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Partnership in statistics
for development
in the 21st century

**THE PARTNER REPORT ON
SUPPORT TO STATISTICS
PRESS 2021**

The report was prepared by the Secretariat of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21).

About PARIS21

The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) promotes the better use and production of statistics throughout the developing world. Since its establishment in 1999, PARIS21 has successfully developed a worldwide network of statisticians, policy makers, analysts and development practitioners committed to evidence-based decision making. With the main objective to achieve national and international development goals and reduce poverty in low and middle-income countries, PARIS21 facilitates statistical capacity development, advocates for the integration of reliable data into decision making and co-ordinates donor support to statistics.

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WHAT'S IN PRESS 2021?

The Partner Report on Support to Statistics 2021 updates the status of international funding to data and statistics with new data from different data sources and the nowcasting methodology developed by PARIS21. The report provides the most recent analysis of funding flows towards data and statistical projects since the pandemic. For the first time, PRESS 2021 provides new perspectives on funding flows by examining projects with partial components related to data and statistics, analysing funding to new data sources, digital technologies, and administrative data systems. The report also introduces a new spotlight section on financing for civil registration and vital statistics systems, followed by fact sheets on different dimensions of primary support to data and statistics.

PRESS 2021 uses a mixed-methods approach to shape the narrative on the evolution of data and statistics financing. The report employs novel quantitative techniques for estimating trends related to funding to data and statistics and complements them with qualitative insights gathered from a range of expert interviews.



FOREWORD

The 2021 Partner Report on Support to Statistics comes at a crucial moment. At the time of its launch, at least one-in-thirty people worldwide will have been infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely tested the ability of governments and public health stakeholders to deploy coordinated and effective measures to track the spread of the virus and marshal appropriate containment and treatment responses.

None of this can happen without timely, accurate and representative data. Without it, we do not know how far or how quickly the virus is spreading or how it affects different populations. In the absence of reliable data, we also risk exacerbating existing inequalities, such as access to essential services or vaccines.

On the one hand, the pandemic had a catalytic effect, spurring innovation, transforming or modernizing statistical systems and health information systems, especially among low- and middle-income countries. Mobile phone data mapping, citizen reporting and digital surveys have lowered the cost of data collection, while also making it faster and more effective.

But COVID-19 has also exposed fundamental weaknesses of many national statistical systems. According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) SCORE Global Report on health data systems

and capacity, 4 in 10 of the world's deaths are unregistered. In many countries, data gaps, lack of coordination and interoperability, inconsistencies in reporting and other issues have meant that response and recovery efforts were less robust and efficient than they could have been, underscoring the central importance of well-functioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems.

To help address the global health challenges of our time, the WHO has established three strategic goals called the Triple Billion targets with a focus on healthier populations, affordable universal health coverage, and health emergencies protection. These targets, which are integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals, require high-quality underlying data from all countries.

To achieve the 2030 Agenda, a significant investment in financing for national statistical systems and health information systems is urgent. For instance, today only three percent of public health surveys in the African region are funded by their governments, instead relying on external donors.

From PRESS 2021, we see that overall funding to data and statistics has been largely stagnant over the past decade, despite massive increases in data demands as a result of the pandemic. We need to rapidly increase investment in critical data infrastructure while also ensuring that this funding



targets those countries and populations with the greatest need. Change needs to happen now.

PRESS 2021 also shows us that the data landscape is becoming more and more fragmented. The COVID-19 pandemic also taught us that coordination among all industries, actors, regions and countries is essential to informing an effective response. Without this, we end up with an imperfect, incomplete and incomparable understanding of the crisis. We therefore call on all parties for smarter financing with accountability for results to support system-wide strengthening and coordination for making a measurable impact in the lives of the people we serve.

The good news is that this year, a number of new global instruments have been developed to strengthen coordination and rally support for the development of statistical systems required to achieve the Triple Billion targets and health-related SDGs.

Developed to support the global action plan of the High-Level Group on Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB), the World Bank's Global Data Facility and the Bern Network's Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data are two examples that seek to bring about the needed step-change in support to statistics for the SDGs.



Dr Samira Asma
Assistant Director-General,
for Data, Analytics and Delivery and Impact
World Health Organization

As we move further into the Decade of Action - and as countries work to respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic - PRESS 2021 reminds us that now is the time for the international community to step up its engagement on data and statistical financing so we can together create the 21st century data systems and networks that help us improve public health, defeat COVID-19, and be better prepared for the next pandemic.





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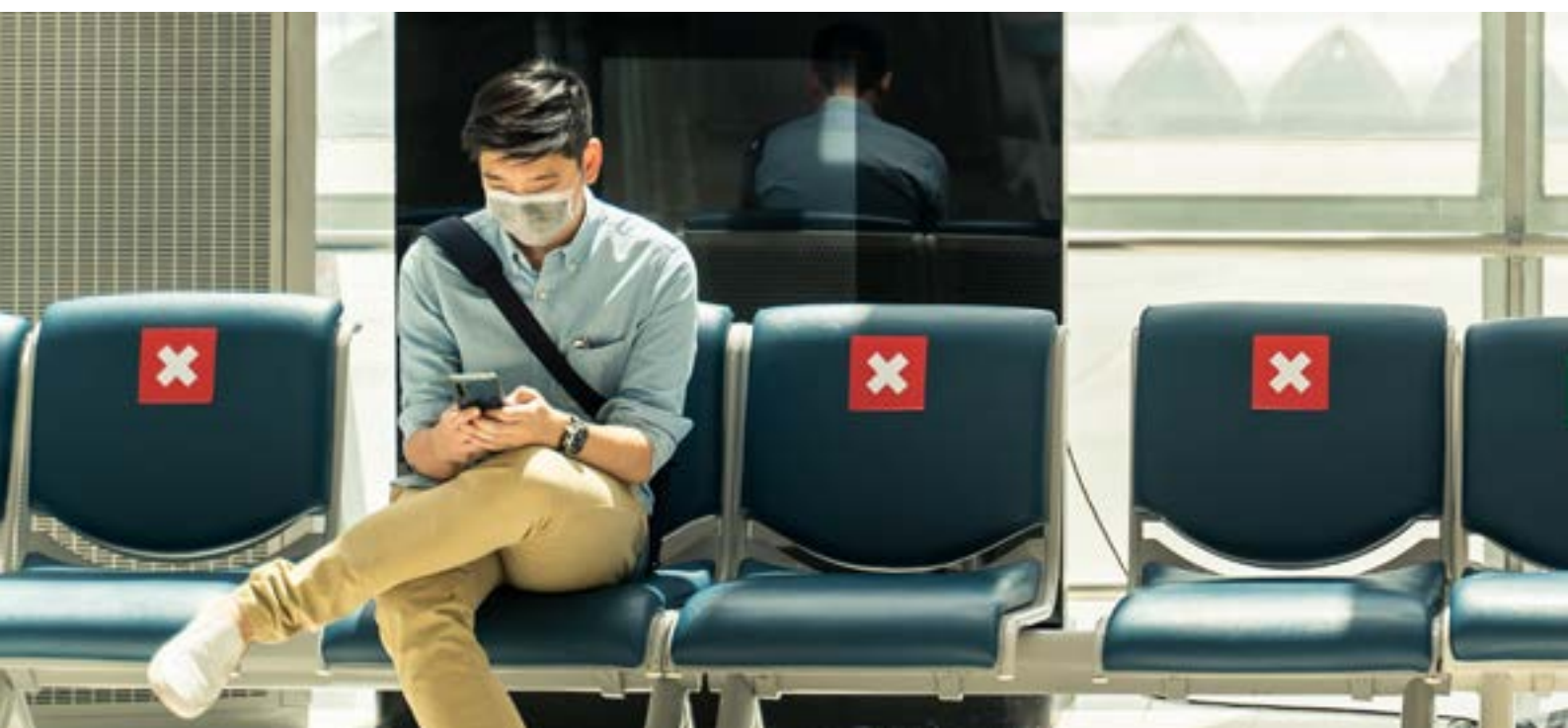


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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
API	Application Programming Interface
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
BP	Bloomberg Philanthropies
CATI	Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview
CAWI	Computer-Assisted Web Interview
CCSA	Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities
CRS	Creditor Reporting System
CRVS	Civil Register and Vital Statistics
CTGAP	Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GSBPM	Generic Statistical Business Process Model
HLG PCCB	High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICT	Information and communication technology
IDA	International Development Association



IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NSO	National statistical office
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PARIS21	The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
PRESS	Partner Report on Support to Statistics
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SESRIC	Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries
SIAP	Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific
SIDS	Small island developing states
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
WHO	World Health Organization



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2021 Partner Report on Support to Statistics is the first study to analyse funding flows to data and statistics during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to PRESS 2021, total global commitments to statistics in 2019 were equivalent to USD 647 million. The nowcasted support to statistics in 2020 is estimated at USD 624 million, continuing the trend of overall stagnation in aid flows to projects with primary focus on data and statistics – which has only increased by 20% between 2011-19. Official development assistance (ODA) to data and statistics accounted for USD 551 million, representing a 0.3% share of total ODA in 2019. In other words, projects to support data and statistics in their own right remain low on the priority list of donors and account for only half of the amount required for the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action plan for Sustainable Development Data (CT-GAP).

Amidst this stagnation, we see a marked rise in international development finance to projects that feature data and statistics as a partial component (from 17% in 2012 to 49% in 2020). This gulf is also reflected in COVID-19 related support to data and statistics where funding to projects with a primary focus comprises of less than 0.5% (USD 491 million) and partial support amounts to almost one-quarter (USD 25.6 billion) of total development aid related to COVID-19.

Further, the pandemic has been marked by shifts in the sectoral distribution of financing. Since the start of

the COVID-19 crisis, we have seen a sharp increase in funding to health-related data and statistics – rising from a 10% share to more than a third of all funding. At the same time, however, funding to other sectors such as social infrastructure and protection have fallen precipitously from 20% to 7%.

Taken together, these findings present an increasingly fragmented picture of the financing landscape for data and statistics. While more needs to be done to increase the overall financing envelope from all sources, some positive trends have also emerged.

- ▶ Between 2011 and 2019 international development finance to **administrative data systems doubled**.
- ▶ Investment in frontier technologies is increased, with **support to new data sources and methodologies** such as machine learning and satellite imagery **rising by 134% between 2015 and 2019** (to USD 40 million).
- ▶ Funding to projects with **gender data as the focus also increased**, driven largely by bilateral donors and, most recently, private foundations.

These positive trends are tempered by a number of challenges.

- ▶ When it comes to innovation and digitalisation, **funding for systems reform decreased by half** (USD 25 million) between 2015 and 2019. Without investment in getting the fundamentals



of statistical systems right, crises like COVID-19 risk exacerbating existing weaknesses such as low co-ordination capacities of NSOs in low and lower middle-income countries.

- Funding flows to data and statistics in **fragile states declined from 40% during the mid-2010s to 25% in 2019**. This risks leaving the weakest left behind in the global development agenda.
- As of May 2021, **four in ten** NSOs reported that data collection costs had increased since the beginning of the pandemic, with NSOs in low and lower middle-income countries reporting the greatest challenges (61%) compared to 33% of NSOs in high-income countries.

As the world continues to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic while striving to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we must accelerate support to national statistical systems, especially in low-income countries and fragile states.

In a funding landscape that is getting more diffuse and complex, we need **better tools and mechanisms to mobilise effective support for development data**. This includes more precise measurement and targeting of development data finance, improved coordination and sharing of experiences and best practices. The Bern Network's Clearinghouse for

Financing Development and World Bank's Global Data Facility are a significant step in this direction.

At the country level, we urgently need to adopt **a system lens** to statistical capacity development and support **core data and statistical infrastructure**. The COVID-19 crisis provides a timely opportunity to diversify sources of data production while accelerating and mainstreaming the modernisation of statistical processes, in a system-wide manner. However, leveraging digital methods and technologies at scale rests on increased support for interlinking infrastructure and enabling environment.

Finally, catalytic financing coupled with targeted technical support can help spur further **domestic investment, strengthening country ownership** in the long run. To facilitate this, **whole-of-government** approaches to investing in statistical capacity as a core feature of modern governance can make public data systems more resilient.

The COVID-19 crisis serves as a wake-up call to the development data community that investing in fundamentals is the key to sustain returns from investing in frontiers. This includes reforming statistical laws and regulation, developing co-ordination capacity within NSSs and modernising essential ICT infrastructure across the government to make public data systems more resilient.





ASSESSING THE EVOLUTION OF DATA AND STATISTICS FINANCING

ASSESSING THE EVOLUTION OF DATA AND STATISTICS FINANCING

1. COVID-19 HAS ALTERED THE DEVELOPMENT DATA LANDSCAPE

1.1 The poorest regions have the greatest needs for high quality data

More than a year into the pandemic, countries continue to battle the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. As of October 2021, the global case reporting count was over 230 million – a six-fold increase since this time last year – and over 4.8 million deaths have been attributed to the disease (WHO, 2021). According to the latest estimates, global extreme poverty induced by COVID-19 stands close to 100 million, with uneven rebound expected across countries (Mahler, Yonzan, Lakner, Aguilar, & Wu, 2021). Meanwhile, the global health community has also administered over 6.5 billion vaccine doses globally (as of October, 2021), offering hope for many of a return to normality and progress (Our World In Data, 2021).

As policies start to diversify from emergency response to medium-term recovery and long-term resilience, the need and demand for high quality, timely and trusted data continue to soar. This is especially critical in the poorest regions of the world and for vulnerable populations, including women, girls and religious, ethnic and racial minorities – where much less is known about the multidimensional impact of the crisis.

At the same time, national statistical offices (NSOs) – a key pillar of a country's data¹ ecosystem – continue to face challenges of elevated data demands and constrained capacities. As of May 2021, **four in ten** NSOs reported that data collection costs had increased since the beginning of the pandemic. This varies between 61% for NSOs in low- and lower- middle-income countries to 33% for NSOs in high-income countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, NSOs reported a decrease in funding from both

government (71%) and donor resources (59%). The costs associated with training and other capacity development also showed disparity between regions – over 50% of NSOs in sub-Saharan Africa reported an increase, whereas 71% of NSOs in Central and Southern Asia reported that training costs decreased. Driven by limited funding (mostly upper middle-income countries) and reduced face-to-face interaction, census and survey programmes continued to be the most affected statistical operations for most NSOs worldwide (UNSD/World Bank, 2021).

1.2 Seizing opportunities to build back better

While the pandemic has widened fault lines of national statistical systems, it also presents opportunities to make them more responsive, innovative and modern. For instance, 58% of NSOs reported improving their information and communication technology (ICT) readiness between December 2020 and May 2021 (UNSD/World Bank, 2021). Several NSOs responded to new data demands by using alternative methods, primarily phone surveys, administrative data and online surveys (UNSD/World Bank, 2020). Similarly, development agencies have also demonstrated agility in some facets of support to statistical systems. As of October 2020, 37 of 39 members of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA)² established specific responses to support countries combatting COVID-19. Of those, 31 agencies indicated the response took the form of technical assistance to partner countries. Fourteen agencies also provided financial assistance to countries (CCSA/PARIS21, 2020).³ Box 1 presents additional ways in which development agencies adapted support to statistics, based on PRESS 2021 interviews.

The COVID-19 crisis will likely have enduring effects on the production, use and support to data and

¹ "Development data are all data produced nationally, sub-nationally and globally that can be used for setting development targets, measuring progress towards them and implementing development goals. Official data constitute the backbone of development data. While governments, donors, the private sector or civil society groups can all produce data and statistics relevant to development, the production of most datasets and statistics that are key to development policy making – statistics on the economy, incomes and poverty, health, and education, etc. – have traditionally formed part of official statistics." (OECD, 2020)

² The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) has 45 members. It , and promotes interagency co-ordination and co operation on statistical programmes and consistency in statistical practices and development. To that end, it fosters good practices in statistical activities of international organisations and contributes actively to the development of a coordinated global statistical system producing and disseminating high-quality statistics.

³ The survey was prepared and implemented by PARIS21 with the support of the World Bank and UNSD in the context of the CCSA. Overall, 87% of CCSA members responded to the survey (39 out of 45 members).

statistics. There is now a need to re-examine the state of financing to data and statistics to build back better. Adopting a new lens to investigating and understanding the new trend and mechanism of funding flows and support to statistics outside of the previous reporting can highlight neglected investment priorities and reinforce strengthened co operation among development partners. In this way, it can mobilise effective support for development data. A renewed emphasis on building resilience – the ability to withstand, absorb and leverage shocks – holds the key to robust national data and statistical systems.

The main findings from our analysis of funding flows to data and statistics, and their consequent implications are presented in the sub-sections below. The quantitative findings are drawn primarily from data analysis based on the PRESS database and methodology (see Annex 1), complemented by

expert interviews. The first part of the report from Sections 2 to 5 assesses the evolution of financing for data and statistics. Section 2 presents funding flows for data and statistics in the time of COVID-19. Section 3 elaborates on investment trends in new data sources, digital technologies and administrative data and includes a new section on financing towards CRVS systems. Section 4 elucidates on the increasingly fragmented financing landscape for data and statistics by presenting findings related to partial support towards data and statistics. Section 5 concludes the first part of the report by discussing a few ways to build resilient data and statistical systems based on previous findings. Part two of the report from sections 7-9 presents general trends on financing for data and statistics. Apart from overall support (Section 7), this part also presents funding towards gender data and statistics (Section 7), funding by recipients – such as SIDS and fragile states (Section 8) and by providers (Section 9).

“ We need to invest in basic data infrastructure that links and integrates data across domains and sectors. Currently, no one owns the gaps between different data domains in a country – this needs to be bridged. So it is likely that health data may win after COVID – and that funding may not be evenly distributed – but this can be trickled out to the system. The more we bring NSOs in the picture when working at the sectoral level, the better chances we have to avoid siloes.”

-Anu Peltola, Acting Head of Statistics, UNCTAD



BOX 1. SUPPORTING DATA AND STATISTICS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 – SELECTED VIEWS FROM PARTNERS

Experts interviewed for this report agreed that COVID-19 was likely to have an enduring impact on how statistical capacity is developed and supported. Highlights of how some agencies adapted during the crisis are presented below:

- ▶ As part of its comprehensive COVID-19 response, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations structured data for its decision-making programmes around four components: conducting rapid, repeated assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity; leveraging innovative data sources to monitor the impact of COVID-19; adapting agricultural data collection methods to meet new demands, while continuing technical assistance on agricultural surveys; and providing evidence-based policy support for post-COVID-19 economic and social recovery (FAO, 2020).
- ▶ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) leveraged earlier investment in new methods and technology to deliver support during the pandemic to partner countries. For instance, ADB received increased demands for e-learning resources from partner countries, and developed trainings in several areas. These included training on Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX); statistical legislation in collaboration with other agencies; and computer-assisted web interviews, telephone interviews and personal interviewing. ADB also plans to launch new projects in tourism statistics, as well as on smart health data and other innovative data projects.⁴
- ▶ Training institutes such as the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) faced urgent needs to adjust their entire training modality from face-to-face to virtual. With this shift, “there was a marked decrease in costs associated in delivering trainings and more inclusion in terms of countries and participants who could attend virtually. At the same time, there were drawbacks observed in delivering practical modules that require more hands-on participation.”⁵ Similarly, SESRIC reported that bilateral trainings, the dominant mechanism pre-pandemic, was replaced by one-to-many trainings. Further, as a response to the COVID-19 crisis, it developed “new modules for training content, such as on the use of administrative data, civil registration and vital statistical (CRVS), remote data collection”.⁶ Some interviewees pointed out the need to adapt how the impact of virtual or hybrid models of learning will be measured. Most experts agreed that a hybrid model to deliver trainings and a broad participant base beyond just the NSO would be optimal in the post-COVID scenario.

⁴ Stefan Schipper and Pamela Lapitan, Asian Development Bank. Interview. 16 July 2021.

⁵ Makoto Shimizu, Officer-in-charge, UN Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific. Interview. 18 July 2021.

⁶ Nenden Shanty, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries. Interview. 5 August 2021.

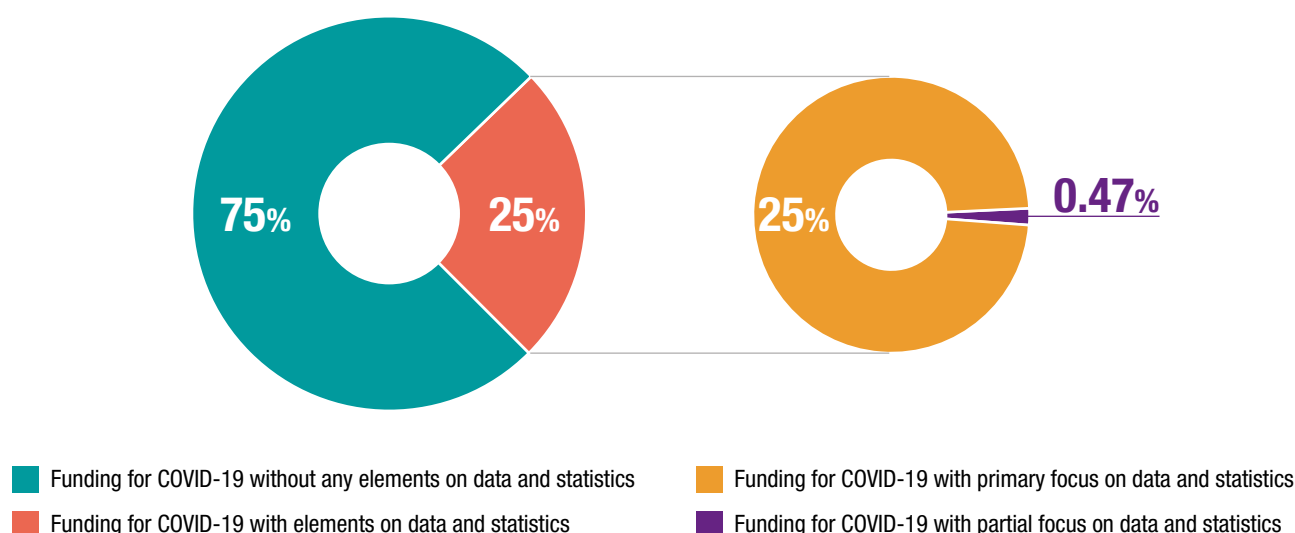
2. FUNDING TO DATA AND STATISTICS DURING THE PANDEMIC

2.1 The gulf between primary and partial support to statistics during COVID-19

More than one year into the pandemic, funding to data and statistics remains relatively unchanged, and as inadequate as it was prior to the pandemic. This finding is based on early data on development projects reported to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). As of 3rd October 2021, of the total projects that represent COVID-19 related financing, around three-quarters have *no component* related to data and statistics.

This signifies looming gaps in support to development data, despite their vital importance in informing response and recovery policies. Funding to projects with a primary focus on data and statistics comprises only 0.47% (USD 491 million) of reported funding for COVID-19-related projects, showing negligible change from 0.44% in August 2020 (PARIS21, 2020). With respect to projects with at least one element related to data and statistics (henceforth “partial” support), the share of data and statistics projects is almost one-quarter (USD 25.6 billion) of total development aid related to COVID-19 (See Figure 2.1). This gap in funding to projects with primary and partial focus is also mirrored by overall financing trends to data and statistics (See Section 4 for details).

Figure 2.1. Partial vs. primary support to data and statistics related to COVID-19, October 2021



Note: Number of projects in October 2021 = 23 789 and in August 2020 = 52 111; the total amount represented by the pie charts is USD 109 billion (left) and USD 26 billion (right).

Source: Authors' calculations based on IATI data as of October 2021. IATI data can be downloaded through its API or through its data portal: <https://iatistandard.org/en/>.

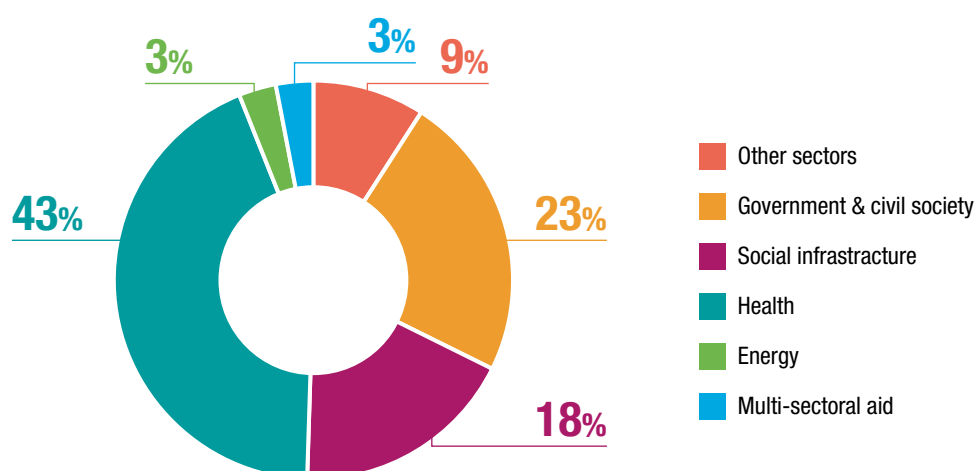
2.2 Sectoral shifts in COVID-19 related funding to data and statistics

A substantial share of COVID-19 related support went to health, and this has increased since 2020. Health-related funding to data and statistics comprised about 43% of the USD 26 billion partial support related to COVID-19 (IATI, 2021) (see Figure 2.2). Further, since 2020, primary support to data and statistics in the health sector as a share of COVID-19-related funding has increased from 10% to 34% (IATI, 2021) (see Figure 2.3).

These trends are expected and in awareness of the important of the health data system to inform emergency response in light of the surge in demand for pandemic-related health data and policy making.

As the impact of the crisis is multidimensional, the importance of investment in data across different sectors cannot be overstated. Employment shocks, food insecurity, disruptions in education and trade induced by COVID-19 influence each other. They also have specific, yet interlinked, effects on vulnerable groups such as women and girls, and people with disabilities. However, financing flows to all other sectors except for health appear to have declined as part of COVID-19 related funding to data and statistics (IATI, 2021) (see Figure 2.3). The drop is highest in social infrastructure and protection (13 percent age points), followed by multi-sectoral support (9 percent age points). This calls for better data to inform broad recovery measures that cut across different policy priorities and that enable intersectional and inclusive social protection.

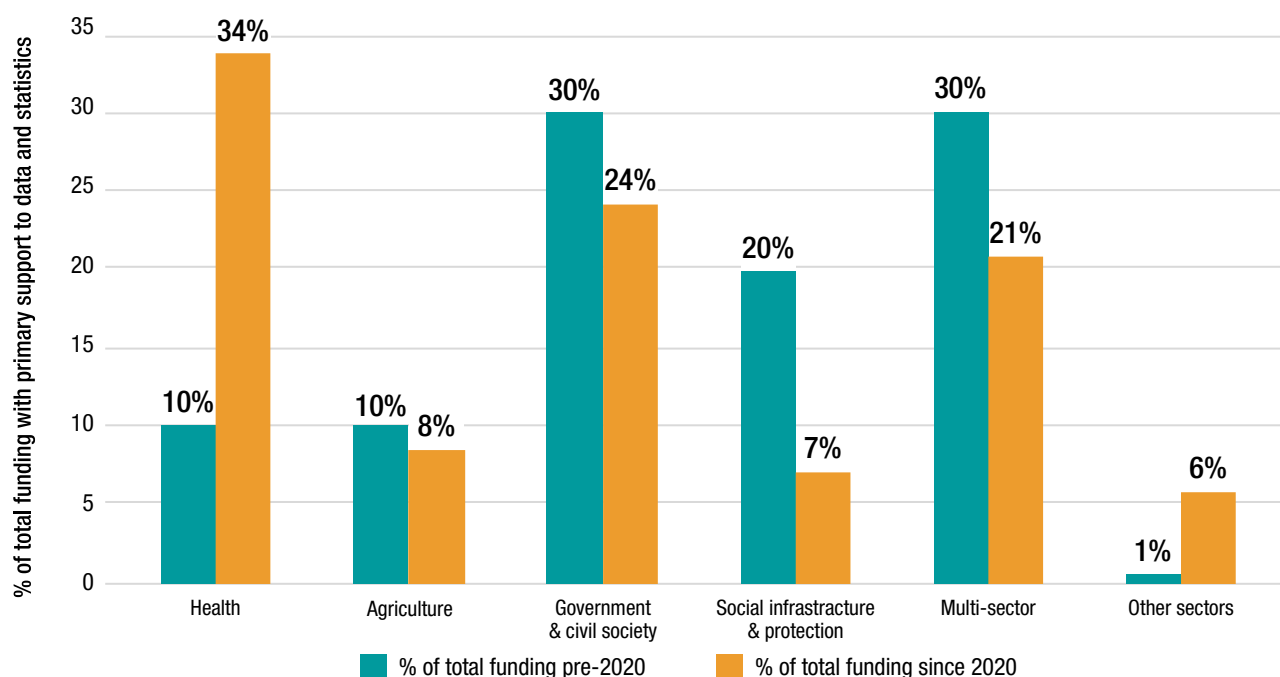
Figure 2.2. COVID-19 related funding with partial support to data and statistics by sector, as of October 2021



Note: The total amount represented by the pie chart is USD 26 billion.

Source: Authors' calculations based on IATI data as of October 2021. IATI data can be downloaded through its API or through its data portal: <https://iatistandard.org/en/>

Figure 2.3. COVID-19 related funding with primary support to data and statistics



Note: The total amount represented in the chart is USD 1.32 billion for the blue bars and USD 491 million for the orange bars. Percentage change is calculated based on average of commitments to data and statistics for 2017-20 (pre-2020) and 2020-21.

Source: Authors' calculations based on IATI data as of October 2021. IATI data can be downloaded through its API or through its data portal: <https://iatistandard.org/en/>

Setting short-term priorities for development financing in light of COVID-19 is inevitable. However, the long-term impact of increased attention and support to health-related data for overall data and statistical system strengthening remains unclear. On the one hand, well-coordinated investment in health data and information systems can be leveraged to galvanise support for foundational data infrastructure.

On the other, several experts interviewed expressed a concern about possible crowding out of support for important sectors, especially cross-cutting systemic investment. This has dire implications as countries move from the emergency response phase to the longer-term recovery from the crisis.

3. OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCELERATE INVESTMENT IN DIGITALISATION, FRONTIER TECHNOLOGY AND ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

3.1 Funding to new data sources and methods is on the rise, while system-wide investment in modernisation has decreased

Disruptions induced by COVID-19 may turn out to be one of the biggest catalysts for modernising core statistical operations and reforming organisational processes of national statistical offices (NSOs).

By May 2021, surveys and census programmes were most heavily affected by the pandemic (in 73% and 64% of countries, respectively). This was predominantly due to reduced face-to-face data collection, funding constraints and mobility or transport-related restrictions. In response, NSOs adapted by implementing new data sourcing methods, investing in modernising their information technology infrastructure and developing new partnerships, among other initiatives.

For instance, about half of NSOs in low and lower middle-income countries used mobile phone data to collect information on COVID-19 and its impacts (UNSD/World Bank, 2020). NSOs also demonstrated agility in reforming their internal processes.

More than half (58%) of NSOs reported having improved their overall information and communication technology (ICT) readiness in the previous six months. Most of this internal digitalisation was driven by deploying new collaborative software (in about 85% of NSOs) and by providing new equipment to staff (in about 73% of NSOs) (UNSD/World Bank, 2021).

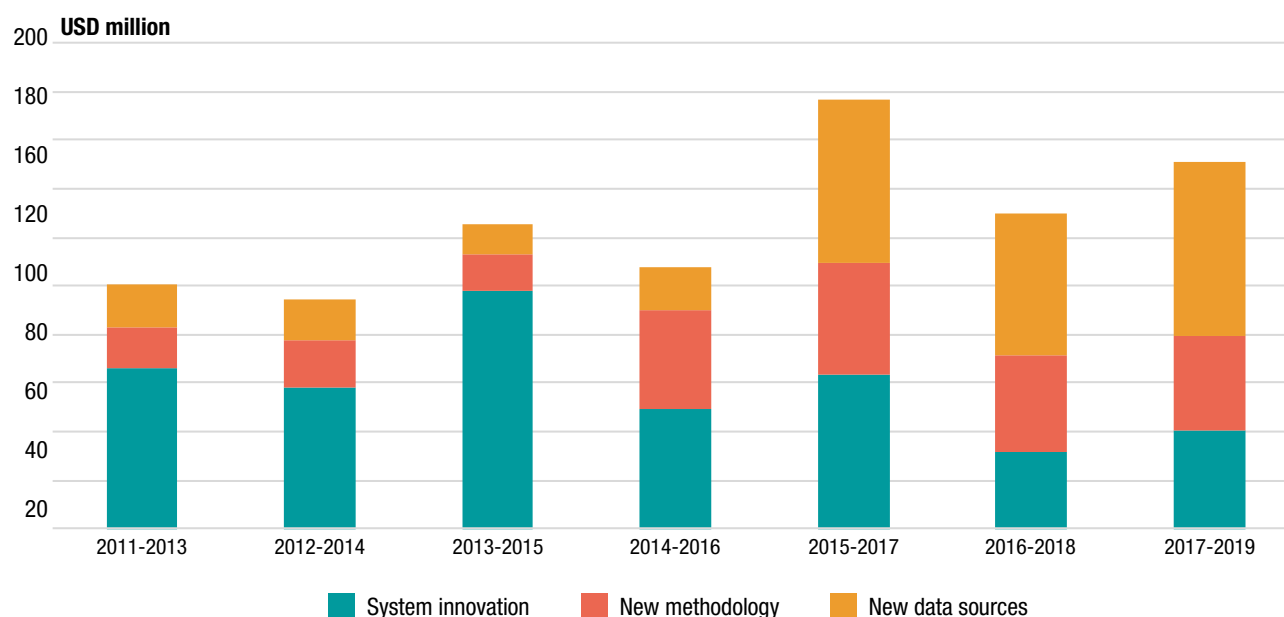
The international community and aid providers played an important role in enabling NSOs to deploy new methods and technology to adapt to the new reality. More than three-quarters (77%) of all NSOs reported their regular budget was the primary source to enhance ICT readiness in light of the pandemic. However, 57% of NSOs from low- and lower-middle-income countries reported that international partners and donors provided funding (UNSD/World Bank, 2021). By October 2020, most NSOs in these countries had established new partnerships with international partners to develop or implement new methods (about 90%) and to access technology (over 80%) to address pandemic-related data gaps (UNSD/World Bank, 2020).

In many cases, the benefits of new technology were harnessed in time for the pandemic. Partly due to the statistical modernisation agenda, the new data sources and methods has received increased attention and investment with the advent of the data revolution, laying the groundwork for reform. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been advocating for smart agricultural data⁷, remote sensing data and other innovative methods with partner countries. Hence, the FAO took advantage of these programmes during the pandemic to produce data on nutrition, food systems and food insecurity. Data from PRESS show that international funding flows towards digitalisation, as well as new data sources and methods, have increased by USD 48 million (49%) from 2011 to 2019 (see line chart depicted “total funding” in Figure 3.1). This finding indicates that global advocacy and research and development in leveraging new sources, methods and frontier technology for innovation in statistical processes is taking root gradually.



⁷ Most notably through the 50X2030 initiative, <https://www.fao.org/new-york/events/detail/en/c/1263727/>.

Figure 3.1. Investment in digital technology, new data sources and methods between 2011-19



Note: System innovation includes funding to infrastructure, new management structure of official statistics (e.g. The Generic Statistical Business Process Model – GSBPM), data revolution and strategic planning and transition for big data. Methodology innovation includes funding to new methodologies such as machine learning, computer-assisted telephone interviewing, computer-assisted web interviews, etc. Innovation in data sources includes funding to non-traditional data sources, including satellite data, mobile data, bank transaction data, etc. See Annex 1 for detailed keyword list.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System, PRESS survey and International Aid Transparency Initiative database (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).

A consistent theme from interviews was the need to adopt **a systems approach to modernisation**. Development Gateway's CEO Josh Powell heads an organisation that builds digital tools to spur data use for decision making.⁸ He cautioned that heightened interest in real-time and granular data may only superficially spur investment in speculative tools. There may not be commensurate funding for foundational infrastructure and a systems-wide approach to modernisation. PRESS data also show that some emerging areas have received more attention than others. International support to new data sources and new methodology, for example, increased by 134% between 2015-19 (USD 40 million). Meanwhile, funding for systems reform declined by 53% (USD 25 million) in the same period (Figure 3.1).

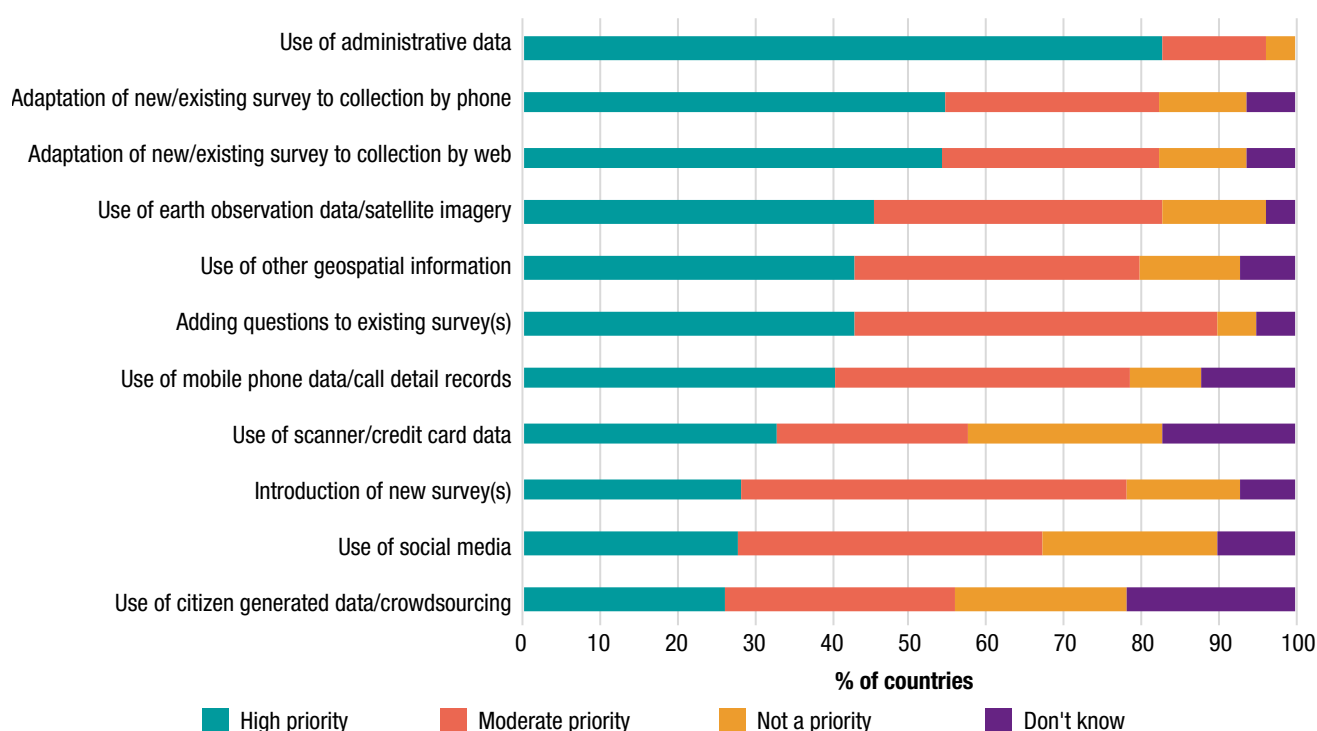
Further, returns from investing in frontier technology can only be realised by **fostering an enabling environment** to scale and sustain their implementation. In October 2020, most NSOs formed new partnerships for different purposes to bridge data gaps from the pandemic. About 70% of NSOs sought to access new data sources and develop/implement new methods for data production. Conversely, over 50% of NSOs wanted to access and use technology. However, more than

60% of NSOs reported challenges in formalising institutional collaborative arrangements with the private and public sector. Other hurdles included amendment of the legislative framework, lack of practical skills and lack of international guidance on innovative data solutions. Notably, in the case of building partnerships with international partners, NSOs reported the main challenge was securing funding (UNSD/World Bank, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis provides a timely opportunity to accelerate and mainstream efforts to modernise statistical processes. Most NSOs have reported plans to develop and use new data sources and methods of data production as a priority over the next three years. In this way, they can expand capacities to meet pandemic-induced challenges, as well as the data demands of Agenda 2030 (see Figure 3.2). This calls for adopting a systems-lens to digital transformation of national statistical systems. It also requires fostering an enabling environment to integrate the use of new tools and technology into regular statistical operations for longer-term returns.

⁸ Interview on 19 July 2021.

Figure 3.2. Priorities for new sources and methods of data production



Note: The total number of responses is 98. "Other geospatial information" includes elevation and depth, functional areas, physical infrastructure, transport networks, etc.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a global survey of national statistical offices in August 2021 by (PARIS21/UNSD/World Bank, forthcoming).

Original question: "In the next 3 years, does your NSO want to expand capacity in the following areas to respond to the new data demands of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development/Sustainable Development Goals and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic?"

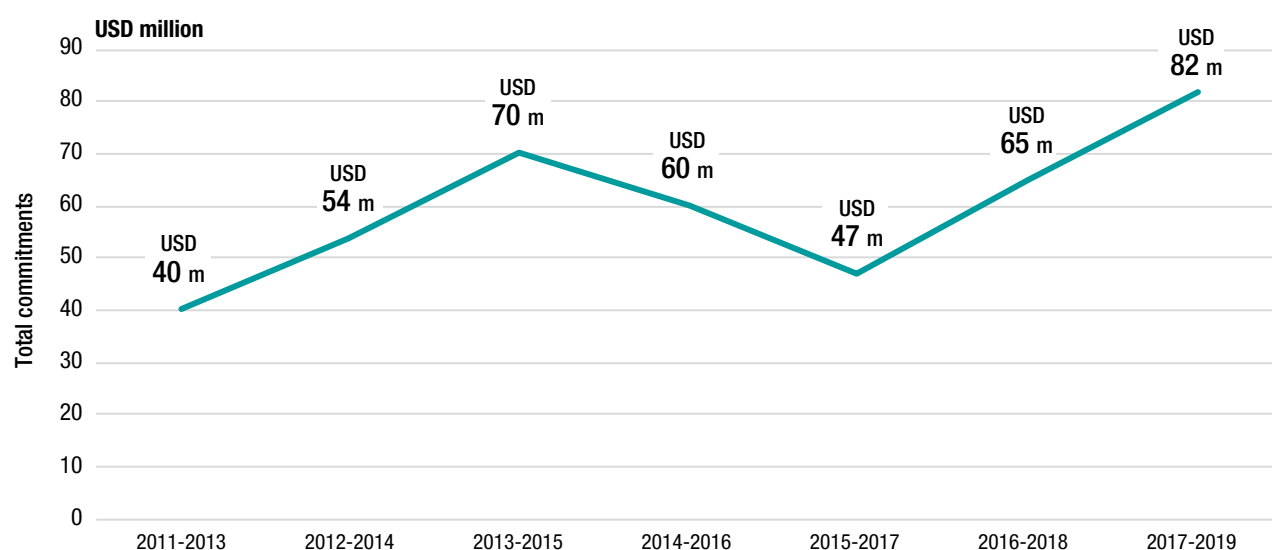
3.2 Funding to administrative data systems is steadily increasing

The COVID-19 crisis brought to light the critical role played by administrative data systems, which can be viewed as a secondary data source to generate official statistics in countries with less strong national statistical systems. While surveys and censuses were widely disrupted due to restrictions on face-to-face data collection, the maintenance of statistical registers was the least affected operation during the pandemic and can be used to generate important insights (UNSD/World Bank, 2021). Functional civil registration and vital statistical (CRVS) systems were also an integral source of information during the pandemic for mortality statistics and data related to cause of death (See "spotlight" at the end of this section for further details on funding to CRVS systems).

Support to surveys and censuses have traditionally outweighed support to administrative data systems, but funding to projects related to administrative data has increased steadily over the past decade.

According to estimates from the PRESS database, funding to administrative data systems has doubled between 2011 and 2019. On average, funding to administrative data grew by 8% annually between 2011 and 2019 compared to close to zero growth in funding to surveys and censuses. Funding to administrative data peaked in 2017-2019; USD 82 million was the highest three-year average of support in the past decade (Figure 3.3). However, this is still amounts to only one fourth of external funding for census and surveys made in the same period. The difference between absolute funding levels for surveys and administrative data can, in part, be attributed to the nature of the data sources and their relevance for different stakeholders. Governments and statistical offices often highlight the importance of data disaggregated at relevant administrative levels of the country for effective policy making. However, aid providers may be driven by data relevant for international comparisons, or specialised project-related data; this can lead to higher investments in surveys (OECD, 2021).

Figure 3.3. Funding to administrative data systems doubled between 2011-2019



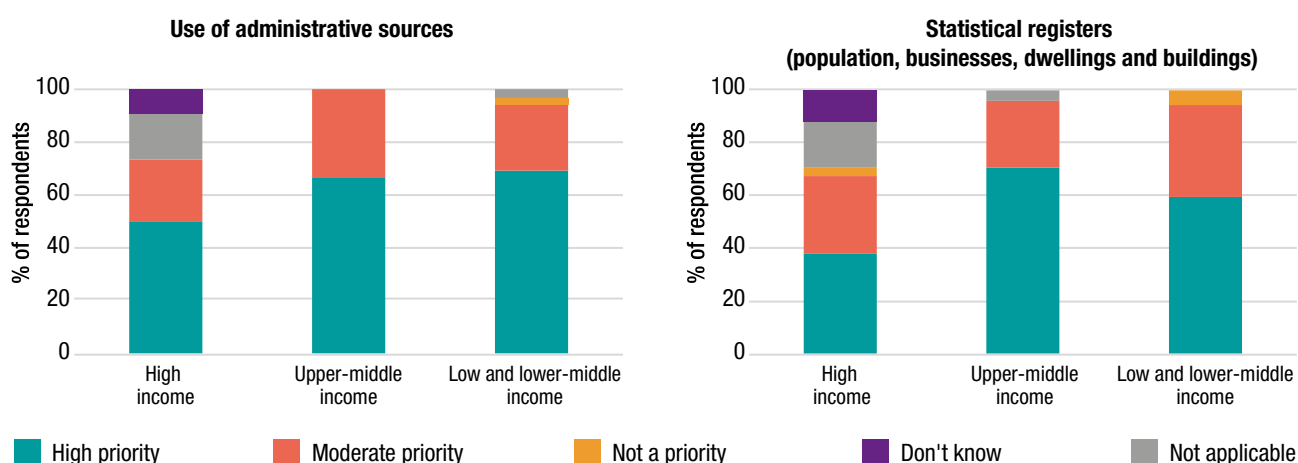
Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS dataset

Note: The projects are identified being related to "administrative data" using their project title; CRS purpose code and text analysis of their descriptions. Detailed methodology is provided in Annex 1

Post-COVID, the reliance and interest in administrative data systems will increase, but additional funding requirements persist. Over 80% of NSOs report "use of administrative data" as a "high priority" for capacity development in the next three years to meet new data demands, as

depicted in Figure 3.4 (PARIS21/UNSD/World Bank, forthcoming^[10]). However, at the same time, over 50% of NSOs in low and middle-income countries urgently require additional funds for administrative sources and statistical registers.

Figure 3.4. NSOs in low and middle-income countries urgently require additional funds for administrative sources and statistical registers in the next three years



Note: The total number of responses is 98. The horizontal axis in the chart represents countries grouped by the World Bank income group (FY21), and the vertical axis denotes percentage of respondents.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a global survey of national statistical offices in August 2021 by PARIS21/UNSD/World Bank (CT-GAP survey - August 2021, forthcoming). The original question "In the next three years, does your NSO require additional funds to cover the following statistical production programmes?"

Investing in administrative data also provides an opportunity to reinforce a systems approach in statistical capacity strengthening of countries. First, aid provided to support administrative sources leads to production of data and statistics that may be better aligned with long-term country priorities – and hence advance country ownership (OECD, 2021). Second, as noted by Srdjan Mrkic, Chief of Demographic Statistics at UNSD,⁹ the direct and indirect reliance of NSOs on administrative data systems to produce statistics calls for a wider lens for funding of data and statistical systems.

When using administrative sources directly, NSOs must build on registers and generate statistics (such as with demographic or health statistics). Indirectly, NSOs may rely on infrastructure that supports administrative sources, even when the recorded administrative data are not used directly.

For instance, NSOs may need access to the reporting mechanism of a phenomenon (for instance, violence against women) from the relevant line ministries. This can help build up statistical forms, which eventually become the source of data that the NSO processes, compiles and produces.

Depending on direct or indirect use of administrative data, the associated costs and funding needs are different. For direct access, the costs may be minimal; NSOs may only need access to the administrative source (say, by law, or another regulatory instrument). However, when relying on the supporting infrastructure, costs related to co-ordination capacity may be higher. To leverage the full potential of administrative sources, developing statistical capacity must also look at the underlying infrastructure and enabling environment required to generate these data in the first place.



⁹ Interview on 18 August, 2021.

SPOTLIGHT

SUPPORTING DATA AND STATISTICS THAT LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND – FUNDING TO CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS (CRVS)

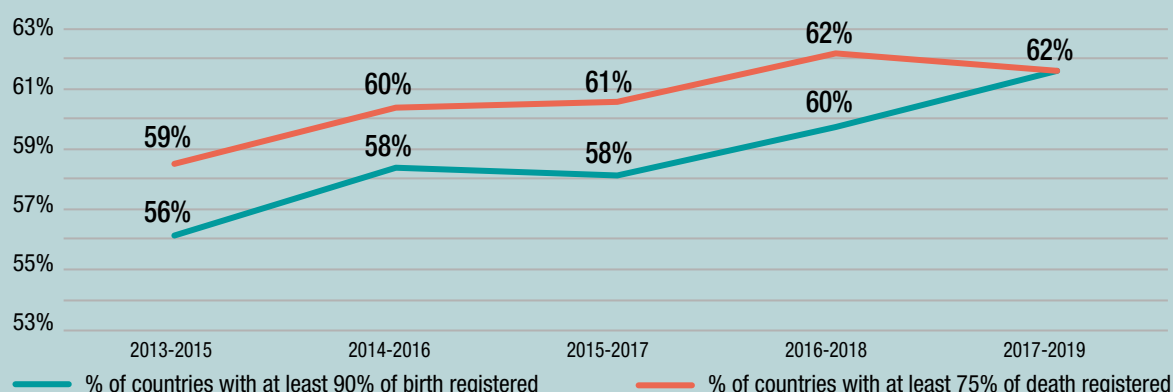
“CRVS systems are the gold standard for population-related data. They are also the only tool of protection that links a person to the state through their life’s course. They form the backbone for administration in a country. CRVS systems are indispensable beyond the current crisis. They should be the first point of investment for data production and developing a country’s statistical capacity, alongside the NSO.”

–Irina Dincu, Former Senior Programme Specialist
at the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems

Perhaps no other statistic highlighted the need for better development data amid the COVID-19 pandemic as dramatically as the absence of reliable death rates in many parts of the world. Global excess mortality estimates from the World Health Organization suggest that 1.2 million more people died to COVID-19 in 2020 than officially reported (WHO, 2021). However, even these estimates are not completely reliable because of gaps in underlying data, often retrieved from civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems.¹⁰ After the worst of the pandemic is over, the world will still lack precise understanding of how, when and where people died during this period globally. This gap in knowledge is a huge testament to the importance of functional CRVS systems.

While the COVID-19 crisis has brought the need for effective CRVS systems to the forefront, limited CRVS coverage is not a new concern, particularly in low and middle-income countries. For instance, while 98% of deaths are registered in Europe, only 10% are registered in Africa (WHO, 2021). Death registration coverage also trails behind birth registrations, which (while still largely inadequate) have dramatically improved over the last several decades (see Figure 3.5). Ineffective CRVS systems represent a continuing threat to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ambition to leave no one behind. This is especially the case for vulnerable populations such as those in conflict, emergencies and fragile settings (Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems, 2021). The monitoring of SDG progress also relies on CRVS, as 30% of SDG indicators need data from well functioning CRVS systems (Mills et al., 2017_[15]).

Figure 3.5. Death registration coverage trails behind birth registrations globally



Source: Authors' calculations based on data on SDG Indicator 17.19.2, retrieved from SDG indicator database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg>) on 4 October 2021

¹⁰ Civil registration is defined by the UN as: "... the continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events (live births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriages, and divorces) and other civil status events pertaining to the population as provided by decree, law or regulation, in accordance with the legal requirements in each country."

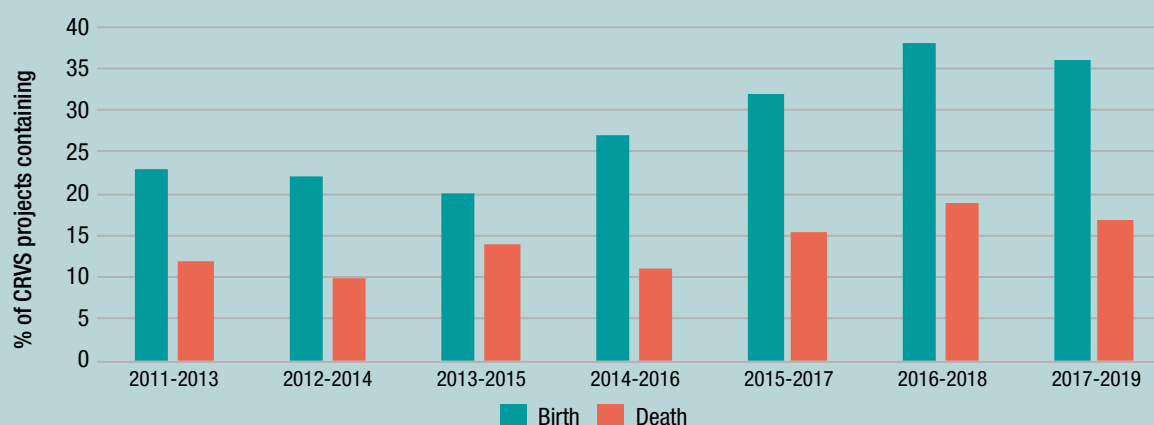
The broader definition of a vital statistics system from the UN is: "... the total process of: 1) collecting information by civil registration or enumeration on the frequency or occurrence of specified and defined vital events, as well as relevant characteristics of the events themselves and the person or persons concerned; and 2) compiling, processing, analysing, evaluating, presenting and disseminating these data in statistical form."

"The main source of vital statistics is records of vital events from civil registration, which involves the continuous gathering of information on all relevant vital events occurring within the boundaries of a country" (UNSD, 2001).

Funding to systems for birth and death registrations reflect enormous disparities. PRESS 2021 estimates that overall funding to projects with CRVS components has remained relatively unchanged for the past decade (averaging USD 2.43 billion¹¹ per year, with an annual growth rate of 1.34% between 2011 and 2020). Within this amount, funding to projects with components on birth registration increased by over 25% in the same period, while support to projects with death registration components only increased by 6%. For 2018-20, funding to death registration systems was about half of that for birth registration (see Figure 3.6).

This disparity can partly be attributed to the focus on birth registrations within the SDGs. Goal 16 explicitly targets “legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030” and is monitored by “Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age”. Similarly, SDG target 17.19, which focuses on support to statistical capacity building in developing countries, is monitored by the indicator “proportion of countries that have achieved 100% birth registration and 80% death registration”.

Figure 3.6. Funding for birth registration far surpassed funding for death registration

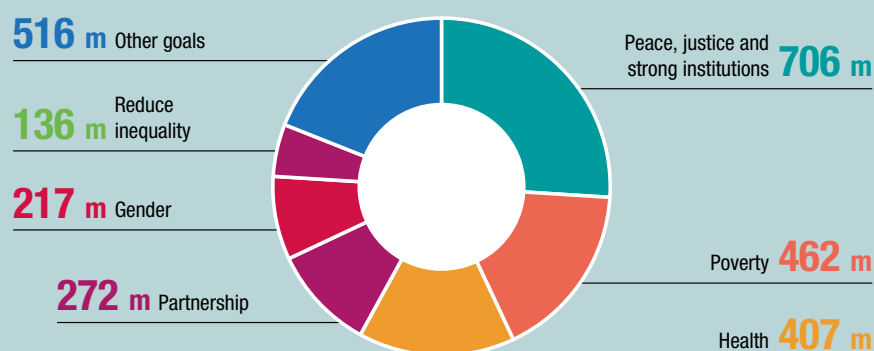


Note: See Annex 1 for details on how PRESS 2021 estimates funding to projects with CRVS components.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from OECD's Creditor Reporting System.

The breakdown of CRVS-related projects by SDG markers indicates that over the past decade “peace, justice and strong institutions” (Goal 16) received the highest funding – at over USD 700 million. This is followed by Poverty (Goal 1) at over USD 460 million and Health (Goal 3) at over USD 400 million (see Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7. International development projects with activities in CRVS, by sector (USD million)



Note: Total amount USD 2.8 billion. Years 2011-20. See Annex 1 for details on methodology.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from OECD's Creditor Reporting System.

¹¹ This is the total amount of funding to projects with CRVS components. The actual budget allocation to CRVS activities is much lower.

Development partners are contributing to resource mobilisation and capacity development of CRVS systems. The World Bank and the World Health Organization have developed a Global Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Scaling Up Investment Plan (2015 to 2024) (World Bank/WHO, 2014^[16]).

Other efforts include: the multi-stakeholder global partnership Global Financing Facility with a focus on low and lower middle-income countries with catalytic financing and technical assistance to strengthen health systems (including CRVS) (World Bank, 2021^[17]); the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), which recommends that grant recipients allocate up to 1% of grant resources to strengthen CRVS (Global Fund, 2019^[18]).

Apart from health, the legal identity agenda is another common entry point through which support to CRVS systems is mobilised. The World Bank's Identification for Development (ID4D) Initiative¹² supports countries to build inclusive and trusted identification systems, including civil registration, using innovative digital and other solutions across sectors.

The **UN Legal Identity Agenda** also takes a holistic approach to civil registration of all vital events, production of vital statistics, and establishment and maintenance of population registers and identity management apparatus from birth to death. The agenda urges members to adopt full interoperability between these functions simultaneously in accordance with international standards and recommendations.

Private foundations and Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members are also playing an increasingly important role in supporting CRVS systems. PRESS 2021 estimates the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided about USD 290 million between 2017 and 2019 to projects with CRVS components – second only to over USD 400 million by the Global Fund. The Bloomberg Philanthropies **Data for Health** Initiative has partnered with low- and middle-income countries to dramatically improve health data and bolster the supply of public health information through strengthened CRVS systems.¹³ Bloomberg Philanthropies also plans to significantly scale up funding for CRVS, including inequality assessments, to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission on Asia and the Pacific.¹⁴ This will be used to strengthen partnership, knowledge sharing and direct technical support to countries, including components on training of trainers at sub-national level. It will also help bring together policy makers to enhance data use and demand. Both components will help ensure sustainability. Among DAC members, Canada is a leading aid provider to CRVS, with about USD 120 million to projects with CRVS components between 2017–19. More than half of Canada's official development assistance (ODA) for data and statistics goes to strengthen population and health data, especially CRVS. Italy and Switzerland also explicitly note CRVS as a priority as part of their ODA to data and statistics (OECD, 2021).

There is a long way to go in building effective CRVS systems, particularly among low- and middle-income countries. According to an estimate, only USD 1.5 billion in development assistance, matched by an equal level of domestic funding, is needed between now and 2030 to build the requisite systems in 77 of the countries most in-need. However, despite generous initiatives since 2014, the funding required for CRVS investments falls short by more than 85% (Espey, 2019). It is critical to scale up funding for CRVS systems to ensure social and political inclusion and leave no one behind.

¹² See <https://id4d.worldbank.org/>

¹³ Jennifer Ellis, Director, Data for Health Initiative, Bloomberg Philanthropies. Interview. 6 August, 2021.

¹⁴ Petra Nahmias, Chief, Population and Social Statistics Section, UN ESCAP. Interview 23 July 2021

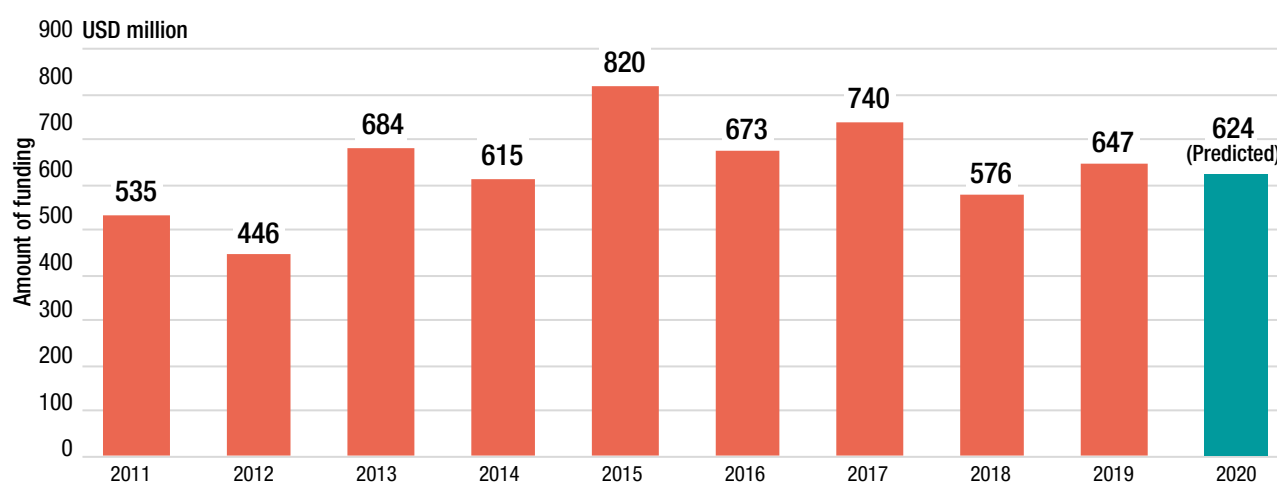
4. An increasingly diffuse funding landscape for data and statistics

Previous PRESS editions estimate that total financial support to data and statistics (as a primary focus) from providers has remained stagnant at USD 600–700 million. According to PRESS 2021, the total global commitments to statistics in **2019** were equivalent to **USD 647 million (in 2019 prices)**.¹⁵ This is only a modest increase of USD 16 million comparing with the annual average between 2016–2018, and only half of the amount required for implementing the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (PARIS21, 2020). This 2019 estimate is close to the nowcasted figure of USD 689 million¹⁶ (within an 8% confidence

interval), as presented for the first time in PRESS 2020 (PARIS21, 2020^[7]).

The stagnation in core funding flows to data and statistics will likely continue. Applying the same nowcasting methodology (see Annex 1) for **2020**, support to statistics is estimated at **USD 624 million** (see Figure 4.1). The persistence of this downward trend poses a significant barrier to statistical capacity development in low and middle-income countries, where national statistical offices (NSOs) have not yet managed to recover from disruptions induced by COVID-19 in many of their core operations (UNSD/World Bank, 2021); (PARIS21/UNSD/World Bank, forthcoming).

Figure 4.1. Global commitments to data and statistics have not increased since 2015¹⁷



Note: Figures for 2020 are nowcasted based on methodology outlined in PRESS (2020) within the confidence interval of 8%.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database that builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System, PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).

However, the picture of stagnation transforms when observing partial support to data and statistics over the past decade, which has increased significantly. For the first time, PRESS 2021 estimates support to development projects that contain at least one component (see Annex 1) related to data and statistics. In sharp contrast with projects focused on data and statistics (henceforth “primary” support), the “partial” support to data and statistics has increased by 50% between 2011–20 compared to the 10% increase of primary support (see Figure 4.2). This points to the increased datafication of development programmes, while revealing the fragmentation of support to data and statistics at large.

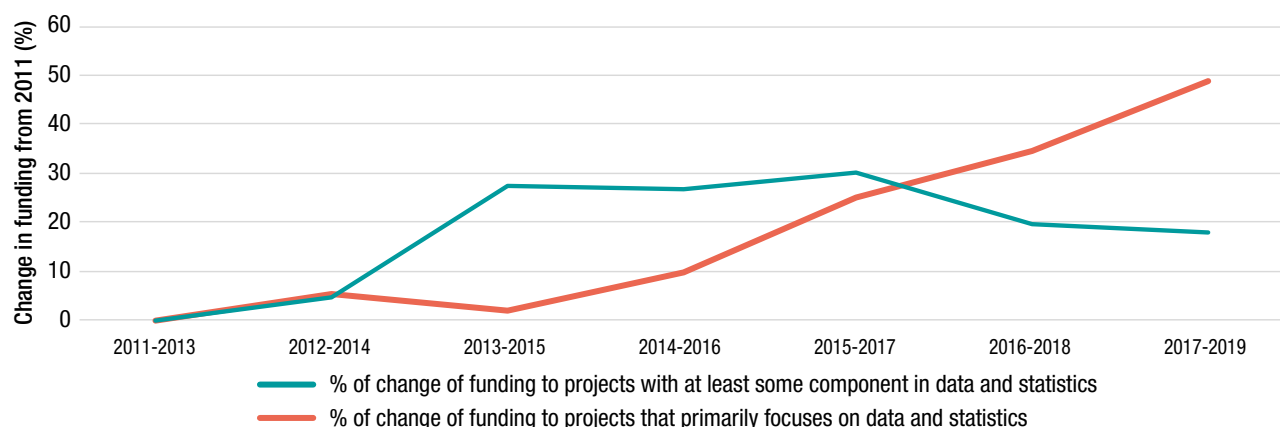
Partial support estimates must be treated cautiously. Only a small share of partial support may flow to strengthening data and statistics of recipient countries, even if the amount dwarfs primary support. Projects that may be informed by or use data and statistics as part of their design and implementation must be distinguished from the true value of incidental partial support to data and statistics. Box 2 describes the preliminary methodology to calculate support to projects with partial funding flows to data and statistics, and presents an upper and lower bound of this share based on some assumptions.

¹⁵ Taking into account aid flows only from the OECD CRS database, total commitment to data and statistics in 2019 were USD 551 million (in 2019 prices) – representing 0.3% of ODA

¹⁶ USD 701 million in constant value (2019 prices).

¹⁷ Data from CRS (<https://stats.oecd.org/DownloadFiles.aspx?DatasetCode=CRS1>), IATI (<https://datastore.iati.cloud/>) and the PARIS21 survey can be updated by the reporting after first entry to reflect the most up-to-date information. Therefore, data in this time series can change in each PRESS, even for the past years.

Figure 4.2. Primary vs. partial support to data and statistics as a share of other development projects



Note: The chart shows how funding has changed over the years since 2011. The 2011 value is USD 535 million for the blue line and USD 2.6 billion for the orange line. The orange line are projects filtered from over 2 million projects from the CRS. The blue line also includes projects from other sources, which are already filtered and thus cannot be used to apply the same filtering method as the CRS.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).

Regardless, the trends in partial support to data and statistics provide a picture of an increasingly diffused development finance landscape. They point to increased datafication of development projects and programming. This trend is partly due to adoption of the data-driven Agenda 2030 with its 17 goals, 169 targets and 231 indicators, which has accelerated the need for development data by actors at local, national and global levels (OECD,

2017). Other factors could include the rise of support for “evidence-informed” policy making among countries and development partners; widespread implementation of results-based monitoring and impact evaluation among aid providers; and the data revolution, which presents opportunities in terms of new sources, tools and technology to generate and disseminate data.

BOX 2. DETECTING “PARTIAL” SUPPORT TO DATA AND STATISTICS

What are projects with “partial” support to data and statistics?

- ▶ Partial support means at least one component or activity of the reported projects is dedicated to data and statistics. See Table 1 for examples of projects.

How is funding to projects with at least one component related to data and statistics estimated?

- ▶ Partial support to data and statistics is mainly identified through analysing text description of projects reported in the CRS database.
- ▶ The text filter used in this process is similar to the one used to identify primary support to data with one key difference: the threshold for a project to be identified as partial support is lower than for primary support.
- ▶ A consistent time series is established to ensure the correct projects are identified. A combination of manual checking, parameter configuration and statistical testing determines the threshold for partial support.
- ▶ A “blacklist” of text patterns is also created to ensure references to data and statistical facts are not mis-identified as partial support activities.

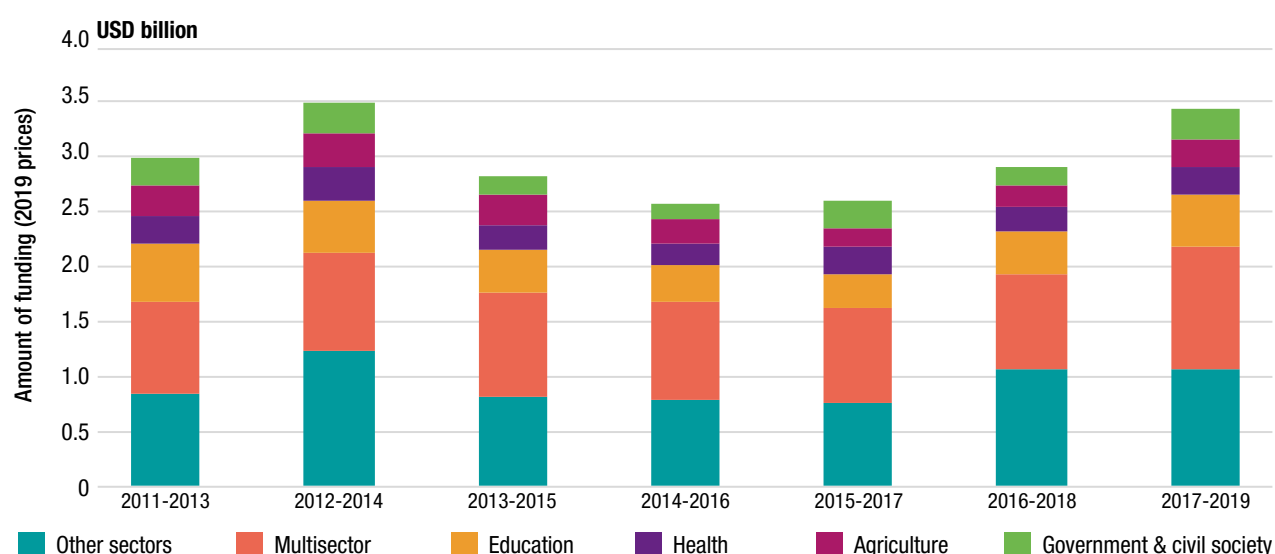
How much of “at least one component” really flows to data and statistical systems?

- ▶ The CRS database does not allow reporters to assign an exact amount to each component under the project or programme. For reporting with less granularity, i.e. at programme or project levels, it is difficult to understand the exact budget allocation to a specific component.
- ▶ By analysing limited reports from same providers in other databases that allows such budget allocation, the share of budget that is partially supporting data and statistics in partial support ranges from 4% to 25%.

Partial funding to data and statistics is increasing over time. Moreover, it is also increasingly spread out over multiple sectors, indicating further dispersion in the financing landscape for development data.¹⁸ Examining the partial support to data and statistics by sector reveals that 30% of projects (USD 1 billion) are marked as “multi-sectoral aid” in 2017-19 (see Figure 4.3). This implies that over one-third of development projects with at least one component related to data and statistics was cross-cutting thematically. Moreover, multi-sectoral

partial support to data and statistics increased by almost 30% between 2011-19. Conversely, funding to traditional sectors (agriculture, health, education, and government and civil society) increased by only 13% between 2011-19 (see Figure 4.4). Notably, funding to “other sectors” is estimated at USD 1.7 billion in 2017-19, with an increase of 34% between 2011-19. This outweighs both multi-sectoral support and funding to traditional sectors. Examples of projects with these sectoral markers are presented in Table 1.

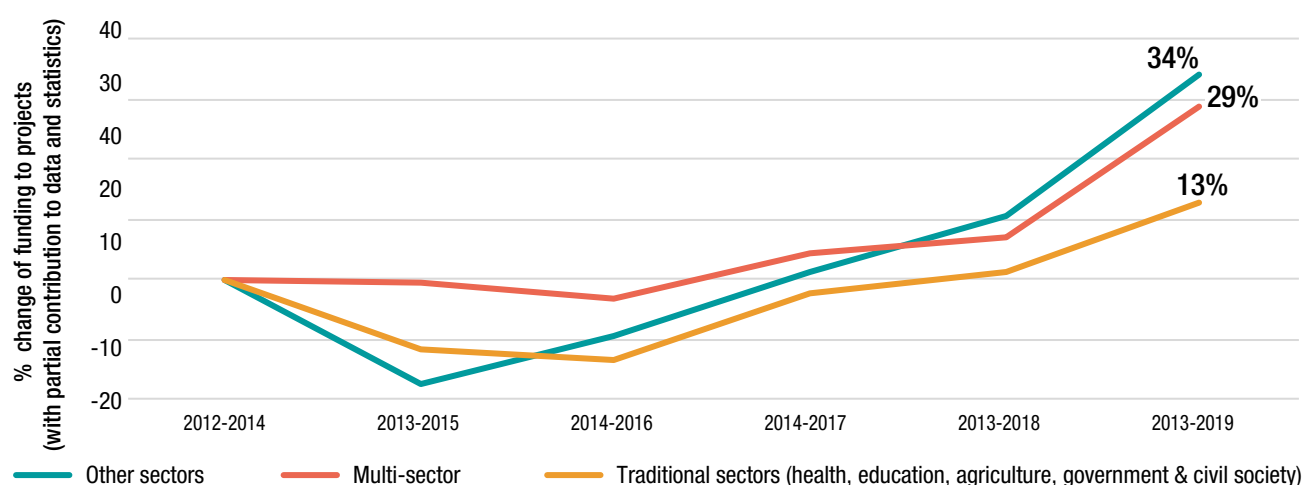
Figure 4.3. Over one-third of support to data and statistics in 2017-19 was multi-sectoral



Note: In comparison, the primary support to data and statistics remained stable over the years. Multi-sectoral support increased slightly from 31% to 35%, while other sectors decreased from 28% to 25%.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activity Database, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>.

Figure 4.4. Partial support to multi-sectoral data and statistics outweighs increased support to traditional sectors



Note: Vertical axis in this chart marks the percentage change in funding to each sector (with at least one component related to data and statistics) since 2012.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activity Database, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>

¹⁸ Sectoral breakdown of primary support to statistics also exhibit a similar distribution and is presented Annex 2.

Table 1. Examples of projects with primary and partial support to data and statistics

Primary support to data and statistics	Partial support to data and statistics		
	Multi-sectoral	Traditional sectors	Other sectors
Geodata for Agriculture and Water: SMARTSeeds Indonesia	Increased multi-sectoral capacity to prevent and address gender-based violence using a continuum approach in all contexts	Improving statistics for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development	Supporting China's transition to low carbon energy Supporting Trade for Development Centre 2018-23
Data For Health: Improving Birth and Death Certificate Systems and Conducting Health Surveys		Impact of azithromycin MDA on mortality among young children in Mali	
Support to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) to progress learning by collecting and analysing global education statistics		Development of Education Strategy in Burkina Faso	

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activity Database, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>.

The above trends present an increasingly complex picture of the financing landscape for data and statistics, most of which is not captured by existing tools and measures. Funding flows with at least one component related to data and statistics form a significant and an increasing portion of investment in development data systems. Further, a significant portion of these ancillary flows cut across sectors.

Taken together, these findings indicate two opposing trends. On the one hand, there is increasing mainstreaming of support to data and statistics across multiple policy objectives. On the other hand, there is increased fragmentation of support to data and statistics, away from building core statistical capacity. Funding for data and statistics by DAC members shows more investment in sectoral data and statistics. While “general capacity building” still accounted for the largest share of ODA for data and statistics in 2019, it declined by more than 27% – from USD 117 million in 2010 (in 2019 prices) to

about USD 82 million by 2019. The overall increase in funding for data and statistics within DAC members was driven by increased investment in other sectoral domains (OECD, 2021).

The scope of reporting and analysis of funding flows for data and statistics should be expanded to uncover the true extent of support for statistical capacity development. The [Clearinghouse on Financing Development Data](#), which seeks to draw granular data from multiple sources and policy sectors, is one mechanism to demystify and enrich understanding of the funding landscape (See Box 3 for details). This will be an important step towards isolating critical funding needs, gaps and impact, thereby helping to mobilise effective support for development data (Bern Network on Financing Data for Development, 2021). The issue will gain further urgency in the post-COVID recovery phase, marked by unintended implications of reprioritised development financing.

“Investing in statistics was easier before – fund a survey, compile results, justify investment. The COVID crisis has shown that this is no longer the case. We don’t have a simple answer to where we should invest in data to get the best return on investment. Resources are getting scarcer and the data ecosystem is becoming more complex. We need to reimagine financing to data and statistics to figure this out.”

–Srdjan Mrkic
Chief of Demographic Statistics, UN Statistics Division

5. Towards smarter investments for enhanced resilience of data and statistical systems

The last decade has witnessed significant developments in financing for data and statistics. On the one hand, donor interest in data-related projects has increased manifold. On the other, financial support to projects with a focus on data and statistics has remained stagnant. The data revolution has multiplied opportunities, modalities and requirements for statistical capacity development. As data and statistics are relevant for all sectors and themes, the number and types of partners that provide general or sectoral support to development data have increased (OECD, 2020). The presence of new and diverse actors, with different priorities, mandates and reporting behaviour, has **increased fragmentation in the financing landscape** for data and statistics.

Past PRESS iterations have made great progress in capturing primary support to statistics, but the new perspective into funding flows illustrates the need to expand the scope of investigations and refine tools. Investment in data and statistics is increasingly embedded in broader development projects. Consequently, efforts to estimate financing flows must shift from estimating support to official statistics to support for development data at large. This calls for a better understanding, **measurement** and targeting of the funding flows for capacity development for data and statistical systems in the country beyond the national statistical office (NSO).

Global initiatives have also been recently launched to mobilise effective support for development data. These aim to address the challenges of better **targeting, co-ordinating and scaling up** funding for data and statistical systems (see Box 3). Further, a few recurrent themes emerged from the interviews to suggest better investments in data at the **country level**:

- Now more than ever, it is vital to **strengthen the foundation** for statistical capacity development. Several expert interviewees emphasised that investing in fundamentals is key to sustain returns from investing in frontiers. The benefits from supporting foundational statistical capacity remain largely untapped in low- and middle-income countries where significant gaps in basic data persist. Core country data systems need more and better support to complement modernisation instead of “convenient techno-solutionism”.¹⁹ This includes aligning investment to country

priorities that can create an enabling environment to sustainably leverage the benefits from digital technology and non-traditional sources. For instance, in the next three years, over 80% of NSOs plan to invest in co ordination, about 60% in statistical legislation or regulatory frameworks and over 50% in public-private partnerships (PARIS21/UNSD/World Bank, forthcoming).

- Apart from improving the quantity and quality of direct support to data and statistical systems, many interviewees emphasised the role of **catalytic investments that can spur further domestic financing** and enhance country ownership. For instance, Bloomberg Philanthropies (BP) highlighted the success of their catalytic financial support together with technical assistance that unlocked further investment by national governments in Peru and Bangladesh. Initially, BP successfully digitalised a portion of birth and death records in Peru to support timely health analytics. Building on this project, the government invested USD 7-8 million from its own budget to scale up the initiative within one to two years for broader, lasting impact. Similarly, in Bangladesh, BP supported strengthening of data collection on cause of death in a sub-geographic area. After the project’s initial success, the government expanded it nationally with domestic funding.²⁰
- A renewed emphasis on a **“whole-of-government” approach to investing in statistical capacity** can make public data systems more resilient and future-proof. Several interviewers noted the multidimensional impact of the crisis has shown the need to support statistical infrastructure that allows for better linking and integration of the data that already exist within the system across registers, surveys and other sources. An expert UN statistician argued that even within a country, “data flows are not harmonised, as agencies may not understand their roles from a data flows perspective.”²¹ There is a need to “invest in government infrastructure and mechanisms that reinforce systemic linkages in data and statistics.”²² Such investments are often long-term and institutional, not project-based interventions. However, they can lead to statistical outputs that are truly intersectional and inclusive to inform policy needs.

¹⁹ Joshua Powell, Chief Executive Officer, Development Gateway. Interview. 19 July 2021.

²⁰ Jennifer Ellis, Director, Data for Health Initiative, Bloomberg Philanthropies. Interview. 6 August 2021.

²¹ Anu Pelolta, Acting Head of Statistics, UNCTAD. Interview. 21 July 2021.

²² Srdjan Mrkic, Chief of Demographic Statistics, UN Statistics Division. Interview. 18 August 2021.

BOX 3. RECENT GLOBAL INITIATIVES TO MOBILISE SMARTER FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT DATA

Two important global initiatives have been launched at the 2021 UN World Data Forum to mobilise more and better financing for data and statistics post COVID-19:

- ▶ The Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data is a platform to help countries, donors and development agencies identify funding opportunities, bring projects to scale, advocate for support to data and statistics and connect to new partners. It provides information and services to match the supply and demand of financing for data and statistics to foster transparency, accountability and alignment, and facilitate co ordination among donors and partner countries. The Clearinghouse, which focuses on low- and lower middle-income countries and fragile states, is an open, multi-stakeholder alliance to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) by promoting more and better financing for data (Bern Network on Financing Data for Development, 2021).
- ▶ The Global Data Facility is the new World Bank-hosted fund, designed in collaboration with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division; the UN Statistical Commission's High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda; and country counterparts and centres of excellence around the world. The Facility integrates three components: i) pooled donor resources for local, national, regional and global data priorities; ii) leveraged resources of the World Bank, International Development Association and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to enable scale and sustainability; and iii) catalysed domestic financing for data and data-driven development in World Bank client countries (Hammer, Kaushik, Song, & Ricketts, 2021). The Facility will enable long-term support and sustainable data and statistics transformations. It will additionally leverage the Bern Network Clearinghouse as a global co-ordination mechanism for a spectrum of partners, practitioners and country clients to join forces in support of the global data revolution.





FUNDING TO DATA AND STATISTICS AT A GLANCE – GENERAL TRENDS

FUNDING TO DATA AND STATISTICS AT A GLANCE – GENERAL TRENDS

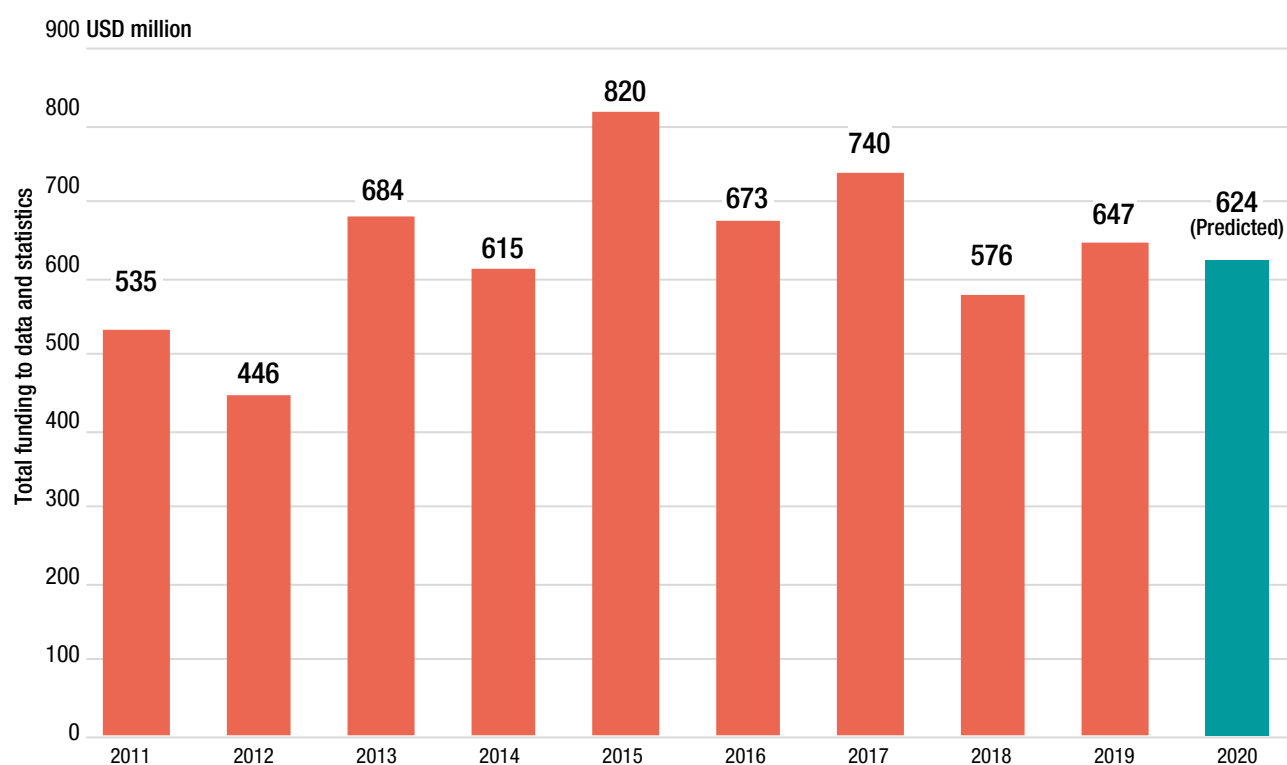
6. Overall support to data and statistics

According to PRESS 2021, total global commitments to data and statistics in **2019** were equivalent to **USD 647 million** (in 2019 prices). PRESS 2021 confirms that the nowcast estimation of support to data and statistics in PRESS 2020 is within the estimated range of deviation, providing support for the robustness of the PARIS21 methodology.²³ Projections (the actual

data are available only for the period until 2019) also indicate that 2020 figures on support to statistics are not likely to rise (Figure 6.1). Applying the same methodology, the nowcasted support to statistics in 2020 is estimated at USD 624 million.

Further, official development assistance (ODA) to data and statistics accounted for USD 551 million representing a 0.3% share of total ODA in 2019.

Figure 6.1. Total funding to data and statistics



Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).

²³ See <https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/PRESS%20methodology%2020210828.pdf>.

7. Support for gender equality and gender statistics

Gender statistics²⁴ represent a cross-cutting issue in statistical development and are essential to effective and inclusive policy making. Since 2018, PARIS21 has been collaborating with UN Women on a gender statistics programme within the framework of the flagship initiative, Making Every Woman and Girl Count. As one of this programme's four activities, PRESS is monitoring global financial support to gender statistics, a critical measure for analysing efforts to improve the production, dissemination and use of gender statistics in national statistical systems.

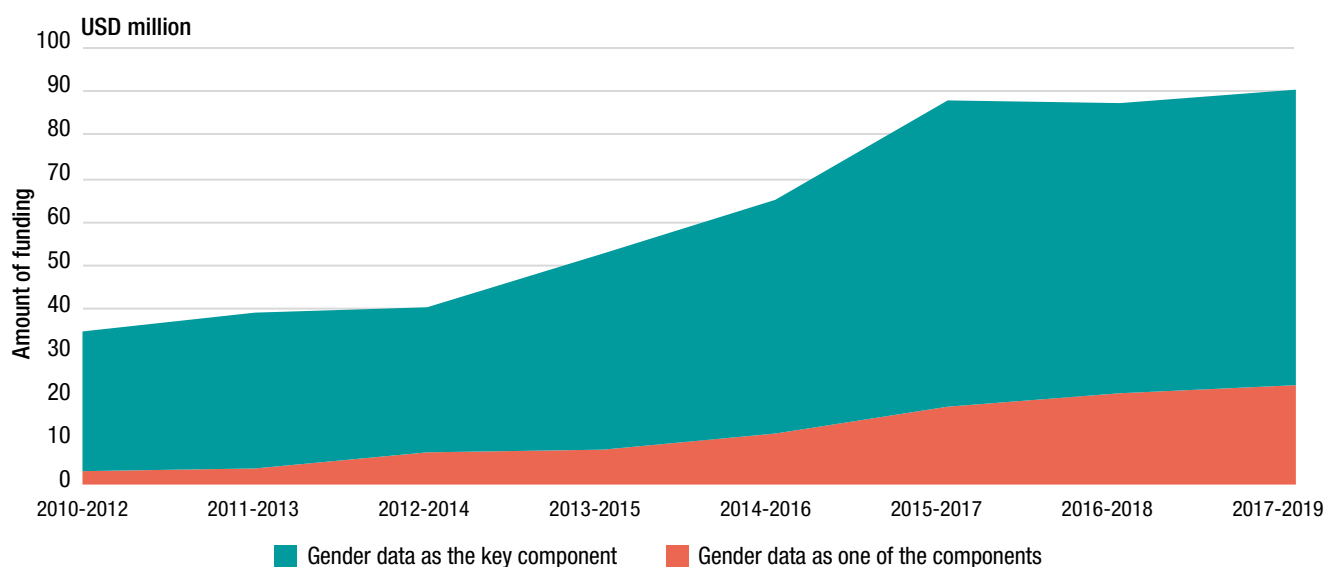
PRESS 2021 developed a new unified marker for gender statistics that considers available information from different sources. These include the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) gender equality marker, the DAC purpose code on gender-related issues, the gender data marker in the PRESS survey and the text description of projects.

The PRESS 2021 finds a stagnant trend in financing for gender-related projects in data and statistics from DAC donors. This trend is consistent with other reports (Open Data Watch/Data2x, 2021^[21]). After a boost around 2015, there has been little change in

funding for gender data (Figure 7.1.).²⁵ However, earmarked funding increased to projects where gender data are the main focus. The increase was mainly driven by bilateral donors around 2015 and by private foundations in more recent years (Figure 7.2). Seven donors provided more than USD 10 million to gender data in 2017-2019, accounting for almost 80% of total funding. This reliance on top donors makes gender data more vulnerable to future disruptions (Figure 7.3).

The Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data provides in-depth estimates of gender data financing on its gender focus page. The page²⁶ presents country, regional, and global views of information on external financing commitments to gender data using the PRESS 2021 module, information on domestic financing for the production of gender data, and a set of capacity indicators and data on the production of gender data-relevant statistical instruments.²⁷ This page along with the clearinghouse data will empower planners, analysts, and decision makers to develop effective projects and advocate for more support for gender data. It is only with such timely data that countries and partners can invest in strengthening core gender data systems to ensure that no one is left behind.

Figure 7.1. Trend of funding to gender data 2010-19



Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).

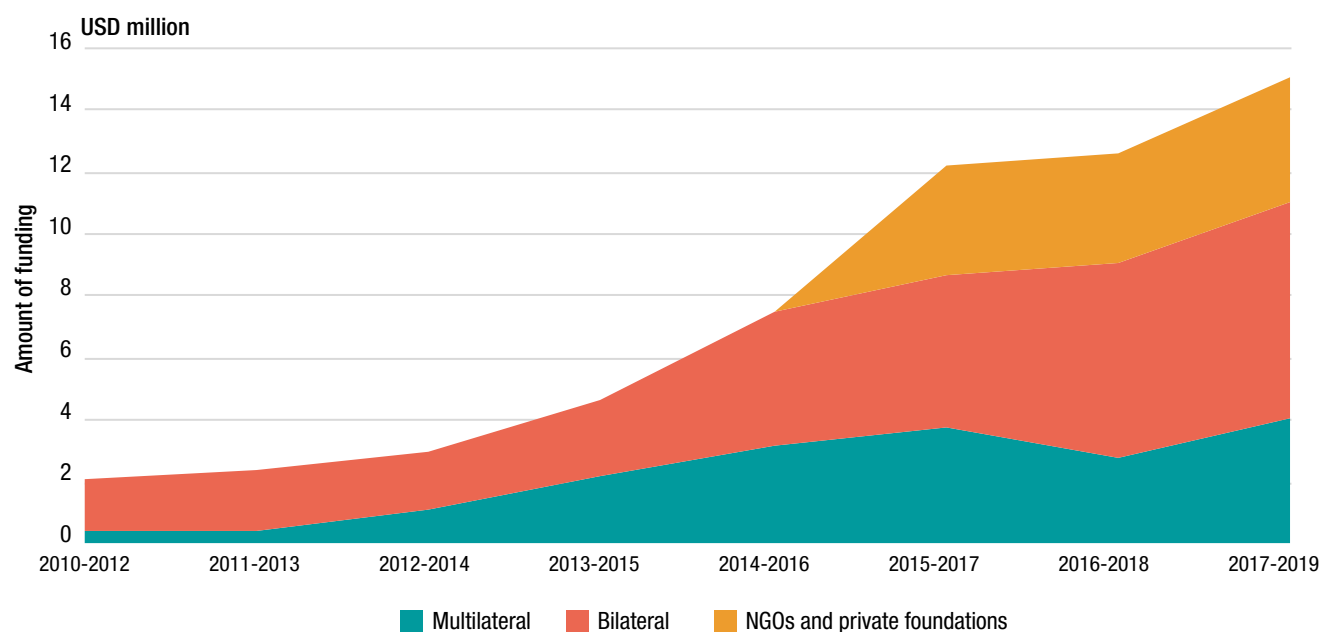
²⁴ In summary, a gender-statistics-related activity contains the following characteristics: a) Data are collected and presented by sex as a primary and overall classification; b) Data reflect gender issues; c) Data are based on concepts and definitions that adequately reflect the diversity of women and men and capture all aspects of their lives; d) Data collection methods must consider take into account stereotypes and social and cultural factors that may induce gender bias in the data. See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/gender/Integrating-a-Gender-Perspective-into-Statistics-E.pdf> (page 1).

²⁵ See Figure 15 in PRESS 2019. (PARIS21, 2019).

²⁶ See <https://smartdatafinance.org/gender>

²⁷ All 74 International Development Association (IDA) countries are included on the gender focus page on a yearly basis, please note that this present report (PRESS2021) uses the full number of ODA recipient countries, including multi-country projects.

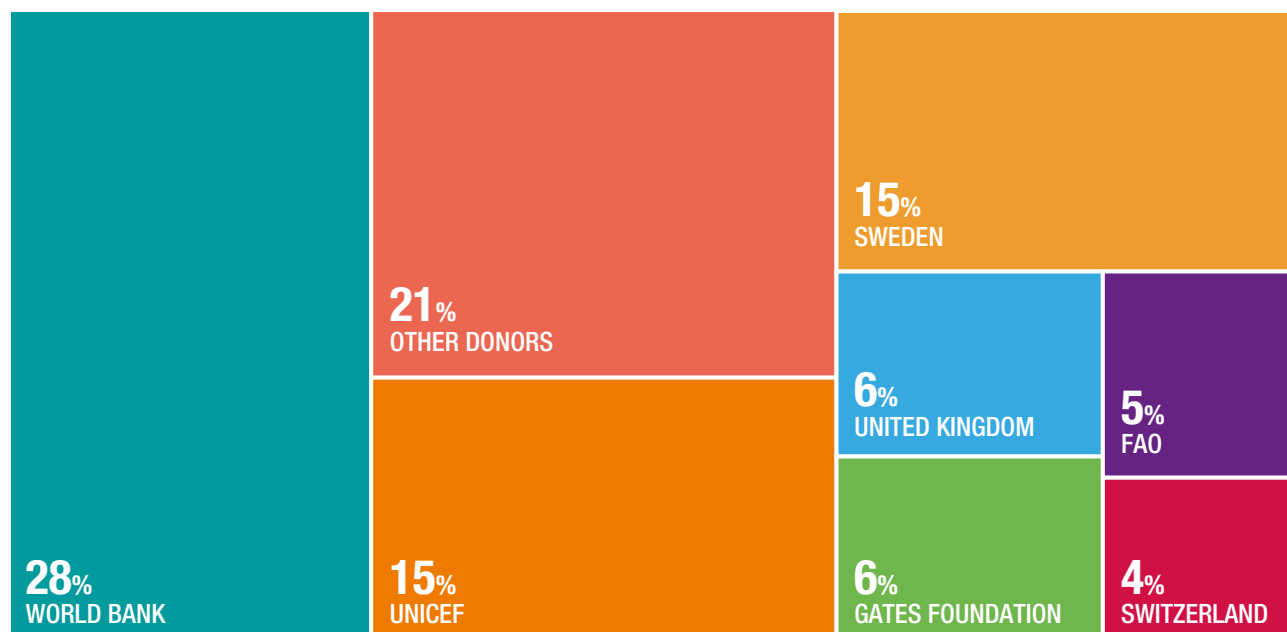
Figure 7.2. Funding to gender data as the key component, by donor types



Note: The figure only includes funding to projects of which gender data is the key component (the orange area in Figure 7.1). Therefore, the trend in this chart should not be used for showing the trend of total funding to gender statistics.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).

Figure 7.3. Top donors of gender data financing, 2017-19



Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).

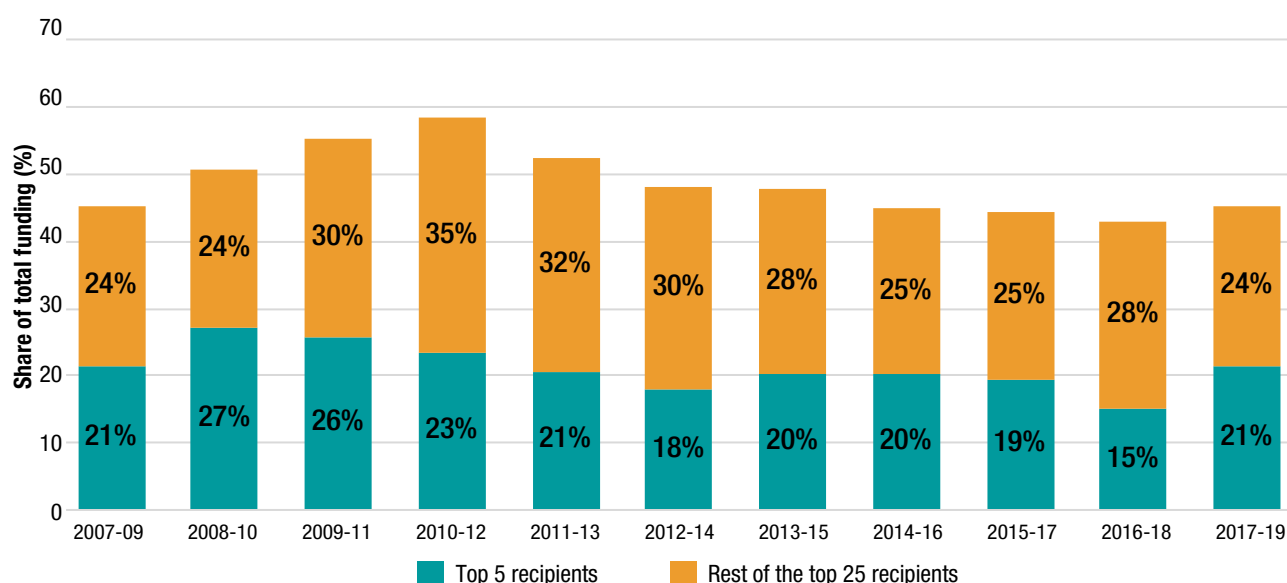
8. SUPPORT TO DATA AND STATISTICS BY RECIPIENTS

8.1 More countries than ever are receiving funds for data and statistics

Support to statistics has been less concentrated on top recipient countries in recent years, representing a trend towards diversification. The top five recipients of support to data and statistics in 2017-19 received around 22% of total funding. At the same time, more

than 65 countries received at least USD 1 million for data and statistics in 2019, up from 60 in 2018, an historic high (Figure 8.1). This finding is consistent with the diversification of funding in different sectors and expanding pool of donors. While it is positive that funding to data is spread to more countries, it becomes more imperative for the community to adopt a mechanism to co ordinate action and learn from each other's success.

Figure 8.1. Share of funding received by top recipients during 2010-2019



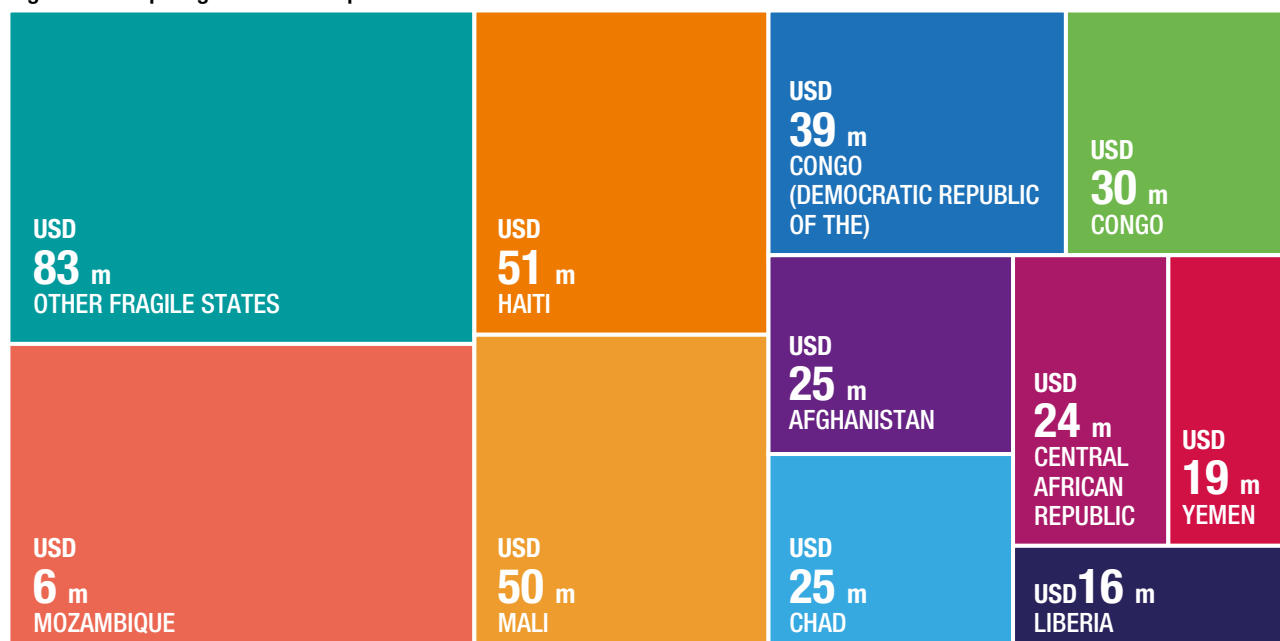
Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology or PARIS21, 2020).

8.2 Funding for data and statistics to fragile states continues to decline

Funding for data and statistics to fragile states²⁸ decreased to 25% in 2017–19, from the historic high of 40% reported in the mid-2010s. Five fragile states received over USD 30 million over this period and another five received over USD 10 million (Figure 8.2). This is another reflection of a more evenly distributed

model of funding. On the other hand, it is a worrying sign that fragile states cannot get prioritised funding and receive a smaller share of a package that did not increase. Donors' trend of diverting more funding to innovation, new data sources and cross-cutting issues may partially lead to this result, as these countries struggled to produce the most fundamental data to achieve outputs in the new trends.

Figure 8.2. Top fragile states recipients in 2017–19



Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).



²⁸ Based on the World Bank's harmonised list of fragile states.

See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations>

8.3 SIDS are receiving more funds for diverse reasons

Commitments to small island developing states (SIDS) increased significantly. In 2019, SIDS covered by PRESS received commitments worth approximately USD 40 million, higher than the sum of the three previous years (USD 27 million).

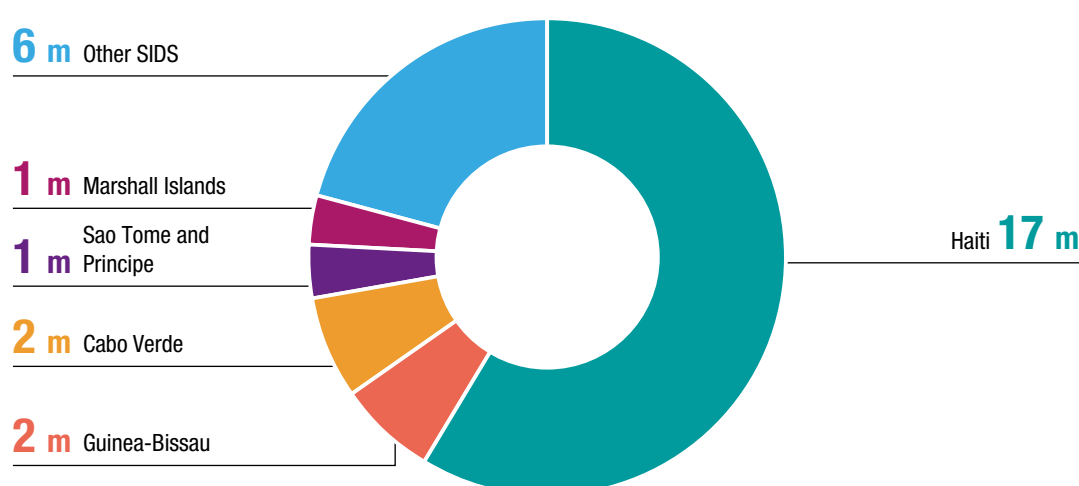
Multiple forces are driving this spike, including disaster responses after the strongest earthquake since 2010 in Haiti; the Statistical Capacity Building Project by the World Bank; and the Evaluation Survey Service by the United States.

Five SIDS received commitments over USD 1 million in 2019. This is an encouraging sign: SIDS are usually

omitted from the global picture of financing to data and statistics because they lack capacity to engage bilaterally with DAC donors. This lack of capacity might explain why SIDS rely more on top donors and regional donors.

Over 83% of aid to SIDS in 2017-19 came from five major donors: the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, United States, Australia and UNICEF, an increase from the previous period (77% in 2013-15). The share of projects with a gender component in SIDS appears to be increasing rapidly due to UNICEF's social protection programmes in recent years.

Figure 8.3. Top SIDS recipients in 2017-19 (USD million)



Source: Authors' calculations based on data on average annual commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).

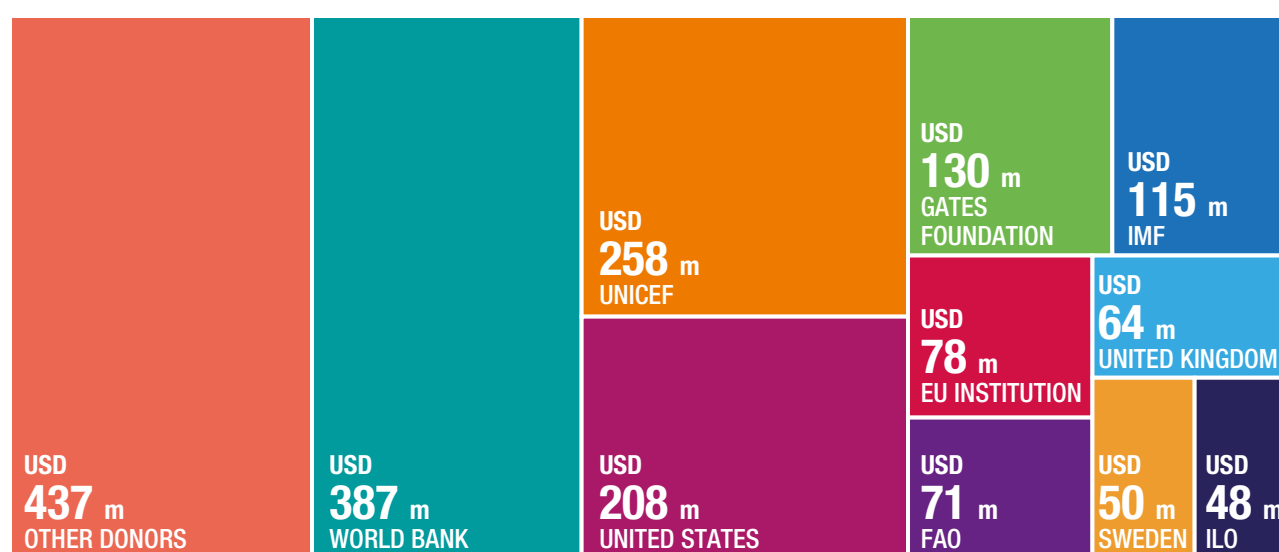
9. SUPPORT TO DATA AND STATISTICS BY AID PROVIDERS

9.1 The pool of funders for data and statistics is diversifying

Global funding to data and statistics is less reliant on funding from top donors. The top five providers of development co operation for statistics – the World Bank, UNICEF, United States, EU institutions, International Monetary Fund and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – provided 58% of total commitments during 2017-19, down from the previous period (65% in 2016-18). Figure 9.1 illustrates support from

the top ten providers globally in funding to data and statistics. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation became the only philanthropic donor that ranks among the top five donors for the first time in two consecutive years. Other philanthropic donors are playing a more important role in recent years in the landscape of international funding to data and statistics, despite accounting for a small share (just over 3% during this period). Together, bilateral donors, multilateral organisations and philanthropic organisations are diversifying the funding pool for data and statistics.

Figure 9.1. Top ten providers for data and statistics in 2017-19



Note: FAO=Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Gates Foundation=Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; ILO=International Labour Organization; IMF=International Monetary Fund.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals ([see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020]).



ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY USED IN PRESS 2021

The main PRESS dataset is constructed from multiple sources, as described in the methodological note for 2011-19 (PARIS21, 2021). This Annex explains how additional information is generated.

1. Identifying funding to digitalisation, frontier technology and administrative data

Each project is classified as one of three innovative areas; there is one residual category for projects without innovative elements. The areas are identified through scanning the project descriptions using the keywords list in Table A1 (and their equivalent in French and Spanish). If a project is identified for more than one innovative area, it will be automatically classified as “Systemic improvements”. Table A2 is used to scan project description for activities related to administrative data.

Table A1. Keywords used to identify innovation areas

Systemic improvements	New methodologies	New data sources
Gsbpm	Data science	Geospatial data
Big data	Machine learning	Satellite data
Data revolution	Cati	Alternative source
Smart governance	Cawi	Remote sensing
Digital governance	Online survey	Credit card
Infrastructure	Mapping	Administrative data*
Modernisation	Cloud	
Digitalisation	Sdmx	
	Artificial intelligence	
	Advanced analysis	
	Tablet	

* Only considers cases where admin data and open admin data are linked

Table A2. Keywords used to identify activities related to administrative data

Tax	Border control	Border recor
Pension	Administra	Registr
Vital stat	Vital record	

2. Identifying funding to projects with CRVS components

Civil register and vital statistics (CRVS) projects may not be purely statistical and thus cannot be classified as primary support to data and statistics. CRVS projects are identified by scanning project descriptions using the keywords in Table A3. The filter is applied to the entire databases of the International Aid Transparency Initiative and CRS to produce results in “Spotlight”.

Table A3. Keywords used to identify CRVS projects

Civil regis	Birth regis*	Death regis**
Marriag regis	Identit*	Mortal**
Vital stat	Crvs	

* Keywords also used to identify projects dedicated to birth registration.

** Keywords also used to identify projects dedicated to death registration.

3. Identifying partial funding to data and statistics

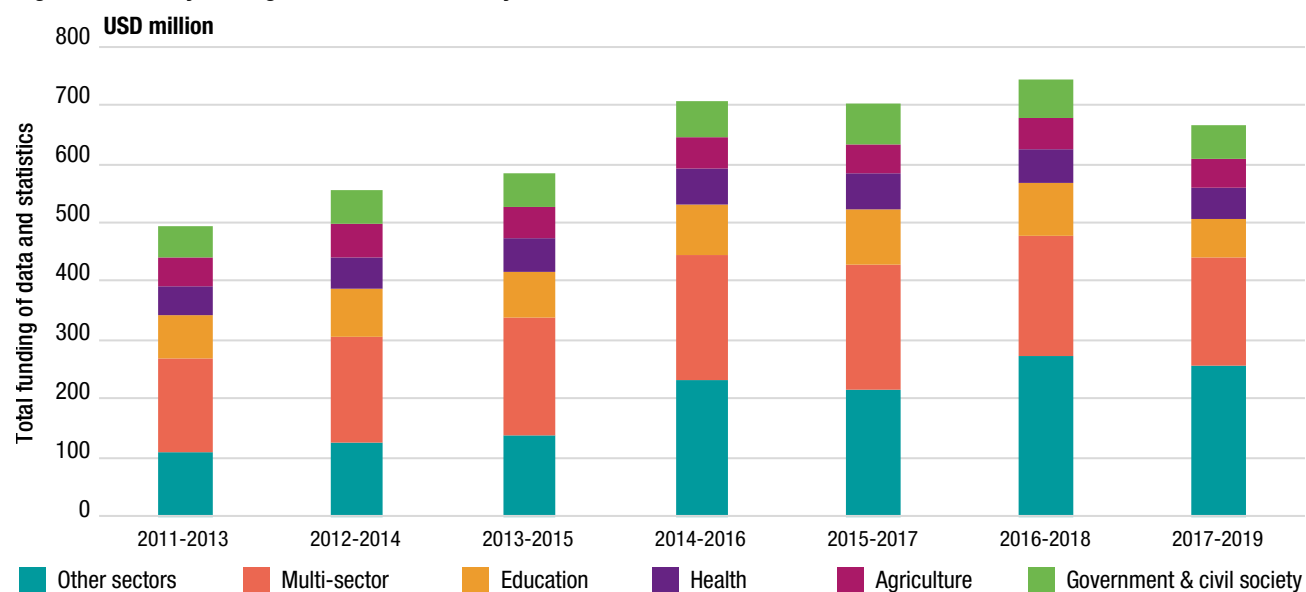
The main PRESS dataset only identifies projects without data-related project title or purpose codes when the frequency of keywords (see Table A3) in project descriptions are above the medium value of marked projects. Partial projects are identified with a much lower value. The actual threshold used is 20% of the threshold used in the PRESS database.

Table A4. Keywords used to identify data and statistical projects

Survey	Database	Big data	Data for decisions
Dhs	Civil registr	Land registr	Cadaster
Sdg indicator	Census	Information system	Birth registr
Statisti	National account	Price index	Production index
Data science	Data for development	Data journalism	Data for education
Education data	Data for health	Peacebuilding data	Global data
Global pulse	Health data	Refugee data	Migration data
Data collection	Action through data	Data project	Open government data
Death regis			

ANNEX 2. ADDITIONAL FIGURES OF PRESS 2021

Figure A1. Primary funding to data and statistics by sectors in 2017-19



Source: Authors' calculations based on data on commitments (2019 prices) from PRESS database, which builds on OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), PRESS survey, International Aid Transparency Initiative database and donor portals (see Annex for detailed methodology, or PARIS21, 2020).



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