1. Name and address of the organisation responsible for the last census:

Department of Census and Statistics, P.O. Box 563, Colombo 7.

2. Population censuses conducted since 1945 (years):

1946, 1953, 1963, 1971 and 1981. The present description relates mainly to the 1981 population census, but reference is also made to earlier censuses (cf. para. 8), as well as to the next census (cf. para. 9).

3. Coverage of the census:

(a) Geographical scope: Whole country.

(b) Persons covered: All persons of all ages.

4. Reference period:

The reference period used when asking questions on the economically active population, employment and unemployment is a long period, i.e. the 30 days preceding the census day.

5. Main topics:

(a) Total population, by sex and age: yes

(b) Economically active population, by sex and age group: yes

(c) Economically active population, by industry and by sex: yes

(d) Economically active population, by occupation and by sex: yes

(e) Economically active population, by status in employment and by sex: yes

(f) Hours of work: no

(g) Other information collected relating to persons’ economic activity: yes

Re. (a) The age is defined in terms of age at last birthday.

Re. (g) The census also covers information on means of transport to workplace.

6. Concepts and definitions:

(a) Economically active population: It comprises all persons aged 10 years and over who, at the time of the census, were either employed or unemployed, according to the definitions given below. Excluded are: non-working students and members of the armed forces.

(b) Employment: Considered as “employed” are all persons aged 10 years and over (except those mentioned under 6 (a) above) who, during the reference period, performed any kind of full-time or part-time work for pay or profit. The question used to determine if a person is to be counted as employed is “What was your principal activity during the last 30 days?” Also included are the following categories:

(i) persons doing unpaid work in family firm or business (for at least 15 hours per week on the average);

(ii) persons engaged in the production of primary products for own consumption;

(iii) employed persons, temporarily absent from work;

(iv) working students with a part time job;

(v) seasonal or occasional workers;

(vi) multiple job holders;

(vii) apprentices and trainees.

None of the above categories can be identified separately.

(c) Unemployment: Considered as “unemployed” are all persons aged 10 years and over (except those mentioned under 6 (a) above) who, during the reference period, were without work and seeking work, or if not seeking work wanted to work and were available for work.
7. **Classifications used:**

Only employed persons are classified by industry, by occupation and by status in employment.

(a) **Industry:** Specific questions were asked of employed persons on the type of industry, nature of business or service carried out in the workplace. For coding industry, 10 codes were used. Links to the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC-68, rev. 2) have been established to the major division level.

(b) **Occupation:** Specific questions were asked of employed persons on the exact occupation or kind of work done during the reference period. For coding occupation, 10 codes were used. Links to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-68) have been established to the major group level.

(b) **Status in employment:** Specific questions were asked of employed persons to determine their status in employment. For coding status in employment, 6 groups were used, namely: employer; own-account worker; government employee; semi-government employee; other employee; unpaid family worker.

8. **The previous population censuses:**

Essentially, the same questions and reference period were used in the previous censuses to determine and describe the economically active population and its component groups.

However, in the 1981 census the "labour force" concept was adopted for the first time, whereas in previous censuses the concept used was that of "gainful occupation" (The gainful occupation approach is based on the idea that each person has a more or less stable functional role and that this role is to some extent independent of his or her activity at any given brief interval of time. The labour force approach is based on the individual activities during a given time interval, usually a week or a month).

9. **The next population census:**

It is planned for 1991 and will collect information about the economically active population and its components.

It is not yet decided whether or not the same questions and reference period will be used to determine and describe the economically active population and its component groups.