

Singapore Department of Statistics

Our History

Official statistics in Singapore date back to 1871 when the first census of population was taken. Since then, censuses had been taken regularly at ten-year intervals. The Census Ordinance of 1880 constituted the first statistical legislation for Singapore.

A legal framework for the collection, preparation and publication of official statistics was put in place in 1921 with the enactment of the Statistics Ordinance. The Statistics Ordinance provided for the establishment of a Statistical Bureau. The Bureau has developed and grown to become the Singapore Department of Statistics today.

The Singapore Department of Statistics is the national statistical office and responsible for official statistics on the Singapore economy and population. Before Singapore achieved self-government in 1959, the focus was on external trade, shipping and cargo statistics and basic demographic data. The statistical activities expanded rapidly in the 1960s to cover manufacturing, commerce and service statistics. Since 1973, a decentralised statistical system has been adopted. Official statistics are collected and compiled by the Singapore Department of Statistics as well as Research and Statistics Units (RSUs) in various government ministries and statutory boards. The RSUs specialise in statistics on key areas under the purview of their parent organisations.

Singapore's Statistical System

Singapore has adopted a decentralised statistical system since 1973. Statistics are collected and compiled by a number of statistical agencies as well as government departments and statutory boards. The structure of the decentralised system is as described in Box 1.

Box 1: The Singapore Statistical System

Singapore Department of Statistics	• National Statistical Office, and responsible for statistics on the Singapore economy and population; • National Statistical Co-ordinator
Gazetted Research and Statistics Units	• Responsible for statistics on specific subject matters under the purview of the parent ministry or statutory board; • Empowered to issue requisition for data under Statistics Act
Non-Gazetted Research and Statistics Units	• Responsible for statistics on specific subject matters under the purview of the parent ministry or statutory board; • Collect data under administrative regulations or other Acts

The Singapore Department of Statistics has the widest scope of responsibility in the statistical system, being responsible for official statistics on the Singapore economy and population. Gazetted Research and Statistics Units (RSUs) are established in a number of government ministries and statutory boards to conduct surveys and compile statistics on specific sectors or subject matters. For most other ministries and statutory boards, non-gazetted statistical units undertake statistical compilation mainly as a by-product of the administrative and operational functions of the parent organisations.

The decentralised statistical system has effectively met users' needs for comprehensive economic and social statistics in the last four decades. There is closer contact and greater

interaction between statistical personnel and data users in specific ministries and statutory boards, leading to more relevant statistics being collected and analysed. As administrative databases and records are increasingly being tapped for statistical purposes, an increasing range of statistics has been compiled on more timely and cost-effective basis. With the specialisation of statistical personnel in specific subject matters, the Singapore Department of Statistics and the RSUs are able to stay focused and provide statistics that are of good quality.