# Asia-Pacific Stats Café on "Balancing Access and Confidentiality: The Role of Synthetic Data in Official Statistics"

**16th September 2024, 14:00-15:15 Bangkok time**

**Link for registration:** https://forms.office.com/e/Zm7FVwBKJU

**Link to join the meeting:** Join the meeting now

## Concept Note

Producers of official statistics encounter the complex challenge of balancing data access with confidentiality. They must safeguard the confidentiality of individuals and businesses while addressing the increasing demand for detailed datasets. Traditionally, national statistical offices have granted trusted users, such as academics, access to micro-level data while providing aggregate statistical tables to other users. However, this approach is not a perfect solution, as it restricts the level of detail available to many users, and the process of vetting and managing trusted users is time-consuming and does not guarantee data security and confidentiality.

An alternative solution is the use of synthetic data, which replicates the properties of the original dataset and yields comparable insights, thereby significantly reducing the risk of disclosing sensitive information.

This Stats Café session will explore the potential of synthetic data and how some countries have used or considered the use of synthetic data in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Agenda

*Moderator*: Afsaneh Yazdan, ESCAP

- **Opening remarks:** Rachael Beaven (3 mins)
- **Presentation 1: Introduction to Synthetic Data and the Guide,** Christopher Jones, UNECE (10-15 mins)
- **Presentation 2: Thailand** (10-15 mins)
- **Presentation 3: New Zealand** (10-15 mins)
- **Presentation 4: Singapore** (10-15 mins)
- **Q & A and discussion**
- **Closing remarks:** Rachael Beaven (2 mins)

## Relevant links:

- **UNECE Publication**: *Synthetic Data for official statistics*
- **Article on synthetic data** (aimed at non-technical readers): *Could synthetic data redefine the way we share statistical insights?*

## Opening and closing remarks

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| **Rachael Beaven**<br><br>Director, Statistics Division, ESCAP |  | Rachael Beaven has over thirty years of experience in government statistics, in particular data preparation and analysis. She has also worked extensively with governments, multilateral agencies and the statistical community, most notably through the United Nations Statistics Division, ECA, ESCAP, World Bank and Paris21.<br><br>Ms. Beaven has provided a wide range of technical support, from improving economic and financial statistics to estimating local population using geospatial data. She is one of the founders of the Inclusive Data Charter, launched at the 2018 High-Level Political Forum, to mobilize political commitments and to advance inclusive and disaggregated data. Ms. Beaven also led a programme on monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals with the United Nations Statistics Division and established a data science hub with the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom to explore the use of data science, in particular geospatial as well as big data, to monitor progress.<br><br>Ms. Beaven holds Master's degrees in Statistical Applications in Business and Government as well as Business Administration, and a Bachelor's degree in Geography and Geology. |

## Moderator

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| **Afsaneh Yazdani**<br><br>Statistician, Statistics Division, ESCAP |  | Afsaneh Yazdani is a Statistician in the Population and Social Statistics Section of the Statistics Division at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). She currently leads regional initiatives aimed at enhancing the use of administrative data for population censuses and data integration.<br><br>Before joining ESCAP in 2018, Afsaneh spent over two decades at the Statistical Centre of Iran, where she served in multiple capacities. She has extensive experience in official statistics, with a focus on survey methodology, censuses, and register-based statistics. Afsaneh holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Statistics. |

## Speakers

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| **Christopher Jones**<br>Statistician, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe |  | Christopher Jones is a Statistician at the Statistical Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), currently working on the modernization of official statistics, and based in Geneva. He has worked in a variety of statistical and analytical roles over the past 18 years, both within United Nations entities and before that for the UK Civil Service, where he assisted in establishing a new series of statistical publications. |
| **Alistair Ramsden**<br>Senior Design Analyst, Stats NZ |  | Alistair Ramsden is a senior design analyst at Stats NZ. He works mainly on confidentiality / statistical disclosure control (SDC) methods, including synthetic data methods, as well as a range of other general statistical business processing model (GSBPM) related methods. He has worked in both the public sector in statistics and evaluation roles, and in the private sector in accounting and business operations roles. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Auckland University (1993), including studies in ethics, logic, epistemology, legal studies, history, and a range of applied mathematics subjects. |
| **Dr Andy Chiang**<br>Chief Technology Officer and Group Director, Singapore Department of Statistics |  | Dr. Andy Chiang serves as the Chief Technology Officer and Group Director at the Singapore Department of Statistics. In this role, he oversees the department's digital services, transformation initiatives, and analytics resources. He also manages the Trusted Centre, which supplies core administrative datasets for analysis and service delivery to various government agencies.<br><br>In his earlier tenure, Dr. Chiang made significant contributions to enhance business surveys through more efficient sampling design and integrating survey data with administrative data. These efforts resulted in increased accuracy, reduced sample sizes/respondent burden, and more timely releases of short-term and annual business statistics. Additionally, he had established the Anonymised Microdata Access Programme, which enabled government and academic researchers to access microdata for the research of socio-economic issues and government policies. Dr. Chiang also held the position of Chief Information Officer, where he was responsible for managing the department's IT resources, infrastructure and systems.<br><br>Before joining the Singapore Department of Statistics, Dr. Chiang was a Statistics professor at the National |

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| | | University of Singapore. He had taught both undergraduate/graduate courses and received multiple teaching excellence awards. His research contributions include authoring and co-authoring papers in scientific journals, book/encyclopedia, serving as an associate editor for the American Statistician journal, and invited speaker at scientific conferences. Additionally, Dr. Chiang provided statistical consultancy to multinational corporations and government agencies. |
| **Ms. Taweesap Srikwan**<br>Director of Social Information Group, National Statistical Office of Thailand |  | **Ms. Taweesap Srikwan** is an experienced statistician currently serving as the Director of the Social Information Group at the National Statistical Office of Thailand. She leads the integration of social, natural resources, and environmental data while promoting data-driven decision-making and supporting government agencies in developing data catalogues. |