

Positioning Household Surveys for the Next Decade

February 19th, 2021

8:00 – 9:30 am (EST)

Household surveys play a critical role in meeting national data needs. A recent mapping exercise found that approximately one-third of all Sustainable Development Goal global indicators (80 out of 232 indicators), covering 13 different goals, can be sourced from household surveys. Despite their fundamental role in national statistical systems over the past decades, household surveys are facing funding challenges and skepticism on their continued utility within the changing data landscape.

Within this context, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges for household surveys, given limitations on face-to-face survey operations as a result of social distancing and other restrictions in many countries. A survey conducted by the UN Statistical Division and the World Bank in May 2020 found that 96 percent of national statistical offices either partially or fully stopped face-to-face data collection at some point during the pandemic.¹The increased need for timely, high-quality data on the impacts of the pandemic heightened demands for more efficient household survey systems relative to the status quo.

In response to these challenges, national statistical offices have acted quickly to respond to new data needs introduced by the pandemic, while maintaining the continuity of existing data collection programmes. To do so, countries have adopted innovative approaches and/or turned to alternative data sources², with most countries implementing one or more rounds of phone or web surveys measuring the impact of COVID-19 in the past year.

Looking ahead, the global data community faces several key questions on the future of household surveys. How will COVID-19 reshape national household survey programs in the future? How can we establish sustainable household survey programs that are resilient and versatile to future shocks like COVID-19? Will COVID-19 be a catalyst for innovation in the field of household surveys? What are the priority actions for countries and for the international community in the next decade for household surveys?

Organized by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys (ISWGHS), the session provides a platform for national statistical offices, international organizations, the research community, and civil society organizations to share their views on how household surveys should be best positioned for the next decade. The discussion will contribute to the drafting of a position paper being prepared by the ISWGHS. Following a short (10 min) presentation by the ISWGHS outlining the content of the position paper, discussants from national statistical offices, development partners and academia will be asked to make brief (5 min) remarks on the document and the proposed role of the ISWGHS, followed by a Q&A session. For further reading, an annotated outline for the paper is available as a background document under agenda item 3(l) at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/52nd-session/documents/BG-3I-Positioning_household_surveys-E.pdf.

Livestream video available at: https://youtu.be/F2t_GJu2sYI

¹ <https://covid-19-response.unstats.un.org/statistical-programmes/covid19-nso-survey/>

² <https://unstats.un.org/iswghs/task-forces/covid-19-and-household-surveys/national-responses-to-COVID-19/>

Work programme

Opening: Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director, UN Statistics Division

Moderator: Mr. Gero Carletto, co-Chair, ISWGHS and Manager, Living Standards Measurement Study, World Bank

Introduction presentation: Ms. Haoyi Chen, Coordinator, ISWGHS and Mr. Talip Kilic, Senior Economist, World Bank

Discussants:

Ms. Ola Awad, President, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

Mr. James Muwonge, Head of surveys, Uganda Bureau of Statistics

Mr. Jack Gambino, Former Director, Household Survey Methods Division, Statistics Canada

Mr. Andrés Gutiérrez, Regional Adviser on Social Statistics, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Ms. Sunita Kishor, Director, The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) program

Ms. Frauke Kreuter, Professor, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and University of Maryland

Q&A

Closing: Mr. Rafael Diez de Medina, Director, ILO Department of Statistics