

High Level Event

Data stewardship and the role of National Statistical Offices in the changing data landscape

Wednesday, 10 February 2021, 8:00 – 9:30 am

Draft Summary by UNSD

1. The topic of data stewardship is revisited at this high-level event to discuss how the understanding of the concept has grown over the past year and mark the initial work done by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to showcase a collection of case studies representing different organisational experiences.
2. The discussion during the high-level event acknowledged the National Statistical Office (NSO) has a role to play as a data steward, and that it is important to apply the NSO's expertise and experience to a broader set of purposes. The concept of data stewardship requires collaboration and contributions from all parts of the data ecosystem.
3. One of the foremost issues for NSOs acting as a data steward is the balance between data access and data privacy. This issue is being confronted more and more as NSOs expand their work to include secondary and non-traditional sources as statistics. At the same time, NSOs need to work more closely with data privacy authorities to nurture and champion trust in data.
4. Another key challenge is the application of data quality frameworks to optimise data from all parts of the data ecosystem; there are instances where quality is not easy to ascertain, or data are accepted without even a basic qualification of their veracity.
5. Another important aspect of data stewardship is to guarantee equity and inclusiveness of data, both in terms of granularity and disaggregation potential of data; but also, in terms of partnerships, consultation and engagement made with other producers, users and respondents at all levels of the data ecosystem.
6. NSOs are doing more to engage with all levels of stakeholders by taking pro-active steps to make supply responsive to demand; in particular, with a service delivery model.

7. NSOs are also doing more to improve data literacy and capability within Government; but there is still a need to empower all parts of the data ecosystem to access, understand and use data more effectively.
8. NSOs can be involved more in the collaboration on policies and standards across the data ecosystem to protect privacy and guide data access; or even operationally with the development of soft rules but robust standards. A suggested first step is to adapt frameworks and principles established at the national, regional and international level to fit a wider data context.
9. From the 'World that Counts' report, there is a widely belief that "data are the lifeblood of decision-making and the raw material for accountability"; the challenge now is how to fulfil this vision in the wider data ecosystem.
