An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh
Central Statistics Office

Australian Bureau of Statistics

3rd Global Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics

Organized by CSO Ireland, UNSD and ABS

30 August – 1 September2016, Dublin, Ireland

Concept Note

Introduction

The daily use of mobile phones and social media, as well as the routine checking of equipment, such as cars or home appliances, generate continuous streams of electronic data. These data sources, commonly referred to as Big Data, can potentially be used in the compilation of official statistics for evidence-based decision-making. The UN Statistical Commission therefore established a Global Working Group (GWG) in 2014, which was mandated to provide strategic vision, direction and coordination on the use of Big Data for Official Statistics. The GWG promotes the practical use of Big Data, capacity building and sharing experiences, while finding solutions for the associated challenges.

The GWG organized its first global conference on Big Data in Beijing in October 2014 and showcased a variety of examples of Big Data projects for official statistics, such as Mobile phone data for tourism and daytime population statistics, Scanner data for price statistics, Satellite imagery data for agriculture statistics and Social media data for consumer confidence indicators. The second global conference took place in Abu Dhabi in October 2015, where the GWG focused on systematic progress: (1) use of Big Data in the statistical production process and (2) moving from examples to developing guidelines.

The GWG and the UN Statistical Commission

The GWG reports every year to the UN Statistical Commission and receives then feedback on its programme of work. The following priorities were proposed by the GWG in 2016 and supported by the Commission, namely to:

- Complete the package of initiatives to improve access to proprietary data, such as Big Data, including increased political support at the national and international level, improved legislation, and fostering of mutual beneficial partnerships with the data owners, while considering and maintaining the confidentiality of data;
- Develop training courses, in cooperation between the European Statistical Training Program and the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) and other training institutes and especially targeted at developing countries, on the topics of

processing and use of Big Data and of transparent methodologies and estimation methods for Big Data;

- Undertake more pilot projects in the use of Big Data for official statistics, including those aimed to support measuring SDG indicators; and in this respect to make use of the Big Data Sandbox in Ireland; and
- Further develop the Big Data quality framework to ensure trust in the compiled official statistics;

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development and SDG indicators

On 25 September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was unanimously adopted by the all members of the United Nations. This Agenda is a universal plan of action for **people, planet and prosperity** and contains 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) and 169 related targets to be achieved by 2030, addressing the needs and seeking contributions of all people across the planet. It will aim at economic progress, social inclusion and environmental sustainability in a balanced manner, and be relevant to all countries. To ensure the full implementation of this agenda and respond to the level of ambition of the new goals and targets, the statistical community has developed and needs to implement a robust framework of SDG indicators. This is an important task which will require intense methodological and technical work. The implementation of this indicator framework poses a challenge even for the most advanced statistical systems, and will certainly require significant efforts to strengthen the capacities of national statistical systems in many developing and least developed countries.

Big Data and SDG indicators

The statistical community needs to modernize and strengthen global, regional and national statistical systems by implementing the Transformative agenda for official statistics and by increasing the capacity of statistical systems to respond more flexible, effectively and efficiently to the new requirements and challenges including monitoring of the SDGs. This includes innovations to incorporate non-traditional sources of data, including Big Data, which thus far have been underutilized in producing official statistics. These data sources can be leveraged to support the compilation of SDG indicators, so that timely and disaggregated data can be produced and made available to policy makers.

Themes of the 3rd Global Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics

In line with the priorities of work and with the urgent needs for support of SDG indicators, the third Global Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics wants to take the next steps in the utilization of Big Data in the production of official statistics. The conference selected three major themes namely (1) Access to proprietary data and successful partnerships with data providers, (2) Capacity building strategies related to the use of Big Data in the statistical production process, and (3) using Big Data in the compilation of SDG indicators.