



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/CES/GE.30/2008/3
10 July 2008

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Group of Experts on Gender Statistics

Fifth Session

Geneva, 6-8 October 2008

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

GENDER STATISTICS TRAINING FOR STATISTICIANS

What Is Gender Statistics And Gender Analysis?

Note by the UNECE Task Force on Gender Statistics Training for Statisticians

Summary

This paper is Chapter 1 of the forthcoming UNECE training manual entitled *Developing Gender Statistics: A Practical Tool*. In this paper, gender statistics are defined, the importance of the gender perspective in statistics and data presentation is emphasized, and a variety of topics in which gender has relevance are listed. This paper presented the justification for gender statistics, and the rest of the forthcoming training manual builds on the information presented here.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The title of the widely-used training manual on gender statistics “*Engendering Statistics: A Tool for Change*”, captures an essential feature of this field. Gender statistics is not a discrete or isolated field but a perspective that relates to all fields of statistics¹. Essential to the production of gender statistics is the identification of what statistics are needed in the context of the problems and goals connected with gender issues in a country. It is this policy-oriented approach rather than the simple disaggregation of data by sex which is at the core of gender statistics.

Gender statistics is a field of statistics which cuts across the traditional fields to identify, produce and disseminate statistics that reflect the realities of the lives of women and men and policy issues relating to gender.

2. The development of gender statistics involves all steps of producing statistics, but with specific regard to integrating gender issues and reflecting gender concerns. The main steps include²:

- (a) selection of topics to be investigated;
- (b) identification of statistics to be collected to reflect gender issues in society;
- (c) formulation of concepts and definitions used in data collection that adequately reflect the diversities of women and men in society and capture all aspects of their lives;
- (d) development of data collection methods that take into account stereotypes and social and cultural factors that might produce gender-based biases;
- (e) development of analyses and presentation of data that can easily reach policy makers, planners and the largest audience possible.

3. This chapter will focus on some of the basic issues and challenges that are involved with developing gender statistics.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF A GENDER CONCERN IN STATISTICS

4. The first challenge faced by advocates of a gender-focus in statistics is to convince statisticians and even some potential users of the importance and feasibility of this field of work. Many argue that gender is already fully incorporated in statistics. Others that it is not necessary since women and men already have equal opportunities in society (see Box on frequently used arguments). By contrast, this manual argues that a gender focus strengthens, in fact improves the whole statistical system. Women and men continue to have different roles in society, different access to and control over resources and different skills and interests. Unless these differences

¹ Birgitta Hedman, Francesca Perucci and Pehr Sundstrom, *Engendering Statistics: A Tool for Change*, (Statistics Sweden, 1996).

² Ibid. page 11.

are reflected in official statistics, statisticians will not fulfil adequately their mandate. Data must cover the entire population and show the differential impact of policies and programmes.

5. A starting point in the discussion of developing gender statistics is the distinction between two terms which are often confused – sex and gender. The difficulty of translating the term *gender* into languages other than English further contributes to the confusion in the use of these terms. Sometimes the simple categories of sex (male and female) and gender (masculine and feminine) are treated as if they were the same thing. They are not. Sex is a reference to the relatively fixed biological basis of the differentiation of women and men. Gender is a reference to the relatively fluid social basis of the differentiation of men and women.

6. When people are asked to record whether they are women or men, it is usually information on their biological sex that is being requested and provided. However the policy and research interest is almost always in gender not sex. It is the nature of variations in the patterns of gender relations that is the central concern of analysis and policy. There are, of course some exceptions to the focus of interest being gender rather than sex, for example, some aspects of health statistics concern forms of ill health that are related to biological differences. Also, not all aspects of biology are fixed, but may vary, for example, the average age of death varies between countries: diet and medical care affect longevity.

7. The analytic and policy interest is almost always in the variable social dimension of gender rather than the more fixed biological dimension of sex. However, when referring to data, disaggregation is on the basis of women and men, that is the biological dimension of sex.

Frequently used arguments against producing gender-sensitive statistics

Argument: Adding gender will cost too much

For the most part, there is a minimal cost attached to adding gender to existing instruments. In some cases, it simply involves the addition of an extra question or column specifying sex. In other cases it might involve the addition of several other questions. At analysis time, the main cost would be the time involved in running additional tabulations, but in many cases sex can simply be added to existing tabulations. Significant cost is generally only incurred when a completely new investigation (such as a survey) is envisaged.

Adding gender will adversely affect the quality of the data

On the contrary, the addition of gender will enrich the information becoming available from the investigation and increase its explanatory value. The addition of gender also often provides the basis for more thorough checking of the accuracy of data collection and recording in that it allows for additional logical checks.

Women and men in this country already enjoy equality

Women and men will never be exactly the same, because biological differences will persist, as will some social differences. Gender statistics are needed to illustrate both the respects in which male and female differ, as well as those in which they are similar. It is only on the basis of this information that governments can make sensible policy. And it is only with ongoing production of this information that governments can be sure that policies in respect of gender equity are succeeding.

We already have gender statistics – all our data are sex-disaggregated

The production of gender-sensitive statistics does not involve only the production of sex-disaggregated data. Sex-disaggregated data form one important component of gender-sensitive statistics. But for full gender sensitivity, the NSS also needs to be confident that it produces statistics in respect of all the key gender issues in the country, and that it covers issues (such as maternal mortality) that might affect only one sex.

It is normal to have differences in the labour market between women and men because women prefer to stay at home

Gender-sensitive data do not in themselves present a value judgement on how the society should look. The task of the NSS is to produce data that accurately reflect the situation in the country. It is then up to the policy-makers and citizens more generally to decide whether the differences depicted between male and female are 'normal' and desirable.

8. The concept of gender places focus on both women and men; not merely on women. This is important because policies and programmes affect women and men differently and because men's position in society is an important context for understanding women's position.

9. However a focus on either men or women may also be appropriate. For example there are some issues that pertain to women but not men, such as maternal mortality, while there are some health issues that are specific to men.

III. INTERSECTION WITH OTHER SOCIAL RELATIONS

10. The division of the population into men and women is usually cross-cut by other social divisions. The nature and implications of these intersections always need to be considered when producing gender statistics. There are significant differences between women (and men) depending on age, education, and other significant categories. It is important to be careful about generalisations about women (or men) that might be misleading because of this diversity.

11. Gender relations intersect with a wide variety of phenomena that can make a significant difference. Another important set of divisions are those with class, poverty and social exclusion. Others significant categories include age, ethnicity, religion, disability, and sexual orientation – areas where inequalities are illegal in the EU. There are also important differences associated with migration and citizenship status, which may or may not overlap with categories of ethnicity and religion. Further distinctions may be based on urban/rural residence.

12. In some instances this intersection may simply lead to an additional form of disadvantage. In others the intersection changes the nature of both of the intersecting categories. This mutual effect can be complex. If there is mutual constitution of the categories, then the notion of simple addition of the various inequalities is insufficient. It will need to be addressed by a discussion of an additional 'interaction effect' in the analysis.

13. It is thus important, where possible, to gather and present data disaggregated not only by sex but by other dimensions of social relations at the same time.

IV. GENDER STATISTICS TOPICS

14. The areas covered by gender statistics are not confined to the family or any one area but span a wide range of concerns in every country. There are various ways to identify and classify critical gender concerns. The European Union's Road Map for Equality³ between Men and Women and the United Nations Platform for Action⁴ provide two such approaches.

15. The 1995 United Nations Platform for Action identifies 12 critical areas of concern calling for strategic actions. In turn these gender concerns identify what statistics will need to be collected to provide a basis for policies and programmes and for their monitoring and evaluation. The listing below uses the phrasing of the "Platform" to establish why an area is a critical concern and selected research findings to briefly describe some gender issues each involves.

16. 'The persistent and increasing burden of **poverty** on women': Poverty among women may be linked to policies on macro economics, welfare and credit that do not take sufficient account of the position of women. Poverty may be understood at the individual level of men and women as well as that of the household. Women may have different routes into poverty than men, such as widowhood and lone motherhood.

17. 'Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to **education and training**': Girls and women may have less access to education and training as compared with boys and men; there is often sex segregation so that women and men are typically found in different branches of education and training, which may lead to better or worse rewarded employment; life-long learning is typically more important to women than men, because women are more likely to want to return to education and employment in adulthood after periods of dedicated intensive childcare but this may be changing as men lose jobs and need to qualify for new types of employment.

18. 'Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to **health** care and related services': Women may have less access to health care than men; some forms of health care concern women specifically, such as at the time of childbirth, in their access to specific forms of reproductive health care; some diseases are specific to different sexes e.g. breast cancer, prostate cancer.

19. '**Violence** against women': Gender based violence is predominantly from men to women, including domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking, sexual harassment at work, female genital mutilation, trafficking of women into prostitution, forced marriage, and traditional and honour based violence. Violence against women is both cause and consequence of gender inequality.

20. 'The effects of **armed or other kinds of conflict** on women, including those living under foreign occupation': Women are typically less involved than men in decision making about

³ European Union, 2006, *A Roadmap for equality between women and men*.

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2006/mar/com06092_roadmap_en.pdf

⁴ The United Nations, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, *Platform for Action*
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm>

conflict resolution; women can be particularly vulnerable to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

21. 'Inequality in **economic** structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources': Analyses of the economy often pay less attention to the forms of work in which women as compared to men are involved, for example, unpaid domestic work as compared with paid work; there are important distinctions between forms of work organisation that are of particular relevance to a gender analysis, such as the distinction between full-time and part-time employment; occupational and industrial segregation by sex, the intricacies of combining caring and employment, discriminatory practices, and the gender pay gap.

22. 'Inequality between men and women in the sharing of **power and decision-making** at all levels': Gendered issues include the proportion of women elected to Parliament, the proportion of women appointed as government ministers, the proportion of women in senior positions in the police, judiciary and other public bodies, proportion of women on the boards of major companies, as well as the nature of the outcomes of political processes.

23. 'Insufficient **mechanisms** at all levels to promote the **advancement of women**': This is a topic of specific relevance to gender relations; it concerns the existence, resources and capacity of the institutional machinery to advance women, including government ministries, programmes and the development of an evidence base to evaluate policy, such as gender disaggregated statistics.

24. 'Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the **human rights of women**': While all human rights are women's rights, some instruments have been developed that are focused on women, such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The concept of human rights has been particularly important in developing analyses of the policies needed to eliminate violence against women, which is conceptualised as a violation of women's human rights.

25. 'Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the **media**': Gender issues in the analysis of the media include the extent of the participation of women in decision making in the media, as well as the nature of the representations of women in the media, such as whether these are stereotypical rather than balanced.

26. 'Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the **environment**': Gender issues include the participation of women in decision making about the environment, as well as gender-focused concerns about the environment.

27. 'Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the **girl child**': Discrimination against girl-children is an example of concerns about girl-children.

28. Even this extensive list is not fully comprehensive. Other areas where gender analysis is important include transport, sport and leisure, reproduction, and sexuality.

V. MAKING GENDER VISIBLE IN STATISTICS

29. The process of identifying gender and gender relevance is a complex and often subtle one. It requires an understanding of where gender might be relevant and which areas might contain dimensions that are significantly gendered. This requires an understanding of current policy issues. It also requires technical understanding of the conceptual frameworks and methods used in official statistics. Certain important frameworks and methods traditionally used in official statistics are biased against women or men and thus women's or men's activities and preferences are not fully covered in statistics. In addition the concept of the household, the basis for much policy-oriented data analysis, assumes homogeneity of all household members.

30. One example of bias in statistical concepts is in the definition of what is economic. The traditional approach to the economy focuses on the monetised sector that can be represented in measures such as Gross Domestic Product. This omits unpaid domestic labour that is labour classified as non-economic in the home, leaving a significant part of women's contribution outside the analysis. To understand the full provision of goods and services in a country, it is important to have comprehensive data on all kinds of work. In order to more fully investigate these issues time budget surveys are being undertaken increasingly by national statistical offices to collect data on all forms of work. And the 1993 System of National Accounts recognizes the need for separate measurement and recommends that valuation of production outside the boundaries set for the SNA be undertaken in satellite accounts.

31. In other areas, the traditional concepts - for example family status, fertility preferences, contraceptive behaviour and actual fertility - are biased against men. However after years of work in gender statistics, Sweden is one of several countries that now collect and publish data on family status, contraceptive practices and fertility for both men and women⁵.

32. A second type of problem occurs when the basic unit of analysis and presentation is the household, as for example in the traditional approach to poverty and social exclusion. This approach is often justified by the assumption that within the household there is an equitable pooling of resources. The assumption that the household is the appropriate unit is carried into certain public policies which tax and provide benefits to the household as a unit. However, use of the household as the unit in poverty analysis renders divisions associated with gender as invisible. It obscures gender inequalities in the distribution of resources within the household, and the implications of differential work incentives for women and men. It is important to collect data on income and resources at the level of individual men and women as well as the level of the household unit and to provide tabulations and analysis which show both household and individual patterns.

33. Another way the household concept has made women invisible in statistics is the use of "head of household." Often the characteristics of the whole household have been identified as those of the head and the head has been assumed to be the oldest man in the household. This practice obscures a series of gender issues. For example, comparing 'heads of households' may

⁵ Statistics Sweden, *Women and Men in Sweden: Facts and Figures 2008*, Sweden 2006.

well not be a comparison between male earners: the highest earning of a two-earner household may be the woman; the woman may be the main earner and the man the main carer; the household may be made up of a lesbian or homosexual couple. The new practice of using the concept of the 'household reference person' allows the advantages of a single point of enquiry, without the disadvantages of making false gender assumptions.

34. The process of making gender visible in areas where it was previously thought not relevant lies at the heart of the development of gender statistics. Rather than making assumptions about the nature and significance of gender relations, such issues questions are opened up to analytic scrutiny. There are many questionable assumptions in traditional analyses. These include: assuming that gender is not relevant because other social and economic dynamics are more important; that women's interests are always closely aligned with those of their husbands; and that a particular category of person is always male or female. The development of gender statistics creates the evidence base that enables such assumptions to be tested, and better analyses and policies can then be developed.

VI. GENDER EQUALITY

35. In many cases the interest in gender is an interest in the nature and causes of gender inequality. Many contemporary policies are designed to reduce the level of gender inequality. Statistics are thus needed to measure gender inequality. However, the concept of gender equality is complex.

36. The definition of gender equality depends on the understanding of gender differences. Are all differences also inequalities? Or are some differences valued and not a sign of inequality? Does reaching gender equality mean changing the position of women, or does it mean a much deeper transformation that includes changing the lives of men as well? These different approaches to gender equality may be summarized in a three-fold typology.

37. First, equality means a single standard of evaluation, with the implication that unless there is sameness there is not equality. An example is that of equal pay for work of equal value. This is the most widespread use of the concept of gender equality. This approach underpins most legal treatments of gender equality, which are based on the principle of equal treatment. It is the simplest and best understood meaning of the concept of gender equality.

38. Second, there is equal valuation of different contributions, with the implication that there is not a simple single standard against which men and women's positions are assessed. An example is that of unpaid care work, and whether and if so how this might be treated as equivalent to paid work. Should national accounts attempt to place a monetary value on unpaid care work in order to equally value it with paid work? This approach may lead to policies that involve special treatment for women, such as paid maternity leave. However, it is also argued that there is a danger that this approach may be used as a justification of the status quo rather than equality. Can different ever mean equal? Hence, while not an uncommon approach, this is a much disputed interpretation of the meaning of gender equality.

39. Third, there is the belief that equality between men and women will only be achieved through the transformation of the practices and standards of both men and women. An example is that of changing the structural conditions so that gender equality may be achieved, such as reconciling work and family life by making the workplace compatible with care; by changing gender power relations in order to reduce violence against women. This approach requires major structural changes throughout society. It is similar to the first interpretation of the concept of equality, in that equality is achieved through ultimately achieving sameness, but differs in positioning this within a wider analysis of the transformation of the social environment. This is the approach most usually adopted within the strategy of gender mainstreaming, which seeks to include the gender equality perspective in all areas of analysis and policy.

40. There are vigorous debates on these three positions among gender scholars and policy makers. It is not necessary to make a decision as to which one is best in order to produce statistics relevant to gender equality. Indeed to the contrary; the job of a gender statistician is to produce the evidence in order to facilitate the discussions that might achieve the resolution of these debates by others.

41. There are several further nuances on the concept of gender equality, including equal opportunities and equity.

42. Equal opportunities are an approach which focuses on issues of access of individuals to particular institutions and treatments. It is close to the notion of equal treatment. With its focus on justice for individuals, however, it is an approach that rarely addresses the wider issues about the institutions that structure our resources. It may be regarded as necessary but perhaps not sufficient for the development of gender equality.

43. The concept of equity is a one that is closer to the notion of fairness than to equality, in that it allows for some inequalities to be regarded as legitimate. For example there may be gender pay equity rather than pay equality if there are gender pay differences that might be caused by differences in skills rather than by discrimination.
