

Guidelines on Survey Clearance

1. Objective

The primary objectives to seek survey clearance are to:

- i. Ensure production of high-quality statistical data. The process envisions that the data produced meets high standards of reliability, comparability, and accuracy in line with the principle of Official statistics; and
- ii. Prevent duplication of efforts, cost and reduce respondent burden. The clearance process helps avoid redundant data collection, and also intends to reduce the demands placed on respondents.

2. Scope

The survey clearance includes all surveys and censuses conducted at national/regional/sub-national/agency level, with an exception to technical surveys or censuses such as National Tiger Census, etc. It covers any surveys or censuses that result in the production official statistic, regardless of the methodology, sample size or funding source. This means it encompasses everything from large national surveys to smaller agency ones, as long as they produce official statistics.

However, the survey clearance will not cover the following type of research or studies conducted by:

- i. Students in colleges/universities for academic purposes, such as master's theses;
- ii. Agencies for internal use, such as seeking feedback and opinion via online platform at agency level;
- iii. Agencies at the national level that are technical in nature. For e.g., National Tiger Survey, conducted by the Department of Forest and Park Services;
- iv. Private companies for market research or product development purpose;
- v. Non-government Organisations/Civil Society Organisations for project-specific evaluations and assessments; and
- vi. Individual researchers or independent consultants conducting studies for personal or commercial reasons.

In summary, the following matrix can be used to check whether a clearance is required.

Method	Sampling Methodology	Do you want to publish as official statistics?	Clearance
Quantitative	Probability or Non-probability Scheme	Yes	Required
Qualitative	Non-probability Scheme	Yes	Required*
Mixed Method	Probability or Non-probability Scheme	Yes	Required

* Only flow of the survey will be measured

3. Assessment Criteria

- i. The need for the survey/census: Assess whether the survey is necessary and justifiable.
- ii. Survey/census instruments: Review the tools and questionnaires used to ensure they are effective and appropriate for the objectives.
- iii. Sampling design: Evaluate the sampling methods to ensure they are statistically sound and appropriate for the population being studied.
- iv. Operational plans: Review the operational aspects, including timelines, logistics, and resource allocation, to ensure they are feasible and efficient.
- v. Authentication/validation of outputs: Ensure that the outputs are accurate and valid, reflecting the survey's objectives.
- vi. Avoiding duplication of efforts: Check for potential overlaps with existing surveys to prevent redundant data collection.
- vii. Conformity to standard definitions, concepts, and classifications: Ensure that the survey adheres to accepted statistical standards and practices.
- viii. Facilitate the use of administrative data: Promote the integration of existing administrative data to complement survey findings, reducing the need for new data collection.

4. Required Documents

The following documents are required at the time of application for survey clearance:

- i. Filled in Application Form for review:
To ensure all information is completed accurately, the instructions to fill in the application form is provided.
- ii. Survey proposal:
The survey proposal should include detailed technical aspects of survey/census and estimated budget. The following aspects will be evaluated:

- Reference period of the survey - specify the time period to which the data collected by the survey pertains, such as the past calendar year, past week, etc
- Geographic area and disaggregation of the data produced- the geographic scope and the levels of disaggregation (e.g., regional, urban/rural, demographic breakdowns).
- Frequency and method of data collection - Description on how often the data will be collected and the methodologies to be employed (e.g., face-to-face interviews, telephone surveys, online questionnaires).
- Sampling design:
 - Sampling Frame: Identification of the population from which the sample will be drawn.
 - Domain: Specification of the target population or subpopulations.
 - Sampling Scheme: Outline the method of sampling (e.g., simple random sampling, stratified sampling, so on).
 - Sample Size Determination: Provide a detailed explanation of how the sample size was determined, including any formulas or calculations used.
- Statistical analysis of results - Describe the methods and techniques that will be used to analyse the collected data.
- Work Plan of activities – planning and preparation, fieldwork, data processing and report preparation.
- Estimated budget - Include a detailed budget that covers all aspects of the survey, from planning to reporting. This should include costs for personnel, materials, transportation, data processing, and any other relevant expenses.

iii. Survey Questionnaire(s); and

iv. Enumerators' Manual/Manual of Instructions.

5. Review Period

The review committee in the National Statistics Bureau (NSB-RC) will process survey clearance applications within 3 working days upon submission of complete documents by the proponent/conducting agencies. Within this period, review will be conducted by the NSB-RC. If necessary, the NSB-RC shall contact the focal person of the proponent/conducting agency to discuss and review the component of the survey.

6. Approving Authority

The NSB-RC is responsible for approval of survey proposals and issuance of the survey clearance.

7. Conditions

- i. **Survey clearance scope:** The survey clearance issued by the NSB covers statistical aspect only, and does not extend to other administration approvals, such as site administrative approval, ethical clearance, other non-statistical approvals;
- ii. **Adherence to approved survey design and instruments:** The survey/census must adhere to the approved survey design without any deviation. Any proposed changes to the design must be resubmitted for NSB approval. Failure to comply with the survey clearance will result in withdrawal of the clearance, and thus the survey/census results shall not be recognized or accepted as official statistics. Consequently, the conducting agency may suffer reputational damage due to perceived incompetence or lack of adherence to methodology;
- iii. **Sharing of final draft findings:** The final draft must be shared with the NSB to ensure compliance with approved survey methodology, including domain-level analysis.
- iv. **Submission of Public User File (PUF):** The PUF, containing anonymized microdata for public use, must be submitted to the NSB; and
- v. **Monitoring:** The NSB team will conduct field inspections to ensure adherence to methodology especially sampling procedures and data collection processes.