D. Linked microdata

D.1. Good practices in using linked microdata

10.81.   In addition to the various data sources that have been discussed in the present chapter and the preceding chapters, it is important to note that the *integration* of two or more existing data sources can also provide a lot of additional information relevant for the compilation of the international supply of services, as described in more detail in chapter 13. In order to facilitate such linking of microdata, it is advisable that all economic entities be included in an SBR that serves as the central sample frame of the statistical system.

10.82.   Microdata are the observational data collected on an individual statistical unit, including a person, household, business or other entity.[1] Exampl es of microdata are the name and location of a survey respondent, an enterprise identification number from the business register and information on the number and characteristics of employees of an enterprise. Such microdata may already be available from existing data warehouses within the national statistical office, or may come from other administrative data sources or the other sources cited in the present chapter. If microdata are being linked across agencies or across different data providers, it is recommended that an aggregate list of the entire population of individuals or enterprises from all sources be marked with an indicator of whether or not it has been linked. A manual review of the entities that have not been linked may reveal duplicates or other inconsistencies that can be resolved.

10.83.   The present *Guide* recommends that compilers conduct a thorough review of enterprises with similar names and multiple establishments to identify the appropriate establishments for inclusion in the linking exercise and to avoid double-counting.

D.2. Purpose and description

10.84.   Compilers may consider using microdata to link characteristics of reporting individuals and enterprises to get a different perspective on a target population, to identify inconsistencies or overlaps in the data or even to fill data gaps. Often microdata are not publicly released other than for officially-sanctioned research studies, which typically involve a rigorous approval process.[1]

D.3. Using linked microdata for purposes of statistics on the international supply of services

10.85.   Linked microdata on enterprises may prove most valuable in compiling FATS and data on modes of supply. Specifically, linking microdata on foreign ownership indicators (available from the business register, company financial statements or other industry sources) will help to identify the target population for FATS surveys and service transactions through mode 3. Moreover, microdata on the characteristics of employees of enterprises who may indicate foreign residence could help in identifying such target populations in relation to mode 4.

10.86.   Microdata on labour statistics and/or the residence of individuals will also help compilers to identify the presence of natural persons for compiling the supply of services through mode 4.

10.87.   Linking microdata can also provide opportunities for the national statistical office to conduct special research studies on many different aspects of the international supply of services that may be of particular interest to the country, such as the characteristics of domestic firms engaged in trade in services, determinants of imports of services and the effect of activities related to foreign affiliates and FDI on the domestic economy.

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[1] See chapter 20 for a more detailed discussion of the release of microdata.

Country experience: United States (Chapter 10)