

Importance of Gender Analysis of Census Data

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Objective of the gender analysis

The objective of the gender analysis of census data is to go beyond the standard tabulations that are normally produced in the analysis of census data, to see what additional knowledge can be gained from the census for the production of detailed gender monographs based on the information contained in the census. This involves:

- The production of non-standard tabulations;
- The construction of more elaborate indicators;
- The combination of census data with data from other sources, such as poverty surveys;
- The multivariate analysis of census data using techniques such as linear or logistic regression.

In other words, the objective is to make gender monographs based on census data less descriptive and more analytical.

Why do we hear so little about censuses in gender statistics ?

Censuses have obvious limitations, especially with respect to the subjects that can be investigated:

- No Gender-Based Violence;
- No Female Genital Mutilation;
- No Male and Female Fertility Preferences;
- No Distribution of Resources within the Household;
- No Time Use Information, etc.

However,

- A lot of census information is relevant to gender analysis;
- Some censuses have special questions on gender topics;
- Censuses can be disaggregated to much more specific levels;
- Census data can (sometimes) be merged with surveys on specific topics.

Common issues in gender (and other) analyses

1. The analysis stops at disaggregation by sex and no attempt is made to uncover the gender dimension (or it only shows data on women).
2. The indicator being used is not appropriate for the type of analysis proposed.
3. The indicators being used are too aggregated and hide a variety of situations that need to be properly understood for gender purposes.
4. Although disaggregations are made, there is really no strategy to decide what to disaggregate and why (policy relevance ?).
5. The data source itself (in this case, the census) may fail to make relevant distinctions.
6. The analysis may “jump to conclusions” and fail to consider the variety of factors that may explain a given result. In particular, correlation does not imply causation.
7. Remember: difference \neq discrimination.

Strengths of census data for gender analysis

1. Censuses provide a basic set of sex-disaggregated data at the smallest geographical level.
2. Censuses provide insights into the private and community spheres and (indirectly) into time-use of women and girls, men and boys.
3. Census data for advocacy: A local-level “early warning system” on gender inequalities.
4. Censuses provide essential background information allowing for further research on women and men, girls and boys.

Weaknesses of census data for gender analysis

1. Census data may not have been produced in a gender responsive way.
2. Census data are of very limited scope and depth.
3. Gender-related discrimination is not explicitly measured by censuses.
4. The level of analysis for census data is sex, not gender.
5. The census data may be outdated or of low quality (e.g. due to underreporting on women).
6. Data access and the capacity to analyse census data in the appropriate ways may be problematic.

Example of the Contents of the Gender Thematic Report

Introduction

PART ONE - Background and Conceptual Clarifications for Gender Analysis of Census Data

1. Gender in Population and Housing Censuses
2. Conceptual Clarifications on Gender Equality and Gender-Responsive Data Analysis

PART TWO – 10 Key Gender Issues Analysed with Census Data

3. Fertility
4. Mortality
5. Sex Ratio at Birth and During the Life Course
6. Marital Status, Polygamy, Widowhood, Child Marriage
7. Households and Families
8. Income, Poverty and Living Conditions
9. Education and Literacy
10. Work, Economic Activities and Social Protection
11. Migration
12. Disability

Conclusion

To make the best possible use of the advantages offered by census data

DISAGGREGATE, DISAGGREGATE, DISAGGREGATE

Or at least, STANDARDIZE.

But have a plan for why you are disaggregating.

Control as many intervening factors as you can, if necessary by using multivariate techniques.

UN Women ASRO Contribution

The UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States stands ready to support national statistics offices of member states in need in producing the GENDER thematic report from population censuses.

THANK YOU!