



COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic and social impact



UN ECLAC COVID-19 Initiatives and Actions undertaken on Economic Statistics

ECLAC Statistics Division

Fourth (Virtual) Meeting of the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics
June 29-30, 2020



Initiatives undertook

COVID-19 Observatory

ECLAC has built a COVID-19 Observatory to support review and follow-up over the medium and long terms and at the request of CELAC.

The Observatory tracks the public policies that the 33 countries of the Latin America and Caribbean region are implementing to limit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and offers analyses of the economic and social impacts that these policies will have at the national and sectoral levels.

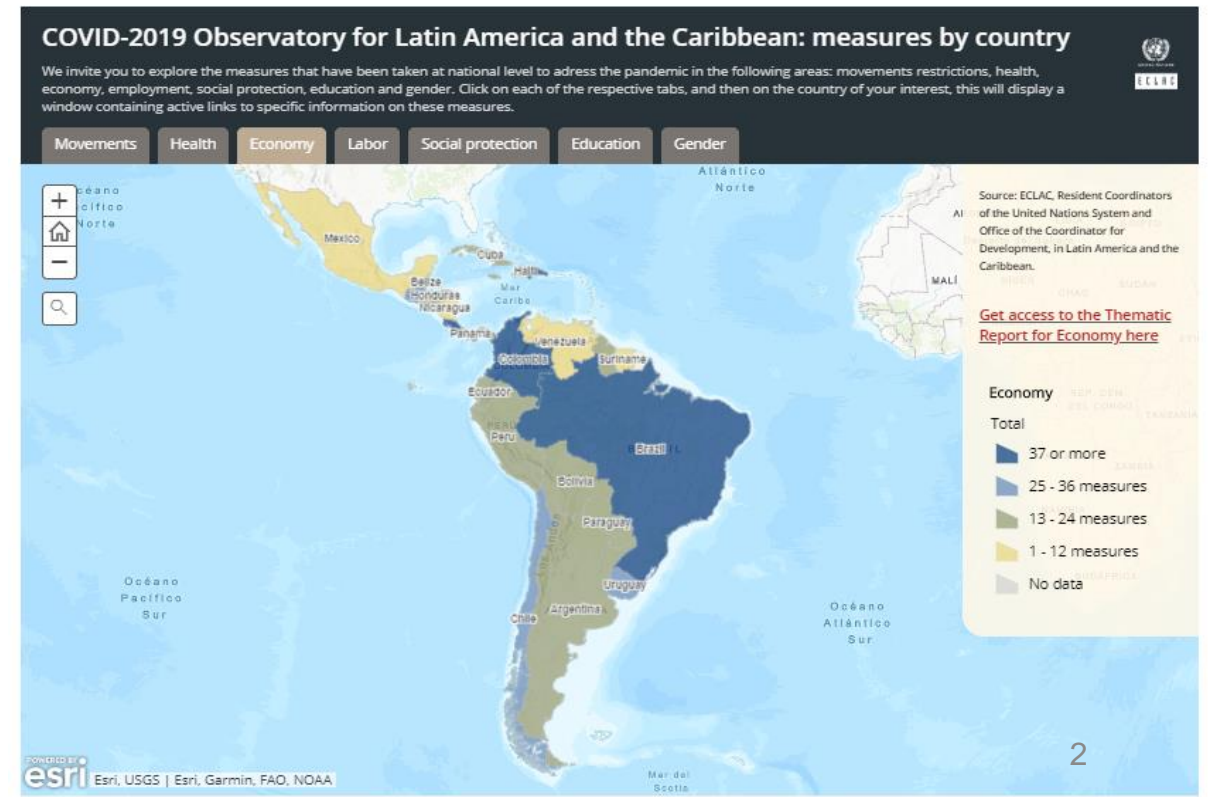
<https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19>



COVID-19 Observatory
in Latin America and the Caribbean
Economic and social impact



Measures and actions at the national level





Initiatives undertaken on economic statistics

- Actions undertaken by UN ECLAC to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the statistical operation in the Latin American and Caribbean region started early April 2020.
- All the activities carried out up to now have been conducted in collaboration under the platform of the Knowledge Transmission Network in the framework of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.
- The initiatives cover the following:
 1. Virtual meetings (4)
 2. Virtual consultations (2)
 3. Technical assistance (8 countries)
 4. Documents with relevant policy recommendations for this period on National accounts and Price statistics (2)



1. Virtual meetings

As of June 2020, four regional meetings have been conducted as follows:

- 2 regional meetings on Price statistics.

The topics addressed were focused on:

- 1) Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the data collection (missing data).
- 2) Actions undertaken by the statistical offices on new modalities of data collection.
- 3) Imputation methods applied.
- 4) Recommendations.

- 2 regional meetings on National accounts and foreign trade statistics.

The main topics addressed were related to the impact of the pandemic on:

- 1) Data sources,
- 2) Compilation methods.
- 3) Dissemination process
- 4) Recommendations

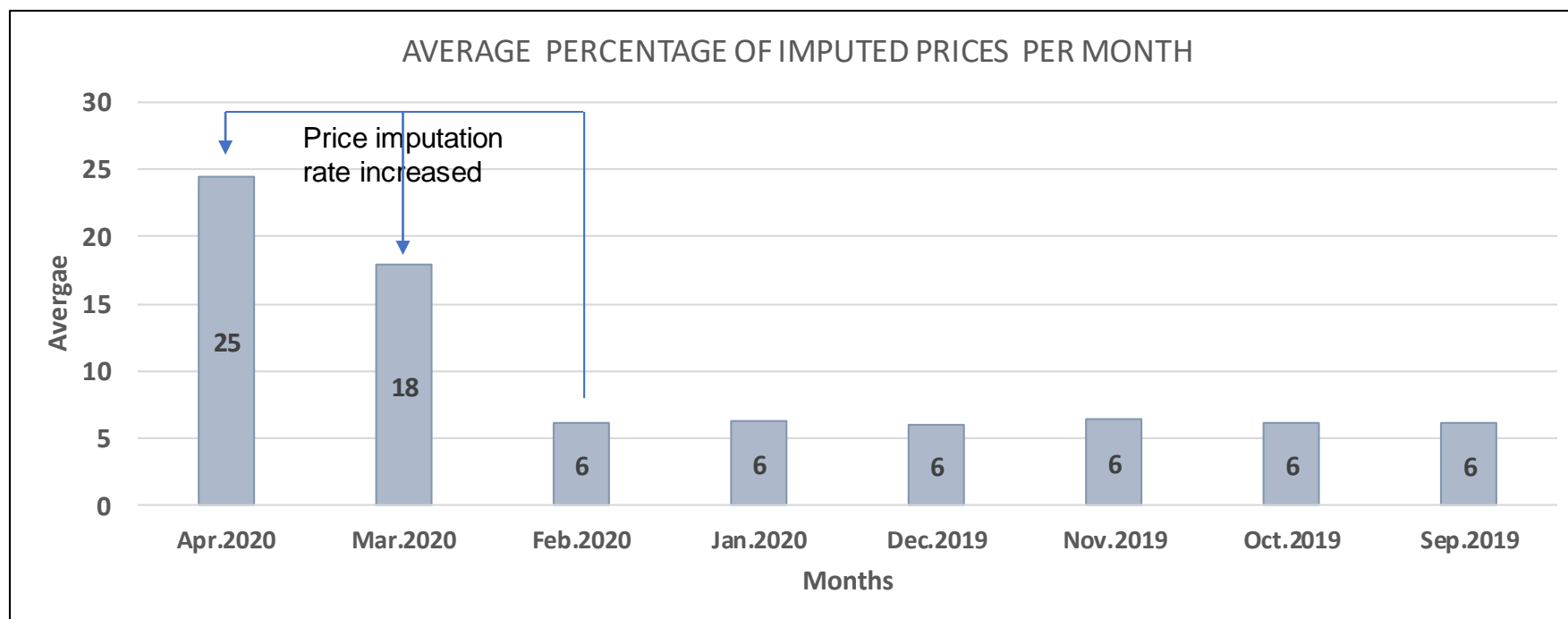


2. Virtual consultations

For price statistics, 2 virtual consultations were carried out to know:

- Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the data collection (missing data)
- Actions undertaken by the statistical offices on new modalities of data collection.

The key findings are the following (1):



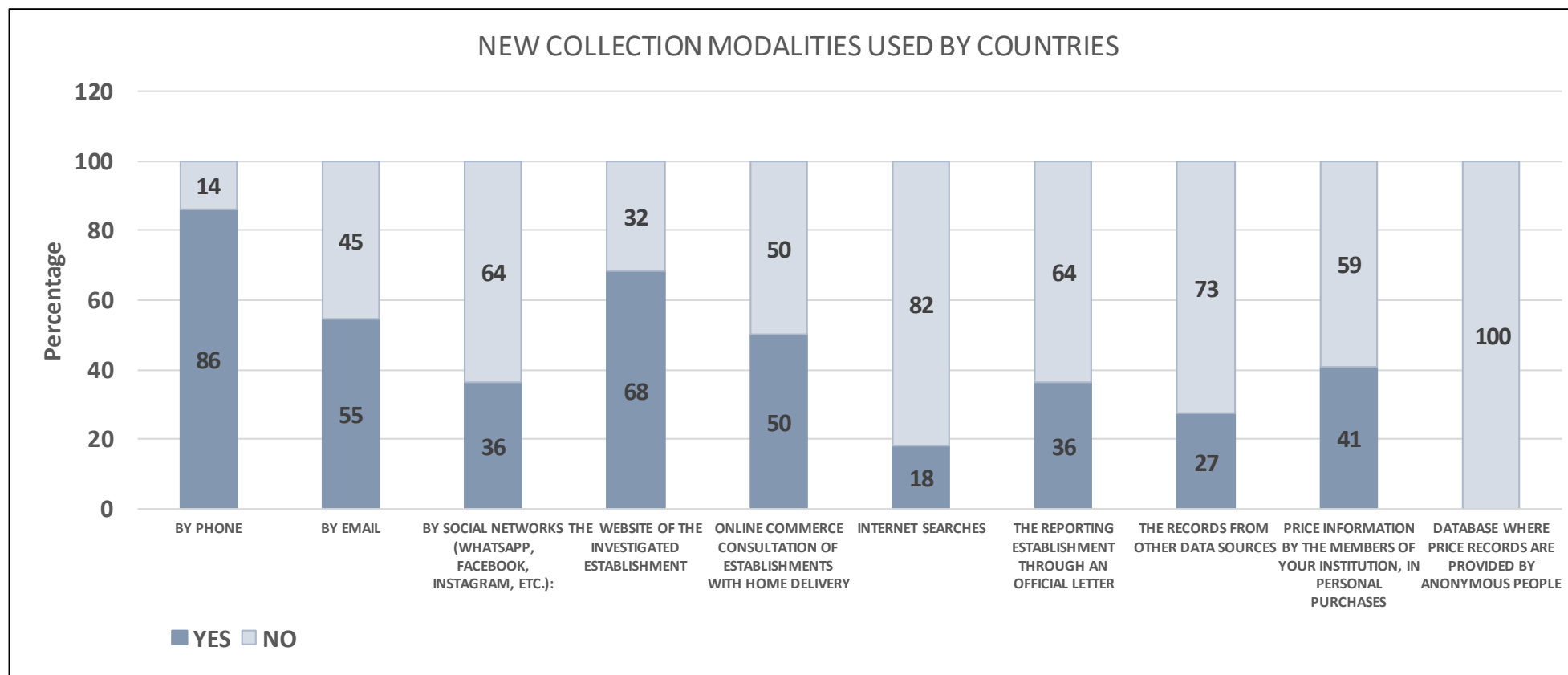
Source: Information from 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, which responded to this consultation.



2. Virtual consultations

The key findings are the following(2):

- 4 alternative price collection modalities were implemented by more than 50% of the countries, highlighting telephone and reporting website consultation.





3. Technical assistance

All these activities were conducted by on-line means.

- National Accounts statistics: 4 countries supported with TA
 - 1) Argentina
 - 2) Guatemala
 - 3) Paraguay
 - 4) Uruguay
- Price statistics: 5 countries supported through 13 virtual meetings.
 - 1) Bolivia
 - 2) Chile
 - 3) Dominican Republic
 - 4) Ecuador
 - 5) Paraguay



4. Documents with recommendations for this period on National accounts and Price statistics

The summaries of the problems raised and recommendations discussed during the virtual meetings were included in two documents already disseminated in English and Spanish:

Consumer Price Indices

National Accounts and Foreign Trade statistics

COVID-19 REPORTS

Producing the consumer price index (CPI) and the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean

April 2020

Summary

In the context of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is preparing a series of short publications with relevant policy recommendations for this period. This note makes several recommendations for the continued collection of price information from which the consumer price index (CPI) is calculated.

Introduction

In order to contain the spread of COVID-19, many Latin American and Caribbean governments have decided to restrict the movement of people through quarantine measures. This has interrupted statistical operations in which information is collected face to face in the field. Thus, the institutions responsible for producing official statistics must address complex challenges in order to continue providing their authorities and users with timely and high-quality statistics, including the CPI.

In view of this situation, the Statistics Division of ECLAC sent out a short questionnaire to the national statistical offices (NSOs) and central banks of Latin America and the Caribbean to learn about the effects that the health emergency was having on the functioning of statistical institutions. Responses from 20 countries indicated that, as at 20 March, they had all declared some form of health emergency as a result of COVID-19.

A series of videoconferences have been held since 24 March to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on statistical operations.¹ These videoconferences have been convened by ECLAC, in conjunction with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Chile, in its capacity as coordinator of the virtual talks of the Knowledge Transmission Network (KTN) of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, chaired by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia.

In order to learn about the progress made, teleconferences and regular consultations were also held with the countries of the region during the first half of March and again at the end of the month.

This document seeks to provide information about the state of affairs in the region, and to disseminate some of the recommendations agreed with the countries to address the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the compilation of data for the CPI. Although the analysis applies to this particular indicator, the considerations can be extended to the compilation of price system information in general, where appropriate. The agreed recommendations are based on international manuals and guidelines that the countries had already developed in response to natural disasters or social upheaval throughout their history.

¹ See [online] <https://file:///C:/Users/andrea/Downloads/16%20-%20Informe%20de%20la%20reunión%20de%20trabajo%20de%20la%20red%20de%20conferencias%20estadísticas%20en%20línea>

COVID-19 REPORTS

Compiling national accounts, balance-of-payments and foreign trade statistics in the framework of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) health emergency

June 2020

Executive summary

In the context of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is preparing a series of short publications with relevant policy recommendations for this period. This note includes several recommendations for the continued collection of information linked to national accounts, balance-of-payments and foreign trade statistics.

Introduction

This document was prepared by the Statistics Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on the basis of two videoconferences held with representatives of Latin American countries on 15 and 22 April 2020,¹ as well as exchanges with regional experts.² Statistical work is not immune to the challenges arising from the COVID-19 health emergency, so the practices developed by countries and the international statistical community are crucial for overcoming the obstacles to measuring the impact of this pandemic. In this context, it should be borne in mind that this issue is evolving continually and should be reviewed as experiences are shared and progress is made on measurement proposals, so that some of the proposals presented here can be adjusted or expanded in order to better reflect reality.

As a result of the health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the countries of the region have declared states of emergency and applied measures to restrict economic and social activity, which affect the compilation of basic statistics. In this context, ECLAC, through its Statistics Division and making use of the Knowledge Transmission Network of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, has decided to conduct a survey of the situation to determine the effects that the health emergency is having on statistical institutions' work. To this end, the Division has launched a series of surveys and held videoconferences with representatives of the national statistical offices (NSOs) and central banks of the countries of this region, and international organizations, as well as experts and consultants. Until now, the focus has been on social and price statistics (in particular, consumer prices). This document addresses the effects of the crisis on the compilation of economic statistics, in particular those on national accounts, the balance of payments and foreign trade, focusing on the aspects related to information sources, compilation methods and the dissemination of press releases.

¹ Representatives of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) of Argentina, the Central Bank of Ecuador, the Bank of Guatemala, the Central Bank of the Dominican Republic, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico, the Bank of Mexico and the Central Bank of Uruguay participated in the first videoconference. Representatives of all the Latin American countries were invited to participate in the second videoconference.
² Lourdes Irujo, Salvador Mancera and Juan Carlos Propiata.



Main conclusions

- As of June 2020, the national statistical offices have faced struggles in the data collection of national accounts and price statistics, some of them fulfilled with administrative data, implementation of supplementary modalities of data collection, and others covered by imputation methods.
- The statistical offices that have already incorporated digital means for data collection are less impacted due to the restrictions posed by the pandemic. However, it is important to distinguish the closure of the operations of the enterprises from the low response rate due to the lockdown.
- It was identified that the impact of the new modalities in the coverage of the price survey was between 10% and 30% of the prices collected in March. These new modalities were applied in specific to cover the data gaps in the collection because of the health emergency.
- As a result of the use of these alternatives, most of the statistical institutes collected sufficient data to calculate the CPI for March and April.
- Recommendations on the treatment supports provided by the Government during this COVID-19 pandemic were discussed and shared with the statistical offices.
- It is advisable to adopt the criteria of flexibility in the methods used during the lockdown and the mobility restrictions in each country.



Steps forward

The Statistical Division will continue working with the LAC region during the pandemic and post-pandemic period to support the National accounts and Price statistics compilation.

Webinars, virtual meetings, and consultations will be organized to give follow-up to the actions undertaken by the statistical offices to solve to some extent the effects of the pandemic in their short-term series.

The TA will be carried out with flexibility to cover the needs of the statistical office with timeliness and effectiveness.



COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic and social impact



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

UN ECLAC COVID-19 Initiatives and Actions undertaken on Economic Statistics

ECLAC Statistics Division

Fourth (Virtual) Meeting of the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics
June 29-30, 2020



**COVID-19
RESPONSE**