Social and Demographic Statistics

an overview of discussions and decisions at the UN Statistical Commission, since 1947

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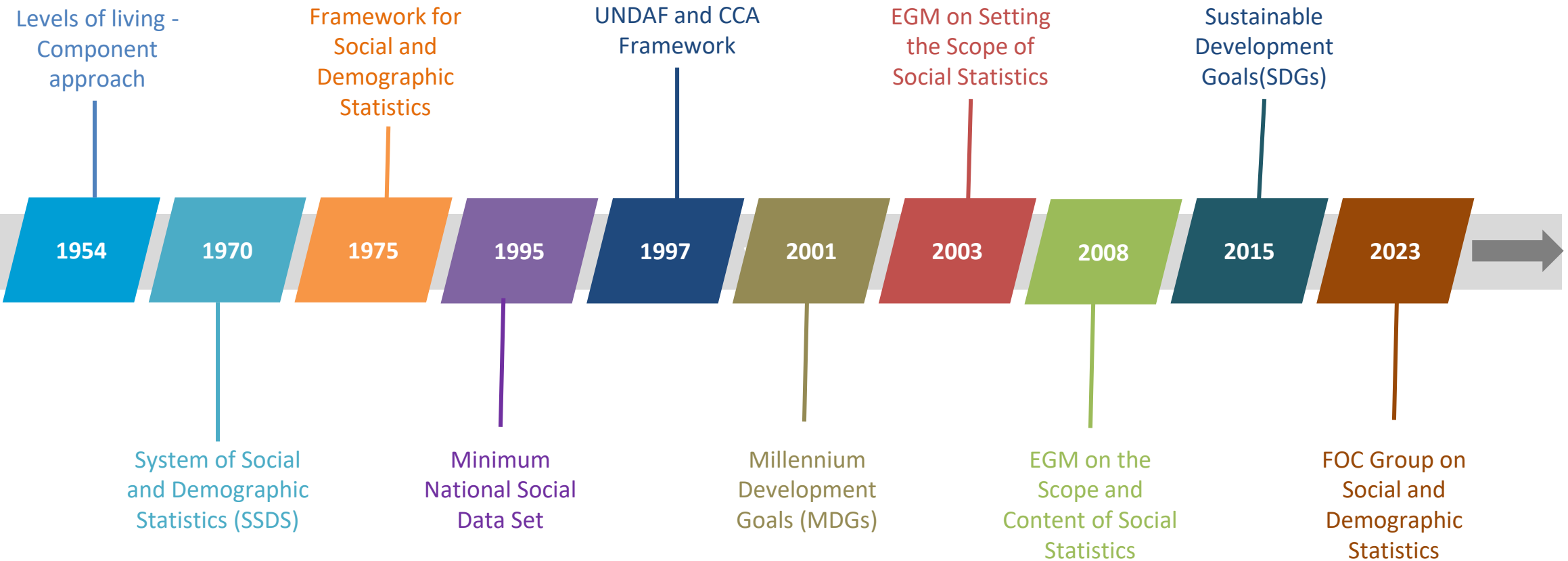
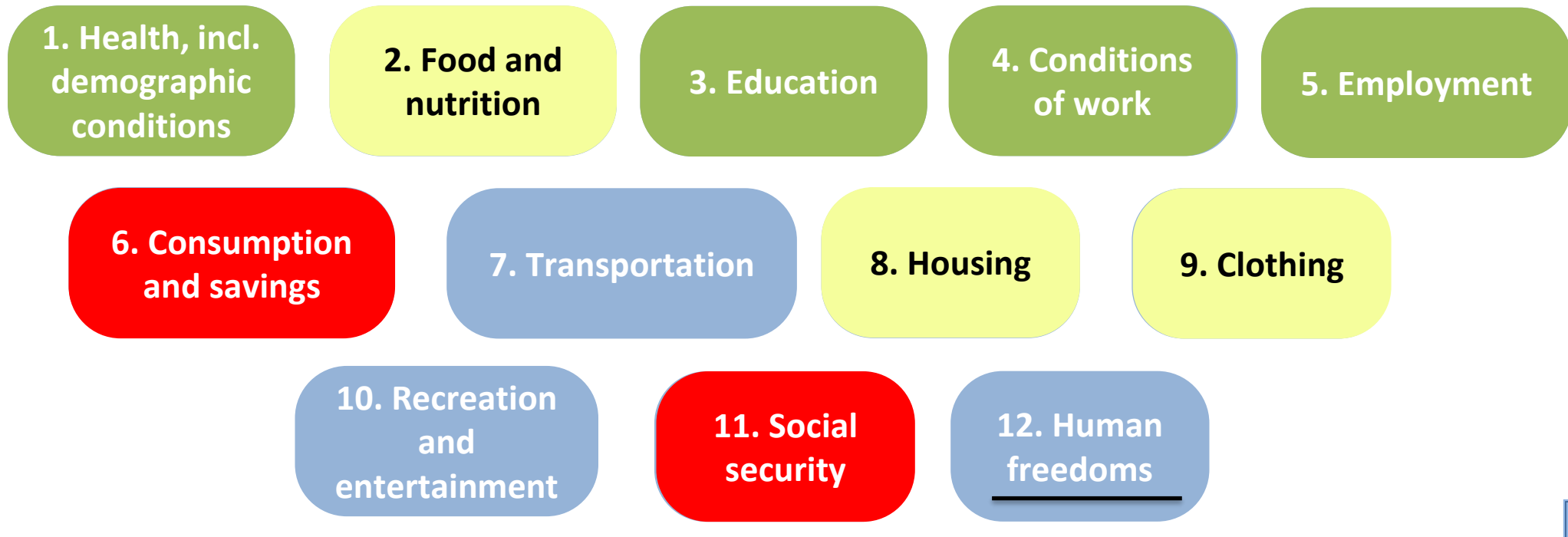Beyond GDP Sprint - Session 1

1 June 2023

Why refer to the past?

❖ Recalling numerous initiatives in the past attempting to conceptualize/systematize social statistics to better measure well-being (QL of life)

❖ Learning from the past to defining future directions

❖ Taking stock of evolution of concerns and related concepts

1954: Levels of living report – component approach

❖ Measuring levels of living through a series of twelve components:

1. Health, incl. demographic conditions

2. Food and nutrition

3. Education

4. Conditions of work

5. Employment

6. Consumption and savings

7. Transportation

8. Housing

9. Clothing

10. Recreation and entertainment

11. Social security

12. Human freedoms

❖ Much of the subsequent work on social indicators can be traced back to this report

1970: System of Social and Demographic Statistics (SSDS)=11 subsystems

1. Population, births, deaths, migration	**2. Family formation, families and households**	**3. Social class stratification and mobility**	**4. Distribution of income, consumption, accumulation and net worth**
5. Housing and the environment	**6. Allocation of time and the use of leisure**	**7. Social Security and welfare services**	**8. Learning activities and educational services**
9. Earning activities, employment services	**10. Health and health services**	**11. Public order and safety, offenders and their victims**	

- To link information on stock and flows of individuals to economic information and provision of services
- Need for linkages and consistency from one field to the other
- Based on common and/or consistent classifications, principles for structuring data
- Record linkages and longitudinal data was also advocated

System too complex

1975: Framework for Social and Demographic Statistics

❖ Developing a simplified version of SSDS – replacing the word "System" with "Framework"

   ▪ Moving from a set of subsystems within a unified system - > to identifying a number of concerns, unified through common international classifications and definitions throughout the body of statistics

   ▪ Step-by-step approach for integration and systematization of social and demographic statistics and indicators

      ▪ Technical report *Improving social statistics in developing countries: conceptual framework and methods (1979)*

❖ This approach led to intensified efforts in developing standards in social statistics:

   ▪ Age-group classifications; Classification on size and type of localities and urban/rural areas

❖ It also led towards developing indicators:

   ▪ *Social indicators: preliminary guidelines and illustrative series* (plus commonly used classifications) (1978)

Moving towards indicators

❖ Since SDSS, debate on indicators, whether they are:

- Outputs of the overall system (e.g., SSDS – subset of all the data series potentially available)

- Or should be developed to satisfy specific policy needs (on special pop groups, policy concerns) without reference to fixed general framework – discussion started in 1972

  => User needs should have priority! Indicators should be derived from policy goals rather than from the elements of the system (however, coordination and improvement of underlying data should proceed)

❖ Initiatives aimed at identifying priority and a "minimum set" of indicators

- Developing countries should focus on a <u>core set of indicators</u> necessary for policy making (1989)

- *Handbook on Social indicators,* conceptual and practical tool for developing social indicators within FSDS (1989)
  - Reviews systematically international standards on common concepts, classifications and definitions in **11 social and related economic fields** which can be used for the development of social indicators, with tables of illustrative series.

United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

1995: Indicator lists - Minimum National Social Data Set

❖ 15 indicators, in response to major UN conferences and summits

| Life expectancy at birth, by sex | Infant mortality, by sex | Child mortality, by sex | Maternal mortality | Employment- population ratio, by sex |

| Average number of years of schooling completed, by urban /rural, sex | Unemployment rate, by sex | Access to sanitation | Number of people per room | Access to safe water |

| Household income per capita | Monetary value of the basket of food needed for minimum nutritional requirement | Contraceptive prevalence rate |

| GDP per capita | Population estimates by sex, age and, when appropriate and feasible, ethnic group |

DESA

| 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | **1990** | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 |

2002 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) indicators:

❖ United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000)

  ▪ Policy goals and targets (time bound and quantifiable)

❖ Indicators framework identified by Expert Group: 8 Goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators

  ▪ The previous work on indicators was used as reference in identifying these indicators.

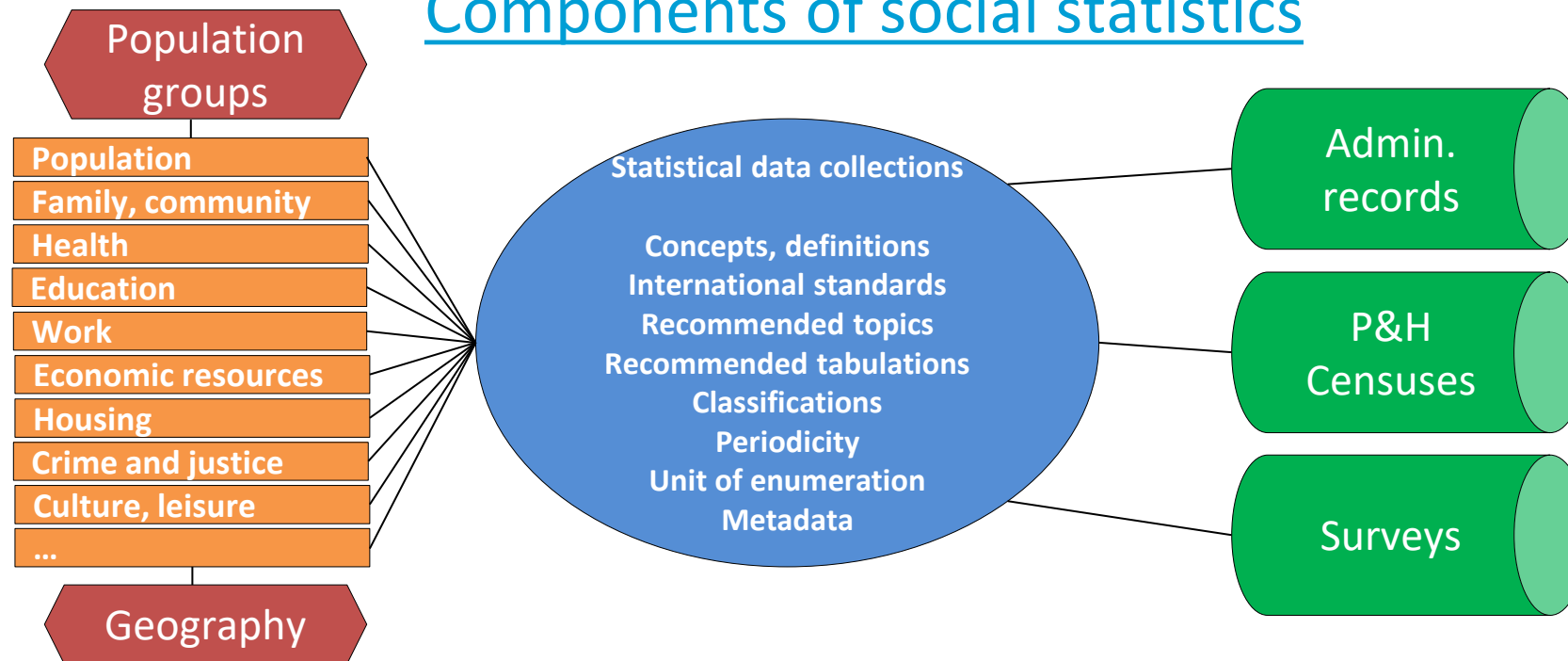## 2015: Global framework for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

❖ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)

❖ Global indicator framework of 17 Goals, 169 targets and 231 indicators

❖ Identified by Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) – endorsed by the SC at 47th session, in 2016

Expert Group Meetings on Setting the scope of social statistics – 2003 and 2008

- At national level, it was a considerable advantage to have a well-developed, coherent **framework for social statistics** applying a bottom-up approach to the spectrum of social phenomena, starting from specific and well-defined social concerns and later moving to emerging ones.
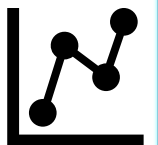
Components of social statistics

Population groups

| Population |
| Family, community |
| Health |
| Education |
| Work |
| Economic resources |
| Housing |
| Crime and justice |
| Culture, leisure |
| ... |

Geography

Statistical data collections

Concepts, definitions
International standards
Recommended topics
Recommended tabulations
Classifications
Periodicity
Unit of enumeration
Metadata

Admin. records

P&H Censuses

Surveys

Friends of the Chair (FOC) Group on Social and Demographic Statistics

❖ The Statistical Commission endorsed the establishment of the Group for reviewing the area of social and demographic statistics

   ❖ co-chaired by Hungary and Mexico, will work during 2023 - 2025 and report back on agreed deliverables in 2026.

❖ Overall objective: to produce specific recommendations for an agile and more responsive system of social and demographic statistics, that leaves no one behind, while anticipating data needs **beyond 2030**.

❖ 3 agreed work streams for the FOC Group:

   ❖ Mapping what we collectively do in this statistical field

   ❖ Identifying national experiences on producing granular, timely, relevant statistics, based on integrated datasets *that have the potential to be scaled up at global level*

   ❖ Make the case for social/demographic statistics

Conceptual frameworks for most social/demographic concerns exist

❖ International level - A lot of work has been done over decades to conceptualize and harmonize statistics on social/population concerns, including:
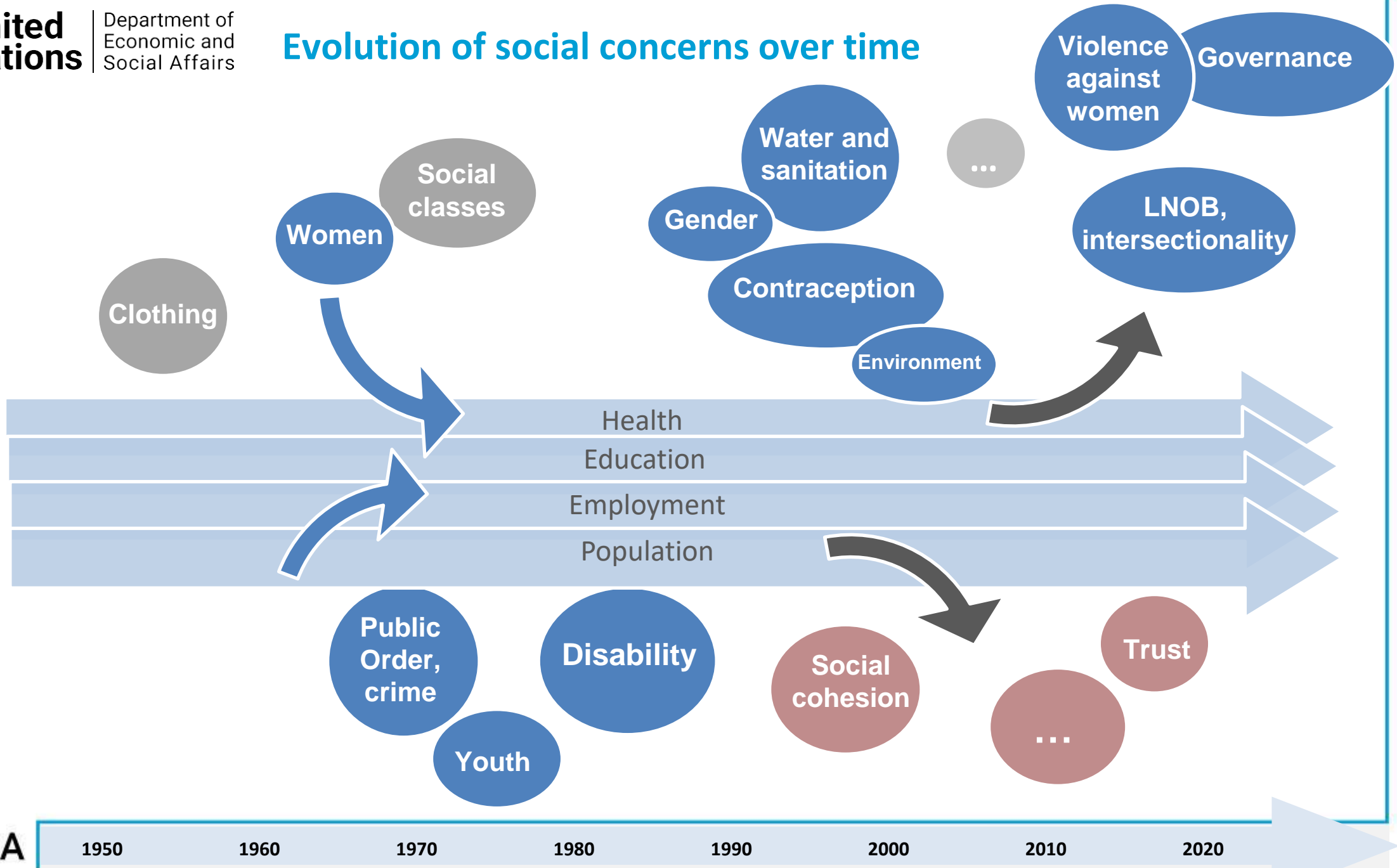
- Population and Housing Censuses
- Civil registration, vital statistics-ID Management systems
- International Migration Statistics
- ICLS on work related concerns
- Statistical Classifications (Education; Cause of Death; work related…)
- Time use statistics (ICATUS 2016, measuring unpaid household service work)
- Gender statistics
- VAW statistics
- Disability Statistics
- Refugees, IDPs, statelessness (EGRISS)
- … and much more!

To wrap up:

❖ The question at UNSC remains: Do we need an overarching framework/a system for social and demographic statistics/accounts?

    ❖ System interlinking components, allowing trade offs and simulations **versus** set of more flexible integrated policy indicators by component

❖ At national level, past EGMs already highlighted the need for better data integration (conceptual and in practice) => new FOC Group!

❖ Consider the needs of developing countries- applicability of system/solutions in all countries

❖ At global level, a lot of normative work has been done over decades to conceptualize and harmonize statistics on social/population concerns

    ❖ Social concerns/terminology has matured/evolved over time

Evolution of social concerns over time

Thank you!