General Household Survey (GHS)

Queering Social Survey Research: Re-imagining Measurements of Sex, Gender and Sexuality in South Africa

Session 2: Capturing the Complexities of the Entire Population: LGBTIQ+ Specificities

20 October 2022

The GHS provides a critical assessment of the levels of development in the country as well as the extent of service delivery and the quality of services in a number of key service sectors.

Six broad areas are covered in the survey, namely education, health and social development, housing, households' access to services and facilities, food security, and agriculture.
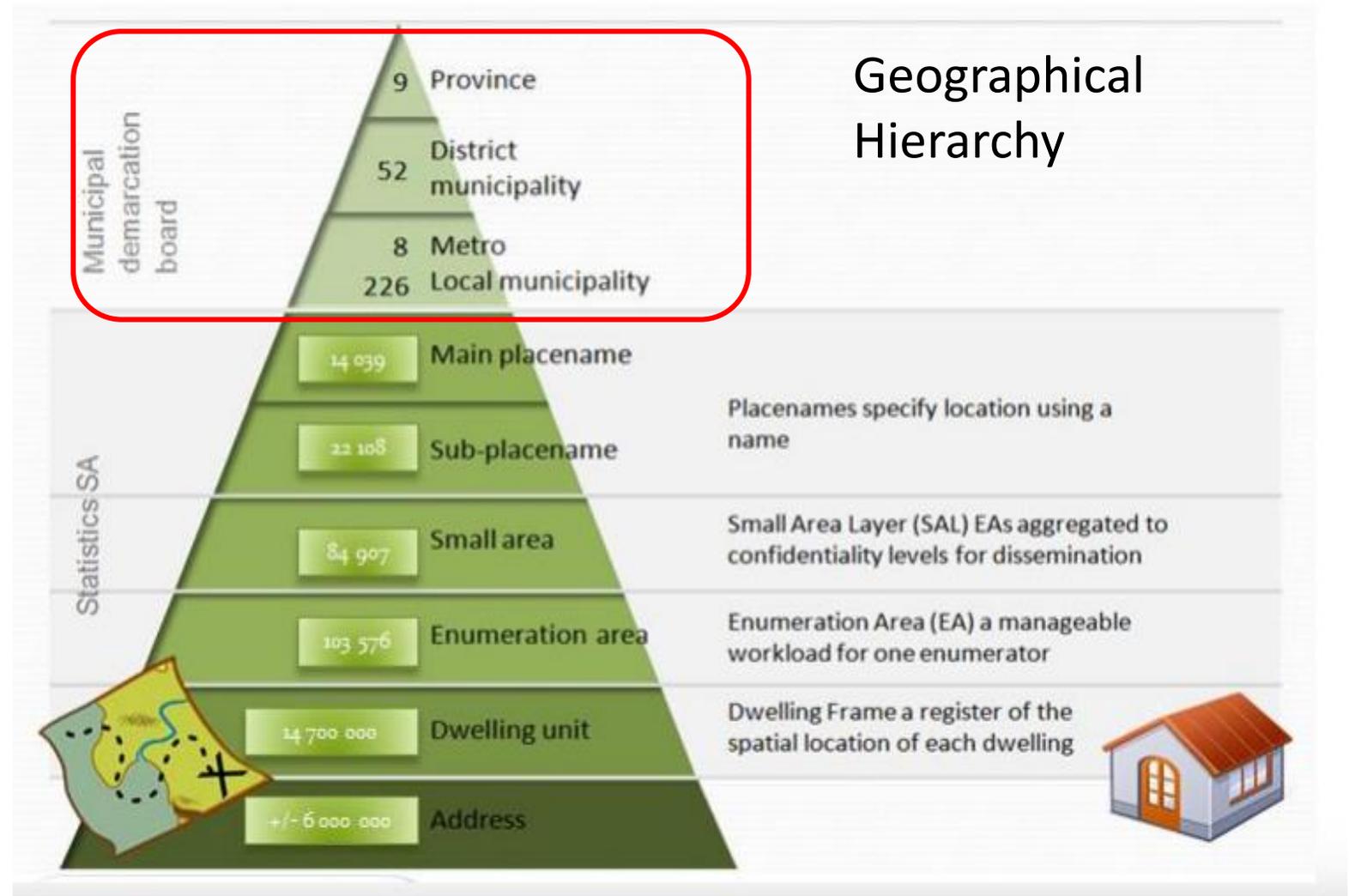
Background and History

- Introduced 2002
- Replaced October Household Survey (OHS) 1993-1999
- Annual Cross-sectional survey
- Face-to-face
- CAPI, investigating mixed-mode
- Use proxies where required
- Sample approximately 33 000 households

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The target population of the survey consists of all private households and residents in workers' hostels across all nine provinces.

The survey does not cover institutionalised individuals living in other collective living quarters such as students' hostels, old-age homes, hospitals, prisons and military barracks.

Target Population

Sample

Household survey data representative at national, provincial, metro (since 2015) and urban/rural levels

Geographical Hierarchy

Motivation

- Little information about socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, health needs, social experiences of trans-gender and intersex persons due to inadequate measurement
- Few surveys collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Large health disparities have been documented
- Increased need to develop trans inclusive measures of sex/gender

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Guidelines

- Comparability over time (wording and sequence)
- Comparability across surveys and to censuses, where appropriate
- Meet international and domestic best practice
- Meet Stats SA standards
- Fit for purpose – appropriate for methodology and mode

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Before we start, we need ourselves the following:

- What will the data be used for? (to count or to illuminate)

- How should it be asked?

- How will the survey be affected by wide distribution of sample across the country, different geographical areas and a variety of cultures.

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Considerations for inclusion of trans-inclusive sex/gender measures in population surveys

- Mode of administration (self vs interviewer – CAWI, CATI, CAPI)

- Consistent understanding, and definition of key terms

- Completeness of experiences and response options

- Language / translation / culture

- Limited number of questions available – limit open ended questions

- Item ordering effects

- Proxy reporting

- Fieldworker sensibilities

- Effect on data calibration / weighting

- Sample and survey methodology

- Data sensitivity and confidentiality

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Consistent understanding is vital…

For cisgender respondents to, comprehension of trans-inclusive survey items is of primary concern

- understanding terms such as transgender, cisgender etc
- preventing misclassification.

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Consistent understanding is vital…

Transgender respondents face similar and additional challenges in responding

- Which dimension of sex/gender queried?
- Do they use the same categories?
- Do the options accommodate the diversity of sex and gender within trans communities
- Terms are not universal, and affected by culture / language

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Timelines

- Implementation will be slow and measured

- Need to develop, test and standardize questions

- Extended survey rotations
  - DTS and GHS runs from Jan-Dec, GPSJS Apr – Mar
  - IES already in the field, and QLFS a very stable platform

- Content rotation scheduled a few years ahead.

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No clear deadline for implementation of revised questions. Due to survey rotation it could probably only take place by 2024, but most likely (for the GHS) by 2025.

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