

Guidelines concerning dissemination practices for labour statistics,  
endorsed by the Sixteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians  
(October 1998)

**Access**

1. Ready access should be provided to data and metadata and they should be actively disseminated and publicized. Subject to national data protection restrictions, micro-data that protect the confidentiality of respondents should be made available — at least for research purposes.
2. A variety of statistical products should be derived from each data set, using appropriate dissemination media in each case.
3. The professionalism of statistical agency staff should encompass the skills and techniques needed to design tables and charts, to communicate information effectively to users; also presentational and media skills.
4. The initial release of the main labour aggregates into the public domain should be free of charge; an explanation of any charging policies that are followed by the statistical agency for additional outputs should be publicly available.
5. The professional staff responsible for labour data should ensure their names and/or workplace telephone numbers are published with all statistical outputs; other forms of direct contact with users such as user groups and “help lines” should be developed by the statistical agency.
6. Statistical agencies should regard the provision of data and metadata to international organizations as equivalent in importance to the supply of data to home customers; international organizations should adopt dissemination guidelines themselves.

**Integrity**

7. The terms and conditions under which statistics are produced and released, including labour statistics, should be a matter of public record.
8. Those agencies that have technical responsibility and prepare analytical commentary on the data should have responsibility for releasing data.
9. There should be prior announcement of the date of initial release of labour statistics including, where possible, the exact time. The earlier the advance notice the better, even if dates are issued initially on a provisional basis. When release deadlines are not met, the reason should be made publicly available.
10. Data should be released the same day and at precisely the same time of day to all parties. If special privileges are given to journalists, this should be under “lock-up” conditions.
11. If demands for prior access to the data within governments cannot be resisted, the number of persons with advance access should be kept to an absolute minimum and a list of these persons should be maintained; the period of notice they are given should be kept as short as

- possible.
12. Ministerial commentaries and statements made at the time the statistics are released must be clearly distinguished from those of the statisticians.

### **Data**

13. Where there are significant shortfalls in the coverage of national employment and unemployment totals, users should be made aware of this and reminded every time the data are released. Providing subtotals sufficiently reliable can be produced for the purpose to be served, their availability should be well publicized.
14. Similarly, users should be made well aware of the reference period of the data.
15. If countries have the resources and there is evidence of user demand, the main aggregates should be released at least on a quarterly basis. Publication of information necessary for detailed structural analysis of the labour market should occur at least annually.
16. Labour statistics should be released as soon as possible after the data have been assembled and analysed. When the source is a household or establishment survey conducted monthly or quarterly, data for the main aggregates should normally be available within a quarter of the end of the reference period to which they refer. Ideally, annual survey data should be released, at least on a preliminary basis, within a half year of the reference period.

### **Quality**

17. Regularly updated documentation on metadata — the definitions, methodology, sources, sampling error and other quality indicators, the questionnaires, forms, etc., used in preparing the statistics — should be made publicly available, including the degree of alignment with international recommendations.
18. Where there are two or more sources of labour data, reconciliation or comparisons between them should be published regularly. Statistical frameworks and accounting schemes that support statistical cross-checks should also be developed.
19. Users should be given adequate advanced warning of revisions and their implementation should be guided by a code of practice.
20. The statistical agency should make estimates for missing periods whenever collection or collation of data is interrupted. Similarly, the effects of discontinuities should be estimated.