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STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY SERIES

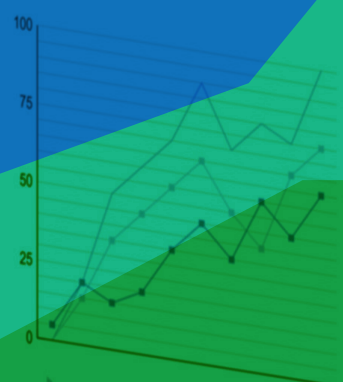
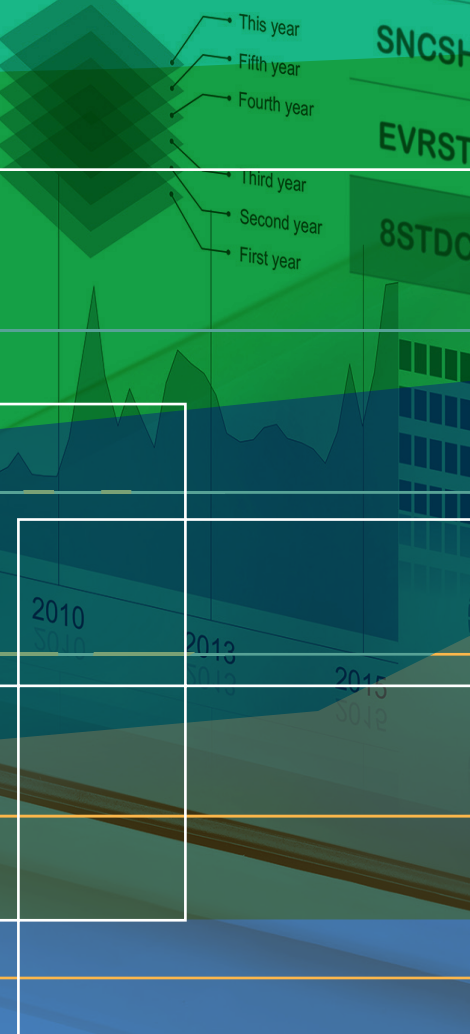
## MEASURING MAIN ACTIVITY IN LABOUR FORCE SURVEYS:

Main findings from the ILO LFS pilot studies

Elisa M. Benes, Kieran Walsh

July 2018

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**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION**

# **Measuring Main Activity in Labour Force Surveys:**

**Main findings from the ILO LFS pilot  
studies<sup>1</sup>**

ILO Department of Statistics –Geneva, Switzerland

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Measuring main activity in labour force surveys: Main findings from the ILO LFS pilot studies

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# I. BACKGROUND

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1. The international recommendations on the measurement of people's economic activities and the production of related indicators including the employment to population ratio, labour force participation rate and unemployment rate were updated at the 19<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2013. The updated standards introduced a number of important updates that will impact the way work and labour force statistics are collected and disseminated by countries around the world in the years to come. To support their wide implementation, the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS called on the ILO to “*conduct further conceptual and methodological work including testing*” and develop “*technical manuals and model data collection instruments*” aligned with the latest standards (ILO, 2013).
2. As follow-up, between 2015 and 2017, the ILO implemented a global project of labour force survey (LFS) pilot studies in collaboration with 10 countries from different world regions. The Project had as main aim to develop and test alternative survey questionnaires to collect statistics on high priority topics including employment, labour underutilization – comprising time-related underemployment, unemployment and the potential labour force, and own-use production work, in line with the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS standards. The ultimate objective is to develop evidence-based guidance to support countries in adopting the new standards. Related to these ‘core’ topics there were a selection of additional measurement objectives on topics which may be measured through Labour Force Surveys.
3. This report presents the main findings on the measurement of **main activity** drawn from the Project. The report is part of the ILO statistical methodology series that describe in detail the main findings of the Project. The full series is available in the website of the ILO Department of Statistics. (ILO, 2018)<sup>2</sup>.
4. Section I provides a short overview of the background to the pilot studies on the topic of main activity and the context of its inclusion in LFS questionnaires. Section II discusses the main issues with the measurement of main activity explored through the ILO LFS pilot studies, the questions tested and the analytical approach taken. The main findings are described in Section III. This is followed by a summary of the identified good practices and practical recommendations that can be made on the basis of the findings (Section IV). The final section (V) discusses some of the issues for which further testing or evaluation is recommended.

## A. Latest international statistical standards

5. Resolution I concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS, updated the previous standards from 1982 that had played a critical role as reference for the development of national systems of labour force statistics, and the design of labour force surveys (ILO, 1982). The new standards have greatly expanded the scope of labour statistics by recognizing the need to produce statistics on different forms of work, paid and unpaid, on a regular basis. They also introduced a number of important changes to labour force statistics that includes a narrower definition of employment as “*work for pay or profit*” and *a set of measures of labour*

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/stat/Areasofwork/Standards/lfs/WCMS\\_484981/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/stat/Areasofwork/Standards/lfs/WCMS_484981/lang--en/index.htm)



*underutilization to complement the unemployment rate.* The standards are described in more depth in a separate report in this series covering the background, objectives and methodology of the pilot studies.

6. The labour force status classification outlined in the standards is not based on a person's main activity. Rather it aims to classify the working age population based on their relationship with the labour market. To achieve this the labour force status classification operates through a priority rule whereby a person with any employment activity (at least one hour in a short reference period) is considered employed, while only those not employed can be considered unemployed or outside the labour force. This combination of the priority rule and one hour criterion is critical for various purposes, including ensuring that all types of jobs are covered, and ensuring that indicators on labour underutilization (e.g. unemployment) only refer to those not engaged in any work for pay or profit. As a consequence it will be the case that for some respondents their labour force status may not reflect their main activity, such as a full-time student with a part-time job etc. As the primary focus of dissemination is typically on the labour force status of individuals, the main activity is not typically highlighted although some countries have been collecting and using this data for some time.<sup>3</sup>
7. Reflecting the above, the concept of a person's "*main activity*" is not a core part of the new standards. However, there are some references to the possible use of a classification of main activity as a supplement to indicators on employment, labour underutilization and participation in different forms of work. The standards refer to the possible value of classification by 'main form or work' (para 17) or 'main activity status as self-declared' (para 80c). However, no detailed guidance is provided on capturing or reporting this information, or how it might relate to information captured on employment, unemployment etc. The inclusion of main activity as a topic in the pilot study questionnaires was intended to serve multiple purposes including:
  - a. Development of guidance for collection of main activity through labour force surveys
  - b. Assessing and highlighting the relevance of a classification of the population by main activity to inform social policy and to better understand the economic characteristics of the population
  - c. Contribute to international efforts to develop standards covering main activity measurement

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Table QLF23 at

[http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Labour%20Force%20Survey%20Quarterly%20Series/Labour%20Force%20Survey%20Quarterly%20Series\\_statbank.asp?SP=Labour%20Force%20Survey%20Quarterly%20Series&Planguage=0](http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Labour%20Force%20Survey%20Quarterly%20Series/Labour%20Force%20Survey%20Quarterly%20Series_statbank.asp?SP=Labour%20Force%20Survey%20Quarterly%20Series&Planguage=0)

## II. METHODOLOGY

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### A. Testing strategy

8. The broader measurement objectives of the pilot studies and high level methodology are described in a separate report in this series entitled *ILO LFS pilot studies in follow-up to the 19th ICLS: Background, objectives and methodology*. Separate reports have also been published on the cognitive and field testing phases of the project.
9. There are a number of issues of interest with respect to measurement of main activity. With reference to the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS an important issue is whether an approach which captures a person's main activity as part of a sequence of questions on employment can yield comparable information to other approaches. Such 'main activity' based approaches have been adopted in questionnaires used in certain regions of the world for Census of Population and other household surveys to capture information on employment. For example, a review of country practices undertaken in preparation for the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS, showed that 54 out of 140 countries collected information on main activity through their Census of Population<sup>4</sup>, although not necessarily as a replacement for measurement of current working activity. With the new standards in mind there is an absence of information on whether such designs can yield comparable estimates to more 'traditional' LFS approaches.
10. In addition, main activity is an interesting analytical topic in its own right so there is interest in testing different approaches to capturing this information even where not used to identify the labour force status of the individual, or indeed using it as a supplement to labour force status information. In this context, there is interest in assessing whether the inclusion of questions on main activity in a sequence where labour force status is also captured impacts the measurement of the labour force status, or main activity, or both.
11. Given the above issues the specific objective of the pilot tests in relation to main activity was to develop and test alternative approaches to capturing this information within typical labour force survey designs. It was decided to assess the questions on main activity during the cognitive interviewing (CI) phase of the work to allow a detailed qualitative assessment of the questions. The adapted questionnaires were then tested quantitatively during the field testing phase. The more detailed objectives are discussed further below.

### B. Main activity approaches tested

12. There were two major alternative approaches to capturing main activity incorporated within the pilot studies (see [Figure 1](#) below). The first approach (Version A) used a single question on main activity as the starting point of the sequence to capture labour force status. Version A was incorporated in model questionnaire 2 (M2), whereby the first question in the individual questionnaire asked the respondent to report their main current activity. Depending on the answer received the person could be treated as employed, or asked other recovery questions to capture secondary employment activity. One rationale for this approach is that asking a general question at the beginning ensures the questionnaire is relevant to all respondents from the outset. By contrast traditional labour force survey questionnaires can ask a long set of questions on labour market

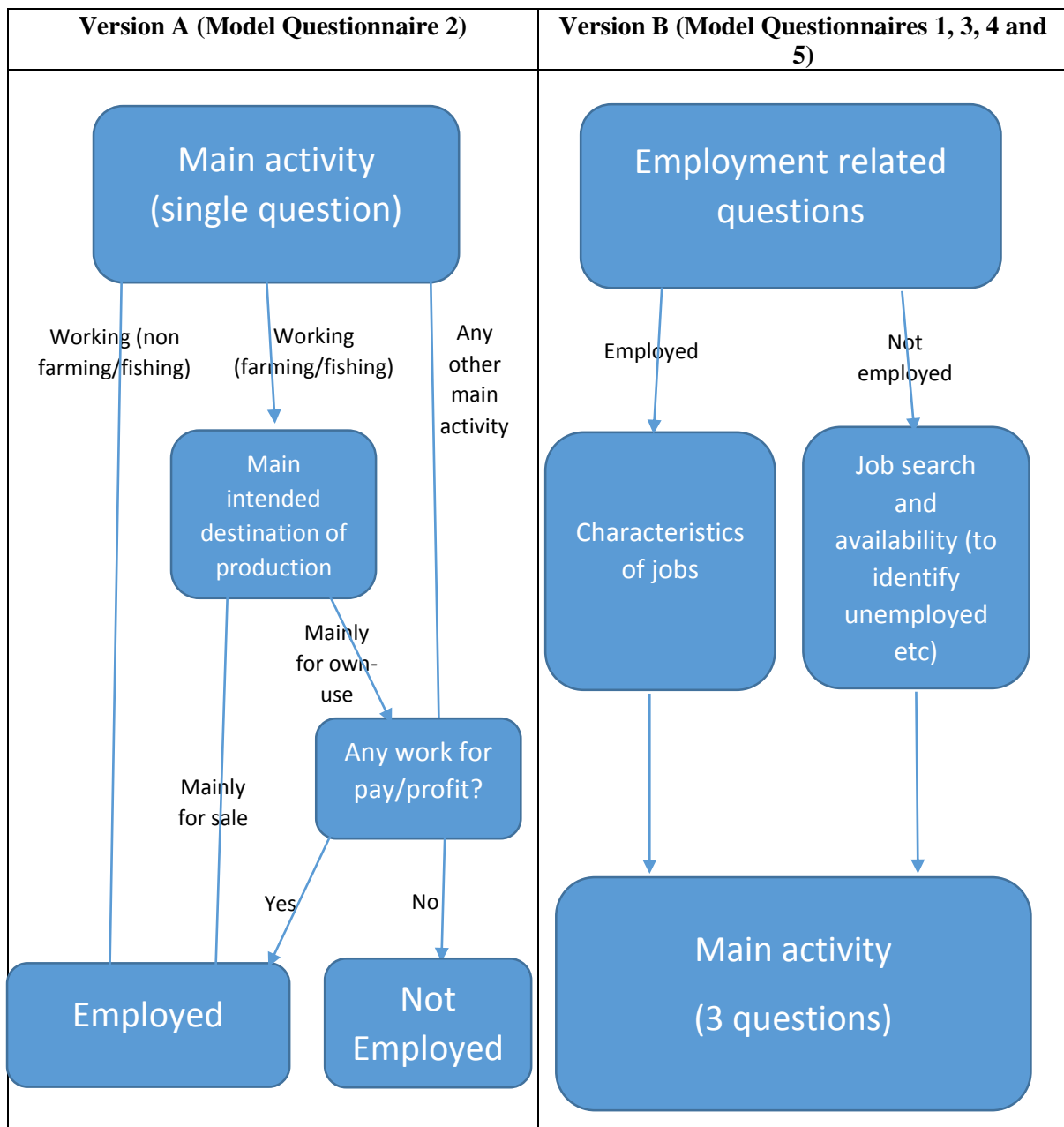
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<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.ilo.ch/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_222950.pdf](http://www.ilo.ch/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_222950.pdf)

engagement which may be of no relevance to certain respondents (e.g. retired persons) and thus introduce respondent fatigue.

13. In the other 4 model questionnaires Version B (an independent module of questions on main activity) was included after questions had been asked covering employment, unemployment and labour underutilization.
14. These two versions created different analytical possibilities. In the first instance it could be assessed if the approaches impacted the measurement of main activity itself. Beyond that it could be assessed if the differences between the versions appeared to impact the measurement of other phenomenon captured through the questionnaires, such as employment, unemployment etc.

**Figure 1:** Different approaches to capturing Main Activity in the pilot questionnaires



15. Model questionnaire 2 was tested in 3 of the pilot countries while all countries tested at least one of the other 4 model questionnaires (see [Table 1](#)).

**Table 1.** Pilot countries by version of “Main activity” module tested

Country	Version A	Version B
Cameroon	—	M1 and M5
Ecuador	—	M3 and M5
Ivory Coast	—	M1 and M3
Kyrgyz Republic	M2	M3
Moldova	—	M3 and M5
Namibia	—	M1 and M4
Peru	—	M3 and M4
Philippines	M2	M3
Tunisia	M2	M3
Vietnam		M3 and M4

16. While the overall approaches were retained, substantial changes were made to the versions tested following the CI tests. For that reason, the next sections of the report present the outcomes of the CI tests, followed by the outcomes from the field tests.

### III. QUESTIONS ON MAIN ACTIVITY – MAIN FINDINGS

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#### A. Cognitive testing phase

17. During the first stage of the pilot studies, CI was used to evaluate questions on main activity. In particular there was an assessment of respondent's comprehension of the term 'main activity' and whether this interpretation was consistent across countries, cultures and languages. Another key issue assessed during the cognitive tests was the manner of administration of the question, i.e. whether or not response categories needed to be read to the respondent. A further issue evaluated was how respondents decided on their response, especially where people were engaged in multiple different activities.
18. As shown in [Figure 1](#) above there were two versions of the main activity questions. However, in addition, during the cognitive testing phase two different variants of Version B were tested (see [Figure 2](#)).
19. For Version A the cognitive test focussed on the single main activity question at the beginning of the individual questionnaire. An important feature of the version tested at the cognitive phase was that response categories were not read out. The question wording used in English was '*What is your main activity at present?*'. One of the issues being assessed through this approach was the range of valid response options for a question of this nature. This could be assessed based on the range of the open ended responses received from the respondents. A wide range of coding categories (16), more than normally used for household surveys, was initially developed to ensure the results could be detailed enough to assess how many and which subset of categories would be sufficient.
20. For Version B, both variants had 3 questions in total and adopted the same structure (i.e. flow and positioning within the questionnaire). The first question (QB1) covered the reference period *at present*, i.e. as done with the single question in Version A. The next 2 questions focussed on the reference period *the last 12 months*, first asking the respondent if the main activity over the last 12 months was different to at present (QB2), and if so, what was the main activity in the last 12 months (QB3). The use of two different reference periods was designed to allow an assessment of any differences in the relative difficulty of comprehension and reporting between *at present* and *the last 12 months*.
21. The difference between the two variants of Version B related to the mode of asking the questions. For variant 1 (included in M4 and M5) the interviewer read out the response categories, whereas for variant 2 (included in M1 and M3) a spontaneous subjective response was sought from the respondent and subsequently coded by the interviewer. The rationale for this distinction was to establish if reading out response categories was necessary to facilitate comprehension and reporting for the respondent.

**Figure 2: Questions on Main activity included in the cognitive tests**

Version A (Model Questionnaire 2)	Version B – Variant 1 (Model Questionnaires 4, 5)	Version B – Variant 2 (Model Questionnaires 1, 3)
<p><b>QA1. What is your main activity at present?</b> (Do not read out list below)</p> <p><i>Work for pay or profit</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. PAID EMPLOYEE</li> <li>02. PAID APPRENTICE</li> <li>03. EMPLOYER (WITH REGULAR EMPLOYEES)</li> <li>04. OWN ACCOUNT WORKER (WITHOUT REGULAR EMPLOYEES)</li> </ol> <p><i>Work without pay</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05. FARMING, FISHING MAINLY FOR SALE</li> <li>06. FARMING, FISHING MAINLY FOR FAMILY USE</li> <li>07. HELPING IN A HOUSEHOLD/FAMILY BUSINESS</li> <li>08. HELPING A HOUSEHOLD/FAMILY MEMBER WHO WORKS FOR SOMEONE ELSE</li> <li>09. VOLUNTARY WORK/COMMUNITY WORK</li> </ol> <p><i>Other activities</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. STUDENT</li> <li>11. HOUSEHOLD DUTIES</li> <li>12. HELPING FAMILY WITH HOUSEHOLD DUTIES</li> <li>13. SELF-CARE (DUE TO DISABILITY, INJURY, ILLNESS)</li> <li>14. CULTURAL/SPORTS/OTHER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES</li> <li>15. RETIRED, PENSIONER</li> <li>16. NONE/DOES NOT DO ANYTHING</li> </ol>	<p><b>QB1.</b> Which of the following best describes your main activity or situation at present? (Read out list below)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. Working for pay or profit</li> <li>02. Looking for work</li> <li>03. Unemployed</li> <li>04. Studying, training</li> <li>05. Household, family responsibilities</li> <li>06. Farming or fishing mainly for family consumption</li> <li>07. Long-term illness, injury, disability</li> <li>08. Retired, pensioner</li> <li>09. Other (specify)</li> </ol> <hr/> <p><b>QB2</b> ...and thinking about your main activity or situation in the last 12 months, would you say it was the same or different?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. SAME AS AT PRESENT → SKIP QB3</li> <li>02. DIFFERENT → QB3</li> </ol> <hr/> <p><b>QB3.</b> Which of the following best describes your main activity or situation in the last 12 months? (Read out list below)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. Working for pay or profit</li> <li>02. Looking for work</li> <li>03. Unemployed</li> <li>04. Studying, training</li> <li>05. Household, family responsibilities</li> <li>06. Farming or fishing mainly for family consumption</li> <li>07. Long-term illness, injury, disability</li> <li>08. Retired, pensioner</li> <li>09. Other (specify)</li> </ol>	<p><b>QB1.</b> How would you describe your main activity or situation at present? (Do not read out list below)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. WORKING FOR PAY OR PROFIT</li> <li>02. LOOKING FOR WORK</li> <li>03. UNEMPLOYED</li> <li>04. STUDYING, TRAINING</li> <li>05. HOUSEHOLD, FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES</li> <li>06. FARMING OR FISHING MAINLY FOR FAMILY CONSUMPTION</li> <li>07. LONG-TERM ILLNESS, INJURY, DISABILITY</li> <li>08. RETIRED, PENSIONER</li> <li>09. OTHER (SPECIFY)</li> </ol> <hr/> <p><b>QB2.</b> ...and thinking about your main activity or situation in the last 12 months, would you say it was the same or different?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. SAME AS AT PRESENT → SKIP QB3</li> <li>02. DIFFERENT → QB3</li> </ol> <hr/> <p><b>QB3.</b> How would you describe your main activity or situation in the last 12 months? (Do not read out list below)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. WORKING FOR PAY OR PROFIT</li> <li>02. LOOKING FOR WORK</li> <li>03. UNEMPLOYED</li> <li>04. STUDYING, TRAINING</li> <li>05. HOUSEHOLD, FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES</li> <li>06. FARMING OR FISHING MAINLY FOR FAMILY CONSUMPTION</li> <li>07. LONG-TERM ILLNESS, INJURY, DISABILITY</li> <li>08. RETIRED, PENSIONER</li> <li>09. OTHER (SPECIFY)</li> </ol>

### *Main findings from CI*

22. In combination the differences in the versions cognitively tested created the possibility to assess whether there were any observed order effects (Version A versus Version B) or mode of administration effects (Version B variant 1 versus Version A and Version B variant 2).

#### *Issues specific to Version of the questions used*

23. Starting with **Version A**, this was tested in 3 of the 10 pilot countries who used M2 (Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, Tunisia). Multiple respondents across those countries were observed to have difficulties with comprehension of the scope of the question. A first illustration of this is found through the many reports of hesitation, confusion, requests for repetition and clarification, and difficulties in answering. For example when probed about the difficulty of responding to the question, one respondent in Philippines stated *“it is a bit hard and you need to analyse so that you will not be lost”*.
24. In Tunisia, the comprehension difficulties resulted in some respondents listing multiple activities (as opposed to one main activity) in response to the question, and others indicating that they were doing nothing, but when probed then listing multiple activities they were currently engaged in. For example one respondent asked for clarification of the question leading to the interviewer reading out the response categories available. At that point the respondent said *“I do nothing, I stay at the house, I make bread, I keep chickens and sell the eggs”*. When probed further the respondent said *“At the start I didn’t understand but it was easier when the list was read out”*.
25. There was evidence that the degree of difficulty with the question was related to the situation of the respondent. Respondents with regular employment generally answered the question confidently and without hesitation. However their responses to probing suggested they may not have considered their non-employment activities when formulating their response.
26. A related difficulty observed in Philippines was the respondent thinking that the question referred to details of their work. More than one respondent who worked in farming responded by listing out their main daily activities in farming. While this would not necessarily lead to misclassification of the response it was indicative of the comprehension difficulties of some respondents and that some activities were not being considered, even though they could potentially involve greater amounts of time.
27. Another specific difficulty for those engaged in farming was that the information initially provided was not sufficient to undertake the coding desired, whereby it was intended to split market oriented farming (employment) from farming to produce goods for own use (own use production of goods). Multiple respondents simply replied *“Farming”* which was insufficient thus requiring additional, unscripted follow up questions in order to assign the proper response category.
28. For respondents who did not have regular employment/farming activities, e.g. students, those looking for work, the comprehension difficulties appeared to be relatively greater. Another respondent in Tunisia gave the response *“Nothing”* but when probed said *“I’m in the process of looking for work, but I don’t have work”* and when asked what they thought the question referred to they said *“my job”*. This was similar to the response received from other respondents in different countries who reported that they felt the question was about their employment activities only.

29. For **variant 2 of Version B** (questions on main activity later in the sequence but response categories not read out) similar comprehension and reporting difficulties were observed. For example, one respondent in Philippines (M3) said *'I came here to be interviewed and afterward will go to the bank'*, with similar types of responses received from others indicating a very short-term scope was being considered. Other respondents considered relatively longer periods of time such as *'the months of this year'* suggesting that the period *at present* was not consistently understood, with unclear impact on responses given.
30. In relation to the scope of activities being considered one respondent in Namibia, paused for a long time when asked then question and then responded *"I don't know"*. When subsequently probed about the question he stated that he found the question difficult and had expected to be given options to choose his response from. This, along with other examples of respondents giving responses out of scope of those intended, highlight the difficulties respondents had in correctly interpreting the question.
31. Further to this, as with Version A, different respondents understood the question to refer to their paid working activities only. This was widespread among those in employment who often reported their occupation, or specifically referred to the information already provided, e.g. a respondent in Cote d'Ivoire remarked *'It's what I just said, I do knitting to sell'*. However, as with Version A, this difficulty was also observed among those not in employment with one young female in Namibia saying that she thought the question referred to *"work you do to support yourself, even though I am still at school"*. Despite being a full time student, this respondent had given her response as *unemployed* as she felt the reference point was paid work.
32. Another issue of interest arising from analysis of Version A and variant 2 of Version B was whether any order effect could be observed arising from the difference in order of the questions within the questionnaire. In particular, it could be imagined that respondents for variant 2 of Version B may have been even more likely to consider employment as the reference for the question given that they would already have been asked a variety of questions about their employment or unemployment. As already reported above there was evidence from both versions that respondents with different profiles understood the question as referring to employment activities only. However, respondents to variant 2 of Version B did directly reference the employment they had already reported earlier in the questionnaire when answering these questions, with some referring to the fact they had already reported their main job, thus indicating they felt the question was repetitive. This suggests that an order effect could exist and warranted further consideration in reviewing the questionnaires in advance of the field tests.
33. In summary, the conclusions drawn from both Version A and variant 2 of Version B were that the combination of the general question wording and lack of read out response categories created clear comprehension and reporting difficulty for respondents. This added confusion and burden for respondents and created risks of misclassifications. Additionally, and possibly related to difficulties in understanding the scope of activities of interest, there was inconsistent understanding of the period covered by the reference period *at present*, being sometimes understood as the immediate present, the recent past or a longer period of months or potentially years. Whether employed or not many respondents felt the question referred to their job or paid working activities which would likely lead to under-reporting of non-employment activities such as looking for work or own-use provision of services when the question is asked in this manner.
34. For **variant 1 of Version B** (response categories read out) there appeared in general to be lesser difficulties, but some inconsistency in interpretation of the question remained. Respondents in



Vietnam reported a variety of difficulties related to the term *main situation* as used in the Vietnamese translation. Some respondents reported considering their marital status or health situation rather than their activities, and/or required the categories to be explained before arriving at an answer. There was also some evidence that respondents gave priority to income generating activity over other activities, regardless of the amounts of time involved. For example, when probed a respondent to model 5 in Moldova stated that the main activity is that which “*generates income as one needs money to take care of family*” even though the respondent also spent time caring for their home and family. Notwithstanding these difficulties, variant 1 of Version B was observed to present far less confusion and burden than variant 2 of version B for the countries who tested both. Taking the case of Namibia the analysis concluded that a high likelihood of comprehension difficulty existed in the case of variant 2 (response categories not read out) but that likelihood was low for variant 1.

### *Issues of general relevance to the wording of the question(s)*

35. Translation of the questions on main activity to different languages presented difficulties, regardless of version tested. For example the words ‘main activity or situation’ were not easily translated in all cases. In the case of Moldova the word *situation* could not be easily translated so a term more closely translated to *status* was used. However the cognitive testing showed that ‘status’ was found to be confusing for a number of respondents. For example one respondent considered this to refer to their ‘status in society’ while another referred to ‘their status in the family, like head of household’.
36. In cases in Latin America it was further observed that use of the term *situation* in the question, when translated to Spanish, was interpreted as referring to sensitive topics, making respondents think in particular about their health or psychological state. A number of respondents with health difficulties referred to their only to their health status, regardless of other activities they may be engaged in. In some of those cases respondents found the question upsetting as they were not expecting to have to answer questions about their health status given the overall topic of the survey. Similar sensitivity was observed in a case where the respondent was providing care for a household member with disabilities, as well as with a respondent experiencing personal relationship problems.
37. The need for careful, rather than literal, translation was also clearly illustrated through the Spanish version adopted in Peru. Initially the question included words corresponding to both “*activity*” and “*situation*”, but early testing during the development phase showed this to be confusing or interpreted as referring to sensitive topics. Instead it was decided to use an equivalent colloquial phrase for the cognitive tests that asked respondents what they were mainly “*dedicated to*” and this wording was found to be generally well understood even where response categories were not read out. This was similar to experience in other countries, whereby comprehension and reporting difficulties were reduced when the translation focussed on what the person was mainly doing rather than a status or situation.
38. For the two variants of Version B follow up questions were asked regarding the main activity in the last 12 months. This longer reference period was observed to present additional difficulties for respondents. When asked the period of time they had in mind respondents gave inconsistent answers ranging from correct interpretations to the previous calendar year, recent years, or subsets of a year. For example a respondent in Namibia understood the last 12 months as “*January to December of last year*” even though the cognitive interviews took place in August. In addition respondents reported through further probing that they found the question difficult to answer. One respondent

in Cameroon had reported without difficulty that their main activity at present was looking for work, but said “*Don’t know*” when asked if their main activity in the last 12 months had been different. Another respondent in Cameroon had believed they were being asked to compare their main current situation to that exactly 12 months earlier, rather than their main situation over the 12 months. In circumstances where the respondent had changed their activities relatively recently this could create a risk of misreporting and at the very least created greater recall difficulties than *at present*.

### *Revisions introduced based on findings from the CI tests*

39. Based on the findings from the cognitive studies substantial changes were made in advance of the field tests. **Figure 3** shows the versions adopted for the field test. Specifically the changes included:
  - a. Wording of the questions was updated (see **Figure 3**). In particular the wording ‘main activity or situation’ was replaced by ‘mainly doing’ in line with feedback from the countries and reflecting on the need to provide terminology which could be more easily adapted to different languages.
  - b. The response categories presented were updated, and both Version A and Version B were updated to ensure response categories were read out in all cases. This was critical to address various difficulties arising due to a lack of clear context for respondents in answering the question.
  - c. The structure of Version B was changed. In order to simplify response for respondents with multiple activities at present, a new initial question was introduced. This new question asked the respondent to indicate all activities which were relevant to them at present. In addition to simplifying the response process this was also intended to address the order effect identified for Version B to try to ensure respondents considered activities beyond employment. This was followed by a question on main activity (for those who had more than one current activity) and a question on main activity in the last 12 months.
40. The main difference between versions A and B remained the flow and purpose of the questions, however an additional difference of note lay in the second and third response categories listed in the questions (as highlighted in **Figure 3**).
41. In Version A (used in model 2) category 2 was ‘*Work in farming or fishing*’ while category 3 was ‘*Working in a sector other than farming or fishing*’. In this case category 2 included any work in farming or fishing regardless of whether it was intended to produce goods for own use or sale. Subsequent questions were used to identify the intended destination and thereby decide if that work was employment or own use production of goods.
42. In Version B category 2 was ‘*working to generate an income*’ – theoretically intended to relate to all employment work regardless of the sector of the activity, while category 3 was ‘*farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family*’ (own use production of goods).
43. The difference in categories between Version A and Version B after the CI tests reflects the different role of the questions. In Version A the question was part of the core employment sequence and as such the additional questions on main intended destination of the production were considered essential to ensure accurate assignment of respondents as employed or not. This reflects the observed difficulties from the CI tests of coding cases of farming work to either employment or own use production of goods using a single main activity question. However, in Version B the questions were used as additional explanatory information so it was decided not to add burden by

also including extra questions to check intended destination of production which were in any case already included earlier in the questionnaire during the employment sequence. The key point to note is that this introduces some incomparability when comparing results from Version A to Version B which is highlighted as needed in the analysis below.

44. The remainder of this report focusses on the findings from the field testing phase following the order of questions in Version B, namely, *all activities* (Section III, B), then *main activity at present* (Section III, C), the correspondence between all activities and labour force status (Section III, D) and finally *main activity in the last 12 months* (Section III, E). As model questionnaire 2 only included one question on main activity at present it is only discussed in Section III, C.
45. In considering the outcomes from the field tests it must be noted that, given the experimental design of the field tests, the results are not generalizable to the larger population. Simple weights were computed to account for random differences in the sex, age group and area distribution of the samples achieved within a given country. The weights were derived by creating a “pooled population” based on the average of the split samples within each country. More details on the weighting strategy are available in the report describing the field test methodology.

**Figure 3: Questions on Main activity included in the field tests**

Version A (Model Questionnaire 2)	Version B (Model Questionnaires 1, 3, 4, 5)
<p><b>QA1.</b> Which of the following best describes what (NAME) is mainly doing at present? (<i>Read out list below</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. Studying or training</li> <li>02. Work in farming or fishing</li> <li>03. Working in a sector other than farming or fishing</li> <li>04. Looking for work</li> <li>05. Engaged in household or family responsibilities</li> <li>06. With a long-term illness, injury or disability</li> <li>07. Retired or pensioner</li> <li>08. <b>Other (specify)</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>QB1</b> Which of the following applies to you at present? Are you....? (<i>Read out list below and mark all that apply</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. Studying or training</li> <li>02. Working to generate an income</li> <li>03. Farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family</li> <li>04. Looking for work</li> <li>05. Engaged in household or family responsibilities</li> <li>06. With a long-term illness, injury or disability</li> <li>07. Retired or pensioner</li> <li>08. Other (specify)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>QB2.</b> And which of those describes best what you mainly do at present? (<i>Read out only those selected in QB1</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>01. Studying or training</li> <li>02. Working to generate an income</li> <li>03. Farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family</li> <li>04. Looking for work</li> <li>05. Engaged in household or family responsibilities</li> <li>06. With a long-term illness, injury or disability</li> <li>07. Retired or pensioner</li> <li>08. Other (specify)</li> </ul>

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**QB3** And which of the following best describes what you mainly did in the last 12 months?  
(*Read out list below*)

01. Studying or training
  02. Working to generate an income
  03. Farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family
  04. Looking for work
  05. Engaged in household or family responsibilities
  06. With a long-term illness, injury or disability
  07. Retired or pensioner
  08. Other (specify)
- 

## **B. ‘All’ activities at present (field testing phase – Version B only)**

### *Main findings*

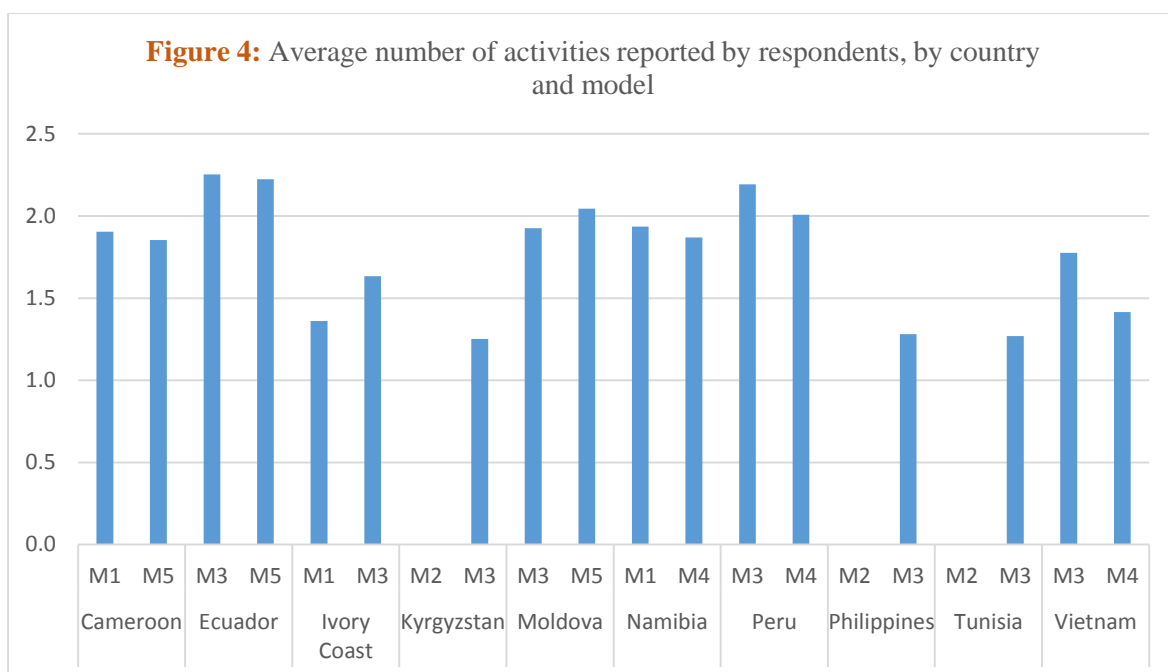
46. Following the experiences of the cognitive testing one of the major changes introduced to Version B of the main activity questions was to include a starting question allowing the respondent to indicate all activities they were currently engaged in from the pre-defined list. This was chosen for 3 reasons, firstly to assess if this generated useful analytical information, secondly to assess if this appeared to make responding to the main activity question easier for respondents, and thirdly to establish the intended scope of the question by reducing the possible order effect introduced to the question placement after detailed questions on employment and unemployment .
47. As a supplement to the quantitative results generated by the field tests, countries were asked to provide qualitative information based on interviewer experiences and observations. In the case of the questions on main activity the countries, in general, reported that the questions appeared to work well and not present major difficulties to respondents. This refers both to the one question on main activity in M2 and the 3 questions in the other 4 models. Given the difficulties noted in the CI test this suggests the changes introduced did improve the operation of the questions.
48. In [Table 2](#), the distribution of the number of activities respondents reported is presented for every country and model. For instance, 36% of the respondents to M1 in Cameroon reported having 1 activity, 39% report 2 activities and so on. The average number of activities for each country and model, and the number of respondents who belong to the working age population (WAP) for each country and model are also reported in the table. A space has been left for M2 (Version A) where it was used in a country to facilitate ease of reading of the data but no data is presented as the question was not included in M2.
49. As an initial observation on quality it can be noted that there were a small number of respondents (max 2) in some countries who reported zero activities. This should not have been possible given the questionnaire design but the low prevalence of this missing data does not indicate that this needs to be considered as a major factor in the analysis.

**Table 2 :** Number of activities reported by respondents, by country and model (% of WAP)

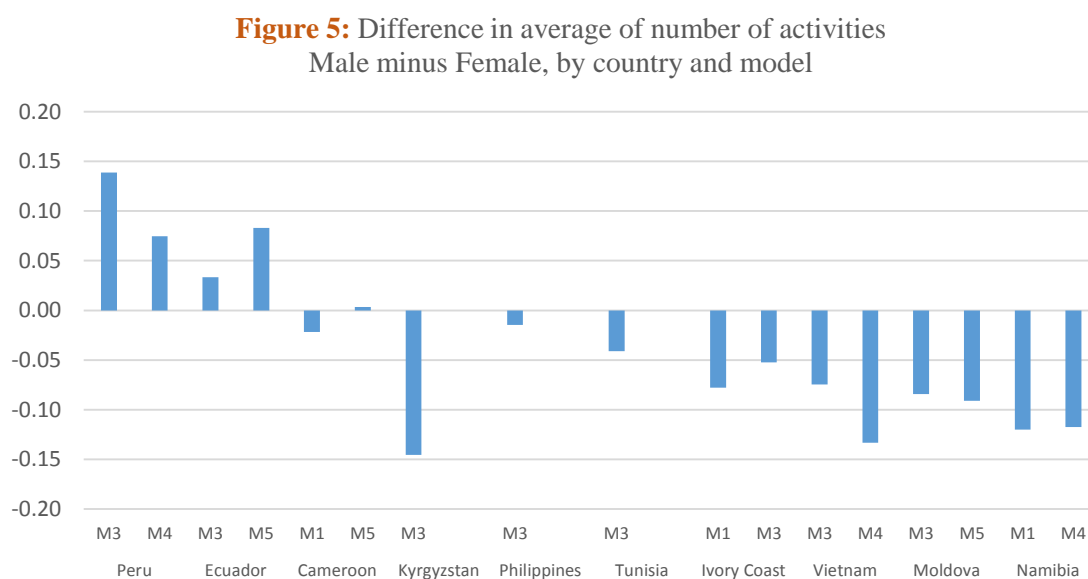
Countries		Number of activities						Average	WAP
		0	1	2	3	4	5		
		<i>% of respondents in WAP</i>						<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Cameroon	M1	1	36	39	21	3	0	1.9	1129
	M5	2	41	32	20	4	0	1.9	1003
Ecuador	M3	0	22	40	29	8	1	2.3	1217
	M5	0	21	43	28	7	1	2.2	1172
Ivory Coast	M1	0	69	25	5	0	0	1.4	963
	M3	0	52	33	14	1	0	1.6	1033
Kyrgyzstan	M2*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1108
	M3	0	77	21	2	0	0	1.3	1161
Moldova	M3	0	33	44	19	3	0	1.9	880
	M5	0	31	40	24	5	0	2.0	925
Namibia	M1	1	38	35	21	5	1	1.9	1144
	M4	1	41	33	22	3	1	1.9	977
Peru	M3	0	18	51	24	6	1	2.2	1107
	M4	1	30	44	18	7	0	2.0	1105
Philippines	M2*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1233
	M3	0	74	24	2	0	0	1.3	1329
Tunisia	M2*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1628
	M3	0	75	23	2	0	0	1.3	1505
Vietnam	M3	0	38	48	14	1	0	1.8	1171
	M4	0	62	34	4	0	0	1.4	1249

\* Question was not included in model 2

50. The results presented in Table 2 show that respondents on average reported more than 1 current activity in every country and model; also, in some countries, the average number of activities is even higher than 2 (see Figure 4). The distribution indicates that respondents tend to report 1 to 3 activities in most countries and models. In both models for Ecuador for instance, almost 30% of respondents reported 3 activities with close to 10% reporting 4 or more. One conclusion to be drawn from this is that it is common for respondents to report multiple activities at present. The most notable exceptions to this were Kyrgyz Republic, Philippines and Tunisia where approximately three quarters of the respondents to M3 indicated only 1 activity.
51. It is also fairly clear that while the results vary across countries they were relatively consistent across models within each country with a low number of exceptions (see Figure 4). For example, for Ecuador the distribution of respondents across the number of activities they reported was almost identical between M3 and M5. The greatest difference in the average number of activities reported between the two models was seen in Vietnam where an average of 1.8 was recorded for M3 versus an average of 1.4 for M4 due to a much higher percentage of respondents reporting only 1 activity in model 4. No immediate explanation is available for this difference, however, it does not change the conclusion that the results within country across model were highly consistent.

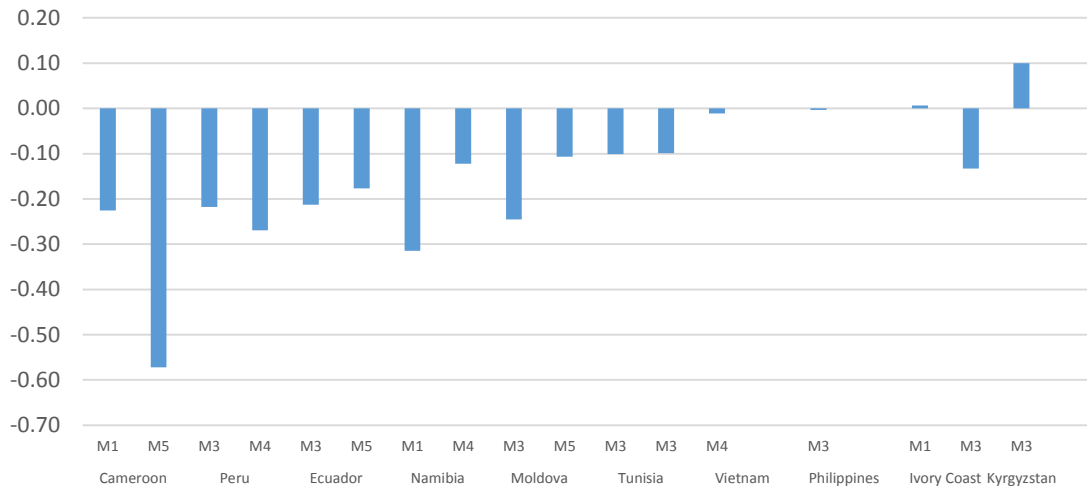


52. To further evaluate the results from the question, a variety of disaggregations were generated. Looking at the disaggregation by sex (Figure 5), for most countries and models, the average number of activities is slightly higher for females; note that the difference is very small, however.



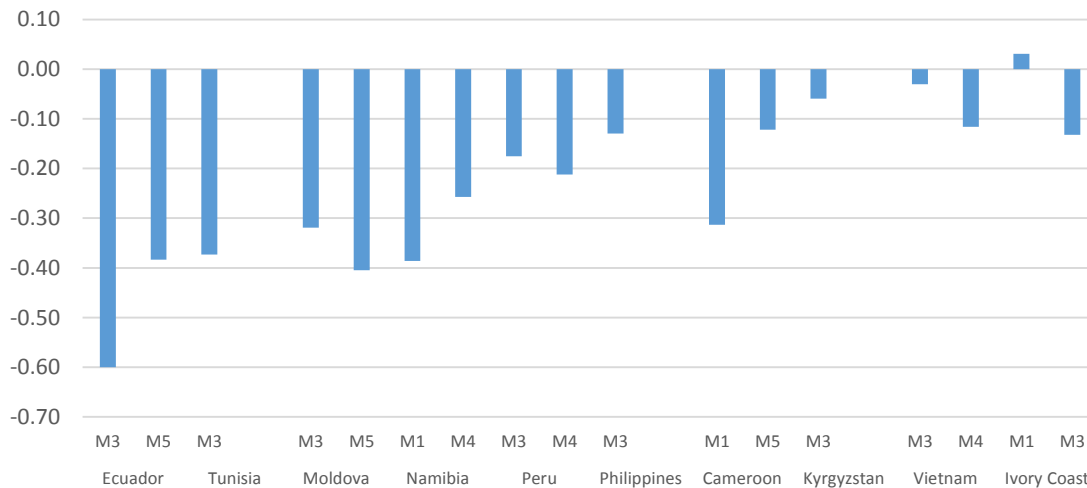
53. A clearer difference is seen when disaggregating by area of residence (urban vs rural). Figure 6 shows that the average number of activities reported by respondents is higher in rural areas compared to urban areas in almost every country and model.

**Figure 6:** Difference in average of number of activities  
Urban minus Rural, by country and model



54. For the LFS pilots the samples of proxy and self-reporting respondents were not random and the level of proxy response across countries varied greatly. As such our ability to draw conclusions on the impact of proxy response is very limited. While needing to be cautious in interpretation of the results we can observe some difference between the reporting of activities for proxies in comparison to self-respondents. This is highlighted by the fact that in all models and countries, with only one exception, the average number of activities reported was higher for direct respondents, than for those for whom information was provided by proxy and the gap was quite substantial in cases (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7 :** Difference in average of number of activities, proxy minus self-reporting, by country and model



55. In Table 3 the distribution of respondents across different activities is presented. For instance, in M1 for Cameroon, 18 percent of respondents' reported that one of their activities was *studying or training*, 45 percent reported they were *working to generate an income*. As respondents could report more than one current activity the sum across the categories is greater than 100.

**Table 3 : Activities reported by country and model (% of WAP)\***

		Studying	Working for income	Foodstuff production	Seeking work	Household resp.	Illness	Retired	Other	WAP
% of respondents in WAP										
		No.								
Cameroon	M1	18	45	48	18	49	7	2	1	1171
	M5	19	42	45	18	39	5	3	2	1040
Ecuador	M3	16	53	47	17	73	13	5	1	1217
	M5	15	54	43	15	80	14	2	0	1172
Ivory Coast	M1	12	59	28	9	21	2	1	2	989
	M3	14	48	39	13	42	4	0	2	1060
Kyrgyzstan	M2**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	M3	8	33	1	7	48	6	21	1	1161
Moldova	M3	8	31	22	11	70	19	30	1	880
	M5	8	32	25	11	72	26	28	1	925
Namibia	M1	24	26	46	26	50	10	12	0	1152
	M4	27	28	36	24	51	8	12	0	970
Peru	M3	16	40	37	19	82	18	6	0	1121
	M4	17	44	26	15	76	15	7	0	1105
Philippines	M2**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	M3	12	51	17	6	35	2	3	1	1233
Tunisia	M2**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	M3	9	29	9	23	39	8	9	1	1505
Vietnam	M3	7	56	33	3	60	6	10	2	1178
	M4	8	59	23	1	33	4	11	3	1243

\* As respondents could report more than one activity the percentages across activities sum to more than 100

\*\*Question was not included in model 2

56. *Working to generate an income and engaged in household or family responsibilities* were the activities most commonly reported by respondents across countries and models. *Farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family* was also commonly reported in many cases. Other categories such as *studying or training* or *retired* were heavily related to the age profile of respondents in the country in question. We can note a relatively high degree of consistency between models in almost all countries. The detailed results of activities reported disaggregated by sex are contained in tables A1 and A2 in section VI.

57. Based on the analysis completed the main conclusions which can be drawn about the question on different activities undertaken by the respondent are:

- a. Given the frequency of reporting multiple activities there can be some analytical value to be gained from including a question of this type. This information would be lost if only a single main activity question was asked. Countries considering collecting information on main activity should consider if there is national interest in also collecting information on multiple activities in the manner done through the pilot studies.
- b. The relative consistency of reporting across models and feedback from the pilot countries suggest the question operated well in the field. Country feedback suggests that it also appeared to have assisted in easing the reporting of main activity which in turn should reduce possible order effects arising from previous questions on employment and unemployment. In addition, there was a very low level of missing data where zero activities



were reported (zero cases for most models and countries) suggesting reporting was not found very problematic by respondents.

### C. Main activity

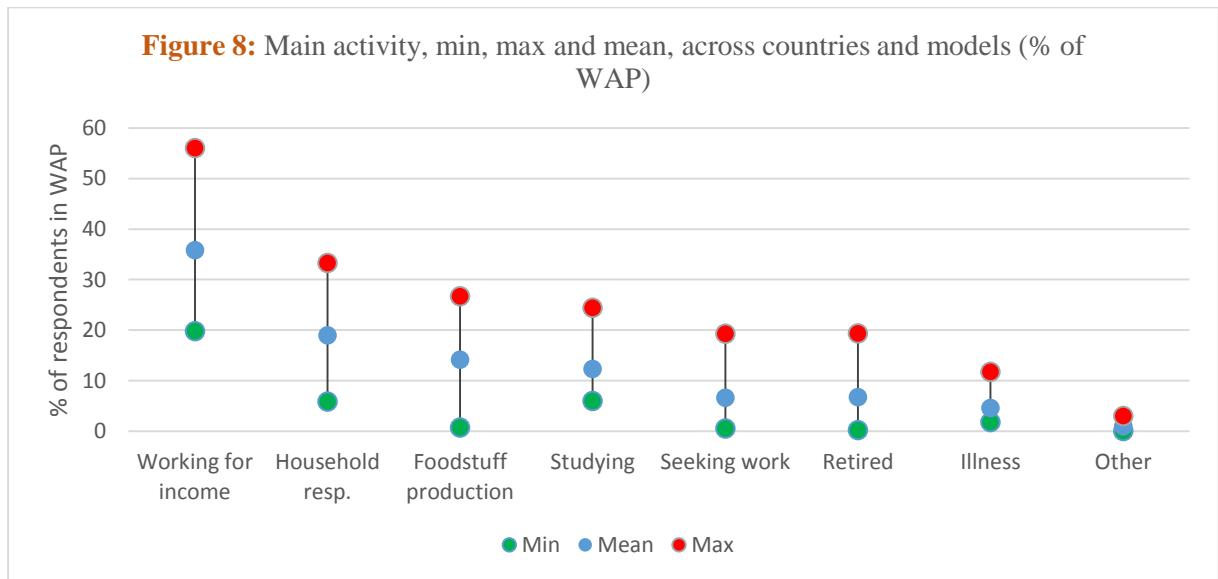
58. The next question in Version B asked respondents to identify their main activity from among those reported in the previous question. If the respondent only reported one activity then it was automatically assumed to be the main activity. For Version A main activity was the initial question in the individual questionnaire thus data from M2 is also included in this analysis albeit with some incomparability in the response options (see paras 40 to 43 above).
59. In Table 4, the distribution of the main activities reported by respondents is presented for each country and model. In this case the percentages in each row sum to 100 percent given that each respondent can only report one main activity. For instance, in Cameroon M1, 17 percent of the respondents in the working age population report that their main activity is *studying or training* (relative to the 18 percent who reported it as one of their activities), 35 percent reported that their main activity is *working to generate an income* (relative to 45 percent who reported it as one of their activities) etc.

**Table 4 :** Main activity distribution by country and model (% of WAP)

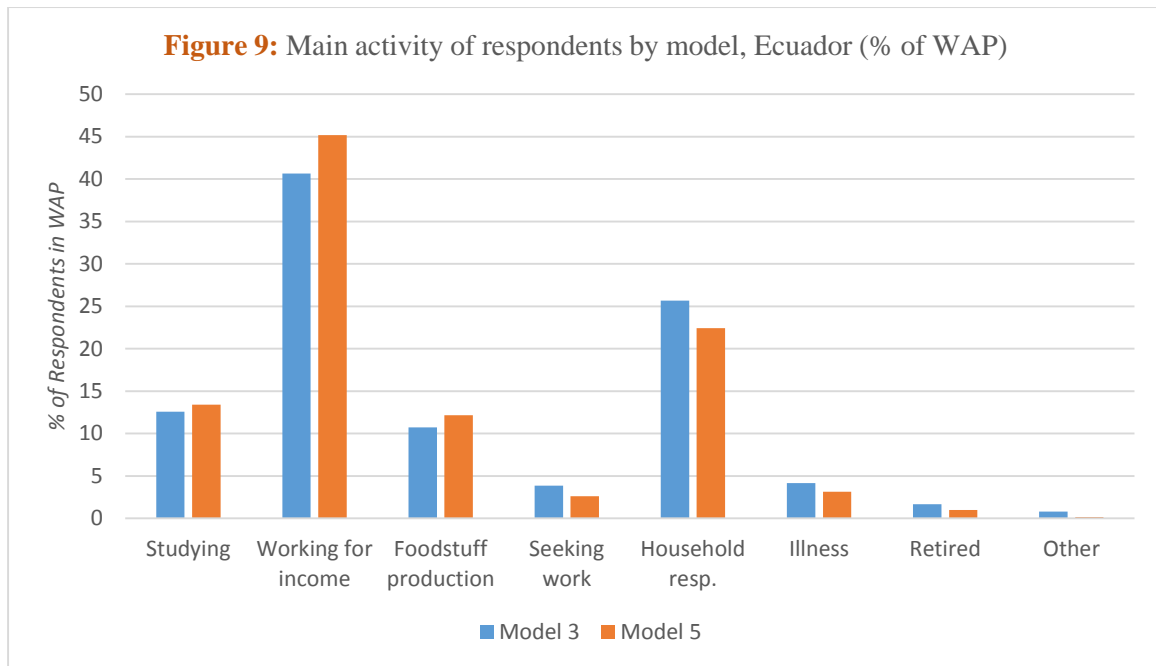
		Studying	Working for income*	Foodstuff production*	Seeking work	Household resp.	Illness	Retired	Other	WAP
		% of respondents in WAP								
Cameroon	M1	17	35	27	6	8	5	1	1	1171
	M5	19	35	26	6	8	4	2	1	1040
Ecuador	M3	13	41	11	4	26	4	2	1	1217
	M5	13	45	12	3	22	3	1	0	1172
Ivory Coast	M1	12	53	15	5	10	2	1	2	989
	M3	14	35	24	7	15	3	0	2	1060
Kyrgyzstan	M2	9	30	1	6	33	3	18	1	1108
	M3	8	31	1	5	32	4	18	1	1161
Moldova	M3	8	29	6	6	23	9	19	1	880
	M5	7	29	6	6	25	12	15	1	925
Namibia	M1	21	20	22	15	12	5	5	0	1152
	M4	24	26	14	11	12	3	9	0	970
Peru	M3	11	29	24	3	25	5	3	0	1121
	M4	12	33	16	3	28	5	4	0	1105
Philippines	M2	11	45	16	3	19	2	2	1	1329
	M3	11	46	14	5	19	2	2	1	1233
Tunisia	M2	13	26	8	19	20	6	8	1	1628
	M3	9	26	7	18	25	7	7	1	1505
Vietnam	M3	6	46	19	1	13	4	9	2	1178
	M4	8	56	16	0	6	3	8	3	1243

\* These categories differed between version A (model 2) and version B (all other models) – see paras 40 to 43 for more details

60. Almost universally, *working (to generate an income)* was the most commonly reported main activity among respondents. The average across all countries and models was 36% of respondents with a maximum of 56% (Vietnam M4) and a minimum of 20% (Namibia M1). Typically, *household or family responsibilities* or *farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family* were the next most commonly reported main activities. The high prevalence of *farming and fishing to produce foodstuff for the family* can in part be linked to the sample design which involved relative oversampling of rural areas given the overall pilot objectives. There was some variability in levels observed across country, which is unsurprising given the different demographic and economic contexts, but this did not substantially alter the ranking of the activities (see [Figure 8](#)).

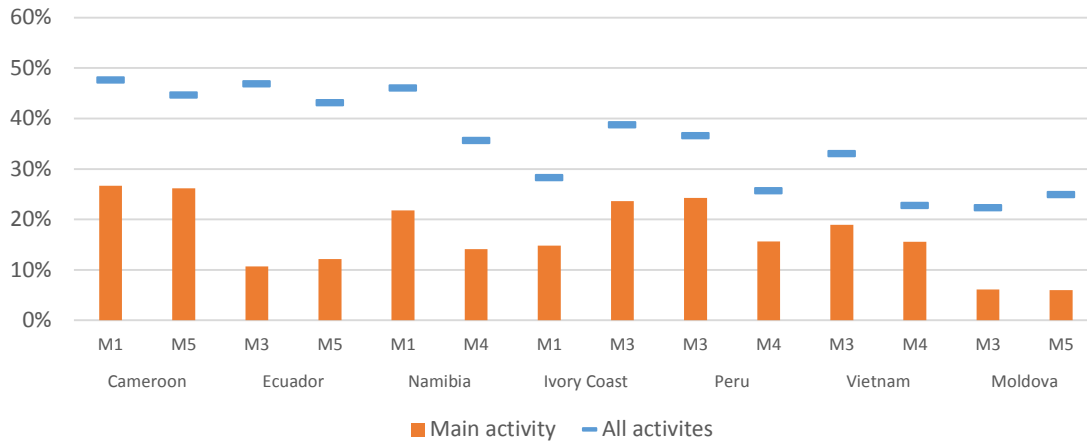


61. By and large the reporting across models within country was highly consistent. To illustrate this [Figure 9](#) shows the distribution of main activity recorded for M3 and M5 in Ecuador. The differences were very minor and in no way impacted the relative order of importance of main activities. This pattern of similarity was repeated across the majority of countries, even those utilising M2 which incorporated a different approach to measurement of main activity. This suggests that measurement of main activity, as refined in preparation for the field tests, was no longer influenced heavily by other differences in the questionnaires or the order effect related to the position of the questions within the questionnaire. Given the experiences of the CI we can link the improved operation of the questions to the changes made to the questionnaires post CI.

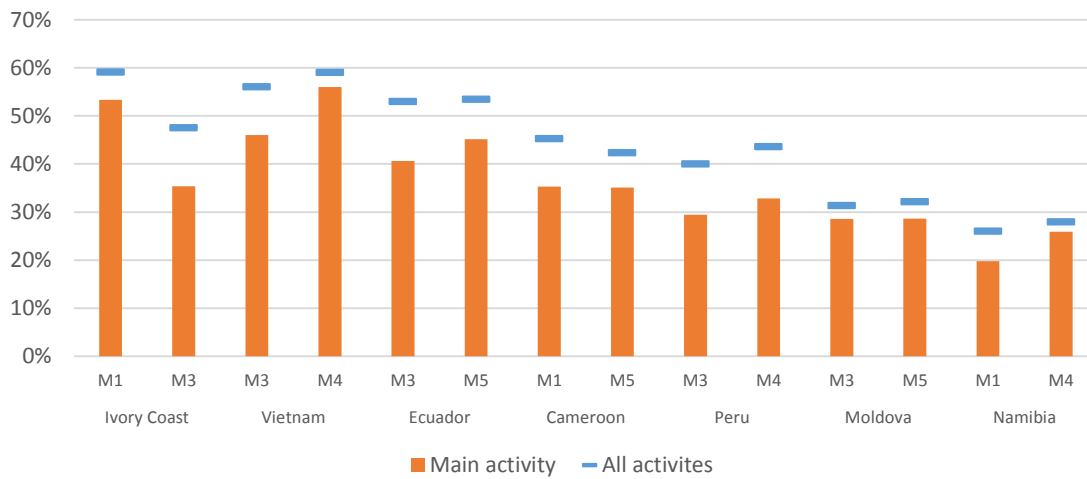


62. Some inconsistency across models was seen in Ivory Coast where 53% of respondents to M1 reported their main activity as *work to generate an income* compared with 35% for M3 (see [Table 4](#)). The difference was reversed for *farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family* where higher levels were reported for M3 than M1 (24% versus 15%). However this pattern was not repeated in Namibia and Cameroon where M1 was also used meaning it is not possible to conclude that the M1 approach made it more likely to capture farming or fishing activity as ‘*work to generate an income*’ by comparison with other models.
63. [Figure 10](#) and [Figure 11](#) highlight another possible analytical value of the combination of data on all activities and main activity. The orange bar in each graph shows the percentage of the working age population who reported an activity as their main activity. For example in Cameroon 27% of working age respondents to M1 indicated that *farming or fishing* was their main activity (see [Figure 10](#)). The blue line shows the percentage of respondent who reported that activity as any activity (whether main or not), e.g. for Cameroon model M1 48% of working age respondents reported *farming or fishing* as one of their activities (see [Figure 10](#)).
64. In comparing [Figure 10](#) and [Figure 11](#) we can see that the gaps between the blue line and the orange bar were smaller in all cases for *working to generate an income* ([Figure 11](#)) than for *farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family* ([Figure 10](#)). An interpretation of this is that *farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family* was relatively more likely to be a secondary activity than *working to generate an income*. This type of analysis highlights a potential additional benefit of collecting information on multiple activities as part of a sequence to collect main activity.

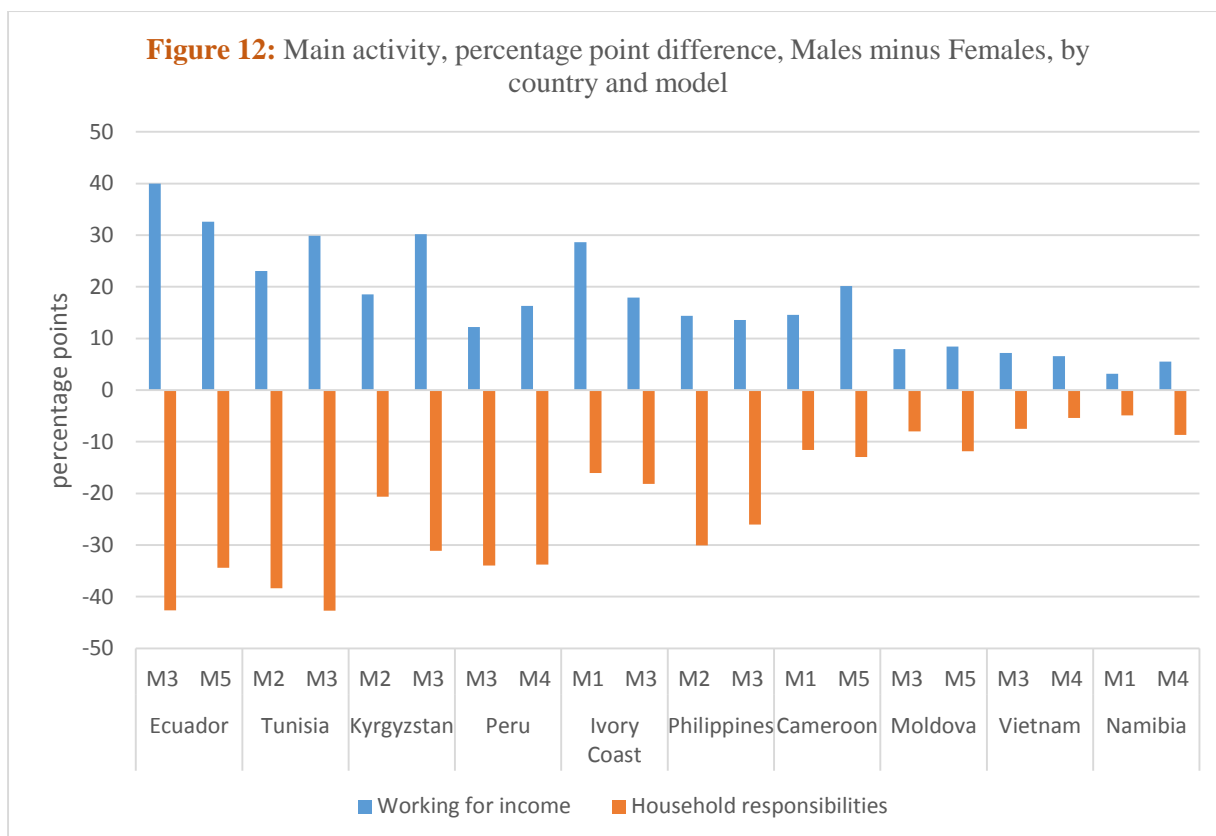
**Figure 10:** Percentage of respondents who report farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family as one activity and as main activity, by country and model



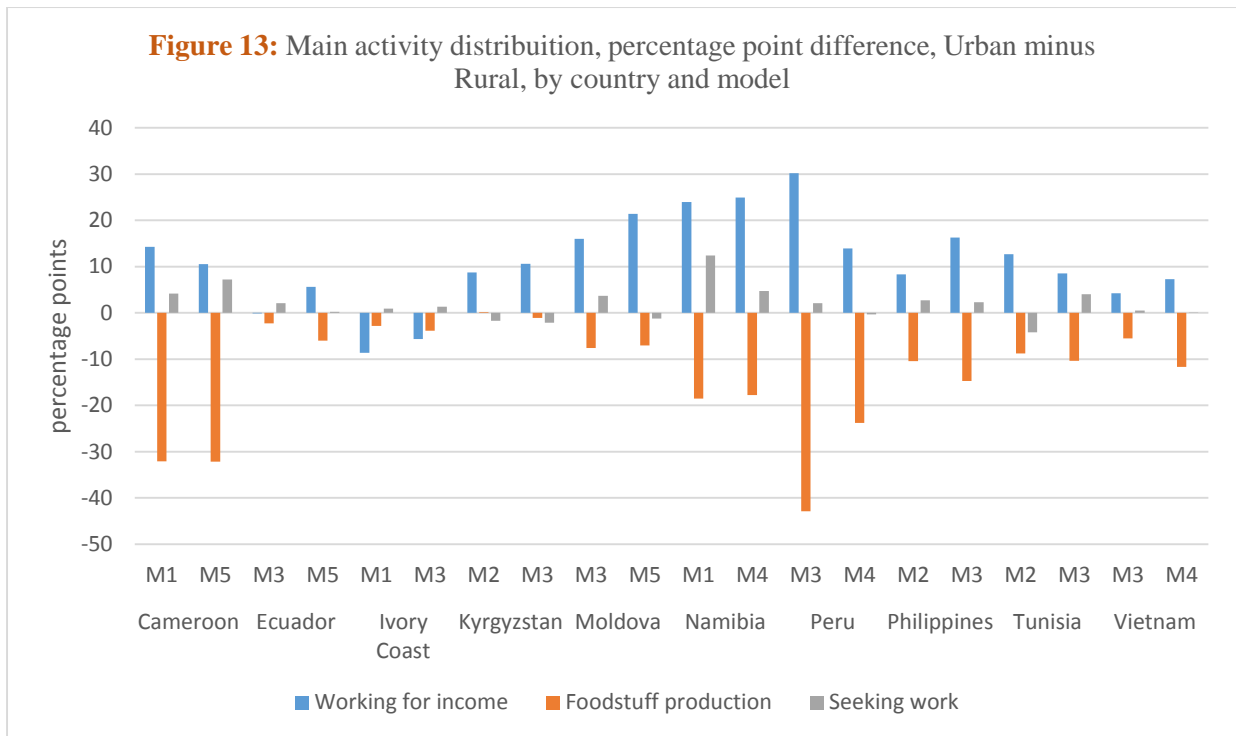
**Figure 11:** Percentage of respondents who report working to generate an income as one activity and as main activity, by country and model



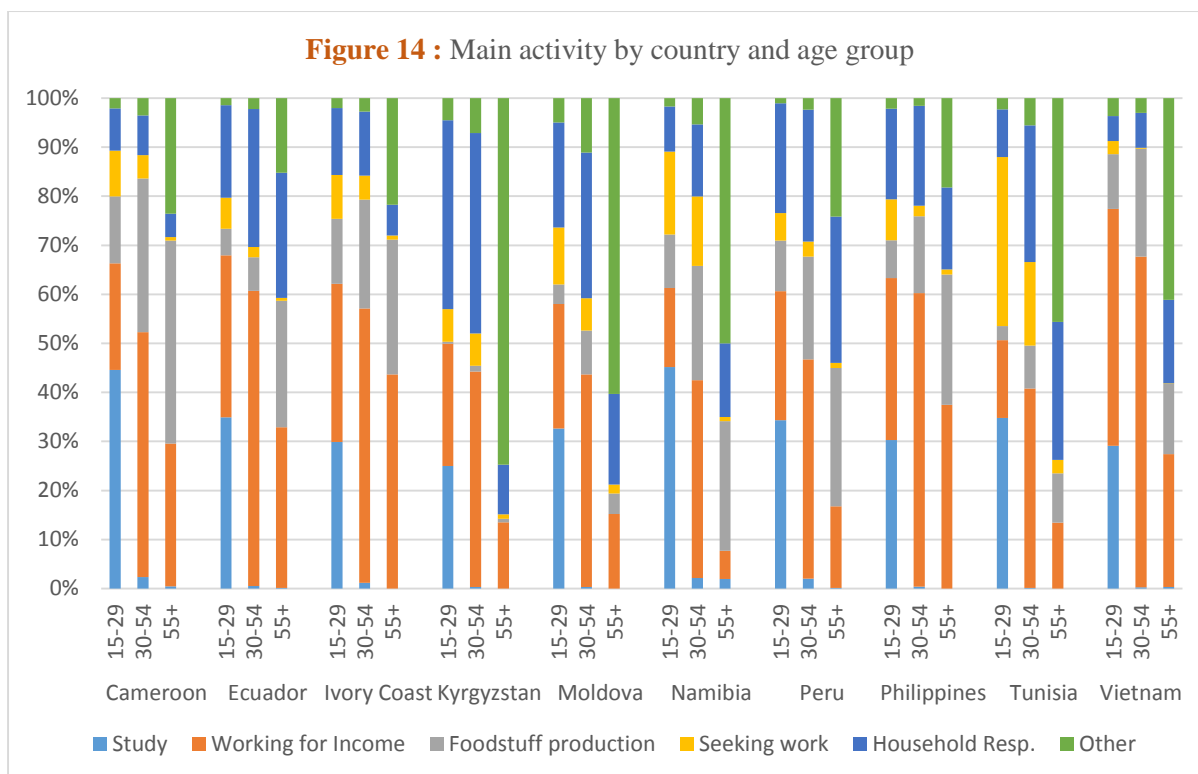
65. Disaggregation by sex reveals some perhaps expected patterns. In every country and model, males report *working to generate an income* to a larger extent than females, while females report *engaged in household or family responsibilities* more often (see Figure 12). The detailed results on main activity disaggregated by sex are shown in Tables A3 and A4 in section VI.



66. Also, the results show that there are important differences between respondents living in urban areas compared to respondents in rural areas. Figure 13 shows that it is more common for respondents in urban areas to report *working to generate an income* or *looking for work* as the main activity, while, unsurprisingly, respondents in rural areas report *farming or fishing to produce foodstuff for the family* more often.



67. Figure 14 presents the distribution of the main activities for different age groups. In this case the average across two models in each country has been presented to facilitate visualisation. The chart does not reveal any unexpected results. For example *looking for work* and *studying* were most common among 15-29 year olds while *farming or fishing to produce foodstuff* and *working to generate an income* are more commonly reported as main activities among older age groups.



68. The main conclusions which can be drawn from the question on main activity are:
- As with the previous question on all activities the question on main activity seemed to function well. This is concluded from the qualitative feedback received along with the relatively high level of consistency across models as well as consistency with a-priori expectations.
  - Strong analytical value can be added by including this question in surveys which capture work and labour force status, either as part of the sequence of questions on employment (Version A) or as a separate set of questions which can be cross-tabulated with labour force status (Version B).
  - Additional analytical value can be added by also including the question capturing multiple activities as well as main activity where there is interest in this type of information. For example the prevalence of certain activities (e.g. household responsibilities) which can otherwise be missed if main activity only is captured. Regarding this conclusion it can be noted that other methods could be used to capture information on other activities such as dedicated questions on own use provision of services, studying etc., but the approach highlighted here is a possible low burden manner to capture some information which can be used as a general social indicator not directly based on activities in a short reference period as other indicators from the LFS tend to be.

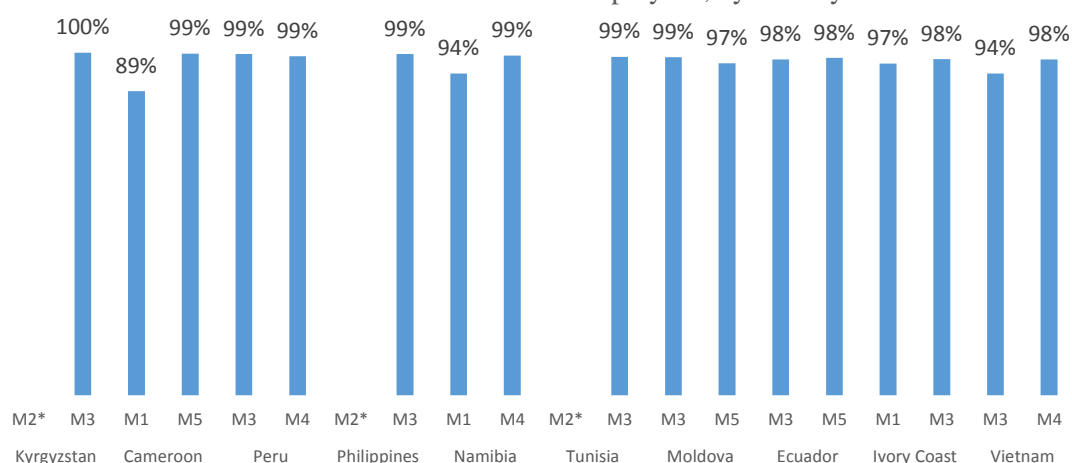
#### D. Concordance between all activities and Labour Force Status

69. The model questionnaires were designed in such a way as to permit various types of checks on internal consistency. One case where this can be useful is an evaluation of the consistency between labour force status and the information captured through the main activity questions. These consistency checks can work in multiple ways as described below with different interpretations depending on the types of inconsistencies identified. For the purposes of this report the focus is on the correspondence between employment and *working to generate an income*. Similar analysis

could be attempted with unemployment and *looking for work* but for the pilot studies that analysis is limited due to the low number of unemployed respondents identified.

70. **Figure 15** shows the percentage of respondents who reported *working to generate an income* as one of their activities and had a labour force status *employed*. In theory, if the category *working to generate an income* was understood by respondents to refer to the concept of *employment* as captured elsewhere in the questionnaire the two figures should align perfectly. If differences did arise they could come from multiple sources such as the wording of the category as “*working to generate an income*” rather than using the type of terminology used earlier in the questionnaire such as “*business*” or “*work for pay or profit*”. Alternatively issues could arise due to order effect given that detailed questions to capture labour force status would already have been asked before these questions.
71. As is evident almost all respondents who reported *working to generate an income* as one of their activities were picked up as employed. Of the 17 datasets where this analysis could be completed 14 had a match of 97% or higher (see **Figure 15**). Another way of putting this is that it was unlikely that respondents would report that they were *working to generate an income* unless they had gone through the earlier sequence of questions and been identified as employed.
72. One low outlier was Cameroon for model 1 (89% as compared with 99% for model 5). Model 1 also gave lower results for Namibia (94% as compared with 99% for model 4). One possible explanation for this is that the structure of the M1 questionnaire (initial focus on farming and fishing work) could lead own use producers to be more likely to report *working to generate an income* as an activity even where they had no recorded employment earlier in the questionnaire but this explanation cannot be supported by any direct evidence. We can also note that this was not repeated in Ivory Coast and level of the difference was not very substantial. Nonetheless, it indicates that some impact of differences in the initial sequence of questions is possible.

**Figure 15:** Percentage of respondents who reported working to generate an income and had the labour force status "employed", by country and model



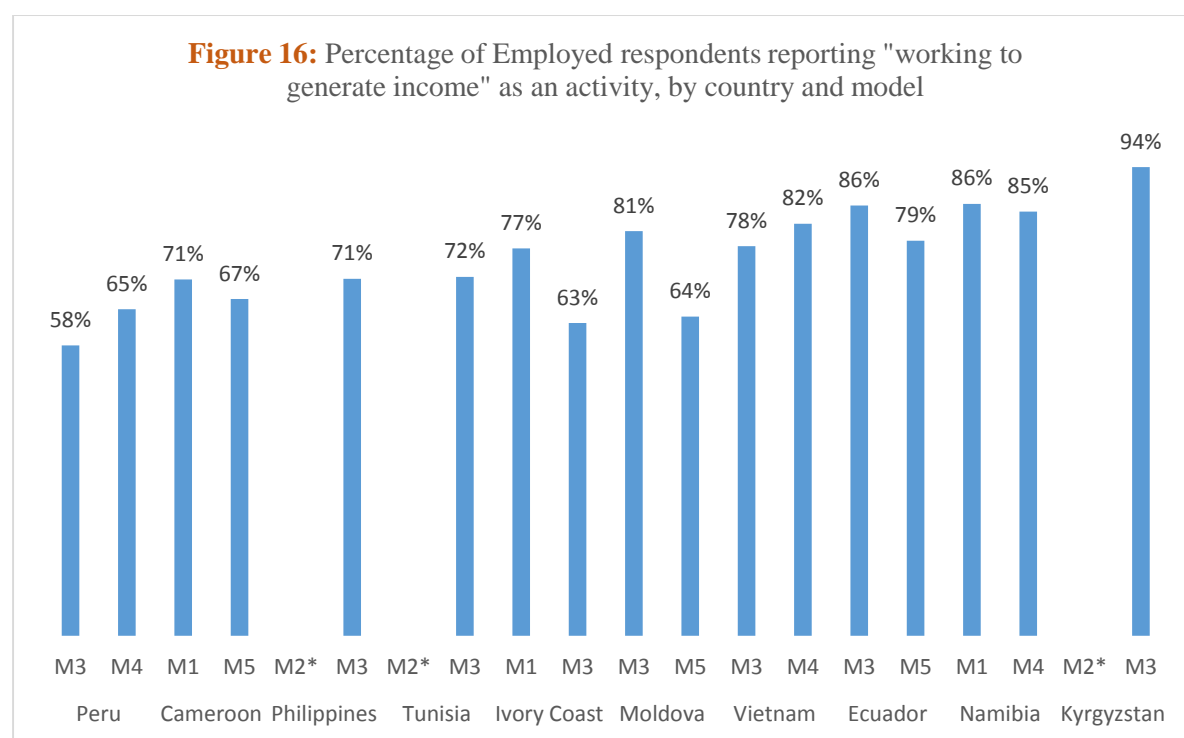
\*This analysis was not possible for model 2

73. When this analysis is reversed it allows us to look at whether people picked up as employed by labour force status report *working to generate an income* as an activity. **Figure 16** shows these



findings, for example showing that 83% of respondents who were captured as employed in model 5 in Moldova also reported *working to generate an income* as one of their activities.

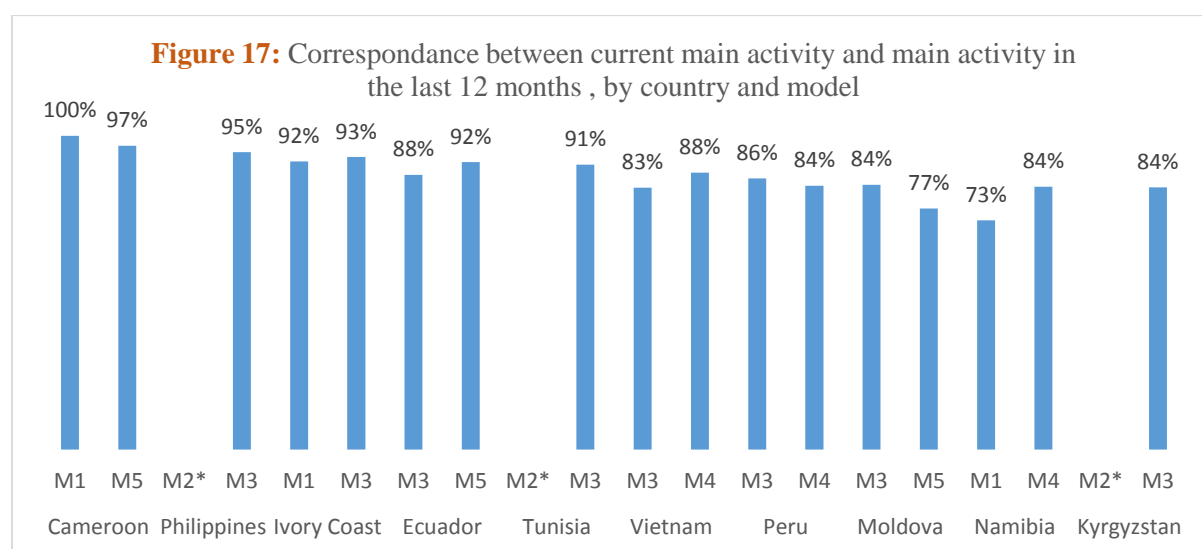
74. The results presented in **Figure 16** show that an approach based on subjective reporting of current activities (i.e. the any activity question from Version B) alone does not produce reliable estimates for employment. Between 6% and 42% of respondents across models and countries were picked up as having a labour force status of employed but did not subjectively report *working to generate an income* as one of their activities, (whether their main activity or a secondary activity). This can be explained in various ways, such as people engaged in casual employment activities not considering their activity as work to generate an income etc.



75. Taken in combination the analysis of the data underlying **Figures 15** and **16** can lead to multiple conclusions about subjective questions on activities and how they may relate to the measurement of employment
- A short set of questions covering peoples' self-reported activities, while analytically useful, should not be considered as a replacement for a dedicated set of questions to identify labour force status. This finding is reinforced by the findings presented in the separate report on the measurement of employment, whereby it was demonstrated that a sequence starting with questions on main activity required additional recovery questions to comprehensively capture employment.
  - Order effects may arise in the sequence of questions but are not easy to identify clearly. The pilot studies showed it was unlikely that the category *working to generate an income* would be over-reported (i.e. someone who reported it not being in employment) but it remained possible that it could be under-reported (i.e. someone in employment not selecting this category). This is something which could warrant further studies to assess order effects more directly.

## E. Concordance between current main activity and main activity in the last 12 months

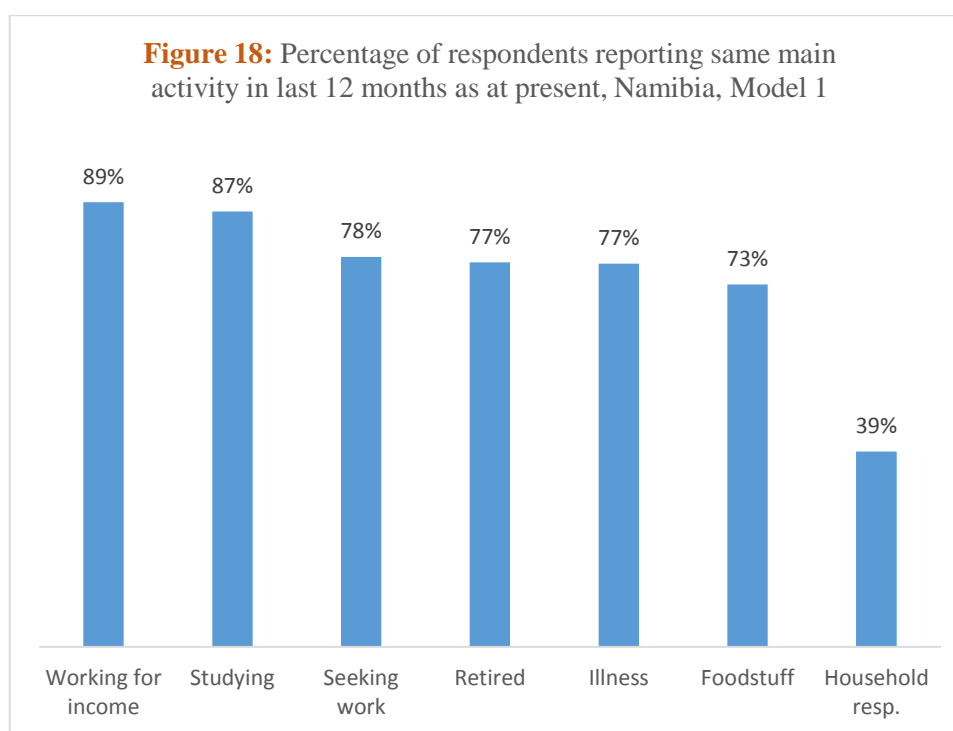
76. The final set of findings cover the correspondence between reporting in response to the question on *main activity at present* and the question on *main activity in the last 12 months*. This analysis can highlight if sufficient difference was found in the reporting to warrant collection of information for both reference periods. If not then a decision on which (if either) to include in a questionnaire would have to be made based on national interest.
77. As reported earlier, during the CI tests it was attempted to establish if there were varying degrees of difficulty in understanding of the two different periods ‘at present’ and ‘in the last 12 months’. Outcomes from the CI indicated a relatively greater degree of inconsistency and reporting difficulty related to the reference period ‘last 12 months’. This is not surprising given the longer recall period involved.
78. Analysis of the field test results could be done either at the aggregate or individual level. **Figures 17 and 18** show the results of analysis at the individual level. This shows the percentage of respondents who reported the same activity at present as over the last 12 months. For instance, 100 percent of the respondents to M1 in Cameroon reported the same activity presently as they had in the last 12 months.



\* This analysis was not possible for model 2

79. The results in **Figure 17** indicate that respondents did report the same main activity in the two reference periods to a large extent, but there are some exceptions to note. We find the lowest level of correspondence for M1 in Namibia with 73 percent of respondents reporting the same current main activity as main activity in the last 12 months. For the majority of countries and models however the correspondence was above 80 percent and in several cases above 90 percent.
80. To highlight the difference found in Namibia **Figure 18** shows how the level of correspondence differed depending on the main activity in question. For example relatively higher levels of correspondence were reported for people *working to generate an income* (89%) and *studying* (87%)

while the correspondence was substantially lower for those reporting *engaged in household or family responsibilities* (39%) as their main current activity.



81. As the correspondence between the current main activity and the main activity in the last 12 months is high generally, it is concluded that including questions for both reference periods appears to be redundant. By far the lowest level of correspondence was found for *household responsibilities* (39%). For some categories such as *Retired* and *Illness* it must be borne in mind that very few respondents were in these categories. Even for those activities more frequently reported any analysis of differences would be likely to be based on very low numbers of respondents given the relatively low level of mismatch found. With this in mind countries considering measurement of main activity should consider where the national interest in analysing the data lies. One benefit of choosing a shorter reference period is a closer concordance with the measurement of labour force status, thereby potentially improving the meaningfulness of cross-analysis of labour force status and main activity. In addition, experience from the cognitive tests suggested ‘at present’ was relatively more respondent friendly than ‘in the last 12 months’ for a question of this type.

## IV. IDENTIFIED CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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82. The pilot studies along with previous experience of collecting information on *Main Activity* highlight its analytical value. Countries should consider including questions on the subject in questionnaires. However, given observed mismatches between recording of employment and the main activity *working to generate an income* these questions should not be regarded as a replacement for questions on labour force status in isolation.
83. However, a question on main activity can be used as part of a sequence of questions to capture employment, as long as sufficient recovery questions are included (as done in Version A) for people who may have another main activity but also have some employment work. This finding is explained further in another report in this series on the measurement of employment.
84. Experience from CI indicated that it is essential for response categories to be read out for any question of this type. There was also evidence that referring to what people ‘mainly do’ rather than ‘activity’, ‘status’ or ‘situation’ can help to improve understanding of the question. Nonetheless careful translation and pre-testing is needed to ensure the appropriate context is achieved in different countries and languages.
85. The updated versions of the questions included in the field tests appeared to operate well. This is based on qualitative feedback from the pilot countries and the quantitative analysis of the results (for example high degrees of consistency between models in the same country, results matching a-priori expectations). The degree of consistency observed suggests that the reporting of main activity was not heavily influenced by other differences in the design of the model questionnaires.
86. Collecting information on ‘all activities’ before identifying the main activity can be useful both to ease reporting and to offer useful information which is missed if only one question on main activity is used. In most countries the large majority of respondents reported more than one current activity. This approach can also potentially reduce any order effects arising from placing the questions after detailed questions on employment and unemployment. Some evidence from the pilot studies could infer some order effect did exist but further study could be warranted to assess this more directly.
87. The list of categories included in the pilot tests should be considered a good starting point but countries should consider national adaptation if relevant. For example if other activities such as volunteer work are common this could be considered for inclusion. However the number of categories included needs to be relatively low given that they should be read to the respondent. A good testing plan should include tests of these questions to ensure the categories are relevant in the national context.
88. In the pilot countries the large majority of respondents reported the same main activity at present as in the last 12 months. This suggests there is no major value to collecting information on both. Given the short reference period adopted for measurement of labour force status it is recommended to adopt the question covering ‘at present’. However, this can be considered further by countries based on national user interest.

89. As with all subjects national adaptation and testing is critical to cover issues such as appropriate question wording (allowing for national culture, translation etc) and appropriate response categories.

## V. REFERENCES

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- ILO. (1982). Resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment. *13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians*. Geneva: ILO.
- ILO. (2013). Resolution I concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization. *19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians*. Geneva: ILO.

## VI. SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

**Table A1:** Activities reported by country and model (% of WAP)\* - Males

		Studying	Working for income	Foodstuff production	Seeking work	Household resp.	Illness	Retired	Other	WAP
% of respondents in WAP										No.
Cameroon	M1	18	54	45	21	39	6	2	0	556
	M5	20	50	44	22	27	5	4	1	493
Ecuador	M3	16	68	47	19	59	12	5	1	614
	M5	17	66	40	19	69	12	2	0	591
Ivory Coast	M1	12	72	27	7	9	2	1	1	483
	M3	16	57	41	11	29	3	1	2	518
Kyrgyzstan	M2**									
	M3	8	48	2	11	24	5	16	2	528
Moldova	M3	8	35	25	15	65	16	24	0	418
	M5	8	38	28	14	64	25	22	1	439
Namibia	M1	28	27	42	27	43	10	10	0	483
	M4	30	31	33	26	43	7	10	0	407
Peru	M3	17	45	43	24	76	14	7	0	550
	M4	19	48	31	17	67	13	8	1	543
Philippines	M2**									
	M3	12	57	20	8	23	2	3	2	606
Tunisia	M2**									
	M3	9	42	10	22	19	9	13	1	745
Vietnam	M3	6	58	33	4	55	6	10	1	554
	M4	10	63	21	1	23	4	12	1	589

\* As respondents could report more than one activity the percentages across activities sum to more than 100

\*\*Question was not included in model 2

**Table A2:** Activities reported by country and model (% of WAP)\* - Females

		Studying	Working for income	Foodstuff production	Seeking work	Household resp.	Illness	Retired	Other	WAP	
		<i>% of respondents in WAP</i>									<i>No.</i>
<b>Cameroon</b>	<b>M1</b>	17	37	50	15	59	9	2	2	615	
	<b>M5</b>	17	35	46	15	51	6	3	2	547	
<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>M3</b>	16	38	47	15	88	14	5	2	603	
	<b>M5</b>	13	40	46	11	91	16	1	0	581	
<b>Ivory Coast</b>	<b>M1</b>	11	47	30	11	32	3	1	4	506	
	<b>M3</b>	13	39	37	16	53	5	0	2	542	
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>M2**</b>										
	<b>M3</b>	9	19	0	5	67	6	25	1	634	
<b>Moldova</b>	<b>M3</b>	8	28	20	7	74	22	35	2	462	
	<b>M5</b>	9	27	22	8	80	28	34	1	486	
<b>Namibia</b>	<b>M1</b>	21	25	49	26	54	9	13	0	669	
	<b>M4</b>	26	26	37	23	57	9	14	0	563	
<b>Peru</b>	<b>M3</b>	16	35	30	14	88	22	5	0	570	
	<b>M4</b>	15	39	20	14	85	16	7	0	563	
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>M2**</b>										
	<b>M3</b>	11	45	14	5	47	3	3	1	627	
<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>M2**</b>										
	<b>M3</b>	9	15	9	24	58	7	5	1	760	
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>M3</b>	7	54	33	2	66	6	10	3	624	
	<b>M4</b>	6	56	24	1	42	4	10	5	653	

\* As respondents could report more than one activity the percentages across activities sum to more than 100

\*\*Question was not included in model 2



**Table A3:** Main activity by country and model (% of WAP) - Males

		Studying	Working for income*	Foodstuff production*	Seeking work	Household resp.	Illness	Retired	Other	WAP
<i>% of respondents in WAP</i>										<i>No.</i>
<b>Cameroon</b>	<b>M1</b>	19	43	23	6	2	5	2	1	556
	<b>M5</b>	21	46	20	7	1	3	2	1	493
<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>M3</b>	13	60	10	6	4	4	2	0	614
	<b>M5</b>	15	61	11	3	5	2	2	0	591
<b>Ivory Coast</b>	<b>M1</b>	12	68	11	3	2	2	1	1	483
	<b>M3</b>	16	45	26	4	5	2	0	1	518
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>M2</b>	7	40	2	10	22	4	13	1	503
	<b>M3</b>	8	47	1	8	15	5	13	2	528
<b>Moldova</b>	<b>M3</b>	8	33	10	9	18	9	13	0	418
	<b>M5</b>	7	33	9	8	18	12	11	1	439
<b>Namibia</b>	<b>M1</b>	26	22	18	16	9	5	4	0	483
	<b>M4</b>	28	29	12	14	7	3	7	0	407
<b>Peru</b>	<b>M3</b>	11	36	35	4	7	3	4	0	550
	<b>M4</b>	12	41	21	5	11	5	5	0	543
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>M2</b>	13	53	22	4	4	2	1	1	654
	<b>M3</b>	12	53	18	7	6	2	2	1	606
<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>M2</b>	11	38	9	22	0	7	12	1	806
	<b>M3</b>	9	41	8	19	3	8	11	1	745
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>M3</b>	5	50	19	2	10	4	9	1	554
	<b>M4</b>	9	59	14	0	3	3	9	1	589

\* These categories differed between version A (model 2) and version B (all other models) – see paras 40 to 43 of the report for more details

**Table A4:** Main activity by country and model (% of WAP) - Females

		Studying	Working for income*	Foodstuff production*	Seeking work	Household resp.	Illness	Retired	Other	WAP
<i>% of respondents in WAP</i>										<i>No.</i>
Cameroon	M1	16	28	30	5	13	5	1	1	615
	M5	17	26	32	5	14	4	2	1	547
Ecuador	M3	12	21	11	2	47	4	2	1	603
	M5	11	29	13	3	40	4	0	0	581
Ivory Coast	M1	11	39	18	7	18	3	1	3	506
	M3	12	27	21	10	23	4	0	2	542
Kyrgyzstan	M2	10	22	0	2	43	2	22	1	604
	M3	9	17	0	2	46	3	22	1	634
Moldova	M3	8	25	3	3	26	9	25	2	462
	M5	8	25	3	4	30	11	18	0	486
Namibia	M1	18	18	24	14	14	4	6	0	669
	M4	22	24	15	9	16	3	11	0	563
Peru	M3	10	23	14	3	41	6	2	0	570
	M4	11	25	11	1	45	5	3	0	563
Philippines	M2	9	38	11	2	34	3	2	1	675
	M3	11	39	10	3	32	2	2	1	627
Tunisia	M2	15	15	7	16	39	5	3	0	822
	M3	9	11	5	18	46	7	4	1	760
Vietnam	M3	6	43	18	0	17	5	8	2	624
	M4	6	53	17	1	8	4	7	4	653

\* These categories differed between version A (model 2) and version B (all other models) – see paras 40 to 43 of the report for more details