
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Final Report¹

**Regional Preparatory Meeting of Labour Statisticians in
support of the 19th ICLS**

Americas

26-28 March 2012 –Santiago, Chile

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Contents

I.	Introduction	1
	Background and objectives	1
	Opening session	2
	Structure of the meeting.....	3
II.	Summary of outcomes	4
	Conceptual framework for labour force and work statistics	4
	Measurement frameworks	4
	Employment.....	5
	Unemployment	5
	Persons not in the labour force	6
	Age thresholds	7
	Reference populations	7
	Other forms of work	7
	Measures to supplement the unemployment rate	8
	Data collection programmes.....	9
	Communication and dissemination guidelines.....	9
	Annex I: List of Participants.....	10
	Annex II: Meeting Agenda.....	12

I. Introduction

Background and objectives

1. The Regional Preparatory Meeting of Labour Statisticians in Support of the 19th ICLS was held from 26 to 28 March 2012 in Santiago, Chile. It was organized by the ILO Department of Statistics, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC), and with the support of the World Bank and the ILO/EC Project “Monitoring and Assessing Progress on Decent Work (MAP)”.
2. The meeting was one of several being organized by the ILO Department of Statistics in all major regions of the world to promote the participation of countries in the review and update of the international standards of statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment. Revised draft international standards for labour force and work statistics will be presented for discussion and adoption at the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2013.
3. Specifically, the main objectives of the meeting were to: (a) inform participants about the review process in preparation for the 19th ICLS; (b) present the current proposals to update the international standards of statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment; and (c) promote discussion and gather feedback to further refine the proposed revisions.
4. The proposals presented during the meeting were developed by the ILO Department of Statistics, with the advice of the *Working Group for the Advancement of Employment and Unemployment Statistics*.
5. The meeting was attended by 22 officials from National Statistical Offices, the Central Bank and Ministry of Labour, representing 16 member States from the Americas. In addition, 13 observers from the National Statistical Office and relevant Line Ministries of Chile participated in the meeting (see Annex I).

Opening session

6. Mr. David Glejberman, Regional Advisor, ILO-Santiago, welcomed participants to the meeting and thanked the UN ECLAC for their support in the organization and conduct of the meeting. He reminded participants that the main objective of the meeting was to discuss the proposals for the review and update of international standards of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment, which had been adopted by the 13th ICLS in 1982. He underscored that countries in the Americas region had a wealth of experience with the implementation of the standards as, during the last 30 years, most had developed and established regular systems of data collection with national household surveys carried out on a continuous or periodic basis. He exhorted participants to share their views and experiences during the deliberations.
7. Mr. Luis Beccaria, Director, Statistics Division, ECLAC, reiterated the relevance of the meeting not only for countries but also for those carrying out the review and update of the standards. It was an excellent opportunity for the exchange of ideas and experiences, to consolidate views and to develop a regional position in preparation for the 19th ICLS. He reminded participants that the meeting would not be the only opportunity to engage in discussions as a Working Group had been created under the auspices of the Conference of American Statisticians (CEA), chaired by Chile, where further work on the topic would be carried out.
8. Mr. Francisco Javier Labbé Opazo, National Director, INE, Chile, recalled the important mandate that national statistical offices had to generate accurate and timely statistics about labour markets to inform the design of social and economic policies. He stressed that the rapid economic development that countries in the region had experienced in the last decades had brought about important changes in national labour markets and that these changes needed to be adequately reflected in the official statistics. To this end, the INE of Chile was committed to support the development of an official regional perspective so that the particular characteristics of labour markets in countries of the Americas were taken into consideration in the global discussions regarding the update of the international standards of labour force and work statistics. He exhorted participants to contribute to the deliberations and wished them success in the work ahead.

9. Mr, Tomas Flores, Undersecretary, Ministry of Economics, Chile, emphasized the centrality of high quality statistics to inform the design of policies. Effective policies to combat poverty, support labour markets, and promote entrepreneurship and innovation required a sound statistical base. To meet such needs, the National Statistical Office had recently carried out a comprehensive review of the national employment survey and was in the process of gaining autonomy from the Government.

Structure of the meeting

10. As detailed in the Agenda, the meeting comprised three main parts (see Annex II):

- a. **Part I** provided an overview of the 19th ICLS preparatory process, the scope of the review and the current status of labour force statistics in the countries of the Americas region.
- b. **Part II** comprised ten sessions covering, for the topics below, the issues in the current standards identified for review and update, current national practices in the implementation of the standards, and the draft proposals to update the standards:
 - i. Objectives and scope of labour force statistics
 - ii. Conceptual framework for labour force and work statistics
 - iii. Labour force measurement framework
 - iv. Employment
 - v. Unemployment
 - vi. Persons not in the labour force
 - vii. Other forms of work
 - viii. Measures to supplement the unemployment rate
 - ix. Data collection programmes
 - x. Communication and dissemination guidelines
- c. **Part III** included a session that summarized the main outcomes of the meeting and a Round Table on "The future of work and labour force statistics" where partner institutions reflected on the main implications of the ICLS revision process for activities at the national and regional levels.

11. Prior to the meeting, selected participants were invited to act as discussants for each topic. The main role of discussants was to reflect on the relevance, feasibility and applicability to national realities of the proposals for update presented by the ILO, in order to promote subsequent discussion in plenary sessions.

II. Summary of outcomes

12. The main outcomes arrived at during the deliberations are summarized in the paragraphs that follow. The summary is broadly organized by substantive topic.

Conceptual framework for labour force and work statistics

13. Participants expressed broad support for the conceptual framework for work statistics presented by the ILO. They recognized the need for a flexible framework to better meet the needs for employment and work statistics and found useful the building block approach, embedded in the proposed framework, to distinguish between employment and other forms of work, based on the main purpose of the activity.
14. At the same time, there was a need to further examine the treatment of persons engaged in unpaid trainee work in the proposed framework. Some participants expressed concern regarding the continued coherence between labour force statistics and the System of National Accounts. They requested the ILO to make more explicit how the proposed framework enabled continued integration between labour force statistics and National Accounts. The meeting also noted the need to clarify the scope of the revised resolution with respect to the coverage of operational guidelines for the measurement of forms of work other than employment.

Measurement frameworks

15. Participants agreed with the proposals to retain the labour force framework as the main measurement approach to produce labour force statistics, including its activity principle, priority rule and one-hour criterion; to use a reference period of measurement of 7 days or one week; and to retain the term "labour force" and remove the terms "economically active population", "currently active population" and "usually active population."
16. Some attendees indicated that a measurement framework to determine the labour force status of persons in a long reference period could provide useful information for social analysis. They recommended to keep in the revised standards the measurement of usual activity over a long

reference period as an optional topic to be collected as part of the non-current statistics programme, as per country priorities.

Employment

17. Participants generally agreed with the proposed revised scope for employment to refer to work whose main purpose is to generate income. Some participants requested further consideration regarding the term to be used to refer to the narrower concept of employment. Retaining the term "employment" could lead to confusion among users. Alternative terms proposed included "market employment" or "labour market employment."
18. A few participants expressed concern regarding the operational implementation of the "for market" criterion to distinguish between production of goods mainly for own final use and that mainly for sale. Operational guidelines to make such distinction would need to be included in the revised draft standards. The guidelines would also require testing to assess their reliability in measurement across settings and periods of the year, for example, during the high and low seasons for agriculture.
19. Regarding the treatment of absences from employment, participants agreed that some reasons could be used as clear evidence of formal job attachment among employed persons, absent from work. They also concurred that payment and assurance of return were not adequate tests, particularly in rural areas and among persons with informal jobs in the informal sector or outside of the informal sector. Several participants noted, however, that the total duration of the absence was also an important criterion to take into account.

Unemployment

20. There was general support for the proposals to update the operational guidelines for the measurement of unemployment. In particular, participants agreed with the re-ordering of the criteria to identify the unemployed, starting with "without employment", following with "seeking employment" and ending with "available for employment" as well as with the removal of the option to partially relax the seeking work criterion in certain contexts. Some participants further requested to include in the revised standards a paragraph indicating that the three criteria were to be met simultaneously.

21. Regarding the seeking work criterion, there was a general support for the proposal to define the reference period for the measurement of active job search as "four weeks or one month"; to update the list of active job search methods by including reference to new methods relying on ITC, as well as the use of private intermediaries to seek employment. Some participants also requested including in the revised standards a statement indicating that active search for work abroad is to be included within the scope of unemployment.
22. Participants also welcomed the proposals to clarify the purpose of the "available for employment" criterion in terms of time availability to start employment. Some participants questioned the proposal to extend the reference period for the measurement of the availability for employment criterion to include the "reference 7days/week or the following 15 days/two weeks". Such an extension would limit the relevance of the unemployment rate as a measure of current demand for employment. They requested that further work be carried out to more clearly establish the rationale for such an extension.
23. There was general agreement to include among the unemployed, persons with other forms of work who were without employment to generate income, seeking employment and available for employment, as well as to remove the option to treat as unemployed persons on lay-off without a formal job attachment who had not sought employment but were nonetheless available for employment. It was agreed that such group would be identified as part of a classification of persons not in the labour force by degree of labour market attachment. Participants also agreed to retain the recommendation to treat future starters as unemployed if they were available for employment. A few countries further suggested including a duration limit, such as one month, to treat future starters as unemployed.

Persons not in the labour force

24. Participants agreed with the proposed revisions to the definition of "persons not in the labour force" and with the removal of the term "economically inactive population" from the revised standards. They also welcomed the proposed classifications of persons not in the labour force by degree of labour market attachment and by main activity status. Some participants requested further elaboration regarding the reasons included under social barriers in the case of persons seeking employment but not available. It was also suggested to include "studying" as a reason in the case of persons who do not want employment. Finally, operational guidelines may be

needed regarding the measurement of desire to work among those who are not seeking and not available for employment.

Age thresholds

25. Participants stressed the importance of taking into account the main objectives of labour force statistics in setting age thresholds. To this end, there was a need to consider national employment legislations as well as ratifications of the ILO conventions on minimum age for employment and child labour in setting the minimum age for labour force statistics. Furthermore, they agreed that upper age limits should not be recommended for the production of labour force statistics, as many persons continued to engage in employment at older ages.
26. Participants also recognized the importance of measuring child labour where relevant, but stressed the importance of using separate, specialized data collection methodologies for this purpose. Separate measurement was important to ensure adequate collection of the information.

Reference populations

27. The meeting welcomed the proposed recommendations on the relevant reference population(s) for labour force statistics to meet different objectives. Some participants also stressed the importance of including reference to international labour migration flows even when data collection methodologies to capture such groups of persons may not be well developed at present. It was important that the revised standards took into account possible future developments in labour markets, such as the growing international mobility of workers. Finally, while acknowledging the relevance of statistics on the armed forces, a few participants questioned the possibility of producing quality employment statistics for this group of workers.

Other forms of work

28. Participants felt that there was a need to provide further details regarding the operational guidelines to be included in the revised standards with respect to the measurement of other forms of work. In particular, for the measurement of own production work, participants requested clarification regarding the proposed reference period for measurement, the application of a one hour criterion, and the activity scope of own production work. Some participants further asked the ILO to develop a list of activities to be included within the scope of own production work as well as sample questions for inclusion in household surveys.

29. For the measurement of volunteer work, some participants questioned whether sufficient consultation with countries had been carried out to arrive at an agreed operational definition. Questions were also raised about the reference period of measurement and the recommended frequency of data collection.
30. Different views were expressed regarding the proposed treatment of persons engaged in unpaid trainee work. In some countries, persons entering professions such as medicine or teaching were required to perform unpaid trainee work for several years in order to receive a licence to practice their profession. These persons often worked side by side with paid professionals, performing similar tasks. Some participants expressed concern regarding the proposed differential treatment of such persons based on whether they were receiving payment or not, and requested the ILO to carry out further work on this topic.

Measures to supplement the unemployment rate

31. The meeting generally recognized the need to develop a set of indicators of unmet demand for employment to be used, at par with the unemployment rate, as supplementary measures to more broadly reflect problems of insufficient quantity of employment. There was general agreement with the suggested focus on two main measures that captured (a) persons in time-related underemployment and (b) persons not in the labour force with some degree of labour market attachment (“marginally attached”). Participants also found useful the possible breakdown of the two measures by its main components to inform policy analysis.
32. Some participants questioned the inclusion in the measure of “marginal attachment” of persons not in the labour force who are seeking employment but are not available. Such group did not reflect “current” unmet demand for employment as they were not available in the reference period. A participant also noted that the definition of discouraged job seekers needed to emphasize the existence of a prior link with the labour market by including reference to an active search in the recent past. Other participants also suggested the inclusion in the measures of “other employed persons, seeking work” as they reflected unmet demand for employment, although not due to insufficient quantity of employment.
33. More generally, some participants questioned the appropriateness of the proposed term “unmet demand for employment” to refer to problems with insufficient quantity of employment. There was also a concern about the use of the term “global measure of unmet

demand for employment” to refer to an aggregate measure comprising the sum of persons in time-related underemployment, the unemployed, and the marginally attached. It was noted that a “global” measure of unmet demand for employment would also need to include a measure of “labour emigration.” Some participants also expressed concern regarding the use of denominators which did not contain the numerator.

Data collection programmes

34. Participants generally agreed with the maintenance of the dual data collection programme to serve short- and long- term needs for labour force statistics. There was general support for the inclusion of guidelines recommending that countries set the frequency of measurement of other forms of work according to their relevance in the national context.
35. Countries emphasized the relevance of dynamic measures of the labour market and their use to compute gross flows, transition probabilities, rates of transition and stability, etcetera. The revised standards should include general guidelines to promote their development.

Communication and dissemination guidelines

36. The meeting acknowledged the importance of developing a communication strategy to raise awareness and inform the public about the upcoming revisions and their possible impact on time-series. Countries emphasized the importance of releasing survey results together with methodological documentation, conducting workshops for various users including the media, making available early on a calendar of data release dates, and other such strategies.

Annex I: List of Participants

19th ICLS Regional Consultation Meeting
Santiago, Chile, 26-28 March 2012

Country	Name	Institution
ARGENTINA	Claudio COMARI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC)
BRAZIL	Elizabeth Belo HYPOLITO	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE)
CHILE	David NICULCAR	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (INE)</i>
	Marcela Luz CABEZAS	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (INE)</i>
COLOMBIA	Alvaro SUAREZ RIVERA	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE)
COSTA RICA	Pilar RAMOS	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	Katerin RAMIREZ	Oficina Nacional de Estadística
	Dilia Margarita CRUZ DE SANCHEZ	Banco Central de la República Dominicana
	Olga Luz DIAZ	Banco Central de la República Dominicana
ECUADOR	Vladimir TIPAN	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC)
JAMAICA	Douglas FORBES	Statistical Institute of Jamaica
MEXICO	Rodrigo NEGRETE PRIETO	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)
	Juan TREJO MAGOS	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)
PARAGUAY	Norma MEDINA	Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos
	Martha Beatriz BENITEZ GUILLEN	Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos
PERU	Rofilia RAMIREZ	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI)
	Susana FLORIAN	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI)
SAINT LUCIA	Edwin ST. CATHERIN	Central Statistics Office of Saint Lucia
EL SALVADOR	Josué Samuel HERNANDEZ	Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (DIGESTYC)
UNITED STATES	Anne POLIVKA	Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
URUGUAY	Adriana VERNENGO	Instituto Nacional de Estadística
VENEZUELA	José Rafael LÓPEZ GARNIER	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (INE)

OBSERVERS

<i>Jorge ESPINOZA</i>	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, Chile</i>
<i>Jose Luis ARANGUIZ</i>	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, Chile</i>
<i>Domingo CLAPS</i>	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, Chile</i>
<i>Jaime ESPINA</i>	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, Chile</i>
<i>Paulina HUAQUIMIL</i>	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, Chile</i>
<i>Virginia ORTEGA SELLERA</i>	<i>Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social, Chile</i>
<i>Ricardo RUIZ DE VIÑASPRE</i>	<i>Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social, Chile</i>
<i>Carolina CASAS-CORDERO</i>	<i>Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Chile</i>
<i>Alvaro KRAUSE</i>	<i>Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Chile</i>
<i>Rodrigo ALARCÓN</i>	<i>Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Chile</i>
<i>Melissa VICUÑA PIÑA</i>	<i>Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo, Chile</i>
<i>Giancarlo TRANCHINO MARTÍNEZ</i>	<i>Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo, Chile</i>

ORGANIZERS

Amparo BALLIVIAN	World Bank
Luis BECCARIA	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Juan Carlos FERES	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Xavier MANCERO	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
International Labour Office	
Elisa BENES	ILO Department of Statistics –Geneva, Switzerland
Adriana MATA-GREENWOOD	ILO Department of Statistics –Geneva, Switzerland
David GLEJBERMAN	ILO Department of Statistics –Santiago, Chile
Bolívar PINO	ILO SIALC –Panamá, Panamá

Annex II: Meeting Agenda

Day 1	
9:00 – 9:40 am	Opening <i>-David Glejberman, Regional Advisor, ILO –Santiago</i> <i>-Luis Beccaria, Director, Statistics Division, ECLAC</i> <i>-Francisco Javier Labbé Opazo, National Director, INE –Chile</i> <i>-Tomás Flores, Undersecretary, Ministry of Economics, Chile</i>
9:40 – 9:50 am	CONTEXTUAL SESSION Objectives of the meeting and expectations from participants 19th ICLS process and scope of review <i>-Elisa Benes, ILO –Geneva</i>
9:50–10:25 am	Setting the stage: Labour Force Statistics Today in the Americas <i>-Juan Carlos Feres, ECLAC</i> <i>-Bolívar Pino, ILO –Panamá</i>
10:25-10:45 am	Coffee break
10:45-11:15 am	SESSION 1 Objectives and scope of labour force statistics Conceptual framework for labour force and work statistics Persons, jobs and activities <i>-Elisa Benes, ILO –Geneva</i>
11:15-11:30 am	Invited discussant: <i>Elizabeth Belo Hypolito, IBGE –Brazil</i>
11:30-12:00 pm	Plenary Discussion
12:00-1:30 pm	Lunch break
1:30 – 2:00 pm	SESSION 2 Labour force measurement framework Current and usual measurement <i>-David Glejberman, ILO –Santiago</i>
2:00 – 2:15 pm	Invited discussant: <i>Pilar Ramos, INEC –Costa Rica</i>
2:15 – 2:45 pm	Plenary Discussion
2:45 – 3:15 pm	Coffee break
3:15 – 3:45 pm	SESSION 3 Employment - Operational definition and reference period - Absences from work - Treatment of specific groups <i>-Adriana Mata Greenwood, ILO –Geneva</i>
3:45 – 4:00 pm	Invited discussant: <i>Rodrigo Negrete Prieto, INEGI –México</i>
4:00 – 5:00 pm	Plenary Discussion

Day 2	
9:00 – 9:30 am	SESSION 4 Unemployment - Operational definition and reference periods - Active job search and Availability for work - Treatment of specific groups <i>-David Glejberman, ILO –Santiago</i>
9:30 – 9:45 pm	Invited discussant: <i>Claudio Comari, INDEC –Argentina</i>
9:45 – 10:15 pm	Plenary Discussion
10:15 – 10:45 am	Coffee break
10:45-11:15 am	SESSION 5 Persons not in the labour force - Operational definition and classifications - Treatment of specific groups <i>-Elisa Benes, ILO –Geneva</i>
11:15-11:30 am	Invited discussant: <i>David Niculcar, INE –Chile</i>
11:30-12:00 pm	Plenary Discussion
12:00-1:30 pm	Lunch break
1:30 – 1:50 pm	SESSION 6 Labour force measurement framework (continued) - Age thresholds - Links between child labour statistics and labour force statistics <i>-Adriana Mata Greenwood, ILO –Geneva</i>
1:50 – 2:00 pm	Invited discussant: <i>Rofilia Ramirez, INEI –Perú</i>
2:00 – 2:20 pm	Plenary Discussion
2:20 – 2:40 pm	Reference populations <i>-Elisa Benes, ILO –Geneva</i>
2:40 – 2:50 pm	Invited discussant: <i>Katerin Ramirez, ONE –República Dominicana</i>
2:50 – 3:15 pm	Plenary Discussion
3:15 – 3:45 pm	Coffee break
3:45 – 4:15 pm	SESSION 7 Other forms of work: Own production work and Volunteer work - Definitions and measurement - Treatment in the Labour Force framework <i>-Adriana Mata Greenwood, ILO –Geneva</i>
4:15 – 4:30 pm	Invited discussant: <i>José Rafael López Garnier, INE –Venezuela</i>
4:30 – 5:00 pm	Plenary Discussion

Day 3	
9:00–9:30 am	SESSION 8 Measures to supplement the unemployment rate Objectives, scope and relation with other indicator sets Components: Underutilized persons among the employed <i>-Adriana Mata Greenwood, ILO –Geneva</i>
9:30–9:45 pm	Invited discussant: <i>Álvaro Suárez, DANE –Colombia</i>
9:45–10:15 am	Plenary Discussion
10:15–10:45 am	Coffee break
10:45–11:55 am	SESSION 9 Components: Underutilized persons among persons not in the labour force <i>-Elisa Benes, ILO –Geneva</i>
11:55–11:10 am	Invited discussant: <i>Anne Polivka, BLS –United States of America</i>
11:10–11:30 am	Plenary Discussion
11:30–11:40 am	Type of measure(s), units and denominators <i>-Elisa Benes, ILO –Geneva</i>
11:40–12:00 pm	Plenary Discussion
12:00 - 1: 30 pm	Lunch break
1:30 – 1:50 pm	SESSION 10 Data collection programmes - Current labour force and work statistics programme - Non-current labour force and work statistics programme - Dynamic elements in the labour force framework <i>-David Glejberman, ILO –Santiago</i>
1:50 – 2:05 pm	Invited discussant: <i>Vladimir Tipan, INEC –Ecuador</i>
2:05 – 2:25 pm	Plenary Discussion
2:25 – 2:40 pm	Communication and dissemination guidelines <i>-David Glejberman, ILO –Santiago</i>
2:40 – 2:55 pm	Invited discussant: <i>Norma Medina, DGEEC –Paraguay</i>
2:55 – 3:15 pm	Plenary Discussion
3:15 – 3:45 pm	Coffee break
3:45 – 4:15 pm	Round table: The Future of Labour Force and Work Statistics <i>-Luis Beccaria, ECLAC</i> <i>-David Glejberman, ILO –Santiago</i>
4:15 – 4:30 pm	Plenary Discussion
4:30 – 4:45 pm	Key outcomes and way forward <i>-Elisa Benes, ILO –Geneva</i>
4:45 – 5:00 pm	Closing

