

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



SDG 17

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation
and revitalize the global partnership for
sustainable development

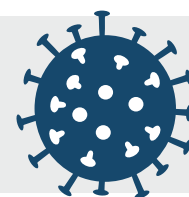
Data

Relevant, timely and usable data are essential for countries to set priorities, make informed choices, and implement better policies for sustainable development. Arab countries, through their national statistical systems, are making significant efforts to produce data to inform and monitor the implementation of the SDGs and national priorities. Considerable progress in data availability has been recorded in recent years. Arab countries are also increasingly using voluntary national reviews as opportunities to broaden the scope of data collection and enhance data quality.

However, large gaps in data availability still exist in several areas related to sustainable development in Arab countries. Key challenges also include the quality and frequency of the statistical information produced nationally, and their international comparability, as well as data transparency and accessibility.

The lack of comparable and disaggregated data on people with disabilities, older persons, women, girls, refugees, migrants, displaced persons and other vulnerable and marginalized groups is a critical development issue in the Arab region. Without robust data, it is not possible to adequately plan and allocate the resources necessary to ensure that programmes and services achieve their objectives and reach the intended population groups. This effectively limits Arab countries' ability to respond to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to prioritize action and resources, and to design responsive measures that leave no one behind. Consequently, the production of timely high-quality disaggregated data is not only a technical pillar for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also a political one as it is fundamental to ensuring inclusivity and justice, and to enhancing institutional and societal resilience to future shocks.

Impact of COVID-19 on data collection in the Arab region



The functioning of national statistical offices has been heavily impacted across the region.¹

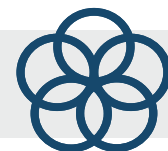
Lockdown and emergency measures have affected the work of statistical offices, especially operations requiring field data collection. The pandemic has also halted operations related to household surveys and censuses. Around 80 per cent of national statistical offices have fully or partially suspended face-to-face data collection as a result of the crisis. Only 20 per cent have continued preparatory work activities for the population census, with 80 per cent postponing until after 2021-2022, or not announcing plans for resumption. Moreover, 69 per cent of Arab countries indicated that the pandemic had negatively impacted their ability to work on price statistics.

In addition, several disruptions were witnessed to the 2030 Agenda frameworks of cooperation, coordination mechanisms, and partnerships with line ministries, private producers and funding entities, including efforts to monitor SDG data. Such disruptions have been

compounded by instability in some Arab countries, namely Libya, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen. Across the region, these disruptions were further exacerbated as efforts were diverted towards rapid and humanitarian responses to address the pandemic's repercussions. This has slowed progress towards harmonized statistical frameworks linked to long-term national development plans.

The complex crises unleashed by the pandemic have highlighted existing data gaps, and the importance of coordination and data sharing between various ministries and institutions. A cohesive and integrated statistical system that leaves no one behind is absent in most Arab countries, causing difficulties in effectively responding to the crisis. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for new indicators that measure the ability to produce rapid assessments at any time. This was particularly evident with regard to socioeconomic data for the health sector, whose availability would have increased the effectiveness of efforts to address the health crisis.

¹ ESCWA, Effect of COVID-19 on price and expenditure statistics, 2020; and the World Bank, Monitoring the state of statistical operations under the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020.



1. National statistical offices across the region have adapted planned activities in response to the pandemic, and introduced innovative data collection practices. Measures include changing data collection dates, organizing new surveys, adapting new collection tools, and using administrative data in countries such as Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and the State of Palestine. Around 44 per cent of surveyed national statistical offices have changed or adapted planned data collection activities. As a result, existing surveys have been amended to include new questions, administrative data is being used more widely, and phone surveys are the most used approach to analyse or monitor aspects of the pandemic.

2. National statistical offices are considering new data sources and partnerships. National statistical offices have forged new partnerships during the pandemic to enhance data collection efforts, including between national statistical offices

and the ministries of communication in Lebanon, Morocco and Oman. Of all the new partnerships, 45 per cent are with the public sector, 34 per cent are with international partners, and 18 per cent are with the private sector. However, nearly a quarter of national statistical offices have not developed new partnerships. Only a handful of surveys were implemented during 2021 in some countries. National statistical offices resumed some household surveys by adopting precautionary measures in face-to-face field operations.

3. A number of Arab countries are enhancing efforts to make data more accessible by adapting new dissemination tools, such as online dashboards. Around 93 per cent of national statistical offices in the region have set up, or are planning to set up, national data platforms to serve government and public data needs. The pandemic may also open new horizons for transparency and data sharing with various stakeholders.



Policy recommendations on data for ensuring an inclusive recovery and achieving the SDGs by 2030



The following recommendations have been identified to accelerate the achievement of SDG 17 in the region, and support action on other SDGs. These recommendations also facilitate the COVID-19 recovery and enhance resilience to future shocks and crises.²

Update and modernize statistical legislation, in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, to authorize national statistical offices to play their new role as 'chief data managers' in adopting new data collection modes, forging new partnerships, openly disseminating data from the statistical system, coordinating and validating national information beyond official statistics, and integrating geospatial information and big data.

Promote statistical literacy programmes to encourage the use of data and evidence-based decision-making by engaging different stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating policies and interventions; improve data accessibility by adopting open data policies; and advance intersectoral analyses to leave no one behind.

Increase support for data collection and capacity development needs, as stipulated in the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, in the following six major categories essential for producing SDG-relevant statistics: national survey programmes; decennial censuses; administrative data, including civil registration and vital statistics systems; economic statistics, including national accounts; geospatial infrastructure; and environmental monitoring.³

Embrace the data revolution by using new sources of data, adopting innovative methods for producing and using statistics, modernizing administrative records for statistical purposes, integrating statistical and geospatial data, using big data and other data for high frequency statistics, including linking microdata from surveys and administrative sources through registers of people and businesses, and forging partnerships with other data producer and user communities.

Prioritize the production of high-quality and timely data disaggregated by income, sex, age, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant to national contexts; and implement the recommended disaggregation of 12 priority SDGs by forced displacement status.⁴

Establish and fully operationalize national reporting platforms with transparent and standardized use of metadata, and develop systematic coordination channels between all data sources to increase data flow and avoid wasted resources and duplication of efforts.

Urge the United Nations and the international community to scale up technical support to national statistical offices, and increase partnerships with academia and the private sector to enhance innovation and the use of new technologies, tools and methodologies in data collection and analysis, including capacity-building for national statistical offices on adopting the International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, and include such statistics in national statistical frameworks.

² Further information are available in the SDG 17 chapter of the ESCWA, Arab Sustainable Development Report, 2020.

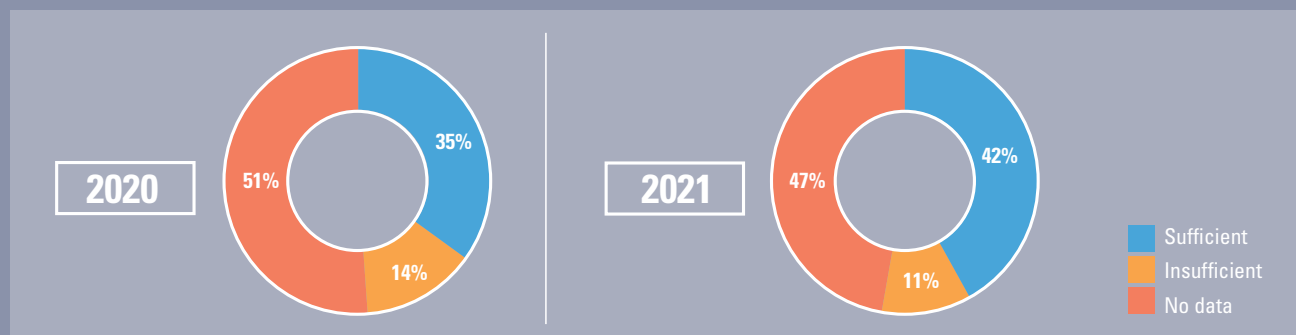
³ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, 2015.

⁴ Statistical Commission, Data Disaggregation and SDG Indicators: Policy Priorities and Current and Future Disaggregation Plans, 2019.

Key facts on SDG data in the Arab region

As per the official global indicator framework for the SDGs, the indicators available for the Arab region in the Global SDG database increased from 35 per cent in 2020 to 42 per cent in 2021.⁵

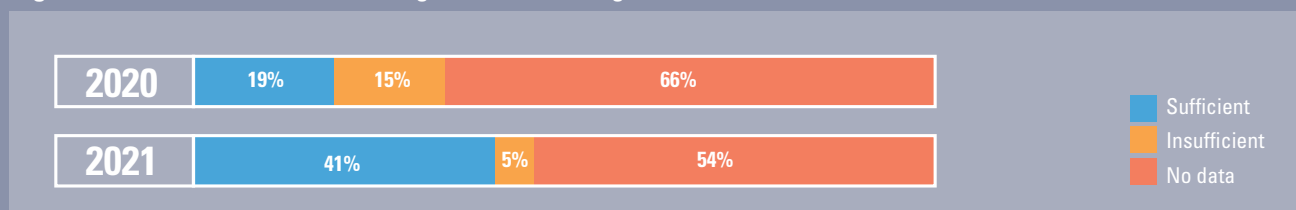
Figure 1. SDG indicator coverage in the Arab region



Source: ESCWA, Arab SDG Monitor – Monitoring SDG Progress and Data availability (accessed 26 January 2022).

For SDG 17 for example, the availability of sufficient data (two data points or more) has improved from 19 per cent in 2020 to 41 per cent in 2021; whereas data unavailability for this goal was reduced from 66 per cent to 54 per cent in the same period.⁶

Figure 2. SDG 17 indicator coverage in the Arab region



Source: ESCWA, Arab SDG Monitor – Monitoring SDG Progress and Data availability (accessed 26 January 2022).

Regional improvement was mainly due to enhanced country data flow to the Global SDG database, which increased by 5 per cent from 2020 to 2021.⁷ However, more efforts and capacity-building are needed to increase data availability and to reduce estimation and modelling methods, where possible.

Figure 3. Progress of available country data flow to the Global SDG database



Source: ESCWA, Arab SDG Monitor – Monitoring SDG Progress and Data availability (accessed 26 January 2022).

5 ESCWA, Arab SDG Monitor – Monitoring SDG Progress and Data availability (accessed 26 January 2022).

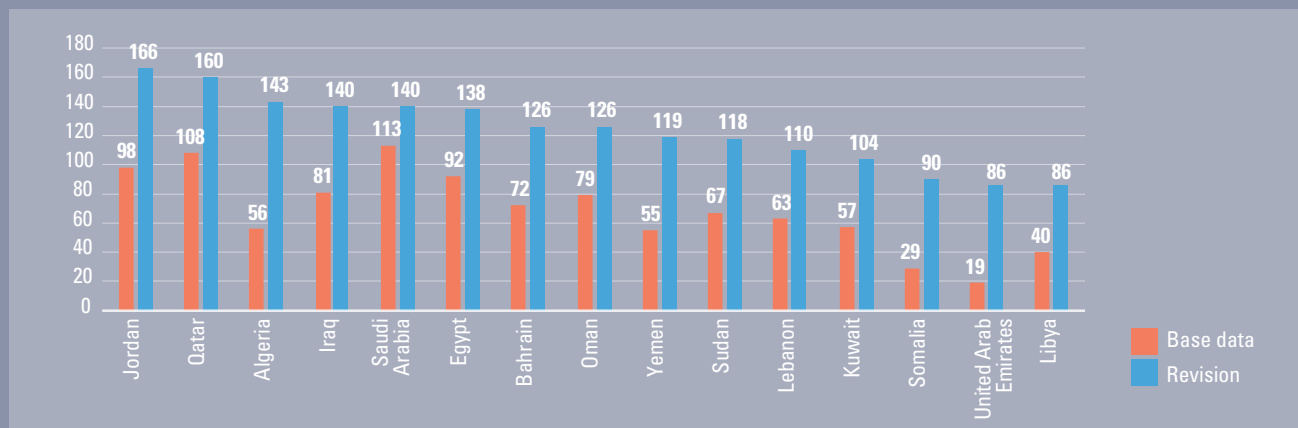
6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

There has been an increase in the release of SDG national data over the years in the Arab region. In 2019, there were only nine countries that disseminated their SDGs on the websites of national statistical offices. ESCWA has committed itself to developing national reporting platforms (NRPs), in collaboration with national statistical offices, to facilitate access to SDG data, accessible through the Arab SDG Monitor. By the end of 2021, ESCWA had worked with 15 Arab countries, namely Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Figure 4 illustrates the significant impact of the joint collaboration between ESCWA and national statistical offices to improve national data availability and quality; and shows the increase before revision (base data) and after it.

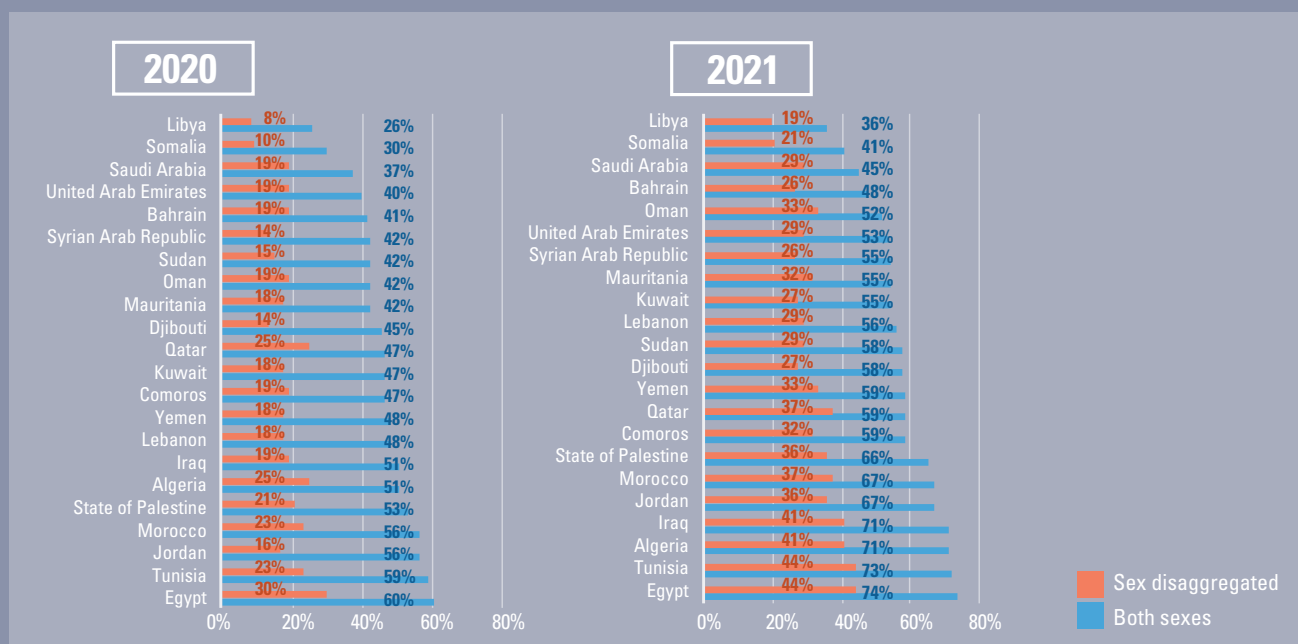
Figure 4. Increase in number of indicators available on NRPs



Source: ESCWA, Arab SDG Monitor – Monitoring SDG Progress and Data availability (accessed 26 January 2022).

ESCWA analysis of countries' performance shows that the data collection for 73 gender-related indicators that can be disaggregated by sex continues to improve over the years. However, countries still publish those indicators in totals rather than disaggregated by sex. Egypt, for example, ranks first in this area, having improved its dissemination of gender indicators, including sex disaggregated data, by 14 per cent over the one-year period from 2020 to 2021, as per data in the Global SDG database. However, many of the available disaggregated data remains unpublished.

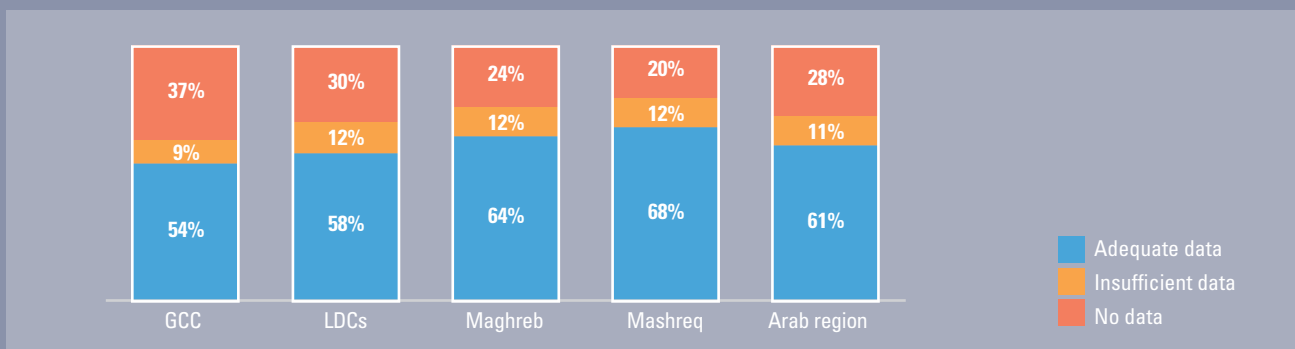
Figure 5. Availability of gender indicators disseminated in totals and disaggregated by sex (percentage)



Source: ESCWA, Arab SDG Monitor – Monitoring SDG Progress and Data availability (accessed 26 January 2022).

Only 61 per cent of the child-related SDG indicators in the Arab region have adequate country-level data, allowing trend analysis. The lowest availability is in the GCC subregion.⁸

Figure 6. Availability of data for the 50 child-related SDG indicators



Source: ESCWA, Arab SDG Monitor – Monitoring SDG Progress and Data availability (accessed 26 January 2022).

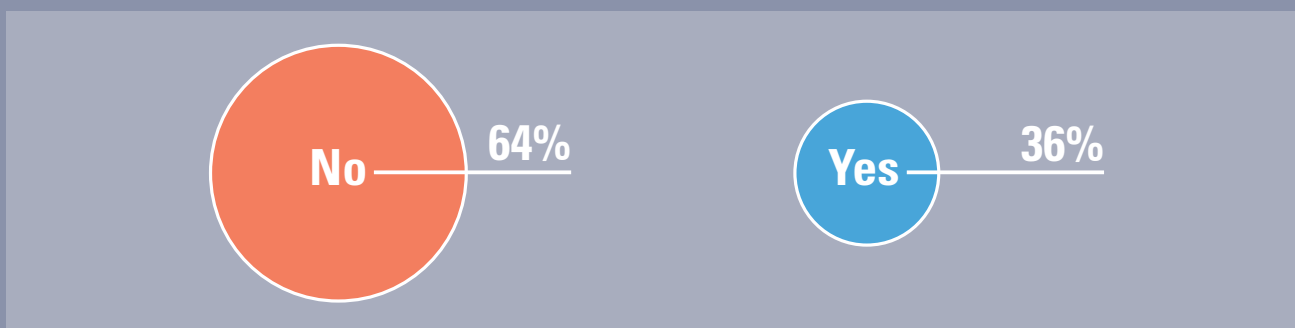
National statistical offices are often trapped in a vicious cycle of statistical underdevelopment, where limited awareness and appreciation of the importance of data has led to inadequate funding and untimely approval of programme budgets for statistics. Only 8 of 22 Arab countries have updated and approved national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS), and have disseminated them online.⁹ Many of the remaining countries still have draft plans under consideration for approval.

Furthermore, national statistical legislation in almost half of Arab countries are old and outdated the endorsement of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics by the Statistical Commission in 1994. To support countries in improving their statistical legislation, ESCWA has published the Guide on the Generic Law for Official Statistics in the Arab Countries.¹⁰

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the implementation of many planned household surveys and population and housing censuses in the region. A total of 11 countries, namely Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates, have postponed their Population and Housing Censuses that were due in at least the past two years, and other household surveys were not implemented in their regular periodicity. Population and Housing Censuses are overdue in countries such as Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, as a result of conflict and instability.

A total of 13 Arab countries stated that their birth registration data were at least 90 per cent complete, and 10 noted that their death registration data were at least 75 per cent complete.¹¹

Figure 7. Availability of an updated NSDS in Arab countries



Source: ESCWA, Arab SDG Monitor – Monitoring SDG Progress and Data availability (accessed 26 January 2022).

⁸ Ibid.

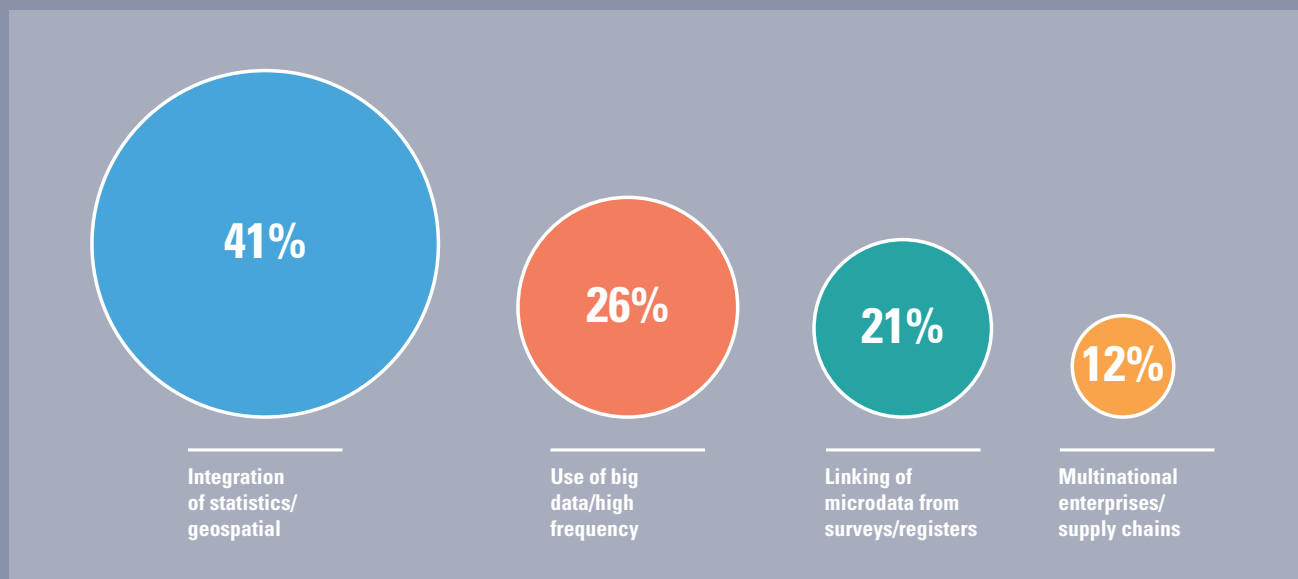
⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ ESCWA, Guide on the Generic Law for Official Statistics in the Arab Countries, 2021.

¹¹ Global SDG database.

Arab countries are embracing the data revolution, and starting to make use of new technologies and methods. In 2020, the World Bank conducted an assessment showing that 41 per cent of Arab countries consider that the integration of statistical and geospatial data is highly important, followed by the use of big data and other data for high frequency statistics (26 per cent), linking of microdata from surveys and administrative sources through registers of people and businesses (21 per cent), and the role of multinational enterprises including their integration into global and domestic supply chains (12 per cent).¹²

Figure 8. Data issues considered important by Arab countries



Source: World Bank, Monitoring the state of statistical operations under the COVID-19 pandemic: Highlights from the second round of a global COVID-19 survey of national statistical offices, 2020.

¹² World Bank, Monitoring the State of Statistical Operations under the COVID-19 Pandemic: Highlights from the Second Round of a Global COVID-19 Survey of National Statistical Offices, 2020.

