

## Estimated rates of activity: African countries and territories (1950-1990)

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In the course of preparing the fourth edition of *Estimates and projections of the economically active population*, the ILO Bureau of Statistics is now making estimates of activity rates by sex and age group and of distribution by sex for each sector of economic activity by sex, for each country or territory in the world which had 200,000 inhabitants or more in 1990.

The article which appeared in the *Bulletin of Labour Statistics* in the first quarter of 1995 (1995-1) contained the estimates in question for 1950-1990, for Asian countries and territories. The present article deals with African countries and territories. The corresponding estimates for Latin America and North America, Europe and Oceania will appear in the *Bulletin* in the third and fourth quarters of 1995 respectively.

These estimates cancel and replace those published in previous editions of *Estimates and projections of the economically active population*, namely: *Labour force projections, 1965-85* (Geneva, ILO, first edition, 1971), *Labour force estimates and projections, 1950-2000* (Geneva, ILO, second edition, 1977) and *Economically active population, 1950-2025* (Geneva, ILO, third edition, 1986). It should be noted, however, that for a very limited number of countries these data may have to be changed if the Bureau of Statistics receives more complete and detailed information before the issue of the fourth edition, which is foreseen for the end of 1995 for the figures and the middle of 1996 for the methodology.

The definition retained for the economically active population is in conformity with that adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 1982 and similar to that retained in the three preceding editions.

Population censuses and sample surveys of the economically active population have provided the main basis for the estimates, which have been adjusted where necessary in order to make the data drawn from these sources compatible with the definition of the economically active population adopted.

Although the quality and quantity of statistics on the economically active population taken from population censuses or specific sample surveys of the economically active population, carried out between 1950 and 1990, remain very precarious in most African countries, it should be noted that despite their difficult conditions at different political, technical, logistic and financial levels, most of these countries have in recent years made a considerable effort to try and redress these two deficiencies.

The estimates presented in this article fully reflect these efforts. Thus it has been necessary to make an in-depth review of the estimates produced in the three previous editions of *Estimates and projections of the*

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*economically active population*, in particular those concerning activity rates by sex and age and the distribution of the economically active population by major sectors of activity and sex in the years 1950, 1960, 1970 and

The estimates for all countries and territories, with the exception of Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda and Somalia, are now based on at least one or more population censuses and/or specific surveys of the economically active population carried out during the period 1950-1990. For the four above-mentioned countries, the estimates are entirely based on models, in particular those established for the third edition of *Estimates and projections of the economically active population*.

As with the Asian countries and territories, adjustments were made to the original data taken from population censuses or sample surveys on the economically active population, concerning one or more categories of persons classified in the non-active or institutionalized population, i.e. military conscripts, first-time job-seekers, students working part-time and seasonal workers. These adjustments have been made by shifting the category or categories concerned from the non-active or institutionalized population to the category of economically active population, when national statistics have allowed, or by estimates based on models taken from neighbouring countries with similar demographic, social, political and cultural characteristics.

Special attention was given to countries with a Moslem culture, as well as other countries in the region, where national statistics have ignored or continue to ignore women's evident contribution to economic activity, and in particular to agricultural work. As in Asia, and in the case of these countries, ad hoc adjustments have been made to take account of this component. The details of the methodology used for these adjustments will be available in Volume VI of the fourth edition of *Estimates and projections of the economically active population*, due out in 1996. In brief terms, this estimate was made in two distinct stages, the first of which consisted of an estimate of the overall contribution of women to agriculture based on the ratio of women/men working in the sector, and the second consisting of the distribution of the amount of the adjustment by age groups through a standard curve profile, in particular that of unpaid family workers in agriculture in the region.

This adjustment has, however, been made only for data in the last two decades, namely 1980 and 1990. In the cases indicated by a separating line the figures for these two decades are not comparable with those for the three preceding decades, namely 1950, 1960 and 1970. Nevertheless, it should be noted that for countries where estimates for the period 1950-1990 have been based on the results of two, or even one, census and/or survey of the economically active population, the adjustment, if made, has been applied to the entire period. This is the case in particular with several sub-Saharan countries.

Given the lack of official statistics reflecting the level of participation in economic activity of the population and the distribution of the economically active population by sectors of activity for one or more decades, we have been obliged to make estimates based on interpolation/extrapolation and, where necessary, ad hoc models, in particular when only one usable estimate was available for the entire period. The models were of the same kind as those used for the third edition of *Estimates and projections of the economically active population*.

Compared to those made in the previous editions, the estimates contained

in this new edition seem to reflect better the level of participation in activity of the population, in particular by women, in the countries and territories concerned. This has led to an improvement in terms of quality, quantity, reliability and comparability at the inter-regional and international levels.

Since the third edition the number of countries and territories for which separate estimates have been made has increased by one unit: Eritrea, which was previously incorporated into Ethiopia. The names and territorial coverage of the other countries have remained unchanged.