

International conference organized jointly by the
Quebec Inter-University Centre for Social Statistics (QICSS, Montréal) and the
Institut national d'études démographiques (INED, Paris)

Call for Papers

Presentation

During the second half of the 20th century, important international migration flows have greatly contributed to the appearance of pluralist societies, and a large number of ethnic groups have emerged mainly as a result of immigration. In the context of globalization, and a slow-down of population growth in many countries, immigration and ethnic diversity represent major challenges at the dawn of the 21st century.

Among the new challenges confronting national governments, international organisations and civil society alike in the face of this growing ethnic diversity, is a rising political and social demand for evidence-based policies. This raises the question of collecting data on ethnic groups in order to estimate their number, describe their characteristics and identify factors of social and economic integration. In particular, measuring the extent and nature of the diverse forms of discrimination is essential to the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of anti-discrimination policies, be they national, regional or global.

Social statistics have always been at the core of political and social debates. In Canada, the rising demand for data on diverse social dimensions including ethnicity has justified the use of substantial public funds for the collection of such data, through censuses or large-scale social surveys. In Europe and in many other parts of the world, the situation is more complex; although the demand for ethnic data is growing, there is no consensus about the relevance of producing official ethnic statistics.

There is a good deal of international variation in the way in which discrimination based on national or ethnic origin is viewed. In Canada, survey or census questions on ethnic origins are explicitly justified on the grounds that Charters, legislation and equal opportunity programmes need to be closely monitored. This is not the case in many other countries. Apart from a few countries like England which are similar to Canada, most European nations (e.g. France) are opposed to including ethnic questions in official statistics. The adoption of anti-discrimination policies by the European Union, however, means that there is now strong pressure to produce ethnic statistics.

The main objective of the International conference on **Social Statistics and Ethnic Diversity: Should we count, how should we count and why?** is to establish links between the production, analysis, uses and interpretation of social statistics related to ethnic diversity. More specifically, the Conference aims to address the following questions:

- **Should we count?** This is essentially an ethical issue. Does distinguishing and characterizing populations according to their ethnic origins constitute a risk of stigmatization or is it, on the contrary, an asset for measuring and explaining discrimination and for demanding more inclusive policies?

- **How to count?** Here, the focus is on methodological considerations. There are many ways to measure ethnic origin and discrimination: what are the best and most common practices in this area, taking into account the historical, socio-economic and political specificities of each society?
- **Who is and who is not counted?** This question is an extension of the preceding one and aims at identifying biases and limitations in official statistics. Who is not counted is very revealing of the political criteria underlying methodological choices.
- **Why count?** What are the characteristics of legal, social and economic integration and non-integration (discrimination)? Is it possible (desirable?) to develop internationally comparable indicators of integration? What rights should be granted to the different categories of migrants (permanent, temporary, refugees, irregular, etc.)? All questions that require innovative data sources (e.g. administrative data and longitudinal surveys) whose future orientation needs careful consideration.

The Conference aims to encourage international exchanges in order to document the diversity of situations, namely:

- the experience of countries of immigration (Canada, the United States, Australia, etc.)
- the European experience
- the experience of countries of the South (Africa, Latin America, Asia, etc.).

The Conference also aims to generate debate between the many different actors involved:

- organizations that produce statistics
- researchers
- users (including civil society, in particular NGOs involved in anti-discrimination activities).

Submissions of Proposals

This conference aspires to bring together decision makers, policy analysts, community workers, and scholars (including students). Persons interested in submitting a paper proposal should send a one-page abstract (around 500 words) by May 1st, 2007 simultaneously to the three following addresses: a.gagnon@umontreal.ca; victor@acpd.ca; simon@ined.fr. Presentations can be made in French or English. Authors will be notified of acceptance by June 1st, 2007.

Financial Support for Students

Students whose papers are accepted may be eligible for some financial support.

Information

For more information, contact Amélie Gagnon (coordinator) at a.gagnon@umontreal.ca or consult the QICSS (www.cigss.umontreal.ca) or INED (www.ined.fr) websites.