

The Generations and Gender Survey 2020:

A new generation of data collection for demographic research

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Extended Abstract

The Generations and Gender Survey has been used to collect data on family dynamics and relationships across more than 20 countries since 2001. In 2020, the Generations and Gender Survey will enter a new round of data collection with a revised and updated questionnaire as well as a centralized and improved data collection process that increases the quality and comparability of the data collected. In the final paper, an overview of the new questionnaire will be provided and many of the innovations included in the new round will be illustrated, including the surveys contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals and new topic coverage such as migration & mobility, economic insecurity, and the digitization of the life course. Several countries have already fielded or committed to field the new survey and many more are in the process of securing financing for fieldwork. These countries include a broad geographical coverage including Latin America, North America, Europe, East Asia and Central Asia. The paper will showcase the results of the first countries to field the new survey and preliminary assessments of data quality. This will include benchmarking of the survey data against sources such as the Human Fertility Database and Eurostat. There will also be an update on further countries who are either fielding or planning to field the survey. Finally, the paper will provide an overview of research questions and agendas that the new round of data collection may be used to address.

Introducing the GGP

The GGP is an international social science research infrastructure that provides high-quality (longitudinal) data to researchers and other stakeholders involved in tackling population issues and family dynamics.

The GGP was launched in 2000 by the Population Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and it has been coordinated by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) since 2009. A central part of the GGP is the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS). The GGS is a multidisciplinary multi-country longitudinal survey, and it is a direct successor of Fertility and Family Surveys (FFS), which were conducted in the 1990s in selected Member States of the UNECE. The FFS project was primarily financed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and it fulfilled the need for policy-oriented research on family and fertility in times of economic transitions and profound societal changes in many parts of Europe. The GGS consists of a baseline questionnaire and two additional follow-up waves. It is a panel survey, i.e. the same individuals are interviewed repeatedly: in the GGS case, in three-year intervals.

The GGS questionnaire covers a wide range of topics, and it focuses on life and partnership histories, transitions to adulthood, economic activity and income, fertility histories, gender relations, division of housework, work-family balance, attitudes, intergenerational exchanges, health, and well-being. The GGS follows respondents over time, collecting data on their relationships, leaving parental home, formal education dropout, labour market entries, marriage and union formation, parenthood, divorce and partnership dissolution, and other important life events. The GGS collects retrospective data on past events in people's lives, but it also gathers prospective data, e.g. on intentions to move,

having children, forming a union, etc. The longitudinal design allows investigation of the factors that affect realization of such intentions.

The GGS Fieldwork model

Contemporary demographic research heavily relies on longitudinal and cross-national data that is comparable across countries. In this context, the GGP is a fundamental tool that improves demographic and other social science research. To achieve this the GGP has pursued a strategy of centralization. This means that the fieldwork is coordinated by a Central Team based at NIDI in the Hague. This helps ensure that the data collected across countries is the same and that the data can be processed efficiently and made available to researchers. A ground-breaking feature of the new round of GGS data collection is the possibility to (at least partially) collect data from web interviews. This introduces new standards for high-quality, cost-effective data collection strategies within a multi-country perspective. Finally, the GGP research infrastructure seeks to stimulate innovative, top-level, state-of-the-art research, to ensure high quality comparative data for scientific and educational purposes, and to measure the impact of policy measures.

The GGP Central Coordination Team (GGP CCT) works closely with national teams to plan and execute the fieldwork using advanced software and survey tools. In addition to fieldwork activities, national teams are encouraged to plan and budget other activities related to documentation and communication in order to raise awareness of the survey and disseminate its findings.

Planning: the early stages of the project consist in four main steps: establishing contact with the GGP CCT; forming of the national team (we recommend a consortium of different stakeholders); planning of the activities, in line with the timetable; and preparation of the budget and fundraising activities.

Preparatory Phase: the next steps concern the pre-fieldwork phase. At this stage, the national team prepares and finalises the tendering process with a decision on the organisation that will conduct fieldwork; translates the questionnaire using the Translation Management Tool (TMT); conducts the pre-testing of the translated questionnaire; and interviewer training is completed. The GGP CCT finalises technical preparations and makes any adjustments necessary in line with the results of the pre-testing. Moreover, it is important for the national team to consider organising awareness events and publicity to increase the public interest in the survey. The detailed guidelines for each of these points are presented later in this document.

Fieldwork and Reporting: after these steps, fieldwork starts. The monitoring of the fieldwork operations will allow for the identification of any potential issues during fieldwork, allowing for corrective measures and thus gains are expected in data quality and timely data release. From a technical point of view, the questionnaire is programmed for Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) using the Blaise survey software. Blaise is a software developed by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) that can be used for both creating computer-assisted surveys and data collection. The GGP CCT will be mainly responsible for data processing – transforming the raw data collected into a ‘clean’ format so that it can be used for analysis. Additional post-fieldwork activities where the GGP CCT will be involved include the preparation of the data documentation and data release, as well as the publication of the national report with key findings. The national team will also possibly organize an event (or events) to disseminate and engage potential GGS data users and other stakeholders in the country