

Using Administrative and Secondary Sources for Official Statistics

A Handbook of Principles and Practices

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Foreword

Statistical organisations around the world are coming under increasing pressure to improve the efficiency of the statistical production process, and particularly to make savings in costs and staff resources. At the same time, there are growing political demands to reduce the burden placed on the respondents to statistical surveys. This is particularly the case where respondents are businesses, as many governments see reducing bureaucracy as a key measure to support and promote business development.

Given these pressures, statisticians are increasingly being forced to consider alternatives to the traditional survey approach as a way of gathering data. Perhaps the most obvious answer is to see if usable data already exist elsewhere. Many non-statistical organisations collect data in various forms, and although these data are rarely direct substitutes for those collected via statistical surveys, they often offer possibilities, sometimes through the combination of multiple sources, to replace, fully or partially, direct statistical data collection.

The degree of use of administrative sources in the statistical production process varies considerably from country to country, from those that have developed fully functioning register-based statistical systems, to those that are just starting to consider this approach.

Although several subject specific texts exist, there have, until now, been no general, international methodological guidelines to help those in the early stages of using administrative data. This handbook aims to fill that gap. It builds on material developed over ten years in the context of an

international training course on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes. That course has now been delivered over ten times, to audiences of official statisticians from throughout Europe, Western and Central Asia, and North Africa.

Each time the course has been run, it has been improved and enhanced by sharing experiences with, and receiving feedback from participants. It has also benefited greatly from the input of various expert guest presenters from Statistics Finland and the British Office for National Statistics.

Mr Steven Vale, UNECE, Course leader

Notes and Acknowledgements

1) Note on References

This handbook includes many references to other papers, web sites and publications. To help those who want to follow-up these references, Internet addresses are given wherever possible. These were all checked at the time of writing, but that is no guarantee that they will still work at the time of reading. If the reader finds a broken link, please report it to support.stat@unece.org.

2) Note on Exercises

The exercises at the end of Chapters 6 and 7 are taken from the course on which this handbook was based. They are included here as practical examples to reinforce the theory presented in those chapters.

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