

Preface

This Framework for Statistics on the Distribution of Household Income, Consumption and Wealth (ICW Framework) has been developed in response to a growing demand for statistics that measure economic well-being from a household, or micro, perspective. Household economic well-being is a reflection of the consumption of goods and services by households, and of the income and wealth that supports such consumption.

Micro statistics are currently most developed for the income dimension of economic well-being. But an examination of income alone cannot provide the insights required to identify that part of the population most in economic need, and to fully explain the economic decisions that households make in response to their specific circumstances. This report has been prepared to provide a framework for household micro data that comprehensively covers the three dimensions of economic well-being, namely income, consumption and wealth, in a fully integrated way.

The most recent international framework in the area is the Canberra Group Handbook on Household Income Statistics, Second Edition (Canberra Group, 2011). The 2011 edition updated the first edition published in 2001, and was consistent with the resolution on standards for household income and expenditure statistics adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in December 2003. The ICW Framework presented here does not replace the 2011 Canberra Group Handbook but rather provides a more complete picture of the relationship of income statistics to consumption and wealth statistics, and clarifies some income concepts in light of those relationships.

The micro perspective of the ICW Framework presented in this volume complements the broad economy/production perspective of the macro statistics articulated in the System of National Accounts (SNA) by supporting the distributional analysis of economic well-being and by placing more emphasis on the non-market activity of households. The relationship between the ICW Framework and the SNA is described in detail, so that data prepared under the two frameworks can be analysed together in a meaningful way.

The ICW Framework was developed under the auspices of the OECD Committee of Statistics (CSTAT). The work was carried out by the OECD Expert Group on Micro Statistics on Household Income, Consumption and Wealth, whose members were drawn from a wide range of countries and that I had the honour of chairing. The Expert Group undertook two complementary tasks at the same time. The first was the preparation of the ICW Framework, while the second was the Guidelines for Micro Statistics on Household Wealth, the first internationally agreed set of guidelines for the collection of household wealth micro statistics (OECD, 2013). Concurrently, the OECD Expert Group to Measure Disparities in a National Accounts Framework was established to consider how existing micro data could be used to produce measures of disparities between groups of households that are consistent with SNA concepts and totals for the household sector. The outputs of this second Expert Group are being released as a stream of OECD Working Papers.

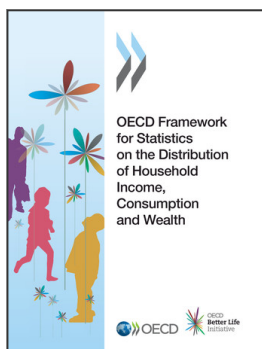
Drafts of the two reports by the OECD Expert Group on Micro Statistics on Household Income, Consumption and Wealth were submitted to the CSTAT for comments under the written procedure in January 2013. Both publications reflect the comments provided by CSTAT delegates, and are published under the authority of the CSTAT. Countries are encouraged to adopt the ICW Framework as a guide to developing and analysing statistics on the different components of household economic well-being. It is hoped that the release of this report will provide further impetus to work by the statistical community on these issues, through the establishment of an ongoing forum for the discussion and resolution of issues arising from implementation of the ICW Framework, the creation of a “city group” on consumption, and the establishment of a process for moving to a set of international standards.

Bob McColl

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Chair of the OECD Expert Group

on Micro-statistics on Household Income, Consumption and Wealth



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