Cross-cutting and managerial issues

COVID-19 and official statistics

Home Support for managing the crisis Social and demographic statistics Economic statistics Cross-cutting and managerial issues Related initiatives

Activities

Ongoing:

- The Executive Board of High-Level Group for Modernisation of Official Statistics and its Blue-Skies Thinking Network established a protected digital space where its members share their views and experiences regarding the response to the crisis in their organizations.
- Facilitating knowledge exchange in the expert community within existing activities (e.g. on usage of mobile data).

Upcoming:

During the **68th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) (22-24 June 2020)**, the chief statisticians of all CES member countries, will discuss:

- **Impact of COVID-19 crisis on official statistics** - jointly with the OECD Committee for Statistics and Statistical Policy (OECD CSSP):
  - Data stewardship – new roles of NSOs in the changing world (organized by UNECE)
  - Impact of Covid-19 crises on business continuity of official statistics (organized by OECD)
- **Using geospatial data and tools for measuring COVID-19 impact** - jointly with UN-GGIM: Europe

Country practices

The examples below illustrate how NSOs deal with the challenges of continuing their operations during the COVID-19 crisis.

The main sources of information are: (1) a special survey carried out by the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters (and follow-up communication with NSOs), (2) the UNSD COVID-19 response website, (3) NSOs’ websites and (4) information provided directly by NSO.

**Examples on crisis communications during COVID-19** are available on the dedicated page under Strategic Communications Framework.

For updates and adding of information please leave a comment at the bottom of the page or contact Malgorzata Cwiek.
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| Australia        | Consumers and data suppliers management | ABS COVID response webpage Australian Statistician's Briefing to the Australian Business Economists | ABS has created three webpages dedicated to COVID-19 response:  
- a webpage dedicated to all ABS COVID-19 statistical products  
- a webpage with information for survey respondents  
- a webpage summarizing ABS COVID-19 response with links to both webpages above, statements of the Australian Statistician and media releases.  
On 30 April, the Australian Statistician gave a briefing to the Australian Business Economists on:  
- how ABS has responded to the changed world  
- how ABS arrived at the suite of outputs they had released over the previous month  
- how ABS had transformed the way they do things to embrace new, rapid response surveys to give governments and the community the most up-to-date statistics possible, and  
- how ABS data can help decision-makers navigate the uncertain economic terrain over the coming months. | 3      | 11 May 2020 |
| Australia        | Statistical production | ABS COVID-19 statistical products Australian Statistician’s Briefing to the Australian Business Economists | The ABS is committed to delivering timely and accurate information about the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on Australian society and the economy.  
The ABS is producing a range of existing and new statistical products, providing relevant insights on households, employment and industry to inform government, business and community responses to the pandemic. A dedicated task force has been established to identify and secure new data sources to supplement the production of existing ABS products, address emerging policy questions and data needs in response to COVID-19, and deliver novel and innovative products in the future.  
New statistical releases will provide information on:  
- Business impacts such as cash flow and turnover  
- Additional monthly analysis on hours worked, including reasons for working less hours, and quarterly hours worked analysis by industry  
- Preliminary retail turnover data  
- Interactive employment maps  
- Preliminary import and export data  
- COVID-related employment and health implications for households  
- Additional analysis of short term overseas visitor and international student numbers  
- Interactive age and health conditions population maps  
- Confidentialised microdata for Australian businesses will be made available for researchers through TabBuilder so they can produce tables, graphs and maps. | 3      | 11 May 2020 |
| Australia        | Statistical production | Protecting the health of staff and respondents, while ensuring the business continuity | ABS is protecting the health of its staff and respondents, while ensuring the ongoing operating capacity.  
By mid-March, given the risks associated with travel and gatherings in confined spaces, ABS reduced the number of agencies and individuals attending lock-ups for market sensitive statistics. ABS also suspended surveys that required close face-to-face contact, including those within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to protect vulnerable populations.  
Some of the regular activities were paused to free up resources to ensure the key economic series weren’t at risk, or to make way for the collection of COVID-19 related data. Critical teams were identified, and surge capacity and shadow teams put in place to keep production processes going in the event that infection rates of ABS staff rose to critical levels. | 3      | 11 May 2020 |
| France           | Statistical production | Impact of COVID-19 on industrial production (press releases of 16 March and 25 March) and a dedicated COVID-19 web page | INSEE has been complying with the confinement and has been able to ensure continuity of its mission through teleworking. This required redefining priorities and adapting certain operation to the new conditions. INSEE informs about the impact of the COVID-19 on its work through press releases and a dedicated web page.  
Registers: INSEE assured the public about that it will continue to maintain the population register and the business register which are under its responsibility.  
Surveys: INSEE carries household surveys exclusively by phone or online if possible (employment survey and living conditions survey). ICT survey will not be carried out in 2020. Replies already provided by companies online will be preserved but there will be no reminders and no legal consequences of non-response. Certain large companies whose responses are indispensable can be contacted.  
Statistical production: INSEE aims to ensure the continuity of the production of national accounts. The provisional annual accounts for 2019 should be published as planned. The publication of trimestral accounts for first and second trimester 2020 may not follow the usual calendar, in particular the first estimate, which is scheduled 90 days after the end of each trimester.  
INSEE will continue to publish according to the usual calendar (or almost) all the main economic indicators, including monthly industrial production index, trimestral employment figures and monthly price index. Changes in data collection may however affect the quality of certain indicators. This will be systematically documented.  
Every week, INSEE will publish daily number of deaths reported by the communes, based on the civil registration system.  
INSEE is in contact with mobile operators to measure the distribution of the population on the territory. This work will lead to a publication as soon as possible.  
Economic impacts: INSEE aims to publish an analysis of the economic situation every two weeks. INSEE will issue updated press releases as necessary if conditions of data collection deteriorate or if INSEE encounters difficulties in ensuring continuity of service. | 4      | 4 May 2020  |
| Netherlands      | Statistical production | A dedicated website Coronavirus crisis: CBS figures. | Statistics Netherlands created a dedicated website with CBS figures on COVID-19 impacts on economy, society, public health, public mobility and supply chains, and related news articles. | 4      | 4 May 2020  |
| Netherlands      | Statistical production | Measuring article stockpiling with scanner data | On 24 March, Statistics Netherlands published an analysis on article stockpiling based on weekly transaction data. | 4      | 4 May 2020  |
| Netherlands      | Consumers and data suppliers management | Message to users of CBS data and those providing data to CBS | On 26 March, Statistics Netherlands published a message to users of CBS data and those providing data to CBS that:  
- Explained in simple terms how the COVID-19 outbreak affects the operations of Statistics Netherlands  
- Assured about their continued efforts to maintain the production of statistics at the highest possible level  
- Underlined the importance of reliable data during a crisis for various stakeholders and the need to continue the data collection  
- Thanked in advance those who provide the data for their collaboration under the difficult circumstances. | 4      | 4 May 2020  |
| Netherlands      | Strategy and leadership | Interview with CBS Acting Director General Bert Nrenko on reliable data in times of corona and beyond | On 22 April, Statistics Netherlands published an interview with CBS Acting Director General Bert Nrenko, who further explained the impacts of the outbreak on the CBS work, importance of reliable, timely data and the need for continued collaboration between the Dutch national and municipal authorities, the academic world and the business community during the crisis and beyond. | 4      | 4 May 2020  |
Italy

Statistical production

Actions to ensure continuity of statistical production, a special internal task force

Due to measures adopted by the government to contain the virus, istat has implemented a series of actions to ensure the continuity and quality of statistical production even in this emergency situation.

The institute has reorganized data collection by sustainable acquisition techniques, innovative methodologies and use of data sources; it also provided most appropriate solutions to support statistical production processes, in full respect of workers' health. Official statistics are fundamental for measuring the evolution of economy and society; their production and dissemination at the service of institutions, policy makers, families and businesses, therefore, cannot be stopped, but need to be rethinked to be ready to provide the country with all necessary answers, and above all to support and monitor the future country's recovery.

Istat has long invested in dematerialization and can therefore ensure full operation of its databases and accessible online services.

A special internal task force is dedicated to organize and manage the impact of pandemic on the statistical activities. It caused the stop of some survey and the postponing of others.

Istat is working using "agile works" and all the workers are connected and are working as usual.

Web meeting tools are very often used. A special part of the internal website is well-organized containing all the necessary information.

Australia

Statistical production

Impacts on the work programme

The ABS is providing a range of additional, up-to-date information to enhance understanding of the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, including new information relating to the Australian Labour Market. In order that the ABS can continue to deliver critical economic and social statistics during this time, it has made some changes to some elements of the ABS Forward Work Program.

Mexico

Statistical production

No interruption of production and publication of short-term economic indicators and maintaining information quality standards

The main challenge is not to interrupt the production and publication of short-term economic indicators and maintain information quality standards.

In case of the production of short-term economic statistics, we anticipate problems in surveying and in the imputation methods of missing data, as well as the temporary or definitive suspension of some businesses in certain industries.

The main challenges for the price indices are:

- Preserving the health integrity of the work team,
- Carry out the day-to-day work of operation, facing existing restrictions, but seeking to obtain the result by alternative methods,
- Resolve the no response problem by alternative methods of data collection and processing,
- Ensure the publication of the National Consumer Price Index, defined as data of national interest.
- Ensure the quality and reliability of the data.

Mexico

Risk management

Evaluation of the operating conditions in economic units

According to the Contingency Plan of the National Economic Surveys, INEGI will carry out an evaluation of the operating conditions that prevailed during the health crisis in the economic units, in such a way that the data available is ratified or rectified.

This activity will be a determining input for the generation of statistical results for the contingency period, in such a way that the data is generated in accordance with the quality, accuracy, relevance and opportunity established by the Law.

It is essential to carry out an evaluation of the actions taken during the contingency, both statistical and non-statistical, in order to prepare a detailed report of the actions, highlighting the impacts, conclusions and alternatives of solutions for the areas which opportunity may be found. This report will be the fundamental input for the design of a contingency plan of greater scope.

Germany

Statistical production

Biggest challenges at the moment

Monitoring of company responses and the share of estimation:

Due to the difficulties experienced by companies during the pandemic, non-responses are expected. As far as possible, this is compensated by utilizing estimates, accepting a higher error tolerance and reducing the publication depth. The present situation is particularly difficult for many companies, public authorities and private individuals obliged to report data for the production of official statistics. We are nevertheless asking for the submission of data via the familiar electronic transmission channels. If necessary, this data will help to pro-vide politicians and administrative authorities with the basic information they need to decide on measures for coping with the crisis.

Contributions by other public authorities:

Important contributions by other public authorities might be missing, because they are also affected by the disease.

Germany

Human resources management

Biggest challenges at the moment

A reduction of active staff is expected because of the pandemic. The existing staff is "reorganised" according to the statistical priorities.

Mexico

Human resources management

Providing data to government for crisis management

NSO sent most of its offices employees to work under a home office structure starting March 23th 2020, keeping just a small crew to operate.

Field personal worked on the census until March 30th 2020.

On April 6th 2020 practically everyone still in the office was sent home.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare indicated to NSO that the contracts of its temporary employees who carry out field activities should be maintained.

Turkey

Human resources management

Biggest challenges at the moment

The TurkeyStat National Data Release Calendar, in order to ensure timely publication of news bulletins and statistics, home office work has been initiated and remote access to databases has been provided.

NSO has taken the necessary precautions for the fieldwork and therefore, the number of personnel has been decreased in the offices (% 90 of staff working temporarily). Instead of it, video-conferences were organized.

Turkey

Statistical production

Data compilation issues

There are 26 regional offices of TurkStat (corresponding to NUTS II level regions), which are in charge of the compilation, evaluation, quality control, analysis of the data and its transfer to the Center. Approximately 3/4 of the total staff are working in the regional offices, with the majority of them are interviewers who are primarily engaged in data collection.

Therefore, due to the Covid-19 illness, some challenges are expected to be experienced during data collection processes in surveys and hence, some measures mentioned below have been taken by NSO to overcome these challenges.

In Regional Offices, face to face interviews with the households and workplaces for some surveys were stopped temporarily. Instead of it, interviews by e-mail, telephone, web survey and data collection by administrative register methods will be continued during the pandemic.

Sim cards are bought each consisting of adequate minutes and internet data for interviewers in the regional offices so that they can call the respondents at home, including the first meeting of Labour Force Survey. This application is valid only for three months. Afterward it is planned to adopt and reorganize the regional offices to our Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system and software.

By optimising the software infrastructure, CATI operators (Working for LFS and CPI Rental Prices) are made to work at home as if they were at office. Thus, all the phone calls are still recorded and given quality scores. Our experts can listen all the calls at their homes by connecting our call center software.

An official application to "Informatics and Communication Authority" is made to get a special phone number (1XY) that is only given to governmental institutions working for common good. With this application, it is aimed to make respondents feel safe when they are called up to conduct a survey.

NSO have been sending information letters to the respondents before the starting of the fieldwork of each survey according to the agreement between TurkStat and Turkish Post Office for years. These new practices are announced with our informative letters and the Request Information Module on our website to inform respondents that they can be called by phone during COVID-19 in order to conduct surveys.

Besides letters, respondents are also given information by SMS and emails.

In terms of business surveys, Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) method was the main channel. Our staff in regional offices ensures respondents participation to surveys reminding them with phone calls and emails.

Household Budget Survey (HBS) is postponed 1 month due to quality problems that it is not nominal enough to conduct this survey by CATI.

Household Budget Survey (HBS) is postponed 1 month due to quality problems that it is not nominal enough to conduct this survey by CATI.

Alternative data sources like outlets' websites, e-invoices, e-archive invoice, card payments for some studies are used to fill data gaps in data collection during this Covid-19 period.
Specific lessons learned about the effectiveness of telecommuting: In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the importance of technological infrastructure in telecommuting has been understood as it enabled continuation of working process. It has been revealed that the works can be carried out easily by telecommuting and alternately working applications in cases where the personnel health should not be risked, but for this, the existing personnel structure and the technological equipment should be prepared. Flexible working conditions may be applied in the future by evaluating the efficiency of the works.

Specific practices: The NSO has established a platform for this task. Coming period, NSO is planning to redesign data collection methods for all its national social surveys in order to employ CATI after a six months pilot study we activated our CATI Center with 30 operators to collect data for some specific surveys. In the field application period, each household is visited 4 times for taking expenditure records. After the survey month, the survey is completed by making an income interview with the CAPI method. In this context, if the first interview can be made through a face to face interview it is possible to complete the survey period with CATI method. In March 2020, field application completed by with CAPI method. However, field application is cancelled for April 2020 since the first interviews could not be made through face to face interview.

Household Labour Force Survey: Before Covid-19, all surveys of the first wave and the majority of the 2nd and subsequent waves were being conducted with CAPI method and a small part of the 2nd and subsequent waves were being conducted with CAPI method. Together with the measures taken in the context of the epidemic, all face to face interviews have been stopped. The capacity of the NSO CATI Center has been increased and the CAPI interviewers have started to implement the survey by telephone.

Statistics on Income and Living Conditions Survey (SILC): SILC Survey’s field application period is 4 months starting at March and finishing at July. This year due to Covid-19 household visits were stopped at the beginning of the field application period. After a while the survey method was changed from CAPI to CATI. For the households of wave 2, 3 and 4 the survey has been trying to be done by phone although SILC is a very long and intense survey. For the first wave households’ surveys cannot be conducted and this will be evaluated by Eurostat in the following days.

Death Statistics: Monthly transferring death data from the data source (the Central Civil Registration System (MERNIS) database of the Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Civil Registration and Citizenship Affairs) does not allow daily/weekly death data production at that moment.

Do you have questions or want to share your experience? Let us know in the comments below.

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