the survey. The stratum identification code should be consistent over time for each observation unit (individual or household).

The information in the variable 'stratum' should enable all strata to be identified. Combining 'stratum' with other variables (such as 'region') should not be needed to identify the strata; 'region' should refer to the moment of the interview, while 'stratum' should refer to the moment of the selection.

In cases of variations of territorial units, such as the blending of municipalities, the value of 'stratum' should not change over time; it should always refer to the situation at the time of the selection.

To estimate the measures of spread (e.g., variance and standard deviation), each self-representing primary PSU must be considered to be a stratum rather than a PSU. Therefore, each self-representing PSU receives a separate and unique stratum identification code which remains the same for the entire period in which the observation units (individuals or households) that receive this identification code remain in the survey.

If strata in the sample consist of only one PSU selected among a larger number of PSUs in the stratum population, or if strata in the sample contain only one PSU (among a larger number of selected PSUs) with respondents, the primary strata have to be collapsed so that every stratum consists of at least two PSUs. If done, this grouping will ideally be implemented between strata that are most similar in terms of the variables used for stratification.

The variable PSU should be left blank when a sample of individuals has been drawn and the population has not been clustered.

It is good practice to randomise the stratum identifiers to prevent respondents from being indirectly identified (it makes the linking to particular locations or to a geographical pattern impossible). However, the randomisation process should ensure that the value of 'stratum' for a respondent does not change over time.

The stratum code of the collapsed stratum is equal to the stratum code of the stratum that before collapsing already contained more than one PSU. The households selected in the stratum with the single PSU receive flag code '3'[25].

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[25] According to the characteristics and availability of data for different countries, we have used different variables to specify strata and cluster information. In particular, countries have been split into three groups:

1) BE, BG, CZ, IE, EL, ES, FR, IT, LV, HU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, UK and HR whose sampling design could be assimilated to a two-stage stratified type using DB050 (primary strata) for strata specification and DB060 (primary sampling unit) for cluster specification;

2) DK, DE, EE, CY, LT, LU, AT, SK, FI and CH whose sampling design could be assimilated to a one-stage stratified type using DB050 for strata specification and DB030 (household ID) for cluster specification;

3) MT, SE, IS and NO, whose sampling design could be assimilated to a simple random sampling, using DB030 for cluster specification and no strata.