

DOES AFRICA COUNT?

A Stocktaking of Censuses and Surveys

Conducted and published in African Countries - From the First to the Latest

Report series	ECA, African Centre for Statistics - Statistical Stocktaking Reports
Linked Initiatives	1. Guidelines for Integrating Emerging Data Sources in Statistical Operations for Enhanced Policy Uptake in Africa 2. Strengthening the role of statistics in Africa to reflect the continent's development aspirations and experience 3. Africa Beyond the Numbers Series.
Scope	Population and Housing censuses (PHC); Business/Economic/Establishment Censuses; Agriculture Censuses; Living Standards and Measurement Surveys (LSMS)/ Household Budget Surveys; Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS); Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS); Business/Economic Surveys; Labour Force Surveys (LFS); Agriculture Surveys; and Time Use Surveys (TUS)
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Presented to	Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

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List of Abbreviations

ABNS	Africa Beyond the Numbers Series
ACS	African Centre for Statistics (ECA)
AFCAS	African Commission on Agricultural Statistics
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CAR	Central African Republic
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa (United Nations)
EHCVM	Enquête Harmonisée sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FASDEV	Forum on African Statistical Development
HBS	Household Budget Survey
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICF	ICF International (implementing partner for the DHS Program)
IDH	Intelligence Data Harvester
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILOSTAT	ILO's statistical database
IPUMS	Integrated Public Use Microdata Series
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Survey / Study
LSMS-ISA	Living Standards Measurement Survey – Integrated Surveys on Agriculture
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NSO	National Statistical Office
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PHC	Population and Housing Census
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPI	Statistical Performance Indicators (World Bank)
TUS	Time Use Survey
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WB	World Bank
WCA	World Programme for the Census of Agriculture (FAO)

Foreword

Statistics are the language of development. They tell governments how many children need schools, how many households live in poverty, how many workers are informally employed, and how many smallholder farmers stand between national security and food security. Without them, policy is guesswork and accountability is impossible.

This report, titled “Does Africa Count?”, represents the first data-driven stocktaking of census and survey activity indexed online across Africa's 54 member States, from the earliest discoverable records to the present day. Drawing on data harvested through the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's Intelligence Data Harvester, it documents 1,355 rounds of statistical enumeration found in the sources searched, spanning ten categories of key censuses and surveys across 178 years of African statistical history (1848–2026). It is best read as a first-pass map of what is discoverable, and a work programme for verifying it, not as a final, confirmed inventory. Using a stepwise approach, future editions are expected to deepen country verification and extend this stocktaking to censuses and surveys that cover additional statistical domains.

The companion ACS paper, *Guidelines for Integrating Emerging Data Sources in Statistical Operations for Enhanced Policy Uptake in Africa*, draws on the gaps identified in this stocktaking to assess where administrative records and emerging data sources such as mobile, geospatial and other digitally generated data may appropriately complement established statistical operations. (see Section 1.1.1).

The findings are both encouraging and cautionary. Africa's statistical system has produced far more than is commonly acknowledged, from Egypt's earliest indexed population census in 1848 to a wave of censuses and surveys completed in 2025 and 2026. The stocktaking also surfaces apparent gaps that warrant urgent follow-up instead of alarm. For instance, 13 countries have had no indexed population census for more than a decade. Time Use Surveys, essential for measuring the unpaid care work that underpins gender equality, appear in fewer than half of member States' indexed records, even though the coverage for Living Standards Measurement Surveys stands at 51 of 54 countries.

International partners have played a significant role in financing, scheduling, and designing key components of Africa's statistical infrastructure, including the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), the Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS), and the World Census of Agriculture (WCA). At the same time, African governments have participated to varying degrees in commissioning and shaping these initiatives. While these instruments have generated valuable data, there is scope for further reflection on how decisions are made regarding what African countries measure, how often they do so, and the standards they apply. Strengthening the alignment of survey cycles with national planning priorities and expanding domestic technical capacity would help advance national ownership of statistical systems, which remain at different stages of development across the continent.

Two further gaps compound this, and this report treats both as unfinished business. Africa's statistical operations remain largely modular, with a census here, a household survey there, financed and run as isolated projects rather than as a coherent, nationally owned system; where this report finds coverage growing fastest, it is precisely because integrated regional instruments have replaced country-by-country pilots with shared design, the model this report argues should become the rule rather than the exception. And Africa's policies have yet to systematically benefit from the kind of data-driven cost-benefit analysis that would make the return on statistical investment itself measurable, without which the advocacy case in this report has numbers but no price tag attached. Read together with the World Bank's Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI), which assess the institutional capacity a coverage stocktaking cannot capture alone, this report answers what data exists; the SPI helps answer what it would take to turn that data into stronger systems and better-informed policy.

This report is an advocacy document, a reference compendium, and a call to action directed at African governments, the African Union Commission, regional economic communities, and the development partners whose sustained investment in national statistical systems is essential to realisation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

ACS, August 2026

Executive Summary

This report presents a stocktaking of ten categories of censuses and surveys conducted by African countries from the earliest historical records to 2026. Data were harvested systematically from national statistical office portals and international repositories using ECA's Intelligence Data Harvester (IDH). Additionally, human intervention was used to source some surveys and censuses missed by the Intelligence Data Harvester.

Reference-period and terminology clarification. The main analytical inventory covers records identified from 1848 through July 2026. In this report, a 'round' means one completed instance of the relevant census or survey in a country. For Population and Housing Censuses, this should not be confused with the United Nations' named global census rounds. Calendar-year comparisons and census-round comparisons are therefore reported separately, and periodicity is assessed against the recommended interval for each instrument.

Governments cannot plan what they cannot count. The 2063 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are built on numbers: how many children need school places, how many households live in poverty, how many farmers face food insecurity, how many workers move in and out of formal employment. When a country has not held a census in over four decades, or has never run a Labour force survey, national policy is imprecise; it is disconnected from the population it exists to serve, and international support cannot be well targeted either. This report exists to make that disconnect visible, countable and actionable: a single, evidence-based baseline that lets Pan-African institutions, Member States and development partners see where Africa's statistical foundations are strong, where they are fragile, and where the investment case is most urgent is a continuous exercise - a standing reference this report is designed to update as national and regional statistical systems evolve.

54 Countries covered <i>all ECA Member States</i>	10 Survey types <i>censuses & surveys</i>	1,355 Total rounds catalogued <i>across 10 types – 23.5 rounds/country median.</i>	1848 Earliest record <i>Egypt PHC</i>
254 Population & Housing Census rounds <i>52 of 54 countries</i>	171 DHS rounds <i>46 of 54 countries</i>	168 Labour Force Survey rounds <i>49 of 54 countries</i>	127 LSMS rounds <i>51 of 54 countries</i>

Key findings include:

1. Except for the two most recently independent countries, Eritrea and South Sudan, 52 of Africa's 54 countries have conducted at least one Population and Housing Census as sovereign States; with 254 rounds documented since 1848 – a median of 5 rounds per country over 178 years. However, 13 countries show no indexed census within the past ten years as of July 2026, with two countries, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, yet to conduct a census in over four decades. Eritrea and South Sudan are treated separately, as neither has conducted a census as a sovereign state. Under a uniform benchmark of one census every 10 years from approximately 1962 to 2026, the expected mean is 6 rounds per country. The observed median of 5 represents 83.3% of the expected median. This median-based comparison is separate from the continental aggregate achievement rate calculated from total actual and expected rounds.

2. The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) programme shows indexed coverage in 46 of 54 countries, with 171 rounds since 1986; eight countries, concentrated in North and Central Africa as well as Small Island States, show no indexed DHS. However, some have indexed Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) that largely cover similar modules. Meanwhile, the rest, especially the Small Island States, rely on strong health information management systems for health statistics.
3. Labour Force Surveys are indexed for 49 of 54 countries, with 168 rounds; only five countries, in Central and Eastern Africa, show no indexed round.
4. Living Standards Measurement Surveys and Household Budget Surveys are indexed for 51 of 54 countries, with 127 rounds; the remaining three countries that show no indexed data (Eritrea, Libya and Seychelles) are spread across Eastern and North Africa as well as a Small Island State.
5. Establishment Censuses show a coverage of 36 of 54 countries (69 rounds), with Rwanda and Uganda tying for the highest indexed series (5 rounds each), Rwanda at a faster 3-year median interval against Uganda's 4.5 years.
6. Agriculture Surveys (26 of 54 countries) and Time Use Surveys (TUS) (25 of 54) are the least prevalent categories on the continent. TUSs are likely undercounted, since they are often embedded within other household surveys rather than catalogued as standalone.
7. South Africa shows the highest indexed statistical record of any country, with 53 total rounds found across all ten survey categories, followed by Uganda (52) and Botswana (46), Ghana (44), and Kenya and Tanzania (43 each). This signals documentation richness.
8. Subregional differences are pronounced. West Africa records the largest absolute number of indexed census and survey rounds, with 422 rounds, while Southern Africa records the highest average per country, at 31.0 rounds. Stark Eastern Africa records 337 rounds, equivalent to 24.1 rounds per country. Central Africa has the lowest total (112 rounds) and the lowest average (16.0 rounds per country). North Africa comprises seven countries and records the lowest DHS coverage, with 5 of 7 countries having an indexed DHS and 13 rounds identified in total.
9. These patterns are corroborated by the World Bank's Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI), which assess national statistical systems on a broader institutional basis (data use, services, products, sources and infrastructure) than this report's census-and-survey coverage focus. South Africa's 2024 SPI overall score of 81.3 and South Sudan's 27.1, which the SPI's own publishers describe as reflecting institutional collapse, sit at opposite ends of this report's own country ranking, a convergence between two independently constructed measures. More broadly, Sub-Saharan Africa's average SPI score remains the lowest of any world region, trailing the best-performing regions by more than 30 points, which is consistent with this report's finding that several categories, including Establishment Censuses, Agriculture Surveys, and Time Use Surveys, remain indexed for fewer than half of African countries. Notably, the SPI's analysis flags Rwanda, Uganda, and Egypt as statistical over-performers relative to their income level, a reminder that strong institutional performance and complete census/survey coverage, as measured in this report, are related but not identical achievements, and that both lenses are needed to read Africa's statistical landscape accurately.
10. This report is intended as a background document: a stocktaking to inform ECA's advocacy, StatCom-Africa's deliberations, and Member States' own statistical planning, on any country's statistical performance. Its findings should be read alongside, and verified against, national statistical offices' own records, the World Bank SPI, and the two companion ACS papers referenced in Section 1.1.1, before being cited in any external communication.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Background

Limited resources and a profound gap in the availability, quality, and continuity of reliable statistical data have long constrained Africa's development trajectory. Population censuses, agricultural surveys, household expenditure surveys, labour force surveys, demographic and health surveys, and other key data collection instruments form the bedrock of evidence-based policymaking. They underpin government planning, resource allocation, poverty measurement, and the monitoring of global development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063.

Despite this centrality, the coverage, frequency, and continuity of censuses and surveys vary considerably across Africa, with some countries facing persistent financial, technical, and institutional constraints. This is corroborated by the World Bank's Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI), an independent measure of statistical-system institutional capacity: Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the three lowest-scoring world regions on the SPI overall score, trailing the best-performing regions by more than 30 points (out of 100). The first African population censuses date back to colonial-era enumerations in Egypt (earliest indexed record now dated to 1848; see Chapter 2.1), and to several other territories in the early twentieth century. Since then, the landscape has evolved dramatically from manual tabulation to digital data capture, from externally driven colonial enumerations to nationally owned statistical programmes; however, critical gaps persist.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), as the principal United Nations body tasked with promoting the economic and social development of its 54 Member States, has both the mandate and the unique convening authority to address this statistical deficit. Since its establishment in 1958, ECA has championed the development of Africa's national statistical systems as a cornerstone of evidence-based governance. Census and survey data are foundational inputs for development planning, poverty measurement, public health targeting, agricultural policy, and monitoring international frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Yet no comprehensive, data-driven inventory of Africa's census and survey history has previously existed. Policymakers and development partners have lacked a consolidated picture of what has been counted, when, with what periodicity, and where critical gaps remain. This report fills that gap.

1.1.1 The Political Economy of African Statistics: Why This Matters Beyond Coverage

Africa's data landscape has been shaped by historical, institutional, and financing arrangements that may influence what is measured, how frequently data are collected, and which actors set statistical priorities. Although this report does not systematically assess these arrangements, they provide important context for interpreting the availability, frequency, and continuity of the censuses and surveys catalogued.

The report therefore raises several questions for further assessment:

1. How are national and external priorities reflected in survey agendas?

To what extent are the selection, design, and implementation of major statistical instruments shaped by national statistical priorities, and to what extent do they reflect the mandates and financing priorities of international partners? Programmes such as the Demographic and Health Surveys, the Living Standards Measurement Study, and the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture have generated valuable and internationally comparable data. Further analysis would be needed, however, to understand how the

involvement of external partners affects national ownership, priority-setting, and the apparent richness of a country's statistical landscape.

2. What determines the frequency and periodicity of data collection?

Where censuses and surveys are conducted irregularly, to what extent does this reflect discontinuities in external or domestic financing, changes in policy priorities, operational constraints, or limitations in institutional capacity? Distinguishing among these factors is important because they imply different policy responses, including strengthening institutional capacity, improving coordination, increasing domestic investment, or securing more predictable and sustainable financing.

3. How is technical responsibility shared between national and international institutions?

What roles do national statistical institutions and international technical partners play in survey design, sampling, implementation, quality assurance, and data analysis? International collaboration can support quality and comparability, but further assessment is needed to determine whether such arrangements also strengthen the long-term ability of national statistical systems to design, finance, and implement their statistical programmes independently.

These questions are not assessed directly in this report and should therefore not be interpreted as conclusions about individual countries or instruments. Rather, they identify areas for future research that could help explain some of the patterns documented in subsequent chapters.

A fourth point, less about history and more about direction: much of the coverage growth this report has documented has come from regional, harmonized instruments such as the WAEMU¹ Enquête Harmonisée sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages (EHCVM), the World Bank's LSMS-ISA, rather than solely from national programmes. This is arguably a working example of the integrated, rather than modular, data collection model that African statistical leadership has called for: a shared regional design and financing structure that still produces nationally usable data. Whether this model can be extended deliberately, in comparison to emerging piecemeal, instrument-by-instrument approaches, is a live question this report does not resolve but flags for the Statistical Commission for Africa's consideration.

Finally, this report should be read alongside the World Bank's Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI), which assess statistical systems on data use, services, products, sources and infrastructure, a broader institutional lens than the pure coverage-and-periodicity stocktaking undertaken here. A direct comparison between this report's coverage findings and countries' SPI scores would help distinguish countries where the constraint is an absence of underlying data (this report's focus) from countries where data exists but is not yet reflected in stronger statistical systems or in policy use (the SPI's focus, and one of the concerns raised elsewhere in this chapter about whether Africa's data yet drives cost-benefit-informed policy decisions).

1.1.1.1 Linkage to other ACS Initiatives

This report does not stand alone within ACS's programme of work. Two papers currently before the Statistical Commission for Africa bear directly on the findings above, and this report in turn supplies country-level evidence that both papers otherwise assert in general terms.

The two papers perform different but complementary functions. This stocktaking identifies apparent gaps in the indexed availability, recency and periodicity of foundational censuses and surveys; it does not determine which

¹ WAEMU Commission covers Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo

alternative source is suitable for addressing each gap. A confirmed gap should therefore trigger a country-level assessment of the statistical and policy need, not automatic adoption of a particular technology. Administrative and emerging sources may improve continuity, timeliness, granularity, and responsiveness between conventional rounds. Still, they do not replace the benchmark, denominator, and sampling-frame functions of censuses and nationally representative surveys. Their use should follow the common decision pathway set out in the companion paper, including comparison of source alternatives, safeguards and readiness, validation and reconciliation, lifecycle costs, statistical designation, and a formal decision to institutionalise, redesign, or discontinue the initiative.

Data and Statistics that Reflect Africa's Realities argues that African statistical systems have built foundations in censuses, surveys and national accounts, but remain better equipped to produce established indicators than to generate the timely, contextual evidence Africa's own transformation agenda requires; noting, for example, that only 150 out of 243 indicators included in the 2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report had sufficient data for assessment.

Examples of some linkages are direct enough to cite specifically:

- The 13 countries in this report with no census within the UN's 10-year standard, including Somalia (51 years) and the DRC (42 years), are among the most severe. Eritrea and South Sudan are treated as a separate category, 33 and 15 years, respectively, since independence without a census of their own as a sovereign state rather than counted among the thirteen (see Section 2.3). Where the gap is confirmed, geospatial, mobile, or administrative data sources may provide interim or complementary evidence, especially where conventional data collection is difficult or unsafe.” This report's country list is a ready-made prioritization input for that paper's proposed case studies and continental inventory.
- The LSMS/HBS coverage growth this report documents, driven substantially by two regional instruments such as the WAEMU EHCVM and the World Bank's Living Standards Measurement Study – Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA)², is a working example of the “integrated, trusted data ecosystem” the Africa's Realities paper argues for in the abstract, and directly relevant to the Emerging Data Sources paper's own question of which shared regional services (legal templates, secure processing, joint procurement) would add the greatest value.

1.1.1.2 Linkage to FASDEV, StatCom-Africa, and the Africa Beyond the Numbers Series

This report's findings connect directly to three items on ACS's own near-term calendar, giving the roadmap for verification a concrete home beyond general aspiration. The Forum on African Statistical Development's twelfth meeting (FASDEV XII, 20 October 2026) is built around a stocktaking function that predates this report by two decades: since its founding in 2004, one of FASDEV's three core mandates has been to maintain “a permanent system for monitoring statistical development in Africa.” FASDEV XII's own concept note quantifies the financing gap that this report's advocacy case (Chapter 8) argues in the abstract: Official Development Assistance (ODA) for data and statistics represented only 0.25 percent of total ODA disbursed by DAC donors in 2023; domestic resources covered just 16 percent of statistical financing in Togo's own country report; and the financing required to implement the continental statistical strategy - an estimated USD 11 billion, remains far above the USD 1.4 billion mobilized to date. This report's country-level census and survey gaps are a direct, granular input to quantifying that shortfall by country rather than only at the continental level.

² ² The Living Standards Measurement Study – Integrated Surveys on Agriculture is a World Bank Program that supports household panel surveys in Sub-Saharan Africa to track poverty, welfare, and Agricultural data over time. Partner countries include Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda

FASDEV XII's communiqué will be submitted for endorsement to the Statistical Commission for Africa's tenth session (Addis Ababa, 19–23 October 2026), which carries a standing statutory agenda item -a Report on Progress in Population and Housing Censuses that this report's Chapter 2 findings, including the 13-country census gap and the corrections to Tanzania's and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's records, are directly positioned to inform. The tenth session also carries a dedicated session titled 'Strengthening the role of statistics in reflecting Africa's development realities', confirming that this report's coverage stocktaking and ACS's wider strategic agenda are not parallel tracks. Still, the same conversation viewed from two different altitudes.

Finally, this report's underlying data is the raw material for a further ACS initiative, the Africa Beyond the Numbers Series (ABNS), which repackages census- and survey-derived indicators into policy-relevant 'statistical blocks' - for instance, child health, education or poverty blocks, each drawing on DHS, MICS or LSMS data. Where this report finds a census or survey gap, the ABNS block built on that same instrument should bring to light the subsequent impact of stale or missing data; the two initiatives are therefore best read together, with this report's coverage findings serving as a direct input to the ABNS's own assessment of 'the state of availability, production and dissemination' of the indicators it packages for policy uptake.

1.2 Objectives

This initiative aims to produce a compendium and database covering ten categories of key censuses and surveys conducted across African member States. The specific objectives are:

1. Catalogue all key censuses and surveys including Population and Housing Censuses, Agricultural Censuses, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Labour Force Surveys, Living Standards Measurement Surveys, Business/Economic Censuses and Surveys, Agriculture Surveys, and Time Use Surveys - from the earliest available records to the present, documenting for each:
 - a) The number of rounds conducted, the earliest and latest years of data collection, and actual and average periodicity;
 - b) Year of publication and funding sources, where determinable;
 - c) Where discoverable, the relevance and policy impact of the statistics generated, recognizing that this report has not yet systematically evidenced this dimension and identifies it as a gap for future editions.
2. Identify critical data gaps, countries and sub-regions where censuses and surveys have not been conducted within internationally recommended periods, as the evidentiary basis for the advocacy case set out in Chapter

These two objectives are intended to build an evidence-based case for high-level advocacy: urging African governments, regional bodies, and international partners to prioritise, fund, and sustain census and survey programmes as strategic national investments as opposed to episodic administrative exercises, and to interrogate the policy relevance of censuses and surveys for Africa's development.

1.3 Scope and Methodology

The stocktaking covers ten categories of key statistical operations across all 54 ECA member States. Data were compiled using ECA's Intelligence Data Harvester (IDH), an AI-assisted web scraping and extraction tool that systematically collects census and survey metadata from national statistical offices, websites, and international repositories including the World Bank Microdata Library, ILOSTAT, FAO's FAOSTAT and WCA portal, the DHS Programme, UNICEF MICS, IPUMS International, and the UN Statistics Division. Additionally, human intervention was applied to source some of the surveys and censuses missed by the Intelligence Data Harvester.

The database documents, for each country and census/survey type, include the number of rounds, earliest and latest data collection years, average periodicity, publication dates, and links to microdata and reports. Drawing on the database, a statistical characterisation of the development indicators generated by each census and survey type, such as poverty, inequality, food security, health, education, labour market participation, agricultural productivity, gender equity, and time poverty.

The inventory distinguishes the year an enumeration was conducted from the availability or publication of its results. A census may therefore appear in the conduct-year analysis even when the latest published table or projection still relies on an earlier census. Recently completed 2026 enumerations, including Cameroon, Chad, Gabon and Lesotho, are recorded by conduct year where completion could be verified; the absence of a report online is not treated as evidence that the operation did not occur.

Data Limitation - Read Before Using This Report

- This report records what the Intelligence Data Harvester found indexed online as of June 2026. A survey or census showing zero recorded rounds means no web-indexed record was identified through the sources searched; it is not confirmation that the operation never took place.
- This distinction matters most for the countries the report flags as gaps: conflict-affected and low-connectivity states are simultaneously the most likely to have data gaps and the least likely to have any activity indexed online, even when it occurred. The two effects are not separable in this dataset.

This stocktaking is best read as a first input into the data-gap profiling stage of the companion framework: it shows which conventional statistical operations are indexed, how recently they were conducted and how regularly they appear in the record. It does not, on its own, prove that an operation never took place, that the resulting data are representative or fit for purpose, or that an emerging source is necessarily the right response to an apparent gap. The next step is verification. Records should therefore be distinguished, where possible, as machine-identified, repository-verified or nationally verified, and any apparent gap should be confirmed with the relevant national statistical office before it becomes the basis for selecting a source, mobilizing finance or shaping policy response.

This caveat is not theoretical. A deeper research cross-check against national statistical office sites, ILOSTAT, and the World Bank Microdata Library independently confirmed the same pattern flagged above: apparent gaps are least reliable for conflict-affected states (Somalia, South Sudan, Eritrea, Libya, Sudan) and small island or lusophone states with thinner online documentation. The same cross-check also surfaced a distinct measurement risk worth naming directly: the World Bank Microdata Library's own country-filter sidebar aggregates studies across all collections, not just the relevant one, and can overcount true survey rounds by two to three times (for example, one country's enterprise-survey sidebar figure of 18 studies reduced to 7 once filtered to the correct collection). Any figure drawn from a repository's sidebar or facet count, in this report or in future editions, should be re-verified against the specific collection it claims to summarize before being cited.

For each census or survey, the following dimensions were recorded:

1. Survey type and country
2. Number of rounds identified in indexed sources
3. Earliest and most recent years of data collection found
4. Inter-round intervals and average periodicity, where multiple rounds were identified
5. Average publication lag (years from data collection to report publication), where determinable
6. Subregional classification

1.4 The Ten Survey and Census Categories

Coverage is far from uniform across the ten categories. Population and Housing Censuses have been conducted by 52 of 54 countries (96.3%) as sovereign States; Establishment Censuses, Agriculture Surveys, and Time Use Surveys have coverage below 70 per cent, with the latter two below half. Recommended intervals also vary systematically by purpose: censuses are infrequent by design (10 years), reflecting their cost and comprehensiveness, while surveys cycle every 2–5 years to track conditions between census rounds. The earliest-year column indicates how far back this report's search found any record for that category; it says nothing about how continuous or current a country's own series has been since, a distinction Chapters 2 through 6 examine category by category.

As shown in Table 1, the 1,355 census and survey rounds identified represent only about half of the 2,748 rounds expected under the recommended intervals. However, the shortfall varies considerably across categories. Population and housing censuses came closest to the expected schedule, with 254 of 316 rounds found. In comparison, substantial gaps were recorded for labour force surveys (168 of 635 expected rounds), agricultural surveys (82 of 279), and business and economic surveys (178 of 373).

If African countries had undertaken these censuses and surveys at the recommended intervals, policymakers would have had access to more timely, regular, and comparable evidence to identify emerging needs, set priorities, allocate resources, and design policies responsive to changing demographic, social, and economic conditions. More consistent data production would also have strengthened the monitoring of policy implementation by enabling governments to establish reliable baselines, track progress at appropriate intervals, identify disparities and implementation gaps earlier, and adjust programmes based on evidence. The difference between the rounds found and those expected reflects not only a statistical data gap, but also missed opportunities to strengthen policy design, accountability, institutional learning, and nationally led development planning across the continent.

Table 1: Overview of the Ten Census and Survey Categories — Coverage, Rounds and Periodicity

Survey / Census Type	Category	Interval (yrs)	Countries w/ Record Found	Actual Rounds Found	Actual Median Rounds/Ctry	Expected Rounds, aggregate*	Earliest Round	Expected median rounds /Ctry since 1962**	Median achievement rate	Aggregate Achievement
Population and Housing Census	Census	10	52 of 54 (96.3%)	254	5	316	1848	6	83.3%	80.4%
Business/Economic/Establishment Census	Census	10	36 of 54 (66.7%)	69	1	122	1962	6	16.7%	56.6%
Agriculture Census	Census	10	51 of 54 (94%)	187	3	349	1929	6	50.0%	53.6%
Living Standards Measurement Survey / HBS	Survey	5	51 of 54 (94.4%)	127	2	178	1993	12	16.7%	71.3%
Demographic and Health Survey	Survey	5	46 of 54 (85.2%)	171	3	279	1986	12	25.0%	61.3%
Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey	Survey	5	44 of 54 (81.5%)	82	1	160	1995	12	8.3%	51.3%
Business / Economic Survey	Survey	3	52 of 54 (96.3%)	178	3	373	1992	21	14.3%	47.7%
Labour Force Survey	Survey	2	49 of 54 (90.7%)	168	2.5	635	1984	31	8.1%	26.5%
Agriculture Survey	Survey	3	26 of 54 (48.1%)	82	0	279	1988	21	0.0%	29.4%
Time Use Survey	Survey	10	25 of 54 (46.3%)	37	0	57	1998	6	0.0%	64.9%

*Expected Rounds is the sum, across all 54 countries, of each country's own expected round count at its recommended periodicity, computed over its own applicable time span;

** Expected median rounds per country and median benchmark attainment use a uniform benchmark beginning around 1962.

***Actual intervals vary a lot depending on funding, capacity, and policy needs.

Raw round counts are not directly comparable across the ten categories because the operations have different recommended frequencies. A Population and Housing Census is generally conducted every ten years, while a Labour Force Survey may be expected every two years. Using approximately 1962 as a common reference point and counting complete recommended intervals, a country could plausibly have conducted six population censuses but 31 labour force surveys.

Table 1 therefore presents two complementary measures to account for these differences. The aggregate achievement rate compares the total rounds identified with the total expected over each category's applicable time span. In contrast, the median benchmark attainment rate compares the median rounds per country with a uniform per-country benchmark. Population and Housing Censuses record an aggregate achievement rate of 80.4 per cent and a median benchmark attainment rate of 83.3 per cent. The corresponding rates are 47.7 and 14.3 per cent for Business and Economic Surveys, and 26.5 and 8.1 per cent for Labour Force Surveys. The aggregate measure reflects overall continental production, while the median measure represents the typical country's experience.

Agriculture Surveys record an aggregate achievement rate of 29.4 per cent and a median benchmark attainment rate of zero, indicating limited country coverage and irregular implementation. Time Use Surveys have a higher aggregate rate of 64.9 per cent but also a zero median because their rounds are concentrated among fewer than half of African countries. A zero median therefore indicates limited country coverage, not the absence of surveys across the continent.

Together, these measures help distinguish statistical operations that are absent from those that exist but are conducted less frequently than recommended. The benchmarks are indicative rather than formal national targets and should be used to identify patterns requiring national verification and further assessment, not to rank country performance.

Chapter 2: Population and Housing Censuses

The Population and Housing Census is Africa's most universally conducted statistical operation. Fifty-two³ of the 54 Member States have conducted at least one census as a sovereign state. Across these 52 countries, 254 rounds have been documented since 1848, the most extensive enumeration record on the continent.

2.1 Historical Overview

Africa's census history stretches back further than the colonial era. Egypt holds the earliest indexed record on the continent, with a census dating to 1848, more than a century earlier. South Africa shows the highest indexed series of any country, with 14 rounds since 1911, spanning both the colonial and post-apartheid periods. South Africa's 14 rounds refer to separate census operations recorded since 1911. The companion population statistics brief begins in 1960 and therefore shows nine operations. Censuses conducted at approximately five-year intervals are counted separately in the historical inventory, but they should not provide additional credit when assessing compliance with the recommended decennial census cycle. By independence in the 1950s and 1960s, most African countries had conducted inaugural national censuses, establishing the foundation for their statistical systems.

The pace of census-taking accelerated after the 1974 World Population Year, and the subsequent rounds aligned with decennial UN recommendations. The 2010 round was the most broadly participated in, with most African countries completing censuses between 2009 and 2012. The 2020 round, though disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, saw significant catch-up activity by 2022–2026. Tanzania and Uganda show the next-highest indexed series after South Africa, each with 8 rounds.

2.2 Coverage and Periodicity

Fifty-two of the 54 countries have conducted at least one census as sovereign States, with variation here being in depth and recency rather than presence. North, Southern, and Western Africa show the highest median rounds per country (5), while Central and Eastern Africa have more moderate medians (4 and 3.5, respectively). Eastern Africa's low median (3.5) reflects both fewer historical rounds due to some of the most severe current gaps on the continent.

At the continental level, the actual median of five census rounds is compared with an expected median of six rounds under the uniform 1962–2026 benchmark, equivalent to a median benchmark attainment rate of 83.3 per cent. South Africa's higher number of census operations does not affect the continental median, which is determined by the middle countries in the distribution.

Historical predecessor-state enumerations are retained where they are relevant to subsequent estimates, but they are labelled separately. South Sudan's 2008 record refers to an enumeration undertaken while it was part of Sudan, and Eritrea's 1984 record refers to an enumeration undertaken while it was part of Ethiopia. Neither is counted as a census conducted by the country after independence.

Table 2: Population and Housing Census Coverage by Subregion

Subregion	Countries	PHC Rounds	Median Rounds/Country	Notable Coverage
West Africa	15	74	5	Cabo Verde, Gambia, and Ghana lead with 6 rounds each
Eastern Africa	14	55	3.5	Tanzania and Uganda lead with 8 rounds each

³ Eritrea and South Sudan are excluded, as their only indexed enumerations were conducted by predecessor states before independence

North Africa	7	34	5	Egypt: earliest indexed record (1848); Algeria and Tunisia tied at 6 rounds each
Southern Africa	11	64	5	South Africa: 14 rounds since 1911 is the richest series found
Central Africa	7	27	4	Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe tied at 5 rounds each, Gabon's most recent completed Feb–Mar 2026
Africa	54	254	5	Expected median: 6 rounds under the uniform 1962-2026 benchmark; median benchmark attainment: 83.3%

2.3 Countries Overdue for a Population and Housing Census

As of July 2026, thirteen countries show no web-indexed record of a population and housing census within the internationally recommended ten-year interval, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Somalia, among others. Collectively, these countries represent a significant share of Africa's population. This confirms and sharpens the point raised earlier in this report: three of Africa's four most populous countries (Nigeria, Ethiopia, and the DRC) have census gaps of 20, 19, and 42 years, respectively; only Egypt, the fourth, has a recent record (2017). Three of the continent's four most populous countries have not conducted a population census in about two decades.

Somalia has not held a census in 51 years, while it is 42 years for the Democratic Republic of Congo, the second-largest gap in this dataset, and 33 years for Eritrea. Several countries in this list, including Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have experienced conflict or displacement that plausibly both delays census operations and reduces the likelihood that any completed operation is indexed online. Furthermore, South Sudan's only verified census was conducted in April 2008, while it was still part of Sudan and before the 2011 independence referendum. This means South Sudan has had no census of its own since independence, suggesting an 18-year gap. Eritrea presents a parallel case: its only indexed enumeration was conducted in 1984, while still part of Ethiopia and nearly a decade before its 1993 independence. Like South Sudan, Eritrea has therefore never conducted a census of its own as a sovereign state; both countries are treated as a distinct category in this report rather than included in the count of thirteen countries above. Countries further down the list (Benin, Equatorial Guinea) show gaps closer to a single missed cycle. Eastern (including Eritrea and South Sudan) and Central Africa together account for ten of the thirteen countries, consistent with the subregional pattern in Table 2, where these same subregions showed the lowest average rounds per country.

For Somalia, the report distinguishes census conduct from results release: the 1975 census has released results, whereas the reported 1985-1986 enumeration requires country confirmation regarding the extent and status of any released results. The overdue-census measure uses the latest nationally verifiable census result and does not treat an unreleased or unverified operation as equivalent to a published census series.

Table 3: Countries Overdue for a Population and Housing Census (More than 10 Years Since Last Indexed Round)

Country	Subregion	Most Recent Record Found	Years Since
Somalia	Eastern Africa	1975	51 years
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	Eastern Africa	1984	42 years
Central African Republic	Central Africa	2003	23 years
Cameroon⁴	Central Africa	2005	21 years
Nigeria	West Africa	2006	20 years
Libya	North Africa	2006	20 years

⁴ As of the time of this stocktaking, Cameroon is currently conducting data collection for its 2026 census

Ethiopia	Eastern Africa	2007	19 years
Sudan	North Africa	2008	18 years
Chad	Central Africa	2009	17 years
Guinea-Bissau	West Africa	2009	17 years
Niger	West Africa	2012	14 years
Benin	West Africa	2013	13 years
Equatorial Guinea	Central Africa	2015	11 years

Key Finding: A Possible Census Gap

- 13 of 54 countries (24%) show no web-indexed census record within the past 10 years.
- The Democratic Republic of Congo's most recently indexed census dates to 1984

Chapter 3: Agricultural and Economic Censuses

3.1 Agriculture Censuses

Agriculture censuses conducted every ten years under FAO's World Programme for the Census of Agriculture (WCA) are the primary instrument for understanding the structure of farming systems. Of Africa's 54 countries, 50 (93%) have at least one indexed agriculture census, generating 192 rounds since Egypt's earliest indexed census in 1929.

Agricultural censuses are particularly critical in Africa, where over 60 per cent of the population depends on agriculture for livelihoods. Unlike agricultural surveys, censuses provide complete enumeration of all agricultural holdings at the sub-national level, enabling governments to identify smallholder productivity gaps, land tenure insecurity, gender disparities in land ownership, and variations in irrigation access. The leading countries, including South Africa, Kenya, Lesotho, and Tanzania, combine long historical series (several dating to the 1930s–1960s) with reasonably sustained periodicity, rather than having conducted more rounds in absolute terms. This distinguishes programme continuity from a high round count achieved through irregular, one-off enumerations.

Across the eight leading countries, South Africa recorded the highest number, with eight rounds, while Kenya, Lesotho, and Tanzania each recorded seven. Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Togo each recorded six. However, the number of rounds alone does not fully reflect the strength or consistency of agricultural data production. For example, Kenya's seven rounds span 1930 to 2019 but have a median periodicity of 16 years, substantially longer than the generally recommended ten-year interval. By contrast, Tanzania also recorded seven rounds, but with a median periodicity of nine years, suggesting comparatively more regular census-taking. South Africa, Lesotho, and Ethiopia met the ten-year median interval, while Malawi, Nigeria, and Togo recorded slightly longer median intervals of 13 to 14 years.

Table 4 also shows substantial differences in historical coverage and recent activity. South Africa, Kenya, and Malawi have records dating back to 1930, whereas Ethiopia's earliest indexed round was in 1967. Nigeria had the most recent census among the countries listed, in 2022, followed by Kenya, Lesotho, Tanzania, and Ethiopia in 2019. In contrast, the latest indexed rounds for Malawi and Togo were in 2006 and 2012, respectively. This suggests that a country can have a relatively high cumulative number of censuses while still lacking sufficiently recent information for current policy decisions.

Long gaps between censuses, or the absence of a recent round, can reduce policy responsiveness by limiting governments' ability to monitor changes in agricultural production, land use, farm structures, technology adoption, and the characteristics of agricultural households. More regular censuses would provide updated benchmarks for designing agricultural policies, targeting investments and support programmes, responding to emerging food-system pressures, and monitoring whether interventions are reaching the intended areas and farming populations.

Table 4: Countries with the Most Agriculture Census Rounds Indexed

Country	Rounds	Earliest	Latest	Median Periodicity
South Africa	8	1930	2017	10 years
Kenya	7	1930	2019	16 years
Lesotho	7	1950	2019	10 years
Tanzania	7	1960	2019	9 years
Ethiopia	6	1967	2019	10 years
Malawi	6	1930	2006	13 years
Nigeria	6	1950	2022	14 years
Togo	6	1950	2012	13 years

Uganda	6	1950	2020	12 years
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Only 3 countries show no indexed agriculture census: Eritrea, South Sudan and Sudan, all conflict-affected states. This concentration is itself informative: it may reflect operational impossibility during conflict, weaker web publication practice, or both.

3.2 Business / Economic / Establishment Censuses

Business and establishment censuses which enumerate all formal economic enterprises by sector, size, employment and location, show that 36 of 54 countries (66.7%) show at least one indexed round, generating 69 rounds in total – with the earliest round in 1962 and the most recent one in 2025. The absence of establishment census data limits governments' ability to design effective tax systems, industrial policy and employment strategies.

Ghana, Rwanda, and Uganda share the highest-indexed series of any country, each with a median of 5 rounds; Rwanda's are the most frequent, at a 3-year median interval, followed by Uganda with a 4.5-year interval, compared with Ghana's considerably slower 14-year median. Angola, Benin, Egypt, Mali and Zambia each show 3 rounds. For 18 countries, no indexed establishment census was found, as with other categories.

Agricultural and Economic Census: Indexing Gaps Requiring Verification

- Only 3 countries show no agriculture census indexed: Eritrea, South Sudan and Sudan, all conflict-affected states, suggesting this specific gap may be more likely to reflect disruption than an indexing artefact.
- 18 countries show no establishment census indexed, a wider gap than agriculture censuses show. The gap is concentrated in Central and North Africa.
- Where establishment censuses are indexed, periodicity varies widely from Rwanda's 3-year cycle to Ghana's 14-year average interval, suggesting capacity and institutional commitment vary considerably even among countries with active programmes.

Chapter 4: Household and Welfare Surveys

4.1 Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS⁵)

The DHS Programme remains Africa's most consistent multi-country health survey. With 171 rounds completed in 46 countries since 1986, it is the continent's primary source of nationally representative data on maternal and child health, fertility, nutrition, malaria, and HIV/AIDS.

Senegal leads with 11 indexed DHS rounds, followed by Kenya (8 rounds) and Egypt, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe (7 rounds each), and Guinea, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zambia (6 rounds each). Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Madagascar follow with 5 rounds each. These figures place DHS coverage as broad but less concentrated, as a small group of countries with sustained government and donor commitment account for a disproportionate share of total rounds.

West Africa accounts for the largest share of indexed DHS rounds (66), a pattern driven substantially by Senegal's eleven rounds, the most of any country across any survey category, alongside sustained programmes in Ghana, Mali and Guinea. North and Central Africa show both the fewest participating countries and the fewest rounds, even though some have conducted Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, which largely collect data on a range of modules similar to the DHS. The remaining countries in the Small Island States category, such as Seychelles and Mauritius, have neither conducted DHS nor MICS and may rely on their Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) for health statistics.

North Africa has the largest apparent DHS gap, though Sudan (1990) and Libya (2014) both show an indexed survey. Algeria and Mauritania show no DHS record in the DHS Program's own country catalogue; notwithstanding, they each have indexed rounds in the MICS.

Table 5: Demographic and Health Survey Coverage by Subregion

Subregion	Countries w/ DHS	Total Rounds	Countries Without DHS	Coverage
West Africa	13 of 15	66	2 countries	87%
Eastern Africa	12 of 14	48	2 countries	86%
Southern Africa	10 of 11	31	1 country	91%
North Africa	5 of 7	13	2 countries	71%
Central Africa	6 of 7	13	1 country	86%

4.2 Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)

The UNICEF-led MICS programme covers 44 countries and has conducted 82 rounds since 1995, per UNICEF's MICS survey catalogue. It is especially important as a complement to the DHS in countries that have conducted few or no DHS surveys. Guinea-Bissau leads in MICS participation with 6 rounds since 1996, followed by Tunisia (5 rounds), the Central African Republic, the DRC and Mauritania (4 rounds each), and Cameroon, Chad, Eswatini, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe are among a group of countries showing 3 rounds. The MICS7 round, launched in 2023, is expected to expand coverage further.

⁵ Note: DHS coverage figures describe one specific survey instrument, not all health data collection. Routine Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) and other national health surveys outside the DHS framework also generate health data in most of the 8 countries shown here without an indexed DHS round; this report does not track HMIS, so DHS and MICS coverage should not be treated as a proxy for a country's overall health data capacity.

4.3 Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS) / Household Budget Surveys (HBS)

Living Standards Measurement Surveys and Household Budget Surveys coverage reveals that 51 of 54 countries (94%) show at least one indexed round. Uganda leads with 8 rounds between 2000 and 2024, followed by Mozambique and Madagascar (6 rounds each) and Algeria and Cameroon (5 rounds each). Botswana, Djibouti, the Gambia, Ghana, and South Africa have 4 rounds each. Madagascar shows the earliest indexed round from 1993.

Part of this broader coverage is structural as eight West African states (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo) run a single harmonized instrument, i.e. the WAEMU Enquête Harmonisée sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages (EHCVM); under a coordinated World Bank/WAEMU programme, so one regional financing and design decision accounts for household budget survey coverage across nearly all of West Africa's WAEMU members at once. This means the true policy lever for closing remaining gaps could be a regional programme decision, not separate national ones.

LSMS/HBS Coverage: Continued Expansion

- Indexed LSMS/HBS coverage stands at 51 of 54 countries (94%);
- Some of this coverage is delivered through a single regional instrument rather than country-by-country capacity: the WAEMU EHCVM covers 8 West African states in one coordinated World Bank/WAEMU programme, so closing the remaining WAEMU gaps is a regional financing decision, not 8 separate national ones.
- Only 3 countries - Eritrea, Libya and Seychelles show no indexed round
- Uganda's 8 LSMS rounds under the World Bank's LSMS-Integrated Surveys on Agriculture since 2000 remain the continent's most sustained series, demonstrating what is achievable with long-term investment.

Chapter 5: Labour Market and Economic Surveys

5.1 Labour Force Surveys (LFS)

Labour Force Surveys are the primary instrument for measuring employment, unemployment and labour underutilization. The search found LFS data in 49 of 54 countries (91%) - 168 rounds since Botswana's earliest indexed 1984 survey.

South Africa's quarterly LFS produces the most rounds of any country (16 indexed), followed by Burkina Faso (8 rounds), and Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia (7 rounds each). Malawi, Morocco and Senegal follow with 6 rounds each. This spread, with strong coverage across every subregion, may suggest LFS implementation is considerably more widespread across Africa. Only 5 countries show no indexed LFS: the Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, South Sudan and São Tomé and Príncipe. All are in Central or Eastern Africa, and several are conflict-affected, a pattern consistent with the census and agriculture-census gaps identified elsewhere in this report. The median periodicity for indexed LSMS/HBS rounds ranges from 2 to 14 years.

Southern Africa leads on total rounds (57) despite having only 11 countries, almost entirely due to South Africa's quarterly programme; strip South Africa out and Southern Africa's remaining ten countries average closer to the continental norm. Central Africa shows both the fewest participating countries (4 of 7) and the fewest rounds (8), the weakest LFS presence of any subregion, consistent with the establishment-census and agriculture-survey gaps found in the same subregion elsewhere.

Table 6: Labour Force Survey Coverage by Subregion

Subregion	Countries w/ LFS	Total Rounds	Countries Without LFS	Coverage
West Africa	15 of 15	47	0 countries	100%
Eastern Africa	12 of 14	36	2 countries	86%
Southern Africa	11 of 11	57	0 countries	100%
North Africa	7 of 7	20	0 countries	100%
Central Africa	4 of 7	8	3 countries	57%

5.2 Business / Economic Surveys

Business and economic surveys are periodic assessments of enterprise performance, output, and employment. The search shows the broadest coverage of any survey category in the dataset: 52 of 54 countries (96%) have at least one indexed round, totalling 178 rounds spanning 1992 to 2025. Egypt, Ghana and Zambia dominate in volume with 7 indexed rounds each. Kenya and Uganda (6 rounds each), and Burundi, Cameroon, Sierra Leone and Tanzania (5 rounds each) follow. Only Algeria and Libya show no indexed business survey. The median periodicity for the indexed surveys ranges from 2 to 19 years.

The World Bank's Enterprise Surveys programme bundles several related instruments such as the core survey, informal-sector and micro-enterprise siblings, innovation follow-ups, and COVID-19 waves, under one country folder, and the Microdata Library's own sidebar count aggregates across all these plus unrelated collections. A dedicated reconciliation against the enterprise surveys collection specifically found this inflates apparent round counts by two to three times for some countries; any per-country business-survey round count in this report or its sources should be understood as sensitive to which of these tiers was counted.

Chapter 6: Agricultural and Time Use Surveys

6.1 Agriculture Surveys

Agricultural surveys are periodic, sample-based assessments of crop production, livestock, inputs, and agricultural livelihoods. Overall, 26 of 54 African countries (48%) have an indexed survey, with 82 rounds since Ethiopia's earliest indexed survey in 1988. Botswana leads in volume with 17 annual or near-annual surveys between 1995 and 2019. Senegal follows with 9 rounds (2015–2023) and Ethiopia with 7 rounds (1988–2021); Zambia shows 5 rounds. Although the recommended periodicity for Agricultural surveys is 3 years, the median periodicity for the indexed surveys ranges from 1 to 15 years.

The FAO-coordinated AFCAS survey rounds have supported agriculture survey implementation in several countries, including Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. In addition, eight countries, including Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda, participate in the World Bank's LSMS-Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) initiative, which embeds a standardized agriculture module within a household panel survey; this is a second example, alongside WAEMU's EHCVM in Chapter 4.3, of a regional programme design decision extending coverage of agricultural surveys across several countries simultaneously.

Twenty-eight of 54 countries show no indexed agricultural survey. However, the gap still includes several countries with at least 5 indexed rounds of agriculture censuses, such as Egypt, Eswatini, Seychelles and Togo, a reminder that census and survey activity for the same sector do not necessarily move together. For these countries, published statistics likely rely on administrative estimates, modelled FAO data, or agriculture census data alone for crop production. Still, this report cannot distinguish whether that is because no direct-enumeration survey exists, or because one exists but was not indexed by the sources searched.

6.2 Time Use Surveys

Time Use Surveys are the primary instrument for measuring unpaid care and domestic work, a key dimension of gender inequality and a specific SDG monitoring requirement (SDG 5.4.1). Overall, 25 of 54 African countries show an indexed Time Use Survey of any form, with 37 rounds documented since Benin and Malawi's earliest indexed surveys in 1998. The ILO's own published estimate is higher, with around 30 countries (57%), suggesting that this report's 25-country figure is itself a conservative floor rather than a ceiling, consistent with the modular-embedding problem described below.

Unlike most survey types where standalone surveys are the norm, many African Time Use surveys have been embedded as modules within larger household surveys, such as Tanzania's Labour Force Survey modules (2006, 2014, 2020), Malawi's Integrated Household Survey series (1998, 2005, 2011), and Mauritius's Living Conditions Survey (2003, 2019, 2024). This modular approach makes TUS activity harder to index reliably, since it is often not catalogued as a distinct survey; the 25-country figure may therefore understate actual coverage more than for standalone survey types.

Malawi (1998, 2005, 2011), Mauritius (2003, 2019, 2024), and Tanzania (2006, 2014, 2020) each show 3 indexed rounds, the highest series found. Benin, Morocco, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Uganda each show 2 rounds. The remaining 16 countries with any indexed TUS show only a single round. Overall, 29 of the 54 countries do not have an indexed TUS. Furthermore, the median periodicity for the 37 documented TUS rounds ranges from 6.5 to 26 years.

Time Use Surveys: An Apparent Gender Data Gap Meriting Direct Follow-Up

- 25 of 54 countries show at least one indexed Time Use Survey in any form. TUS is often embedded as a module rather than run as a standalone operation.
- Only 3 countries (Malawi, Mauritius and Tanzania) show more than 2 indexed rounds; a further 6 countries show exactly 2.
- With a 29-country gap, SDG indicator 5.4.1 (unpaid care work) cannot be effectively monitored from this data source for those countries.
- The ILO and UNSD recommend a TUS periodicity of ten years; 16 countries with an indexed TUS have only one.

Chapter 7: Country and Subregional Analysis

7.1 Countries with the Highest Indexed Statistical Record

Ranking countries by total rounds found across all ten surveys and census categories reveals significant variation. Still, this ranking measures how much indexed, discoverable documentation exists for a country's statistical operations, not how much statistical work the country did. A country with a well-organized, actively maintained NSO website will rank higher than one that conducted the same surveys but published results only in print, on a portal the Intelligent Data Harvester did not crawl, or in a format the harvester could not parse. This table should be read as an index of 'documentation richness', with actual statistical activity as one plausible but unconfirmed contributor to that richness.

Table 7: Country Ranking by Total Indexed Rounds Across All Ten Categories

Rank	Country	Subregion	Rounds Found	Standout Strength
1	South Africa	Southern Africa	53	16 LFS rounds - category leader; 14 PHC rounds since 1911
2	Uganda	Eastern Africa	52	Broadest coverage of any country (across all 10 categories); 8 LSMS, 8 PHC rounds
3	Botswana	Southern Africa	46	17 Agriculture Survey rounds since 1995 - category leader
4	Ghana	West Africa	44	7 DHS, 7 Business/Economic Survey rounds; broad 10-category coverage
5	Kenya	Eastern Africa	43	8 DHS rounds; 7 each of PHC, Agric. Census, LFS
6	Tanzania	Eastern Africa	43	8 PHC rounds; 7 each of Agric. Census, DHS
7	Senegal	West Africa	42	11 DHS rounds - the most of any country in this report across any category
8	Zambia	Southern Africa	42	7 each of Business/Economic Survey and LFS rounds
9	Nigeria	West Africa	37	7 LFS rounds; 6 each of Agric. Census, DHS; full 10-category coverage
10	Rwanda	Eastern Africa	36	6 DHS rounds; 5 each of PHC, Establishment Census, Agric. Census, LFS
11	Burkina Faso	West Africa	35	8 LFS rounds; 5 each of PHC, Agric. Census, DHS
12	Egypt	North Africa	34	7 each of DHS and Business/Economic Survey rounds
12	Malawi	Southern Africa	34	6 each of Agric. Census, DHS, LFS rounds
14	Ethiopia	Eastern Africa	33	7 Agriculture Survey rounds; full 10-category coverage
15	Mali	West Africa	31	7 DHS rounds; full 10-category coverage
16	Mozambique	Southern Africa	30	6 LSMS rounds - among the highest of any country

7.2 Subregional Patterns

Western Africa shows the highest indexed statistical record with strong, broad-based coverage across Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, all four in the top eleven nationally. The subregion has the largest pool of 15 countries. Southern Africa, with 11 countries, shows some of the most complete category coverage per country, led by South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Malawi. Eastern Africa follows in third place with some of the highest indexed statistical records across the 10 censuses and surveys, driven by Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Rwanda, five of the top ten countries nationally. On the other hand, Central and North Africa show the lowest indexed coverage of any subregion (7 countries each); within Central Africa, Cameroon and Chad show indexed activity across several categories despite the subregion's low aggregate total. This dataset alone cannot determine whether the residual Central Africa gap reflects lower actual statistical activity, weaker web publication practice, or both.

7.3 Countries Where the Record Suggests a Need for Direct Follow-Up

The following countries show the most acute combination of low-indexed coverage, long apparent inter-round intervals, and absence of key survey types in the dataset:

1. South Sudan: its only verified census is the April 2008 round, conducted before independence, meaning South Sudan has held no census as a sovereign state. It shows no indexed Establishment Census, Agriculture Census, DHS, LFS, Agriculture Survey or TUS; 2 LSMS, 1 MICS and 2 Business/Economic Survey rounds are indexed.
2. Eritrea: its only indexed PHC record dates to 1984, conducted while still part of Ethiopia, meaning Eritrea has held no census as a sovereign state, like South Sudan. No indexed Establishment Census, Agriculture Census, LSMS, MICS, LFS, Agriculture Survey or TUS; 2 DHS rounds and 1 Business/Economic Survey round are indexed, the only instruments found for the country.
3. Democratic Republic of Congo: its PHC indexed is 1984 - the country has not held a census in 42 years, the second-most severe gap in this dataset and one of the most consequential given its population size. Agriculture Survey and TUS remain unindexed; 2 LSMS, 4 MICS, 4 Business/Economic Surveys, 4 Agriculture Censuses, and a first indexed Establishment Census round (2019) are found - a fuller record than the census gap alone would suggest.
4. Guinea-Bissau: no indexed PHC since 2009; no indexed DHS, Agriculture Survey or TUS. Establishment Census (1 round), MICS (6 rounds), LSMS (2 rounds), Business/Economic Survey (2 rounds) and LFS (1 round) are indexed - a more mixed picture than a simple 'low coverage' label would suggest.
5. Libya: no indexed PHC since 2006 is the most severe in North Africa. No indexed Establishment Census, LSMS, Business/Economic Survey, Agriculture Survey or TUS; 3 Agriculture Censuses, 1 DHS, 1 MICS and 1 LFS round are indexed.
6. Chad: indexed 4 rounds of PHC, latest 2026. No indexed Establishment Census, LFS, Agriculture Survey or TUS; agriculture census remains stalled at 1972 (54 years ago), while MICS (3), LSMS (2), DHS (3) and Business/Economic Survey (3 rounds) show more recent activity
7. Somalia: shows the single most severe census gap in this dataset - its only indexed PHC dates to 1975, 51 years ago, following decades of state collapse and conflict. Agriculture Census (1 round, 1950) and PHC are the oldest indexed records for any country in this report; LSMS (3 rounds), Business/Economic Survey (2), DHS (1), MICS (1), Establishment Census (1) and LFS (1) all show at least one recent round (2019–2025), suggesting statistical capacity has partially recovered even where the census itself has not.
8. Central African Republic and Cameroon: CAR's PHC (3 rounds, latest 2003, 23 years ago) and Cameroon's (3 rounds, latest 2005, 21 years ago) place both among the more severe census gaps on the continent, though both show reasonably active survey programmes - Cameroon in particular shows 5 LSMS and 5 Business/Economic Survey rounds, among the higher counts in Central Africa.

Chapter 8: Policy Implications and Advocacy

8.1 The Development Cost of the Statistical Gap

The gaps documented in this report are not administrative shortfalls; they have direct, measurable consequences for development outcomes. When governments lack current population counts, infrastructure investments are misallocated. When poverty surveys are absent, social protection programmes cannot be properly targeted. When agricultural censuses are not conducted, food security interventions are designed without reliable knowledge of who farms, what they grow, how much land they cultivate, and what their constraints are.

The World Bank estimates that the LSMS programme costs approximately USD 1.7 million per survey per country, a figure that is vastly outweighed by the policy impact of well-targeted poverty programmes informed by survey data. Agricultural censuses under FAO's WCA programme have been shown to improve smallholder policy design in countries that complete them directly. The DHS Programme, funded by USAID, UNFPA, and national governments, has informed immunisation campaigns, maternal health programmes, and HIV prevention strategies across the continent.

Table 1 makes it possible to put a number on this shortfall rather than leave it as a general concern. Summed across all ten categories, the 1,355 rounds this report found are less than half (49 per cent) of the 2,748 rounds that would exist today if every country conducted each census and survey at its own recommended interval from its own applicable starting point. The missing 1,393 rounds are not evenly spread: Labour Force Surveys alone account for 467 of them, the largest absolute shortfall of any category, meaning the instrument most directly used to track employment, unemployment and labour market conditions — the evidence base for job-creation policy, social protection eligibility, and monitoring progress against Sustainable Development Goal 8 — has been produced at little more than a quarter (26 percent) of the frequency it was designed for.

Agriculture Surveys (29 per cent achieved) and Business/Economic Surveys (48 per cent achieved) show similarly wide gaps, meaning the data that would ordinarily inform smallholder policy, food security planning, and short-term economic management is, for most countries in most years, not being renewed on schedule. The practical consequence is not that these policy areas go unmeasured entirely—many countries produce administrative or partial substitutes—but that the specific, comparable, survey-based evidence recommended for tracking them exists for roughly one year in every two to four years it should. A government designing a five-year national development plan based on a labour force survey that is, on average, several years out of date is making policy choices calibrated to a labour market that may no longer exist by the time the plan is implemented; a government monitoring that same plan's employment targets against the next available survey is doing so with a lag embedded into the data itself. This is the cost of unmet data needs made concrete: not an abstract data gap, but a specific, quantifiable shortfall in the timeliness of the evidence each policy area was designed to be measured against.

8.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this stocktaking, ECA makes the following recommendations to African governments, Pan-African institutions, regional economic communities and development partners:

For African Governments

1. Verify and, where confirmed, prioritize population census completion in the 13 countries flagged.
2. Embed census and survey programmes within medium-term national development plans and national statistics strategies, with multi-year budget allocations that reduce dependence on ad hoc external financing.

3. Close the residual Labour Force Survey gap in Central Africa, where 4 of 9 countries (the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, and São Tomé and Príncipe, and South Sudan) still show no indexed round, to enable fuller monitoring of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).
4. Commit to at least one Living Standards Measurement Survey per five-year planning cycle, recognizing LSMS data as essential infrastructure for poverty targeting and social protection design. For countries in existing regional blocks, prioritise joining or fully utilising harmonised and coordinated instruments such as the WAEMU EHCVM or the World Bank's LSMS-ISA programme, which can close a national gap through a regional financing decision rather than a standalone national one.
5. Conduct Time Use Surveys as standalone operations at least once per decade, in compliance with UNSD guidelines, to monitor SDG 5.4.1 (unpaid care and domestic work).

For the Pan-African and Regional Economic Communities

6. Adopt a continental Statistical Operations Charter setting minimum standards for census and survey periodicity, publication timelines and data accessibility for all ECA Member States.
7. Explore the feasibility of a dedicated concessional financing mechanism for census and survey operations in least-developed countries by first mapping this against existing instruments (PARIS21, the World Bank's Statistical Performance Indicators trust funds, and AfDB's existing statistical capacity-building windows) to establish whether a new fund is needed or whether the gap is one of coordination and uptake instead of an absence of financing.
8. Mandate the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa) to conduct an annual review of census and survey compliance against this stocktaking baseline.
9. Strengthen the Centre of Excellence to provide professional support to the implementation of DHS, MICS and LSMS by the African Capacity at the NSOs.

For Development Partners

10. Restore and sustain funding for the DHS Programme, whose suspension of USAID support in 2025 threatens continuity of a critical continental data infrastructure built over four decades.
11. Increase coordinated support for agricultural census and survey programmes under FAO's African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS) framework.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

This report has assembled, for the first time in a consolidated form, a map of Africa's discoverable census and survey record across ten categories of key statistical operations, with 1,355 rounds found in the sources searched, spanning 178 years (1848–July 2026) and covering all 54 ECA member States. It is a starting point for verification, not a closing statement on any country's statistical history.

The picture that emerges is one of notable achievements alongside critical fragility. Africa's statisticians, national statistical offices, and their international partners have produced an extraordinary body of evidence. Still, it remains unevenly distributed, chronically underfunded, and insufficiently used in the policy processes it was designed to inform.

The urgency of the moment cannot be overstated. The Sustainable Development Goals will be assessed in 2030. Africa's population is projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050. The continent's leaders have committed, through Agenda 2063, to a transformed Africa built on the rule of law, democratic governance, and evidence-based management. None of these commitments can be fulfilled without the statistical systems to measure progress, identify needs, and guide investments.

Africa counts. In every sense of the phrase, both as a matter of continental significance and as a daily practice of enumeration. This report calls on all stakeholders to ensure that Africa continues to count, and that the numbers it produces are current, credible, accessible, and used.

Annex A: Rounds Summary - Number of Indexed Rounds by Country and Category

Country	PHC	Ag. Census	Bus/Est. Census	LSMS/HBS	DHS	MICS	Bus/Econ Survey	LFS	Ag. Survey	TUS	TOTAL
Algeria	6	3	2	5	0	2	0	3	0	1	22
Angola	3	2	3	2	1	1	3	5	1	0	21
Benin	4	2	3	2	5	2	4	1	1	2	26
Botswana	6	5	2	4	1	1	3	7	17	0	46
Burkina Faso	5	5	2	3	5	2	4	8	1	0	35
Burundi	4	1	2	1	3	2	5	1	4	0	23
Cabo Verde	6	4	2	2	0	0	3	2	0	1	20
Cameroon	3	3	2	5	4	3	5	3	0	1	29
Central African Republic	3	3	0	1	1	4	2	0	1	0	15
Chad	3	1	0	2	3	3	3	0	0	0	15
Comoros	4	2	0	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	13
Congo	4	3	1	2	2	1	2	3	0	0	18
Côte d'Ivoire	5	3	1	3	4	1	4	4	1	0	26
DR Congo	1	4	1	2	2	4	4	1	0	0	19
Djibouti	3	1	0	4	1	1	2	1	0	1	14
Egypt	5	5	3	1	7	0	7	5	0	1	34
Equatorial Guinea	4	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	9
Eritrea*	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
Eswatini	5	5	0	1	1	3	3	4	0	0	22
Ethiopia	3	6	1	1	5	1	4	4	7	1	33
Gabon	5	2	1	2	2	0	2	1	0	0	15
Gambia	6	3	2	4	2	2	3	5	0	0	27
Ghana	6	4	5	4	7	2	7	4	4	1	44
Guinea	5	3	0	3	6	1	3	3	2	0	26
Guinea-Bissau	4	3	1	2	0	6	2	1	0	0	19
Kenya	7	7	2	2	8	1	6	7	2	1	43
Lesotho	6	7	0	3	1	2	4	1	1	1	26
Liberia	4	2	0	1	3	0	3	1	1	1	16
Libya	3	4	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	10
Madagascar	3	3	1	6	5	1	3	2	0	1	25
Malawi	5	6	0	1	6	1	4	6	2	3	34
Mali	5	5	3	2	7	1	4	1	2	1	31
Mauritania	5	1	0	1	0	4	3	1	0	0	15
Mauritius	6	3	2	2	0	0	2	1	0	3	19
Morocco	5	3	1	1	3	0	4	6	0	2	25
Mozambique	4	4	2	6	4	1	3	3	3	0	30
Namibia	4	4	1	2	1	0	3	5	0	0	20
Niger	4	3	1	2	4	1	4	1	1	0	21
Nigeria	4	6	2	2	6	1	4	7	3	2	37
Rwanda	5	5	5	3	6	1	4	5	2	0	36
Senegal	5	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	11
Seychelles	5	2	1	2	11	1	4	6	9	1	42
Sierra Leone	6	5	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	15
Somalia**	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	0	0	11
South Africa***	14	8	0	4	3	1	4	16	1	2	53
South Sudan	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	5
Sudan	4	0	0	2	1	2	2	1	0	1	13
São Tomé and Príncipe	5	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	11
Tanzania	8	7	1	2	7	1	5	5	4	3	43
Togo	5	6	1	2	3	1	3	2	0	0	23
Tunisia	6	4	0	1	1	5	3	3	0	1	24
Uganda	8	6	5	8	7	1	6	5	4	2	52
Zambia	6	5	3	2	6	1	7	7	5	0	42
Zimbabwe	5	2	1	2	7	3	4	2	1	1	28
TOTAL (Africa)	252	187	69	127	171	82	178	168	82	37	1353

* Eritrea: PHC = 0 as a sovereign State. The 1984 enumeration conducted while Eritrea was part of Ethiopia is retained as a predecessor-state record and is not included in the PHC count.

** Somalia: PHC = 1, representing the verified and published 1975 census. The reported 1985-1986 enumeration is excluded pending confirmation of its status and publication.

*** South Africa: PHC = 14 indexed census operations since 1911.

† South Sudan: PHC = 0 as a sovereign State. The 2008 enumeration conducted while South Sudan was part of Sudan is retained as a predecessor-state record and is not included in the PHC count.

PHC = Population and Housing Census; Ag. Census = Agriculture Census; Bus/Est. Census = Business/Economic/Establishment Census; LSMS/HBS = Living Standards Measurement Survey / Household Budget Survey; DHS = Demographic and Health Survey; MICS = Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey; Bus/Econ Survey = Business/Economic Survey; LFS = Labour Force Survey; Ag. Survey = Agriculture Survey; TUS = Time Use Survey.

Annex B: Subregional Summary - Rounds by Category and Subregion

Category	North	West	East	Central	Southern	TOTAL (AFRICA)
No. of Countries	7	15	14	7	11	54
PHC	34	74	55	27	64	254
Bus/Est. Census	6	25	19	5	14	69
Ag. Census	20	54	48	14	51	187
LSMS/HBS	11	37	36	14	29	127
DHS	13	66	48	13	31	171
MICS	14	24	17	13	14	82
Bus/Econ Survey	19	57	46	16	40	178
LFS	20	47	36	8	57	168
Ag. Survey	0	27	23	1	31	82
TUS	6	11	9	1	10	37
TOTAL (Subregion)	143	422	337	112	341	1355

Annex C: References

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