E.5.2. Population Census versus household based surveys

7.121. Population Census information on the economic characteristics of the population focuses on enumerating the economically active population so as to provide benchmark data for current studies of employment, unemployment and underemployment.

7.122. Census data provide information on the economic characteristics of the population from the highest to lowest geographical levels of aggregation and classified by sex, age, industry, occupation and educational attainment.

7.123. Furthermore, the data collected from the Population Census are used in conjunction with other statistical sources of data collection on the labour force and other economic characteristics.

7.124. At the same time, the number of questions used in a Population Census to investigate the various items has to be limited. Often, a single question is used per item (activity status, occupation, industry, status in employment, working time, income, sector of employment and place of work).

7.125. In contrast, the household-based sample surveys, by virtue of their smaller size, can allot more than one question to each item, which thereby allows more precise measurement of a wider variety of data for different kinds of analyses. Furthermore, the concepts and definitions of the LFS are based on the international recommendations of ILO, which can be used as a yardstick for international comparisons on this topic.

7.126. Other differences include:

- Scale of the operations involved (complete enumeration versus sampling)
- Methodology, practical conditions of implementation, timing and complexity of the data collected
- More flexible tailoring (by the LFS) to fit a variety of user needs and methods of data collection
- Surveys usually do not provide sufficient detail for small areas or subgroups of the population, owing to the limited size of the samples.