

Governance of labour market data and the ability of BRICS labour market information and analysis systems to report on the SDGs

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Abstract

The BRICS are a driving force in the global economy and the global labour market, representing almost 44 per cent of the world's labour force. Thus, it is crucial to have timely statistical information on the BRICS' labour markets. The performance of labour market information and analysis systems (LMIASs) of BRICS countries has an impact on the world as a whole, but also on the possibilities for cooperation amongst member countries on issues pertaining to the labour market.

The LMIASs of BRICS countries present a high level of development overall, incorporating a variety of statistical sources and allowing BRICS countries to have a reasonably good data coverage for SDG labour market indicators. In all BRICS countries, the national statistical office is at the core of the LMIAS and plays a pivotal role in the coordination of statistical activities at the national level.

Although the BRICS in general recognize the importance of openness, transparency, and accessibility of labour market data, efforts are needed to ensure full openness and coverage of labour data in all BRICS countries.

Similarly, even though all five BRICS countries have regular statistical compilations from which they derive labour statistics, there is a need to ensure that data produced systematically adheres to international statistical standards and is made available to the public in a timely manner.

Introduction

The formulation, implementation and evaluation of effective labour market policies requires the support of solid labour market information and analysis systems (LMIASs), able to provide in a timely manner valid, accurate, and reliable statistics. Robust LMIASs also facilitate cooperation across countries on labour market issues, allowing for the exchange of comparable statistics on matters of common interest.

A LMIAS is a network of institutions or persons with agreed roles that is responsible for labour market analysis, monitoring and reporting on employment and labour policies, information exchange on labour market issues, and coordination among users and producers of labour market information and analysis.

An efficient LMIAS consolidates the efforts of all institutions involved in the production of labour market statistics and analysis, clarifying the role and duties of each of them. It includes a wide range of sources of labour statistics with a view to casting light on as many aspects of the labour market as possible. The sources of labour statistics typically making up a LMIAS are: population censuses, household surveys (such as labour force surveys and household income and expenditure surveys), establishment censuses and surveys, administrative records (kept by the labour ministry, the labour inspectorate, the social insurance, employment offices, workers' organizations, and a variety of other agencies), and national accounts.

The outputs of a LMIAS must be relevant (linked to labour market priority areas), timely (to facilitate prompt policy responses), accurate, and to the best extent possible, comparable across countries and over time. In order to foster cooperation within the BRICS on labour market matters, it is particularly important to produce labour statistics that are comparable across BRICS countries. To ensure data quality and transparency, all the necessary documentation must be disseminated alongside the data, including information on the sources and methods used.

The performance of national statistical systems of BRICS countries and particularly of their LMIASs bears great significance for the world as a whole. The BRICS represent almost 44 per cent of the world's working-age population (aged 15 and above) and of the world's labour force, which means that developments in BRICS' labour markets have a considerable impact on the global labour market. Thus, it is all the more important at the global level to have timely statistical information on BRICS' labour markets.

The BRICS adopted in their Sixth Summit in 2014 the *Fortaleza Declaration and Action Plan*, underscoring the need for cooperation amongst member countries on labour and employment, social security and social inclusion public policies. In order to foster this cooperation and to simplify the exchange of labour market information among BRICS countries, the ILO proposed a set of BRICS key labour market indicators in the report *Towards a Harmonized Set of BRICS Key Labour Market Indicators*, prepared for the 2016 Labour and Employment BRICS Ministerial Meeting. This harmonized set of BRICS labour market indicators was meant to inform policy formulation and decision-making. It covered all the main areas related to the labour market and social protection, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Proposed BRICS Key Labour Market Indicators.

Labour force and employment
1. Labour force participation rate by sex and age group
2. Employment-to-population ratio by sex and age group
3. Share of employment by broad sector and sex (*)
4. Share of employment by broad occupation and sex
Informality
5. Share of informal employment in non-agricultural employment by sex (*)
6. Share of employment by status and sex
Unemployment and labour underutilization
7. Unemployment rate by sex and age group (*)
8. Share of youth not in employment, education or training (youth NEET rate) by sex (*)
Education
9. Share of labour force by level of educational attainment, sex, and age group
10. Unemployment rate by level of educational attainment, sex, and age group
Productivity, wages and inequality
11. GDP per person engaged and GDP per hour worked (*)
12. Real average monthly wages and wage growth (*)
13. Labour income share (*)
Social protection
14. Public social security and health expenditure (*)
15. Share of unemployed receiving unemployment benefits (*)
16. Active contributors to a pension scheme by sex (*)
Social dialogue
17. Trade union density rate
18. Collective bargaining coverage rate
Occupational safety
19. Fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100'000 workers by sex (*)
20. Labour inspection rate (inspectors per 10'000 workers)
(*) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators, or indicators from which SDG indicators could be derived.

Such a comprehensive and diverse set of labour market indicators can only be produced by a developed and integrated national statistical system. Indeed, the production of the 20 indicators requires the existence of all the main types of sources of labour statistics: labour force surveys and other household surveys, establishment surveys, administrative records and national accounts.

This is true as well for the labour market indicators included in the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the UN General Assembly in its Seventy-first session. The purpose of the SDG indicators is to allow the international community to monitor progress towards the achievement of the goals and targets included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDG indicators pertaining to the labour market and social protection are numerous and varied, covering all major areas of decent work. The production of all the labour market SDG indicators (listed in table 2) also calls for the development of a performant LMIAS integrating all the main sources of labour statistics.

In general, there is reasonably good coverage among BRICS countries for the key labour market indicators presented in table 1 and for the SDG labour market indicators presented in table 2.

Table 2. SDG indicators pertaining to the labour market and social protection.

SDG indicator number	SDG indicator title
1.1.1	Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)
1.3.1	Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable
1.a.2	Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)
4.3.1	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex
5.5.2	Proportion of women in managerial positions
8.2.1	Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person
8.3.1	Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex
8.5.1	Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities
8.5.2	Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities
8.6.1	Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training
8.7.1	Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age
8.8.1	Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status
8.8.2	Level of national compliance of labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status *
8.b.1	Existence of a developed and operationalized national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy *
10.4.1	Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers
10.7.1	Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination
14.c.1	Number of countries making progress in ratifying, accepting and implementing through legal, policy and institutional frameworks, ocean-related instruments that implement international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources
16.10.1	Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months

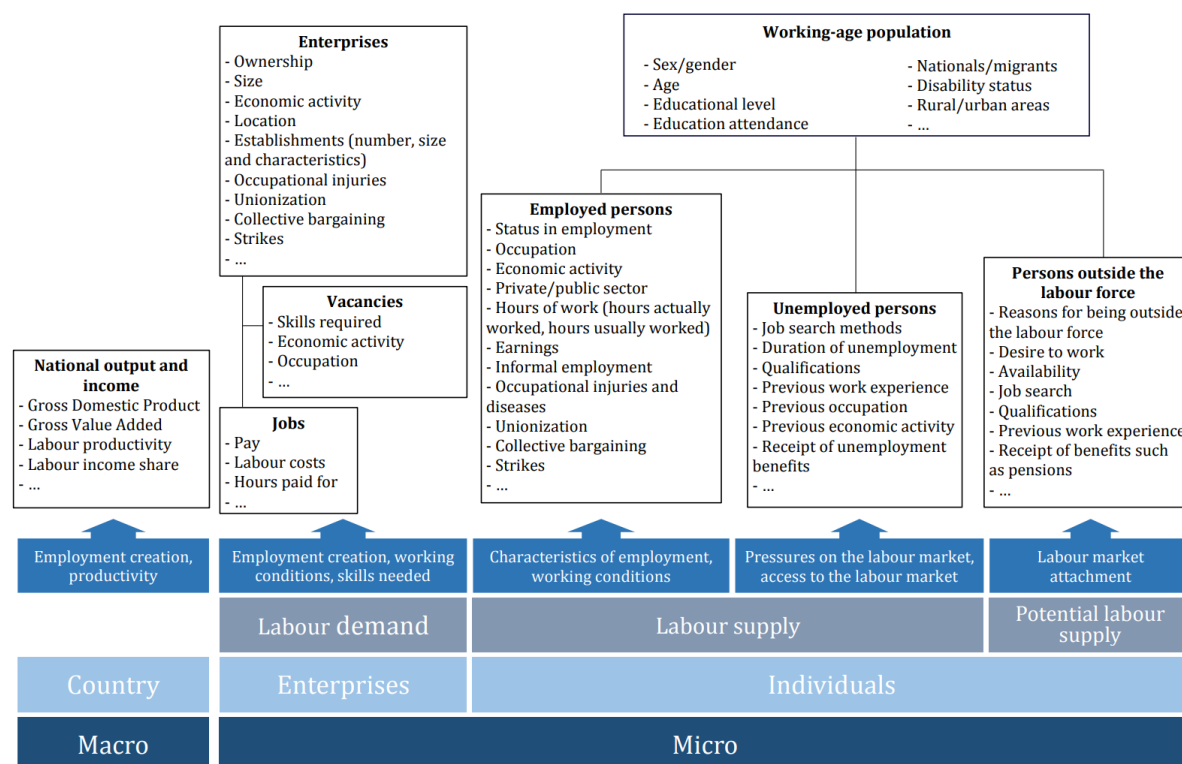
* SDG indicators 8.8.2 and 8.b.1 are to be produced exclusively by the ILO, based on ILO textual sources for 8.8.2 and on national reporting of relevant information for 8.b.1.

The role of national statistical offices in BRICS labour market information systems

A country's labour market information and analysis system centralizes and coordinates statistical activities carried out by various institutions in the national territory, ensuring coherence and consistency. It brings together users and producers of labour statistics. Its activities span different areas, including data collection and compilation, methodological development, statistical standard setting, and analysis. LMIASs promote and regulate the exchange of information across different actors and coordinate their efforts through various institutional arrangements and networks. Officially laying out the role of the LMIAS in monitoring policies, plans, and strategies via legislation or formal agreements legitimizes it and ensures that it will be respected.

Developed LMIASs cover a vast array of labour-related topics at the macroeconomic and the microeconomic levels and deal with labour supply and labour demand. The following figure summarizes the main items of data collection in a LMIAS.

Figure 1. Scope of labour statistics in a labour market information and analysis system.



Source: ILO, 2017b.

No single data source can meet all needs. In fact, the production of statistics on all (or most of) the items presented in figure 1 requires the existence of various types of statistical sources, including population censuses, labour force surveys (and possibly other types of household surveys such as household income and expenditure surveys), establishment censuses and surveys, administrative records (including insurance records, employment office records, labour inspectorate records, and migration records, to name a few), and national accounts.

The sheer breadth of the spectrum of labour statistics and the variety of sources required to satisfy all data needs makes it crucial to coordinate effectively all statistical activities within a country. This essential coordination and centralization role belongs to the national statistical office in all BRICS countries.

Brazil

In Brazil, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*IBGE - Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*) is officially responsible for the collection of statistical, geographic, cartographic, geodetic and environmental information. Its mission is to “portray Brazil with information necessary to know its reality and to exercise citizenship.”¹ Its main functions are the production and analysis of statistical and geographical information, the coordination and consolidation of statistical and geographical information, the creation of a system of environmental information, the documentation and dissemination of statistical and methodological information, and the

¹ <https://ww2.ibge.gov.br/english/disseminacao/eventos/missao/default.shtm>

coordination of the national statistical and cartographical systems. The IBGE is part of the public federal administration and it is linked to the Ministry of Economy. With a view to covering the whole national territory, the structure of the IBGE includes 27 state units (in all state capitals and the federal district), 27 units to supervise information documentation and dissemination and 570 data collection agencies (in the main municipalities).

Many other Brazilian agencies participate alongside the IBGE in the country's LMIA. One key labour data collection function performed outside the IBGE is the Annual Report of Social Information (*Rais - Relação Anual de Informações Sociais*), which is based on a form that all enterprises must submit annually with socioeconomic information on all their formal workers. This data collection was the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Employment until the ministry was extinguished in 2019. Since then, the Ministry of Economy oversees the Annual Report of Social Information. Similarly, the General Register of Workers and Unemployed (*Caged – Cadastro Geral de Empregados e Desempregados*) provides valuable information on registered unemployment, going back to the 1980s.

Also, the Unified Registry for Social Programs (*Cadastro Único*), kept by the Ministry of Citizenship (formerly the Ministry of Social Development) is the main instrument of selection used for social programs focusing on low-income families in Brazil. It currently covers 27.5 million families and almost 75 million people (36 per cent of the Brazilian population is registered). Over 30 programs, services and rights (such as *Bolsa Família*) use the Unified Registry to monitor the situation of vulnerable families, plan their actions in the territory, and offer benefits in a transparent way. Data collected includes information on the labour market situation, educational attainment, civil documentation, and income of each family member.

Furthermore, the Brazilian National Social Security Institute keeps a rich database on occupational accidents, based on data from its records. These records, combined with those of the labour inspection and other relevant agencies, constitute a wealth of information on labour market topics not covered by households and establishments surveys.

It is worth mentioning Brazil's Decent Work SmartLab, an initiative to foster knowledge and data management resulting from a partnership between the ILO country office of Brazil and the Federal Labour Prosecutor Office. The SmartLab aims to bridge the know-do gap, providing information that stimulates evidence-based policymaking, transparency, and accountability through a collection of digital observatories of labour-related topics. The Digital Observatory of Decent Work for example, uses data from the ILO's Decent Work Municipal Indicators System to create a user-friendly platform that facilitates labour market decision-making. From the production of diagnostics and territorial analysis, through the design and implementation of programmatic activities, to monitoring and evaluation, the SmartLab supports both the Brazilian government and the ILO in providing a solid basis for quality policy advice and implementation. This collection of digital observatories also includes observatories on specific topics such as forced labour and human trafficking, child labour, occupational safety and health, and equality in the world of work.

China

In China, the National Bureau of Statistics, directly under the State Council, is in charge of statistics and economic accounting. Its main functions are to regulate statistical work, formulate plans for statistical modernization and nationwide statistical surveys, to organize, lead and supervise statistical and economic accounting work in various localities and departments, and to monitor the enforcement of statistical laws and regulations. In addition, the National Bureau of Statistics sets the national statistical standards and oversees any statistical standard-setting by other government departments.

The National Bureau of Statistics has a clear central role in China's LMIA: it manages, verifies and publishes basic national statistical data and informs the general public on socioeconomic issues. China has a coordinated national statistical system with decentralized administration but under the unified leadership of the National Bureau of Statistics. The Chinese national statistical system includes statistical agencies and statisticians working at all levels of government (local, county, township, etc.), and statistical agencies and statisticians directly under the State Council. The National Bureau of Statistics is responsible for managing and coordinating national statistical activities, including the work of the Organization of Rural Socioeconomic Surveys, the Organization of Urban Socioeconomic Surveys and the Organization of Enterprise Surveys. Statistical agencies and statisticians at the provincial, prefecture, county and township levels are responsible for statistical activities within their own administrative areas.

The Chinese Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security maintains administrative records covering several labour-related topics from which statistics are derived. In fact, within the Ministry, there is a Statistical Research Centre, and a Planning and Finance Division which also has a statistical unit. The Ministry's efforts to collect and compile labour statistics are extensive, and they result in the regular publication of the *China Labour Statistical Yearbook* and the *Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Human Resources and Social Security of China*.

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) also has the capacity to produce statistics on key labour market topics such as unionization and collective bargaining from its records. In addition to providing comprehensive statistics on trade union density and collective bargaining coverage in China, these data also help to inform the ACFTU's efforts to promote the establishment of trade unions and collective bargaining in enterprises throughout China.

India

In India, the main authority for official statistics is the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which used to consist of a Statistics Wing, also known as the National Statistical Office, comprising the Central Statistical Office, the Computer Centre, the National Sample Survey Office, and a Programme Implementation Wing. Additionally, India used to have an autonomous National Statistical Commission overseeing all the statistical work done in the country, and an equally autonomous statistical institute (the Indian Statistical Institute, declared of national importance by an Act of Parliament).

However, an order dated 23 May 2019 set out a restructuring of the Statistics Wing of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, calling for the merger of the Central Statistical Office and the National Sample Survey Office into the National Statistical Office. It is unclear what the role of the National Statistical Commission will be in the new structure, and whether its autonomy will be preserved.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is in charge of ensuring the quality of statistics released in India, which are derived from a variety of sources, including surveys, censuses and administrative records. The Ministry supervises statistical compilations, oversees methodological development activities and leads the efforts of statistical standard setting.

India's National Statistical Office (within the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation) is at the core of the country's statistical development. Its tasks span various areas, including data collection, methodology and dissemination. What is more, the National Statistical Office coordinates the statistical work of numerous government agencies, such as Ministries, Departments, and State Statistical Bureaus.

Various agencies in India maintain records with suitable labour market information or conduct data collection activities, thus contributing to the national statistical system. In particular, the

Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Labour Bureau collect and disseminate data on several labour-related topics, such as minimum wages, social security, occupational safety and health, and price indexes.

Russian Federation

In the Russian Federation, the federal executive body in charge of statistical matters is the Federal State Statistics Service (ROSSTAT). It supervises official statistical activities, including data collection, methodological development, data analysis and dissemination. ROSSTAT also coordinates statistical efforts by other agencies, such as the Federal Service for Labour and Employment, which provides data on some labour market issues (for example, registered unemployment).

The Russian Federation's various statistical sources coordinated by ROSSTAT produce a set of valuable labour market indicators in a timely manner. Nevertheless, for the topics not covered by household or establishment surveys (such as social dialogue and occupational injuries), it is harder to find reliable statistics produced following a strict methodology.

Rostrud (the Federal Service for Labour and Employment) under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation, the regional Public Employment Services and the regional Labour Inspectorates collect data on various labour market-related issues. Also, the All-Russian job vacancy portal administered by the Rostrud provides valuable statistical information about vacancies and the local labour market. The responsibilities of the Rostrud have been decentralized with each region being responsible for the implementation of employment policies as well as collecting labour market information and data.

South Africa

In South Africa, the national statistical system is governed by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), whose mission is "to lead and partner in statistical systems for evidence-based decisions". The agency, under the responsibility of the Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, operates independently in terms of the production and coordination of official statistics and other statistics. A Statistics Council advises the Minister and the Statistician-General (the head of Statistics South Africa) on matters pertaining to official statistics including statistical policy and priorities, statistical data collections and methodological issues, and coordination of statistical activities.

Statistics South Africa is in charge of ensuring data quality and consistency. In this sense, it promotes the use of common concepts and definitions in all statistical products by the agency. Stats SA also leads methodological development and statistical standard setting processes.

All other government agencies are required to assist Stats SA in order to facilitate its work, following principles of cooperation and effective intergovernmental relations in statistics.

Availability of labour market data in the BRICS

The labour market information and analysis systems of BRICS countries present a high level of development overall, incorporating in all cases a variety of statistical sources under the strong leadership and coordination of the national statistical office.

All five BRICS countries conduct regular labour force surveys and establishment surveys and produce solid statistics from administrative records. The existence of all the main sources of labour

statistics allows these countries to produce timely statistics on many labour-related topics, favouring comprehensive labour market analysis and policy formulation.

The list of sources included in ILOSTAT, the ILO's central statistical database, shows the variety of sources that BRICS countries use to report statistics to the ILO. They cover population censuses, household surveys, establishment censuses and surveys, and many types of administrative records. Table 3 presents the different sources of the statistics included in ILOSTAT for BRICS countries, specifying the time span covered (some of the sources have been discontinued).

Taking the BRICS as a whole, there is reasonably good data coverage overall for most labour-related topics included in ILOSTAT, and particularly for the BRICS labour market indicators presented in table 1.

Yet, great disparities emerge when focusing on each country individually. In fact, although all BRICS countries have the statistical capacity to produce labour statistics regularly, and even to disaggregate them according to various categories, not all countries disseminate their labour statistics widely.

Regarding SDG labour market indicators, there is also an adequate data coverage overall for the BRICS. Figure 2 summarizes data availability for each BRICS country and for each SDG labour market indicator, based on the 2019 SDG data reporting by the ILO to the UN Statistics Division. The use of standard concepts and definitions and international comparability are crucial in the SDG monitoring framework, thus only data complying with international standards and best practices in terms of coverage, methodology, and measurement are reported.

Brazil has available data for at least one year for all SDG labour market indicators and complete time series for all but three indicators. India has data for all but one indicator, but most indicators are not available on an annual basis for the country as a whole; instead, they are rather typically available on a 5-year basis corresponding to the quinquennial National Sample Survey. The Russian Federation reports data on all but two indicators, and South Africa does not report data on three. China does not provide data on nine indicators, which hinders the assessment of progress towards achieving the SDG pertaining to the labour market.

Table 3. Sources of labour statistics included in ILOSTAT.

Type of source	Title of source	Time span in ILOSTAT
Brazil		
Population census	Population census	1960 - 1991
Household survey	Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNADC - <i>Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua</i>)	2002 - 2018
	National Household Sample Survey (PNAD - <i>Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios</i>)	1972 - 2015
	Monthly Employment Survey (PME - <i>Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego</i>)	1981 - 2015
	School-to-work transition survey	2012 - 2013
Establishment survey	Annual Report of Social Information (Rais - <i>Relação Anual de Informações Sociais</i>)	1970 - 1988
Insurance records	Insurance records	1978 - 2017
Records of workers' organizations	Records of workers' organizations	1992 - 2008
Labour inspectorate records	Labour inspectorate records	2011 - 2013
Other administrative records	Labour legislation	1994 - 2015
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index - National (IPCA - <i>Índice Nacional de Preços ao Consumidor Amplo</i>)	1970 - 2019
	Consumer Price Index - Main city	1976 - 2004
Russian Federation		
Population census	Population census	1989 - 1989
Labour force survey	Labour Force Survey (LFS)	1992 - 2019
Household income/expenditure survey	Household Budget Survey	2013 - 2016
Other household survey	School-to-work transition survey	2012 - 2015
Establishment survey	Establishments sample survey on employees' wages by occupation	1980 - 2017
Records of workers' organizations	Records of workers' organizations (FITUR)	2006 - 2015
Other administrative records	Labour relations records	1990 - 2008
	Labour legislation	1995 - 2016
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index	1991 - 2019
Other official source	Statistical migration records, Ministry of Internal Affairs	2017 - 2017

Table 3. Sources of labour statistics included in ILOSTAT (cont'd).

Type of source	Title of source	Time span in ILOSTAT
India		
Population census	Population census	1961 - 2001
Labour force survey	Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)	2019
Other household survey	National Sample Survey	1994 - 2012
Establishment survey	Employment market information survey	1969 - 2006
Insurance records	Insurance records	1971 - 2007
Labour inspectorate records	Labour inspectorate records	1969 - 2008
Other administrative records	Labour legislation	2000 - 2013
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index	1957 - 2019
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index - Agricultural Workers	1970 - 2014
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index - Industrial Workers	1970 - 2014
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index - Non-manual employees	1970 - 2010
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index - Industrial Workers in Delhi	1970 - 2014
National Accounts	National Accounts	2014 - 2014
Other official source	Annual Report of Non-Residents, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs	2008 - 2016
	Estimates from the Institute for Human Development	1983 - 2012
China		
Population census	Population census	1982 - 2010
Labour force survey	Sample Survey of Weekly Working Hours in Urban Areas	2017 - 2018
Establishment survey	Employment and wages statistics based on enterprises' reports	1969 - 2008
Employment office records	Labour and Social Security records	2005 - 2016
	Registered unemployment records	1978 - 2017
Labour inspectorate records	Labour inspectorate records	1993 - 2002
Workers' organizations records	ACFTU Statistical bulletin	2000 - 2013
Other administrative records	Labour legislation	1995 - 2013
	Administrative records (China's Statistical Yearbook)	2001 - 2015
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index	1970 - 2019
South Africa		
Population census	Population census	1960 - 1991
Labour force survey	Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS)	2008 - 2018
	Labour Force Survey	2000-2007
	October Household Survey	1994-1999
Establishment survey	Monthly Survey of Employment, Salaries and Wages	1969 - 2008
	Quarterly Employment Statistics	1990 - 2014
Labour inspectorate records	Labour inspectorate records	1989 - 2000
Other administrative records	Labour relations records	1969 - 2008
	Labour legislation	2003 - 2013
Consumer price survey	Consumer Price Index	1957 - 2019
National Accounts	National Accounts	2014 - 2014

Source: ILOSTAT (<https://ilostat.ilo.org>).

Figure 2. Data availability for SDG labour market indicators in the BRICS.

SDG indicator	Brazil	China	India	Russian Federation	South Africa
1.1.1 - Share of employed population below international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day, by sex and age					
1.3.1 - Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable					
5.5.2 - Proportion of women in managerial positions					
8.2.1 - Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person					
8.3.1 - Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex					
8.5.1 - Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities					
8.5.2 - Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities					
8.6.1 - Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training					
8.7.1 - Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age					
8.8.1 - Fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status					
9.2.2 - Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment					
10.4.1 - Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers					

	Available for at least a third of all years since the SDG baseline (2000)
	Available for less than a third of all years since the SDG baseline (2000)
	Not available or not comparable

Openness of labour market data in the BRICS

All BRICS countries have a Statistical Act or other legislative vehicle regulating and legitimizing the state's statistical activities. The legal framework thus guarantees the proper functioning of the national statistical system.

Access to statistical information by the population is seen as essential in the BRICS group in general, which is evidenced in some cases by legislation on the right to information². Examples of this are Brazil's *Law of Access to Information* (Law n°12.527, 2011) and India's *Right to Information Law* (2005), which regulate citizens' right to access public information.

Additionally, Brazil, India, and the Russian Federation have ratified the *ILO Labour Statistics Convention* (No. 160, 1985), committing to regularly producing statistics according to international standards on a number of labour-related topics, and to reporting them to the ILO. South Africa ratified the *ILO Convention concerning Statistics of Wages and Hours of Work* (No. 63, 1938), which was classified as outdated and will be abrogated.

The national statistical offices of all five BRICS countries have performant official websites giving access to key labour market indicators. Furthermore, the websites of the national statistical offices of Brazil, India and South Africa make publicly available detailed labour statistics from the main sources on numerous indicators and with numerous breakdowns, and provide in-depth methodological information. Data on the Chinese labour market is much more limited, covering basic items only, such as total employment, urban unemployment, registered unemployment and migrant workers. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in 2018 the National Bureau of Statistics of China took a significant step forward in statistical communication, when it started disseminating the surveyed urban unemployment rate.

It is important to note that Brazil, India, the Russian Federation and South Africa share the anonymised microdata sets of their labour force surveys with the ILO Department of Statistics. This shows the openness and transparency of the data and promotes close collaboration between the ILO Department of Statistics and the national statistical offices of these countries on sources and methods used. In addition, making anonymised survey microdata files available to the public conveys the official commitment to transparency of information, increases general confidence in the national statistical system, and fosters labour market research and analysis.

The autonomy of statistical agencies, and particularly national statistical offices, is crucial to ensure data quality, accuracy, relevance, and credibility. The integrity and objectivity of statistical activities can only be guaranteed if the corresponding statistical agency is fully autonomous. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted by the UN General Assembly on 29 January 2014 establish that “official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information” and that “to retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.”

Open Data Watch is an international non-profit organization of data experts focusing on the production and management of official statistics by organizations such as national statistical offices. It seeks to improve the coverage and openness of official statistics, under the premise that high quality and open data are necessary to monitor and achieve the SDGs. To inform its work, Open Data Watch has developed the Open Data Inventory, a database on the coverage and openness of official statistics around the world. The scores for labour data in particular and all

² All BRICS countries have a statistics act, as indicated above, but not all of them have a law on the population's right to information.

data in general for BRICS countries are presented in table 4. The scores are scaled from 0 (worst) to 100 (best).

In BRICS countries in general, labour data tends to be somewhat more open compared to all data. However, improvements are needed to ensure full openness and coverage of labour data, especially in China, India and the Russian Federation.

Table 4. Open Data Inventory scores for BRICS countries, 2018.

	Labour data			All data		
	Coverage	Openness	Overall	Coverage	Openness	Overall
Brazil	70	60	65	59	50	54
China	30	50	40	50	39	44
India	10	80	45	44	64	55
Russian Federation	60	50	55	63	51	57
South Africa	80	90	85	45	57	51



Source: Open Data Watch - Open Data Inventory (www.opendatawatch.com).

Challenges for labour market information and analysis systems

All of the BRICS member countries have regular household surveys and establishment surveys in place, and the results are disseminated in the corresponding national statistical office websites, in a more or less timely and complete manner, depending on the country.

The main challenge when looking for labour market statistics for the BRICS member countries is thus not lack of availability, but rather whether all of the available data (including all the key labour market indicators and the main breakdowns) are made available to the public, and with what degree of punctuality.

In addition, precise methodological information on how labour statistics in BRICS countries were produced is not readily available in all cases. Having accurate methodological descriptions accompanying the key labour market indicators is crucial, especially for cross-country studies, since the comparability of the statistics depends on the concepts, definitions and methods used.

In general, the BRICS adhere to international statistical standards and tend to apply internationally recommended concepts and definitions of the main labour market indicators, especially when it comes to indicators typically derived from labour force surveys. It is worth noting that all BRICS countries have actively participated in the last two International Conferences of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), held in 2013 and 2018, thus being heavily involved in the standard-setting process for labour statistics³. However, not all BRICS countries follow international standards and practices on all aspects of labour statistics, leaving room for improvements in this regard.

³ Two delegates from Brazil, six delegates from China, four delegates from India, six delegates from the Russian Federation and two delegates from South Africa attended the 19th ICLS (2013). Five delegates from Brazil, four delegates from China, two delegates from India, six delegates from the Russian Federation and six delegates from South Africa attended the 20th ICLS (2018).

The vast methodological information available on the labour force surveys of Brazil and South Africa and tabulations from their publicly available survey microdata confirm that they follow international standards. India has made some efforts to adhere to international standards, particularly in the design of the new Periodic Labour Force Survey. Nonetheless, the questionnaire used for data collection through the Periodic Labour Force Survey still uses a single direct question to identify persons in employment and in unemployment, yielding a measure of these concepts (and all the related ones, such as informal employment) not compatible with international standards. The information available on the Russian Federation's labour force survey also suggests that it follows international best practices. Information on the methodology of the Chinese labour force survey is more limited, as anonymized survey microdata are not yet available to the ILO. Therefore the available information is insufficient to assess the extent to which the survey adheres to international standards.

Regarding in particular the age coverage of labour statistics, BRICS countries tend to deviate from the international common practice of defining the working-age population as all persons aged 15 and above. The working-age population is defined as all persons aged 14 and above in Brazil's Continuous National Household Sample Survey, as all persons aged 15 to 72 in the Russian Federation's Labour Force Survey, and as all persons aged 15 to 64 in South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey. In China, labour statistics usually refer to a working-age population of 16 and above. However, deviations from the international common practice in age coverage should not necessarily hinder comparability: countries may prefer to use different age coverage for national purposes, but still produce labour indicators referring to persons aged 15 and above for international reporting. In this regard, giving access to anonymised labour force survey microdata files presents a clear advantage, since international organizations, researchers and analysts would be able to derive labour indicators themselves, applying common definitions.

Labour statistics should be representative of the country as a whole. Nationwide data collections allow for the production of reliable statistical information reflecting the situation of everyone in the country. Surveys or other data collection exercises covering only some regions of the country (such as only urban areas, or only the main cities) are valuable sources of data, but they cannot be taken as nationally representative. Indeed, analysing labour statistics covering only some regions as if they were portraying the whole country may lead to inaccurate conclusions about the national labour market. In particular, labour markets have very different characteristics in rural and urban areas, so labour statistics covering only urban areas cannot be expected to inform on the situation of rural areas by extrapolation. The insufficient geographical coverage of labour statistics, and particularly of labour force survey statistics, is a concern for China and India, although India has tried to mitigate this insufficiency with the design of the new Periodic Labour Force Survey.

In terms of keeping up to date with the newest international standards, Brazil, the Russian Federation, and South Africa have made efforts to revise their labour force surveys to be in line with the *Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization* adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. However, all BRICS countries have yet to collect data on forms of work other than employment via their labour force surveys, which would require further revision. An additional challenge will be for BRICS countries to implement the *Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships* adopted by the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. This involves incorporating new questions in their surveys to capture additional types of employment and different forms of work, particularly unpaid work, which were not captured before. Besides, some breaks in time series will require technical explanations to the wider public.

The production of reliable statistics from administrative records represents another challenge for BRICS countries. In fact, administrative records are widely underutilized in BRICS countries as sources of statistics, leaving them with sparse data on topics such as occupational injuries, labour inspection, strikes and lockouts, unionization, and collective bargaining. When data is indeed

produced from administrative records, it is often not accompanied by the necessary methodological information that would allow the user to assess data quality and to understand the concepts and definitions used. The unification or consolidation of records kept by various agencies within the country would contribute to increasing reliability, accuracy, coverage and transparency of the statistics, and it would greatly benefit the labour market information and analysis system.

Moreover, given the BRICS' commitment to achieve the SDGs, and the importance in this regard of monitoring progress mainly through SDG indicators, there is a need to strengthen coordination of statistical activities across agencies, and to enhance data autonomy. In the context of the SDGs, national statistical offices have a key role to play, but they must have the right tools and resources to do so, including autonomy in their activities.

Concluding remarks

Overall, BRICS countries have a high level of statistical development, with solid and efficient labour market information and analysis systems. The coordinating role of the BRICS' national statistical offices strengthens the LMIASs, and ensures data quality, accuracy, and reliability.

The variety of sources of labour statistics available in BRICS countries make it possible to produce data on a wide range of labour-related topics. However, more efforts are needed to ensure that all BRICS countries adhere to international standards and practices in the production and dissemination of labour statistics and progressively promote data openness and transparency.

The statistical systems of most BRICS countries are more performant in designing and conducting surveys than in taking advantage of administrative records. Further developing the capacity to derive and use statistics from administrative records could allow BRICS countries to have more and better data on topics such as occupational safety and health and social dialogue.

The strong capacity of the BRICS in the field of labour statistics results in a rather high data coverage for SDG labour market indicators. Indeed, SDG data reporting is very satisfactory for the BRICS except for China, which has data gaps for numerous indicators.

Recent efforts by the BRICS to foster data accessibility and transparency, for instance by sharing survey anonymised microdata files, are noteworthy and encouraging. Enhancing data dissemination by regularly publishing comprehensive labour statistics and providing microdata access throughout all BRICS countries remains an outstanding challenge. Making detailed labour statistics and the relevant methodological documentation widely available should be a priority for the BRICS, with a view to fostering cooperation in labour-related matters, informing policy formulation and decision-making, and supporting the work of labour market researchers and analysts.

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