Background

• ILO has gathered information from more than 70 countries about impacts of COVID-19 on their labour market statistics operations (not data) and responses to the challenge

• Impacts and responses vary substantially with country context, systems, capacities and infrastructure

• Difficult balance to maintain between continuity, quality and responsiveness

• However, there are patterns and commonalities which can be identified
Impact on field operations
Impact on field operations

Mode of data collection

Mode of data collection used largely determines impact

- Face-to-face interviewing (PAPI and CAPI) suspended by most
  - 80% of respondents to an ILO survey in 2018 use these as main mode
- Some suspending collection until later date (particularly if periodic survey)
- Those with regular collection generally trying to move collection to telephone interviewing (CATI or PAPI by telephone)
- Challenge depends on existing systems, infrastructure and availability of contact details (e.g. published telephone numbers)
Level of impact by mode

Currently using PAPI (if continuing)

- Attempts to quickly moving to telephone interviewing with existing interviewers
- Potentially major difficulties with contact information (e.g. published telephone numbers)
- Also difficulties with recruiting households (lack of face-to-face contact, listing operations no longer possible etc)
- Systems/processes not established so many challenges such as data entry tools and processing

Currently using CAPI

- Many of the same challenges as those with PAPI
- At least systems for transmission and processing of data exist
Level of impact by mode - contd

Currently using CATI (and CAWI for some)

- Relatively lower impact but still problems
- Restrictions still having some practical impacts but operations are able to continue
- Some fully using these modes already and report little impact (especially if interviewers working from home)
- CATI sometimes having to move location (e.g. call centres shutting) creating some logistical and technological challenges (e.g. ability to interview from home)
- Where 1st interview normally face-to-face – concerns about co-operation rates and obtaining contact information for subsequent interviews

COMMON ISSUES FOR ALL:

- Major disruption in normal working arrangements, technological challenges for remote working, co-ordination challenges etc
- Nearly all concerned with impact on response rates
  - May be easier to contact some, but others may be less available (e.g. health workers, police etc.)
- All have to adjust working practices, and potentially retraining for interviewers if mode is changing
- Some attempting to implement CAWI but development required (or were already starting) and care needed on representativity etc.
Treatment of different situations reported by respondents

Countries asking about how to treat cases of people on temporary layoff or others impacted

- ILO developing some guidance on this
- Core definitions/standards will not change but clarifications can be provided, for example:
  - People on undetermined duration of lay off, possibly receiving benefits from a different government scheme.
  - People not seeking because of restrictions
- Additional indicators and analysis critical
- Countries also giving updated instructions and training to interviewers
Change in data analysis – existing data

Additional data analysis

Major concern about possible impacts of lower response rates on data analysis – loss in data quality, breaks in series etc.

► Also demands to produce data which shows labour market impacts
► Many countries supplementing existing analysis of dimensions likely to show changes or of increased interest/relevance, for example:
  ► Reasons for absence (lay off), duration of absence, continued receipt of income, working arrangements, working time, reasons for changes in situation, reasons for not seeking work, informality
► Need to review existing questionnaire content and identify useful information already available which may show impacts below level of headline indicators
► E.g. Australia – February 2020 detailed Labour Force release

https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6291.0.55.001Main%20Features3Feb%202020?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6291.0.55.001&issue=Feb%202020&num=&view=

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Change in data analysis – possible changes in questionnaire content

Some countries planning to cut content to maintain response levels (if changing mode in particular)

Others planning to introduce new content of relevance

- ILO developing some guidance on this
- While additional analysis of existing data will be valuable it may not directly capture COVID-19 related impacts
- Some additional questions of different types can be valuable (e.g. additional information on absences, changes in work arrangements, working time etc.)
- Also possible need for retrospective questions if interviewing disrupted – needs to be done carefully
Other issues

- Additional focus on administrative data where available and relevant
  - Any new Government schemes will be relevant to track
  - Existing admin data can be very useful but clear reporting needed on interpretation (possible differences to LFS)
  - Can be highly valuable – high frequency, detailed etc. However may be difficulty with access due to restrictions in some contexts

- Some countries planning supplementary data collection

**EXAMPLES:**
- Parallel survey when fieldwork restarts – retrospective questions – in addition to normal LFS
- CAWI only survey alongside LFS to provide more summary and supplementary data (care needed in design and interpretation)
Some general conclusions

- Impact is heavily dependent on mode of data collection, current resources, and capacities, plus country context
- Lesser impact where CATI/CAWI being used (subject to available telephone numbers) and where design of questionnaire is more flexible (modular)
  - perhaps a long term lesson of need to move to these modes, panel designs also helpful in delaying some impacts
- However, LFS not designed to be rapid reaction source of information in general
- Given the challenges it will be an important (and perhaps impossible) achievement to maintain operations, with data continuity and quality
- Any additional analysis of existing data will be an important contribution
- Additional content, retrospective questions and/or parallel surveys could be useful but need to be done carefully
- Also - major communications challenge, data may not move as generally anticipated – how to deal with this?
ILO support

- ILO clearly recognises the unprecedented challenge being faced by countries
- Working on sharing of practices and responses – will continue this
- Working to clarify interpretation of standards, specific cases and analytical approach using existing data, along with communications
- Developing guidance on possible additional questionnaire content-supplementary approaches
- Providing support directly to countries as possible/requested
THANK YOU

Maintaining Data quality and continuity

Flexibility and responsiveness

New focus of analysis

Field operations

Changing content

Response rates and quality impacts

Increased use of other sources

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