

► Earnings data collection practices

Survey report



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► Introduction

Current international statistical standards on income generated through employment are contained in the [*Resolution concerning the measurement of employment-related income*](#) adopted by the 16th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 1998 and updated at the 21st ICLS in 2023.

The resolution establishes a comprehensive framework for measuring the remuneration derived from employment activities by both independent and dependent workers.

It also makes recommendations on sources to collect data on the topic, classifying them, at general level, into two groups based on the nature of reporting units – households or establishments.

This report presents the results of a survey on practices of data collection of employee income from establishments, that is, it does not cover practices related to data collection in household surveys and those related to measuring profit derived from independent (self-employment) activities.

The survey was conducted between November 2025 and March 2026 aiming to update the existing knowledge and support national implementation of standards. It collected key information about national administrative sources, economic censuses or surveys used by official statistics to collect earnings data from establishments.

► Survey methodology

The online questionnaire was developed in Excel Forms and an invitation to participate in the survey containing the link¹ was sent to known email addresses of national statistical agencies.

Initial invitations to participate in the survey were sent on the 21st of November. By the end of January 2026, 53 countries had participated providing information on a total number of 99 data sources, or on plans to collect earnings data in the future. To increase the sample and improve geographical coverage, a reminder was sent to countries which hadn't participated and ILO regional statisticians made efforts to motivate countries. As a result, by the end of March, a total number of 81 countries², representing almost 60% of the global population, had provided data.

The questionnaire was designed to collect detailed information on any source used to collect data from 2020 to 2025 to produce official statistics of employee earnings. For countries which hadn't collected earnings data during that period, questions were designed to request summary information on possible data collection before 2020 and on any plans to do so in the future.

Dedicated questions were designed to collect the following information about data sources:

- Type (census, administrative source, survey)
- Key sample design characteristics for surveys (stratification, sample selection and size)
- Data collection frequency, mode and reference period
- Geographical coverage
- Coverage of economic activities
- Type of units providing data (size, head/local unit, profit/non-profit, ownership, incorporated/unincorporated)
- Type of employee collected (individual/aggregated, types of employees, employee characteristics, number of persons / full-time equivalents, average/stock numbers)
- Type of data on hours worked collected
- Earnings components on which data are collected

The analysis of this information allowed producing a detailed picture of national approaches to collecting earnings data from establishments.

¹ <https://forms.office.com/e/eCPK8nmmMF>

² See the Annex

► Survey results

Data sources

Countries generally rely on multiple complementary sources to produce earnings statistics, with sample surveys being the most common, followed by administrative sources and economic censuses. This diversity reflects different statistical objectives and institutional arrangements. Administrative sources have become a key component of national earnings statistics where suitable registers exist, while surveys remain indispensable for collecting variables not available in administrative records.

Of the 81 countries which participated in the survey, 68 had collected official earnings data between 2020 and 2025 and had provided information on 136 data sources (an average of 2 sources per country and a maximum of 8).

Most participating countries are from Europe³ (41%), representing 74% of the region's population. The second most represented region is Americas – while participating countries represent only 20% of the total number, the region's population coverage reached the highest level (87%).

Similar shares of countries from Asia and the Pacific and from Africa participated in the survey, however, population coverage was lower – 53% and 35% respectively.

Only four Arab States participated, but covering 41% of the region's population aged 15 years and over.

► **Table 1. Distribution of participating countries by regions and data collection experience**

Region	Share of responding countries' population aged 15+, %	Have collected official earnings data between 2020 and 2025, countries		Total countries
		No	Yes	
Africa	35	2	11	13
Americas	87	5	11	16
Arab States	41	1	3	4
Asia and the Pacific	53	4	11	15
Europe	74	1	32	33
Total	58	13	68	81

Of the 81 reporting countries, 84% (68 countries) had collected earnings data between 2020 and 2025. Of the 13 countries which hadn't done so, only 4 had collected such data before 2020.

More than half of data sources reported are sample surveys (55%). About 28% are administrative sources or registers, and 17% economic censuses⁴.

³ At this level of aggregation, the region should be *Europe and Central Asia*. However, no countries from Central Asia participated in the survey.

⁴ Refers to data collection from all eligible units, without selecting a sample.

► **Table 2. Distribution of data sources by region and type**

Region	Administrative source/register	Economic census	Sample survey	Total
Africa	3	2	7	12
Americas	5	8	14	27
Arab States	0	0	4	4
Asia and the Pacific	7	4	17	28
Europe	23	9	33	65
Total	38	20	78	136

Five countries provided information on household surveys (mainly Labour Force Survey) used to collect earnings data. While such sources were not in the scope of the survey, it is important to note that in some countries they could be the only source of earnings data covering most or all employees (mainly where informal employment rates are very high). A dedicated report describing earnings data collection practices in Labour Force Surveys will be produced later.

This report focuses on practices applied in collecting data from establishments only, therefore, the five cases were excluded from the analysis presented further, which is based on 131 sources reported by 66 countries.

Data collection frequency, mode, and response rates

Most establishment sources operate on a regular schedule, predominantly annually, providing a stable basis for producing official earnings statistics. Administrative sources stand out for their high collection frequency and extremely high comprehensiveness for the population covered, while surveys and censuses rely more heavily on mixed collection approaches combining self-reporting with interviewer support. The widespread use of self-administered reporting may indicate continuing digitalization of data collection, although regional differences suggest interviewer-assisted collection remains important in certain statistical systems.

Data collection frequency

Of the 131 sources collecting data from establishments, most (126) do so regularly – every year (79%), every two years (6%), every four years (9%)⁵ and every five years (6%).

All reported surveys are conducted regularly, with a predefined frequency. The 9 cases of sources used to collect data irregularly were administrative sources (6) and economic censuses (3). The highest share of irregular sources was reported by countries from Americas (15%).

Unsurprisingly, due to low data collection costs, administrative sources are those used most frequently – almost all of them (97%) are used each year. Surveys, which usually collect most complex/rich data, follow next with 73% of them being used each year. Economic censuses, requiring full coverage of establishments and collection of great quantities of data, are the sources used least frequently.

⁵ All cases refer to the *Structure of earnings survey* conducted in EU countries, candidate countries, and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries every four years.

► **Table 3. Distribution of data sources by frequency and type, percentage by columns**

Frequency	Administrative source/register	Economic census	Sample survey	Total
Each year	97	70	73	79
Every 2 years	0	0	10	6
Every 4 years	0	0	15	9
Every 5 years	3	25	1	6
Every 6 years or less frequently	0	5	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Shares of sources collecting data each year are higher in Americas, Europe and Arab States (over 75%), and lower in Africa, Asia and Pacific (64%). In terms of countries, if sources of all types are considered then over 86% of countries collect data each year.

Data collection mode

In most sources (71%), data are collected through self-reporting which means asking establishments to fill in and deliver (electronic or paper) forms using guidance provided by statistical authorities. About a fifth (22%) of sources apply a mixed approach combining self-reporting with data collection by interviewers and only 7% collect all data through interviews.

As expected, administrative sources rely almost exclusively on self-reporting (95%), with very limited involvement of interviewers – 5% apply the mixed approach. Economic censuses and sample surveys apply self-reporting less frequently (60 to 65%) and rely more on the mixed approach (about 30%). Data collection only by interviewers is practiced in 4% of administrative sources and 11% of sample surveys.

Reliance on self-reporting is the highest in Europe (91%) and lowest in Africa and Arab States (about 30%), where a significant share of data are collected by interviewers.

Response rate

The overall response rate across all sources is 86%, with the highest value (96%) for administrative resources and lower values (about 82%) for economic censuses and sample surveys.

Sample surveys

Establishment surveys show a high degree of methodological consistency. Stratification by economic activity and establishment size has become standard practice, often supplemented by geographical location. Many countries combine probability sampling with certainty selection of economically important establishments, balancing statistical efficiency with the need to accurately measure large employers that account for a substantial share of employment and earnings.

Stratification

Of the 70 establishment surveys reported, 66 use stratification when extracting the sample. Most frequently used stratification variables, applied in over 85% of surveys, are economic activity and establishment size (number of employees). In 80% of surveys, these variables are used simultaneously.

Other characteristics used for stratification less frequently are location⁶ (55%), ownership type (21%), revenue/profit value (20%) and others (14%).

Most frequently (46%), three variables are used to stratify the sample frame, combined use of economic activity, establishment size and location being the preferred option.

Use of two stratification variables is the second most common approach (29%). In most cases economic activity and establishment size are used.

Ownership type, revenue/profit value and other characteristics are in almost all cases used for stratification as additional variables.

Sample selection

For half of the surveys, the sample is selected applying a mixed approach – some units are selected randomly and some non-randomly. This practice is predominant in Americas (71%). Almost in all cases, the non-random component of the sample represents a census of units considered important, influencing significantly employment and the national economy in general. Such units are allocated to special strata using one or several criteria – establishment size being the most frequently applied. Other common criteria are the type of economic activity and revenue/profit value. Capital size and foreign control are used less frequently. In half cases, a combination of two or three criteria is used to identify units assigned to the census strata.

Where the non-random survey component is not a census, it is a sub-sample designed to observe the most important part – for example, the group of establishments with highest revenue holding 80% of total value. Such groups are also maintained as longitudinal panels.

Only random selection is applied in about 39% of surveys samples. This approach is predominant in Europe (49%).

The practice of using only non-random samples is very limited (7%) and consists in observing the most important establishments (mainly in terms of revenue value).

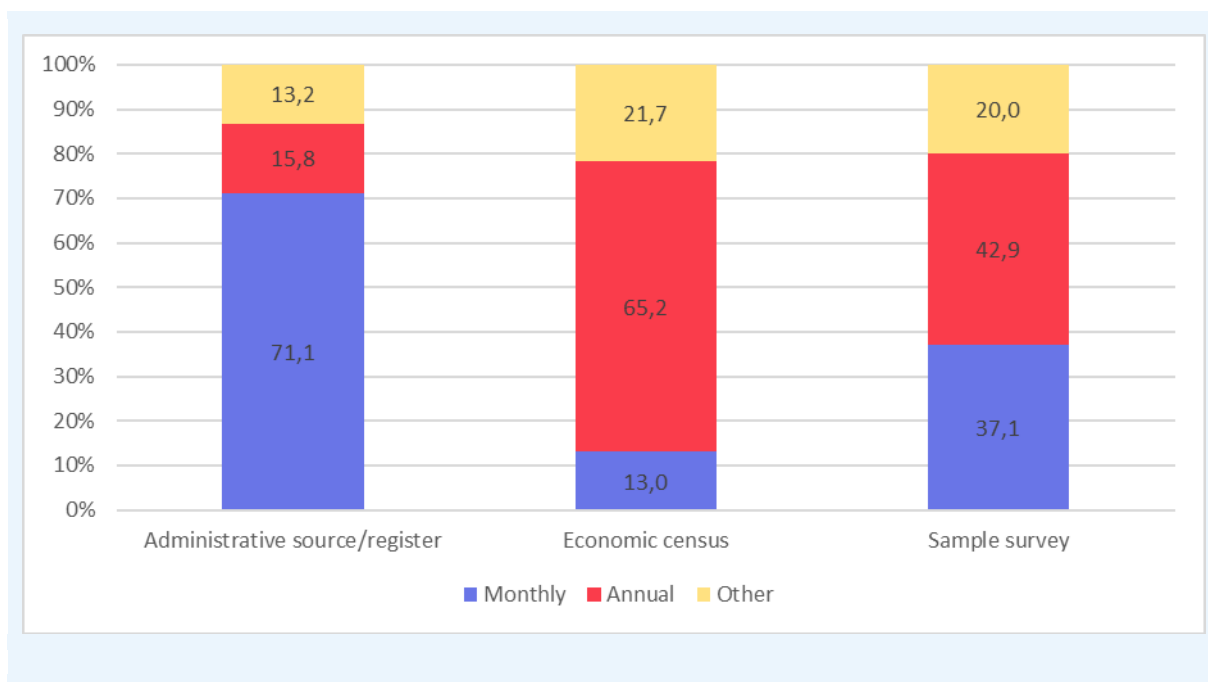
Reference period

Monthly (43%) and annual (39%) reference periods dominate earnings data collection, reflecting the different purposes served by administrative systems, surveys and censuses. Quarterly and weekly reference periods are rarely used.

Administrative sources are primarily designed around regular payroll reporting and therefore favour monthly observation (71%), whereas annual reference periods are more commonly used in economic censuses and surveys where broader structural information is collected. This diversity highlights the need to consider reference periods carefully when comparing or integrating data across sources.

⁶ Region or administrative unit

► Chart 1. Distribution of data sources by type and frequency, percentage



The preferred reference period in Europe and Africa is the month (around 50%), while in other regions it's the year (about 55%).

Coverage of economic activities

Although most sources cover all economic activities, comprehensive coverage is not yet universal. A substantial number of data collections are either sector-specific or intentionally exclude selected activities for which alternative data sources exist. Consequently, users should account for differences in industry coverage when interpreting national earnings statistics or undertaking international comparisons.

Only 61% of sources collect data from establishments operating in all economic activities⁷. Administrative sources do so in almost all cases (95%), economic censuses in over half of cases (57%) and sample surveys less frequently (44%).

Cases where not all activities are covered can be classified into two groups:

- Sources designed to collect data only from specific sectors – only one or few activities covered (for example, financial sector, industry, trade, public sector). They represent about 20% of all sources.
- Sources excluding one or few activities (like agriculture, public administration, education, financial/insurance activity) for which more appropriate sources exist or are specially designed.

Sources in Africa and Europe cover all economic activities more frequently (73%) than in the rest of the world (45%).

During data collection, 63% of sources ask establishments to provide data only on their main activity – the one which contributes most to the unit's total output (value added, revenue or production). In very rare cases, sources identify the main activity based on the highest labour input (number of employees).

⁷ Sections from A to S as defined by ISIC Rev. 5

Coverage of reporting units

The survey indicates that most establishment-based earnings collections aim for broad institutional coverage, including public and private sectors as well as various legal forms of enterprises. Nevertheless, differences remain regarding the treatment of small establishments, unincorporated units, foreign-owned enterprises, cooperatives and non-profit organizations. These differences can influence both the representativeness and comparability of resulting earnings indicators.

Most data sources (71%) do not use the number of employees as a criterion to exclude units from data collection. However, those that do so use a threshold of 10 employees or less in most cases and apply it (with very few exceptions) across all economic activities.

When applying this threshold, most sources (74%) consider all types of employees working at the unit and fewer (26%) target specific groups like full-time/regular employees, those with direct contracts.

Data from both private and public establishments are collected by most sources (85%). About 12% of sources limit data collection to private units and very few (2%) to public ones.

Only 8% of sources exclude units owned (totally or partially) by foreign entities. In most cases, these are sources collecting data from unincorporated or public units.

Unincorporated units are covered by 63% of sources, coverage being higher for administrative sources and economic censuses (79%) compared to sample surveys (50%).

Most sources collect data from cooperatives (80%) and non-profit organizations (73%), coverage being higher for administrative sources (87%) and economic censuses (74%).

Treatment of sub-units

Countries are almost evenly divided between collecting information directly from local establishments and obtaining consolidated data from enterprise headquarters. In a few cases, sample surveys do not collect any information on sub-units. This reflects different statistical unit concepts and administrative practices. The choice affects the geographical and industrial detail that can be produced and should therefore be considered when designing establishment-based earnings statistics.

Economic surveys tend to treat sub-units as independent data providers to a larger degree than other sources (65% against 45%). Same approach seems to be applied to sources in Americas, Assia and the Pacific compared to other regions.

Type of data collected

Most sources collect information covering all employees, although significant differences exist in the level of detail. Administrative sources primarily collect individual-level records, while surveys and especially economic censuses more often collect aggregated information. Where individual records are collected, employee characteristics such as sex, age, occupation and job type (full/part-time) are widely available, enabling detailed analysis of earnings differentials. Aggregated collections remain focused mainly on totals, with more limited disaggregation by employee characteristics.

Collecting data on all employees working for economic units is the predominant practice (92%). Requesting data only on specific groups (full-time/permanent employees, specific occupations) is an approach rarely applied.

Most sources collect aggregated employee data (59%), economic censuses doing so at the highest rate (91%), followed by sample surveys (64%). Administrative sources, on the other hand, collect mostly individual employee data (71%).

Europe seems to be the region with the highest share of sources collecting individual data (51%) and Africa and Americas with the lowest (about 28%).

Individual data

In all administrative sources and economic censuses, units provide individual data on all their employees (unit-level census). Only 42% of sample surveys follow this practice, in 27% cases units provide data samples of employees while 31% of surveys combine unit-level census and sampling.

Almost all sources (96%) collect data on employee characteristics. The most frequently collected being sex (82%), full/part-time (69%), age (67%) and occupation (65%). Other characteristics, like education level and job tenure, are collected less frequently. None of the reported sources collects data that could provide information on the employees' family – like marital status, household size, number of children, etc.

Aggregated data

Sources collecting aggregated data mostly (87%) ask units to provide the total value of indicators (e.g. employees, remuneration, hours worked). Only few sources ask for average values (5%) or both totals and averages (8%).

About 66% of sources ask units to provide aggregated data by employee characteristics. Sex (53%), full/part-time (33%) and occupation (18%) being the most frequently collected variables.

Employment and working-time measures

Data on the number of employees

Most sources collect employee counts, while information on full-time equivalents is considerably less common. Collection of hours worked is widespread but not universal, with surveys more frequently capturing this information than administrative sources. Differences in whether sources measure hours worked, hours paid, overtime or contractual hours underline the importance of precise metadata when interpreting earnings measures, particularly those expressed on an hourly basis.

By default, in sources collecting individual data units provide the number of persons employed by unit, which then can be used to calculate full-time equivalents (FTE). Sources collecting aggregated data, on the other hand, must choose what data to request. Most of them (65%) request units to report numbers of employees, few (9%) request FTEs and one quarter (26%) ask for both indicators.

Whether sources collect aggregated numbers of employees or FTEs, there are two main approaches in relation to the moment these numbers refer to:

- At the beginning or end of the reference period, applied in 40% of sources
- Average number for the reference period, applied in 43% of sources

About 17% of sources apply both approaches.

Data on hours worked

Almost two-thirds (63%) of sources collect data on hours worked. Sample surveys do so more frequently (75%), compared to economic censuses (58%) and administrative sources (45%). Collection of data on hours worked has higher prevalence in Europe (77%) compared to other regions (46%).

Data on hours worked and paid are collected by most sources (82%), regardless of their type. Other types of working hours often considered are overtime (63%) and normal/contractual hours (54%). Fewer sources collect data on hours worked and not paid (15%) or on hours not worked but paid (22%).

Few sources (mainly surveys) collect data on all these five types of hours. On average, a source collects data on two types.

Earnings data

While cash remuneration is collected universally, countries vary considerably in the range of additional earnings components measured. Bonuses and gratuities are widely covered, whereas remuneration for time not worked, payments in kind, housing allowances, overtime pay and unpaid wages are collected less consistently. These differences affect the extent to which national statistics align with the comprehensive concept of employment-related income defined in international standards and should be considered in international comparisons.

Bonuses and gratuities are the earnings component measured by most sources (81%), especially in Europe (95%) and Asia and Pacific (80%). The usual practice is to collect data on all bonuses and gratuities (88%) not only on those paid regularly (12%). Bonuses covered are year-end and seasonal bonuses (93%), profit-sharing bonuses (82%), supplementary vacation and other bonuses (88%).

Remuneration for time not worked is the second component frequently measured with 62% of sources collecting data, with highest rate in Europe (71%). All sources covering this component collect data on payments related to paid leaves. Almost all cover payments for public and other holidays (91%) and other types of time off granted with pay (85%).

Payments in kind are covered by half of sources with highest prevalence among economic censuses and surveys in Europe (63%).

Fewer sources collect data on housing and rental allowances (39%) and on overtime remuneration (37%); and very few on unpaid wages/salaries.

Data collection plans

The survey also indicates positive prospects for expanding establishment-based earnings statistics. Of the 13 countries that did not collect earnings data during the reference period, 10 reported plans to introduce new data collections between 2026 and 2029. Four of them indicated household surveys as sources of data.

This suggests continued progress towards improved availability of official earnings statistics, although household surveys will remain an important complementary source in countries where establishment-based systems are still under development.

► Annex

List of countries participating in the survey

Africa

Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo, Tunisia

Americas

Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Saint Lucia, Suriname, United States of America, Uruguay

Arab States

Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen

Asia and the Pacific

Australia, China, French Polynesia, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Tokelau, Viet Nam

Europe

Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Türkiye