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Communicating gender statistics**Summary of comments from the consultation on the
*Guidance on Communicating Gender Statistics*****Prepared by the Secretariat***Summary*

This document summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Guidance on Communicating Gender Statistics*. The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the Guide in March–April 2020.

A total of 42 countries and 4 organizations replied to the request for comments. All responding countries and organizations considered the Guidance ready for the endorsement by the Conference of European Statisticians, subject to incorporation of the comments made during this consultation. This note presents the substantive comments received, together with the replies of the UNECE Task Force on communicating gender statistics, including suggestions for amendments to the Guidance to address the comments.

In view of the support received, the Conference of European Statisticians is invited to endorse the *Guidance on Communicating Gender Statistics*, subject to the amendments outlined in this document.



I. Introduction

1. The note summarizes the comments by the members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Guidance on Communicating Gender Statistics*. The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the recommendations in March–April 2020.
2. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviewed the draft Guidance in February 2020 and requested the Secretariat to send the document to all CES members for electronic consultation.
3. The following 46 countries and international organizations replied to the consultation: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). Malta sent comments from the National Statistics Office as well as the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality and the Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance. Spain provided comments from the National Statistics Institute and the Institute of Women.
4. The CES members were asked to provide general comments regarding the usefulness of the Guidance and chapter-specific comments on each of the six guidance notes which cover thematic areas in the dissemination and communication of gender statistics. Substantive comments and Task Force responses are summarized in sections II and III. Some countries provided specific editorial comments. These are not presented in this note but will be taken into account when revising the Guidance for publication. Comments on the specific situation in individual countries which have no direct reference to the content of the Guidance are also not covered in this note.

II. General comments

5. All responding countries and organizations considered the Guidance ready for approval by CES, subject to the amendments resulting from the comments provided in the consultation.
6. All responding countries and organizations also indicated that the Guidance is useful for their offices in communicating gender statistics.
7. Many countries acknowledged the value of the Guidance. General remarks of appreciation for the importance and usefulness of the Guidance were made by several countries including: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States. For example:
 - (a) Albania: “The guidance is very useful; it presents not only the importance of gender statistics when produced and disseminated but also the importance of communicating these statistics for the general public and policymakers.”.
 - (b) Austria: “From our point of view the Guidance gives a good overview of topics of importance specifically for those countries where gender statistics is at an early stage of development.”;
 - (c) Colombia: “We are convinced that the Guidance is very timely nowadays because of the increase in the production of gender statistics alone is not enough if we do not manage to communicate and disseminate them in a timely and comprehensible manner.”;
 - (d) Portugal: “We would like to welcome this well-structured and complete guide addressing the main issues that arise when communicating gender statistics, whether to specific users or to a wider audience. It is an important tool to be taken into account when producing and disseminating future statistical data.”;

(e) Ukraine: “The innovative format in which the Guidance is presented will facilitate strengthening of bilateral feedback between producers of gender statistics and its users, as well as permit a wider range of users concerned to get familiar with best international practices dealing with the mentioned issues.”;

(f) United Kingdom: “We support this paper and welcome the way that the guidance is being communicated, through the use of electronic guidance notes, rather than a formal report. Overall, we consider that this is a very helpful guide at time of heightened interest in the topics of gender and sex.”

8. Several countries commented positively on the electronic format of the guidance notes and the inclusion of direct links to the web resources referenced. For example:

(a) Belarus: “The Guidance is of great practical benefit in that it provides links to useful online resources the study of which contributes to strengthening the statistical capacity of interested countries.”;

(b) Slovenia: “We strongly support the idea to insert in the document different examples and solutions with added hyperlinks. This makes the document really useful.”;

(c) Sweden: “It is interesting and inspiring to see different examples on how gender statistics are communicated.”

9. Several countries praised the establishment of an online repository for sharing best practices and offered to share their material.

10. The Netherlands expressed doubt that users will visit all the linked websites and documents and requested that more information about some of the resources be included in the text of the guidance notes.

11. Hungary suggested that the guidance notes emphasize the importance of using plain language to describe results for non-expert data users.

12. Israel suggested that a general recommendation be added to the guidance that all national statistical offices assign a gender focal point.

13. Sweden referred to the importance of the gender concept for better understanding of the outcome of gender statistics and emphasised that sex would have to remain as the principal variable measured at the individual level. They requested the clarification of how the gender concept was intended to be used in the production and dissemination of gender statistics under the Guidance. Malta (National Statistics Office) proposed that a definition of gender for the purpose of the guidelines be provided. They commented that some recommendations in the guidance seemed to employ a broad definition of gender while others used the term according to its traditional definition, i.e. female and male.

14. Sweden pointed out that it would be too early to make recommendations on how to consider gender diversity in data collection and analysis. They highlighted that the measurement of gender diversity and gender identity is a new and complex field and referred to the ongoing work of a UNECE task team on that topic.

15. Malta (Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance) commented that the guidance notes do not sufficiently promote intersectionality and that other characteristics affecting individual outcomes such as migratory status, status of dependents, disability status, religion, level of education, and occupation should be considered.

16. The Republic of Moldova considered it important to recommend that for all gender statistics data are published in an open and reusable format for users.

17. The Netherlands requested more information on how the six themes were selected.

18. Spain suggested that their “Women and Men in Spain” resource serve as an example that adopts all the recommendations mentioned in the Guidance.

19. Ukraine suggested that contact information for theme leaders be included in each electronic guidance note in case of questions.

Response by the Task Force

20. To keep the guidance notes concise, the Task Force prefers not to add more information about the material to be found through the web links. The web addresses included in the print version of the guidance will be presented as hyperlinks in the digital guidance notes, in line with usual practice for digital publications.

21. To emphasize the use of plain language, a related recommendation is added to guidance note 5 “Interacting with users of gender statistics”.

22. Assigning a gender focal point is among the good practices for integrating the gender perspective to a statistical system, which can strengthen dissemination of gender statistics. This is reflected in internationally agreed guidance from UNECE (2010) and UNSD (2016), for example. Issues pertaining to the general organization of the statistical system would go beyond the scope of the Guidance.

23. The Guidance relies on the internationally agreed definitions of sex as a biological characteristic and gender as socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes. The text is edited to ensure full consistency with the understanding that the examination of data by sex (measured for individuals in the data set) is the means to making inferences on gender issues on the macro level of society. The paragraphs that explain the concept of “gender identity” are the only ones where gender is understood to apply to measurement at the individual level. This is also the context where the use of other than the male and female gender categories is recommended if possible and relevant.

24. Acknowledging that the work on the measurement of gender diversity and gender identity is in an early stage, the recommendation for an explanation of gender diversity is removed. The recommendation to take into account gender diversity is qualified as “if possible and relevant”. These changes pertain to the “Challenges and recommendations” sections of guidance note 4 “Maintaining impartiality”.

25. Sentences referring to intersectionality are added to guidance notes 2, 5, and 6. The topic is already addressed in all the other guidance notes.

26. A recommendation to publish data in an open and re-usable format for users is added to guidance note 5 “Interacting with users of gender statistics”.

27. A paragraph is added to section I.B describing the selection of the guidance note themes.

28. Spain is invited to add its resource to the online repository of good practice examples.

29. Contact information for the theme leader is included in each electronic guidance note.

III. Chapter-specific comments

30. This section summarizes comments on specific chapters of the Guidance. In addition, Germany, Lithuania, Mexico, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland provided detailed editorial suggestions, which the Task Force will consider in revising the Guidance.

A. Guidance note 1 – Communicating about the gender pay gap

31. Hungary suggested that the distinction between adjusted and unadjusted gender pay gap (GPG) be emphasized. France asked that the Guidance explicitly state that the adjusted GPG does not measure discrimination in the labour market because it does not account for all factors influencing GPG. Israel suggested the guidance recommend that countries calculate adjusted GPG according to international guidelines.

32. Armenia, France, and the Republic of Moldova requested that the Guidance directly address the use of gross earnings versus net earnings when calculating GPG. France suggested adding the recommendation that gross earnings should be used to facilitate international comparisons.

33. Armenia suggested that along with hourly and annual earnings, monthly earnings are among the alternatives for which earnings should be considered when calculating GPG. They also observed that the size of GPG depends on the data source used in its calculation (household survey, enterprise survey, administrative data, etc.) in addition to the type of workers included, the type of income considered, and the methodology employed. Turkey proposed using household and enterprise surveys together to overcome limitations associated with each type of survey.

34. Norway commented that the country uses administrative data rather than survey data to calculate GPG, and that this approach could be considered in the guidance, particularly when it comes to handling unpaid work.

35. Armenia suggested adding as a challenge non-standard terminology, particularly if translated to the national language. They requested to reflect in the Guidance that unpaid work is covered in the labour force surveys of many countries.

36. Slovenia suggested to include education among the characteristics of the population from which GPG is estimated.

Response by the Task Force

37. Text is added to section I.B describing the selection of the guidance note themes and justifying the focus on GPG.

38. Section II.A.4 is expanded with the description of the EU standard methodology for GPG and an example provided by Germany.

39. The distinction between adjusted and unadjusted GPG is described in section II.A.1. A statement is added to explain that the adjusted GPG should not be interpreted as an estimate of gender-based discrimination in the labour market. The amended section also includes the specification of gross earnings, a recommendation that gross earnings be used in international comparisons of GPG, and remarks on the use of monthly earnings, their data source. Clarifications have been added on the relationship between paid and unpaid work in the context of the GPG.

40. A recommendation on the use of data from various sources and text on the use of enterprise and administrative data are added to section II.B.2.

41. The challenges of using non-standard terminology are addressed in Guidance Note 3: The language of gender in statistical communication.

42. The Task Force is convinced that education is not relevant in defining the population universe used to calculate GPG. Education comes into play as a predictor of the gender pay gap in a multivariate context.

43. The Task Force maintains that data on unpaid work is not universally collected in labour force and/or income surveys. Section II.A.2 is revised to say, “these surveys do not always include variables on unpaid work, nor do administrative data.”.

B. Guidance note 2 – Communicating statistics on gender-based violence

44. Several countries commented on the definition of gender-based violence (GBV). Canada and OECD suggested that a clear definition of GBV be added to the beginning of the guidance note. Albania and Slovenia pointed out that economic violence is a form of GBV in addition to physical, psychological, and sexual violence. Albania suggested that harmful practices such as forced abortion, female genital mutilation, and trafficking of women and girls also be considered in the guidance. Iceland recommended that more attention be given to the issue of violence against trans people. OECD commented that the definitional challenges discussed in section II.B.1. could be explained more clearly.

45. Albania commented that another challenge in communicating statistics on GBV is that the unit of observation (i.e. court cases, violent episodes, survivors, etc.) may vary across monitoring institutions. Albania also emphasized the importance of disaggregating statistics

on GBV by other demographic and social characteristics such as age, ethnicity, disability status, religion, etc.

46. Albania and Slovenia offered additional sources of data on GBV: local and community-based monitoring associated with mandated reporting and referral mechanisms (Albania) and social and health services (Slovenia). Slovenia also suggested that non-governmental organizations be included in the fourth bullet point in the recommendations section.

47. Armenia suggested that countries establish a national steering committee or working group to oversee data collection processes, assess information priorities through dialogue between data producers and data users, and provide clear ownership over findings and outputs.

48. Lithuania noted that the collection as well as the dissemination and communication of data on GBV can attract negative attention in the community. Turkey commented that GBV is likely to be underreported and that the communication of GBV increases awareness of the issue.

49. Eurostat, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands suggested that reference to the upcoming EU-wide survey on GBV be added to the guidance. Serbia also mentioned the survey in its comments. Croatia, Israel, and Turkey advocated for the introduction of international survey on GBV.

50. Finland and Germany commented on police crime statistics. Finland suggested working with the police to ensure police records include pertinent information. Germany commented that certain recommendations in the guidance may not be applicable to police crime statistics. Relatedly, Colombia requested the addition of advice on communicating statistics on GBV from administrative data given its unique challenges.

51. Eurostat suggested that its work regarding crime and criminal justice statistics could be included as examples. Mexico suggested adding three examples to the guidance relating to measuring GBV in the country.

Response by the Task Force

52. Text is added to section II.B.1 that clearly defines GBV, specifies economic violence as a form of GBV, and indicates the guidance may also apply to the communication of statistics on harmful practices.

53. Section II.B.1 is revised to indicate that the collection of data on GBV can attract negative attention, that GBV can be under-reported and that communication around GBV helps increase awareness of the issue in society. Text is also added to acknowledge that some recommendations may not be applicable to publications using police crime statistics. The Task Force believes the comment by Finland on working with police pertains to data collection and not communication of statistics on GBV. Likewise, the Task Force believes the topic of administrative data is adequately addressed in the guidance.

54. Section II.B.2 is revised to include additional sources of data on GBV and to acknowledge the challenge presented by varying units of observation across monitoring institutions. Text is added to emphasize the importance of considering characteristics that intersect with gender when analysing and communicating data on GBV such as age, race, class, minority group membership or education level.

55. Recommendations are added to section II.B.3 to consider establishing a national steering committee to oversee the collection and dissemination of statistics on GBV, to disaggregate results by social and demographic characteristics when possible, and to encourage surveys on GBV.

56. New examples describing the upcoming EU-wide survey on GBV, the Eurostat and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime database, and Mexico's annual bulletin on GBV and Integrated System of Statistics on Violence against Women are added to section II.B.4.

C. Guidance note 3 – The language of gender in statistical communication

57. Armenia commented that in many countries, gender statistics terminology is adapted and translated into the national language from international standards and that multiple translations of the same term may exist. Armenia suggested adding a recommendation that countries standardize translation into national languages of key terms. Lithuania and Hungary requested more guidance for countries with languages that use the same word for sex and gender or that do not have a simple translation of the term gender.

58. Canada remarked that given the transformational nature and fast evolution of gender diversity—new concepts and terminology emerge on an ongoing basis—it would be advisable to update this chapter annually.

59. Iceland wished to emphasize for languages with gendered pronouns the importance of using gender neutral pronouns when describing groups. Albania and Serbia also raised the issue of gendered nouns and the difficulty of implementing recommendations surrounding gender neutral terms.

60. United Kingdom requested that it be made clear that the 2021 census question on gender identity described in section II.C.4 will be voluntary.

61. Canada suggested adding as an example work done by Statistics Canada on gender identity. Mexico suggested using the definitions of gender and sex offered in the 2011 World Health Organization report “Gender mainstreaming for health managers: a practical approach.”

62. The National Statistics Office of Malta noted that while the previous guidance notes use gender to refer to males and females, this note employs a broader perspective of gender. Malta commented that it is not clear how the recommendations in this guidance note relate to those in the guidance notes on gender pay gap and gender-based violence.

63. Netherlands commented that the fourth recommendation to test use and understanding of words with general population and target audiences is too broad and should be made more specific.

Response by the Task Force

64. Section II.C.2 is amended to acknowledge the unique challenges for languages with one word for sex and gender and to address translation as a challenge.

65. Recommendations are added to section II.C.3 to standardise translation of key terms into national languages, to review frequently definitions and standards around language, and to avoid gender-specific pronouns if possible. The recommendation to test the use and understanding of language is amended to specify cognitive testing, pilot surveys and/or focus groups as methods.

66. Regarding the comment by the United Kingdom, the wording of section II.C.4 was edited to make clear that the 2021 census question on gender identity will be voluntary.

67. The World Health Organization glossary is added as an example. The Task Force invites Canada to contribute its work on gender identity to the online repository of good practices.

D. Guidance note 4 – Maintaining impartiality when communicating gender statistics

68. Finland commented that the word “must” in paragraph 65 is too strong and should be replaced with something less commanding. Finland also suggested that references to “women and men” in paragraph 71 be replaced with “all sexes and genders.”

69. Finland suggested that examples from other countries besides Finland be added to the guidance note. Slovenia noted that occupations are strongly segregated by sex not only in Finland but elsewhere in the world and suggested “in Finland” therefore be deleted from paragraph 76.

70. Israel commented that the issue of impartiality is not unique to gender statistics and suggested excluding this topic from the guidance. Israel wrote: “Including this issue, especially with gender will preserve stereotypes that this issue is sensitive and different from other topics in statistics and it is wrong.”

71. The Republic of Moldova noted that another challenge for national statistical offices is their limitation to deeply analyse phenomena.

72. The United Kingdom welcomed the text around intersectionality but suggested the issue be addressed more directly by recommending the collection of other variables in the same dataset to support cross-tabulation and disaggregation of results.

Response by the Task Force

73. Section II.D.1 is revised to use the word “should” rather than “must.” Section II.D.2 is amended to refer to all sexes and genders rather than women and men and to acknowledge the challenge for NSOs to deeply analyse a phenomenon.

74. A recommendation is added to consider the range of questions included in data collection instruments and how these characteristics can be combined with gender in statistical outputs.

75. The Task Force recommends the inclusion of this guidance note. The Task Force decided to focus on six major thematic areas, including impartiality, and presented the work progress and plans at the Work Session in Neuchatel, in May 2019, where Israel was represented. In that occasion, there were no comments or objections from any participants about including impartiality among the thematic areas. In the electronic consultation, the Task Force received comments from 15 countries on the guidance note on impartiality, which were all positive or required relatively minor amendments to the text.

E. Guidance note 5 – Interacting with users of gender statistics

76. Canada noted that the guidance would benefit greatly from specific advice regarding how to interact with different groups of users of gender statistics. Canada also considered it important to note that the degree of polarization on gender diversity in a region or country would determine which channels to favour for communications (e.g. social media is to be avoided for conversations on polarized issues).

77. Israel wished to emphasize the use of infographics and suggested that a recommendation be added that all countries create user-friendly databases or tabulators for gender statistics. Finland suggested adding as a recommendation that data producers avoid colours and images that reinforce gender stereotypes.

Response by the Task Force

78. The Task Force agrees that the topic of interacting with different users of gender statistics is certainly relevant. The guidance includes a general recommendation concerning this point. Nevertheless, the Task Force prefers not to explicitly state which channels are best for each user group due to diversity at regional and country levels and to the peculiarities of the different topics considered.

79. Section II.E.3 is amended to state “Avoid using images and colours that reinforce gender stereotypes.” A link will be added to guidance note 3 “The language of gender in statistical communication”.

80. The guidance note emphasizes the use of infographics in section II.E.3 which states: “Create data visualization and infographics to increase the appeal, comprehension, and retention of your data.” A new recommendation is added in section II.E.3 (under B. Designing) which states: “Ensure the user-friendliness of databases and tabulators produced for gender statistics.”

F. Guidance note 6 – Addressing gaps in gender statistics

81. Belarus and Turkey remarked on challenges related to data harmonization and comparability when working with various data producers within a country. Belarus recommended that national statistical agencies direct their efforts to ensuring the coherence of the actions of various data producers to avoid the dissemination of conflicting data.

82. Canada noted that one challenge associated with addressing gaps in gender statistics is that data are required to demonstrate the importance of a social or economic issue. In the absence of such data, it is difficult to advocate for addressing the gaps. Canada suggested that in these circumstances data producers can be advised to draw on data collected by academics, other NSOs, and/or non-governmental organizations.

83. Israel wished to emphasize the need for transparency and the importance of disaggregating statistics by sex. Finland remarked on the importance of cooperation between stakeholders, particularly when it comes to the funding of data collection. Hungary commented that it is important to emphasize that in certain cases data replacement would lead to greater uncertainty and is not recommended.

84. Chile commented that it is not clear how example B—National Registry System, Turkey—relates to the production of gender statistics.

Response by the Task Force

85. A new recommendation is added in section II.F.3 (under B. Designing) which states: “When working with various data producers within a country, NSOs should direct their efforts to ensure the coherence of the actions, and to avoid the dissemination of conflicting data.”

86. Section II.F.2 is amended to acknowledge the challenge of addressing data gaps when data to demonstrate the importance of an issue are limited. Recommendations are added to section II.F.3 to be transparent about data gaps and to consider finding sponsors for expensive surveys.

87. Issues of data comparability and harmonization across various data producers within countries are addressed in guidance notes 2 and 3. Disaggregation by sex and other characteristics is addressed in sections 1 and 2 of this guidance note and in other guidance notes where relevant.

88. The Task Force discussed the National Registry System example with the Turkish Statistical Institute and removed it as an example.

IV. Proposal to the Conference

89. The Conference is invited to endorse the *Guidance on Communicating Gender Statistics*, subject to amendments outlined in this document.