

Resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population,  
employment, unemployment and underemployment, adopted by the  
Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians  
(October 1982)

The Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians.

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Recalling the existing international standards concerning statistics of the labour force employment and unemployment contained in Resolution I adopted by the Eighth Conference (1954) and concerning measurement and analysis of underemployment and underutilisation of manpower contained in Resolution III adopted by the Eleventh Conference (1966),

Recognising the need to revise and broaden the existing standards in order to enhance their usefulness in the provision of technical guidelines to all countries and particularly those with less developed statistics and recognising the usefulness of such standards in enhancing the international comparability of the statistics,

Adopts this twenty-ninth day of October 1982 the following resolution in substitution for Resolution I of the Eighth Conference and paragraphs 4 to 9 and 13 of Resolution III of the Eleventh Conference:

Objectives and scope

1. Each country should aim at developing a comprehensive system of statistics on the economic activity of the population in order to provide an adequate statistical base for the various users of the statistics taking account of the specific national needs and circumstances. In particular the system should provide for needs in connection with the measurement of the extent of available and unused labour time and human resources for purposes of macro-economic monitoring and human resources development planning and the measurement of the relationships between employment income and other social and economic characteristics for purposes of formulating and monitoring employment policies and programmes, income-generating and maintenance schemes, vocational training and other similar programmes.

2. In order to fulfil the above objectives the programme of statistics of the economically active population should in principle cover all branches of economic activity, all sectors of the economy and all status groups (employees, own-account workers, etc.) and should be developed to the fullest extent possible in harmony with other economic and social statistics. The programme should specifically provide for both short-term and longer-term needs, i.e. statistics for current purposes compiled frequently on a recurrent basis and statistics compiled at longer intervals for structural in-depth analysis and as benchmark data:

- (a) the current statistics programme should encompass statistics of the currently active population and its components in such a way that trends and seasonal variations can be adequately monitored. As a minimum programme, countries should collect and compile statistics on the currently active population twice a year, if possible coinciding with the agricultural peak and slack seasons wherever considered appropriate;
- (b) the non-current statistics programme which may include censuses and surveys should provide (i) comprehensive data on the economically active population, (ii) in-depth statistics on the activity pattern of the economically active population over the year and the relationships between employment, income and other social and economic characteristics, and (iii) data on other particular topics (e.g. children and youth, women, households) as determined by the long-term and continuing needs.

3. Population censuses and sample surveys of households or individuals generally constitute a comprehensive means of collection of data on the economically active population which can be linked with data on other related topics. Establishment surveys and administrative records may also serve as sources for obtaining in some cases more precise, more frequent and more detailed statistics on particular components of the economically active population. The different sources of information should be regarded as complementary and may be used in combination for deriving where necessary integrated sets of statistics. In designing population censuses, surveys of households or individuals or other means of data collection on the economically active population, efforts should be made in so far as possible to incorporate the international standards.

4. In order to promote comparability of the statistics among countries where national concepts and definitions do not conform closely to the international standards, explanations should be given and the main aggregates should if possible be computed on the basis of both the national and the international standards. Alternatively, the necessary components should be identified and provided separately in order to permit conversion from the national to the international standards.

## Concepts and definitions

### The economically active population

5. The economically active population comprises all persons of either sex who furnish the supply of labour for the production of economic goods and services as defined by the United Nations systems of national accounts and balances during a specified time-reference period. According to these systems the production of economic goods and services includes all production and processing of primary products whether for the market for barter or for own consumption, the production of all other goods and services for the market and, in the case of households which produce such goods and services for the market, the corresponding production for own consumption.

6. Two useful measures of the economically active population are the usually active population measured in relation to a long reference period such as a year and the currently active population or equivalently the "labour force" measured in relation to a short reference period such as one week or one day.

### The usually active population

7. (1) The usually active population comprises all persons above a specified age whose main activity status as determined in terms of number of weeks or days during a long specified period (such as the preceding 12 months or the preceding calendar year) was employed or unemployed as defined in paragraphs 9 and 10.

(2) Where this concept is considered useful and feasible the usually active population may be subdivided as employed and unemployed in accordance with the main activity.

### The labour force (the currently active population)

8. The labour force or "currently active population" comprises all persons who fulfil the requirements for inclusion among the employed or the unemployed as defined in paragraphs 9 and 10 below.

### Employment

9. (1) The "employed" comprise all persons above a specified age who during a specified brief period, either one week or one day, were in the following categories:

- (a) "paid employment":
- (a1) "at work": persons who during the reference period performed some work for wage or salary, in cash or in kind;
- (a2) "with a job but not at work": persons who, having already worked in their present job, were temporarily not at work during the reference period and had a formal attachment to their job.

This formal job attachment should be determined in the light of national circumstances, according to one or more of the following criteria:

- (i) the continued receipt of wage or salary;
- (ii) an assurance of return to work following the end of the contingency, or an agreement as to the date of return;
- (iii) the elapsed duration of absence from the job which, wherever relevant, may be that duration for which workers can receive compensation benefits without obligations to accept other jobs;
- (b) "self-employment":
- (b1) "at work": persons who during the reference period performed some work for profit or family gain, in cash or in kind;
- (b2) "with an enterprise but not at work": persons with an enterprise, which may be a business enterprise, a farm or a service undertaking, who were temporarily not at work during the reference period for any specific reason.
- (2) For operational purposes, the notion of "some work" may be interpreted as work for at least one hour.
- (3) Persons temporarily not at work because of illness or injury, holiday or vacation, strike or lockout, educational or training leave, maternity or parental leave, reduction in economic activity, temporary disorganisation or suspension of work due to such reasons as bad weather, mechanical or electrical breakdown, or shortage of raw materials or fuels, or other temporary absence with or without leave should be considered as in paid employment provided they had a formal job attachment.
- (4) Employers, own account workers and members of producers' co-operatives should be considered as in self-employment and classified as "at work" or "not at work", as the case may be.
- (5) Unpaid family workers at work should be considered as in self-employment irrespective of the number of hours worked during the reference period. Countries which prefer for special reasons to set a minimum time criterion for the inclusion of unpaid family workers among the employed should identify and separately classify those who worked less than the prescribed time.
- (6) Persons engaged in the production of economic goods and services for own and household consumption should be considered as in self-employment if such production comprises an important contribution to the total consumption of the household.
- (7) Apprentices who received pay in cash or in kind should be considered in paid employment and classified as

"at work" or "not at work" on the same basis as other persons in paid employment.

(8) Students, homemakers and others mainly engaged in non-economic activities during the reference period, who at the same time were in paid employment or self-employment as defined in subparagraph (1) above should be considered as employed on the same basis as other categories of employed persons and be identified separately, where possible.

(9) Members of the armed forces should be included among persons in paid employment. The armed forces should include both the regular and the temporary members as specified in the most recent revision of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

#### Unemployment

10. (1) The "unemployed" comprise all persons above a specified age who during the reference period were:

- (a) "without work", i.e. were not in paid employment or self-employment as defined in paragraph 9;
- (b) "currently available for work", i.e. were available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; and
- (c) "seeking work", i.e. had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid employment or self-employment. The specific steps may include registration at a public or private employment exchange; application to employers; checking at worksites, farms, factory gates, market or other assembly places; placing or answering newspaper advertisements; seeking assistance of friends or relatives; looking for land, building, machinery or equipment to establish own enterprise; arranging for financial resources; applying for permits and licences, etc.

(2) In situations where the conventional means of seeking work are of limited relevance, where the labour market is largely unorganised or of limited scope, where labour absorption is, at the time, inadequate or where the labour force is largely self-employed, the standard definition of unemployment given in subparagraph (1) above may be applied by relaxing the criterion of seeking work.

(3) In the application of the criterion of current availability for work, especially in situations covered by subparagraph (2) above, appropriate tests should be developed to suit national circumstances. Such tests may be based on notions such as present desire for work and previous work experience, willingness to take up work for wage or salary on locally prevailing terms, or readiness to undertake self-employment activity given the necessary resources and facilities.

(4) Notwithstanding the criterion of seeking work embodied in the standard definition of unemployment, persons without work and currently available for work who had made arrangements to take up paid employment or undertake self-employment activity at a date subsequent to the reference period should be considered as unemployed.

(5) Persons temporarily absent from their jobs with no formal job attachment who were currently available for work and seeking work should be regarded as unemployed in accordance with the standard definition of unemployment. Countries may, however, depending on national circumstances and policies, prefer to relax the seeking work criterion in the case of persons temporarily laid off. In such cases, persons temporarily laid off who were not seeking work but classified as unemployed should be identified as a separate subcategory.

(6) Students, homemakers and others mainly engaged in non-economic activities during the reference period who satisfy the criteria laid down in subparagraphs (1) and (2) above should be regarded as unemployed on the same basis as other categories of unemployed persons and be identified separately, where possible.

#### Population not economically active

11. The "population not economically active" comprises all persons, irrespective of age, including those below the age specified for measuring the economically active population who were not "economically active", as defined in paragraph 5.

#### The population not currently active

12. (1) The "population not currently active", or, equivalently, persons not in the labour force, comprises all persons who were not employed or unemployed during the brief reference period and hence not currently active because of (a) attendance at educational institutions, (b) engagement in household duties, (c) retirement or old age, or (d) other reasons such as infirmity or disablement, which may be specified.

(2) Countries adopting the standard definition of unemployment may identify persons not classified as unemployed who were available for work but not seeking work during the reference period and classify them separately under the population not currently active.

#### The population not usually active

13. (1) The "population not usually active" comprises all persons whose main activity status during the longer specified period was neither employed nor unemployed. It comprises the following functional categories: (a) students; (b) homemakers; (c) income recipients (pensioners, rentiers, etc.); and (d) others (recipients of public aid or private support, children not attending school, etc.) as defined by the United Nations *Principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses* (1980).

(2) Where necessary, separate functional subcategories may be introduced to identify (i) persons engaged in unpaid community and volunteer services and (ii) other persons engaged in marginal activities which fall outside the boundary of economic activities.

**Please note that paragraphs 14 to 20 on Underemployment are revised by the more recent "Resolution on Underemployment and Inadequate Employment situations", 16<sup>th</sup> ICLS, 1998, which can also be consulted on the Bureau of Statistics' website.**

#### Analytical concepts

21. Based on the concepts and definitions given in paragraphs 5 to 20 above, a variety of analytical concepts and measures can be derived. For instance:

(1) The economically active population may be divided into two broad segments: the armed forces and the economically active civilian population.

(2) The economically active population may be related to the total population for the derivation of a crude participation rate, or, more appropriately, to the population above the age prescribed for the measurement of the economically active population.

(3) The employed population may be related to the population above the specified age for the derivation of an employment-population ratio.

(4) The unemployed population may be related to the economically active population for the derivation of a general unemployment rate. Unemployment rates, relevant to paid employment on the one hand and self-employment on the other, may be derived, wherever considered useful and feasible.

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(6) A composite rate of unemployment and visible underemployment compiled as the ratio of unemployed labour time available for employment to the total labour time employed or available for employment.

The rates, ratios and proportions suggested above may be compiled separately by sex in respect of specified age groups.

22. The technique of labour time disposition suggested in paragraph 20, if carried out through a series of current surveys covering a representative sample of reference periods spread over a year, can be used for the estimation of labour time employed or unemployed over the year. The estimates may be expressed in terms of person-days or person-hours or, if so desired, converted into standard full-time person-years.

#### Employment and income relationships

23. In order to realise the objectives of analysis of the relationships between employment and income mentioned in paragraph 1, countries should develop programmes of data collection on employment and income that reveal related economic and social aspects. In particular, data should be compiled on employment, income from employment and household income for the purpose of (a) analysing the income-generating capacity of different economic activities and (b) identifying the number and characteristics of persons who are unable to maintain their economic well-being on the basis of the employment opportunities available to them.

24. (1) In order to obtain comprehensive measures of the relationships between employment and income, the measurements of employment, income from employment and household income should refer to the work experience of the population over a long reference period, preferably a year, taking into account not only the principal occupation but also any secondary occupations and other sources of income.

(2) Income from employment includes wages, salaries and other earnings in cash and kind of persons in paid employment and net entrepreneurial income of persons in self-employment.

(3) The concepts and definitions of income and its components are given in the resolutions concerning an integrated system of wages statistics and concerning household income and expenditure surveys adopted by the Twelfth Conference (1973) and in the United Nations Provisional guidelines on statistics of the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation of households (1977).

(4) The statistics on employment and income should be analysed to the extent possible, in conjunction with duration of work, household size, number of earners, assets and other demographic, social and economic characteristics of the individual and the household.

(5) The statistics on employment and income should be consistent with and, in so far as possible, be integrated into the framework of the statistics of the economically active population set forth in paragraphs 5 to 22 above.

#### Data collection, analysis and classifications

25. The International Labour Office should prepare a manual on statistics of the economically active population,

employment, unemployment and underemployment detailing such aspects as methodology of data collection, tabulation and analysis.

26. (1) The analysis of the economically active population and the population not economically active should include classifications by significant demographic, social and economic characteristics as well as appropriate cross-classifications by two or more related characteristics.

(2) In particular, the population above the age specified for the measurement of the economically active population should be cross-classified by usual activity status (employed, unemployed, students, homemakers, etc.) and current activity status (employed, unemployed and not currently active).

27. For the purpose of international comparisons, the classifications of the statistics of the economically active population should adhere to or be convertible into the standard international classifications most recently adopted such as:

- (a) International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)-ILO;
- (b) International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC)-United Nations;
- (c) International classification according to status (as employer, employee, etc.) — definitions of status by the United Nations — except that for the classification of unpaid family workers the minimum time criterion (at least one-third of the normal working hours) no longer need be applied;
- (d) Provisional Guidelines on Standard International Age Classifications-United Nations.

28. For classifications according to other characteristics such as duration of work, duration of unemployment, the International Labour Office should develop appropriate international standard classifications taking into account the current national practices and needs.

#### Data on particular topics

29. In order to adequately study the transition phases from learning to earning activities and to develop appropriate policy measures where necessary, specific statistics should be obtained periodically on children and youth in relation to school attendance and their participation in economic activity. For this purpose, it may be necessary to collect additional data on children and youth below the specified minimum age limit adopted for measuring the economically active population.

30. (1) For the purpose of developing and monitoring programmes concerned with the participation of women in development and the promotion of equality between the sexes, an adequate statistical base on women's participation in economic activities is essential. In this respect, therefore, the statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment, underemployment and related topics should be compiled separately for males and for females.

(2) Further, in order to obtain more accurate statistics on women's participation in economic activities, measurement methods should be carefully reviewed to ensure unbiased coverage of men and women. Sex biases in the form of underestimation of women's participation in economic activity may result, for example, from incomplete coverage of unpaid economic activities, failure of respondents and enumerators to take account of women's multiple activities and use of proxy respondents. Where necessary, research should be carried out in order to identify the extent, nature and sources of the possible biases, if any, and to develop appropriate methods of reducing them.

31. Since the participation in economic activity of individuals often depends on the circumstances of other

members of the family or household and in many countries, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, economic activity is largely organised on a family or household basis, statistics on economically active population, employment, unemployment, underemployment and related topics should be supplemented periodically by statistics on families and households: for example, identifying the unemployed in terms of their relationship to other members of the household or family, presence of other working members of the household or family, number of children in the household or family, as well as identifying households and families in terms of number of members unemployed, sex and other characteristics of the primary earner in the household or family, etc.

32. In order to provide improved and more detailed information on employment, unemployment and underemployment and for other purposes such as identifying multiple activities and marginal activities, attempts should be made to collect periodically statistics on time-use.

33. In order to account for the informal sector activities both in developed and developing countries and the rural non-agricultural activities generally carried out by households in conjunction with agricultural activities in developing countries, and given the scarcity of statistics on these topics, it is desirable that countries develop appropriate methodologies and data collection programmes on the urban informal sector and the rural non-agricultural activities. In particular, suitable definitions and classifications should be developed in order to identify and classify the economically active population in the urban informal sector and those engaged in the rural non-agricultural activities.

34. In order to provide adequate employment opportunities and means of livelihood for the disabled and other handicapped persons, statistics should be collected and compiled using appropriate methodologies on the size of this population and its distribution according to relevant social and economic characteristics distinguishing in particular those employed, those unemployed and those inactive.

35. (1) It is recommended that in countries with a planned economy, extensive use should be made of the balance sheet of labour resources so as to identify the size and structure of the labour force and its geographical distribution by type of employment and sector of the national economy.

(2) The population of working age, with the exception of the disabled who do not work, and also the population not of working age, are included as labour resources. The balance sheet of labour resources may be broken down separately according to sex, identifying persons employed in subsidiary farming and in housework, disabled persons of working age but who do not work and persons not of working age.

(3) The data in the balance sheets make it possible to identify the proportion of labour resources which may be utilised in the future to work in national production.

36. It is suggested that countries consider collecting information on the population not economically active, taking account of national needs and circumstances, to assist governments in designing their human resources and development policies. Countries should develop classifications designed to permit cross-tabulation reflecting the relative strength of attachment to the labour market of the groups identified in paragraphs 12(1) and 13(1) above.

#### Evaluation and dissemination

37. Like any other set of data, statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment, underemployment and related topics are subject to errors. While the data collection programme should be carefully designed to minimise possible errors, some are bound to occur. A careful interpretation of the results, therefore, requires some knowledge about the quality of the data. An evaluation of data quality is also necessary to improve upon data collection, processing and estimation procedures in subsequent rounds of the programme. The evaluation procedure should as far as possible form part of the data collection programme itself.

38. Statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment, underemployment and related topics should be issued promptly and made widely available. The statistics may be issued in stages by means of preliminary reports as soon as the main aggregates are available, followed by one or more final reports giving the revised and detailed statistics, in tabular form and, to the extent possible and permissible, in machine readable form.

39. Every release of statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment, underemployment and related topics, whether recurring or single-time, should clearly indicate the nature of the data and make reference to any detailed technical descriptions. In particular, descriptions should be given of the scope and coverage, the concepts and definitions, the method of data collection, the sample size and design where sampling is used, the methods of estimation and adjustments, including seasonal adjustments where applied, measures of data quality, including sampling and non-sampling errors where possible, as well as descriptions of changes in historical series, deviations from international standards and relationships with other sources of similar data and related bodies of statistics.

