



Challenges and Responses in China's Labour Force Survey

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Outline

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03 Relative Measures



01

Overview of the China Labour Force Survey



Overview of the China Labour Force Survey

- 1. Survey coverage:** Urban and rural areas in 31 provinces.
- 2. Survey population:** Households residing in sampled dwellings.
- 3. Sampling method:** Stratified sampling.
- 4. Survey frequency:** Monthly.
- 5. Sample size:** 340,000 households, covering approximately 21,000 PSU, with 16 households surveyed per PSU.
- 6. Response rates:** In the first interview, all selected households are surveyed. If a sampled dwelling is non-reponse, replacement procedures are applied. For repeat interviews, vacant dwellings are confirmed as such. The replacement rate is approximately 5%. The response rate has remained at a relatively high level. The non-response rate is approximately 1%.



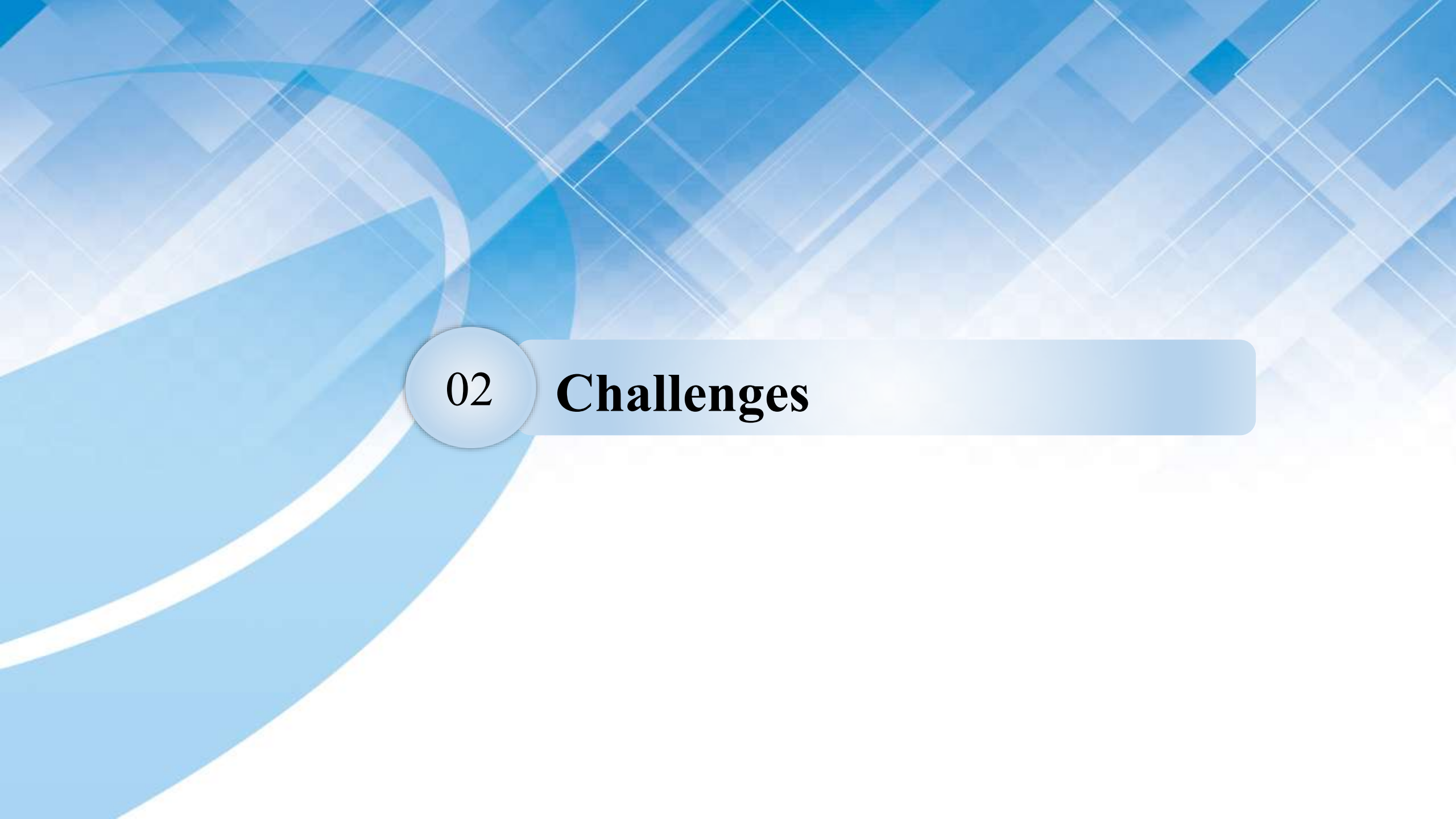
Reasons for maintaining a high response rate

1.Survey mode: Primarily personal visits from a CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) .

- Over 95% of communities conduct in-person interviews, which significantly reduces the likelihood of refusals or nonresponse.
- If no one is at home, interviews may be conducted by telephone.

2.Interviewer selection:Preference for community staff.

- Interviewers are familiar with residents, which helps reduce resistance.
- Interviewers receive salaries from the state and additional allowances for survey completion, ensuring efficiency and accuracy.



02

Challenges



1. Increasing difficulties in gaining household cooperation

Although the overall response rate remains relatively high, the difficulty of conducting household surveys in China has been increasing. Declining willingness of cooperation, as well as the low quality of “proxy” responses from family members, have both affected the quality of survey data.

(1) Declining cooperation.

- Growing awareness of privacy rights has led to increased resistance to surveys involving personal information.
- Interviewers must spend more time persuading households, raising costs and challenges for maintaining high response rates.



1. Increasing difficulties in gaining household cooperation

(2) “Proxy” reporting reduce accuracy.

- When some household members are absent, others often respond on their behalf.
- However, “proxies” may not fully know employment details, leading to inaccurate answers, especially when parents respond for children, or when respondents change jobs frequently or are informal employment.



2. Interviewers' performance directly affects data quality

The quality of labor force survey data relies tightly on interviewer conscientiousness, understanding of indicators, and communication skills. Some interviewers, due to long-term work fatigue, may develop a tendency to “finish quickly” , leading to noncompliance with survey protocols, which directly undermines data quality .

(1) Weak adherence to survey procedures.

- Some interviewers complete questionnaires on behalf of households, relying on prior data. GPS data shows multiple households being surveyed at the same location.
- Others incorrectly classify dwellings as non-responded or replaced households without required follow-up visits, even when utility records confirm occupancy.



2. Interviewers' performance directly affects data quality

(2) Non-standard interviewing.

- Some interviewers rush through surveys, submitting large volumes of data in a short period without following standard questionnaire.
- For example, a standard questionnaire typically takes approximately 4 to 5 minutes to complete. However, a small number of interviewers averaged less than two minutes per questionnaire.



3. Quality of certain survey items remains to be improved

While long-term training for interviewers has improved data quality for core questions directly related to employment/unemployment classification, some items remain challenging, requiring further quality improvement.

(1) Occupational and industrial coding errors.

- Since occupational and industrial coding is technically demanding, interviewers record job descriptions, and local statistical staff code them.
- However, vague or oversimplified responses hinder accurate coding.



3. Quality of certain survey items remains to be improved

(2) Underreporting of wages and income.

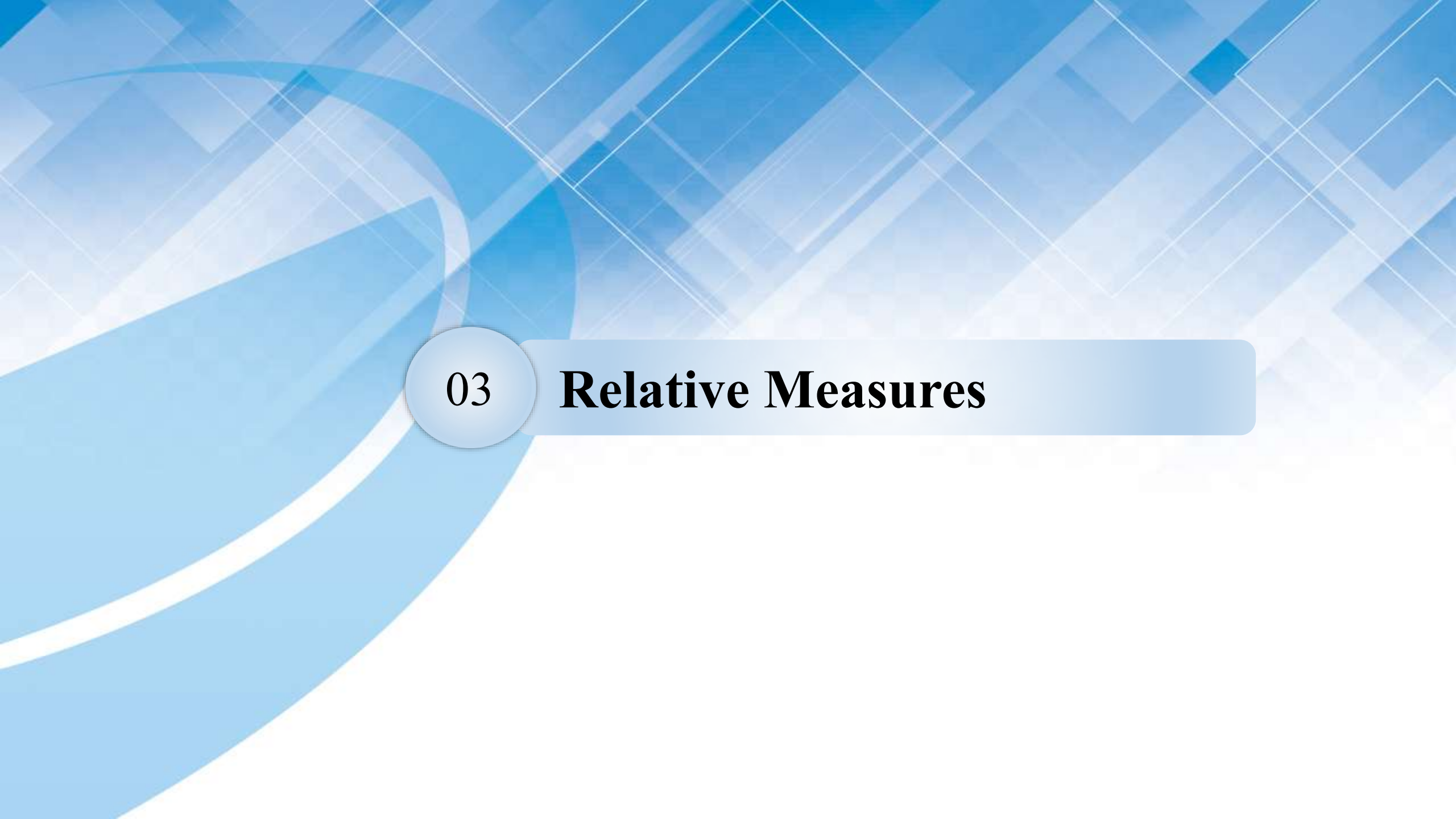
- Many high-income respondents intentionally report lower figures due to sensitivity concerns.
- Complex income structures (e.g. bonuses, the employee's share of social assistance contributions) also result in misreporting, leading to under-estimation.



4. Growing demand for diverse labour force data

Employment and unemployment statistics are receiving increasing attention in China. Public demand for diverse labor force survey data continues to grow, placing higher demands on the survey.

- Monitoring employment quality and decent work.
- Measuring the size, income, and social protection of new forms of employment and informal employment.
- Assessing the impact of specific events (e.g., American tariff policy changes) on labour markets.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of employment policies.



03

Relative Measures



1.Enhance public awareness of the LFS— Reduce respondent reluctance

(1) Conduct promotion through multiple channels.

- Release promotional videos on online platforms like TikTok and WeChat.
- Display posters on buses, subway, and within communities (notices, banners, letters to respondents).
- Distribute well-designed promotional presents (e.g., tote bags, Spring Festival couplets, folding fans) to sampled households.



1.Enhance public awareness of the LFS— Reduce respondent reluctance

(2)Emphasizing legal obligations and privacy protection.

- Interviewers explain that participation is a civic duty, and accurate reporting is legally required.
- They highlight that personal data is legally protected, and any disclosure is strictly prohibited.
- Data are used exclusively for aggregated statistical purposes, never for individual identification, administration, or commercial use.



2. Standardizing interviewer training and evaluation — Improve data quality

(1) Standardize interviewer guidance and training.

- Develop an interviewer manual and instructional videos based on survey protocols to unify requirements and standardize practices.
- Conduct regular training sessions addressing common issues. Annual training by experienced statistical staff should cover both survey items and interviewing skills.



2. Standardizing interviewer training and evaluation — Improve data quality

(2) Improve interviewer management and assessment.

- Establish a database of labor force survey interviewers to track changes promptly.
- New interviewers must receive training before fieldwork; untrained personnel are not permitted to conduct interviews.
- Refine management procedures, adhering to a system of " training–testing–fieldwork " .
- Motivate interviewers by recognizing and awarding outstanding performers with bonuses.



3.Strengthen data validation and review —Promptly identify anomalies

(1) Comprehensive data review system.

- Establish a five-tier review system (Interviewer, District, City, Province, National).
- Decompose review tasks, clarifying responsibilities at each level.
- Facilitate reviews from national down to district level, cross-reviews between district, and training for local staff at national and provincial levels on data review methods.

District: an administrative subdivision of a Chinese city, with its own local government.



3.Strengthen data validation and review —Promptly identify anomalies

(2)Detailed review processes.

- A unified platform monitors key indicators and fieldwork compliance, enabling immediate review of critical indicators and anomalies.
- Develop a multi-layered monthly evaluation system based on behavioral data, questionnaire data, and community summary data.
- An intelligent coding system has been developed for occupational and industrial code, supported by a knowledge base built from hundreds of thousands of coded records.



3.Strengthen data validation and review —Promptly identify anomalies

(3) Multiple verification methods.

- Including telephone follow-ups, and field re-interviews.
- A national hotline conducts post-survey checks, verifying interviewers' work and key indicators with sampled households.
- Initiate field checks based on platform alerts or telephone follow-up results, providing simultaneous guidance on proper interviewing techniques.



4.Improving survey design —Meet growing data needs

- **Optimizing questionnaires:** Revising core modules to include more questions on employment quality and informal employment.
- **Supplementary surveys:** Conducting additional modules in certain months to collect more detailed labour market information.
- **Thematic studies:** Organize targeted surveys on specific topics like informal employment, flexible employment, and the effects of policy changes such as US tariffs to obtain in-depth information.



THANKS!