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Social Statistics in Brazil: Producer and User Strategies \*

by

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## Social Statistics in Brazil: Producer and User Strategies

### Summary

1. Brazil has a long-standing tradition of producing social statistics. Decennial population censuses have been regularly carried out since 1940 and the introduction of sampling in censuses, from 1960 on, has largely enhanced the range of information on social matters for all regions of the country. In the mid-sixties, as a first utilization of social indicators was brought into the evaluation of the impacts social policies, a system of household surveys was introduced. This has been consolidated into a nation-wide annual survey which is at present the most important source of current information on Brazilian population. Many other special independent surveys (of family budgets, work in informal sector, etc) or specific supplementary questionnaires coupled with the household annual survey (of education, health, social mobility, political participation, child labour, etc) have been put into effect in the last 35 years. Notwithstanding, it has not been possible yet, with the exception of the annual survey, to achieve a stable programme of specific surveys capable of accounting for the whole range of information needed for the construction of a system of relevant social indicators. In the beginning of the nineties, the annual survey underwent a far-reaching restructuring which led to a much larger number of surveyed subjects, as an answer, to a certain extent, to growing demand for social statistics.

2. The production of statistics in Brazil, taking surveys as a basis, is to a large extent centralised in the National Statistical Office (IBGE). Only some specific subjects – such as employment and prices – have received continuous attention from survey agencies belonging to the states. Federal offices produce statistics from administrative records in varying periodicity, scope and quality. Some of these offices have succeeded in setting up large banks of statistical data based on administrative records. Data banks set up by the Ministries of Education, Health and Labour are good examples.

3. There are no legal or formal enacting mechanisms to define a work programme for the national statistical office. The appendix to the establishing law of the statistical programme has not been updated for more than 35 years. In case of social surveys, new subjects have been recently included in existing or new surveys on demand by specific offices responsible for formulating, implementing or assessing public policies. IBGE makes its decisions on what is to be surveyed by means of -- even though unsystematic -- mechanisms of consultation with users and also based on works and assessments by its own technical staff. More recently, the whole set of required information for calculating monitoring indicators, as proposed by the several United Nations social summits, has been adopted as a guideline to assess the scope of social statistics production in the country and to reflect on future programming. At present, we are analyzing information gaps that still exist in our system of social information in order to fulfill indicators production of the Millennium development Goals. Based on this analysis we intend to make necessary adjustments and improvements in our work programme for the coming years in this area.

4. In the national statistical system, nowadays, a wider conception of the scope and meaning of social statistics is adopted. Previously, most social statistics were produced

from the censuses and household surveys that collect information on characteristics of the population and some aspects of its living conditions. These statistics lead, no doubt, to a certain knowledge of the target populations of social policies. In a country with a continental extension and with a considerable share of the population living in deprivation, however, public policy making requires a more comprehensive network of information. It is of utmost importance to have statistical data on supply and quality of public services and on their capacity to satisfy target populations of social policies. The network, therefore, counts today on a set of surveys going from traditional household surveys (on population living conditions) to surveys of local governments and public services (or utilities) companies so that it can generate data on local social expenditures, social use facilities and any kind of information on social local policies. A great effort has been made lately to bring administrative records data into the subnetwork of social statistics. Brazil is an extremely heterogeneous country in most aspects, from a political and administrative point of view as well, so that quality of administrative records is diverse at a federal level, among the ministries, for instance, and at state level, among the states. The national statistics office – IBGE – has endeavoured to promote integration of all existing sources of information so that these can be collected and processed at a lower cost. Resort has been made of committees, work groups, agreements for joint work and others.

### **The Brazilian Social Statistics**

Social statistics network in Brazil is made up of a decennial population census, a number of household surveys of varying periodicity, surveys of public utility companies and of local governments and administrative records.

Censuses and household surveys play a most important role in the production of social statistics in Brazil, given that existing administrative records are still rather precarious in many of the country regions. Thus, relevant statistics or indicators, such as of infant mortality, are indirectly procured, through censuses and household surveys data, because children births and deaths records are clearly understated.

### **Short description of the main surveys**

#### **Population Census**

This census, which has been accomplished every ten years, since 1920, is the most complete source of information on population characteristics, as well as of social statistics. The largest advantage of the Census over household surveys is its ability to generate statistics for smaller geographical units. From the census it is possible to know, at least every ten years, the condition of the Brazilian population no matter how small the places where people live.

Two census forms have been in use since 1960. The first one is shorter and applied to every household in the country, whereas a longer form is restricted to a sample of 10% of the population in municipalities with 15,000 or more inhabitants and of 20% of population in those with less than 15,000 inhabitants (64% of municipalities in Brazil have less than 15,000 inhabitants). These were the percentages used in the year 2000 Census. In the short form information on gender, age, literacy rate, educational background and income of

household head is recorded, as well as some characteristics of the households. The long form, in addition to the information enquired in the short form, surveys race and skin colour, religion, disability, educational background, fertility, wedding rates, income, migration, labour and housing conditions.

When the censuses are carried out, considerable amounts of financial resources are allotted to IBGE, thus enabling methodological developments to be implemented and later extended to the continuous ongoing surveys. It is, therefore, at census preparation time when new classifications are adopted and concepts and definitions reviewed. Forms preparation is preceded by a wide consultation process with users of all kinds. There is surely a great concern about the adoption of international recommendations on population censuses from the United Nations Handbook.

The census data are widely used by Brazilian society and have earned a high level of credibility among policy makers.

### **Household surveys- The National Household Survey**

The National Household Survey, known as PNAD, appears to be the most important feeding source of the network. This status is attributed to its basic characteristics: its national coverage, annual occurrence and large number of subjects encompassed (it currently includes 200 questions), and allowing for additions of supplementary in-depth questionnaires on specific or new subjects. Having started more than 30 years ago, PNAD has already surveyed – in its core and supplementary questionnaires – almost all relevant social issues.

At present, its questionnaires routinely comprise questions on population characteristics (age, gender, skin colour and race), family structure, housing, migration, fertility, wedding rate, social security, labour (in details) and income.

Lack of a definitive plan concerning the subjects of the supplementary questionnaires is a problem that remains to be solved. Ideally, needs should be listed and a survey of the subjects planned according to a definite criterion for a period of, at least, five years. During last decade, the subjects were chosen according to demand, provided that the demander brought in adequate financial support. Since the national statistics office does not receive stable budgetary sums to carry on the application of supplementary questionnaires, the demander's financial resources and interest have become the determining factors of those statistics. Thus, government sectors and agencies with looser budgets and a better understanding of the role of good statistics for their work end up being better served by IBGE. Anyway, having a larger budget means being of higher priority and, therefore, adoption of any other subject definition criterion would probably lead to a quite similar result. On the other hand, it is not uncommon to have identified areas with an enormous lack of information, whose responsible agents do not invest in statistics production. A conspicuous example refers to police and security offices, which count on rather inaccurate and unreliable statistics.

A survey with a multisubject questionnaire and supplementary questionnaires has a great advantage in interlinking social statistics relative to distinguished conditions of life. It is possible then to go through a supplementary questionnaire on access to health services, for example, in order to make clearer the relationship of this subject to others such as education, work and income. PNAD enables interrelationships between varied conditions of life of the population to be better known and analysed because they share the same concepts and classifications approach basis.

PNAD also works as an anchor for the social statistics system. Due to its stability along time and large utilisation by society as a whole, any other household survey that may be carried out, either by IBGE or by any other statistical office, will keep to the concern of reaching information and data that may relate to those of PNAD and, as such, use the same conceptual and classification basis.

PNAD's sample is designed to provide information and data to the country, to states and to the greatest metropolitan areas. Demand for information and data at local level is, however, growing since the late 80's, when a constitutional change provided local governments with more financial resources and social responsibilities. The only current source of general social statistics at a smaller geographic level is the Population Census. We are now starting to face the methodological challenge of estimating data for smaller regions, taking the interlinking of information from the censuses and the PNAD as a starting point from which to secure local statistics for the period between censuses.

### **Other Household Surveys**

Aiming at enhancing production of social statistics, two far-reaching and important surveys were recently introduced into the survey program. The first one was a survey of labour in the informal sector of the economy. It was carried out in 1997, in accordance with an ILO-prescribed methodology. It is our goal to have it repeated every five years. The second survey is an ongoing family expenditure survey with national distribution (the two latest Family Expenditure Surveys were distributed only in the regions for which consumer price indexes are calculated), expected to be concluded by next June. The FES, being as it is a multipurpose survey, largely contributes to increased social statistics supply for different kind of users. The ongoing FES version is also collecting anthropometric information of great relevance to some social policies. It focuses on relevant aspects for poverty measurement, a strongly demanded issue in the national statistics network nowadays. It was designed and developed in such a way as to adopt the same concepts, definitions and classifications as both the 2000 Census and PNAD.

It is worth recording that IBGE accomplished in 1997 a pilot of the World Bank's Living Standard Measurement Survey, in two regions. Adequacy of this survey model to countries like ours has been a matter for discussion in Brazil, since we have already developed a fairly sophisticated and stable statistics network and the geographic and population extension of the country turns a survey like this into an extremely expensive undertaking. This explains why this kind of survey has not been repeated on a national scale.

The Monthly Labour Survey – PME, whose objective is to produce monthly indicators about the labour market, in particular the unemployment rate, is used to monitor labour market short term fluctuations. This survey was first conducted in 1980 using a form very similar to that of PNAD which, at that time, was a typical labour force survey. The survey covers only the six major metropolitan areas of the country. Lack of monthly unemployment indicators for the whole country is often criticised. For this reason a project is now being developed to integrate or even unify PNAD and PME. We, at IBGE, believe this merging as leading to a more rational system, in addition to bringing costs down. It would turn PNAD into a survey continuously supplying indicators of the Brazilian labour market on a monthly basis.

### **Surveys of service providing institutions**

As said before, quality of administrative records in Brazil, though gradually improving, is still far from being capable of providing a reliable source of social statistics. Thus, many relevant information that could have administrative records as a source, are indeed secured by means of conventional surveys, like censuses of service agencies or companies. Two on demand surveys have been carried out with a defined biannual periodicity, funded by government agencies concerned with health and housing: the Survey of Medical and Sanitary Care, covering all public and private health-care providing institutions, and the National Survey of Basic Sanitation, which comprises all companies or agencies that supply water and sewerage services and trash collection. These two surveys are good examples of integration between the national statistical office and public policy-makers and monitors. The Ministry of Health totally funds the first survey and shares the necessary amounts of money for the second one with housing policy agencies. A committee, in which experts and technical staff from policy-making agencies and from the statistical office participate, was created to formulate methodology and to define the main aspects of these surveys.

### **Local Government Surveys**

This is by all means the less conventional kind of social statistics producing survey. It was first introduced in the 1999 work programme and it is aimed at annually obtaining information about characteristics of Brazilian municipalities in what refers to their multifarious ways of providing services for their population. Collected information comprises the amount of so-called local social expenditures; locally available facilities for sport, cultural, health and education; range of local population participation in municipal management; local approach to environmental questions; and so on. Survey results give a full picture of every municipality, which helps as an assessment tool of quality of life in each one of them, as measured by available scales. These are important information for citizenship exertion and, when in a time-series, for local government rating.

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY SCOPE AND PERIODICITY

### 1- Population and Housing Census

Periodicity - 10 years

Geographic coverage- whole country

Subjects surveyed-age, sex, race and colour, disability, religion, education, migration, fertility, nuptiality, labour, income and housing.

### 2- National Household Survey

Periodicity - every year except in census years

Geographic coverage - whole country except the rural area of the North region (3% of the population)

Sampling design for states, federal district and, major metropolitan areas.

Subjects surveyed - age, sex, race and colour, education, migration, fertility, nuptiality, labour, income and housing.

### 3- Informal Sector Survey

Periodicity - every five years

Geographic coverage - whole country, urban areas

Sampling design for states

Subjects - characteristics of labour in the informal sector and characteristics of informal sector units of production.

### 4- Family Expenditure Survey

Periodicity - every five years (planning to change to every three years)

Geographic coverage- whole country

Sampling design for states and major metropolitan areas

Subjects surveyed - family expenditure and income, quantities bought, housing characteristics of the population (age, sex, race and colour), anthropometric information, labour and subjective poverty.

### 5- Monthly Labour Force

Periodicity - every month

Geographic coverage - 6 major metropolitan areas

Sampling design for metropolitan areas

Subjects surveyed - labour and labour income

6- Survey of Medical and Sanitary Care

Periodicity - every two years

Geographic coverage - whole country

All medical services establishments are interviewed

Subjects surveyed - number of beds, medical equipment for diagnosis, number of health professionals, etc

7- National Survey of Basic Sanitation

Periodicity- every two years

Geographic coverage- whole country-all sanitation service suppliers are interviewed

Subjects surveyed - number of households with sanitation and kind of services supplied, characteristics of trash collection frequency, etc.

8- Municipalities Survey

Periodicity - every year

Geographic coverage - all 6000 municipalities in Brazil are interviewed

Subjects surveyed-culture equipments (number of theatres and libraries, for example), sports equipments, health services establishments, legislation concerning the functioning of commissions with participation of the community, budget and many others.

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