



56th UNSC Side Event

Measuring equality and non-discrimination: connecting the dots across international initiatives

17 February, 09:00-10:15 AM EST

Speaker

- **Dr. Mariana Kotzeva**, Director General of Eurostat
- **Mr. Geir Axelsen**, Director General of Statistics Norway
- **Dr. Romina Boarini**, Director, OECD WISE Centre
- **Mr. Nicolas Fasel**, Chief Statistician, UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

Moderated by **Ms. Diana Castillo-Trejo**, Director General of the Statistical Institute of Belize

Summary Note

Context

- All around the world, people report experiencing discrimination in their lives and these feelings are coupled with a sense of grievance and erode trust in public institutions ([OECD 2024](#)). The evidence underscores the importance and timeliness of discussions on measuring discrimination.
- There are also indications that self-reported discrimination may have increased recently, possibly reflecting greater awareness. For example, according to recent OECD research, in the EU, self-reported discrimination rates rose from 15% in 2019 to 21% in 2023, coinciding with increased media and government attention on the issue ([OECD 2024](#)).

Key takeaways

What is the status of statistics on equality and discrimination?

- Under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission, the [Praia Group on Governance Statistics](#) aims to develop international standards and methodologies for compiling statistics on various governance dimensions, including on non-discrimination and equality. With support from UNDP and OHCHR, it is [currently developing](#) an internationally harmonized survey module on Non-Discrimination and Equality – which enables reporting on [SDG indicator 10.3.1/16.b.1](#) on self-reported experiences of discrimination – as well as Guidance for Utilizing Administrative Data to Produce Statistics in this area.

- The OECD uses data from the [OECD Risks That Matter Survey](#) and EU-wide surveys, such as the [Special Eurobarometer SP535 Survey](#), to assess the extent and impact of discrimination on many aspects of life. The analysis reveals that discrimination can constrain income-earning opportunities, exacerbate housing and financial stress, subject people to violence, fear and low self-esteem, and contribute to mental ill health. These findings provide valuable insights for engaging with OECD countries on effective policy measures to combat discrimination, in the context of the [OECD Observatory on Social Mobility and Equal Opportunity](#).
- EU law safeguards individuals against discrimination on six grounds: sex, age, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, and disability. To assess discrimination risks and experiences, the [Eurostat Equality and Non-Discrimination Statistics Taskforce](#) focuses on two types of indicators: disaggregated indicators in key areas of life to help identify disparities and areas where specific groups may face disadvantages, and indicators capturing self-reported experiences of discrimination.

Country examples

- **Belize** introduced the Praia Group's discrimination survey module in its [Labour Force Survey](#), making it possible to link discrimination data with measures of multidimensional poverty. This approach helps uncover additional vulnerabilities faced by marginalized groups.
- **Ireland** plans to include [questions on sexual orientation](#) in its upcoming census. Ireland, along with the **Slovak Republic**, has been particularly active in engaging marginalized communities in data collection and policy discussions. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland is working to develop a National Equality Data Strategy, with support from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.
- **Norway** established an [Equality Coordinator](#) role within Statistics Norway who is responsible for coordinating inclusive statistical production related to equality issues across government bodies, and for producing reports and analyses on equality data.

Main challenges and related opportunities

- **Lack of harmonized concepts and standards:** The absence of standardized definitions and measurement approaches makes cross-country comparisons difficult. However, both the Eurostat Equality and Non-Discrimination Statistics Taskforce and the Praia Group on Governance Statistics are actively working on harmonizing concepts and methodologies to improve data comparability, in line with internationally recognized legal standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and widely ratified international human rights treaties.
- **Methodological and sampling challenges for hard-to-reach groups:** A range of methodological challenges hinder the accurate measurement of discrimination, making it difficult to include in official statistics. These challenges include reluctance by survey respondents to disclose sensitive information, varying levels of awareness about what constitutes discrimination, sampling biases (such as under-coverage or exclusion of smaller vulnerable groups), measuring the intersectionality of discrimination (how multiple forms of discrimination interact) and underreporting of discrimination to responsible bodies. A solution is integrating discrimination-related survey questions into existing large-scale surveys and triangulating findings with administrative data.
- **Public acceptance and ethical concerns regarding sensitive data collection:** Ethical considerations, including data privacy and security, can affect the public's willingness to take part in a survey on discrimination. Addressing these concerns requires strong data protection measures, transparent communication, and efforts to make data accessible through user-friendly portals, podcasts and other such outreach initiatives.
- **Strengthening public trust in data:** These challenges underscore the importance of complying with the [Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#) and with a [Human Rights-Based Approach to Data](#) in order to nurture public trust in the integrity of official statistical systems and confidence in statistics.

What are strategies for improving how discrimination is measured?

- The Praia Group recommends using an **open-ended list of discrimination grounds**, covering categories such as sex, race, color, ethnic background, language, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and socioeconomic status, among others.
- Improve the collection of equality data through **administrative sources**, including data collected by national human rights institutions, and combine it with survey data for a more comprehensive picture of discrimination that looks at both self-reported discrimination and actual well-being outcomes.
- Strive for efficient data collection by **adding survey questions on discrimination to well established surveys** like labor force surveys or living conditions surveys, thus making it possible to link discrimination data with other relevant variables for more detailed analyses of the state and effects of discrimination.
- Engage **civil society/NGOs** in conducting in-depth studies on hard-to-reach groups, using qualitative research methods.
- Increase **statistical literacy and awareness** among data users to help prevent misinterpretation, improve decision-making and ensure that resources are used more effectively in combating discrimination.
- **Involve marginalized groups** in survey design, data collection, and interpretation to help build trust in the data collection process. Stronger engagement of marginalized groups also helps ensure that survey questions accurately reflect their lived realities, making the results more valid and reliable.
- Forge collaborations between National Statistical Offices and **Human Rights Institutions** to enhance the visibility of victims of discrimination in official statistics and to operationalize a human rights-based approach to data.
- Align with **national policy priorities and national legal frameworks** to facilitate sustainable investments in discrimination statistics and to encourage uptake in policymaking.

Additional resources

- [Handbook on Governance Statistics](#), Praia Group on Governance Statistics (2020)
- [Overview of Eurostat's work on Equality and Non-Discrimination Statistics](#): Provides an overview of the policy issues, the various dimensions of equality (grounds of discrimination) and the statistical domains and indicators, and discusses some data collection challenges.
- [The State and Effects of Discrimination in the European Union, OECD \(2024\)](#): This paper uses new survey data to examine discrimination against people from racialised communities, LGBTIQ+ people, persons with disability and religious minorities. It explores the role played by discrimination in driving well-being gaps between at-risk groups and the majority of the population, overcoming challenges in measuring discrimination, which stem from a lack of cross-country comparable data.
- Norway Living Condition Surveys ([2005/2006](#) and [2016](#)), describing the coverage of discrimination-related questions in the surveys.
- [A Human Rights Based Approach to Data](#) – Leaving No One Behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Guidance Note to Data Collection and Disaggregation, OHCHR (2018).

Overview of relevant data sources

Data	Types of Data	Description
Dedicated survey modules on discrimination for inclusion in well-established (cross-country) surveys	<i>Population survey</i>	- Approach favoured by Praia Group, currently developing an internationally harmonized survey module to ensure cross-country comparability of discrimination data - Possibility to match with other data (from the host survey) to analyse risk factors for discrimination - EU previously included such modules in EU survey on income and living conditions and in the European Health Interview Survey
EU Gender-based violence survey	<i>Population survey</i>	- Measures gender-based violence and other forms of interpersonal violence in all 27 EU Member States - Covers for example the overall prevalence of physical violence or threats and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator, violence perpetrated by women's intimate partners and by other people (non-partners) and women's experiences of sexual harassment at work
EU Fundamental Rights Survey and similar surveys on discrimination	<i>Population survey</i>	- The Fundamental Rights Survey is the first survey to collect comprehensive and comparable data on people's experiences and views of their rights in the EU-27 - Included questions related to rights in different areas, including crime victimisation and safety, data protection and privacy, functioning of the democracy, views on human rights and experiences with public services
OECD Risks That Matter Survey	<i>Population survey</i>	- Conducted every two years since 2018 in OECD countries, special module on discrimination in 2022 - Questions about people's experiences of discrimination, how they identify and about various aspects of their lives including their material conditions, life satisfaction, and mental health
SDG 16 Survey	<i>Population survey</i>	- Well-tested survey tool developed by UNDP, OHCHR and UNODC to support data production on peace, justice and inclusive institutions (SDG 16) - Includes several survey modules covering the survey-based indicators of SDG 16, including on experience with discrimination
Data sources, such as 1) Police and justice sector institutions; 2) National Human Rights Institutions, Equality Bodies and NGOs; 3) service provision institutions	<i>Administrative data</i>	- Good to triangulate with survey data due to significant under-reporting of discrimination by affected populations because of fear of retaliation or repercussions, lack of trust in authorities and lack of awareness of rights or legal protections - May not collect data on all legal grounds of discrimination - Inconsistent data across agencies or jurisdictions, making it difficult to generalize findings across sectors or regions - Sometimes difficult to access
OECD Anti-discrimination questionnaire to OECD countries	<i>Country policy practices</i>	Provides an overview of OECD policy practices and initiatives that countries are taking to measure and combat discrimination