

**TOPIC: Fundamental Issues Relating to Data Gathering and Data Quality and
Related Resource and Response Burden Consideration**

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National Accounts is compiled by integrating several accounts and statements from different sources in a more coherent and consistent manner using international standards. The source data for compiling National Accounts are not generated from within the office that compiles National Accounts but from different agents (governments, households, business entities, non-profit entities and Rest of the World) in the economy. Therefore data gathering and its quality becomes a major fundamental activity upon which the National Accounts compilation is built. The more reliable the input data, the more reliable the output data if proper compilation standards are observed.

Below are some of the fundamental issues of data gathering; especially for National Accounts purposes:

Knowledge of the appropriate source of the input data

This is a fundamental issue that every national accounts compiler must bear in mind before thinking of compiling National Accounts estimates. Knowledge of the appropriate source of the input data, and the methodology of compiling them, will add credibility to estimates.

Detailed nature of the source data

Data for national accounts compilation has to be more detailed to avoid multiple inclusions of transaction items in the accounts and to facilitate better analyses. The more detailed the source data are, the better it can be compiled since it can be easily aggregated to a required level but cannot be easily disaggregated.

Timeliness of the data

Timeliness requires how often and regularly the input data is published. Untimeliness of source would force the compiler to shift from the appropriate source data to probably a less appropriate source or indicators.

Related sources of the input data

Related sources of input data are essential for the following:

- Serves as alternative to the main source which can be used if the appropriate source is not published in a timely manner.
- As a means of monitoring the consistencies in the appropriate source data.

Related Resources and/or logistics

National Accounts data gathering requires adequate logistics/resources if appropriate and credible aggregates are to be compiled. Lack of sufficient and adequate resources can force the compiler to resort to a cheaper but insufficient and remote data source thus resulting to unreliable estimates.

Response burden

Most data requested by National Accounts (NA) compilers are either financial data or production data. These are the types of data business entities are reluctant to divulge as it discloses their weaknesses and strength of performance. Besides the NA office, these data are requested by other institutions like the Central bank, ministries, commissions/departments and other researchers. Such numerous request, and mostly in different formats, could lead to response burden and fatigue on the respondents. This response fatigue is indicated by the large number of deliberate refusals to national accounts questionnaires especially if they have satisfied their governing ministry or department. Some of the respondents who may return our questionnaire later send them in the wrong format requested. Response burden can be eliminated by administering a well synchronized questionnaire, in a well coordinated manner by the statistical system. This can be done by harmonizing the data requests of the various institutions in the

statistical system with the data collected by one institution (preferably the governing ministry/department) for dissemination in the statistical system.

Conclusion

The issues discussed above contribute to the quality of data and the subsequent inference that maybe drawn on them. In conclusion, therefore, the quality of data gathered has much effect on the quality, hence reliability, of the national accounts estimates generated. Data should be gathered from their appropriate sources and the collection exercise should be adequately funded.