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15 October 2020

English only

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## **Economic Commission for Europe**

Conference of European Statisticians

**Online Meetings on Gender Statistics**

12-14 October 2020

# **Report of the 2020 Online Meetings on Gender Statistics**

## **Note by the Secretariat**

### **I. Attendance**

1. The online event was attended by representatives of the following countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Egypt, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Philippines, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, and Uzbekistan. Council of Europe, Eurasian Economic Commission, European Commission, Eurostat, International Labour Organization (ILO), Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), PARIS21, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), and World Bank Group were also represented.

### **II. Organization of the meeting**

2. The event was divided into two parts. The first day focused on countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia (EECCA), and included substantive sessions on the following topics:

- a. Gender, entrepreneurship and trade;
- b. SDGs and their disaggregation.

3. UNCTAD and UNECE co-organized the session on Gender, entrepreneurship and trade to share background information and early methodological work related to their joint United Nations Development Account project “Data and statistics for more gender-responsive trade policies in Africa, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia”.

4. UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and UNECE jointly organized the session on SDGs and their disaggregation.
5. The second and third day of the online meetings explored the measurement of gender issues at the times of the Covid-19 pandemic. The following substantive topics were discussed:
  - a. Solutions to Covid-19 challenges;
  - b. Priorities for gender statistics in the aftermath of Covid-19;
  - c. Communicating gender statistics;
  - d. Measurement of gender identity;
  - e. Measurement of sexual orientation.
6. The following participants acted as discussants: for item (a) Pierre Turcotte (Canada) and Katja Branger (Switzerland); for item (c) Cristina Freguja (Italy); for item (d) Linda Björneskog (Sweden); and for item (e) Amy Symens Smith (United States).
7. Documents and slides presented at the meeting are available at [the UNECE web site](#).
8. The meetings were supported financially from the United Nations Development Account programme on data and statistics (10<sup>th</sup> tranche) and the project “Data and statistics for more gender-responsive trade policies in Africa, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia” (12<sup>th</sup> tranche).

### **III. Summary of proceedings**

9. This section presents a summary of the key observations and conclusions of the online meetings.

#### **A. Gender, entrepreneurship, and trade**

10. Trade affects men and women differently, yet statistics on the gender dimensions of trade are rarely available. Presentations by UNCTAD highlighted the value of gender statistics for women’s economic empowerment and gender-responsive trade policy, and proposed that countries produce gender-in-trade statistics by linking business and individual-level microdata across commonly available data sources.

11. Presentations by Ireland, the Republic of Moldova, and Georgia showcased recent experiences with specialized surveys related to gender representation in business and entrepreneurship. UNCTAD emphasized the potential of these data sources for gender-in-trade analyses thanks to information on industry captured in the surveys. While the country presentations demonstrated the value of specialized surveys for the production of gender-in-trade statistics, a poll of meeting participants suggested that very few countries in the EECCA region produce trade statistics by sex, that specialized surveys are rare, and that microdata linking across statistical domains is challenging in many countries. Participants confirmed the need for capacity-building around the compilation of statistics for more gender-responsive trade policy in the EECCA region.

#### **B. SDGs and their disaggregation**

12. The presentations in this session demonstrated progress on the measurement and disaggregation of SDGs in the EECCA region. UN Women, which has supported national statistical offices of EECCA countries in their SDG reporting requirements, reported that all

countries in the region have completed the SDG nationalization process and many have progressed to its second phase of indicator revision. UN Women also provided an update on the work of the IAEG-SDGs working group on data disaggregation. With an aim to produce disaggregated indicators that better respond to policy needs, the group is developing methodological recommendations and practical tools to strengthen statistical capacity around multi-dimensional data disaggregation.

13. CIS-Stat reported on the list of 111 indicators CIS member states have identified as priorities for the region for assessing progress towards the 2030 agenda. CIS member countries have agreed to publish these indicators regularly and to disaggregate by sex when relevant and possible. Georgia and Kazakhstan shared experiences with SDG nationalization and showcased a new web platform (Georgia) and publication (Kazakhstan) focused on gender-relevant SDG indicators. UNECE presented the Dashboard and Database for SDGs, which launched in March 2020 and includes annually updated data for 73 indicators for the 56 UNECE countries. The dashboard allows users to view charts and download data disaggregated by sex for several indicators, supporting the monitoring of gender differences in progress towards SDGs.

### **C. Solutions to Covid-19 challenges**

14. Nearly an entire day of the online meetings was dedicated to sharing early responses to the demand for data on the gender dimensions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Republic of Moldova presented questions added to existing surveys to measure impacts of the pandemic on health, work, education and financial status on women and men. Ireland and the United States reported on new surveys deployed to assess the impacts of the pandemic on individuals and business. Italy and Finland shared experiences using existing data to evaluate domestic and intimate-partner violence during the pandemic. Results based on these data collection and analysis efforts indicate that the effects of the pandemic are not gender neutral. Data presented show variable impacts on employment, life satisfaction, and health behaviours for women and men, as well as increases compared to the same period in 2019 in domestic abuse helpline calls in Italy, and police reports of intimate partner violence in Finland.

15. ILO and UNCTAD provided practical guidance on adapting existing instruments and making innovative use of statistical infrastructure to respond to Covid-19 data demands. ILO offered recommendations on priority topics and minimal question sets for Labour Force Surveys (LFS) and rapid surveys to monitor from a gender perspective impacts on employment, labour underutilization, unpaid domestic and care work and volunteer work, aligned with the latest standards and best practices. UNCTAD encouraged investment in register-based statistical infrastructure and microdata linking capacity to assess the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on trade and the related consequences for women and men.

### **D. Priorities for gender statistics in the aftermath of Covid-19**

16. The early results presented in the previous section demonstrate the urgent and lasting need for statistics on the impact of the pandemic on women and men. To provide practical guidance to countries and support the collection of internationally comparable data for the region, the Steering Group is exploring the development of a minimum set of questions data producers might add to household surveys such as household budget and expenditure surveys or labour force surveys to measure the differentiated medium- and long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women and men. On behalf of the Steering Group, Canada presented preliminary results of a questionnaire distributed to gender statistics focal points in the region to map Covid-related activities in the area of gender statistics, shedding light on the needs of national statistical offices.

## **E. Communicating gender statistics**

17. Presentations by Georgia, Mexico, and Sweden demonstrated impressive progress in the communication of gender statistics. In 2018, Georgia launched an online gender statistics portal and reported the recent addition of indicators of SDGs and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. Georgia also presented on gender statistics trainings with data users from academia, government, media and NGOs. Mexico shared challenges and lessons learned during the production of data stories and story maps on gender statistics. Sweden presented its approach to its annual statistical review, which focused on the call of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to “leave no one behind”. The work aimed to provide a detailed overview of the situation of those who are furthest left behind in Swedish society and to identify data sources, indicators, and disaggregations that should be incorporated into regular statistics products. UNECE provided an update on the publication of the forthcoming Guidance on Communicating Gender Statistics, prepared by a Conference of European Statisticians (CES) task force. An interactive version of the Guidance and an associated good practice repository will be available on a dedicated website in the coming months.

18. The presentations and discussion highlighted the importance of an intersectional approach to the analysis and communication of gender statistics. The discussant (Italy) stressed the point that effective communication of all statistics—and especially gender statistics—must strike a balance between delivering a clear message and falsely removing complexity. Arguments were made in support of statistical communication tools that explain rather than deny or oversimplify the complex array of factors impacting gender equality.

## **F. Measurement of gender identity**

19. During this session, Canada and the United States presented ongoing work towards the improvement of measurement of gender identity. Canada discussed challenges related to introducing “gender-as-default” in Canadian social statistics, presented the two-step approach for the 2021 census which will include questions on both sex-at-birth and gender, and reported on ongoing work to further refine Statistics Canada’s gender standard. United States presented recent research that reviewed terminology and ordering of response options for survey questions on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). United States emphasized the fluid nature of terminology related to SOGI. The research presented suggests that sexual and gender minorities identify themselves using multiple terms that change over time, and that preferences for and understanding of SOGI terminology varies by age, sex at birth, and educational attainment. Also in this session, the United Kingdom provided an update from the Task Team on Measuring Gender Identity.

20. Questions posed to presenters as well as the discussant’s comments highlighted the common challenges national statistical offices face in measuring gender identity. Data collection instruments must include questions and response options that resonate with sexual and gender minorities while also supporting the production of comparable statistics across government and over time. Diverse and evolving SOGI terminology make the establishment of statistical standards difficult, and extensive consultation with sexual and gender minority populations is necessary. The presentations and discussions during the session highlight the need for international methodological work in this area, providing support for the CES Task Team on Measuring Gender Identity.

## **G. Measurement of sexual orientation**

21. Canada and Norway shared approaches to collecting and disseminating statistical information on sexual orientation. Norway presented its experience with the new National Survey on Quality of Life, which was the first national survey in Norway to include questions

on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Norway reported positive public engagement with the SOGI questions, with very few respondents refusing to answer SOGI questions or leaving the survey at the SOGI questions. Norway emphasized challenges associated with presenting survey results for sexual and gender minority groups in a way that provides information on the situation of this population while also ensuring confidentiality. Canada presented an update on its work to develop a sexual orientation statistical standard. Canada's experience provided insight on universal challenges such as small sample sizes, rapidly changing terminology, and conceptual differences across national languages and population groups.

22. Experiences in both countries suggest that sexual orientation is becoming a less sensitive topic among the general public, and that consultation of subject-matter experts and members of the LGBTQ2+ communities has supported methodological advances. The discussant (United States) reminded participants of the data producer responsibility to ensure that sexual and gender minority populations "see themselves in the data".

## **H. Future work**

23. UNECE provided an overview of ongoing and future work on gender statistics under the Conference of European Statisticians. The work for the coming year will centre around four activities: the finalization of the guidance on communicating gender statistics, the development of a minimum set of questions for the production of gender statistics in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Task Team on Measuring Gender Identity, and the preparation of the 2021 Work Session. Meeting participants expressed support for the work plan.

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