



Economic Commission for Europe**Conference of European Statisticians****Group of Experts on Gender Statistics****Work Session on Gender Statistics**

Neuchâtel, 15–17 May 2019

Report of the Work Session**I. Attendance**

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Work Session on Gender Statistics, co-organized with the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland, was held on 15 to 17 May 2019 in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. It was attended by participants from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Canada, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan. The European Union was represented by Eurostat. The United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, the World Bank Group, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International Women's Development Agency were also represented. Experts from the University of Basel, University of Geneva and University of Applied Science, Western Switzerland as well as Advanced Study Center and Canadian Institute of Technology in Albania participated at the invitation of the Secretariat. There were 96 participants.

2. A number of participants were able to attend the Work Session thanks to financial support from the United Nations Development Account (10th tranche) project 'Data and statistics', the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland, and UN Women.

II. Organization of the meeting

3. Ms. Katja Branger of Switzerland was elected as Chair of the meeting and Ms. Helen Cahill of Ireland as Vice-Chair.

4. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting:

- (a) Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the gender perspective;
- (b) Communicating gender statistics;



- (c) Measuring gender identity;
- (d) Use of gender statistics in policymaking and policy monitoring;
- (e) Economic empowerment and intra-household power;
- (f) Institutional mechanisms to support gender statistics;
- (g) Gender and trade statistics;
- (h) Emerging issues and international initiatives in gender statistics.

5. The following participants acted as session chairs and discussants: for item (a) Fiona Willis-Núñez (UNECE); for item (b) Katja Branger (Switzerland); for item (c) Karen Hurrell (United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission); for item (d) Javier Alcantara Ortega (Eurostat); for item (e) Pierre Turcotte (Department for Women and Gender Equality, Canada); for item (f) Ala Negruța (UN Women); and for item (g) Pierre Turcotte (Department for Women and Gender Equality, Canada). The meeting also included a panel discussion on meeting the needs of policymakers.

6. The discussion at the meeting was based on papers that are available on the UNECE website.¹

III. Recommendations for future work

7. Participants supported the proposal that for the UNECE Secretariat to collect information from national statistical offices (NSOs) on documentation and research on measuring gender identity, and to disseminate it through an online platform hosted by UNECE.

8. The meeting requested the Steering Group to develop a plan for improving conceptual and methodological clarity in measuring gender identity and developing practical guidance to countries to support their initial steps in this area, and to submit this plan to the October 2019 meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians for discussion and approval.

9. The meeting recommended that the next Work Session on Gender Statistics should take place in 2020. Participants took note that a meeting room and interpretation for this are reserved at the Palais des Nations in Geneva (Switzerland) for 22–24 April 2020.

10. The following topics were suggested for discussion in the 2020 Work Session:

- (a) Disseminating and communicating gender statistics;
- (b) Improving the statistical literacy of gender statistics users;
- (c) Use of gender statistics for policymaking and policy monitoring;
- (d) Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the gender perspective;
- (e) Gender statistics and geospatial information;
- (f) Gender and climate change;
- (g) Measurement of sexual orientation in official statistics;
- (h) Measurement of gender identity in official statistics;
- (i) Intra-household power and decision-making;
- (j) Addressing the impact of the digital revolution on gender statistics.

¹ <http://bit.ly/unecegenderstats2019>

IV. Adoption of the report of the meeting

11. The meeting adopted parts I–III of this report before adjourning. A summary of the discussion in the substantive sessions of the meeting is presented in the annex of this report, which was prepared by the Secretariat after the meeting.

Annex

Summary of the main issues discussed in the substantive sessions

I. Overall observations and conclusions

1. Key observations and conclusions which recurred throughout the Work Session, and which were noted in the closing comments, included the following:

(a) There is a growing visibility of gender issues in international efforts to measure sustainable development;

(b) This rise of gender statistics is not occurring in isolation—many of the important measurement issues raised during the Work Session pertained to intersecting vulnerabilities requiring the simultaneous consideration of various dimensions, such as age, disability, poverty, geographic location and migratory status;

(c) Along with this widening scope comes the need for creativity in uses of data, such as making use of administrative sources, longitudinal data and techniques for integrating microdata from multiple sources;

(d) Two-way communication with stakeholders, and notably with policymakers, is key to enhancing gender statistics, ensuring that they are fit for purpose. At the same time such communication increases financial and institutional support for gender statistics which enables producers to improve their products.

II. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the gender perspective

2. The session was organized by Fiona Willis-Núñez (UNECE) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Presentations were given by UNECE, Switzerland, Mexico, UNCTAD and UNICEF. A paper by UNECLAC was summarized by the session chair.

3. The experiences of Switzerland and Mexico in integrating a gender perspective into their SDG-nationalization efforts were welcomed. Countries were urged to share the tools and methods they have used, to the greatest extent possible, so that others may benefit from them. Participants were reminded that UNECE materials on statistics for SDGs, developed collaboratively with countries, are available to guide NSOs.

4. The paper by UNCTAD comparing several global indices of gender equality prompted discussion from participants about the value of composite indicators—including communicative and advocacy value, policymaking value, and predictive value. Indices can play a key role in drawing public attention and the attention of politicians to important topics, while the underlying sub-indices and individual indicators may be more suitable candidates for targeted policy actions. The ‘leave no-one behind’ imperative also means that even aspects of composite indicators that contribute little to explaining variance may still be important arenas for policy action.

5. The paper from UNICEF prompted discussion about the growing interest in multiple disaggregation and the value of viewing gender, age, poverty, migratory status, geographic location and other variables holistically, since they can interact to produce compound discrimination that affects the lived experiences of individuals in different ways depending on their combination of circumstances.

6. The variety of topics covered in the presentations made it evident that the need to integrate a gender perspective throughout the drive for sustainable development is now well accepted—the discussions of gender issues in the 2030 Agenda are no longer confined to specific indicators or to just goal 5 but pertain to the entire Agenda. The presentations and

discussions also made evident that the Sustainable Development Agenda is not exclusive to developing countries but is relevant to all.

7. Participants discussed the ways in which the rise of the 2030 Agenda as a framework for statistical offices has influenced the development of gender statistics in recent years. The increased attention has given NSOs a stronger role among the data-producing agencies and has enabled better identification of statistical gaps.

III. Communicating gender statistics

8. The session was organized by Katja Branger (Switzerland) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by Ireland (representing the Task Force on Communicating Gender statistics), Lithuania, Switzerland, Georgia, Italy and Eurostat.

9. As noted in the paper presented by the UNECE Task Force on Communicating Gender Statistics, many of the challenges in statistical communication are common across all statistical domains but there are some aspects that are unique or especially relevant to gender statistics. The paper by Eurostat gave a striking example of this, where the communication challenges entailed in explaining a complex statistical construct (the Gender Pay Gap) are made even more demanding because of the inherent political nature of the topic.

10. The papers touched on a wide range of innovative communication tools and techniques targeted towards different user groups—such as tables and interactive database software to allow advanced users to access detailed information to suit their own requirements, and infographics, interactive visualizations, social media and ‘science slams’ to engage less advanced and younger audiences.

11. The ability to translate statistical findings into relatable stories that make sense to people, such as by using maps, is a key to good communication of gender statistics.

12. The timing of communication initiatives can have a strong influence on their effectiveness—a good practice suggested by presenters is to design them to coincide with national or international events such as International Women’s Day, International Day for the Elimination of violence Against Women.

13. The papers and discussion emphasized the importance of integrating dissemination and communication in a strategic way from the outset, rather than only after statistics have been produced. They also stressed the need to monitor access and use of statistics and the effectiveness of communications efforts, and then to use the results of such monitoring to adjust strategies when needed. It was noted that sometimes statistical products may be designed from the perspective of producers rather than users. It is important to gather user feedback and to change tactics if a product is found to be underused or if demand for a different kind of product is identified.

14. Communication of gender statistics can be used both as a means for demonstrating progress towards gender equality, and as a way to draw attention to remaining problems.

15. Many participants noted that the challenges of communicating gender statistics remain significant and welcomed the ongoing work of the UNECE Task Force.

IV. Measuring gender identity

16. The session was organized by Marc Lachance and Heather Lathe (Canada) and Melissa Randall and Karen Hurrell (United Kingdom). Karen Hurrell chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by Sweden, Italy and (jointly) Canada and the United Kingdom.

17. Discussion covered the need to balance inclusivity against minimizing negative impacts on data quality, such as through non-response or incorrect responses resulting from poor understanding of concepts and questions (for example, low public understanding of ‘intersex’ precludes inclusion of this as a response option for sex at birth).

18. It is important to take special measures to ensure confidentiality when collecting information and publishing statistics on gender identity. In some cases, the collection of gender identity information for the purposes of inclusivity may be necessary, but the small numbers may necessitate suppression of the results or reallocating them to male or female categories for publication purposes. When this is done, a new communication challenge arises in explaining to users why the collection appears to reflect gender diversity, but the resulting statistics do not.

19. Linguistic nuances and differences lead to challenges, especially in countries or languages where the same term is used for sex and for gender, and/or where the difference between the two concepts is not well understood by the general public.

20. Participants debated the reasons for including gender identity questions in sample surveys. The rationale may be not only the production of statistics on transgender populations, but the desire to be inclusive and allow respondents the opportunity to answer in an honest and accurate way. Some countries have found that not only transgender and non-binary individuals but cisgender individuals in the population have complained when survey questions are seen as not inclusive.

21. Discussion also touched upon the reasons why sexual orientation and gender identity should be considered separately, to avoid confusion and the perpetuation of mistaken understandings of the two.

22. The session, and in particular the in-depth review paper presented by Canada and the UK, made clear that there is considerable ongoing work in some countries in the UNECE region. The importance of continued international collaboration for those countries conducting research and testing was emphasized. While each country has its own specificities, there is much that can be shared to avoid each country having to start from scratch in this area. Countries were encouraged to share their materials to the greatest extent possible. The UNECE Secretariat is ready to support such sharing.

V. Use of gender statistics in policymaking and policy monitoring

23. The session was organized by Javier Alcantara (Eurostat) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by Finland, Switzerland (two papers), Italy, the United Kingdom and OECD Development Centre.

24. The presentations showcased a broad variety of ways in which gender statistics can be used to inform policies. At the same time many of the interventions highlighted the value of translating statistics into useable formats or tools where policy-relevant messages are underscored and communicated—such as in the Finnish Gender Equality Barometer and OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index.

25. The interventions also highlighted the value of gender statistics for enabling the public to hold policymakers to account, such as in the case of demonstrating the pace of progress of gender equality in higher education institutions in Switzerland, and in measuring equality and human rights in the United Kingdom.

26. Discussion touched upon the need to gather feedback to assess how far the gender statistics needs of policymakers are being met; and relatedly on the need to analyze usage of statistics and of tools for their analysis. This may present some challenges, since counting downloads, for example, is not the same as knowing how a product or tool is being used and by whom. Discussion also therefore covered the need for direct consultation with stakeholders.

27. In concluding the session, the session organizer remarked that the impartial role of official statistics means it is necessary to communicate to policymakers not only about progress towards gender equality, but also about shortcomings. The particular challenge for gender statistics is to disentangle the task of informing policymakers, which is the job of statisticians, from the task of formulating or assessing the policies, which is outside the scope of official statistics.

VI. Economic empowerment and intra-household power

28. The session was organized by Pierre Turcotte (Canada) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by Canada (representing the Task Force on Measuring Intra-household Power and Decision-making), Mexico, Italy, Belarus and the International Women's Development Agency.

29. The session shed light on some of the practical applications of measuring the gender dimension of intra-household decision-making, for instance for informing policy measures designed to foster transitions to clean fuel sources in Mexico.

30. The presentations also highlighted the interactions of gender with other variables, such as age and education, which can lead to different outcomes among members of the same household in outcomes such as poverty and health.

31. Discussion touched upon some of the many challenges in measuring inherently subjective matters such as perceived power, and the related issue of what could or should be done when discordant responses are received (e.g. when both members of a couple self-report as the principal decision-maker for a given type of decisions). The importance of perceptions in their own right was stressed, although the possibility was also raised of gathering the views of others as 'witnesses' to the distribution of decision-making (e.g. members of the household other than the partners in a couple).

32. The likelihood of social desirability influencing responses was also raised, such as when respondents say that they share decision-making within their couple because this is viewed by society as the most desirable situation.

VII. Institutional mechanisms to support gender statistics

33. The session was organized by Ala Negruța (UN Women) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Presentations were given by Albania, Paris21 (OECD) and Kazakhstan.

34. Discussion covered the pros and cons of having a dedicated gender unit in statistical offices versus having people working on gender integrated throughout the office. While there are examples of success with either approach, a necessary feature is that someone in the office should have a coordinating role to bring together different people or units working on gender, especially in linking production to dissemination and communication departments. At the same time, no single individual should be assigned sole responsibility for gender statistics as it is not possible to achieve and creates a false sense that others do not need to adopt a gender perspective.

35. A general observation among participants was that as institutional support for gender statistics increases, the workload and scope for gender focal points in NSOs increases.

36. Discussion of the gender statistics gaps assessment framework presented by Paris21 highlighted the fact that institutional support refers to a much broader setting than only NSOs. Both gender and statistics need to be mainstreamed throughout legislative and policymaking processes to ensure that gender statistics producers receive a strong mandate.

37. In concluding the session, the session organizer observed that the increasing demand for gender statistics is a positive development but one that can only be met if the growing demand is matched by growing institutional and financial support to enable official statistics to compete with non-official sources of gender statistics. Gender focal points in NSOs need to be proactive in seeking such institutional support.

VIII. Gender and trade statistics

38. The session was organized by Anu Peltola (UNCTAD). Pierre Turcotte (Canada) chaired the session and led the discussion. Presentations were given by the European Commission, UNCTAD, Finland, OECD and the World Bank.

39. The session served as an introduction to the need for, and current lack of, data on gender and trade. The presentations revealed that the interactions between gender and trade are complex and vary widely across countries, and demonstrated that trade and trade policies may either exaggerate inequalities or contribute to more equal engagement of women and men.

40. The session stressed the importance of defining what is meant by gender and trade statistics. The conceptual framework for the measurement of gender and trade presented by UNCTAD could provide a basis for developing definitions. Presenters underlined the importance of developing different approaches to measuring gender and trade based on register data, existing surveys or new dedicated survey tools.

41. During the discussion NSOs were invited to consider the Nordic countries' experience with register data to improve the linking of business and demographic variables, such as gender, and the linking of exporter/importer information to business data. Countries were also encouraged to engage in pilot testing and development of new statistics on gender and trade, building on existing data and capacities of statistical systems.

42. The session provided an initial overview of the scope of activities that could be undertaken to develop trade statistics from a gender perspective. It also demonstrated the need for more conceptual work and the current scarcity of national examples of statistics on gender and trade.

IX. Emerging issues and international initiatives in gender statistics

43. Presentations were made by UNSD and UNECE, both giving overviews of recent, ongoing and planned activities by the respective organizations. Participants were introduced to the content and functionality of the UNECE statistical database, in which a range of sex-disaggregated and gender-relevant indicators are presented in harmonized format in an online database to facilitate international comparisons.

X. Keynote speech and panel discussion

44. A keynote speech entitled "Gender statistics: from statistical neutrality to policymaking" was given by Sylvie Durrer of the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality. A panel discussion followed, guided by the questions "What (more) do producers of gender statistics need to do to ensure that the statistics they produce are used to bring about real change in gender equality? What should be the role of NSOs and of international organizations in mediating between data production and use by policymakers?"

45. Panellists were from the Italian National Institute of Statistics, UN Women and the University of Basel. The discussion was moderated by Katja Branger of Switzerland.

46. The keynote speech emphasized that statistical neutrality cannot be used as an excuse to avoid conveying policy-relevant messages.

47. While communication of statistics can often be made more effective by relating findings to individual experiences –such as showing the gender pay gap in terms of how a user's or reader's pay compares with that of other people– the greatest effect on policymaking may be achieved when statistics are communicated at the national level, such as showing the gender pay gap in terms of national GDP forgone due to gender differences.

48. The interventions from panellists and discussion among the audience touched on the need to promote data literacy and to foster citizen participation; the need to engage with non-official producers of gender statistics and to be open to working with non-traditional sources; and the key role of international organizations as advocates for improved data collection and greater support for gender statistics.

49. The continued 'gender-blindness' of some of the Sustainable Development Goals was noted. Panellists also argued that for SDG 5 (gender equality), lack of data is among the impediments to its achievement.

50. The influence of gender differences on the data that are collected should not be ignored (such as in the case of perception-based questions or even systematic sex differences in self-reported family histories). It must be borne in mind that gender norms drive behaviour in many ways, including in how people respond to surveys.

51. The essential role of transparency of methods for collecting, compiling, analyzing and publishing data was stressed, so that users are able to replicate findings, enhancing their trust in the statistics produced by NSOs.
