UNECE Task Force on Population Projections

Preliminary recommendations and good practices: Transparency

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Introduction

In addition to explaining which method is used, the forecaster should specify (de Beer 2011):

- Underlying choices and assumptions

- The arguments for these choices and assumptions

- Consequences of these choices.

- Scientific research reports should provide descriptions of procedures and assumptions to a level of detail sufficient for others to undertake a replication of the results (Morgan and Henrion. 1990).

Introduction

Users have a strong desire for more detailed information about

* The projection assumptions (29%),

* The methodology (24%)

* The underlying sources (22%).

Introduction

1. User survey expressed dissatisfaction in the level of detail disseminated by their NSO.

2. NSOs appear to be dedicating a substantial portion of their disseminations to the discussion of projection assumptions

Improvements could potentially be made in the focus and content of those descriptions to better suit user needs for both qualitative, contextual information and detailed quantitative data

Key recommendations

- Document and disseminate the main activities that led to the decision to develop new projections methods or assumptions.

- Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology.

- Clearly define key terms used in dissemination products

- Assess the performance of previous projections

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Document and disseminate the main activities that led to the decision to develop new projections methods or assumptions

1. To develop an assessment of the performance of previous projections

2. Describe how the new projections differ from previous editions.

3. Describe the key factors which led to the decision to produce new projections.

4. Update the projections on a regular and predetermined basis or when important demographic changes affect the pertinence of the assumptions.

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Document and disseminate the main activities that led to the decision to develop new projections methods or assumptions

1. To develop an assessment of the performance of previous projections

- One of the first tasks carried out for the elaboration of new population projections, is the evaluation of the performance of the previous one.

- Regardless of the depth of this evaluation, this allow to conclude aspects to be considered in the new projection, such as possible changes in the methodology and procedures to be followed for the definition of assumptions and calculation of projections

- it is very important that users are aware of the results of this evaluation

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Document and disseminate the main activities that led to the decision to develop new projections methods or assumptions

2. Describe how the new projections differ from previous editions

- NSOs make apparent to users if and why projection assumptions differ from previous editions.

- For users who are familiar with a previous edition of projections, a comparison of the new methods and assumptions versus the old ones can facilitate the learning process

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Document and disseminate the main activities that led to the decision to develop new projections methods or assumptions

3. Describe the key factors which led to the decision to produce new   projections.

- NSOs may formulate new projections on a set schedule or when motivated by substantial demographic shifts or policy changes.

- The elaboration of new projections should always be accompanied by a description of the factors taken into consideration which led to the decision to produce them

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Document and disseminate the main activities that led to the decision to develop new projections methods or assumptions

4. Update the projections on a regular and predetermined basis or when important demographic changes affect the pertinence of the assumptions.

- If there is an updating schedule, it is recommended to be public knowledge. If there is no such schedule or if an update is performed out of schedule, it is recommended to clearly inform the reasons that you have for this update

- It is important establish clearly the reasons for projections update, especially when these updates are not made with an established periodicity.

- it is recommended to inform users in a timely manner.

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology

1. Disseminate the projection inputs in sufficient detail so as to facilitate reproduction .

2. Describe the consultation process and its outcomes

3. Acknowledge any relevant stakeholders

4. Document the technical and methodological changes of new projections as compared to previous editions

5. Describe the quality of the data source

6. Provide justification for the choices of assumptions , horizon and methods.

7. Provide descriptions of the methodology used to project the population

8. Provide a description of the software programs used to produce the projections

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology

1. Disseminate the projection inputs in sufficient detail so as to facilitate reproduction .

- To disseminate projection inputs in the same level of detail as was utilized in the building of the projection

- Projection makers should improve direct communication with users regarding their methods and to provide input data to users to help them reproduce the results

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology

2. Describe the consultation process and its outcomes

- Most NSOs engage in some form of consultation in the process of creating their projections. Data from the NSO survey show that two-thirds of NSOs had noted some or all of their consultations in their disseminated products

- Documentation of consultations may help contextualize why some decisions were taken.

- Dissemination of minutes with divergent views can have a negative effect on the credibility of the projections. on the other hand, information about the participants in the consultations and conclusions reached by the projections

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology

3.   Acknowledge any relevant stakeholders

- NSOs should provide a description in dissemination materials of major stakeholders, particularly those who may have had any influential role in the production of the projections,

- When possible, the impact of stakeholders on the production of the projections (for example, changes in assumptions) should be specified

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology

4. Document the technical and methodological changes of new projections as compared to previous editions

- Where applicable, users should be informed of any changes in the methodology used to produce the projections in comparison with previous.

- The projection period for each edition should also be clearly identified in high-level dissemination materials such as publication titles so that editions can be easily distinguished

Transparency

Good practices

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5. Describe the quality of the data source

- The quality of the projection inputs have a direct impact on results. Therefore, an assessment of data sources used should be provided to users, commenting on their major quality features and any associated impacts on the assumption-building process.

- Information on the procedures of evaluation and eventual adjustment of the data used at the onset of the projection should also be provided.

- A population projection takes as its starting point the most recent estimate of the population, usually by age and sex. Accordingly,

- It is recommended that the presentation of the projection results include a brief description of the procedure followed to obtain the base population.

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology

6. Provide justification for the choices of assumptions , horizon and methods.

- The arguments underlying the choices of assumptions and methods and their consequences should also be provided (de Beer, 2011) .

- In general, all key decisions made in the process of building the projections should be detailed.

- Logical links should be made between descriptions of the current demographic context, projection assumptions and the choice of the methods, including their strengths and limitations

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology

7. Provide descriptions of the methodology used to project the population

- The general projection model should be described, along with its strengths and limitations.

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Provide a clear and complete description of the projection methodology

8. Provide a description of the software programs used to produce the projections

- Know the mechanics used to implement the selected methodology, provides users with some elements which can orient them about the scope and limitations of the results

- While it is possible that for various reasons the relevant software may not be available to users, a general description of the software and its calculation procedures should be provided to users

Transparency

Good practices

KR: Clearly define key terms used in dissemination products

To be properly understood, communications must use clear and well-defined terms.

One recommended way to achieve this practice is to include a glossary of key terms in dissemination materials. In particular, key terms associated with projections such as projection, forecast, scenario or variant