UNHCR
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QUICK GUIDES

# RESEARCHING STATELESSNESS

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Qualitative and quantitative data on stateless populations globally remains scarce. Action 10 of UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014 – 2024 calls on States to "improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations." This series of quick guides is intended to assist States, civil society and other actors to collect reliable data on statelessness, and to improve the quality of data outputs. While the quick guides cover a number of key themes, this compilation is not intended to serve as a complete guide on the topic of data collection on statelessness.

The quick guides in this compilation are as follows:

# Quick Guide 1
# DESK REVIEW





All data collection activities should begin with a "desk review". This is a process which assesses the current situation and state of knowledge in relation to statelessness in a given context by analyzing multiple sources of data that are already available. A desk review can help to:

- Provide an overview of the existing information on statelessness in a given context, including on affected populations, causes and consequences, key stakeholders and possible solutions;
- Establish baseline data, including statistics, on situations of statelessness; and
- Highlight gaps in information, which in turn can help to develop and refine the key questions to be investigated through the primary data collection phase.

A desk review normally requires assessment of five main sources, namely: legislation, policies and administrative frameworks; existing research; the media; and statistics.

## Legislation, policies and administrative frameworks

Legislation, which can be in the form of a Constitution and/ or nationality laws, regulations, by-laws and decrees, will typically set out the rules according to which a person or group of people may or may not be recognised as citizens. Policies and administrative frameworks or documents, which can take the form of guidelines, protocols, procedures etc., will usually set out the process through which the legislation is to be implemented. Given that statelessness issues are often associated with situations of historical migration to a country, it is important to consider past versions of legislation, policy, and administrative frameworks which could have a bearing on the nationality status of an individual or group over the time they have lived in the country. Civil registration laws and policies should also be assessed, as these will have a bearing on a person's access to documentation needed to prove entitlement to nationality. If it is unclear whether a person or a group of people is entitled to the nationality of one

## Data Sources

| Legislation | Case Law | Policies and Administrative Documents |
|---|---|---|
| • Current and previous national Constitutions<br>• Current and previous nationality laws<br>• Citizenship codes (for civil law countries)<br>• Laws governing marriage and civil unions<br>• Laws governing migration and naturalization<br>• Laws on foreigners or aliens<br>• Laws governing birth registration and certification<br>• Laws governing voter registration<br>• Laws governing housing, land and property ownership<br>• Laws governing the issuance of passports and other travel documents<br>• Laws governing issuance of national ID cards and nationality certificates<br>• Laws governing access to basic rights, including education, health care, freedom of movement, property ownership, employment, the right to vote and social security<br>• Bilateral or agreements between States concerning issues of migration, population transfer and nationality and state succession<br>• Regulations and other forms of subsidiary legislation in relation to the above | • Final court judgements can be another form of law that explains how legislation is to be interpreted or applied in a country<br>• Rulings and advisory opinions of international and regional courts, commissions, tribunals and other human rights mechanisms such as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the European Court of Human Rights | • Government-issued guidelines, instructions, protocols, procedures, manuals and strategies etc. which relate to the processes concerning implementation of relevant legislation |





or multiple countries, it is necessary to undertake a review of the relevant legislation and administrative policies of all countries with which that person or group of people have "relevant links," in particular through birth on the territory, descent, marriage, adoption or habitual residence.

Reviewing and analysing relevant legislation and administrative policies may also help reveal gaps in or conflicts between laws and policies within or among countries, which could lead to individuals being left stateless or at risk of statelessness. Identifying whether or not legislation and administrative policies comply with key international standards related to nationality (see page 8) can also help to identify population groups that are likely to be stateless or at risk. Legislation and policy review can also assist in acquiring useful baseline information about the ways in which nationality is acquired or lost, as well as the legal requirements when it comes to processes and documents related to proof of nationality, such as birth registration and certification as well as national ID cards. This can be critical information when comparing law with practice after the primary data collection phase has been completed.

Legislation related to nationality and statelessness can be complex to understand and navigate. It is therefore recommended that someone with legal training conducts, or thoroughly reviews, this part of the desk review. It is also advisable to engage someone familiar with the laws, policies and administrative frameworks and political environment of the country, or countries whose laws and administrative policies are being reviewed to ensure that all relevant data sources are identified and interpreted correctly.

## Key questions to answer through the legislation and policy review

- What principal legislation exists in relation to nationality (and statelessness) in the country or countries under study?
- Is the country in question a party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions? Any reservations?
- Is the country in question a party to other relevant international or regional instruments? Any reservations?
  Look at whether the country is party to: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); The Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; Relevant regional instruments.
- What are the ways in which nationality is acquired and lost in the country?
- Does the legislation require that nationals hold proof of nationality or documents that help to prove an entitlement to nationality? Does the legislation, policy or administrative framework set out the process for acquiring such documentation?
- Does the legislation comply with key international standards? Article 1 of the 1954 Convention; Articles 1, 2 and 4 of the 1961 Convention; Articles 7 and 8 of the CRC and Article 24 of the ICCPR; Articles 9(1) and 9(2) of the CEDAW; Articles 2 and 5 of the CERD and Article 2 of the ICCPR?; Article 18 of the CRPD; Article 9 of the 1961 Convention; Does the legislation establish a statelessness determination procedure? Article 32 of the 1954 Convention?



QUICK GUIDE 1 - DESK REVIEW

# Existing research

Relevant academic disciplines for statelessness research include law, politics, international relations, geography, sociology, demography and anthropology. Check with local academic and NGO partners, if they are aware of any locally produced research of relevance. Regional NGO statelessness networks such as the European Network on Statelessness, the Statelessness Network Asia Pacific, the Americas Network on Nationality and Statelessness and the Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative or the global NGO Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion may be able to identify existing or ongoing research of relevance. Other relevant NGO networks, such as those working on child protection, minority rights or migration may also be avenues for accessing existing research. Research institutes, such as the Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness at the University of Melbourne, may also be able to point to relevant resources.

Government-sponsored research on statelessness is rare, and where it exists, it tends to have been undertaken in collaboration with UNHCR. Nonetheless, and where possible, it is worth checking with relevant Government counterparts or competent authorities whether they have any existing research or data that they can share. This will often be in the form of statistics derived from population census data. Regional bodies may have also published research on statelessness.

UN Agencies, such as UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women and UNDP may have undertaken or commissioned research on particular populations that are stateless or at risk of statelessness through the lenses of their respective mandates. For example, UNICEF may have undertaken research on the prevalence of birth registration amongst marginalised population groups that could also be stateless.

# Media

The media, both traditional and digital, can provide useful information. It is helpful to establish clear parameters around media searches, including a time-frame and a broad and diverse range of sources to consult. It is important to take note of contexts in which mainstream media are State-sponsored. Where relevant, journalists can also be consulted as part of the primary data collection phase.

## Official statistics

Existing national data sources, such as censuses, surveys, civil registries or social service agencies, may include data on stateless people. Current and comprehensive statistics on the number of stateless people will generally be rare, although some countries, particularly in Europe, gather and publish such statistics. Such information still needs to be treated with caution as statistical data, particularly census data, is often based on self-identification. Individual respondents may not know, as a matter of fact, whether or not they are stateless. Furthermore, datasets may not always distinguish between those reporting that they are stateless, those who choose not to respond to a question about their nationality and those who do not know what nationality they have. Please refer to UNHCR's population statistics database for the most recently available statistics on stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality by country. The fact that there is no data reported for a particular country does not mean that there are no stateless persons, only that there are no publicly reported statistics from the State. If not published, it is recommended to inquire with relevant statistics gathering agencies whether they have disaggregated statistics by age, gender, and perhaps location.



# Quick Guide 2
# WHEN TO UNDERTAKE QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION ON STATELESSNESS

This quick guide covers the two types of primary data collection - qualitative and quantitative – which can take place after a "desk review" (see Quick Guide 1 for more information) has been completed. It provides an overview of the main differences between the two data collection methods and indicates the situations for which each method is more appropriate.

# Features and advantages of each method

Before starting a primary data collection exercise, it is recommended that a "desk review" takes place to assess the current situation and state of knowledge in relation to statelessness in a given context (see Quick Guide 1 for more information). Once specific information gaps have been identified, the next step is to consider undertaking primary data collection in order to fill these gaps. Both qualitative and quantitative methods may be considered for primary data collection. The key differences, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of these qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, especially when it comes to stateless or at-risk populations, are highlighted in the table below.

| Qualitative data collection | Quantitative data collection |
|---|---|
| **FEATURES OF THIS METHOD** | |
| • Qualitative data collection methods mostly use words and result in findings based on the perspectives of the research subjects.<br>• Qualitative data examines the substance of a problem and its impact with a focus on the causal links and dynamics of a phenomenon or system as well as the subjective experiences and motivations of the research subjects. | • Quantitative data collection methods are used with a view to generalise findings to a population, to test statistical hypothesis on effects and impacts, and to estimate population sizes and other parameters.<br>• Quantitative research is structured by measurable concepts, indicators and variables that can be used for a descriptive and inferential analysis of the population of concern. |
| **Examples of data sources** | |
| • Key informant interviews, semi-structured individual interviews, focus group discussions, participatory assessments and life histories. | • Censuses, surveys and administrative data. |





| Qualitative data collection | Quantitative data collection |
|---|---|
| **Advantages of this method, especially in relation to stateless and at-risk populations** | |
| • Can be used to understand complex phenomena using in-depth analysis by looking at the causes and consequences of the problem, for select research units or groups.<br>• Seeks comprehensive knowledge of the problem and its impact.<br>• Normally less costly to undertake than quantitative data collection.<br>• May produce compelling personal and narrative findings. | • Sample surveys will in most cases result in findings that can be generalised to a wider population.<br>• Censuses yield results for the total population and can produce the most accurate estimations of geographically small areas without sampling errors.<br>• Particularly well-suited to population size estimation, programme and project evaluation, impact studies, and socio-economic assessments.<br>• Useful for planning, advocacy, reporting and resource allocation since the findings can be extrapolated to the population of interest. |
| **Disadvantages of this method, especially in relation to stateless and at-risk populations** | |
| • Findings cannot be generalised to a group or population beyond the research subjects. Results are therefore generally not representative.<br>• It can be difficult to prevent or detect researcher induced bias.<br>• Scope may be limited due to the in-depth, comprehensive data gathering required. | • Tends to provide numerical results rather than detailed narrative.<br>• Dynamics and causal pathways often get lost since quantitative data collection tends to be broad and high level as opposed to focused and deep.<br>• Tends to be more costly due to the high level of human, logistical and financial resources needed to obtain sample sizes that allow for generalisation of findings with sufficient statistical precision. |

Generally, the most effective data collection efforts use a mixed approach which combine both qualitative and quantitative methods. This recognizes the complementary nature of the two approaches, although in the statelessness context qualitative methods may be the only feasible way forward.

# Qualitative data

## What is qualitative data collection?

The objective of qualitative data collection is to shed light on a given problem or topic from the perspective of the population it involves. Qualitative data collection is especially effective in obtaining information about the experiences, values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations. It provides information about the "human" side of an issue. It is also usually necessary to support quantitative data with qualitative data, which helps to interpret its implications. For example, while figures on the number of children in a stateless population who are unable to access primary education might be available, a qualitative study could help to shed light on the obstacles and reasons for their inability to enjoy their right to education.

Qualitative data provides in-depth information about important issues, such as how the stateless persons concerned and their families experience daily life, the reasons why certain groups might be specifically vulnerable to the risk of statelessness, or the reasons why they don't hold national ID cards. It can also illustrate the link between statelessness and other measurable phenomena such as poverty levels.

## Identify the need for qualitative data on statelessness

Qualitative data will often be collected independently of any collection of quantitative data, although where possible a combined approach is recommended. Factors such as the complexity and high costs normally associated with quantitative data collection methods, and the lack of a sampling frame may point to qualitative data collection



QUICK GUIDE 2 - QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE DATA

being the best or only option. Often qualitative data collection is a good starting point to gather information on statelessness as its scope is usually narrow and in-depth, focusing on a specific population or group. Qualitative data collection may also be helpful in framing questions, assessing the salience of questioning for larger scale quantitative research and determining methodologies for quantitative reseach.

Qualitative methods can be used to obtain a snapshot of the types of issues that a community might be experiencing. Its results provide evidence of the impact of statelessness, which is often a key step to understand the problem and to generate the necessary political will to address it. The results of qualitative data collection can also be helpful in providing information to the media and for raising public awareness.

## When to collect qualitative data on statelessness?

- To understand whether there is a problem of statelessness in a specific group or community;
- To better understand the causes of statelessness amongst a particular group;
- To better understand the social, political and economic implications of statelessness amongst a particular group, as well as coping strategies, needs and priorities of the affected population;
- Where resources to undertake any kind of quantitative data collection are limited;
- Where quantitative data collection might generate protection concerns, such as exposure or stigmatisation of the population;
- To build partnerships with and to develop trust with affected communities;
- To demonstrate the human impact of statelessness; to collect testimonials; to raise awareness; to advocate with decision-makers; and draw media attention.

# Quantitative data

## What is quantitative data?

Quantitative data collection is generally used to quantify an issue or a problem by generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. It can also be used to generalise results from a sample population that is representative of the whole population.

## Identify the need for quantitative data on statelessness

Quantitative data can be used to estimate the size of a stateless population (be it a local, regional or national population), their demographic characteristics (e.g. age, sex, place of birth, religion, ethnicity), socio-economic characteristics (e.g. poverty rates, education, labour market participation, assets, living conditions), access to services (e.g. education, health, infrastructure), vulnerabilities, protection needs, access to legal identity, and social and political inclusion. Quantitative data can also shed light on why certain groups are stateless (e.g. because they belong to a particular ethnic group which is excluded from nationality) and how they can become citizens of a country (e.g. how many stateless people have successfully been able to use provisions in the law to be recognised as citizens, or have successfully been recognised as stateless under a statelessness determination procedure and given access to facilitated naturalization).

Accurate quantitative data on statelessness can serve as a powerful evidence-based advocacy tool. Reliable statistics on population sizes and living conditions are particularly important for governments, UNHCR, NGOs and others attempting to improve the situation of stateless persons in multiple contexts. Ensuring that "hard-to-count" populations, such as stateless persons, are enumerated is important for ensuring accurate demographic estimates and efficient allocation of public and private resources. Quantitative data can also facilitate evidence-informed advocacy to address statelessness.



QUICK GUIDE 2 - QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE DATA

Stateless populations are generally considered to be "hard-to-count" due to their frequent physical remoteness, lack of documentation, lack of awareness about their legal status, unwillingness to be enumerated and the fact that statelessness is a relatively rare phenomenon when considering society as a whole. For this reason, quantitative data collection for stateless populations can be extremely technical, resource-intensive and time-consuming.

### When to collect quantitative data on statelessness?

- To obtain estimates of the size of a stateless population and its demographic characteristics;
- When a need for primary data collection has been identified and the appropriate resources (human and financial) exist;
- To establish a baseline on size, demographic characteristics or living conditions of a stateless population, and to track changes in quantitative indicators over time;
- If there is a suspected significant stateless population and there is an upcoming national census;
- To assist with development planning and resource allocation;
- To facilitate evidence-informed advocacy for legislative or policy change to promote solutions to statelessness;
- To contribute to improved statistical data on the number of stateless people worldwide.

Quick Guide 3

# MAIN STEPS IN COLLECTING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA ON STATELESSNESS





Depending on the objectives of the study, quantitative or qualitative data collection methods or a combination of both can be employed. The main steps in data collection include:

- Developing key research question(s)
- Choosing qualitative/quantitative data collection method(s);
- Piloting the method and adjusting methodology;
- Undertaking data collection;
- Checking, cleaning and processing raw data (only for quantitative data collection methods);
- Analyzing the data and reporting;
- Ensuring confidentiality and consent.

These steps and particular considerations of both qualitative and quantitative data collection in the field of statelessness are discussed in this guide.

# Develop key research question(s)

The development of a key research question or questions is an important early step which will not only help to inform your decision as to which type of data collection (qualitative, quantitative or mixed) needs to be undertaken but it will also determine the scope of the study. Key research question(s) can be developed by considering the following categories of questions:

### Why do we need data?

- To confirm whether statelessness or risks of statelessness exist?
- To establish where stateless people live and their circumstances?
- To establish demographic characteristics of the stateless population (e.g., age, sex, occupation, socio-economic situation)?
- To explore the causes and consequences of statelessness, including access to rights and services?
- To identify whether there are discrepancies in law and practice when it comes to acquisition of nationality/ birth registration/ documentation of certain groups?
- To explore what solutions might be available for stateless persons?





### Who are we studying?

- Stateless persons, those potentially at risk or of undetermined nationality?
- One group with a single profile or groups with different profiles?
- In one location or multiple locations?
- Children? Women? The elderly? Refugees? Irregular migrants (and their children)? Foundlings? Minority groups? Nomadic populations? Historical migrants?
- Those who were formerly stateless, and the difference that acquiring a nationality has made in terms of access to services, socio-economic characteristics, protection needs and social and political inclusion.

**Sample research questions**

For qualitative data collection:

- What are the legislative, procedural and practical barriers to nationality for members of Group X?
- What are the economic, social and political impacts on stateless persons from Group Y as compared with nationals living in the same area?
- What is the effectiveness of mechanisms to resolve statelessness in country Z?
- Do refugees/irregular migrants from Group K living in a protracted situation in Country J face any risks of statelessness?

For quantitative data collection:

- How many stateless people are in the country?
- How many stateless people in the country are children (e.g., under the age of 18 years)?
- To what extent are stateless people in paid employment?
- On average, how long have stateless people lived in this country?
- What is the average stateless household food security and/or ownership of assets compared to a household of citizens?[1]
- How many stateless people have accessed a statelessness determination procedure (if one exists)?
- How many formerly stateless people have acquired the nationality in the last 5 years?

1 Measuring income level is prone to underreporting. Measuring food security and ownership of assets is an alternative but also challenging and data collection on these questions would have to be thoroughly prepared, tested and reviewed.





# Choose qualitative/quantitative data collection method(s)

## Qualitative data collection methods

There are many types of qualitative data collection methods. The most common methods for collecting qualitative data that are relevant to statelessness are:

1. **Key informant interviews**

Key informants are an important starting point for finding out more about a situation of statelessness or about the research subjects. Key informants, typically, are those who can provide an accurate and important perspective on the setting and context. They can include persons such as community and religious leaders, relevant government officials or NGO workers working with or living close to the affected individuals and communities. Information provided by key informants can be used to refine thematic areas and questions that are used in focus group discussions or semi-structured interviews with affected communities. As such, interviews with key informants are a useful method to deploy early in the course of gathering primary qualitative data.

2. **Focus group discussions**

Focus group discussions are an effective method to gather a range of perspectives that exist within a community or subgroup. Because they typically seek to illuminate group opinion, they are useful when needing to explore and analyze group responses to a topic of common concern (such as a shared experience of being stateless or at risk of statelessness). Meeting with groups of affected individuals is useful for the efficient collection of numerous views simultaneously, as well as to observe the exchanges between and among different participants. The strength of the focus group discussion relies on allowing participants to agree or disagree with each other so that it provides an insight into how the group thinks about an issue, about the range of ideas and opinions, and the variations that exist within a community in terms of beliefs, experiences and practices.

**3. Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are conducted in the same way as focus groups but with a smaller number of people (perhaps 2 – 3) or just one individual, in an informal and conversational way, using open-ended questions. These can be conducted with families, households, or groups of people known to each other, all with similar experiences or concerns. Semi-structured discussions are suited to analyzing problems that are more nuanced or complex that may not easily emerge or take up too much time with just one individual or in a larger focus group discussion. They are also useful when personal, sensitive or confidential information is being discussed.

## Quantitative data collection methods

The most common methods for collecting quantitative data that are relevant to statelessness are:

**1. Census**

A census is a full count of all households and individuals in a specific geographic location at a specific moment in time, either in the place they are found at the time that the census is undertaken or at their usual place of residence. The official national population and housing census (official census) is the most common source of population data. Official censuses are usually conducted by governments every ten years, depending on the country. The major advantages of an official census is that it covers the entire population of a country at the time it is conducted, that it uses a well-tested methodology, and that it can provide a comprehensive sampling frame. This is important when measuring statelessness, since stateless persons tend to constitute a relatively small proportion of the total population and may be dispersed throughout the country, making it difficult to reach them with sample surveys without using complex sampling techniques or an accurate list or frame of stateless people. An official census can provide valuable information on the size and profile of stateless populations and thereby facilitate the work of policy makers by helping to identify causes of statelessness.





**2. Sample survey**

A sample survey differs from a census because it aims to collect data from a population by surveying only a randomly selected subset of the total population. The advantage of a sample survey is that data for a relatively small proportion of the population can be used to yield estimates for the total population through extrapolation, if the sample is representative of the total population. However, if the location of stateless persons is not known and an efficient sample to capture them is not possible, a large number of households will need to be interviewed in order to find an adequate number of stateless people and yield reliable estimates.

**3. Collecting administrative data**

Administrative data from national systems may be a source of quantitative data provided that they collect information relevant to statelessness. The methods for collection of administrative data vary greatly from one country or context to another. The main gateway systems are civil registers and population registers. Civil registers record a person's vital events such as birth, marriage, divorce and death. In most countries, the birth of a child is registered regardless of their legal status or the legal status of their parents. Population registers record all resident populations of a country, including foreigners. Each resident is assigned a unique identifying number which enables information across different registers (i.e., birth, death, marriage etc.) to be linked and for central records to be updated. If someone is excluded from the civil register or population register, then the likelihood of them being excluded from functional registers greatly increases. There are other registers that may record information on stateless populations for specific purposes, such as residence permit registers, work permit registers, tax registers, social security registers, social welfare shelter registers, school database; as well as databases maintained by international organisations and NGOs working on statelessness.

In countries with established dedicated statelessness determination procedures, data is also generated from individual applications. This data can provide valuable insights into various aspects of statelessness in the country, e.g., causes of their statelessness, the geographic location of stateless persons, countries that stateless persons have potential links to etc.

## Piloting the method and adjusting methodology

A pilot is a replica of the planned data collection exercise but conducted at a smaller scale. Piloting a selected method, particularly when it comes to testing the questions intended for use, is an important step. It is imperative that the timeline and budget allocated for undertaking qualitative data collection allows for the method(s) to be piloted and the results of the pilot to be analyzed so that necessary adjustments can be made to the methodology.

To be helpful, the pilot of the method should be undertaken in a manner as similar to the final data collection phase as possible (including training of facilitators and interviewers). The only difference should be the scale of the exercise. If data collection occurs in more than one location, then the method should ideally be piloted in all locations where final data collection will take place, as different issues can arise in different settings. If multiple pilots are conducted, they should all be completed before the final data collection in any location takes place so that adjustments of cross-cutting or generic nature that can be comprehensively implemented. A short report should be written at the conclusion of the pilot study.



QUICK GUIDE 3 - MAIN STEPS

## Undertake data collection

Data collection exercises must be undertaken by interviewers, facilitators and enumerators who understand the purpose of the data collection exercise and who have been trained and vetted. Trainers should encourage trainees to ask questions and ensure that all aspects of the data collection exercise are understood before the fieldwork commences. Where possible, training sessions should be organized before fieldwork commences and include simulations of the method(s) that will be used to collect information from affected individuals and groups.

It is imperative that data collection exercises are adequately staffed. While on the one hand involving too many people in the data collection exercise can have a negative impact on the willingness of affected individuals or groups to share information, or can create the impression of a spectacle, drawing unwanted observers and bystanders, having too few can adversely impact on the accuracy, quality and depth of the data collected. Where possible, it is also important that the data collection team is accompanied by a member of a local partner organization who is familiar to and trusted by the affected individuals and communities.

QUICK GUIDE 3 - MAIN STEPS

# Check, clean and process raw data
## (only for quantitative data collection methods)

Checking raw data for consistency and completeness is a crucial step in the statistical production process in order to identify potential problems, errors and discrepancies such as outliers, item non-response and miscoding. Data should both be checked against pre-defined quality and consistency rules, and iteratively by analytically exploring the data set. This can already partly be done during the data collection phase, and it can still be informed by the data analyst's assessment of the quality of the data set during the analysis phase. This process step can also involve adding data from other sources such as geospatial data sets. Classifying and re-coding existing variables and creating additional variables are further parts of the preparation of the data set before the main analysis.

After collecting data, it will be necessary to undertake detailed data analysis, a process where quality control and supervision is crucial to ensure reliable and accurate results. Again, ensuring involvement of a person with advanced training in quantitative data analysis techniques will be necessary for this step.

**As a general guide, the following stages of data analysis will need to be considered:**

1 **Data coding/entry**
Questionnaire data needs to be transformed into another format that is compatible with computer software. As an alternative, mobile data collection through the use of mobile phones/ tablets is becoming increasingly common and can incorporate simple consistency and quality checks at the data collection stage.

2 **Data editing**
Quality and validation checks or "cleaning" will need to be undertaken so that errors can be found and removed from the data.

3 **Data analysis**
This is the process of analyzing and modelling data in order to highlight useful information and suggest conclusions. Advanced statistical software (such as R or SPSS) may be needed.

4 **Cross tabulation**
Cross tabulation of census or simple random survey data related to citizenship and statelessness can provide information on the estimated number of stateless persons or persons at risk of statelessness. Through cross tabulation, it may be possible to detect groups within the general population who possess characteristics which in combination serve as strong indicators of statelessness.

5 **Data evaluation**
For high-profile sample surveys, consider undertaking a post-enumeration survey (PES) no more than one month after data collection activity is completed.

6 **Data archiving**
The data will need to be kept and stored for a set period of time for use over the longer term if necessary or if there's aneed to refer back to it, perhaps for advocacy purposes.

# Analyse the data and report

Analysis of the data should be done in a manner that helps to respond to the key research questions identified at the beginning of the process. In the analysis of qualitative data, it is particularly important to identify key findings and patterns by reviewing responses provided by affected individuals and communities to the questions they were asked, either in the context of a stakeholder interview, a focus group discussion or in a semi-structured individual or small group interview. Qualitative data is particularly helpful in recording detailed information and personal testimonies, so an effort should be made to capture the richness and nuances of the data collected.

Reporting results may need to take several forms in order to be most effective with the relevant stakeholders. The report must be produced in the official language(s) of the State in which the research takes place. Affected individuals and communities that have participated in the fieldwork must be provided with copies of the written report. Where affected individuals and communities are only literate in a different language to that in which the report has been produced, then the report needs to be translated into their language. Every effort should be taken to ensure that the report can be made public. In countries where statelessness issues are particularly sensitive, publication of the report must be discussed and agreed with the Government in advance, as the utility of the information in a report is greatly diminished if it cannot be made public.

Apart from providing government officials with the written report, it may be effective to organize an event at which the report is launched, particularly where the Government has participated in and/ or supported the research. If public, the launch event can also be an opportunity to discuss the key findings and recommendations amongst a range of stakeholders, including the affected communities.

Consideration should be given to how the results of the data collection exercise help to support efforts to address statelessness, be that in terms of general awareness raising, development of a statelessness-specific advocacy strategy or specific goals including law or policy reform.



QUICK GUIDE 3 - MAIN STEPS

# Confidentiality and consent

National statistical laws provide a high degree of protection to providers of information, including respondents in surveys and other data used for the purposes of official statistics. Such data may not be shared with any other body, including other government departments, in any way that would lead to an individual being identifiable from the data. Where data is being collected by bodies other than national statistical authorities, and where sensitive data is being collected, prior consent from respondents is necessary. It is important that informants and participants in research give free, prior and informed consent to participate in the research and for the information they provide to be put to subsequent use. Researchers must also be clear and open to respondents as to how the information will be used.

# Quick Guide 4
# KEY QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR COLLECTING STATELESSNESS DATA

There are many types of qualitative data collection methods. The most common methods for collecting qualitative data that are relevant to statelessness are key informant interviews, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews or a combination of qualitative data collection methods. These methods, along with sample questions, are outlined below.



## Key informant interviews

Key informants are an important starting point for finding out more about a situation of statelessness or about the research subjects. Key informants, typically, are those who can provide an accurate and important perspective on the setting and context. They can include persons such as community and religious leaders, relevant government officials or NGO workers working with or living close to the affected individuals and communities. Information provided by key informants can be used to refine thematic areas and questions that are used in focus group discussions or semi-structured interviews with affected communities.

Apart from providing background information, key informants may also be able to help engage affected communities to participate in the data collection activities by acting as an advocate for the project. Community leaders are a particularly valuable type of key informant, because they will often have the trust of the affected community. Consequently, they may be able to assist in explaining the potential outcomes of the data collection activity, thereby helping to manage expectations. Community leaders are often in a position to assist with finding safe and comfortable places to undertake interviews and focus-group discussions, and with reassuring and supporting community members throughout the data collection process.

Statelessness is not a concept that is always well understood or one that translates easily into different country contexts or languages. It is therefore important that in all interviewing situations, careful consideration is given to the terminology used to determine whether the concept is correctly understood.

**Below are some general questions which can be tailored to the specific circumstances to gather information on statelessness situations from key informants:**

### Key Informant 1: Community leader/local authority

- What are your responsibilities as a community leader?
- Who would you consider to be a member of your community?
- Do you understand what it means to be stateless?
- What is the history of your community (migratory history in particular)?
- Are there members of your community who are stateless or at risk of statelessness? Do you know or can you estimate how many are affected?
- For how long have they been stateless?
- What are the causes of statelessness in your community?
- Does statelessness affect particular members of your community more than others? Why?
- Do members of your community experience issues with acquiring documents such as birth certificates or nationality documentation? Has this always been the case?
- How are members of your community, including those who are stateless or at risk of statelessness, perceived by nationals of the country? Do they experience discrimination or harassment? How does this manifest itself?
- What are the main impacts on members of your community who are stateless or at risk of statelessness?
- What has your community tried to do to address their statelessness? What is the impact of their efforts?
- What are the main obstacles that your community faces in trying to resolve their situation of statelessness?
- What role have you played as a





community leader in trying to address statelessness in your community? What has been the impact of your efforts?

- Are there any organizations that are trying to help your community address issues of statelessness? Are they successful? What obstacles do they face?
- In your opinion, what needs to be done to address statelessness in your community and who do you think can assist?
- Can you identify members of your community that are stateless or at risk of statelessness that would be willing to be interviewed about their situation and experiences?
- Can you assist us in contacting these individuals?
- Can you assist us in explaining to your community why we want to collect this information and what we intend to do with it?
- Can you help us to find a safe, quiet place in the community to conduct interviews?

### Key Informant 2: Relevant Government authority

- What is your role in the Government department?
- For how long have you been working in this role?
- [Explain what statelessness is and then ask] Are there particular communities in your country that you know are stateless or that are at risk of statelessness?
- Do you know or can you estimate how many are affected?
- For how long have they been stateless or at risk?
- What are the main reasons for their statelessness?
- Are you aware of what the impacts are of those who are stateless or at risk?

- Are you aware of any discrimination or harassment faced by stateless people? How does this manifest itself?
- Do you believe that there are any gaps or problems in your nationality law that could lead to statelessness?
- What is the procedure for acquiring nationality in the country?
- Is this procedure set out in the law? How easy is it for members of the affected communities to find out about this procedure?
- Is there a key document that is issued to individuals to prove that they are nationals of the country?
- Are there any gaps in the nationality law that can lead to statelessness? Is the nationality law implemented in a certain way that can lead to statelessness?
- What is the birth registration rate in the area the official is responsible for? Is it easy and free to register births? Is there the possibility of late birth registration? Are children of migrants/ foreigners registered in the same way as children of nationals?
- What does a person need to do to prove that s/he is a national of the country?
- What has the Government done to address the issue of statelessness facing particular communities in your country? Have these efforts been successful? If not, what are the main barriers?
- Are you aware of any other organizations that are assisting stateless or at-risk communities in your country? Are they successful? What obstacles (political/ geographical/ financial/ capacity) do they face?





**Key Informant 3:**
**Civil society representative**

- What is your role in your organization?
- For how long have you been working in this role?
- What are the consequences of being stateless in the community?
- With which stateless or at-risk communities has your organisation been working? For how long?
- Do you know or can you estimate how many people are affected by statelessness in the communities you work with?
- What are the main reasons for their statelessness?
- Is there a key document that is issued to individuals to prove that they are nationals of the country?
- What is the birth registration rate in the area? Is it easy and free to register births? Is there the possibility of late birth registration? Are children of migrants/ foreigners registered in the same way as children of nationals?
- How does the Government regard a person who claims this country's nationality but who does not have that document to prove their nationality?
- Are you aware of what the impacts are of those who are stateless or at risk?
- Are you aware of any discrimination or harassment faced by stateless people? How does this manifest itself?
- In what ways has your organization been working with communities/ individuals that are stateless or at risk of statelessness? How successful has this work been? What are the main barriers? What is needed for your work to be more effective?
- In what ways has your organization being working with the Government on issues of nationality and statelessness? How successful has this work been? What are the main barriers? What is needed for your work to be more effective?
- Are there other organizations that you are aware of that are working with communities or individuals that are stateless or at risk of statelessness?

# Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions are an effective method to gather a range of perspectives that exist within a community or subgroup. Because they typically seek to illuminate group opinion, they are useful when needing to explore and analyse group responses to a topic of common concern (such as a shared experience of being stateless or at risk of statelessness). Meeting with groups of affected individuals is useful for the efficient collection of numerous views simultaneously, as well as to observe the exchanges between and among different participants. Focus group discussions are inappropriate for sensitive topics, particularly those involving detailed personal accounts. For this reason, it is good to follow up focus group discussions with individual or small-group interviews (please see information on semi-structured interviews below).

It is advisable to form focus group discussion groups on the basis of shared characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, formerly stateless etc. as this minimizes or eliminates at least some significant differences which can impact how a person in the focus group communicates his or her experiences of statelessness or risk of statelessness. Further, in some contexts, it will be particularly important to separate groups by age and gender, as cultural and social customs could, for example, discourage women or younger people from speaking up in a mixed group context.

Please note that it is important to proceed with a degree of caution when it comes to undertaking data collection activities with children (i.e., persons under the age of 18 years). Issues concerning consent and confidentiality must be treated with utmost care. All actions concerning children shall be guided by the principle of the "best interests of the child". The principle applies to all children, including stateless children.





Particular care must be taken with respect to seeking consent for participation from children. In most situations, consent can and should be obtained from the child's parent, family member with parental responsibility, or legal customary caregiver. In the case of unaccompanied or separate children, consent by the child may be appropriate provided that he/she has the capacity to understand the process and its ensuing rights and obligations.

There is also a need for sampling in qualitative research, just as there is in quantitative research, although the formal criteria are not as strict. The persons to be interviewed need to be identified and they should be as representative as possible of the larger group. For example, if a group of ten young stateless men are interviewed in a focus group, they should to some extent represent the range of young stateless men in the community that is investigated (e.g., in terms of age, education and occupation). The overall size of the community that is being interviewed does not affect the size of the focus group. However, if the total population of the community is large (e.g., more than 2000 people) consider holding multiple focus group discussions rather than increasing the size of just one or two focus group discussions. One of the key roles of the facilitator is to ensure that all of the group members get heard and prevent a few voices from dominating the discussion.

Focus group discussions should be structured around a few key questions that can adequately be covered in the time allotted. Each group should ideally have no more than 10 – 15 people with one facilitator and one note-taker, together with an interpreter if needed. Wherever possible, it is useful to have local civil society partners, with whom the community is familiar, undertake or assist with the facilitation of the focus group discussion.

QUICK GUIDE 4 - KEY QUALITATIVE METHODS

**Here are some general questions to use in focus group discussions** which can be tailored to the specific circumstances. Please note that not all questions need to be asked. If multiple questions are selected for the focus group discussion, consider grouping according to theme (e.g., a session on causes and impacts followed by a discussion on obstacles and solutions).

- Do you have a nationality?
- [Where there is a requirement that the individual holds proof of nationality] Do you have proof of nationality? [Can be asked of each member of the group individually or through a show of hands]
- Since when has the group experienced difficulties in acquiring the nationality of Country X? [Take some responses]
- [Where there is a requirement that the individual holds proof of nationality] Since when has the group experienced difficulty in acquiring proof of nationality of Country X? [Take some responses]
- What are the reasons given by Government authorities for not giving nationality/ proof of nationality? [Take some responses]
- Were you/your children registered at birth? Do you have proof? [Show of hands]
- What services can you only access when you can show that you are a national? [Take some responses]
- What specific problems have you faced as a result of not having a nationality/ proof of nationality? [If necessary, prompt questions about: access to education (primary, secondary, tertiary), access to healthcare, freedom of movement, social services, employment, civic rights (voting), property rights, issues with law enforcement, access to justice) [Give everyone in the group who wants to say something the opportunity to do so].
- To what extent do you think not having a nationality has made things more difficult for you than if you had a nationality? [Take a number of responses and allow discussion between participants]
- Why do you think that you are not being recognised as a citizen/ being issued with a citizenship document? [Take some responses]
- What is the impact of not being recognised as a national, on you, your family, your community, your relationship with others in society who are citizens of Country X? [Take some responses]
- Do you feel that you are a member of the broader society? Of country X? [Take some responses]
- What steps have you or your community taken to get a nationality/ proof of nationality? [Take some responses]
- Have you sought assistance from anyone or any organisation? [Take some responses]
- What are the obstacles you have faced in trying to resolve your nationality/ proof of nationality situation? [Take some responses]
- If you were able to acquire nationality/ proof of nationality, how did this happen? [Take responses from all those who were able to acquire a nationality]
- What difference has it made to your situation to have acquired a nationality/ proof of nationality? How long did it take for you to experience these changes? [Take as many responses as possible].

## Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are conducted in the same way as focus groups but with a smaller number of people (2 – 3) or just one individual, in an informal and conversational way, using open-ended questions. These can be conducted with families, households, or groups of people known to each other, all with similar experiences or concerns. Semi-structured discussions are suited to analysing problems that are more nuanced or complex that may not easily emerge or take up too much time with just one individual or in a larger focus group discussion. They are also useful when personal, sensitive or confidential information is being discussed.

Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to better capture an individual's full story, gather quotes and where consent is given also take photos and video-record testimony. One technique for selecting individuals for a semi-structured interview is to identify them during the course of a focus group discussion. In such discussions, a few individuals will usually stand out because they express themselves eloquently and clearly, have an ability to respond to questions relevantly and in detail, or have a particular, or compelling story to share.

Semi-structured interviews can be structured by using the same general questions recommended above under the section on focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews can also zone in on particular thematic issues or points raised in the course of the focus group discussion, in order to obtain clarification and more information. Where individual interviews are undertaken, it is important to collect basic identity information about the interviewee, including name, age, gender etc.

As with focus group discussions, it is recommended that semi-structured interviews are conducted by one facilitator and one note-taker, together with an interpreter if needed.

## Using a combination of qualitative methods

It is recommended that, where possible, a combination of qualitative methods is used each time an effort to collect data on a stateless or at-risk population is made. Certain techniques will be more appropriate in some circumstances (e.g., use of semi-structured individual interviews to obtain information that might be difficult for participants to divulge in a group setting). Different techniques will elicit various perspectives and levels of detail on the issues facing affected individuals and communities. Ideally, time and finances permitting, the data collection will begin with a few key informant interviews, which are followed by focus group discussions and then semi-structured small-group or individual interviews to obtain more detail. Comparing results from individuals and groups who represent the diversity of the community, and using the different methods outlined above, is called triangulation and is an important way to check the reliability of the information gathered and validate the understanding of the issues. Qualitative research can also be used to frame questions and assess the salience of questioning for larger scale quantitative research.



# Quick Guide 5
# KEY QUANTITATIVE METHODS FOR COLLECTING STATELESSNESS DATA

There are many types of quantitative data collection methods. The most common methods for collecting quantitative data that are relevant to statelessness are censuses and sample surveys, although data may also be obtainined from administratve processes and population registers. These methods, along with sample questions, are outlined below.

# Census

A census is a full count of all households and individuals in a specific geographic location at a specific moment in time, either in the place they are found at the time that the census is undertaken or at their usual place of residence.

The official national population and housing census (official census) is the most common source of population data. Official censuses are usually conducted by governments every ten years, depending on the country. The major advantages of an official census is that it covers the entire population of a country at the time it is conducted, that it uses a well-tested methodology, and that it can provide a comprehensive sampling frame. This is important when measuring statelessness, since stateless persons tend to constitute a relatively small proportion of the total population and may be dispersed throughout the country, making it difficult to reach sufficient numbers of them with sample surveys. An official census can provide valuable information on the size and profile of stateless populations and thereby facilitate the work of policy makers by pointing to potential causes of statelessness and therefore how it can be prevented and reduced once it has occurred. It can also provide quantifiable evidence of the existence of stateless people, where without such data it may have been easier for the Government to deny the problem and thereby fail to take constructive steps to address it.





It should be noted that obtaining statistical data through an official census is not a fool-proof method to acquire accurate information on the extent of statelessness in the country. Official censuses are taken fairly infrequently, usually only every ten years, and it may take several years before detailed statistics become available. Thus, official census data can become outdated quite quickly. Answers given by respondents to the enumerators are self-reported. As individuals may not know whether or not they are in fact stateless and there is little room for enumerators to probe and investigate further, the results may not be reliable. The long form of a census, which is a more detailed census questionnaire that only a random sample of the enumerated population receives, can provide an opportunity to include more detailed questions on nationality and statelessness.

If there are statelessness issues in the country and it has an official census coming up in the next 2 or 3 years which does not contain specific questions related to nationality or statelessness, it is recommended to consider using this opportunity to collect statistics on stateless persons in the country. The official census is normally conducted by the National Statistical Office and overseen by a national planning committee which includes the main stakeholders. A special Official Census law is often adopted for each census, and it is a good idea to obtain a copy of and review such laws to understand the scope and any limitations placed on the census.

QUICK GUIDE 5 - KEY QUANTITATIVE METHODS

**The following steps are recommended:**

**1**

Identify the date of the next Official Census.[2]

2 United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Census dates for all countries: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/censusdates.htm

**2**

Examine the questionnaire from the most recent official census to see how and if citizenship status (including statelessness) status was recorded and investigate whether a question on citizenship status is planned for the upcoming official census.

**3**

Obtain early drafts of the questionnaire and questions for the upcoming official census.

**4**

Look critically at the wording of the nationality question, if any, and suggest the inclusion of specific response options "stateless/no citizenship" and "citizenship unknown," if these options do not already exist.

**5**

Propose other proxy questions that might be relevant for identifying statelessness, especially if cross-tabulated with the response to the question on nationality (e.g. questions related to ethnicity, migration nationality and place of birth of parents, and documentation as noted above). Adding a census question is very costly and must be balanced with other policy needs by the Government, but there may be some synergies with vital statistics needs which could be used to justify new questions.

**6**

Once the questions have been included, provide input to any official census training manuals or participate in any physical training of enumerators to help them understand key concepts related to nationality and statelessness, any follow-up questions to clarify responses to questions on and related to nationality and how to code such responses.

**7**

Consider sensitizing communities that are known to be stateless or have a high proportion of stateless persons about the upcoming census exercise. This can include assurances that the census will not be used to the detriment of respondents, and information on the content and meaning of questions related to citizenship and migration. It is important to ensure that in the course of sensitizing stateless communities about an upcoming census exercise that the community is not coached to respond to census questions in a particular manner.

**8**

Advocate for pilots of the questionnaire before the official census is taken, including of questions related to nationality. Data from such tests should be analysed and evaluated to confirm whether the census is capturing statelessness effectively and accurately.

It is recommended by UN statisticians that **"provisions should be made in order to obtain separate data for stateless persons."**[3] If a government is planning an Official Census, this presents an important opportunity for UNHCR to advocate for the inclusion of:

- A separate question relating to citizenship;
- A question on a person's country of citizenship is generally essential for the identification of stateless persons;
- Relevant response options in answer lists.

In addition to the option of giving the name of an actual country as a response to the question on citizenship, response options to this question should also include "stateless/no citizenship" and "unknown" as separate response options. Clear instructions and guidance on the international definition of statelessness, and how to explain this in simple language, should be provided to the enumerators. If the response option "statelessness" is included, it is important to pair it with the option "no citizenship" because "no citizenship" may be more understandable than the concept of statelessness. This is particularly critical if enumerators are pressed for time and cannot explain to a respondent what it means to be stateless.

If a respondent chooses either "stateless/no citizenship" or "unknown" in response to the question on citizenship, enumerators can ask certain follow-up questions to determine whether the person might in fact be eligible for a citizenship. Given time-constraints in a census, such questions are more suited to a long form of the census, where this is used. A long form version will also allow for detailed probing of the answers to the citizenship question to verify "stateless/ no citizenship" or "unknown" responses. Depending on the main causes of statelessness in the country, factors which could have a bearing on whether the person has a citizenship could include: whether the person had a former nationality; whether the person habitually resided in another country (and for how long); whether the person has ever held a passport issued by another country; the nationality of the person's parents; the date and country of birth of each of the respondent's parents; whether the respondent's parents have ever held the passport of another country; and the duration for which the respondent's parents resided in another country. These questions can reveal the links that stateless persons have to the country undertaking the census and to other countries, thereby providing guidance to policy makers on potential solutions through possible acquisition or confirmation of nationality on the basis of birth, descent, residence or marriage.

3 UNHCR, Measuring Statelessness through Population Census. Note by the Secretariat of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 13 May 2008, ECE/CES/AC.6/2008/SP/5, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/4a705e4b2.html





The completeness and quality of information on the stateless population that may be derived from official census data will depend largely on the reliability of responses to questions on citizenship. Given the problems with self-identification as stateless as mentioned above, consideration should be given to advocating for the inclusion of questions which permit cross-checking of data based on self-identification of citizens. Such additional indicators can include questions on ethnicity, migration and documentation:

- **Ethnicity**
  If it is known or suspected that members of a certain ethnic group are ordinarily stateless, questions to ascertain a respondent's membership of a certain group may serve as an indicator of statelessness. The risk of discrimination based on information collected in official censuses, including on potentially sensitive topics such as ethnicity, particularly in countries prone to ethnically-based conflict, needs to be assessed on a country-by-country basis, and be evaluated against the risk of not having information on such groups.

- **Migration**
  In countries where statelessness results from loss of ties to countries of former nationality, State succession and gaps in and conflicts between nationality laws, establishing the migration history of respondents and their parents and/or spouses can provide important information in assessing whether they are stateless. Such questions include:
  - Country of birth?
  - Date and country of birth of each parent?
  - Year of arrival in the country for foreign-born persons or returning migrants?
  - Former nationality/ies?
  - Period of habitual residence in another country/ies?
  - Possession of passport issued by another country?
  - Parents' nationality?

- **Documentation**
  While being undocumented is not the same as being stateless, a lack of a birth certificate or documents that serve as proof of citizenship such as a passports or national ID cards, can put people at risk of statelessness. Data on documentation, particularly in contexts where it is known that without certain documents individuals will not be recognised as citizens, may serve as an indicator of statelessness, particularly when cross-tabulated with other data (see below for information on cross-tabulation).

  The principle of avoiding any question that might arouse fear or reduce the level of participation in the census should prevail over all recommendations for questions to be included in the official census.[4] Decisions on whether to include a particular question related to citizenship or statelessness must be made taking into account a number of factors including an assessment on their usefulness, the risk of lowered response rates and the potential for measurement errors where there is an incentive for a respondent to reply untruthfully.

## Sample surveys

A sample survey differs from a census because it aims to collect data from a population by surveying only a randomly selected subset of the total population. The advantage of a sample survey is that data for a relatively small proportion of the population can be used to yield estimates for the total population through extrapolation, if the sample is representative of the total population.

All questions relevant to nationality and statelessness may also be asked in a sample survey, but a sample survey may include many additional questions because the time available for interviewing is less restricted. For example, survey respondents may be asked to show documents such as national ID cards and birth certificates, which a census usually cannot do.

One disadvantage of a sample survey compared to a census is that using a random sample introduces uncertainty because only a part of the population is surveyed. Such a sampling error arises from the fact that not all units of the targeted population are enumerated, but only a sample of them. Therefore, the information collected on the units in the sample may not perfectly reflect the information which could have been collected on the whole population. The extent of uncertainty arising from sampling error can be controlled through sample size and design. The bigger the sample size, the higher the precision of the estimates from the survey and the lower the sampling error. Bias is introduced if units of the population have different and unknown selection probabilities into the sample, for example if there is a selective non-response to the survey (i.e., if members of some population groups are less likely to be available for interviews such as young men working away from home, and if this decreased selection probability is unknown or cannot be controlled for).

Good sampling methods will provide results with the validity and reliability needed when advocating for government action on the basis of the evidence. Random sampling methods, such as simple random sampling, cluster sampling and stratified sampling, allow researchers and practitioners to generalise from the study results to a wider population. Simple random sampling is the most straightforward of these methods. In simple random sampling, every unit has exactly the same probability of being selected into the sample. However, in practice simple random sampling is almost never used because of the travel costs involved in contacting the scattered units. In more complex sampling methods, where the selection probabilities of the population units can differ, the final data set needs to include sampling weights. Units with lower selection probabilities are assigned proportionally higher weights to address the differing selection probabilities and to avoid bias in the analysis. Such methods may be used if it is known, for example, that the occurrence of statelessness is high in some regions of a country and low in others. It is strongly advised that an expert in sampling is used to design the methodology. More sophisticated random sampling methods such as area sampling and respondent-driven sampling with known selection probabilities can be useful for identifying hidden or "hard-to-count" groups. It is therefore important to give full consideration to the sampling method to be used in the data collection exercise and to select the most appropriate methods in close consultation with an expert in sampling and quantitative data methods.

Sound random sampling starts with the construction of a sampling frame that enables inclusion of all units of the study population in the frame and to determine their

4 UN Statistics Division, Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, 2017, available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesM/Series_M67Rev3en.pdf

selection probabilities. A sampling frame is the set of source material from which the sample is selected. A sampling frame is also the means for choosing the particular members of the study population that are to be included in the survey. The most important objectives of a good sampling frame are comprehensiveness and accuracy. Comprehensiveness refers to the degree to which the sampling frame covers the entire population. Accuracy refers to the degree to which the sampling frame includes correct information about the elements of the target population that it covers. Constructing a comprehensive and accurate sampling frame can be particularly challenging for hidden populations such as stateless groups and can require as much, if not more, effort and resources as the survey. Some examples for constructing a list of all stateless persons in a country or region include: using census data (if up-to-date), conducting a listing exercise (ideally in cooperation with the National Statistics Office), or enlisting the assistance of an NGO to identify stateless persons or the areas in which they are known to live.

Random sampling techniques can be contrasted with non-random sampling for which the selection probabilities are unknown. Such methods include convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Non-random sampling generally does not allow for generalisation of survey findings to a larger population and should only be used if random sampling is not feasible.



# Quick Guide 6
# HOW TO OPERATIONALIZE KEY STATELESSNESS CONCEPTS WHEN COLLECTING DATA ON STATELESSNESS

In researching statelessness, it is important to have a clear understanding of the key statelessness concepts and how they can be operationalized. Besides the concept of statelessness, the categories of persons at risk of statelessness or with undetermined nationality are useful when collecting data on statelessness. This is because it may not be possible through research to definitively identify that an individual is stateless. This can be for several reasons, including due to lack of conclusive evidence that no State considers that person to be a national. In this guide these different concepts will be explained and how they can be operationalized when collecting data on statelessness.

# Operationalizing the concept of statelessness

## The definition of a stateless person

The international legal definition of a stateless person comes from the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons: "A person who is not recognized as a national of any State under the operation of its law".

- "by any State"
  Although the definition is formulated in the negative ("not considered to be a national by any State"), only States with which someone has a relevant link, in particular by birth on the territory, descent, marriage, adoption or habitual residence, would need to be considered. An inquiry can thus be limited to only one State.

  When researching whether a certain group is stateless, it is recommended to start with a desk review to understand with which States the group has links with. A desk review can include an analysis of multiple sources of data that are available, such as legislation, policies and administrative frameworks; existing research; the media; and statistics.

  After a desk review, primary data collection may be necessary in case existing resources are not sufficient to establish which States a group has links with. Quantitative data collection, in the form of a sample survey, is in many cases the appropriate method to obtain this information. Qualitative data collection can be opted for in case quantitative data collection is not feasible, including for reasons of limited financial resources and protection concerns when conducting quantitative data collection.

- Meaning of "law"
  The reference to "law" should be read broadly to include not just legislation, but also ministerial decrees, regulations, orders, judicial case law (in countries with a tradition of precedent) and, where appropriate, customary practice.

  To examine the scope of relevant legislation and other sources, a desk review can in many cases provide substantial information on this. In case customary practices are involved, it is recommended to identify persons who can provide accurate information on these practices, and can include persons such as relevant government officials or NGO workers. Qualitative data collection through key informant interviews or semi-structured interviews are in many cases appropriate.

- When is a person "not considered as a national" under a State's law and practice?
  Establishing whether an individual is not considered as a national under the operation of its law requires a careful analysis of how a State applies its nationality laws in practice. This is a mixed question of fact and law. Applying this approach of examining an individual's position in practice may lead to a different conclusion than one derived from a purely formalistic analysis of the application of nationality laws of a country to an individual's case. A State may not in practice follow the letter of the law, even going so far as to ignore its substance. The reference to "law" in the definition of statelessness therefore covers situations where the written law is substantially modified when it comes to its implementation in practice.

  To research whether a State 'considers' a particular group or individual as a national, a logical step is to approach the relevant competent authorities and ask them specific questions to this extent. In cases where this is not possible or desirable, other key informants can often be identified. Community leaders or members of the community can also provide information on their interactions with the authorities which may shed light on the question of whether they are considered nationals by the State. Appropriate qualitative data collection methods include key informant and semi-structured interviews.

## Other statelessness concepts

- Persons at risk of statelessness
  The concept 'persons at risk of statelessness' does not have a legal or technical internationally agreed upon definition but is used to describe those who could be vulnerable to statelessness. While conceptually the term can be useful, it is not recommended to use this category in quantitative research due to the lack of a clear definition. The threshold that must be reached before a person is considered at risk of statelessness may vary according to context and the term risks being applied in a manner that is overly inclusive. Data generated from different studies on this category may therefore not be comparable.

- Persons with undetermined nationality
  One subcategory of persons at risk of statelessness are people who, in the absence of overwhelming evidence that they are stateless, are considered to be with undetermined nationality. There is no legal definition of a person with undetermined nationality. However, UNCHR uses the following working definition for the purposes of collecting statistical data: "A person may be assessed as being with undetermined nationality following a review that verifies the following: they lack proof of possession of any nationality; and either A) have links to more than one State (on the basis of birth, descent, marriage or habitual residence); or B) are perceived and treated by authorities in the State of residence as possessing such links to other States."





## Language awareness in researching statelessness

Statelessness is not a concept that is always well-understood or one that translates easily into different country contexts or languages. It is therefore important that careful consideration is given to the terminology used to determine whether the concept is correctly understood by persons providing information. In some contexts, it may therefore be better to use a term such as "without any nationality or citizenship" instead of statelessness. Many languages have no direct translation of the word "nationality" or "citizenship". It may be helpful to consult local interlocutors on the most accurate way to explain the concepts of nationality and statelessness, or to determine if there are specific local terms that approximate a translation. If there is a key document that serves as proof of nationality, and without which a person is very unlikely to be considered a national, always ask whether the affected person(s) hold(s) such a document as a way to confirm that the question about lack of nationality has been understood. Where such a document exists, it may be more effective if questions simply refer to the possession of this document rather than to possession of a nationality.

QUICK GUIDES

# RESEARCHING STATELESSNESS

March 2021

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