

PRODUCING SDG
INDICATOR 5.4.1:
BASIC GUIDE FOR
CARICOM NATIONAL
STATISTICS OFFICES
SURVEY
COMPONENT



DEBORAH BUDLENDER 2019



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INTRODUCTION

Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have presented countries with the challenge of producing estimates for a range of indicators that many of them have not, to date, been producing. SDG 5.4.1 is one such indicator, and is of special importance from a gender perspective.

The official metadata define SDG 5.4.1 and the related target and goal as follows:¹

- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- Target 5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;
- Indicator 5.4.1: Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.

The target and indicator recognize the key role that the distribution of responsibility for unpaid care work plays in determining whether there is gender equality in a country. The metadata elaborate further on the definition, concepts and methodology. The elaboration highlights the challenges involved in producing measurements for the indicator, and also indicates that there are different ways in which this can be done.

The SDGs have not been the first agreement requiring Caribbean countries to measure unpaid care work. The outcome document of the 10th Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) Regional Conference on Women in Latin

America and the Caribbean held in 2017 required the development of:

...instruments, especially time-use surveys, for periodically measuring unpaid work performed by women and men in order to make such work visible and recognize its value, to incorporate their results into the System of National Accounts and to design economic and social policies accordingly (Agreement XXIII, cited in Stuart, 2014: 23).

Nevertheless, currently, none of the Caribbean countries has an official system in place to collect data that can be used for this indicator. In 2014, Stuart noted that the Caribbean was the only region in the world that had not yet implemented a full-scale time-use survey. Further, very few of the countries in the region have conducted even limited one-off initiatives, whether inside or outside government, that produce data relevant to this indicator.

UN Women is therefore committed to supporting the region in:

- Adapting for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) context a survey methodology to measure unpaid care work in line with SDG indicator 5.4.1; and
- Developing an accompanying methodology for a qualitative component.

As the first step in this process, UN Women commissioned an international time-use expert to develop a paper to guide the work. The paper, *Producing SDG indicator 5.4.1: Guidance for Caribbean countries*, was reviewed by a specially convened Regional Advisory Group. This group brought together experts from UN Women, regional bodies, national gender machineries in the region, national statistics offices and academic institutions.

After discussion, the Regional Advisory Group agreed that a small set of stylized questions relating to unpaid care work should be included in the core set of census questions for the 2020 round of censuses in the region. This approach will allow for disaggregation by age and sex, as specified in the metadata for SDG indicator 5.4.1, as the census routinely collects both these variables. It will also allow for disaggregation by location to the extent that location is recorded in the census. Further disaggregation that goes beyond what is specified in the metadata will also be possible where the census captures data for the relevant cross-tabulation.

The census-based approach should fulfil countries' requirements in respect of the SDG indicator, but will not provide the basis for the rich analysis that a full-scale time-use survey can allow. However, the census-based approach can highlight issues that need further exploration and discussion by providing data that would not otherwise be available.

To prepare for a future in which many of the countries will have enhanced resources and statistical capacity, the Regional Advisory Group resolved that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and UN Women should meanwhile support a few of the countries to conduct a full diary-based time-use survey. This could be done as a stand-alone survey. Alternatively, if the countries concerned have household-based surveys, a time-use module could be added.

This guide

This guide is intended for managers and officials in national statistics offices who have responsibility for the 2020 census round. It focuses on the proposal in respect of the stylized questions for this census round. It does not provide guidance in respect of a fuller time-use survey or module. It also does not provide guidance on analysis and reporting on the data collected.

The recommendation is that countries follow the proposed approach as closely as possible so as to enhance comparability, as well as learnings in terms of methodology and analysis, across countries.

The proposed approach is in alignment with the CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS), which advocates for standardization and harmonization of conceptual frameworks, methods and tools for official statistics across member countries.

The guide is intended to provide technical rather than theoretical or conceptual guidance. The latter can be found in the publication *Producing SDG indicator 5.4.1: Guidance for Caribbean countries*, referred to above.

The proposed approach can also be used in labour force and other household surveys if a full-scale diary-based time-use module is not possible. The questions do not need to be asked every year as time-use patterns generally change slowly.

¹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-05-04-01.pdf>

GUIDANCE

The proposed questions

The SDG indicator covers two components of unpaid care work: household maintenance (including housework and shopping, among others) and care of persons in the household. It does not cover the third component—namely, care for members of the community beyond the household and volunteer work in the community. This third component has been found in other countries to account for a very small proportion of all unpaid care work performed. There is also more disagreement as to what the component entails than in respect of the first two components. For example, some see attendance at political meetings as part of the component. The Jamaica Survey on Living Conditions included religious activities such as fasting.

We therefore propose that the core questions for the 2020 round of censuses cover only the first two components. However, we substitute

“family” for “household” in the second component so as to include care of children by non-resident parents, care of elderly parents living apart from their children and care provided by grandparents, aunts and the like for children living in a separate household. This adjustment seems especially appropriate given the relatively small average size of households in many Caribbean countries as well as the large proportion of children living with only one parent.

The following questions are proposed, with responses to be provided in full hours. The question on fuel and water can be omitted if no households rely on collection of fuel and water to meet household needs. It should, however, be included if there is any uncertainty as to whether this is the case for some households in the country.

The framing “last week” is chosen because this appears to be the framing used for asking labour force questions in the 2010 round of censuses.

Last week, how many hours did spend doing the following activities?
(a) doing unpaid housework, yard work or home maintenance for their household or family? <i>Some examples include preparing meals, washing up, washing the car, doing laundry, cutting the grass, shopping, paying household bills</i>
(b) looking after one or more of the household or family’s children, without pay ? <i>Some examples include bathing or playing with young children, taking children to or from sports activities or helping them with homework, talking with children about their problems, supervising children, etc.</i>
(c) providing unpaid care or assistance to adults, e.g. older people or those with disabilities? <i>Some examples include providing personal care to family members, visiting family members needing care, talking with them on the telephone, helping them with shopping, banking or taking medication, etc.</i>
(d) collecting fuel or water for household use?

The questionnaire should include a further question, as follows:

Were the questions on unpaid work answered by the person doing the activities? Yes/No

If the framing for the labour force questions in the 2020 round differs, both the framing and the reference week for the unpaid work questions should change accordingly. Similarly, if the labour force questions are posed and responses recorded for each day separately, the same should be done for the unpaid work questions.

For example:

- If the census questionnaire asks what work each member of the household did in the “past (calendar) week”, the unpaid work questions should also ask about the “past (calendar) week”.
- If the census questionnaire asks what work each member of the household did in the “past seven days”, the unpaid work questions should ask about the “past seven days”.
- If the census questionnaire asks what work each member of the household did in the week 11 May to 17 May inclusive, the unpaid work questions should also ask about this specified week.

The second framing above is likely to result in the most accurate estimates, as the person’s memory of the most recent days should be better than their memory in respect of days further in the past.

More generally, respondents need to know whether to include time spent on travel related to an activity (e.g. taking a child to the clinic or to playschool) and time spent on waiting (e.g. at the train station).

Stylized-type questions are ideally administered by trained fieldworkers, who can assist respondents in understanding the scope of the pre-set activities and guide them in their estimations if necessary.

More specific proposals include the following:

- All household members aged 10 years and above should be covered for the time-use questions.

- The number of hours for each of the three activities should be reported in full or half hours rather than in the brackets used in Canada.
- Administration of the questionnaire should be timed to avoid coinciding with any unusual period, such as Easter, Ramadan, Christmas, Diwali, Carnival or school holidays.

In countries where there are clearly defined seasons and where a significant proportion of the population is engaged in agriculture, the time of the year in which a time-use survey is conducted can affect results. Some Caribbean countries do have a relatively large share of the population engaged in agriculture. Stark seasonal variations are, however, not common in the region. Further, the impact on unpaid care work is likely to be smaller than that on time spent on “economic” work. The time of the year in which the census is conducted is thus not an important consideration.

Ensuring quality data

Special training on these questions will be needed as few, if any, of the fieldworkers will have experience with unpaid care work. The training should cover:

- *The basic concept of unpaid work, and unpaid care work in particular, and the types of activity that fall within each category:* The questions already have examples that can guide fieldworkers and that they can use to guide interviewees. The training should include an exercise in which the fieldworkers themselves answer the questions for each day of the past week, listing all the activities they did in each category. The trainer should check all the lists and discuss any aspects needing clarity with the group as a whole.
- *How to ask the questions:* The training should include roleplaying of the questions, with trainees encouraged to roleplay specific

difficulties that may arise. Fieldworkers should be shown how to assist interviewees in calculating the time spent, for example by going through the days of the week one at a time, emphasizing that activities are likely to differ from day to day, especially over weekends. Fieldworkers can also prompt gently on likely activities. For example, if there is a young child in the household, adults could be prompted about time spent caring for the child. However, trainees should also understand that they must not put words into the interviewee's mouth, and must also not assume which activities a particular person may or may not do.

- *What activities are excluded:* Fieldworkers must be clear that any time that is remunerated should not be counted. This means that time spent on activities by a paid domestic worker is not counted, even if the question covers such activities. It also means that a family member who is paid to care for a child or to babysit should not count this time.
- *How to deal with travel:* Fieldworkers need to understand that the time spent on any travel—regardless of mode—associated with an

activity counts as time spent on that particular activity.

- *Simultaneous activities:* All the time spent on a particular activity must be counted, even if the person was doing something else at the same time. For example, a woman who sells food at a roadside stall may take her child with her in the absence of available childcare services. She may well then be spending time caring for the child at the same time as selling food.
- *Passive care:* Fieldworkers must understand that time spent on passive care, or supervision, must be counted.
- *Who should respond:* The questions should be asked in respect of all household members aged 10 years and above. If at all possible, as with labour force questions, the person concerned should answer the questions themselves. This may require some repeat visits to the household, or making an appointment, or asking these particular questions through a phone call. The need for extra visits, appointments and phone calls can be minimized by timing visits when household members are most likely to be at home.

