

Private sources and international statistics

- Is there an issue?
 - For the statistician?
 - For the international civil servant managing a statistical office?
- Are issues similar when
 - estimating a missing data point
 - vs. estimating entire series (i.e, WTO building a new synthetic indicator on *trade in services competitiveness*)
 - ➔ *Note “Private sources” is used for “not from governmental sources” national or international NGOs, private providers, etc...*

Use and mis-use of imputations when estimating missing point

- From a **statistical perspective**:
 - inside a time series (intrapolation)
 - end-point estimate (nowcasting)
 - using time series model (MA, AR, ARMA, ARIMA, ...)
 - IF (big IF) missing data are not outliers. Important in times of crisis or structural changes
 - Additional data from non-official providers (Chambers of Commerce, financial institutions, ...) correlated with the missing point allow to reduce the possibility of inaccurate imputation.
 - **Non-official sources**: sometimes institutional and well established (Dow Jones, ICC).
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- From an **institutional perspective** when estimating missing points.
 - Flag the data point as secretariat estimate “*on the basis of official and non-official information*”
 - Document internally the procedure and sources for
 - (i) internal replication;
 - (ii) providing additional information to users when required
 - Dissemination: if the statistician is happy with the estimate, it should be disseminated to the public as a policy (notion of providing public services)
 - But avoid disseminating politically sensitive figures when nowcasting (inflation, employment)
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- When deriving an entire time series
(e.g, hypothetical composite indicator on international competitiveness in services)
 - **Institutional decision making process:**
 - ToR of the international organization:
 - specialised in a subject matter or specialised in a region; providing analytically valuable information vs. doing capacity building, ...
 - pro and cons of deriving synthetic indicators
 - global perspective on complex issues, internationally comparable, not available elsewhere
 - source of media coverage and mis-interpretation of ranking; conflicts with badly ranked governments, especially when non-official data are used or politically sensitive issue (human rights, transparency, ...).

- **Technical aspects (entire time series)**
 - Stability in time of the non-official data sets
 - Use of consistent methods, comparable coverage, ...
 - Quality of the metadata
 - Life expectancy of the non-governmental source
 - When the IO is compiling the data directly from surveys: stability of the internal funding
 - Copy-right issues: Are data in the public domain?
 - Dissemination policy
 - separate indicators from official statistics
 - transparency on sources and methodology
 - good practices: open forum, external audit
 - Long-term developments
 - When the new composite indicator clearly provides international public good: Need to strengthen and develop the statistical basis
 - TA with the NGOs providing the data, in cooperation with NSOs whenever possible