

Guidelines concerning a statistical definition of informal employment

The Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS),

Acknowledging that the relevance of informal employment varies among countries, and that a decision to develop statistics on it is therefore determined by national circumstances and priorities,

Noting that the term “informal economy” is used by the ILO as including the informal sector as well as informal employment and that, as a supplement to the System of National Accounts, 1993, an international conceptual framework for measurement of the non-observed economy already exists, which distinguishes the informal sector from underground production, illegal production and household production for own final use,

Recalling the existing international standards on statistics of employment in the informal sector contained in the resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector adopted by the 15th ICLS (January 1993),

Noting the recommendation made by the Expert Group on Informal Sector Statistics (Delhi Group), during its Fifth Meeting, that the definition and measurement of employment in the informal sector need to be complemented with a definition and measurement of informal employment,

Emphasizing the importance of consistency and coherence in relating the enterprise-based concept of employment in the informal sector to a broader, job-based concept of informal employment,

Considering the methodological work, which the International Labour Office and a number of countries have already undertaken in this area,

Supporting the request, which was made by the International Labour Conference in paragraph 37(n) of the resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy adopted during its 90th Session (2002), that the International Labour Office should assist countries in the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistics on the informal economy,

Recognizing that the considerable diversity of informal employment situations poses limits to the extent to which statistics on informal employment can be harmonized across countries,

Realizing the usefulness of international guidelines in assisting countries in the development of national definitions of informal employment, and in enhancing the international comparability of the resulting statistics to the extent possible;

Endorses the following guidelines, which complement the resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector of the 15th ICLS, and encourages countries to test the conceptual framework on which they are based:

1. The concept of informal sector refers to production units as observation units, while the concept of informal employment refers to jobs as observation units. Employment is defined in the sense of paragraph 9 of the resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment adopted by the 13th ICLS.

2. Informal sector enterprises and employment in the informal sector are defined according to the resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector adopted by the 15th ICLS. For the purpose of statistics on informal employment, paragraph 19 of the resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector adopted by the 15th ICLS should be applied to exclude households employing paid domestic workers from informal sector enterprises, and to treat them separately as part of a category named “households”.

3. (1) *Informal employment* comprises the total number of informal jobs as defined in subparagraphs (2) to (5) below, whether carried out in formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises, or households, during a given reference period.

(2) As shown in the attached matrix, informal employment includes the following types of jobs:

- (i) own-account workers employed in their own informal sector enterprises (cell 3);
- (ii) employers employed in their own informal sector enterprises (cell 4);
- (iii) contributing family workers, irrespective of whether they work in formal or informal sector enterprises (cells 1 and 5);
- (iv) members of informal producers' cooperatives (cell 8);
- (v) employees holding informal jobs (as defined in subparagraph (5) below) in formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises, or as paid domestic workers employed by households (cells 2, 6 and 10);
- (vi) own-account workers engaged in the production of goods exclusively for own final use by their household (cell 9), if considered employed according to paragraph 9(6) of the resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment adopted by the 13th ICLS.

(3) Own-account workers, employers, members of producers' cooperatives, contributing family workers, and employees are defined in accordance with the latest version of the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE).

(4) Producers' cooperatives are considered informal if they are not formally established as legal entities and also meet the other criteria of informal sector enterprises specified in the resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector adopted by the 15th ICLS.

(5) Employees are considered to have informal jobs if their employment relationship is, in law or in practice, not subject to national labour legislation, income taxation, social protection or entitlement to certain employment benefits (advance notice of dismissal, severance pay, paid annual or sick leave, etc.). The reasons may be the following: non-declaration of the jobs or the employees; casual jobs or jobs of a limited short duration; jobs with hours of work or wages below a specified threshold (e.g. for social security contributions); employment by unincorporated enterprises or by persons in households; jobs where the employee's place of work is outside the premises of the employer's enterprise (e.g. outworkers without employment contract); or jobs for which labour regulations are not applied, not enforced, or not complied with for any other reason. The operational criteria for defining informal jobs of employees are to be determined in accordance with national circumstances and data availability.

(6) For purposes of analysis and policy-making, it may be useful to disaggregate the different types of informal jobs listed in paragraph 3(2) above, especially those held by employees. Such a typology and definitions should be developed as part of further work on classifications by status in employment at the international and national levels.

4. Where they exist, employees holding formal jobs in informal sector enterprises (cell 7 of the attached matrix) should be excluded from informal employment.

5. *Informal employment outside the informal sector* comprises the following types of jobs:

- (i) employees holding informal jobs (as defined in paragraph 3(5) above) in formal sector enterprises (cell 2) or as paid domestic workers employed by households (cell 10);
- (ii) contributing family workers working in formal sector enterprises (cell 1);

- (iii) own-account workers engaged in the production of goods exclusively for own final use by their household (cell 9), if considered employed according to paragraph 9(6) of the resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment adopted by the 13th ICLS.

6. Countries which do not have statistics on employment in the informal sector or for which a classification of employment by type of production unit is not relevant, may develop statistics on informal employment, if desired, specifying appropriate definitions of informal jobs of own-account workers, employers and members of producers' cooperatives. Alternatively, they may limit the measurement of informal employment to employee jobs.

7. Countries which exclude agricultural activities from the scope of their informal sector statistics should develop suitable definitions of informal jobs in agriculture, especially with respect to jobs held by own-account workers, employers and members of producers' cooperatives.

Annex

Conceptual Framework: Informal Employment

Production units by type	Jobs by status in employment								
	Own-account workers		Employers		Contributing family workers	Employees		Members of producers' cooperatives	
	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal
Formal sector enterprises					1	2			
Informal sector enterprises ^(a)	3		4		5	6	7	8	
Households ^(b)	9					10			

- (a) As defined by the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (excluding households employing paid domestic workers).
- (b) Households producing goods exclusively for their own final use and households employing paid domestic workers.

Note: Cells shaded in dark grey refer to jobs, which, by definition, do not exist in the type of production unit in question. Cells shaded in light grey refer to formal jobs. Un-shaded cells represent the various types of informal jobs.

Informal employment: Cells 1 to 6 and 8 to 10.

Employment in the informal sector: Cells 3 to 8.

Informal employment outside the informal sector: Cells 1, 2, 9 and 10.