Executive summary

The *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust* aim to assist data producers in collecting and reporting trust measures, and to support users of trust data in understanding different measurement approaches and their implications for analysis. They describe best practices in trust measurement, propose a core set of measures to form the basis for international comparisons, and encourage national statistical offices (NSOs) to include measures in their regular household surveys.

In particular, the Guidelines are intended to:

- Improve the international comparability of trust measures by providing guidance for NSOs and other data producers, grounded in best practice in question design;
- Summarise what is known about the validity and reliability of trust measures and, where possible, extend this evidence through empirical analysis of existing surveys;
- Act as a catalyst for NSOs and researchers to broaden the evidence base on the validity and reliability of trust measures;
- In the longer run, increase the number of countries for which official measures of trust are produced, so as to contribute to the monitoring of critical targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

What is trust?

The Guidelines make a fundamental distinction between individuals' trust in other people (***interpersonal trust***) and trust in institutions (***institutional trust***):

- For interpersonal trust, the Guidelines distinguish between *generalised trust* and *limited trust*. Generalised trust refers to trust in people who are not known to the respondent or to trust in situations where the person being trusted is not specified. Limited trust focuses on persons known to the respondent, including family, friends and neighbours.
- Institutional trust refers to trust in all types of institutions, with trust in *political, law and order* and *non-governmental institutions* used to refer to a narrower concept.

Why have these Guidelines been produced?

The policy need for better measures of trust has been underscored by international initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and work to improve measures of key economic, social and environmental outcomes, such as that initiated by the Report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress in 2009 and carried forward by the OECD's Better Life Initiative.

Trust measures based on household surveys are already collected as part of the official statistical system in several OECD countries. This has largely been the result of demand from these countries' policy makers for better information on people's well-being, social capital and social cohesion. However, regular, timely and consistent measurement is less common, and most comparable information at the moment comes from unofficial sources.

How are the Guidelines intended to be used?

The Guidelines do not prescribe a single approach to measurement, but instead bring together information on what is currently known about measuring trust. Users of the Guidelines will find different parts of this document valuable depending on their needs.

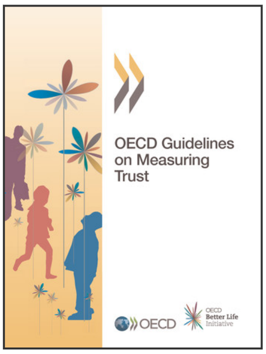
- Chapter 2 addresses the issues of concept, relevance and validity. This chapter will be of interest to both users of trust data, interested in what concepts are captured by different measures and the extent to which different trust measures are valid, and to producers of trust data, wanting to reach a judgement about whether to measure trust and which concepts to focus on.
- Chapter 3 brings together information on the key methodological issues that should inform question design, including issues relating to measurement error, question wording, response formats, survey context, survey mode, response styles and cultural context. This chapter provides a resource for producers of trust data interested in question design as well as for technical users wanting to understand different sources of bias in trust data.
- Chapter 4 provides specific guidance on best practice in measuring trust. This chapter is structured around the different stages of the research process, i.e. planning, survey and sample design, question design, and implementation. More than the other chapters, this section is prescriptive, and is intended particularly for data producers during the survey design process.
- Chapter 5 focuses on the output and analysis of trust measures. The main goal for the chapter is supporting the production of basic descriptive outputs and the interpretation of trust data, such as evidence on what can be considered as *large* or *small* changes in trust levels. The chapter also reviews the analysis of trust data to help users who are approaching the data with a research question requiring more sophisticated analysis.

There are two annexes to the Guidelines.

- Annex A brings together a wide range of trust questions currently in use in different surveys around the world, from both official and unofficial surveys. This annex will help readers understand what sorts of measures are available from different sources.
- Annex B contains five prototype question modules as starting point for data producers to develop their own questions. The first core question module includes a limited set of measures that are intended for widespread use. A single 'primary measure' defines the absolute minimum that should be included in relevant surveys and forms the basis for cross-country comparison; another four questions provide basic information on the most important types of interpersonal and institutional trust. The other four modules cover different approaches to capturing information on trust, focusing on respondents' evaluation of their feeling of trust, expectations about others' behaviour, past experiences, and experimental techniques to observe trusting behaviour.

Next steps

As the evidence base on trust develops, the information in these Guidelines will eventually need to be updated. The Guidelines should thus not be viewed as “carved in stone”. Ideally, a review should take place some time after their release to assess the degree to which the evidence base has improved and to identify any next steps to move towards greater standardisation of trust measurement in the official statistical system.



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