



Generations and Gender Programme

Summary Description

UNECE PAU, 16-Sep-2005

The Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) is a system of national **Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS)** and **contextual databases**, which aims at improving the knowledge base for policy-making in UNECE countries. The GGS is a **panel survey** of a nationally representative sample of 18-79 year-old resident population in each participating country with at least three panel waves and an interval of three years between each wave. The contextual databases are designed to complement individual-level survey data in multi-level analyses.

Objective and Focus

The main substantive goal of the programme is to improve understanding of demographic and social development and of the factors that influence these developments, with a particular attention towards relationships between children and parents (*generations*) and relationships between partners (*gender*).

The Programme focuses on the determinants and crucial transitions in these relationships, marked by demographic events such as birth of a child, formation and dissolution of a partnership, and leaving parental home, as well as by retirement, ageing, and changes in the health status. It also focuses on key dimensions of these relationships, such as subjective satisfaction and closeness of ties.

Key Features

By taking the **prospective** view, the GGP essentially broadens the explanatory scope of the collected data. To make causal inferences, the analyst needs data where the hypothesized cause is observed before the outcome in a person's lifetime. The panel design provides a possibility to use the broad range of information pertaining to the time of interview in explaining the demographic behaviour recorded between the panel waves. This is particularly important for variables such as incomes and opinions that cannot normally be caught retrospectively.

Population scholars increasingly share the view that single-discipline perspectives for studying population and family behaviour are incapable of producing major gains in our understanding. The **multidisciplinary** approach in the GGP is reflected in the breadth of theories underlying the questions included in the survey instrument. Among the theories reflected in the questionnaire are the theory of reasoned action, the theory of the importance of attitudes and norms in social behaviour, theories of the impact of social networks, and theories of gender and gendered behaviour.

The GGP integrates the broader **context** within which people make their behavioural choices into the data design and develops a contextual database. This is grounded on the assumption that individual behaviour,

such as childbearing and the formation and disruption of co-residential unions, is influenced not only by personal traits, living conditions, and beliefs, but also by the context within which people live, including their families, networks, communities, and societies.

From its inception, the GGP has been a joint multi-country research effort. European countries have many features in common, therefore, it pays for countries to join forces and seek answers together. The knowledge emanating from a joint effort will better shed light on how each country's policies actually influence population and family change. In order to enable individual countries to compare themselves with others as fully as possible, the GGP aims at a high level of **comparability** of data and method.

The GGP addresses **gender issues** throughout its wide range of topics. It uses stratified nationally representative samples that include approximately equal numbers of men and women. It collects most of its data from a couple perspective, that is, the respondents provide a large amount of information also about their current partner if they have one. The gender issues are taken into account throughout the questionnaire in the formulating the response items and including thematic blocks of questions. All this allows to study the system of gender relationships in a country and its link with demographic behaviour

The GGP covering **relationships between generations** also from the viewpoint of the population above the reproductive ages, which allows analysts and policy-makers to address the pertinent issues of population ageing in developed countries.

Organisation and Funding

The Programme is co-ordinated by the UNECE **Population Activities Unit** (PAU) and developed by the GGP Consortium that includes:

- Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Great Britain)
- Department of Demography at the University "La Sapienza" of Rome (Italy)
- Hungarian Central Statistical Office
- Institut national d'études démographiques* (France)
- Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (Germany)
- Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute
- Statistics Canada
- UNECE Population Activities Unit

For the management of the programme two structures have been created: the Consortium Board, which also assumes the functions of an Advisory Group, and the Informal Working Group (IWG), which includes representatives from all interested institutions, national statistical offices, population institutes and experts of the member States. The Consortium Board has formed expert working groups to carry out the work on programme development.

During 2000-2003, the **UNFPA** supported programme co-ordination activities at the PAU. Grants from the governments of France and Switzerland have provided additional support.

Member organisations of the GGP Consortium have supported the Programme by the contributions of their staff in the GGP expert working groups and by covering travel and other costs related to their work on the GGP. The countries that have implemented the survey have raised the required funds on their own initiative and mainly from their own sources. Significant additional support has been provided by the UNFPA to Romania, by the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research to Russia, Bulgaria and Romania, and by the *Institut national d'études démographiques* to Georgia.

Background

In the 1980s and 1990s, the PAU coordinated the Fertility and Family Surveys (FFS) that had an outstanding impact on the advancement of knowledge-based policy-making and on better understanding of population processes both by policy-makers and the academic community. The data collected are now in most cases more than ten years old. In the intervening period, the social, economic and political landscape of Europe has changed fundamentally, data collection methodology has advanced substantially and so has the state of demographic theory – partly as a result of studies based on the FFS. There is an urgent need for a new round of comparative surveys to be able to address population issues in contemporary developed countries. The need was once again emphasised in the 2004 European Population Forum, which called for the advancement of knowledge in service of policymaking in all the fields it addressed. The GGP is an excellent response to such call.

Progress as of September 2005

The expert working groups have completed the methodological instruments for the first panel wave of the survey. Their publication is in print. Development of the questionnaire for the second wave is in progress. The conceptual framework and specification of the GGP contextual database has been completed and published.

Representatives of national population institutes and statistical offices from 30 countries, including two ESCAP countries (Australia and Japan), participate in the GGP Informal Working Group. Hungary, Italy, Japan, Russia, Bulgaria, Germany and the Czech Republic have completed data collection in the first panel wave; Hungary has also completed second wave. France, Georgia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Australia have scheduled their first wave data collection for later this year or for 2006; preparations are under way in many other countries. The contextual database has been completed in Bulgaria.

Programme co-ordination is focussing on setting up and maintaining the GGP central data archive that is expected to boost comparative studies in a number of policy-relevant areas, organizing the publication of analytic outputs, developing instruments for the second and third panel wave and assisting countries in programme implementation. The GGP Consortium Board and the Informal Working Group will convene next time in Istanbul on 5-8 October 2005.