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Title: Sampling strategies and data collection processes for gender-sensitive data

The Sustainable Development Goals have highlighted the importance of gender-sensitive data and revealed the dearth of gender statistics. This paper contributes to thinking about the kinds of data required to measure progress towards SDG 1 in a way that is genuinely sensitive to gender. It argues that while sex disaggregation may be a first step, gender sensitivity must go further. Sampling strategies and data collection processes are often given relatively little consideration from the perspective of gender, but are central to the gender sensitivity of any measure of poverty. To date, poverty data are usually collected at the household level, with one member, usually the household head, responding on the behalf of other members. In these household surveys, the views and experiences of women and men are assumed to be similar. If data are to be sensitive to gender, sampling strategies must move beyond the households to the individuals. The Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) is a multidimensional poverty measure that uses gender as a lens for understanding and assessing human deprivation at the individual level. It is among the first poverty measures to sample all eligible adult members in a household. The result is data that reflects the gendered experience of poverty across the IDM’s fifteen dimensions. However, sampling individuals brings a range of challenges.

Drawing on the experience of the IDM, this paper will highlight two key challenges in collecting gender-sensitive information at the individual level, as well as the strategies proposed to overcome them. First, while sampling every individual within the household enhances gender sensitivity, it raises the question of representativeness of the data. Second, and very importantly, the IDM survey asks several highly sensitive questions, including experiences of violence and controlling behaviours and reproductive health. Ensuring the safety and privacy of respondents, alongside protecting the confidentiality of their responses, when all household members are asked the same survey questions creates significant ethical challenges. In exploring the ways in which the IDM addresses these issues, this paper will present important lessons for other measures aimed at being sensitive to gender, while discussing our ongoing challenges.