

Producing Labour Statistics that are useful for addressing gender concerns¹

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Introduction

Labour statistics provide information on the number of persons who participate in the labour market, their characteristics, the work they carry out and the conditions and environment in which they work. However, the statistics tend to be incomplete because the definitions and measurement methodologies that are used to produce them have limitations of various kinds. Definitions need to simplify the reality into synthetic categories that will highlight certain aspects of this reality while ignoring others. What is highlighted or ignored depends to a large extent on the priorities and objectives of the descriptions and analysis to be undertaken. Those designing and producing labour statistics will tend therefore to consider certain groups of workers or work situations as less essential than others for understanding the way the labour market functions thus excluding them from employment or income statistics, or preventing them from being separately identified. Also, available measurement methodologies are often costly and depend on imperfect sources of information (i.e., persons providing answers to a set of standard questions or records kept for administrative purposes which do not necessarily coincide with statistical requirements). These factors will constrain the type, range and quality of information that can be produced.

As a consequence, national labour statistics are generally weak in identifying and describing “atypical” forms of employment, characterised by being casual, part-time, informal, undeclared to tax authorities, unpaid, carried out at or close to the home, and which are often interchanged with domestic activities. Women tend to be, more than men, in such “atypical” work situations, and as a result, the contributions of women to ‘economic production’ are often underestimated and less well described than the contributions of men. But policies and programmes designed on the basis of statistics that only partially reflect women’s contributions may be detrimental to both women and the objectives of such policies, as they may provide a distorted picture of the nature of a country’s economy and its human resources.

This paper identifies areas where national labour statistics as commonly produced could be improved in order to make them more complete and increase their quality and usefulness for revealing distinctions between men and women in the labour market, as well as the particularities of the work of men and women. By so doing, the completeness and

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usefulness of such statistics for reflecting reality as a whole is also enhanced, thus increasing their overall usefulness.

Mainstreaming gender in the production of labour statistics will be one of the discussion items at the next International Conference of Labour Statisticians (the 17th ICLS), scheduled to take place in November-December 2003³. A half-day working group will discuss the need and advantages of producing national labour statistics that address gender concerns and the issues that national statisticians may need to consider for this purpose. More specifically, it will discuss a general checklist on good practices, designed to ensure that national labour statistics satisfy gender needs and improve their overall quality and completeness, for possible approval as a supplement to existing ILO international guidelines on labour statistics. The proposed checklist is reproduced as an Annex to this article.

What are gender statistics?

Gender statistics are all those statistics that are useful for describing and analysing significant differences and similarities between the situation of men and women in any area of life. Gender statistics in education, for example, are those that show the extent to which men and women attain different levels of education and specialize in different fields of knowledge, the extent to which they teach at each of the different levels and different subjects, and the extent to which women and men are in different situations and have different characteristics that may be used to explain such differences. Gender statistics in health are those that show the extent to which men and women are subject to different accidents and illnesses and make different decisions regarding, and have different access to, health care services; as well as the extent to which men and women work in different health occupations, at different levels and in different specializations.

In the area of work, gender statistics are those that show differences between men's and women's work activities and conditions, and the extent to which they are rewarded for their work, in the context of their personal and family situation as well as other factors that help explain these differences. Statistics on conventional labour subjects, such as employment, unemployment, strikes and occupational injuries, when disaggregated by the sex of those involved will, as a general rule, always be useful to describe gender issues. But gender statistics are more than information by sex. In addition they need to satisfy at least the following four characteristics:

First of all, they should relate to *issues or areas* that are relevant to enhancing the understanding of men's and women's positions and interrelations in the labour market. Statistics are needed on subjects where there are important inequalities between women and

³ The International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) meets roughly every five years since 1923. Participants include experts from national statistical institutes and other government representatives, as well as from employers= and workers= organizations. Observers from regional and international organizations and other interest groups can also participate. This Conference adopts international guidelines on labour statistics (called "resolutions") that serve as models for countries when they develop or revise their national statistical systems as well as facilitating international comparisons. These guidelines relate to agreed concepts, standard definitions, classifications and other methodological procedures. Although not binding on official labour statistics, the guidelines affect to a great extent the range and type of labour statistics produced by national institutes of statistics around the world.

men, including areas related to how men and women balance their working life with their other obligations, such as family life; the full extent of men's and women's participation in productive activities, covering their participation in the paid labour market as well as in unpaid production of goods and services for consumption by their own household; the different contributions of men and women to the labour market and how this translates into differences in tasks and duties (occupations), working time arrangements, status in employment, occupational injuries and income inequalities.

Second, labour statistics should *cover and adequately describe all workers and work situations.* The identification and adequate description of “atypical” work situations – i.e. those which do not reflect a common view of what “working” and “joblessness” are all about - is the most important challenge for conventional labour statistics. It is more difficult to identify and describe work situations which are informal, irregular, short time and unpaid than work which is paid, full-time, regular and in formal sector establishments. Measurement definitions need to be based on criteria that do not exclude groups of workers or work situations, and measurement methodologies need to apply special procedures when there is a risk that groups of workers or work situations may be overlooked.

Third, labour statistics should be sufficiently *disaggregated to show meaningful distinctions between men and women.* Broad population groups can be very heterogeneous and comprise a diverse set of employment situations where men and women are present to different extents. For example, analysing the managerial group as a whole will not reveal the fact that women may be concentrated in managing small enterprises, while most of those managing larger companies are men. Similarly, analysing earnings as a whole may hide the fact that it is most often men than women who receive family allowances and other benefits.

Finally, the way labour statistics are *presented and disseminated* should reveal significant differences and similarities between men and women, and the factors that may cause them. This implies relevant cross-classification of labour statistics by variables which present the demographic, economic, social and family context of workers, including, in addition to the workers' sex, at least their level of education, their marital status and most importantly, the *presence in the household of small children* and other persons requiring care.

An examination of the implications of these four requirements on national labour statistics would benefit the users of the statistics produced by national statistical institutes. It would reveal the strengths and shortcomings of the statistics currently available and indicate how and where improvements are needed and possible. Taking action on this evaluation would not only improve the usefulness of labour statistics for reflecting gender concerns, but would also make them more complete and improve their overall quality, benefiting all users, including market analysts and policy decision makers.

Carrying out such an examination and taking action requires a strong commitment from national statistical institutes. It is not simple to modify the existing data collection instruments and publication programmes, and in the same way as it is not simple to modify the way one thinks of and perceives particular situations. The commitment to do so must come from the highest levels within the statistical institute and spill down to all levels in the organization: all persons, from the director general down to the interviewer, should understand and be convinced that the above evaluation and modifications will improve

statistics in general. Underlying this process is the need for training in gender issues at all levels of the organization.

The following sections discuss the issues contained in this proposal.

Gender topics and presentation of statistics

Labour statistics should be able to cover and separately identify the types of statistics that are useful for advancing equality between men and women in the workplace. A number of areas are discussed below, which were identified by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995⁴.

The balancing of work and family life

To analyse the issues in this area it is necessary to consider simultaneously variables that describe workers' participation in the labour market and variables that describe workers' personal and family characteristics when preparing statistical tables. The latter variables include the age and educational background of workers, but also their marital status and whether there are preschool or dependent children in the household, or whether there are other persons requiring special care. Such situations are known to affect women's as well as men's levels of employment, unemployment, underemployment and inadequate employment situations, their hours of work, their absence from work, the precariousness of their job, their working time arrangements, etc., and, as a consequence, their employment related income. Most national Labour Force Surveys are able to produce statistics based on relevant variables. Two examples are provided below.

Table 1 shows the impact of marriage and presence of dependent children on labour market participation of men and women in the United Kingdom. Marriage and the presence of dependent children is clearly related not only to the levels of employment among women, but also to the number of hours they work. The reasons for economic inactivity also vary: most women with dependent children who are economically inactive are looking after their family, and those without dependent children state other reasons for being inactive, as do men who are economically inactive, whether married or not. Unfortunately, no breakdown by the presence of children was provided for men, presumably because it was not considered to affect men's participation in the labour market by those preparing these statistics (although that should in itself be an interesting and gender relevant result).

⁴ See www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform and www.undp.org/fwcw/plat.

Table 1. People of working age (16-59) by sex, economic status and marital status. United Kingdom, spring 1998, in percentages

	Women			Men	
	Married with dependent children	Not married with dependent children	Without dependent children	Married	Not married
All persons	100 (5 734)	100 (1 688)	100 (9 646)	100 (12 110)	100 (6 628)
Economically active	71	53	75	88	76
Employed	68	44	71	84	67
Full time	27	19	49	80	56
Part-time	41	25	23	4	10
Permanent employees	56	38	61	65	52
Casual Employees	5	3	5	3	6
Self-employed	6	3	4	15	7
Unpaid family workers	0	-	0	0	-
Unemployed	3	9	4	4	10
Economically inactive	29	47	25	12	24
Looking after family/home	23	36	5	1	1
Student	1	3	7	0	12
Other	5	9	13	11	11

Source: Labour Force Survey data (Thair, T., Ridson, A. 1999).

Notes: Marital status: 'married' includes persons living together; 'not married' includes single, widowed, divorced and separated if not cohabiting; -: less than 10 000 in cell.

Table 2 shows the relationship between pre-school children in the household and absence from work of the parents in Canada. Both men and women are more absent from work when they have small children to take care of, but women are absent more than men. Additionally, the number of days that men are absent decreases when they have small children, while it dramatically increases for women. This is because even though men with small children are more often absent for family responsibilities than those without children, they also actually fall sick less often and for fewer days. In contrast, women with small children fall sick as often as those without small children, but are absent due to family responsibilities twice as often.

Table 2. Absence rates (and days lost per year) for full-time paid workers in Canada by sex and presence of pre-school children in the households, 1997 annual average

	Total		Illness or disability		Personal or family responsibilities	
	Rate	Days lost	Rate	Days lost	Rate	Days lost
All employees (15+)	5.5	7.4	4.1	6.2	1.4	1.2
All Men	4.6	6.3	3.4	5.3	1.2	0.9
Men with pre-schoolers	4.9	5.9	3.0	4.2	1.9	1.8
All Women	6.7	9.1	5.1	7.6	1.7	1.5
Women with pre-schoolers	8.6	11.7	5.1	7.5	3.5	4.2

Source: Labour Force Survey results (Akyeampong, E. 1998).

Notes: Absence rates are calculated by dividing the number of absent workers by the corresponding employed population. The number of days lost per year are calculated by dividing the hours absent by the hours usually worked and the multiplying this by the general number of working days in a year (= 250).

Participation in productive activities

At present, the scope of conventional labour statistics is limited to activities which contribute to the production of goods and services as defined by the System of National Accounts or SNA (UN 1993). Thus, employment and income statistics cover mainly market work. Although they may include some non-market work if it represents a significant proportion of the production of those goods in the country⁵, a review of national practices revealed that only a few countries did so (ILO 1990). In practice therefore, non-market work is excluded from the scope of the statistics that are presented. However, non-market work is very important both in terms of the volume of work it implies but also in terms of the economic value it has for society as a whole. Excluding non-market work may distort the description of the economic structure and the understanding of the changes that are taking place, if they to a large extent consist of a transfer of activities from being done outside the market to being done within the market, e.g., the care of children and of the elderly in many OECD countries. It is therefore important to analyse the full contribution of all workers to production, using statistics on the total working population, including persons who do not participate in the paid labour market (and thus are not included in the statistics on the “labour force”) but who carry out other productive activities, as well as information on the time spent on such activities.

Table 3 shows statistics on the average hours spent working per week, by sex and activity status in France, using an ‘extended’ concept of work, i.e., one that includes all productive activities, whether market or non-market. This table shows that while women did less market work, spent more time working than men, because they did more housework and caring activities. Men did more market work and household repair and maintenance.

Table 3. Average hours per week spent on work and other activities, by sex and ‘economic’ activity status, France 1998-1999

	Women		Men	
	Active	Inactive	Active	Inactive
All work activities	65h34	39h05	62h11	28h28
Market work	34h53	1h10	44h06	2h34
Domestic work	30h41	37h55	18h45	25h54
Caring for children and others	3h44	3h51	2h06	2h06
Housework	24h58	31h37	10h44	15h17
Do-it-yourself, gardening, repairs	1h59	2h20	5h15	8h24
Training	0h21	5h50	0h21	7h49
Leisure	20h53	34h53	25h54	43h03
Personal needs (including sleep)	81h12	88h12	79h34	88h40

Source: Time use survey results (INSEE 2000).

Notes: The total number of hours during a week is 168. “Active” are those classified as either “employed” or “unemployed”.

⁵ **Non-market work which may be included** relates to activities that produce goods for own consumption, such as: agricultural work, fishing, hunting, cutting firewood, carrying water, threshing and milling grain, making butter and cheese, slaughtering livestock, curing hides and skins, preserving meat and fish, weaving baskets and mats, making clay pots and plates, weaving textiles and, making furniture, making clothes and other handicrafts, construction work, etc. **But non-market work which is always excluded** relates to domestic or personal services provided by unpaid household members, such as: cleaning dwellings, small repair, preparing and serving meals; caring for and instructing children; caring for other persons; etc.

Another example relates to how labour force participation rates may actually hide important differences in attendance at work and in working hours between men and women and between countries. Table 4 shows that participation rates of men and women are very high in Nordic countries and are not very different between men and women, in comparison with other developed nations. It also shows that this is partly due to generous leave entitlements provided to both men and women in these societies, whereby workers can be absent for extended periods of time without losing the attachment to their jobs. Such workers are counted as “employed” in these statistics even though they are not “at work”. The “at-work rate” shows the effect of excluding such workers. As can be seen, these rates are significantly lower in all Nordic countries, and more so for women than for men. Furthermore, there are important differences regarding part-time work, and the “market hours rate” corrects this effect. The differences between men and women in “corrected” participation rates are greater in Sweden, Finland and Norway and smaller in the United States and France (i.e., the opposite to what the standard labour force participation rates showed). Also, differences between countries narrowed.

Table 4. Labour Force Participation Rates, At-work Rates and Market-Hours Rates by sex for selected countries, 1989

	Labour force participation rate (percent)		At-work rate (percent)		Market-hours rate	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Sweden	82.2	86.8	64.5	73.7	20.7	29.3
Finland	72.9	78.8	60.1	67.8	21.4	27.7
Norway	69.3	83.3	56.5	70.8	16.5	28.2
USA	67.8	85.9	60.2	77.7	21.0	32.2
France	62.8	83.7	51.3	72.7	18.5	31.6

Source: Labour Force Survey results (Jonung, C., Persson, I. 1993)

Notes: The labour force participation rate is the number of persons in the labour force as a percentage of the population 16-64 years old; the “At-work rate” is the number of persons who were “at work” during the reference period as a percentage of the population 16-64 years old; the “market-hours rate” is the total number of hours actually worked in the reference week divided by the population 16-64 years old in that group.

The segregation of the labour market

The analysis of labour market segregation needs statistics that can show differences and similarities in men’s and women’s contributions to the labour market as well as in the conditions of work and the consequences: the different types of work they carry out, the different types of work contracts that they have, the different places where they work, the different injuries they are subject to, etc. This information needs to be sufficiently detailed so that significant distinctions and similarities between men and women are, as much as possible, revealed. Table 5, for example, shows employment figures by broad occupational groups for Uganda. Women and men in Uganda are equally represented in employment (women are 47% of all persons employed), but men are more evenly distributed over the occupational groups and numerically dominant in most of them, particularly among machine operators, managers and professionals. Women are concentrated in fewer groups and represent more than half of those employed only among agricultural workers.

Table 5. Total employed and percentage women by major occupational groups, Uganda 1992

Occupational title	Total	% women
Managers	10299	14.2
Professionals	18588	19.9
Associate professionals	196471	27.8
Clerks	47956	43.3
Service workers	433821	43.3
Agricultural workers	4644742	51.5
Craft workers	276818	28.7
Machine operators	46132	2.7
Elementary occupations	521823	35.1
Not stated	89612	39.0
Total	6286262	47.0

Source: Population Census of Uganda, 1991

A finer breakdown by occupations (Table 6) shows that among agricultural workers, where they are a majority, women are working mostly in subsistence agriculture jobs, rather than producing agricultural products for sale in the market. Among craft workers, where as a whole they made up less than 30% of employment, they represent over 60% of occupations linked with food processing and textile trades, and they are a majority among street vendors. It should be noted that the occupations dominated by women are all linked to the informal sector. Among professional jobs, where women as a whole are not very numerous, they nevertheless represent above 20% of life science and teaching professionals. In contrast, they have almost no jobs in metal and machinery trades, extraction and building and industrial plant operators as well as among drivers and supervisory occupations.

Table 6. Total employed and percentage women by detailed occupational groups, Uganda 1991

Occupational title	Total	% women
Managers	10299	14.2
Legislators and Senior Officials	1249	9.6
Corporate Managers	8131	15.6
Head of Diplomatic Missions	72	11.1
Political Mobilizers	847	7.8
Professionals	18588	19.9
Physical Mathematics Professionals	1904	7.8
Life Science Professionals	2724	21.3
Teaching Professionals	5573	24.5
Other Professionals	8387	19.2
Associate professionals	196471	27.8
Physical Science Technicians	8086	7.1
Life Science Associate Professionals	27091	47.4
Teaching Associate Professionals	59166	35.3
Other Associate Professionals	52186	9.6
Clerks	47956	43.3
Experienced Non-professionals	49942	30.6
Official Clerks	32603	48.9
Customer Service Clerks	5790	40.4
Clerks N.E.C.	9563	25.7
Service workers	433821	43.3
Personal and Protective Workers	66757	40.1
Salespersons and Models	80741	40.3
Wholesalers	11049	12.1
Retailers	255249	47.7
Other Business Persons	20025	28.3
Agricultural workers	4644742	51.5
Market Oriented Agricultural Workers	201756	27.7
Subsistence Farmers	4442986	52.5
Craft workers	276818	28.7
Extraction and Building Trades	67907	5.0
Metal and Machinery Trades	52588	1.4
Precision and Related Workers	17484	28.8
Other Craft Workers	106000	62.3
Machine operators	46132	2.7
Wood Trades Workers	32839	12.9
Industrial Plant operators	722	3.7
Stationary Machine Operators	9658	9.5
Drivers and Machinery Operators	35752	0.8
Elementary occupations	521823	35.1
Sales and Elementary Occupations	135974	54.1
Agricultural Labourers	222756	38.8
Other Labourers	155149	14.7
Supervisors of Elem. Occupations	7944	5.4
Not Stated	89612	39.0
Total	6286262	47.0

Source: Population Census of Uganda, 1991.

Another example of the need for detail is shown by Table 7, which presents the employed population by status in employment and working time arrangements in Italy and Sweden. As in basically all countries in the world, the proportion of men in self-employment is higher than that of women, and women are more likely than men to be paid employees and contributing (unpaid) family workers. While this information in itself is very useful, it is important to further disaggregate these categories because each comprises a diverse set of employment situations. For example, more women than men are in temporary employment and work from home. In Italy, men more commonly work shift work, and at night and on weekends, but in Sweden it is women who more commonly work unsociable hours.

Table 7. Employed population in Italy and Sweden (in thousands), by sex, status in employment and working time arrangements (as a percentage of employment), 1998

	Italy		Sweden	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total employment, of whom:	7 308	13 050	1 858	2 088
Employers and own account workers	16.2	29.0	6.0	15.2
Employees, of whom:	77.2	68.0	93.4	84.3
Temporary workers	10.2	7.4	15.2	10.6
Family workers	6.6	3.0	0.6	0.5
Usually work at home	4.7	3.9	8.5	8.3
Usual works shift work	16.1	20.2	30.0	20.4
Usually works in the evening	10.5	14.7	23.1	21.1
Usually works in the night	3.3	6.1	6.3	8.6
Usually works Saturdays	39.3	39.4	22.9	16.3
Usually works Sundays	7.7	8.8	20.1	14.3

Source: Labour Force Survey results (Eurostat 1998).

Because men and women tend to do very different jobs they also tend to face different hazards at work: men tend to be in occupations where injuries are more visible and obvious while women tend to be in occupations which are more stressful, less autonomous and with more repetitive tasks, which are more exposed to occupational diseases than to injuries (Messing 1998). Therefore, statistics are needed on the number of different types of occupational injuries and diseases by sex and other characteristics of the workers and work situations. In addition, the classification schemes used for coding occupations, causes of injury or disease, types of accidents, etc. should be detailed and comprehensive enough to enable the identification of the different patterns of injury and disease for men and for women. Table 8 presents the number of events or exposure cases leading to days away from work by the nature of the event or exposure and sex for the United States. It shows that, although more men suffered injuries and illnesses in general, women were affected much more than men by certain types of events or exposures such as repetitive movements, assaults and aircraft transportation incidents.

Table 8. Selected event or exposure cases resulting in days away from work, private wage and salary workers, United States, 1995

Event or exposure	Number of cases (women)	Women to men ratio	Median days away from work (all cases)
Total	667 166	49	5
Bodily reaction or exertion	320 535	58	7
Overexertion in lifting	112 873	51	6
Repetitive motion	51 091	165	18
Falls	134 769	65	7
Contact with objects and equipment	127 453	30	4
Exposure to harmful substances or environments	36 972	56	3
Due to inhalation	6 183	104	2
Assaults and violent acts	18 156	171	4
By persons	15 440	212	5
Transportation incidents	16 940	30	8
Highway	12 313	37	8
Aircraft	386	394	8

Source: Toscano, G. 1998

Individual groups of workers may also be targeted for deeper analysis on e.g., the extent to which men and women behave in a different way, and are subject to different constraints, as well as to analyse trends in their numbers. Specific groups of workers were identified by the Beijing Platform for Action and elsewhere, and include e.g., entrepreneurs and other persons in decision-making positions (politicians and heads of special interest organizations), workers in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector and workers in the media.

Income inequalities

Income generation is the main objective of working for most people. They work in order to earn a living and provide for their households. But there is a pervasive difference between men's and women's levels of income in all countries (ILO 1998) even after correcting for hours worked, occupation and level of education (Dixon-Muller, R., Anker, R. 1990), leading to important inequalities in their standard of living. Trends in this difference need to be evaluated continuously. It is also very important to evaluate differences in access to productive resources and in the allocation of benefits among household members. Household income and expenditure statistics may be instrumental for this latter purpose.

It is not enough, however, to compare average income levels of men and women, because there are important differences in the hours that women and men work, in the size and industries of the firms in which they work, as well as the occupations they are engaged in and in other factors that affect levels of income. Table 9 presents statistics on two types of ratios for selected occupations in Cyprus. The first ratio divides hourly earnings of women by those of men and the second divides wage rates of women by those of men. In Cyprus, women's earnings are in average 78% of men's. But when earnings of men and women are compared

for specific occupations⁶ after correcting for hours worked, as is done in Table 9, then out of the 25 occupations in the table, women's earnings in relation to men's is higher than the overall average in 17 of them. In four occupations, women actually have higher hourly earnings.

Table 9 also allows the comparison of the earnings ratio with the wage ratio, which broadly speaking, eliminates the effect of additional payments, such as bonuses and family allowances, which workers may receive as part of their earnings, and of which men are presumed to receive more. Statistics in this table show that, even after taking away this effect, women continue to have lower wages than men in most occupations. It can be seen that, when the wage ratio is higher than the earnings ratio (in 7 occupations), the difference can be significant, e.g., 82% and 62% respectively among telephone operators and 82% and 68% among printing pressmen. This may indicate that in these occupations bonuses, family allowances and other additional income are substantial and given to men more than to women. In cases where the wage ratio is smaller than the earnings ratio, and where women as a group may benefit from those bonuses and family allowances more than men, the difference is small, e.g., 77% and 80% among bakers and 83% and 86% among general physicians.

Table 9. The ratio of women's wage rates to men's and the ratio of women's average earnings to men's earnings, selected occupations, Cyprus 1999.

	Average earnings ratio corrected for hours worked	Wage rate ratio
Field crop farm worker	55	54
Forestry worker	80	79
Baker	80	77
Cloth weaver	69	72
Garment cutter	88	88
Journalist	73	76
Printing pressman	68	82
Construction labourer	98	102
Stock records clerk	70	72
Cash desk cashier	83	83
Grocery salesperson	60	60
Hotel receptionist	87	87
Waiter	79	80
Room attendant or chambermaid	97	98
Motor bus driver	87	92
Aircraft cabin attendant	89	87
Air traffic controller	91	92
Telephone switchboard operator	62	82
Computer programmer	103	105
Government executive official	65	63
First level education teacher	88	88
General physician	86	83
Dentist (general)	104	104
Professional nurse (general)	107	107
Medical X-ray technician	103	101
All occupations	78	

Source: ILO 2001a, ILO 2001b.

⁶ It should be noted that there may be significant heterogeneity even within the same occupation in the tasks actually carried out between men and women, leading to differences in income accrued.

Coverage and Detail

Most labour statistics that are useful for addressing gender concerns are already being produced in some form by many national statistical institutes (but not always published). However, their coverage and the detailed categories used may need to be evaluated from a gender perspective in order to enhance their usefulness, not only for gender concerns, but given the resulting improvements in comprehensiveness and quality, also for general users and policy makers. Full coverage of workers and work situations as well as sufficient detail in statistics can only be achieved if definitions and measurement methodologies take into account the fact that women and men do not perform the same activities, nor do they always behave in the same way, nor are they subject to the same constraints, nor have the same opportunities and needs. In particular, the statistics need to take into account the fact that women, given their traditional roles as housewives, tend not to perceive themselves as workers even when they are according to the definitions to be used by the statistics, and conversely, that men given their traditional roles as breadwinners, tend to perceive themselves as active participants in the labour market to a larger extent than women who are in corresponding situations.

The definitions and classifications actually used during the data collection and processing determine the subjects to be covered and in how much detail, and are the basis for the whole data production process. The quality of the resulting figures depends on how well these definitions and classifications mirror the actual situation of the different participants in the labour market, and how well they cover and describe all qualifying work situations, regardless of whether they are performed by a man or a woman, with sufficient detail to bring out significant gender distinctions. The following issues need to be considered:

- (a) *The possibility that national definitions of employment incorporate work which is beyond the boundary for measuring production in the System of National Accounts (SNA)*⁷. Women and men spend a considerable amount of time and effort in these activities, which are important to the welfare of the society but which are excluded from the scope of conventional employment statistics. The SNA already incorporates non-market production in its accounts in the form of satellite accounts. In the same way, labour statistics could consider incorporating e.g., persons performing activities which are outside the “SNA production boundary”, occupational injuries which occur when persons are performing such activities and child workers who get limited schooling because they are engaged in unpaid household activities.
- (b) *Whether the criteria used to define national concepts exclude particular groups of workers or their characteristics.* If criteria are unable to include in the actual data collections certain groups of workers or certain characteristics (e.g., the armed forces, self-employment income, labour disputes of short duration, etc.) estimates should be provided at least on the sex composition of the excluded groups.
- (c) *Whether national definitions relate to long reference periods* to ensure a good coverage of seasonal, occasional and intermittent activities throughout the year.
- (d) *Whether national definitions and classifications separately identify and define all groups needed to adequately reflect important distinctions between workers.* This implies the identifications of sufficiently detailed categories of workers and work situations to effectively describe differences and similarities between men and women at work.

⁷ See footnote 5 for examples of activities of this type.

Measurement methodologies determine the coverage of workers and work situations as well as the type and range of information that can be produced. Whether using administrative records, establishment surveys or household surveys as the main source when producing a particular set of statistics, the methodologies must, as much as possible, cover topics that are useful for gender analysis, including at least those identified above, follow the statistical definitions established for measurement, ensure full coverage of workers and their characteristics and guarantee sufficient and adequate detail in relevant categories. Not all data sources are able to satisfy these requirements, however.

Administrative records are not usually designed for statistical purposes but relate to the administrative functions of the agency making the registrations, and may thus be limited by the type and range of information it receives and which it needs to perform its mandate effectively and reliably⁸. Similarly, statistics produced on the basis of information found in **establishments' records** may also be limited, because these records are generally kept for staff management, e.g. payment and attendance monitoring, not for statistics production. In contrast, **household-based surveys**, including labour force and time use surveys, obtain information from workers themselves through replies to standard questionnaires, a methodology that allows greater control over the type and range of data collected, the underlying concepts, data item definitions and classifications. The information collected is limited, however, by the capacity and willingness of respondents to provide it, by the questionnaire design as well as by the competence of those administering and processing them. As a result, statistics based on administrative and establishment records can be useful for analysing particular groups of workers that are well covered and described by them, e.g., entrepreneurs and workers in decision-making positions (from administrative records), and production workers (from establishment surveys). But household-based surveys are the preferred sources of statistics for overall gender analysis. The following areas may need to be evaluated:

- (a) *Whether laws, rules or regulations governing administrative and establishment records that specify the type and range of information to be recorded, specify (a) the recording of variables such as age and sex of workers, which are useful for gender distinctions; (b) criteria for inclusion or exclusion from the records, which complies as much as possible with statistical definitions; (c) sufficient level of detail to reveal distinctions important for gender related issues;*
- (b) *Whether the sample size in household-based surveys and establishment-based surveys is sufficient to allow a degree of precision in the statistics produced that is adequate for meaningful and detailed categories;*
- (c) *Whether household-based surveys apply specific measurement strategies to identify and describe economic activities on the borderline between economic and non-economic activities. For example, whether the classification of a person in a particular category (e.g., a particular occupation or a particular activity status) is determined on the basis of a set of questions that are designed to obtain information about relevant aspects of their situation, rather than a direct question which requires the respondents to classify themselves into categories that reflect the type of distinctions that the statisticians want*

⁸ Thus, employment exchange offices can provide information on unemployment claimants only, and these are not equivalent to the unemployed; and insurance companies provide information on compensated injuries, which are only a subset of all occupational injuries; etc.

to use to describe their work situation. The most important example relates to the use of **activity lists** to ensure that productive activities carried out for own consumption and/or by persons who tend to be considered by others and even by themselves as economically inactive, are properly included in labour statistics. Respondents who answer negatively to a question inquiring on their work activities are further probed on their involvement in activities which tend to be considered an extension of domestic activities and therefore tend to be omitted from labour statistics⁹.

Annex. A proposal of good practices (to be discussed at the 17th ICLS)

To usefully address gender concerns, labour statistics should satisfy the following four requirements:

- (a) They will be based on a political will at all levels in the data collection agency to incorporate gender concerns in the production of labour statistics.
- (b) The data collection procedures for labour statistics will ensure that, as far as resources allow, all topics relevant for describing gender concerns are included.
- (c) The data collection and processing procedures for labour statistics programmes are designed to ensure that definitions and measurement methods cover and adequately describe all workers and work situations in sufficient detail to allow relevant gender comparisons to be made.
- (d) The resulting labour statistics are presented in a way that will clearly reveal differences and similarities between men and women in the labour market and the factors that may influence their situations. This can be done by (i) presenting relevant topics in sufficient and relevant detail, and by (ii) linking statistics with descriptive variables, of e.g. workers' personal and family circumstances.

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⁹ See footnote 5 for a list of possible activities included in such an activity list.

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