

Methodological note

EU-SILC GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE 2020 DATA COLLECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS

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UNIT F4 — INCOME AND LIVING CONDITIONS; QUALITY OF LIFE

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Introduction

The main issue for EU-SILC data collection, related to COVID-19, is that statistical offices are not able to conduct face-to-face interviews (PAPI, CAPI) with households. In most of the countries, PAPI and CAPI are the main (or only) data collection modes for EU-SILC. In addition, some countries requested clarifications of certain variables during these special circumstances.

Moreover, evaluating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on household living conditions is crucial, therefore Eurostat would like to propose collecting the variables on 'Change in income compared to previous year' and its main reason, on a voluntary basis.

When new benefits have been introduced nationally to reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 it is recommended that countries consult Eurostat in order to ensure harmonised and comparable across countries, classification of benefits.

Finally, Eurostat, together with the countries, will investigate the possibility to add a small voluntary module on the impact of COVID-19 on 2021 EU-SILC data collection.

Cancellation of face-to-face interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic

CHANGE THE MODE OF DATA COLLECTION

In response to the limitations posed by COVID-19 in conducting face-to-face interviews, countries mainly adopt two main strategies or a combination of the two:

- postpone/prolong the fieldwork;
- move from PAPI and CAPI to CATI or CAWI interview modes.

The general recommendation is that countries, when possible, should move to a non-contact mode of data collection (CATI or CAWI), and, if needed, to prolong the data collection period.

DATA COLLECTION FROM 1ST WAVE PANEL SAMPLE

In most of the cases, when moving from face-to-face interviews to telephone interviews, there is no availability of the telephone numbers for the 1st wave respondents. Based on the measures already taken to solve this problem, we would like to outline several best practices to overcome the issue that are already used by some from countries:

- sending letters by post to the 1st year sample persons and asking them to contact statistical offices and provide phone numbers;
- oversampling the sample for the 1st wave of the survey;
- prolonging the 4th year panel (or the last panel, if there are more than 4) of the 2019 survey, in case the 1st wave households in 2020 are not reachable or the response rates are very low.
- investigate and use administrative sources more;
- cooperate with other national institutions to obtain the telephone numbers for the 1st wave of the panel.

Additional clarifications for the EU-SILC variables

Eurostat recommends collecting information as it is at the time of the interview for variables with the reference period 'current'. Eurostat has been informed that, in some countries, the reference periods have been interpreted as "before the crisis - as usual", in particular for education and child-care variables. This interpretation for these specific variables is accepted by Eurostat. Moreover, for ad hoc module variables, the "last month" could be adapted to "typical month". Acknowledging the varying interpretation of the reference periods and timing of the fieldwork, Eurostat would ask this metadata to be provided in the associated Quality Report according to the template that will be circulated in due time.

Regarding the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the modalities of variables, Eurostat in general suggests putting the reasons connected with COVID-19 in "other reason", only if the already given categories do not cover the situation.

Optional COVID-19 related variable for EU-SILC 2020 data collection

Eurostat recommends including in the EU SILC 2020 data collection and transmission to Eurostat four voluntary variables on change in income compared to the previous year and reasons for any change. Three of those variables have been collected in year 2019 and will also be collected annually, starting from 2021. Consequently, it will allow comparisons over time. Moreover, information on whether this change is an outcome of the COVID-19 crisis could be collected.

The variable on change in income has already been included in the national questionnaires of some countries. It could be collected from respondents directly, however, if it is not possible (as the country has already finished fieldwork or cannot modify the questionnaire) the answer could be derived based on nationally asked current income variables or administrative registers.