

Estimated rates of activity: Latin American countries and territories (1950-90)

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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, for each country or territory in the world which had 200,000 inhabitants or more in 1990.

Two articles were already published in the *Bulletin of Labour Statistics* in the first and second quarters of 1995 (1995-1 and 1995-2) containing the estimates in question for 1950-90, for Asian and African countries and territories respectively. This third article deals with the countries and territories of Latin America. The corresponding estimates for North America, Europe and Oceania will appear in the *Bulletin* of the fourth quarter of 1995.

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.

These adjustments have concerned primarily military personnel, the unemployed and those seeking their first job, but other categories, particularly women working in agriculture as unpaid family workers, have also been included.

Where national statistics permit, the adjustments have been made simply by shifting the category or categories concerned from the non-active or institutionalized population to the category of economically active population. In all other cases recourse has been had to models mostly taken from other years in the same country or from neighbouring countries with similar demographic, social, political and cultural characteristics.

Where, owing to one or more factors, major discrepancies have appeared between the figures published in the third edition for 1950, 1960, 1970 and 1980 and that calculated for 1990, owing to the different definition retained for the economically active population or certain categories of it, the date when the census or sample survey was carried out (high or low agricultural season) or the coverage of certain categories of persons, adjustments have nearly always been made to the earlier series.

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Where differences may have arisen between different sources, particularly sample surveys of the economically active population and population censuses, preference has usually been given to the former. It should be noted that in the case of women in seven countries, namely Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay, the statistics for the 1950, 1960 and 1970 periods, based mainly on population censuses, and those for the 1980 and 1990 periods, based mainly on sample surveys, are not comparable. This is indicated by a separation line between the two periods.

Although the adjustment methodology has remained the same as that used in the three previous editions, in terms of quality, quantity, reliability and comparability at the international and interregional levels, the statistics on the active population of the countries and territories of Latin America have shown notable improvements since the appearance of the third edition of *Estimates and projections of the economically active population*.

For the vast majority of the countries and territories of Latin America, the figures presented are based on statistics drawn from a number of censuses and/or sample surveys of the economically active population that were made between 1945 and 1994. However, for some countries, the most recent available information on the active population dates back several years: this is the case in particular for Haiti (1982), Dominican Republic (1981) and Peru (1981). For these countries, the estimated rates of activity by sex and age for 1990 may include a significant margin of error.

Compared with the previous edition, this fourth edition includes three new entities, namely the Bahamas, Netherlands Antilles and Belize, and the deletion of the Windward Islands (change in the status of the islands of this entity).