

Collection of Vital Inflation Data

There and back again

Patrick Kelly
Statistics South Africa
South Africa



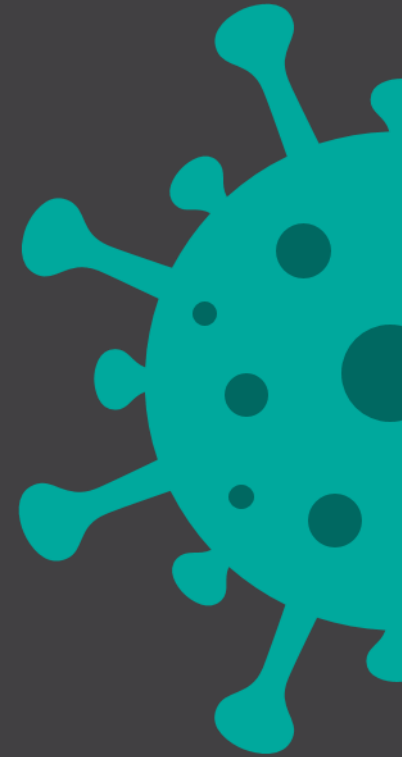
stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Contents

- 🦠 Shifting nature of lockdown
- 🦠 South African data collection response
- 🦠 Experiences in other African countries
- 🦠 Benefits of international collaboration
- 🦠 Reflections



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



South Africa lockdown timeline

End March and April : Level 5

- ☀ Most COICOP groups (except essential goods & services) prohibited
- ☀ Most travel restricted

May : Level 4

- ☀ List of items permitted for sale broadened
- ☀ Travel for permitted work allowed

June - mid August : Level 3

- ☀ All retail available except alcohol and cigarettes
- ☀ Certain services (eg gym, sports spectating, hotels) still prohibited

June - mid August : Level 4

- ☀ All retail except cigarettes
- ☀ Air travel, sports spectating prohibited

mid August - Level 5

- ☀ All retail
- ☀ Sports spectating prohibited



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Impact on field price collection

- ☀️ **April:** No field work - online price collection only
- ☀️ **May:** Negotiations with unions on field health protocols.



- ☀️ 1/3 of field staff not able to visit stores due to health risks
- ☀️ Remaining staff not equally distributed across collection areas – challenge for geographic indices



- ☀️ Collection in last week of May – focus on fresh food, clothing and other newly permitted retail items



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Online price collection

- ☀ Team of 12 staff members working from home to manually collect prices from online presence of retail chains
- ☀ Replicated field sample to maintain continuity
- ☀ Collected prices of permitted essential items at end of March to compare with April
- ☀ Collected online prices weekly in April and then monthly
- ☀ Developed webscraping tool but not used



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Impact on CPI collection and processing

- ☀ Online data captured in excel and required changes to capturing system
- ☀ Field quality control processes not suited to online data
- ☀ CPI compiled on significantly less data
- ☀ Imputations for prohibited products
- ☀ April CPI delayed by 1 month
- ☀ Regular communication with users important



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Essential products CPI

Essential products CPI

- ☀ Short publication to inform country of price changes of essential goods
- ☀ Compiled weekly in April based on available online prices
- ☀ Aimed to assess possible excessive price increases – there were none picked up
- ☀ Much interest from media and users
- ☀ But ...economic meaning not clear and different outcome to monthly CPI



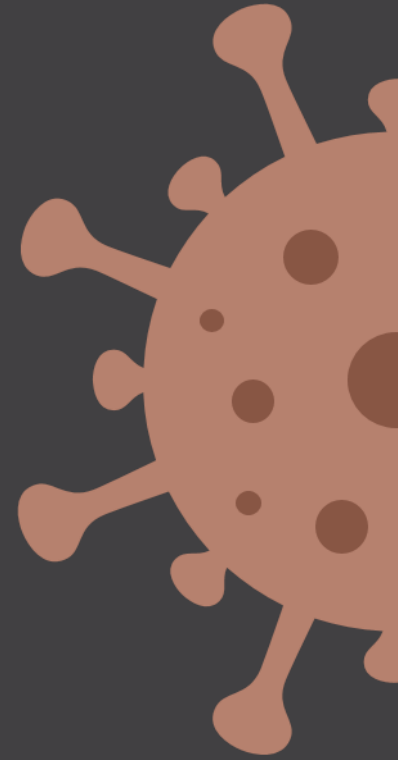
stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Experience of selected African countries

- ☼ Generally less severe lock down than South Africa
- ☼ Limited availability of online prices
- ☼ Special permissions for price collectors to travel
- ☼ Government branded vehicles
- ☼ Purchasing of PPE
- ☼ Emailing questionnaires to stores or phoning (limited success)
- ☼ Office staff and families collect prices while shopping



stats sa

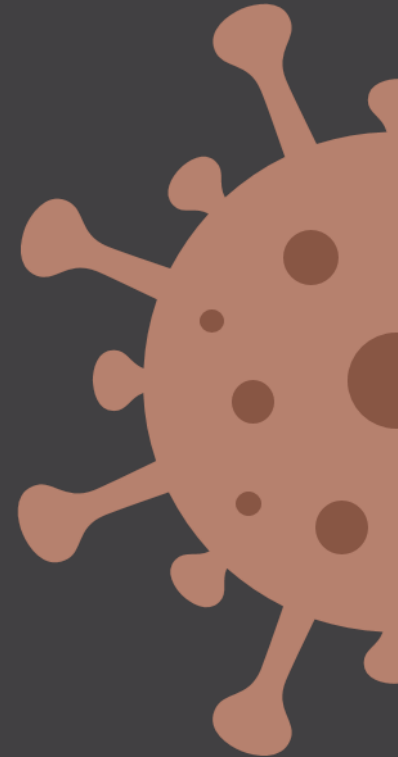
Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



International collaboration

Crisis shows benefit of international agencies supporting NSOs

- ☀ Intersecretariat working group Business continuity guidance document – March
- ☀ UNECE wiki page - March
- ☀ UNECA seminar on Data collection for compiling CPIs - May
- ☀ IMF Afritac South webinar on CPI business continuity – August
- ☀ UNECE/OG – October



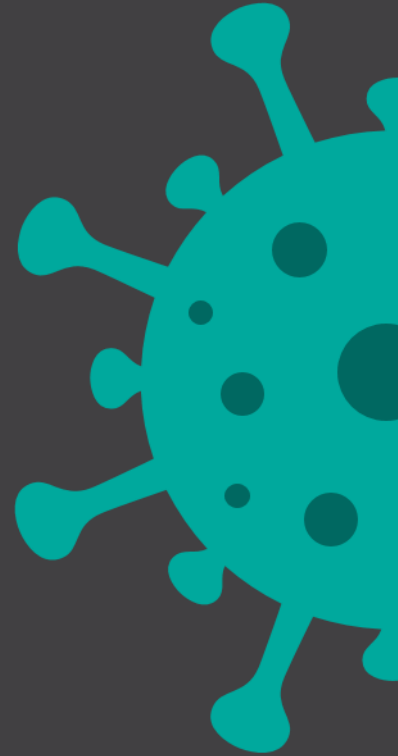
stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Reflection

- ❁ Lack of time for preparation meant little changes possible to collection strategies
- ❁ Changes more possible in processing and compilation than collection of data
- ❁ What challenges with coming out of crisis (the return journey)
- ❁ Is it now back to business as usual or waves – when does it end?
- ❁ Has this prepared us for future crises?



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Thank you



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

