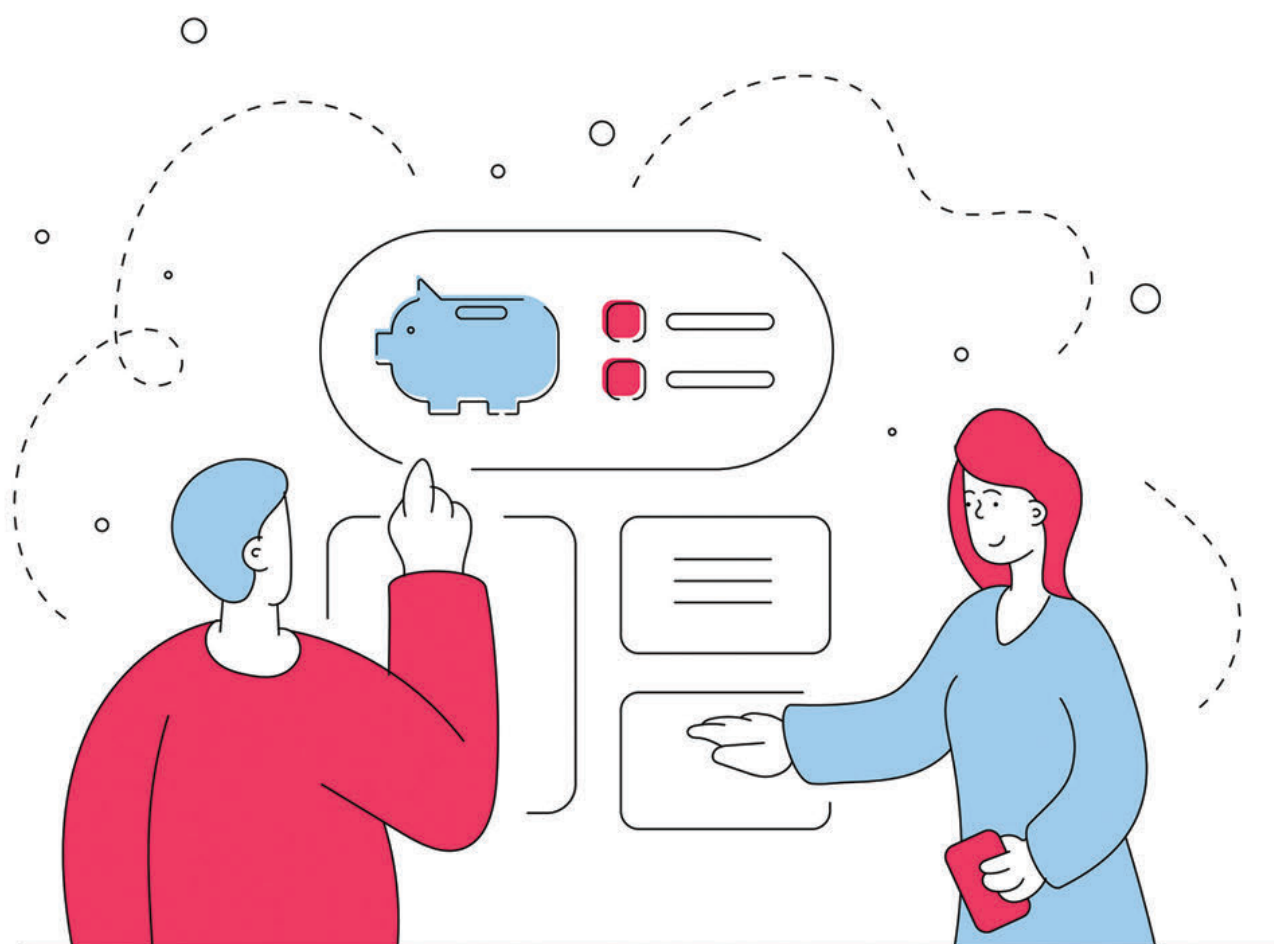


# **Guidance for Measuring Intra-household Power and Decision-making**





UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

# Guidance for Measuring Intra-household Power and Decision-making

Prepared by the Conference of European Statisticians Task Force  
on Measuring Intra-household Power and Decision-making



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## Preface

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All the major international policy frameworks on gender equality and development recognize the importance of equality between women and men in their ability to make decisions and to control and access resources. These frameworks point out that unequal power relations operate not only in the public world but also in the private sphere, within households.

However, while national official statistics often include indicators on power and decision-making, they are mostly limited to power and influence in the public sphere of life such as political representation and management of companies. Yet for someone to occupy a powerful public position, they must first be empowered in the private sphere of their own home. With this in mind, academic researchers have for decades examined the distribution of power in homes, looking at who usually makes decisions about a variety of matters, from routine grocery shopping to saving up for a car, and from seeing a doctor to visiting relatives.

The measurement of intra-household power and decision-making is not new, but has been brought into the fold of official statistics only recently. The present Guidance has been developed to support national statistical offices in developing such measurement.

The Guidance results from the work of a Task Force established by the Conference of European Statisticians in 2017. It proposes seven different dimensions of intra-household decision-making and offers suggestions of how these could be measured. It takes existing work in academic and applied development as a starting point. Then it argues that many of the commonly-used survey questions and indicators do not capture the complexities of lived experiences across a variety of cultural settings. Concrete recommendations emerging from the work are made, as well as proposals for further work on this complex issue.

The Guidance is a first step towards integrating the measurement of intra-household power and decision-making into national official statistics on gender equality. Quantifying the silent inequalities behind closed doors could help to shine a spotlight on them, providing policymakers with evidence to guide their efforts towards altering the imbalances.

The Guidance was endorsed by the 68th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians in 2020.

UNECE is grateful to all the experts who were involved in the preparation of this publication.

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