

## In brief

## Expert Group meeting on measuring the economically active population in censuses

In November 2007, ONS participated in a five-day Expert Group meeting at the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) headquarters in New York. Participants included experts from the UNSD, International Labour Organisation, a range of developed and developing countries, and an international consultant on labour statistics; Mr Robert J 'Bob' Pember. The objective was to review and update the 'Handbook on Measuring the Economically Active Population in Censuses'. The Handbook is a practical guide to organising and implementing the Census of Population, and is intended for use in the 2010/2011 round of population censuses.

Issues discussed by the Group included both conceptual and operational definitions of the economically active population, the practicalities of measuring these and related concepts, and a range of issues pertinent to both developed and developing countries. The Handbook covers definitions and concepts, methodology, data collection, processing, tabulation, analysis, validation, dissemination and the uses of census data.

The Handbook focuses on internationally agreed definitions and classifications. It emphasises the importance of consistency with definitions used in labour force surveys, in addition to the importance of benefiting from the experience gained in labour force surveys in collecting and analysing the characteristics of interest.

The meeting was conducted in a spirit of co-operation, and the outcome is an updated Handbook, which is a detailed and practical guide to all countries implementing a population census. The Handbook is designed to be a user-friendly self-contained document, and users can utilise the Handbook as a whole, or refer to individual chapters as required. Further work recommended by the Group included a summarised version of the Handbook to be produced for training purposes. The Handbook is available from the UNSD website at the address given below.

### More information

✉ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/default.htm>

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## ONS reduces business burdens

Many of the statistical outputs reported in *Economic & Labour Market Review* depend on the wide range of business surveys that ONS carries out each year. These surveys impose a burden on those businesses included in survey samples. ONS has a long-standing commitment to minimise this burden. In 2005 this commitment was given fresh impetus through the government-wide Better Regulation initiative. Nineteen government departments and regulators – including ONS – signed up to targets to reduce the administrative cost to business of government regulation by up to 25 per cent by 2010.

The burden on business of ONS statistics was estimated to be just under £40 million in 2005 – only 0.3 per cent of the total burden of government regulation – but nevertheless a real irritant and cost to the businesses included in surveys. ONS signed up to a 2010 target to reduce those burdens over which there is some discretion – excluding those undertaken predominately to meet European Union regulations – by 25 per cent (£7.5 million). Detailed plans are included in the ONS Simplification Plan 2007 which was published on 11 December 2007; the address is given below.

In the first two years since the target was set, ONS has reduced the annual burden of its business surveys by £6 million and has plans to increase this total to £7.5 million by 2010. There are, however, pressures to increase burdens to meet new European Union demands or to improve the quality of regional and service sector statistics. Meeting these new demands, while keeping the cost to businesses low, will depend on ONS using some of the administrative data already held by government. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 will enable information-sharing agreements between the new Statistics Board and other public authorities, subject to Parliamentary approval.

### More information

[www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=14683](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=14683)

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## Move from monthly to quarterly Labour Market Regional First Releases

Following a review of the publication of the Labour Market Regional First Releases, it was decided to move the production of these First Releases from monthly to quarterly. The change is due to take place from February 2008. This month (January) sees the publication of the last Regional First Releases on a monthly basis, with the next Regional First Releases published a quarter later, in May 2008. Subsequent Regional First Releases will then follow in August and November with the yearly cycle again beginning in February of the following year.

This change will not affect the availability of the tables that accompany the Labour Market Regional First Releases. The Regional and Local Area Results in Tables 1 to 17 will continue to be released on the web as Excel tables each month. There will also be a covering note detailing the changes to 'this month's Release' and expected changes to 'next month's Release'. However, the accompanying text, graphs and maps will not be produced monthly, only being available as part of the quarterly First Releases. The new monthly Excel version of the tables will also be available in the months when the quarterly First Releases are produced.

Key users have been consulted regarding this change and it is not expected that it will have an adverse impact on their requirements for the data. The new arrangements will be reviewed after implementation to assess the effectiveness of the release process.

### More information

✉ [www.statistics.gov.uk/onlineproducts/lms\\_regional.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/onlineproducts/lms_regional.asp)

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## International comparisons of economic welfare

In December 2007, the World Bank released global results of the International Comparison Programme (ICP). The ICP is a global statistical initiative which, by calculating relative price levels (referred to as purchasing power parities) between countries and deriving the associated real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita figures, makes it possible to compare the relative economic welfare across countries.

Among the successes of this round of the ICP, the first since 1993, have been the broader coverage of the exercise, both in terms of expenditure covered and countries included, and the improvements in methodology and governance that have been introduced. In terms of coverage, 146 countries are included in the 2005 results, including a successful contribution from 48 African countries (over twice as many than participated in the previous round). The 2005 round of the ICP has also seen coverage of the results increase in terms of the components of a country's economy which are measured. In 1993, data collection was far more limited; a significant proportion of countries only collected data for a very small proportion of GDP, and more estimation took place. Data collection for the 2005 round included a much broader set of goods and services.

An analysis of the ICP results reveals an interesting story for many countries. China, for example, participated in the ICP survey programme for the first time ever and India took part for the first time since 1985. The previous, less reliable, methods led to estimates of their GDPs that were 40 per cent larger than the results of the new, improved methods. China, however still ranks as the world's second largest economy, with over 9 per cent of world production, and India follows as the fifth largest, with over 4 per cent of the world total. The UK is among the twelve economies (along with the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, China, India, Russia, Brazil and Mexico) that together account for more than two-thirds of the world's output.

A more detailed article on the ICP and

ONS involvement in the programme in Africa will follow next year.

**More information**

[www.worldbank.org/data/icp](http://www.worldbank.org/data/icp)

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