



Technical Seminar: Strengthening Labour Market Information to Monitor Progress on Decent Work in Africa

GUIDANCE ON MAJOR SOURCES OF LABOUR STATISTICS: Administrative Records

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What are administrative data?

Administrative data are produced as a by-product of the administrative functions of a government agency.

In undertaking these functions, often under the authority of a set of laws or regulations, an organization will generally register or record a great deal of information (relating to events or transactions or to people or organizations) which is needed for the administrative process.

Purpose of administrative system

- An administrative system does not exist to produce statistics.
- ☐ It is meant to implement the administrative functions of the agency, often in response to legislative requirements or specifications.
- ☐ However, an administrative system can provide a rich data which should be fully exploited to:
 - (1) contribute to the overall system of labor statistics;
 - (2) provide information about the performance and efficiency of the administrative system; and
 - (3) assess and monitor the economic and manpower situation for use in preparing, evaluating and monitoring action plans, structures and outcomes.

Statistics compiled from administrative records

In general terms, statistics compiled from administrative records may be distinguished from data collected *directly* as part of a statistical census or survey.

In direct statistical collections, data are collected for statistical purposes and in the course of an administrative function.

This difference is important in many ways, particularly in respect of costs and quality.

Statistics compiled from administrative records

Costs. Initial data collection costs for the statistics producing agency will be less when using administrative records than when collecting similar data through a special survey.

Administrative data will be gathered even if they are not used for statistical outputs.

Importantly: Costs other than for data collection may be higher.

Quality. Data compiled from administrative records may not conform to normal statistical standards because they are by-products of an administrative process or a legislative requirement which has its own specified standards.

An overall evaluation of the relative quality of the resulting statistics will depend on users' priorities.

Administrative statistical data as part of an integrated system of labour statistics

A comprehensive system of labour statistics would have the following components:

-  A program of regular and ad hoc household-based and establishment-based surveys and censuses.
-  A program to ensure that administrative registrations are used effectively to produce statistics as a by-product of the administrative process.
-  Legislation and mechanisms for coordinating the statistical programme.
-  National standards for defining concepts, units of measurement and reporting units, for classifying collected data; and
-  Regularly maintained and comprehensive population frames for use in household and establishment surveys.

Statistics compiled from administrative records: Advantages

-  Lower cost of data collection: data collected from the same group of units, fewer reporting units, easier to contact, obligation to provide reports to head office – minimized non-response.
-  Census (total count): statistics are based on the full set of reporting units covered by the adm. system, not on a sample of such units.

An adm. system may be used to furnish statistics at finer levels of geographical detail than those supplied by sample surveys.

-  Less reporting burden on business and household communities.

Statistics compiled from administrative records: Disadvantages

-  Dependence on existing legislation: A labour law may be enacted for many reasons. E.g., to set up an institution, provide it with administrative or legal authority and enforce penalties in order to implement government policy. Hence, the concepts, definitions, classifications and reference periods used in the legislation will be appropriate for the particular administrative procedure. At the same time, the adm. System may not include other information.
-  Stability of operational procedures: Legislation and related administrative procedures may change according to policy and administrative needs, as well as workload and availability of staff.

Statistics compiled from administrative records: Disadvantages

- ❏ Other constraints of legislation: Legislation may also specify the content and structure of an administrative reporting form. New definitions, new data items or even improved form design may not be possible without revised legislation.
- ❏ Difference between administrative rules and actual practice: In some administrative systems, clerks may not in practice operate the system according to written rules due to workload, laziness or ignorance. As a result, a system which might appear to be well designed on paper may be less than perfect in implementation and vice versa.

Statistics compiled from administrative records: Disadvantages

-  False reporting.
-  Lack of reliability: administrative systems are maintained in order to fulfill administrative functions, not to provide statistics. As a result, information in an administrative record will often be checked only if it is an essential component of the administrative process.

Data may be incorrect and not maintained for other reasons. Thus in the unemployment insurance system of a given country some details are recorded one only (e.g. when a person first joins the insurance scheme) and not maintained through time. These data will therefore become out of date.
-  Affect of historical development of the system: The way the system has developed will have an impact, e.g., on its scope of reporting and degree of compliance.

Statistics compiled from administrative records: Disadvantages



Inadequate scope and coverage:

- Not all the unemployed may be registered as jobseekers with an employment exchange as they may feel that there is little chance to find a job.
- Not all registered jobseekers will be unemployed.
- Not all industrial accidents may require reporting under the legislation.
- Not all alien workers may need to hold permits.
- Clandestine foreign workers, etc.



Constraints associated with time schedules built into the system: Each adm. system difference according to the time required for thorough-put records (continuous reporting vs. reporting according to a deadline – income tax).

Statistics compiled from administrative records: Disadvantages

-  Lack of timelines: the statistical outputs of the administrative system may not always be as timely as users prefer.
-  Non-comparability with other sources.
-  Variations in the same series of statistics over time and between locations: this may be due to variations and differences in procedures, workload, pressures from local authorities, etc.
-  Data confidentiality.

Some of these disadvantages may be overcome or minimized with appropriate action during processing or tabulation (edit checks, choice of classifications in table design). However problems of scope and coverage are more difficult to reconcile.

User should be kept informed of these matters so that they fully understand possible limitations in data and interpret them accordingly.

Major sources of labour market statistics

Labour demand: establishment-level data

- Establishment censuses and surveys:
 - employment and wage sample surveys
 - occupational wage and vacancy sample surveys

Labour supply: household-level data

- Population censuses and household surveys:
 - labour force sample surveys
 - income and expenditure sample surveys

«Intervening mechanisms»: employment and labour market «services»

- Administrative records:
 - employment office registers
 - unemployment insurance records
 - tax records
 - social security files
 - labour inspection records