected
- ❖ Deviation from international definition
  
- ❖ ***Minimum length of stay***
- ❖ ***Maximum duration of stay*** (12 months)
- ❖ ***Intended*** and **actual** residence
- ❖ ***Purpose*** of movement

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# Circular Migrants

- ❖ No NSO measured or provided a definition
  
- ❖ Operationalization:
  - Duration of stay in destination country
  - Frequency of repeated movements
  - Purpose of migration

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# Irregular/Undocumented Migrants



- ❖ Only four countries provided an operational definition
- ❖ Other definitions similar to the international standards

# Transit Migrants

- ❖ No countries provided a definition or attempt to measure
- ❖ Operationalization:
  - repetition of international migration
  - intention to move onwards





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# Trafficked persons/Smuggling

- ❖ *Trafficking*
- ❖ *Smuggling*



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# Asylum Seekers

- ❖ Eleven countries provided definitions
- ❖ Asylum seekers are foreigners who have applied for refugee status and are awaiting a response

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# Refugees

- ❖ Almost all reported a definition in-line with UNHCR
- ❖ Some use broader interpretation to include asylum applicants under international protection

# Data Sources

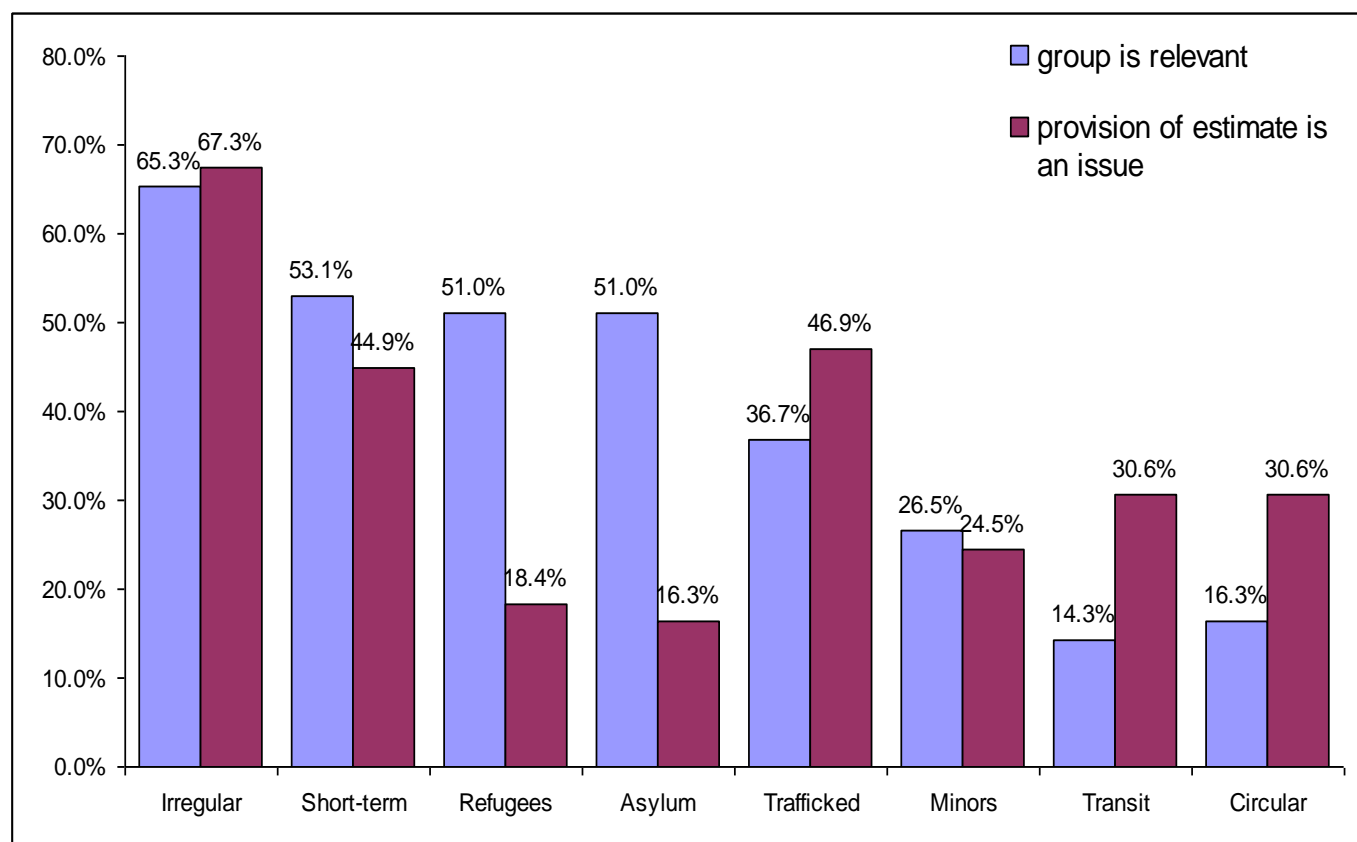
- ❖ Censuses and population registers, visa and border control data, as well as some household and passenger surveys
- ❖ Short-term migrants & refugees most frequent
- ❖ Circular and transit migrants least frequent
- ❖ Irregular migrants and/or trafficked persons: border control information, police reports, and NGOs

**Table 1: Number of countries and sources used to provide counts or estimates of hard-to-count migrant groups**

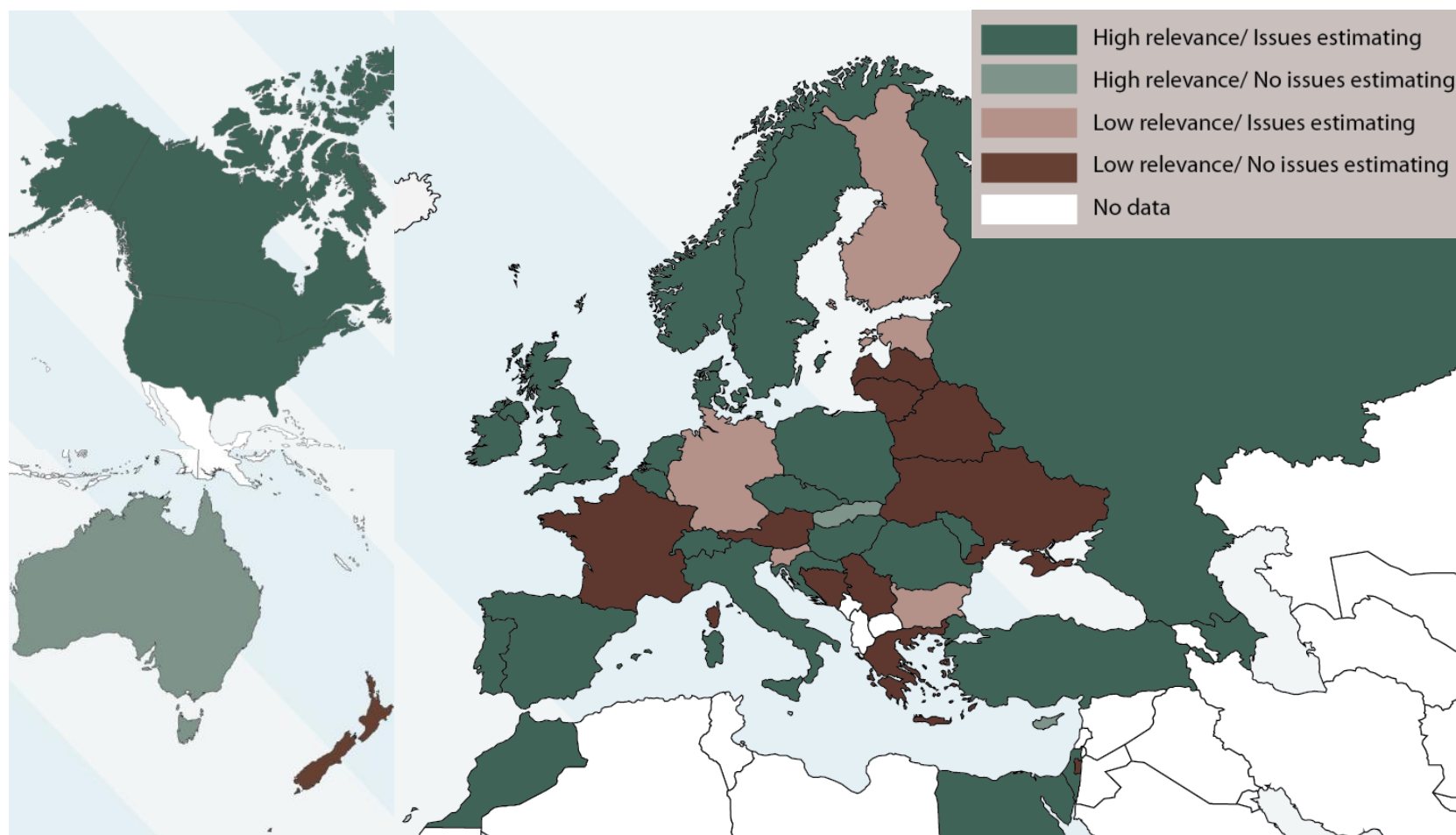
Note: Countries could provide more than one source per migrant group

|        |                                | Migrant Category |           |           |           |            |          |          |
|--------|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------|----------|
|        |                                | Short-term       | Refugees  | Asylum    | Irregular | Trafficked | Circular | Transit  |
| Source | Administrative                 | 2                | 1         | 2         |           |            |          |          |
|        | Asylum department              |                  | 1         | 1         |           |            |          |          |
|        | Asylum register                |                  |           | 3         |           |            |          |          |
|        | Border card                    | 2                |           |           | 1         |            |          |          |
|        | Border police                  | 1                |           |           |           |            |          |          |
|        | Census                         | 3                | 4         | 1         |           |            |          |          |
|        | Emigration survey              | 1                |           |           |           |            |          |          |
|        | Federal report                 |                  | 1         | 1         |           |            |          |          |
|        | Foreigners' register           | 3                | 3         | 1         | 1         |            | 1        |          |
|        | Home office                    |                  |           | 1         |           |            |          |          |
|        | Immigration service            |                  | 1         | 1         |           |            |          |          |
|        | International passenger survey | 1                |           |           |           |            |          |          |
|        | Labour force survey            | 1                |           |           |           |            |          |          |
|        | Migrants' Register             |                  | 1         |           |           |            |          |          |
|        | Ministry of Foreign Affairs    |                  |           |           |           |            | 1        |          |
|        | Ministry of Interior           | 3                | 4         | 4         | 3         | 3          |          |          |
|        | Non-governmental agencies      |                  |           |           |           | 1          | 1        |          |
|        | Police headquarters            |                  |           |           |           |            | 1        |          |
|        | Population register            | 4                | 2         |           |           |            |          |          |
|        | Refugee office                 |                  | 3         | 3         |           |            |          |          |
|        | Register                       | 1                | 1         | 1         |           |            |          |          |
|        | Statistical service            | 1                |           |           |           |            |          |          |
|        | <b>Total</b>                   |                  | <b>23</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>6</b>   | <b>6</b> | <b>1</b> |

# Relevance of Group and Difficulty of Estimation, All Countries



# Country-Specific Relevance and Difficulties in Estimation of Irregular Migration





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# Factors that Influence the Difficulty of Measuring Hard-to-Count Migrants

- ❖ Data issues
- ❖ Statistical Office might have difficulty accessing administrative data from other national organizations
- ❖ Data already produced by another organization
- ❖ Lack of relevance for a country