Cross-cutting and managerial issues

COVID-19 and official statistics

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.
### Australia

**Country:** Consumers and data suppliers management  
**Category:** Statutory  
**Title and/or link:** ABS COVID response webpage [Australian Statistician’s Briefing to the Australian Business Economists](#)  
**Description:** 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 ways 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.

**Source:** 3  
**Date added:** 11 May 2020

### Australia

**Country:** Statistical production  
**Category:** Statutory  
**Title and/or link:** ABS COVID-19 statistical products [Australian Statistician’s Briefing to the Australian Business Economists](#)  
**Description:** 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 visitors and international students
- Interactive age and health conditions population maps
- Confidentialised microdata for Australian businesses will be made available for researchers through TableBuilder so they can produce tables, graphs and maps.

**Source:** 3  
**Date added:** 11 May 2020

### Australia

**Country:** Statistical production  
**Category:** Statutory  
**Title and/or link:** Protecting the health of staff and respondents, while ensuring the business continuity

**Description:** 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 look-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.

### France

**Country:** Statistical production  
**Category:** Statistical production  
**Title and/or link:** Impact of COVID-19 on industrial production (press releases of 14 March and 25 March) and a dedicated COVID-19 web page

**Description:** 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 but interpolation will be used in order to avoid large gaps. Preliminary import and export data will be released on a weekly basis.

### Netherlands

**Country:** Statistical production  
**Category:** Statistical production  
**Title and/or link:** A dedicated website Coronavirus crisis: CBS figures

**Description:** 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.

**Source:** 4  
**Date added:** 4 May 2020

### Netherlands

**Country:** Statistical production  
**Category:** Statistical production  
**Title and/or link:** Measuring article stockpiling with scanner data

**Description:** On 24 March, Statistics Netherlands published an analysis on article stockpiling based on weekly transaction data.

**Source:** 4  
**Date added:** 4 May 2020

### Netherlands

**Country:** Consumers and data suppliers management  
**Category:** Strategy and leadership  
**Title and/or link:** Interview with CBS Acting Director General Bert Kroese on reliable data in times of corona and beyond

**Description:** On 22 April, Statistics Netherlands published an interview with CBS Acting Director General Bert Kroese, 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.

**Source:** 4  
**Date added:** 4 May 2020
A reduction of active staff is expected because of the pandemic. The existing staff is “reorganised” according to the statistical production plan. Important contributions by other public authorities might be missed, because they are also affected by the disease.

For the production and publication of short-term economic statistics, the National Statistical Offices (NSO) have been sending information letters to the respondents before the starting of the fieldwork of each survey. The letters are only given to governmental institutions working for common good. With this application, it is aimed to make respondents aware of the field 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 publication of short-term economic statistics will be ensured.

The main challenge is to ensure the quality and reliability of the data. Methods to control the quality and reliability of the data are developed in accordance with the quality assurance procedures and are promptly applied. The data collected in the surveys are subjected to statistical editing and adjustment. The main data quality assurance methods are descriptive statistics, range checks, follow-up data from other sources, and ad hoc expert reviews. The main data quality assurance methods are descriptive statistics, range checks, follow-up data from other sources, and ad hoc expert reviews. The main data quality assurance methods are descriptive statistics, range checks, follow-up data from other sources, and ad hoc expert reviews.

Monitoring of company responses and the share of estimation: In the past, company responses to official surveys were not systematically followed up. Nowadays, this situation is reversed. The NSO has been sending information letters to the respondents before the starting of the fieldwork of each survey. The letters are only given to governmental institutions working for common good. With this application, it is aimed to make respondents aware of the field conditions that prevailed during the health crisis in the economic units, in such a way that the data available is ratified or rectified.

It is essential to carry out an evaluation of the actions taken during the contingency, both statistical and non-statistical, in order to identify lessons learned for the future. For this reason, it is necessary to prepare a detailed report of the actions, highlighting the impacts, conclusions and alternatives of solution for the areas of statistical and non-statistical production of short-term economic statistics.

The main challenge is that the production of short-term economic statistics does not need to be interrupted during this time, and it has made some changes to some elements of the short-term economic statistics production process. The main challenge is that the production of short-term economic statistics does not need to be interrupted during this time, and it has made some changes to some elements of the short-term economic statistics production process.

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In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, weight structure of CPI and classification which is used in CPI compilation will remain unchanged during the year. However, price compilation of the CPI is guided by the following principles:

- to continue the price collection from outlets by price collectors whenever possible.
- to replace missing price by price obtained from other sources.

In addition to this, prices will be collected by telephone, e-mail enquiries and outlet's websites.

**Short Term Business Statistics:**
In Short Term Business Statistics, VAT declaration information is used as the data source in the calculation of turnover indices, retail sales indices and industrial production index. Due to the Covid-19, VAT declaration is extended. VAT declaration information of all enterprises has not been received due to the extension of the declaration period. For the enterprises without data, industrial production survey, e-invoice, e-archive invoice, card payment and foreign trade data were used in the calculation of the indices in addition to the VAT declaration information. There is no problem for the studies whose data source is questionnaire.

**Household Budget Survey (HBS):**
Household information is compiled by interview, registration and observation methods in HBS. The households are visited prior to the survey month and the first meetings are held with the Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) method. Then, during the survey month, 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 CATI 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 CATI 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.