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Substantive discussion to obtain input to the in-depth review of statistics related to population ageing

Statistics related to population ageing

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews each year selected statistical areas in depth. The purpose of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, identify gaps or duplication of work and address emerging issues.

The secretariat has prepared this note to provide basis for the discussion of statistics related to population ageing at the CES plenary session. The note outlines the policy challenges related to population ageing and the statistical issues related to its measurement, describes the relevant international statistical activities and proposes future action to the statistical community. Based on the discussion at the plenary session, the note will be updated for the in-depth review by the CES Bureau in November 2012.

Contents

I. Introduction

1.   The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) regularly reviews selected statistical areas in depth. The aim of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), identify gaps or duplication of work and address emerging issues. The review focuses on strategic issues and highlights concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and a coordinating nature.

2.   The CES Bureau selected statistics related to population ageing for an in-depth review at its February 2012 meeting and requested the secretariat to prepare the paper that would provide the basis for the review. The present note is prepared for the discussion of statistics related to population ageing at the CES plenary session. It outlines the policy challenges related to population ageing and the statistical issues related to its measurement, describes the relevant international statistical activities and proposes future action to the statistical community.

3.   Based on the discussion at the CES plenary session, the note will be updated for the Bureau's in-depth review in November 2012. Member countries will be invited to contribute short descriptions of their activities in collecting data on population ageing and its consequences and in coordinating such activities across different statistical domains and among agencies.

II. Increasing policy relevance of population ageing

4.   As the world population is passing through the demographic transition – the transformation of a population characterized by large families and short lifespans into a population of small families and long lifespans – the distinctive trait of this century is going to be ageing. Ageing will have a profound impact on a broad range of economic, political and social processes, affecting virtually all domains of society.

5.   The effects of ageing are already strongly felt in many UNECE countries where the large generations born during the baby boom are beginning to retire. There are significant cross-country differences in the rate of population ageing. Thus the scale of the measures required for adaptation is not the same across countries. Nevertheless, all countries will need to adapt, and this poses challenges.

6.   The urge to utilise the labour resources of older people is among the key policy responses that entails great potential for the opportunities of ageing. As people remain healthy, active and autonomous for longer, they can continue to contribute actively to economic, social and family life over more years and can share their experience. Longer lives are, after all, among the greatest achievements of modern times.

7.   Governments and international organizations have recognised the need to tackle the challenges and benefit more from the opportunities of ageing. In 2002, countries of the UNECE adopted their Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (the global action plan) where they committed to action in ten key areas. The Strategy attempts to cover the entire spectrum of domains that are affected by ageing and where government action can make a difference. While addressing each domain, the Strategy is holistic, requiring that the concerns of different age-groups are systematically considered in all areas and levels of policymaking. The adoption of this Strategy reflects the broad consensus on the cause of government action in response to population ageing in the UNECE region.

8.   To base these actions on evidence, reliable data on the relevant issues needs to be available by age and sex. The importance of appropriate measurement of ageing and its consequences is further emphasised in the context of monitoring the implementation of the agreed Strategy. UNECE member countries reinforced this commitment in the ministerial declaration "Society for all ages: challenges and opportunities" adopted at the review of the Strategy at its five-year mark in 2007.

III.   The scope of ageing-related statistics

9.   While the phenomenon of population ageing is demographic, its consequences cut across all spheres of society. Statistics related to ageing are thus cross-cutting and concern all areas of social and demographic statistics as well as government finance and public sector statistics. Statistics in other domains than demography do not focus on the process of ageing as such. They inform about the situation of people at different age, the timing of important transitions in people's lives and about services and expenditures that target different age-groups.

10.   Measurement of the demographic parameters is the core element of ageing-related statistics. Basic data on population age structure are collected by censuses and updated by vital statistics. The age structure of the population holds a lot of information about the present, past and the future and indicators based on the proportions or ratios of age-groups as well as the median age are the standard measures describing the ageing of any particular population. The same applies to projections used for forecasting the population size and age structure and to the life expectancy at birth and at different ages, derived from mortality statistics. Long time series of these data are available for most countries.

11.   Longer lives influence the structure of an individual's entire life course. In the context of population ageing, the life course transitions in later life are of particular policy relevance. First, the change in health status. In this, the crucial question is whether the gained years of life are spent in good health or in disability and dependence. To measure this, there are health expectancies that adjust the conventional life expectancy measures for disability or indicate the number of healthy years for an average individual under current mortality and morbidity conditions. The extent and type of health care and services needed and used vary greatly with age and need to be measured adequately.

12.   Another key area is living arrangements. The type of the household where a person lives carries important information on the extent and type of services a person may require, on the way resources are shared and consumed. Characteristics such as economic well-being and housing conditions usually pertain to the whole household. Presence of other household members in addition to the nuclear family (a couple with or without children) may constitute either an additional resource, for example, as a provider of childcare or household work or add to the responsibilities, for example, through a need for care. From the perspective of older people and population ageing, the issue of living alone or in a household with other persons becomes a particularly important determinant of well-being as well as intergenerational transfers (financial and in-kind) among household members.

13.   Retirement marks an important status transition in both the economic and social sense. Measurement of the age at which this transition is made, the income and well-being of people before and after, and the measurement of economic activity by age, including those above 65, represent crucial statistical information for reforms in the labour market and pension systems. The shrinking and ageing of the working-age population (conventionally defined 15-64) are having profound impact on the labour market. Monitoring unemployment, part-time work, persons following different pathways of exit from the labour market and the effective entry and exist ages to the labour market are

important for monitoring the ageing-related labour market policies. Education statistics need to capture lifelong learning that can influence older persons' employability and well-being.

14. Population ageing influences the way in which a society redistributes resources among its members through social protection systems. A successful adaptation to ageing requires monitoring the functioning and financial sustainability of these systems. The related statistics include replacement rates of pensions, population involved in different pension and health insurance schemes as well as public spending on pensions, health care and long-term care.

15. Promotion of active ageing is among the key policy responses to population ageing. Beside the measurement of economic activity and retirement, the monitoring of active ageing policies requires statistics on volunteering work and lifestyles that allow people to remain healthy and autonomous longer.

IV. International activities

A. United Nations Population Division

16. The United Nations Population Division prepares demographic estimates and projections for all countries and areas of the world as well as urban and rural areas and major cities, which serve as the standard and consistent set of population figures. These are broadly used throughout the United Nations system, by other international organizations and governments. The estimates and projections provide the basis of population-related figures in many internationally developed sets of statistical indicators.

17. In addition to the bi-annual updates of population estimates projections, occasional statistical reports are prepared with focus on ageing. Beside demographic data, the latest such report from 2007[1] included data on labour force participation and illiteracy of the population aged 65 and older as well as on the statutory pensionable age.

B. World Health Organization (WHO)

18. The WHO European Office hosts the Health for All[2] database that includes, among others, detailed data on population and mortality by age and sex. WHO mortality databases also contain detailed mortality by cause of death and life expectancy estimates at various ages.[3] Moreover, a detailed age breakdown of hospital discharges (a proxy for morbidity), including for higher age groups, is available in the WHO European Hospital Morbidity database[4], adding altogether capacity to assess disease impacts on health at different ages. The WHO European Office has started to work with WHO Headquarters and other WHO Regions on guidelines and assessment tools for monitoring age-friendly policies at community (city) level. This includes work on indicators for monitoring age profiles on community level.

19. The WHO European Office is jointly collecting other statistics with Eurostat and OECD related to health care resources (e.g. for long-term care) and activities (e.g.

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[1] United Nations 2007. *World Population Ageing 2007*. New York: United Nations.
[2] European Health for All database available at http://data.euro.who.int/hfadb.
[3] European Detailed Mortality database available at: http://data.euro.who.int/dmdb
[4] European Hospital Morbidity database available at http://data.euro.who.int/hmdb

immunization against influenza among older people), that may further add to the capacity to analyse the health needs of ageing populations. This collaborative effort aims to improve the quality and coverage of health information and reduce the burden of country reporting

20. WHO Headquarters is coordinating a global Survey on Ageing and Adult Health (SAGE), which is a longitudinal study of ageing in six low and middle-income countries[5]. It also includes collaboration with European surveys on ageing and health such as COURAGE (a survey in three European countries), and longitudinal surveys such as SHARE (see section H.3).

C. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

21. The OECD Working Party on Private Pensions and its Task Force on Pension Statistics launched the Global Pension Statistics project (GPS) in 2002 that permit inter-country comparisons of current statistics and indicators on key aspects of retirement systems across OECD and non-OECD countries. OECD prepares country profiles on private pensions systems, which include relevant demographic and macroeconomic data, pension fund data and description of the pension system.

22. OECD publishes the series Pensions at a Glance that provide a wide range of indicators for comparing pension policies and the outcomes of these policies between OECD countries. It includes indicators such as average earnings, public pension expenditures, life expectancy and the dependency ratio, as well as expected relative pension values, replacement rates and pension wealth at different individual levels of earnings for mandatory pension schemes and many other statistical parameters of pension systems. In its series Education at a Glance, OECD also occasionally provides some relevant data on employment of older age groups 55-64 by educational level.

23. OECD has been carrying out two waves of country reviews of the labour market situation of older workers: the first phase took place in 2003-2005 and the second phase started in 2011.[6] As part of that process, OECD has supplemented the standard labour market statistics on older workers (e.g. participation rates, employment rates and unemployment rates) published in the OECD Employment Outlook[7] with a range of indicators developed specifically for this project, such as effective retirement age, retention rates, measures of seniority wages, hiring rates, inactivity by reason and incidence of different forms of working conditions.

D. European Commission

24. Eurostat collects and hosts in its databases statistics on many areas relevant to ageing in the European Union Member States and Associated States. The recent publication "Active ageing and solidarity between generations: a statistical portrait of the European Union 2012" collects this into one report, covering demographic statistics, labour market, transition to retirement, health and healthcare, living conditions, income and participation in society. The data in all these areas is presented by age groups and are available in Eurostat's online database.

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[5] China, Ghana, India, Mexico, Russian Federation and South Africa. See www.who.int/healthinfo/systems/sage.
[6] www.oecd.org/els/employment/olderworkers
[7] www.oecd.org/employment/outlook

25.   Based on its annual demographic data collections, every year Eurostat computes for all European countries a set of harmonized demographic indicators referring to ageing, such as median age, dependency ratios and life expectancies. In particular, for a large number of countries (EU Member States and Candidate Countries plus EFTA countries) annual life tables by single age are available at both national and regional level. The regional dimension is not represented in other comparable datasets. These data are input also for the computation by Eurostat of harmonized indicators of Disability-Free Life Expectancy (Healthy Life Years) at birth, at age 50 and at age 65. All these data are freely available in the Eurostat database.

26.   Eurostat also provides data for the EU Demography Reports (2008 and 2010) that are designed to inform EU policy debate on coping with consequences of population ageing. Among others, these reports provide data on population age structures, labour statistics for age groups particularly relevant from the ageing perspective and on pension expenditure.

27.   Every three years, Eurostat produces and releases population projections by single year and single age (up to age 100+) for 31 countries (all the EU Member States and EFTA countries). The projections at national level are usually followed by regional level projections for the same set of countries, where Eurostat ensures also the consistency of the figures at the two geographical levels. The Eurostat Population Projections (EUROPOP) at national level are a fundamental official input to the assessment of the long-term sustainability of public finances, while those at regional level are an important element for the report that the European Commission submits regularly to the EU Council and to the European Parliament about the progress made towards socio-economic cohesion at regional level. The level of age disaggregation of both datasets, freely available in the Eurostat database, allows the computation of prospective ageing-related indicators.

28.   In 2010, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN Council) of the European Union mandated the Economic Policy Committee (EPC) to update its age-related expenditure projections by autumn 2012 based on a new population projection by Eurostat. The long-term age-related expenditure projections provide an indication of the timing and scale of changes in economic developments that could result from an ageing population in a 'no-policy change' scenario. The 2012 Ageing Report, presented to the ECOFIN council in May 2012, details the expenditure projections covering pensions, health care, long-term care, education and unemployment transfers for all EU Member States. A statistical annex gives a country-by-country overview of the main assumptions and results.[8]

E.   European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna (ECV)

29.   ECV works on indicators for monitoring implementation of the UNECE Regional Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Indicators have been developed in the domains of demography, income and wealth, labour market and labour market participation, and social protection and financial sustainability. Much of the data are collected through international sources where availability for other countries than members of EU and OECD is weak. In 2007 and 2009, UNECE facilitated additional data collection from national sources for these indicators. The data are published in the country profiles

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[8] http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/2012/2012-ageing-report_en.htm

available online.[9] Subsequently, the lists of long-term care indicators and gender-specific indicators for mainstreaming ageing have been established.

30.   This work is carried out in consultation with the intergovernmental Working Group on Ageing at UNECE, which consists of representatives of government agencies responsible for the national implementation of the UNECE Strategy and thus provides a direct link to the data users. The indicators are also linked to the specific commitments that UNECE countries have agreed upon in the Strategy.

F.   The Active Ageing Index project

31.   The Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission, UNECE and ECV are jointly implementing the project Active Ageing Index, linked to the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

32.   The Index should allow measuring the extent to which older people can realise their full potential in terms of total and healthy life expectancy, participation in the economy, in social and cultural life and in terms of independent living. The project aims at building a consensus on the key domains that need to be considered, on the relevant indicators, on a benchmark level for each of the indicators and on a weighting method to build a composite indicator that should be relevant for wide variety of countries. Composite indicators could also be calculated for subsets of indicators, making it easier to identify the domains in which most progress is required.

G.   Statistical Office of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-Stat)

33.   CIS-Stat is preparing methodological recommendations on a statistical study of socio-demographic aspects of population ageing based on the data of current statistics and the population census. Besides that, CIS-Stat intends to carry out the following activities:

         (a)   Publish a statistical pocketbook on population ageing in the CIS countries;

         (b)   Developing a database related to the topics of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing for the CIS countries;

         (c)   Review the best international practices of recording and analysis of indicators of pension systems;

         (d)   Rreview the best international practices in studying living standards of the elderly.

H.   Internationally coordinated surveys in the UNECE region

1.   Generations and Gender Survey (GGS)

34.   In 2000, UNECE launched the Generations and Gender Surveys – panel surveys of nationally representative samples of 18-79 year-old population with an interval of three years between each panel wave. The main goal is to improve understanding of demographic and social developments and of the factors that influence these developments, with

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[9] www.monitoringris.org

particular attention to relationships between children and parents (generations) and those between partners (gender).

35. The Survey takes a multi-disciplinary approach. Among the covered topics, the following are particularly relevant for studying older age-groups: retirement, material living conditions, income, family relations, extent and quality of the support network, subjective health status and disability, intergenerational transfers, satisfaction with different life domains and perceived loneliness. The large sample sizes in the order of 10,000 individuals in each country allow the production of detailed statistics and analyses by age.

36. The surveys are conducted in 19 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Sweden, Australia and Japan. In many of them, the implementing agency is the national statistical office. Harmonised micro-data files are available for 15 countries. An online tabulation tool provides quick access to simple tabulations and analyses.[10]

2. European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)

37. EU-SILC is an instrument in the European Statistical System (ESS) aiming at collecting timely and comparable cross-sectional and longitudinal multidimensional microdata on income, poverty, social exclusion and living conditions. The project was launched in 2003 and has been implemented in the 27 EU countries, Croatia, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. It provides cross-sectional data on income, poverty, social exclusion and other living conditions as well as longitudinal data pertaining to individual-level changes over time, observed typically over a four-year period.

38. EU-SILC does not rely on a common questionnaire or a survey but on the idea of a framework. The latter defines the harmonised lists of target primary (annual) and secondary (every four years or less frequently) variables to be transmitted to Eurostat; common guidelines and procedures; common concepts (household and income) and classifications aimed at maximising comparability of the information produced. Eurostat provides access to the micro-data.[11]

3. Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE)

39. SHARE is a multidisciplinary and cross-national panel survey on health, socio-economic status and social and family networks. The survey is implemented by a network of research institutes and is supported by the European Commission. SHARE has a multi-disciplinary approach aims at providing the full picture of the different aspects of the ageing process.

40. The surveys are conducted in 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. The sample sizes in different countries range from one to four thousand individuals aged 50 and over. Harmonised micro-data files are available through the project's website[12].

4. UNDESA/UNFPA surveys on ageing

41. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) coordinated and supported the implementation

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[10] www.ggp-i.org
[11] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/eu_silc
[12] www.share-project.org

of harmonised surveys on ageing by national statistical offices of Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan in 2007-2011. These surveys collected information on the situation of older persons with the objective to identify areas for policy interventions.

5. Other relevant surveys

42. Time Use Surveys that national statistical offices in many countries implement in ten-year intervals provide rich information on the time use of adult population, including older persons. These surveys are particularly suitable for measuring unpaid work and non-market production and well-being at different stages of life course.

43. European Social Surveys are designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its populations. They are conducted every two years as cross-sectional surveys covering all adult age-groups. The Surveys are funded by the European Commission, national research councils and ministries, and the European Science Foundation.

44. Eurofound (the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) carries out European Working Conditions Surveys that allow studying issues related to the ageing workforce, and the European Quality of Life Surveys that examine issues such as employment, income, education, housing, family, health, work-life balance, life satisfaction in European Union member and candidate countries. The small sample size of these surveys limits the statistics that can reliably be produced for different age groups.

V. Issues and challenges

45. The information presented in this review highlights general issues and challenges for consideration by the international community for future developments in statistics related to population ageing.

A. Production and dissemination of data by age

1. Tabulation by age

46. Published statistics can inform on ageing and its impact if they are tabulated by age. A great deal of social statistics are not. Where they are, the aggregate age groups used in the tabulations often vary across topics and across different sources on the same topic. The use of the cut-off points of 60 or 65 as a marker for older population and 80 or 85 for the very old are among the common examples. As another example, data on the unemployment of older workers could pertain to 55-64 year-olds, available for most countries, but also to open-ended age-groups of 50, 55 or 60 and over. At the same time, data on time use was aggregated to the age group 45-64. Improvements can be achieved by adhering to commonly agreed age-groups that could make data more easily comparable across countries and topics. In designing survey samples, it would be important to plan for a sufficient number of observations in the age groups that are critical for measuring ageing-related issues.

2. Years elapsed and years remaining

47. In the context of longer lives, the meaning of conventional and legally set age-markers of life-course transitions such as the age of retirement at 65 (a legal standard in many UNECE countries) is changing as the proportion of the population surviving long past that age is increasing. This is leading to new ways of thinking about age that focus on the years of life ahead rather than on the years elapsed since birth. Indeed, reporting the

expected number of years ahead is aligned with behaviours connected with life planning. Indicators such as the proportion of population with remaining years of life below 15 years are gaining ground in comparative representation of the ageing process in the UNECE region.[13]

48. Such new measures could become an important complement to the conventional chronological age in describing population ageing and its consequences. Regular production and publication of this kind of indicators would contribute in itself to a change in thinking about population ageing. For example, while the conventionally measured median age of the population is projected to increase impressively, the decrease in the population average remaining years of life is going to be rather minimal.[14] The statistical community would need to investigate the possibility of producing and disseminating such indicators on a regular basis.

B. Dispersion of ageing-related statistics

1. Different departments and organizations

49. Information on ageing-relevant issues is scattered across different domains and sources. In national statistical offices, they are managed in different departments and international organizations deal with different ageing-related domains according to their mandates. Furthermore, in many countries, statistics on pensions, social security payments and health services are produced outside statistical offices.

2. Different publications and databases

50. With the exception of rare specialised publications, statistics on ageing are dispersed across different publications and online access is not optimised for accessing data on specific age groups. The user would need time to find out for each type of statistics the availability by age and the age-groups used in the tabulations.

3. A good example

51. The Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics[15] in the United States (established in 1986) can be seen as a good example of national-level cooperation of agencies that provide ageing-related data. The Aging Integrated Database[16] of the United States Administration of Aging is an example of consolidating access to available statistics on ageing to one entry point. Such endeavours can greatly enhance the accessibility of ageing-related statistics and promote its use. It could also promote the need for a more streamlined presentation of ageing-related statistics and help to get these statistics into policymaking.

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[13] Sanderson W, Scherbov S 2008. Rethinking age and aging. *Population Bulletin* 63 (4).
Vienna Institute of Demography, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. *European Demographic Data Sheet 2010*. Available at www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/datasheet.

[14] Lutz W, Sanderson W, Scherbov S 2008. The coming acceleration of global population ageing. *Nature* 451: 716-719.

[15] www.agingstats.gov

[16] www.agidnet.org.

C.   Data gaps

52.   Current international work on developing and collecting data on ageing-related indicators has revealed large data gaps in many pertinent areas related to ageing. In a recent production of a statistical annex to a regional report on ageing, the UNECE Statistical Division identified 20 indicators that could be provided for a large majority of its member countries. While the availability of data on population, life expectancy and labour force participation by age is universal, other key measures such as unemployment at age 55-64, average effective labour market exit age, poverty and living in a one-person household by age was not available for most non-OECD countries. For many other indicators that have been identified for monitoring the UNECE strategy on ageing, data are scarce for the EU and OECD countries as well.

53.   As a rule, the original data sources contain information on age. For many indicators, the production of the necessary figures would only require additional tabulation of an already collected survey or administrative dataset. In other areas, such as the measurement of lifelong learning, volunteering or healthy lifestyles and intergenerational transfers and support, data collection would need to be undertaken or strengthened.

D.   Need for subjective measures

54.   To understand the situation of different age groups of the population and to design policies that affect them, governments also need information on subjective perceptions of well-being. Although objective conditions do influence subjective perception, they are far from determining these perceptions. For many behaviours, the effect of perceived conditions may be larger than that of the objectively measured conditions.

55.   Using the subjective indicators involve challenges of measurement, interpretation and comparability. However, research on measuring such subjective perceptions has produced questions and scales that are increasingly well established in measuring satisfaction with different life domains, including measurement of emotional well-being. Recent work on the measurement of quality of life in EU and OECD has recommended using subjective measures alongside objective ones for providing an adequate picture of quality of life. Government statistical agencies would need to progress in collecting data and producing sufficiently credible measures to monitor subjective well-being of the population, including older persons.

E.   Need for longitudinal data

56.   Longitudinal data grasp the dynamic character of the ageing process, allow measuring change over time, reactions to changes in the institutional environment and to specific policies. Such data are also indispensable for measuring linkages between different life domains and testing behavioural hypotheses. Longitudinal studies can give answers to questions concerning change that cross-sectional studies cannot. Recent developments in ageing-related data collection have increasingly considered these needs and advantages. GGS and SHARE as well as several national studies on ageing are designed as panel surveys.[17] EU-SILC also includes a panel component.

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[17]   Health and Retirement Study (HRS) of the United States and the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) are among the best known.

57.   Longitudinal data are challenging to collect and manage. First, longitudinal surveys are more expensive than cross-sectional ones because of the need to keep track, maintain commitment and locate the panel respondents at each consecutive wave. In addition to this, data processing and cleaning involves additional complexity. Furthermore, confidentiality concerns must be managed appropriately to ensure that the personal information needed for keeping track of the panel member or linking data from a census or administrative sources corresponds to the legal requirements.

58.   In many countries, national statistical offices would be among the few organizations in a position to meet these challenges adequately. There is a potential to extend existing internationally coordinated longitudinal studies to cover more countries. Indicators of change based on longitudinal data could be increasingly used in descriptive statistical publications. Longitudinal aspect would need to be seriously considered in new data collection initiatives related to the measurement of ageing.

VI.   Recommended action

A.   Task force

59.   Create a joint task force of statisticians and policymakers to develop recommendations to statistical offices for improving and harmonising the collection and dissemination of ageing-related data. This task force should bridge the work on monitoring indicators for the UNECE ageing strategy with regular work in national statistical offices. The task force could take as its starting point the work of the expert group on the Active Ageing Index.

B.   Dashboard of indicators

60.   The outcome of this work could be a dashboard of indicators recommended to statistical offices for regular production. These indicators should rely on existing mechanisms of statistical data collection. The new requirement would be to produce and disseminate the data in the way that supports ageing-related policymaking.

C.   Consolidation of ageing-related statistics

61.   The task force should also explore modalities of how to consolidate ageing-related statistics, provide recommendations on issues such as common entry points to the various ageing-related sources on the web and ageing-related chapters in regular statistical publications, and demonstrate existing good practices.