

New forms of data for official statistics

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Data for statistical purposes has traditionally been collected through large, designated surveys run by the statistical agencies. This way of producing data is challenged for several reasons; they are very expensive and statistical agencies are faced with budget restrictions, there is a response burden problem as response rates are falling in all countries – and there are new ways of getting access to data that are both cheaper and more effective in relation to the response burden problem.

This paper deals with two issues in relation to new forms of data for official statistics.

The first issue is the possibilities and challenges in the use of administrative data sources in the production of official statistics. The use of administrative data in official statistics is on its rise in many countries and it is an official goal of the European Statistical System (ESS) to enhance this. There are a number of examples of countries using mainly administrative data for the production of social statistics and there are a number of important issues to be dealt with in doing this – which will be addressed in the paper.

The second issue is the future prospects in using what has been called ‘Big data’ in relation to the production of statistics. In the digitalised world individuals as well as companies are leaving electronic footprints everywhere as part of their daily digital activities. This gives new opportunities for official statistics in relation to data for existing statistics as well as opportunities for the production of new statistics. The paper will explore and illustrate these new opportunities.

In the concluding part a number of important issues in relation to the development in and use of new forms of data for official statistics like documentation and confidentiality issues will be discussed.

Keywords: administrative data, Big data, digital footprints