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Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Group of Experts on Gender Statistics

Fifteenth Meeting

Geneva, 10–12 May 2023

Report of the Meeting

I. Attendance

1. The 2023 meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Group of Experts on Gender Statistics was held from 10 to 12 May in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting was attended by participants from the following countries and organizations: Armenia; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Finland; Georgia; Germany; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; North Macedonia; Poland; Portugal; Republic of Moldova; Slovenia; Sweden; Switzerland; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Ukraine; United States of America; Uzbekistan; Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat); European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE); Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); International Labour Organization (ILO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia; World Health Organization (WHO); Make Mothers Matter; and the University of Perpignan. There were 80 participants.

2. A number of participants were able to attend the meeting thanks to financial support from UN Women, and from the project “Data and statistics for more gender-responsive trade policies in Africa, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia” of the United Nations Development Account (12th tranche)..

II. Organization of the meeting

3. Helena Löf of Sweden was elected as Chair of the meeting.
4. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting:
 - (a) Gender pay gap and income inequality
 - (b) Gender digital divide
 - (c) Gender, climate and the environment
 - (d) Measuring sex and gender
 - (e) Measuring violence against women



- (f) New data sources and emerging issues
- (g) Gender and trade
- (h) New approaches to measuring unpaid work and work-life balance
- (i) Current and future work on gender statistics under the Conference of European Statisticians.

5. The following participants acted as discussants: for item (a) Jérôme Hury (Luxembourg); for item (b) Ligia Nobrega (EIGE); for item (c) Thomas Körner (Germany); for item (d) Katja Branger (Switzerland); for item (e) Ainur Dossanova (Kazakhstan); for item (f) Susana Neves (Portugal); and for item (h) Marjut Pietiläinen (Finland). Under item (e), a panel discussion was held on closing the data gap on technology-facilitated violence against women, led by Raphaëlle Rafin (UN Women).

6. The presentations and discussions at the meeting were based on papers that are available at [the UNECE website](#).

III. Recommendations for future work

7. Participants took note that the next in-person meeting of the Group of Experts on Gender Statistics is scheduled for May 2025.

8. Participants suggested the following topics for future discussion in the Group of Experts:

- (a) Measuring gender stereotypes and gender discrimination
- (b) Mainstreaming the intersectional approach in gender statistics
- (c) Gender differences among the elderly
- (d) Gender digital divide
- (e) Technology-facilitated violence against women
- (f) Measurement of wealth and poverty by sex
- (g) Dissemination and communication of gender statistics
- (h) Violence against girls.

9. The meeting recommended that the Steering Group on Gender Statistics initiates the following activities concerning topic (a) Measuring gender stereotypes and gender discrimination:

- (a) Collect information on current national practices
- (b) Develop a plan for methodological work that could be taken forward under the Conference of European Statisticians.

10. The meeting recommended that the Steering Group on Gender Statistics facilitates and coordinates the collection of national practice and expert inputs on measuring technology-facilitated violence against women in the UNECE region, to support the development of global methodological guidance on this topic.

IV. Adoption of the report of the meeting

11. The meeting adopted parts I, II, and III of this report before adjourning. A summary of the discussion in the substantive sessions of the meeting will be presented in the annex of this report, to be prepared by the Secretariat after the meeting.

Annex

Summary of substantive sessions

I. Session A: Gender pay gap and income inequality

1. This session included presentations by Eurostat, the University of Perpignan (France), Armenia and Switzerland. The discussant Jérôme Hury (Luxembourg) identified the following principal questions:

(a) What are the most important drivers for gender income inequality and what political measures could be taken to address them?

(b) Are there any methodological improvements that could improve the gender inequality measures?

(c) Is any work conducted on indicators of unpaid work, which are important for understanding gender inequality?

2. Concerning policy measures, it was considered desirable to promote those that would accelerate women's careers by enabling them access to higher positions and salaries more quickly with lower levels of education than what they need now. Another suggestion in relation to the so-called “sticky floor” is considering the experience in unpaid work and in other sectors of life, in family managing, in multitasking, in care work, to balance the experience of women and men.

3. In Switzerland, women’s participation in the labour market along their life is an especially crucial factor as many women work part-time and have career breaks when they have children. This is related to insufficient availability and high cost of childcare facilities, in spite of some improvement of the last 10 to 15 years when a government programme has been in place.

4. In relation to data sources and methodologies for calculating the gender pay gap, Eurostat referred to their use of the Structure of Earnings Survey (SES) because of its high quality and detailed data. However, as an enterprise survey, it does not provide data on household composition or caring responsibilities. This information is obtained from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) that has a module that collects information on career breaks. Since 2021 Eurostat is working towards collecting annual data about the gross monthly pay in LFS, which could provide a new or complementary basis for calculating the gender pay gap.

5. The advantages of LFS include representation of all sectors, including informal sector, and coverage of many personal characteristics. However, variables on different types of income are lacking or are difficult to obtain. Armenia does not conduct SES regularly and estimates the gender pay gap from LFS. For the Armenian labour market, informal employment is a typical situation and LFS allows measuring the impact of informality on the size of gender pay gap. Switzerland adapted the calculation of its gender overall earnings gap in order to cover the groups that are missing in the SES. For the estimation of the income of self-employed people Switzerland combine data form LFS and the Old Age and Survivors Insurance data.

6. On measuring unpaid work, Armenia pointed out the coverage of all forms of unpaid work in its LFS since 2018. In 2023 Armenia plans to conduct a time use survey, which would provide the data for all the necessary indicators of unpaid work. Switzerland regularly publishes statistics on unpaid work by gender, activity type and other sociodemographic characteristics, and calculates the monetary value of this unpaid work, to show how much it would cost if this work would be paid for. Eurostat is currently not planning to present indicators of unpaid work.

7. To analyse the relationship between the gender pay gap and women’s labour force participation, Eurostat created a theoretical indicator that takes into account the employment

rate. Women may have lower employment rates due to a self-selection effect, as they would not enter the labour market without a perspective of earning sufficiently.

8. The discussion underlined that the best way to measure the gender pay gap is using the hourly wages, to reduce the direct effect of gender differences in working time. Eurostat noted that in the future there will be attempts to develop something in LFS, in order to convert from monthly to hourly measurement.

II. Session B: Gender digital divide

9. This session was based on presentations by Belarus, Italy and CIS-STAT. The discussant was Ligia Nobrega (European Institute for Gender Equality). The following issues came up in the discussion:

10. The presentations discussed gender aspects of using information and communication technologies, based on a household survey. The results did not indicate a profound gender divide. In Italy, men outperform women in technology-based activities related to leisure whereas women are better represented among Internet users in general. In younger age-groups, men have slightly better information and communication technology (ICT) skills but there is no gender difference in Internet use.

11. In Belarus, women are more actively using the Internet than men, and concerning both access and having computers and mobile phones, these indicators are higher for women, which is consistent with the larger proportion of higher-educated and employed among women than among men in that country.

12. A question for further analysis would be: How does the use of digital technologies and its different impact on women and men relate to the access to work, but also the access to training and to education, in lifelong learning processes?

III. Session C: Gender, climate and the environment

13. This session included a presentation by Italy, in addition two papers were submitted by the International Women's Development Agency and the Women's Environment and Development Organization. The discussant Thomas Körner (Germany) summarised these two papers.

14. Migrant status was considered is an important variable in explaining gender differences in behaviours related to climate and the environment. It was pointed out that the analysis of behaviour within the couples would help better understand the taking into account the gender roles and their change. Italy expects to collect relevant data for such analyses.

15. The discussion underlined the importance of the topic and the need to considering different data and surveys. For example, in Finland, a section on environment was included in the latest publication on gender equality. Data from the Finnish Environment Institute and the communications sector, the national travel survey, consumer surveys, quality of work surveys and time use surveys were all identified as potential sources.

16. It was suggested that data on eco-friendly behaviour could be linked to administrative data. For instance, data on the use of private cars vs public transport to go to the work place could be linked to administrative data on the property of cars, to estimate for instance gas emissions. Big data could also be used. While policymakers are the first users of data on eco-friendly attitudes and behaviours, these data would be useful also for the agencies in charge of public transport.

17. Participants emphasised that representation of women in decision-making bodies on environment and climate change remains low.

IV. Session D: Measuring sex and gender

18. This session included presentation of papers by Italy, the United States, and by the chair of the UNECE Task force on sex and gender. The discussant was Katja Branger (Switzerland).

19. All three presentations demonstrated the need for data on sexual orientation and gender identity, to represent the diversity and allow measuring the discrimination of population groups. The three contributions represent the efforts made at national and international level towards this objective, the importance of sharing experience with all interested parties, advocacy stakeholders, researchers to advance and stay up to date with the current trends. The results of piloting and testing are valuable for all countries, although there are always some specific regional, national, cultural issues to take into account.

20. In Italy, the survey that measured questions on sexual orientation and gender identity was fielded after careful testing and the questions were perceived well. The survey used a non-standard sampling technique to achieve representativeness of LBGT+ groups through their associations. Involving those who are not in advocacy or activism remains a challenge and it would not be known to what extent their profiles differ from those involved with the associations.

21. In United States, the American Community Survey is introducing the measurement of sexual orientation and gender identity at the request from the Department of Justice, to meet the need for data for enforcing anti-discrimination laws. A key aspect is adapting the terminology not only for gender identity and sexual orientation categories, but also for avoiding gendered relationship categories. Discrete answer categories are combined with free response fields, allowing respondents to always report their preferred terminology. The terms and the categories in data products will be determined by what is required by the law and the requesting federal agency, ensuring at the same time that the public can identify themselves easily in the broader categories.

22. The UNECE Task force on sex and gender is elaborating and testing a proposal for countries to implement sex and gender questions in the next (2030) census round. Before making changes to the census a number of issues have to be considered, including policy relevance, public opinion acceptability, legal context, disclosure, control and quality assurance. A critical point is that education is still required about the difference between sex and gender. The decision to adopt in a census a question on gender or gender identity with more than two response options will of course remain up to the countries.

23. In Switzerland, the civil register requires the recording of the sex as male or female. From 1 January 2022, any person may request a change to the sex recorded in the civil register by submitting just a statement to that effect in person at a civil register office. The Swiss Health Survey is asking about sexual behaviour since 2007, about sexual orientation since 2017, and in 2022 included a short module on gender identity and sexual orientation.

24. Participants highlighted the need to differentiate between gender and sex and the confusion made often between the two concepts were discussed. Explaining the difference between the sex and gender concepts to the general public would take a long time and would be done in steps.

25. UN Women reported about work towards developing recommendations on measuring violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. They highlighted the sensitivity of these matters to social political contexts and the risks to certain population groups posed by data collection and emphasised the importance of national legal and socio-political frameworks around these issues.

26. ECLAC informed on its initiatives and confirmed that similar challenges are faced in Latin America. Differently from the situation reported for Italy and the United States, the experience in data collection in Colombia suggests that it would be preferable to ask the question on gender identity before sex at birth. Efforts are made to collect the data in a way that makes sense to both the minority groups, but also the general public.

V. Session E: Measuring violence against women

27. This session included presentations by Finland, Slovenia, UNFPA Turkmenistan, UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office and Italy. Ainur Dossanova of Kazakhstan led discussion.

28. A panel discussion entitled “Closing the data gap on technology-facilitated violence against women” included the perspectives of representatives from Finland, Georgia, Italy and EIGE, and was moderated by Raphaëlle Rafin of UN Women.

29. The discussant noted the importance of detailed preparation in designing and fielding surveys to measure violence against women. The Covid pandemic necessitated large and rapid shifts in collection mode, towards online and telephone methods. For this topic area, the considerations of privacy and safety made such shifts more challenging. The necessity of using these modes has enabled improvements in their use and development of protocols specific to measuring violence against women.

30. It was observed that as the field develops rapidly, there may be a risk of proliferation of methods and survey questions and a growing potential for contradiction between different tools and standards, such as those produced by international organizations, which may have an adverse effect on comparability across countries and over time. Discussion also touched on the need to analyze mode effects as the shift in mode becomes more widespread.

31. Even when standardized instruments are used, the comparability could be affected by language, willingness to identify oneself or others as a victim and to report acts of violence, availability of women's shelters, and trust in authorities. Given the high potential for cross-country differences, it is essential to make available detailed methodological reports and to highlight any potential issues, including signalling them to the custodian agencies of common survey tools such as Eurostat or WHO.

32. Participants emphasized the need for continued and active engagement at the international level to safeguard comparability and encourage use of best practices. A goal for international work could be to move towards an approach modelled on the Washington Group approach, in which there is a gold standard for a question set and methodology, with some flexibility to allow for differing circumstances and priorities.

33. Discussion also considered the matter of safety when surveys on violence against women are conducted online. 'Quick exit' buttons are employed in Finland and Slovenia to enable respondents to leave the survey rapidly, but this still carries risks, particularly for certain population groups whose understanding of such features may be limited, such as older women, as well as people in lower socioeconomic groups who may be using devices that are shared by other household members. The particular challenges of privacy protection, safeguarding and consent when surveying adolescent girls were noted.

34. There were questions from participants regarding the sampling frames and means of contacting respondents. Even Finland and Slovenia, with comprehensive population registers, noted challenges such as incorrect telephone numbers and a lack of email addresses. Other participants mentioned that in their countries, identifying and reaching potential respondents would be a significant challenge for online surveys. Particular steps need to be taken to protect privacy and ensure safety with VAW surveys: for example, motivation letters sent in conventional mail must be worded carefully to avoid drawing unwanted attention to the subject matter of the survey. Particular care must be taken in the event that passwords for surveys are sent via email.

35. It was noted that the availability of methodological tools and other guidance in Russian facilitates their uptake among member States in which Russian is spoken. Many such materials, including those prepared by UNECE and by kNOwVAW, are already freely available in Russian. Specific request for translation of other materials could be made, and may be considered by international organizations if sufficient need is identified.

A. Panel discussion: Closing the data gap on technology-facilitated violence against women

36. A panel discussion explored the emerging topic of technology-facilitated violence (TFV) against women, with discussion centring on a core point that 'technology-facilitated' is not a synonym for 'online', and that such violence is not limited to social media abuse by strangers but encompasses a very wide range of acts on a continuum. It covers technology-facilitated violence perpetrated by current and former intimate partners; public and private abuse; anonymous harassment; and many other forms of violence. The discussion revealed a great deal of ongoing work on both national and international levels to understand and measure the prevalence, characteristics and impacts of such violence.

37. Panellists and participants focused on three main areas: (a) the considerations to be made in the choice of survey or other data source; (b) the relevance of different denominators for measurements; and (c) the choice of questions asked to understand TFV.

38. Questions about TFV can be added to existing surveys, including victimization surveys, surveys focusing on information and communications technology, dedicated VAW surveys, or surveys on other topics such as quality of employment. They can also be fielded in dedicated surveys on the topic of TFV. Some data can also be gleaned from administrative sources. Each has pros and cons, including cost, limitations of the respondent sample, and particularities of concepts and definitions. Panellists described the range of ways in which they have so far gathered information on the topic.

39. The choice of denominator can have a substantial impact on the resulting indicators, for instance by referring to all people; women only; only those who are regular users of the Internet, or a specific online platform; or those who are or have been employed. The panellists noted that only those who use the internet can experience online abuse directly, but that not all forms of TFV are experienced online. Furthermore, being a witness to or simply being aware of TFV can have impacts, for example in the case of children being fearful of cyber-bullying. Discussion covered the tendency to avoid or leave platforms on which TFV is experienced or observed. While this is a potential strategy for avoiding violence, it might also have the effect of widening existing gender digital divides.

40. Many factors influence decisions about what questions to ask. Statistical concerns such as comparability and stable time series are important, as is flexibility to incorporate new concepts to capture new and growing phenomena. It was pointed out that the online nature of much TFV makes it especially prone to having cross-border and cross-cultural characteristics, making it especially important to foster international cooperation both in tackling TFV and in measuring and understanding it. It was also noted that national legislation regarding the definitions of various forms of TFV, of what constitutes a crime, and on the protection of free speech, can all impact data collection. Where particular acts are defined as crimes it may be easier to dedicate resources to measuring them as this creates a mandate for such measurement.

VI. Session F: New data sources and emerging issues

41. In the first part of this session there were presentations from representatives of Italy, Georgia, and EIGE. A second part of the session included presentations from representatives of UNIDO and FAO (two presentations). Susana Neves of Portugal led the discussion for both parts.

42. Summarising the papers in the first part of the session, the discussant noted a common theme in the need to go beyond mere production of sex-disaggregated indicators, instead progressing to improved presentation and communication; analysis and interpretation; and a shift towards gender rather than only sex as a variable for disaggregation, where available.

43. The three papers all highlighted the importance of addressing data gaps. A complete picture of gender inequalities will depend on filling such gaps, whether through reusing of using differently the data sources that already exist; linking diverse sources; developing new surveys; or making novel use of other sources. The growing need for exploration and

integration of multiple sources, including large unstructured datasets, was observed as a common theme.

44. A crucial point emerging from the presentations was the need to consider intersecting inequalities, rather than viewing gender inequalities in isolation, in order to better understand it in context. At a basic level this includes the intersection of sex and gender, but also encompasses a wide range of personal and social characteristics, including socioeconomic status, household characteristics and parenthood. Analysis is enriched by considering all of these variables when they are available.

45. Discussion touched on the drivers and mandates for using innovative approaches. In the case of Italy, an agreement with the relevant national governmental department provides a mandate for using innovative approaches to develop an integrated system of statistics on violence against women. Other countries can take inspiration from this as they search for appropriate avenues in which to explore novel approaches and develop experimental statistics.

46. It was noted that as multiple sources are integrated, the importance of detailed metadata grows. In the area of gender statistics, it is particularly important to ensure that metadata are as gender-sensitive as possible, or to not where and why this is not possible.

47. Working with such sources brings risks of changing cost, availability and data structure, all having the potential to compromise sustainability. Furthermore, there is the challenge of extracting meaningful information from a large mass of data, ensuring that there is an actionable message in the information being produced. This is not self-evident when transforming social media posts about VAW into statistics about VAW; it requires careful reflection and experimentation.

48. Participants discussed the changing capacities and capabilities required of NSOs to be able to process large novel data sources. New competencies in data science are now becoming well developed in universities, and human resources systems need to invest wisely to exploit this. Subject-matter understanding is also essential, however, to ensure that the information extracted has meaning and relevance.

49. In the second part of the session, international organizations presented research on specific areas in which gender inequality is persistent or in which gender has typically not been an area of focus. The discussant noted that new topics in gender studies are always emerging, since inequalities between women and men are far from disappearing. On the drivers of inequality, the presenters observed that their analyses revealed persistent norms and stereotypes that affect the expected roles of women and men. It was proposed that going beyond merely 'gender sensitive', to 'gender transformative', is necessary in order to shake up and change norms that hold women back. It was pointed out that attitudinal questions on stereotypes were developed through expert and stakeholder consultation and pass through cognitive testing.

50. A key point emerging from the session was that sometimes there is significant potential in utilizing existing data sources in a new way, either through different types of analysis or through integration with other sources. Not every new research or policy question requires a new survey.

VII. Session G. Gender and trade

51. UNECE reported on the session on gender and trade statistics held at the capacity development workshop before the expert meeting. At the workshop, the conceptual introduction given by UNCTAD, followed by five country experiences from Tajikistan, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Finland. The promising perspective for compiling gender-in-trade statistics is by linking enterprise level data from sources on trade and with data from business registers or business statistics surveys, without the need for new data collection. Georgia and Kazakhstan have carried out pilot studies and expressed commitment to pursue this direction.

52. The workshop report is available on [the UNECE website](#).

VIII. Session H: New approaches to measuring unpaid work and work-life balance

53. This session included presentations by Germany, Sweden, ILO and ECLAC. The discussant was Marjut Pietiläinen (Finland).

54. In the discussion, it was highlighted that the Covid pandemic had no effect on the distribution of work between men and women as measured with LFS in Germany. In the pandemic, the methodology of LFS changed from a computer-assisted personal interview to self-completion on the web, without proper methodological preparation, which might have some impact on the comparability of results.

55. The new time use of Finland the difference between women and men in the time spent on housework had become equal. Gainful employment decreased for men, and time used for domestic work increased whereas a decrease was recorded for women in time used for both activities.

56. Sweden changed the time-use survey methodology as the testing established that even the light diary would not bring enough responses and direct questions were asked on time used on certain activities. ILO pointed out that the modular approach for measuring time use developed for LFS cannot substitute for doing a full time use survey. The LFS module can be useful in countries that have never done a time-use survey or that do not have the resources to do it again. Demonstrating the usefulness of time use survey results for policymaking and specifying the periodicity of such survey in legal or programme documents can facilitate decisions on their funding.

57. To understand the gender differences in contributing to household chores and unpaid work for adulthood, information on the time use of children is relevant as they play a role in childcare and household chores. Germany collects time use data on children starting from age 10, Sweden from 18 on and Italy from age 3.

58. Care needs to be taken in publishing the time use survey results as they may not be easy to interpret by the public. And are often based on a small number of responses in specific categories. It was suggested to pay attention in the analysis to the age difference of women and men and on the mental burden of the different activities.

IX. Current and future work on gender statistics under the Conference of European Statisticians

59. UNECE reminded the work on gender statistics done over the last few years under the Conference of European Statisticians, with guidance from the Steering group on gender statistics. This has led to publications on measuring the impact of the COVID pandemic on women and men; measuring intra household power and decision making; communicating gender statistics; and on valuing unpaid household service work. A repository and networking platform on gender identity has been established.

60. The discussion on future work led to the recommendations presented in section III of the main part of this report.