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**Population and Housing Census 2000 - Migration Patterns in**  
**Malaysia**

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# **Population and Housing Census 2000 - Migration Patterns in Malaysia**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) has had a long experience in undertaking national population and housing censuses, apart from her responsibility of collecting, interpreting and disseminating other fields of statistics. Since her independence in 1957, Malaysia has conducted her population and housing censuses for the years 1970, 1980, 1991 and 2000. The forthcoming census will be conducted in 2010.

2. A population and housing census provides the principal means of data collection aimed at providing a comprehensive set of statistical information on population and housing. In this respect, the census provides a wealth of information on the number of persons and households together with a wide range of demographic, social and economic characteristics. In addition, information on the number of living quarters by type, structural characteristics and the availability of amenities are also available.

3. Data from the census provides input for planning, formulation and implementation of government policies and programmes. Apart from this, the census data is also widely used by businesses, industry analysts, academicians and researchers as well as private individuals. This paper will focus on topics relating to migration in Malaysia which utilizes data from the 2000 Census.

## **MIGRATION IN MALAYSIA**

4. Migration is one of the main components in measuring the expansion in the population size, apart from the fertility and mortality. In the 1980's, the Malaysian economy transformed from agricultural based to industrial based. This transformation directly led to changes in the development of states, districts and towns, which resulted in a better standard of living with improved housing, better

public amenities, employment as well as education opportunities. These factors represented the pull effect for migration.

5. Migration is one of the defining issues of the twenty-first century. Malaysia's multi-racial population is evidence of the earlier in-migration during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Colonial rule saw the entry of foreign labour especially from China and India to work in the plantations, mines and construction sectors. After gaining independence in 1957 and the inception of Malaysia in 1965, several five-year plans were formulated and implemented.

6. As a result of industrial transformation during the 1980's and early 1990's and the infusion of foreign direct investment has shifted the economy to export-led industrialization. This resulted in high economic and employment growth, which the labour markets could not accommodate. The agriculture sector was the first to experience labour shortage, followed by the construction and manufacturing sectors. Migrant workers from neighbouring countries seek employment in these sectors.

## **SOURCE OF DATA**

7. The population and housing census (Census) is the main source of migration data. Data on migration is reported in the special publication called the Migration and Population Distribution which published information on population by birthplace, population by place of current usual residence and place of usual residence five years ago and non-citizens population by citizenship. Apart from this report, the monograph series on migration gives an insight into the magnitude and pattern of internal migration in Malaysia and its relationship to the changes in size and structure of the population at sub-national level.

8. Since the Census is carried out once every ten years, the more recent migration trends are obtained from the annual Migration Survey. The survey provides information on the trend and magnitude of migration, social and demographic characteristics of migrants and the economic activities of the migrant with emphasis on overall migrants, the migration of youth and women.

9. Another source of data on migration is administrative records of various government departments namely the Immigration Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Ministry of Home Affairs. Information collected by the various agencies serves different needs particularly for recruitment policies, observation

of labour laws as well as co-ordination of visas purposes. Data from the Immigration Department is collected through the arrival and departure cards of foreign visitors to Malaysia.

## MEASUREMENT

10. In the 1991 and 2000 Censuses, data on migration were derived from the questions pertaining to the “place of birth” and “the usual place of residence five years ago”. For the 2000 Census, an additional question on “year of first arrival to Malaysia” was included for those who were born outside Malaysia. For foreign-born population, question on “place of birth” and “citizenship” was cross tabulated to identify the total stock of foreign born population

11. Migration status of the Malaysian population is known through the change in the usual place of residence between the census date and five years ago. Coding of the changes of residence at specific geographical or spatial units forms the basis for the classification of movement into international or internal migration. Both measures of migration do not take into account the intervening moves of a person during the period. The number of moves is synonymous to the number of migrants.

12. In the case of Malaysia, internal migration refers specifically to the change in the district or state of residence between the two reference dates. In the 2000 Census, the migrant population was classified into two categories: *inter-district intra-state migrants* and *inter-state migrants*. Inter-district intra-state migrants were those who moved from one administrative district to another district in the same state and thus assumed to be relatively shorter distance movers. Inter-state migrants were those who changed their state of residence over the reference period.

13. It should be noted that the migration data collected through the Annual Migration Survey is based on a change in the usual place of residence over a fixed period of one year for all persons aged one year and over. The main limitation of the survey is that the selective nature of migration and a relatively short reference period of one year may not yield enough migrants for a particular stream which uses the sample design of the Labour Force Survey.

14. Besides measuring the volume of movement, the coding of migration data at locality level (that is, name of town) also permits an analysis of moves by

migration direction such as urban to urban, rural to urban, urban to rural and rural to rural migration. Information on the profile of migrants can be derived from cross tabulations of demographic variables such as age, sex, marital status, ethnicity, education and occupation. However, due to the limitations on the information collected in the Census, it is inadequate to address the issues relating to the causes or effects of migration.

## DEFINITIONS

15. The following paragraphs will describe the definition used for migrants in Malaysia. *Five-year external in-migrants* refer to those whose current usual place of residence at the time of the census was Malaysia but whose usual place of residence five years before was in a different country (outside Malaysia). *Five-year internal migrants* are those who reported that their usual place of residence in Malaysia five years ago was different from their current usual place of residence at the time of the Census.

16. *Five-year inter-state migrants* refer to those whose current place of residence at the time of the Census was in a different state from that of their usual place of residence five years ago and can be described as in-migrants or out-migrants. *Five-year inter-district intra-state migrants* refer to those who had moved from one district to another within the state boundary while intra-district migrants refer to people who had moved from one locality to another locality in the same district.

17. *Lifetime inter-state migrants* refer to those whose current place of residence is a different state (within Malaysia) from that in which they were born. *Non-migrants* on the other hand are those who reported that their usual place of residence five years ago was the same as that of their current usual place of residence.

18. The rate of migration measures the level of mobility or migration and can be calculated as:

$$\text{Migration rate (\%)} = \frac{M_i}{P_i} \times 100$$

Where  $M_i$  is the number of migrants in a specified category  
 $P_i$  is the total population in the same category

## MAGNITUDE AND PATTERNS

19. The 2000 Census data revealed that the magnitude of internal migration declined when compared with that of the 1991 Census. **Eight** per cent (1991: 12 percent) of the total population were recorded as internal migrants of which 5 percent (1991: 7 per cent) were inter-state migrants and the remaining 3 per cent (1991: 5 per cent) constituted inter-district intra-state migrants. The drop in the magnitude could be due to the development factors and improved standard of living at the current place of residence. Table 1 compares the distribution of population by migration status in Malaysia between the 1991 and 2000 censuses.

**Table 1: Distribution of population by migration status, Malaysia, 1991 and 2000**

Spatial Unit	Migration status	1991 ('000)	%	2000 ('000)	%
Country	International/external	299.5	2	332.0	1
State	Inter-state migrants	1,145.6	7	1,057.0	5
District	Inter-district intra-state migrants	928.0	5	600.8	3
House	Non-migrants	14,741.7	84	18,505.4	83
Unknown	Status unknown (migrant)	Not applicable	Not applicable	370.2	2
	Status unknown	383.4	2	1,333.0	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17,498,0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>22,198,4</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Table 3.1 : Monograph Series No. 2, pg 7)

20. Movement from one state to another is a basic factor in population redistribution with its varied impact on the population of the receiving or destination states and the sending or state of origin. The magnitude and patterns of inter-state migration can be expressed in a number of ways, such as, in-migration, out-migration and net migration. Migration rates are used to relate the number of migrants with respect to the population in the state of destination that is approximated to be the population at risk for ease of calculation.

21. The patterns of *inter-state migration* during the 1995 – 2000 period was dominated by *Selangor* which recorded the highest proportion of net in-migrants with 6 per cent. Other states with net in-migrants were Negeri Sembilan (2.1 per cent), Pulau Pinang (1.1 per cent), Johor (0.7 per cent) and Melaka (0.5 per cent). The development in the industrial and housing sectors in these states could have been the contributing factors for the net in-migrant patterns.

22. Net out-migration existed in the states of Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur (-7.2 per cent) followed by Kelantan (-4.6 per cent), Perak (-2.6 per cent) and Perlis (-1.5 per cent). Other states that experienced net out-migration were Terengganu (-1.4 per cent), Sabah (-0.9 per cent) and Sarawak (-0.8 per cent). The rapid development of housing sector in the neighbouring areas of F.T Kuala Lumpur had influenced the movement of people out of the state. Furthermore, inadequate supply of job opportunities in Kelantan and Terengganu had forced the people to move out in order to seek employment elsewhere. (Refer to Table 2)

**Table 2: Inter-state Migration by state of destination, Malaysia, 1995 - 2000**

State of destination	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net
	(Number ('000))			% of state population		
Johor	107.4	88.2	19.2	4.2	3.4	0.7
Kedah	65.7	78.0	-12.3	4.2	5	-0.8
Kelantan	29.2	88.0	-58.8	2.3	6.8	-4.6
Melaka	40.7	37.8	2.9	6.7	6.2	0.5
N.Sembilan	69.1	51.3	17.8	8.3	6.2	2.1
Pahang	61.7	76.0	-14.4	5	6.2	-1.2
Perak	70.3	121.3	-50.9	3.6	6.1	-2.6
Perlis	10.7	13.6	-2.9	5.4	6.9	-1.5
P.Pinang	65.5	51.9	13.6	5.3	4.2	1.1
Sabah	25.1	46.1	-21.0	1	1.9	-0.9
Sarawak	19.3	43.2	-24.0	1	2.2	-1.2
Selangor	344.4	107.5	236.9	8.7	2.7	6
Terengganu	34.5	46.6	-12.1	3.9	5.3	-1.4
F.T Kuala Lumpur	106.3	200.5	-94.2	8.1	15.4	-7.2
F.T Labuan	7.1	6.9	0.2	10	9.7	0.3
Malaysia	1057.0	1057.0	0	4.8	4.8	0

(Source: Table 3.2 : Monograph Series No. 2, pg. 9)

23. The 2000 Census also recorded 600,755 *inter-district intra-state migrants* in Malaysia during the five-year period 1995-2000. The level of inter-district intra-state migration is directly related to the total number of districts in a state. Sabah and Sarawak, being the states with the highest number of districts, experienced the biggest rates of inter-district migrants. Among the factors contributing to the

inter-district movements are marriage, employment opportunities, housing, education and reasons such as accompanying husband/wife or family.

24. The impact of migration depends not only on the absolute number of migrants but also the urban or rural status of both the place of origin and place of destination. The 2000 Census clearly shows that the dominant flow in inter-state migration was *urban-urban* movement which constituted more than half (68.8 per cent) of inter-state moves during the 1995-2000 period.

25. *Life-time inter-state* migrants by ethnic group is predominant among the ethnic Indians. The result from both the 1991 and 2000 Censuses showed that the Indians maintained the highest rate of migration (1991:19 per cent, 2000:20.6 per cent). The movements among the Indians could be due to the closure of rubber estates and plantations in some states, hence forcing them to migrate elsewhere to seek livelihood. The ethnic Malays recorded a 23.7 per cent migration rate while the Chinese, 20.5 per cent.

## **PROFILE OF INTERNAL MIGRANTS**

26. The profile of internal migrants focuses between *inter-district* and *inter-state* migrants with that of non-migrants population. The analysis will also see the impact of migration on demography and socio-economic characteristics such as age, sex, ethnic group, marital status, education and employment. The characteristics of the migrants were measured at the end of the migration period and thus do not reflect the status of the migrants at the time when they actually moved.

27. During the 1995-2000 period, inter-state and inter-district migration trends showed that age group 15-34 years reflects the largest group for both these migration movement, reaching a peak in the 20-24 years age group. Inter-state migrants, particularly females, indicated the highest concentration of 23.2 per cent in the 20-24 years age group compared with 16 per cent for inter-district female migrants and only 6.8 per cent for non-migrants in the same age group.

28. Generally, male migrants tend to be older and this is indicated by the median age whereby for inter-state male migrants the median age was 23.9 years when compared with 22.8 years for female. The median age for male inter-district migrants was 24.9 years and females was 23 years. It can be stated that women tend to migrate at a younger age compared to men. The 2000 Census also indicated that women were marrying at an average age of 25.1 years, which

was three and a half years younger than their male counterparts. Marriage is one of the factors contributing to migration.

29. It is also interesting to note that more females tend to migrate between states and districts at the age of 15-24 years compared to males probably due to education and employment opportunities. However, more males migrate at the age group of 30-59 years as inter-state and inter-district migrants. Female migration is higher for the age groups of 60 years and above. This could be attributed to higher life expectancy of females compared to males and females normally stay with their children upon the death of their spouses.

30. The 2000 Census data indicated that Malays had the highest migration rate among inter-state migrants (6.3 per cent) followed by Indians (4.7 per cent) and Chinese (3.7 per cent). Similar patterns were also observed for both male and female inter-state migrants. Malay men and women indicated the highest rates (6.3 per cent) respectively. For each ethnic group, males had a higher tendency to migrate than females.

31. The distribution of inter-state and inter-district migrants by marital status was standardized according to age distribution of the non-migrants. It was found that the age-standardized distribution by marital status between non-migrants and migrants were almost similar. Though the proportions of widowed and divorced were relatively small, the number of inter-state and inter-district migrants were consistently higher compared to non-migrants. The never married population had the highest tendency to migrate inter-state (4.8 per cent) while the married population had higher tendency to migrate inter-district (3.8 per cent).

32. Education factor is often positively correlated with migration. Young people may move to pursue higher education or the more highly educated individuals may move to obtain jobs commensurate with their qualifications. Education differentials may be evaluated based on the highest education attainment. Among the inter-state migrants, those having attained tertiary education recorded a higher migration rate of 17.2 per cent. In terms of sex, males recorded 18.9 per cent and females recorded 17.6 per cent. It was also shown that those who have obtained certificate/diploma/degree qualifications had higher inter-state and inter-district migration rates compared to those who had no certificates.

33. The pattern of employment distribution between migrants and non-migrants indicated that inter-state migrants were mainly concentrated in two occupational groups namely service and shop/market sales workers (18.9 per

cent) and technicians and associate professionals (17.5 per cent). The highest concentration for the non-migrant category was in the group of skilled agricultural and fishery workers (16.9 per cent).

## **NEXT CENSUS**

34. The next round of population and housing census of Malaysia will be in 2010. The Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses – Rev. 2 by the United Nation will be used as a basis and guidelines in conducting the census. The Department has started planning work in 2006. Various committees have been formed to look into topics and conducts of the census. Relevant agencies and stakeholders are consulted in terms of scope and coverage of census topics.

## **CHALLENGES**

35. The current trend on migration whether international or internal has to be reckoned with in the context of effects of globalization. If the Malaysian economic performance track is sustained there will be continuous inflow of persons especially from neighbouring areas seeking employment in Malaysia. Continuous effort to step up the enforcement and monitoring of data collection on migrants is required as it serves as inputs to policy formulation.

36. Concerted efforts need to be taken by the relevant agencies in collecting and tackling issues affecting migration. A comprehensive and reliable database and statistics on migration has become of importance especially for policy makers as well as researchers and academicians. The Department being the official collector, compiler and disseminator of various statistics has been given the mandate to enhance her role and responsibility in the area of statistical collection. Upgrading of the organization in term of restructuring the organization and strengthening work force capacity is now under the purview of the government.

## **CONCLUSION**

37. The pattern of migration trends in Malaysia depends greatly on the level of development in a state and districts together with the factor of natural population growth rate. Internal migration in Malaysia remained low, as indicated by the 5

per cent of the population being inter-state migrants and 3 per cent inter-district migrants during the 1995-2000 period.

38. Net in-migrant in certain states was evidence for the reason of seeking employment where job opportunities are abundant and for further education. Generally, most of the inter-state and inter-district migrants tend to be males aged 30-59 years. Females tend to migrate more at younger age group of 15-24. The ethnic Malays recorded the highest rate of migration among the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia.

39. There were no distinct differentials by marital status between migrants and non-migrants. However, migrants tend to be much more educated in terms of highest educational attainment. In terms of occupational distributions, it was noted that migrants tend to be concentrated in the occupational group of service workers, shop and market sales workers.

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