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Concepts and definitions used in the Quarterly labour force survey

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IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS



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1. Concepts and definitions used in the QLFS

Age refers to the number of completed years and refers to a person’s age at their last birthday.

An **assignment number** is the number which groups the PSUs for which a survey officer has responsibility. It comprises of the following:

- The first digit represents the province in which field-staff will be working.
- The next two digits identify the District Survey Coordinator.
- The last two digits identify the survey officer.

Assignment planning is a systematic approach to distributing the workload of QLFS field-staff. Its application through the use of the RTMS, allows management to track and monitor publicity and data collection as well as to provide rapid feedback to field-staff. A unique identifier – the assignment number - is pre-printed on all listing booklets, publicity forms and questionnaires that belong to the specific workload.

Blocking is the process used in urban formal and some tribal areas that ensures the entire PSU is listed. The procedure requires that roads and streets are used to create the boundaries of blocks. These blocks are then listed sequentially, ensuring that corner houses/structures are not erroneously omitted or duplicated.

Classification questions are those required to determine whether a person is employed, unemployed, or not economically active.

Commercial farms cover extensive land areas but are generally not as densely populated as urban areas. Farm boundaries are represented as “cadastre” on the map, and may be any physical line feature e.g. fence, river, road, railway line, etc. on the ground, where any of these line features become a farm’s boundary.

Commission: An amount that is usually paid to persons such as sales men/women who sell goods such as Tupperware, Avon products, or services such as insurance. The amount paid as a commission is usually linked to the quantity of the good or service sold.

Community based organisations (CBO) are based in and working in one or more local communities (neighbourhoods or districts); they are normally private, charitable (non-profit) institutions which are run by and for the local community.

Current job is the job in which a person is engaged during the survey reference week.

The **current job title** refers to a person’s job title in the place where he/she worked in the reference week.

Descriptor questions are those that provide insight into key labour market patterns, they are not used in determining whether a person is employed, unemployed or not economically active but instead would, for example, describe the employed by their industry, occupation, hours worked etc.,

Discouraged work-seeker is a person who was not employed during the reference period, wanted to work, was available to work/start a business but did not take active steps to find work during the last four weeks, provided that the main reason given for not seeking work was any of the following: no jobs available in the area; unable to find work requiring his/her skills; lost hope of finding any kind of work.

A **disability grant** is one type of social grant which is money paid regularly by the Government to people who are disabled.

A **dwelling unit** is a structure, part of a structure, or a group of structures that can be lived in by a household(s).

A **dwelling unit number** consists of five digits and is the number given during the listing of the Master Sample to any structure (private dwelling) that can be lived in by a household.

Economic activities are those that contribute to the production of goods and services in the country. There are two types of economic activities as follows: (1) Market production activities (work done for others and usually associated with pay or profit) and (2) Non-market production activities (work done for the benefit of the household e.g. subsistence farming)

Employee: A person who works for a public sector or private sector employer and receives remuneration in wages, salary, commission, tips, piece-rates or pay in kind.

Employer: (employing one or more employees): a person who operates his/her own economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more employees.

Employment to population ratio (labour absorption rate) is the proportion of the working age population that is employed.

Enumerator: The person (usually the survey officer) who asks the questions in the questionnaire of respondents.

Enumeration area (EA) the smallest geographical unit into which the country has been divided for census and survey purposes.

Helping without pay in a household business is working without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a person living in the same household.

The **head of the household** is usually the main decision maker, or the person who owns or rents the dwelling, or the person who is the main breadwinner.

The **acting household head** refers to another person in the household who has assumed the role of household head if the person regarded as the household head is away.

A **household** is a person or a group of persons who lived/stayed together sharing resources for on average four nights per week for the past four weeks.

Income tax is the amount of money that is paid to the South African Revenue Services based on income earned.

Informal employment: This indicator is intended to identify persons who are in precarious employment situations. It includes all persons in the informal sector. Employees in the formal sector and persons employed in private households who are NOT entitled to basic benefits such as pensions or medical aid and who do not have a written contract of employment.

Informal sector: (This definition is subject to review pending final consultations with the ILO). The informal sector has two components as follows:

- i) Employees working in establishments that employ less than five employees and do not deduct income tax from their salary/wage;
- ii) Employers, own account workers and persons helping unpaid in their household business who are not registered for either income tax or value-added tax.

Industry refers to the activities of the business/establishment/factory i.e. the goods and services produced by the business/establishment/factory.

The **labour force** comprises all persons who are employed plus all persons who are unemployed.

Labour absorption rate/employment to population ratio is the proportion of the working age population that is employed.

Labour force participation rate is the proportion of the working age population that is either employed or unemployed.

The **labour market** comprises all persons aged 15 – 64 years who are employed, unemployed and not economically active (inactive).

The **last week** is the previous calendar week i.e. from Monday to Sunday of the previous week (all seven days included).

The **last four weeks** is the previous calendar week (from Monday to Sunday last week) and three weeks before that.

A **link factor** is a numerical value that embodies all the differences that occur between the labour market indicators based on the LFS and the new values from the QLFS.

Lockout: A work stoppage in which an employer prevents some or all employees from working, even to the extent of closing the business. This usually happens when there is a dispute between the employer and employees.

Long-term unemployment: Persons in long-term unemployment are those individuals among the unemployed who were without work and trying to find a job or start a business for one year or more.

Main activity refers to the activity on which the most time is spent.

A **medical aid** scheme is one to which people subscribe (usually a monthly amount) to cover some or all of their medical expenses in the event that they become ill.

Market production activities: The production of goods and services for sale, such activities are associated with payment. See economic activities.

New-entrants into unemployment are identified as persons who were unemployed during the reference period that had never worked before and were currently looking for work.

Non-contact describes the situation where an enumerator fails to make contact with a household in the sampled dwelling unit, because no one was at home at the time of the visit or subsequent visits although there were clear signs that the dwelling unit was occupied.

The term **Non-Government Organisation** is applied to a wide range of institutions which are not established by or operated by government. NGOs are usually private, non-profit entities which are run by their members.

Non-market production activities: The production of goods and services for household consumption/use, such activities are not associated with payment. See economic activities.

Non-sampling errors include biases from inaccurate reporting, processing, and measurement, as well as errors from non-response and incomplete reporting. These types of errors cannot be measured readily.

Not economically active: Persons aged 15-64 years who are neither employed nor unemployed in the reference week.

Occupation refers to the type of activities/work undertaken by persons working in a business/establishment/factory etc.

An **old age pension** is money paid regularly by the Government to people over a certain age.

Own-account worker (not employing any employees): a person who operates his/her own economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees.

Paid domestic work includes activities such as cleaning, cooking, gardening, for a PRIVATE household for a cash payment and does NOT include normal housework undertaken by household members.

Pay As You Earn (PAYE): See Standard Income Tax for Employees (SITE).

Payment in kind is work undertaken not for cash but for meals, accommodation, transport etc, instead of cash.

A **Primary Sampling Unit (PSU)** is an enumeration area (EA) or a number of EAs of the same type when the original (first selected) EA was found to have between 25 and 99 households. These EAs are usually adjacent to each other but in a few instances they are not.

Note that an **EA** is the smallest geographical unit into which the country has been divided for census and survey purposes.

A **PSU number** is a unique eight-digit number given to the Primary Sampling Unit (PSU) for the purpose of record keeping.

Probing: This is the technique that is used to obtain a complete and relevant answer from the respondent. An answer is always probed if it is incomplete, or inconsistent with other answers.

A **PSU Listing Book** contains information found during listing about a sampled PSU. Forms MS1 to MS10 are contained in the listing book as follows:

MS1 -	Cover Page/Listing History
MS2 -	PSU Route Description
MS3 -	PSU Boundary Description
MS4 -	EA Boundary Description

MS5 -	PSU Listing Route Description
MS6 -	PSU Segment Description
MS7 -	PSU Sketch Map
MS8 -	Listing Recording Form
MS9 -	Special Dwelling Description
MS10 -	Query Form

A **proxy** is a respondent that answers questions on behalf of someone else in the household.

Re-entrants into unemployment: Re-entrants into unemployment are unemployed persons who worked before who were currently looking for work whose main activity before looking for work was any of the following: managing a home; going to school; other reason i.e. they were not working.

A **respondent** is a person who answers the questions contained in the QLFS questionnaire.

Rotation group: At any point in time the sample is divided into four sub-samples. Each of these is identified by the calendar quarter that it first entered the QLFS sample.

Rotation of PSUs: When the dwelling units within a sampled PSU have all been used, the PSU is removed from the Master Sample and is replaced with a new PSU from the sampling frame.

Rotation of dwelling units: The sample of dwelling units within the PSUs that belong to a particular rotation group will be replaced with a new sample during the corresponding quarter of the following year.

Salary: The amount an employer pays an employee for work done. It is a fixed income for services, which is usually paid on a weekly, biweekly or monthly basis, unlike a wage, which is generally paid on an hourly basis. The salary of an employee is usually specified in an employment contract.

A **scholar or student** is a person who attends an educational institution such as a school, university, technikon, college, or other type of educational institution such as a secretarial college, hairdressing school, mechanic school, hotel school etc.,. Note that persons who undertake correspondence courses or who participate in government programs that are conducted in schools are also to be included.

Seasonal dwellings are occupied only at certain times of the year but remain unoccupied during the rest of the year, such as, for example, holiday/vacation homes, harvest-time homes, etc.,

Segmentation is the listing procedure used in informal settlements to sub-divide the area into smaller parts that are defined by boundaries such as foot-paths, dirt/gravel roads etc., and other prominent land marks.

A **self-employed** person operates his/her own economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees.

Standard Income Tax for Employees (SITE): People whose net remuneration from employment exceeds R60, 000 per annum (i.e. income and benefits after tax) are required to pay both SITE and Pay As You Earn (PAYE). People whose net remuneration is R60 000 or below are required to pay SITE only.

Survey officer is the Stats SA employee who conducts publicity, listing and administers the QLFS questionnaire to household members in the sampled dwelling units.

Temporary absence: Refers to a period away from a job/work to which a person will definitely return. The person is therefore regarded as active in their usual job.

Temporary layoff: Being off work for at least one complete working day is considered temporary lay off. This occurs when an employer does not have enough work for employees, who may be told to stay at home temporarily.

Time-related underemployment: This indicator is measured as a sub-set within employment for those who work less than 35 hours in the reference week and wanted to work additional hours and were available to do so.

Tribal areas are areas outside the town/city boundaries and commercial farm areas that are governed by a tribal authority (chief, headman, induna, etc). The villages that make up a tribal area are usually located within the tribal authority boundaries, on rugged terrain along mountainsides, riverbanks, etc. Dwellings are predominantly thatched huts, brick, stone or mud houses, and some modern structures.

Unemployed persons are those (aged 15–64 years) who:

- a) Were not employed in the reference week.
- b) Actively looked for work or tried to start a business in the four weeks preceding the survey interview.
- c) Were available for work i.e would have been able to start work or a business in the reference week.

Unemployed job losers: Job losers are unemployed persons were working when they became unemployed and had lost their job; they were laid off; the business in which they had previously worked had been sold or had closed down.

Unemployed job leavers are those among the unemployed who were working when they became unemployed and had stopped working at their last job for any of the following reasons:

- Caring for own children/relatives;
- Pregnancy;
- Other family/community responsibilities;
- Going to school;
- Changed residence;
- Retired; or
- Other reasons

Unemployed re-entrants to the labour force: Re-entrants into unemployment are unemployed persons who worked before and who were currently looking for work, and whose main activity before looking for work was any of the following: managing a home; going to school; other reason.

Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) is a fund to which employers and employees contribute and from which employees who become unemployed or their beneficiaries, are entitled to benefits. The intention of the fund is to alleviate the harmful economic and social effects of unemployment.

Unemployment rate is the proportion of the labour force that is unemployed.

The questionnaire **unique number** consists of 19 digits which represent the following:

- a) PSU number is the first eight digits.
- b) Segment number is the next three digits
- c) Dwelling unit number is the following five digits.
- d) Household number is the next two digits

e) Questionnaire number is the last digit

Urban settlements (formal) occur on land that has been proclaimed as residential. A formal urban settlement is usually structured and organised. Plots or erven make up a formal and permanent arrangement. A local council or district council control development in these areas. Services such as water, sewage, electricity and refuse removal are provided, roads are formally planned and maintained by the council. This includes suburbs and townships. There are two types of formal urban areas (1) conventional suburbs (2) townships.

Urban informal settlements, or “squatter camps”, are usually located in urban areas. The dwelling units in informal settlements are usually made of materials such as zinc, mud, wood, plastic, etc. They are typically disorderly and congested and are sometimes referred to as squatter settlements. The Surveyor General’s office does not have the records of the area in question, thus, they have not been proclaimed as formal residential areas.

Wage the amount of money paid for work done. When expressed with respect to time (usually per hour), it is called the wage rate. It is often the main monetary item upon which the worker and the employer focus when negotiating an employment contract. It is usually the only payment for unskilled labour.

Work is any activity carried out by the respondent during the reference week for pay, profit or for household gain (where household gain includes persons helping unpaid in a household business).

Workers’ hostels are collective living quarters that are used for housing workers who are usually employed by the same company, e.g. mine hostels, or are rented by individuals for accommodation purposes. The quarters usually accommodate people of the same sex. In recent years, some hostels have been converted into family units, while others are still strictly for same sex individuals. In some cases there may be sprawling informal settlements around the hostels.

The **working-age population** comprises all persons aged 15 – 64 years.

2. List of acronyms

Acronyms	Explanation
DC	District Council
DPC	Data Processing Centre
DSC	District Survey Coordinator
DU	Dwelling Unit
EA	Enumeration Area
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
HO	Head Office
HOPS	Head Office Processing System
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISR	Inverse Sampling Rate
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
LFSR	Labour Force Re-engineering
MD	Magisterial District
MS	Master Sample
OHS	October Household Survey
PQM	Provincial Quality Monitor
PSC	Provincial Survey Coordinator
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
RTMS	Real Time Management System
SASCO	South African Standard Occupation Classification
SIC	Standard Industry Classification
SMS	Stores Management System
SO	Survey Officer
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TIFF	Tagged Image File Format