

Survey design: Are we asking what we think we're asking?

Asia-Pacific Stats Café, 14 March 2022

Concept Note

Despite increased interest in alternative data sources, household surveys remain a vital component of national statistical systems and a key source for producing official statistics. In measuring the progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), household surveys are the primary source for one-third of indicators, cutting across 13 out of 17 SDGs. This underpins the importance of implementing strategies to improve the quality of data acquired through surveys. In addition to other design elements, questionnaires play a critical role in communicating statistical ideas to respondents and capturing high-quality data.

Testing statistical concepts and questions used in labour force surveys is one way of ensuring data producers can operationalize statistical standards and produce reliable and accurate data. The ILO uses qualitative testing - cognitive interviews, focus groups, and rapid ethnographic assessments – to enhance the [generic labour force survey questionnaire](#) and in development of a light module to measure time use.

This Stats Café will share recent experiences from two projects that have been conducting qualitative tests in India, Peru and Uganda. The session will explore:

- Objectives - which testing methods are useful for survey development and why?
- Benefits - what comes from these tests and how can the findings be used?
- Costs - what kind of skills, time and resources are needed for such testing?

The session should be beneficial for official statisticians who are involved in designing household surveys. Participants engaged in questionnaire adaptation and development with or without recent experience in qualitative testing should find the session informative. Those who have conducted similar testing are encouraged to share their own experiences and lessons learned. Those with no or limited experience will get an insight into what is involved and how testing might support better data production in their country or area of work.

Agenda

Moderator: Afsaneh Yazdani, ESCAP Statistics Division

- **Welcome remarks**, Ms. Rachael Beaven, Director, Statistics Division, ESCAP
- **Using qualitative testing for better gender data**, Jessica Gardner and Samantha Watson, ILO Department of Statistics
- **What were they thinking? Using cognitive interviews to test if questions work**, Richard Ssewakiryanga, Centre for Basic Research (CBR), Uganda
- **“What people do, what people say they do”: Bridging the divide with REA**, Neetha N., Centre for Women’s Development Studies (CWDS), India
- **Experience of INEI, the Peru National Statistics Office: Lessons learned from cognitive interviewing** (pre-recorded video)
- **Q&A and discussion**
- **Conclusion and wrap-up**, Peter Buwembo, Specialist Labour Statistician, ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia

Related publications and links:

Publications on earlier rounds of qualitative and quantitative testing:

- [ILO LFS pilot studies – Cognitive interviewing tests: Methodology, process and outcomes](#)
- [ILO LFS pilot studies – Experimental field tests: Methodology, process and outcomes](#)
- [Measuring Women and Men’s Work: Main findings from a Joint ILO and World Bank Study in Sri Lanka](#)

Further information on the methodological work of the ILO:

- [LFS modular time use measurement project](#)
- [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\) research and development](#)
- [ILO generic labour force survey questionnaire](#)
- [ILO Working Group on the Revision of Informality Statistics Standards](#)
