
Francesca Perucci (UNSD) and Gero Carletto (World Bank)
Poverty & Equity GP’s Data for Policy Global Solutions Group and Statistical Capacity Building Community of Practice – Webinar series

January 12th, 2021
The Global COVID-19 survey of NSOs

**Motivation:**
- Covid-19 upended statistical operations worldwide.
- NSOs facing “double burden”: disruptions/more constrained environment AND increased data demand.
- Need to monitor status and inform interventions

**Objective:** Provide information to the global statistical community, including donors and development partners, to effectively mobilize technical and financial support to statistical activities that most urgently need it.

**Conveners:** United Nations Statistics Division and World Bank’s Development Data Group, in coordination with UN Regional Commissions
The Global COVID-19 survey of NSOs

• **Three waves** to date:
  5 – 17 May 2020 (response rate: 122/218)
  7 – 25 Jul 2020 (response rate: 112/195)
  Forth wave: end-Jan 2021

• **Mode**: Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI), programmed in Survey Solutions

• **Reports** disseminated by [UNSD](https://unstats.un.org) and [World Bank](https://www.worldbank.org)

• **Data** disseminated and used by UN Regional Commissions, Paris21 and other DPs
The Global COVID-19 survey of NSOs

• Flexible, modular instrument, with inputs from several DPs.

• Thematic areas covered:
  • Office openings, remote working, face-to-face interviews
  • Impact on specific programs (surveys, censuses), monthly/quarterly stats, publications, reporting
  • Response to new information demands
  • Use of new data sources
  • ICT readiness, constraints
  • Emergency plans, field protocols
  • Coordination, partnerships, data stewardship
Outline

1. Monitoring of NSO operations during COVID-19
2. Disruptions of statistical programs and impact on major statistical outputs
3. Support needs and new data demands
4. NSOs’ adaptation and role of partnership and coordination
5. Take away messages
Monitoring of Operations during COVID-19
Many NSOs have been reopening after widespread initial closures...

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic: is your main office closed?

- **May**
  - Office is closed to ALL staff: 15%
  - Office is closed only to non-essential staff: 50%
  - Office is not closed: 35%

- **July**
  - Office is closed to ALL staff: 3%
  - Office is closed only to non-essential staff: 25%
  - Office is not closed: 72%

- **October**
  - Office is closed to ALL staff: 2%
  - Office is closed only to non-essential staff: 22%
  - Office is not closed: 77%

27% In low and lower-middle income countries
...but remote work is still the norm for many...

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic: Is staff instructed to work from home?

- Higher in high income countries at 64% and lowest in LLMI countries with 49%
- Highest in Latin America--89% instructed all or some staff to work from home and lowest in Oceania and SSA with less than half

Percent

All Countries

May

July

October

Yes, all

Yes, some

No
... and face-to-face data collection remains partly or fully suspended

October 2020: When do you expect to be able to resume face to face interviews in full? (%)

Stopped face-to-face data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Yes, fully</th>
<th>Yes, partly</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uncertainty on face-to-face resuming in full

- within 1 month: 16%
- within 6 months: 57%
- within 3 months: 17%
- longer than 6 months: 6%
- hard to say: 5%
Disruptions of statistical programmes and impact on major statistical outputs
Impacts on international reporting have been severe

May 2020 – Round 1

June 2020 – Round 2

Proportion of countries reporting the pandemic is affecting their ability to meet international reporting requirements

- Low and lower-middle income:
  - Yes, severely: 23%
  - Yes, moderately: 68%
  - No, not at all: 10%

- Upper middle income:
  - Yes, severely: 51%
  - Yes, moderately: 41%
  - No, not at all: 8%

- High income:
  - Yes, severely: 39%
  - Yes, moderately: 48%
  - No, not at all: 14%

Proportion of countries reporting production of monthly and quarterly statistics being affected, by number of domains

- Low and lower-middle income:
  - None: 24%
  - 1 or 2: 21%
  - 3 to 5: 10%
  - 6 or more: 21%

- Upper middle income:
  - None: 44%
  - 1 or 2: 28%
  - 3 to 5: 6%
  - 6 or more: 6%

- High income:
  - None: 64%
  - 1 or 2: 14%
  - 3 to 5: 10%
  - 6 or more: 6%
Many NSOs in L/LMIC had to postpone their Population and Housing Census …

October 2020, Round 3

Situation of Population and Housing Census data collection among countries that had planned the census for 2020 or 2021

- TOTAL
  - Happening in 2020 as originally planned: 19%
  - Happening in 2021 as originally planned: 41%
  - Originally planned for 2020, but postponed to 2021: 20%
  - Originally planned for 2020, but postponed to after 2021, or to undetermined time: 8%
  - Originally planned for 2021, but postponed to after 2021, or to undetermined time: 12%

- High income
  - Happening in 2020 as originally planned: 26%
  - Happening in 2021 as originally planned: 50%
  - Originally planned for 2020, but postponed to 2021: 5%
  - Originally planned for 2020, but postponed to after 2021, or to undetermined time: 7%
  - Originally planned for 2021, but postponed to after 2021, or to undetermined time: 12%

- Upper middle income
  - Happening in 2020 as originally planned: 17%
  - Happening in 2021 as originally planned: 43%
  - Originally planned for 2020, but postponed to 2021: 30%
  - Originally planned for 2020, but postponed to after 2021, or to undetermined time: 4%
  - Originally planned for 2021, but postponed to after 2021, or to undetermined time: 4%

- Low and lower-middle income
  - Happening in 2020 as originally planned: 8%
  - Happening in 2021 as originally planned: 24%
  - Originally planned for 2020, but postponed to 2021: 36%
  - Originally planned for 2020, but postponed to after 2021, or to undetermined time: 12%
  - Originally planned for 2021, but postponed to after 2021, or to undetermined time: 20%

73% of NSOs participating in the survey had a PH Census planned for 2020 or 2021 before the pandemic hit.
... potentially putting future census funding at risk?

October 2020, Round 3

Have financial resources initially allocated to the Population and Housing Census been reallocated to other government activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low and lower-middle income</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle income</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High income</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Out of 90 countries that had planned to conduct census in 2020 or 2021
Increased need for funding and new data demands
6 in 10 NSOs reported the need for additional external support

May 2020 – Round 1

Proportion of NSOs that need additional external support to face the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic

Overall Average

High income 32

Upper middle income 75

Low and lower middle income 82

Latin America and the Caribbean 94

Sub-Saharan Africa 90

Northern Africa and Western Asia 71

Central and Southern Asia 67

Eastern and South-Eastern Asia 55

Europe and Northern America 28

Overall Average

Share of responding countries (percent)
Support priorities

May 2020 – Round 1

In LLMi countries, top three priorities are higher at 77%, 74%, 68%

- Technical assistance/capacity: 74% high priority, 22% moderate priority, 4% not a priority
- Financial: 61% high priority, 31% moderate priority, 8% not a priority
- Software for remote data collection: 60% high priority, 23% moderate priority, 17% not a priority
- Software for remote work: 51% high priority, 31% moderate priority, 18% not a priority
- Equipment: 42% high priority, 37% moderate priority, 21% not a priority
- Connectivity at home for staff: 41% high priority, 36% moderate priority, 23% not a priority
- Connectivity in other locations: 36% high priority, 33% moderate priority, 31% not a priority
- Connectivity at HQ: 36% high priority, 33% moderate priority, 31% not a priority
- Protective gear for staff: 30% high priority, 27% moderate priority, 43% not a priority
- Training on social distancing: 19% high priority, 29% moderate priority, 51% not a priority

High priority | Moderate priority | Not a priority
Decrease in funding and ICT constraints particularly severe in LMICs

July 2020 – Round 2

Has your funding been affected due to the current COVID-19 pandemic?

- Total: 12% increased, 38% decreased from government, 48% increased from other sources, 20% decreased, 14% neutral, 38% no change
- Low and lower-middle income: 20% increased, 8% decreased from government, 53% increased from other sources, 20% decreased, 14% neutral, 38% no change
- Upper middle income: 14% increased, 38% decreased from government, 49% increased from other sources, 20% decreased, 14% neutral, 38% no change
- High income: 23% increased, 74% decreased from government, 3% increased from other sources, 20% decreased, 14% neutral, 38% no change

The office has access to adequate cloud computing services for remote data storage and data exchange

- Total: 10% strongly disagree, 15% disagree, 19% neutral, 37% agree, 19% strongly agree
- Low and lower-middle income: 12% strongly disagree, 18% disagree, 35% neutral, 29% agree, 6% strongly agree
- Upper middle income: 10% strongly disagree, 19% disagree, 6% neutral, 42% agree, 23% strongly agree
- High income: 9% strongly disagree, 16% disagree, 40% neutral, 26% agree, 26% strongly agree
Change in data demands

Low and lower middle-income countries
- Increase in data demands by international community
- New requests related to socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19
- Specific data requests from international donors

Upper middle-income countries
- New requests from the government to identify vulnerable groups
- More data requests related to enterprises’ operations

High income countries
- Providing daily figures to the government to help guide the response to COVID-19
- New requests for random samples to test and trace COVID-19 cases

"The scope and volume of data requested by the government, and development partners have increased because of the huge demands by the international community"

Respondent of NSO’s survey Round 1
Additional difficulties

Low and lower middle-income countries
- Access to internet at home or to send data from regions
- Reduction on budget

Upper middle-income countries
- Learning about alternative methods
- Sensitizing informants to get responses in phone surveys

High income countries
- Responses rates have fallen for business surveys
- Parents having difficult times working from home and supervising online schooling

"These include the unavailability of staff, delays in processing internal activities, traffic difficulties, the inability of technical staff to work remotely given the insufficient number of laptops."

Respondent of NSO's survey Round 1
Reasons for additional support needs

Low and lower middle-income countries
- Lack of financial resources to carry out the surveys
- Need for technological infrastructure to work remotely

Upper middle-income countries
- Acquisition of electronic equipment, licenses
- Implementing new survey systems

High income countries
- Strengthening the digitization of surveys’ processes
- Acquisition of electronic equipment, licenses

“Surveys are donors-driven and therefore without assistance from the donor’s community the office will not conduct any survey”

Respondent of NSO’s survey Round 2
NSOs are addressing new data demands – but there is need for stronger partnership and coordination
Many NSOs adapted quickly to challenges raised by COVID-19

May 2020 – Round 1

If you had to alter a planned survey because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which changes did/will you introduce?

- Change data collection mode or use alternative source/approach
- Add COVID-19 related questions
- Reduce questionnaire content
- Reduce sample size
- Change sample design
- Other

Is your institution using alternative/nontraditional data sources/approaches to analyze or monitor aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Phone survey
- Administrative data
- Web surveys
- Social media
- Phone call detail records
- Remote sensing/satellite imagery
- Citizen generated data / crowdsourcing
- Other
NSOs are playing a major role in governments’ COVID-19 response

July 2020: Has your office been called to serve on a government crisis response group or advisory committee at the national level due to COVID-19?

- Yes: 43
- No: 57

And in July 2020, 63% of NSOs were involved in implementing surveys on COVID-19 and its impacts.

October 2020: Has your institution planned or implemented the collection of any data on COVID-19 and its impacts?

- Yes: 81
- No: 19

More than half of the NSOs that have planned or collected data on COVID-19 have added questions to an existing survey or have created a new survey.
Some NSOs developed new fieldwork protocols, most others would consider such guidelines useful for operations.

October 2020 – Round 3

**Has your office developed new written fieldwork protocols for face-to-face interviews?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>High income</th>
<th>Upper middle income</th>
<th>Low and lower-middle income</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>42</td>
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**Would you consider it useful to your operations if such new protocols were developed?**

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<th>Low and lower-middle income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
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NSOs are establishing new partnerships to bridge data gaps

Share of NSOs that have established new partnerships, by type of partnership

- Partnerships to access and use technology
- Partnerships to access new data sources
- Partnerships to develop or implement new methods

The main challenge in establishing new partnerships with public or private sector partners has been formalizing the institutional collaborative arrangements.
Coordination in the collection of data on the COVID-19 pandemic has been inadequate in some cases.
NSOs have suggestions for better coordination

- Establish a high-level coordinating technical committee on COVID-19
- Carry out mapping exercises of all data collection activities
- Involve key private sector players as well as local governments in countries with a decentralized system
- Encourage all stakeholders to consult with NSOs for any data collection
- Improving collaboration among government agencies for better access to administrative data
- Investing financially and technically in NSOs to improve capacity to respond to crisis

"It is important to build upon the existing knowledge-sharing platforms and networks to foster the exchange of best practices"

Respondent of NSO’s survey Round 1

"A mapping of all data collection initiatives should be done and making it public in order to avoid duplication and overburden on respondents"

Respondent of NSO’s survey Round 2
Takeaway messages

• Large, still ongoing impacts on statistical operations
• Double burden: Increased demands amid disruptions
• Risk of exacerbating global data inequities
• Response induced accelerated innovation with lasting effects, but more support needed
• Emerging needs: Resources, ICT infrastructure, technical assistance, coordination

• How to best influence design of future statistical operations?
Thank you!
covid-19.stats@un.org