

Statistical System

Department of Census and Statistics - Sri Lanka
www.statistics.gov.lk

The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) is the National Statistical Office in Sri Lanka mainly responsible for the collection and dissemination of statistical data requirements of the government. Apart from its responsibility of collecting and supplying data on the various sectors of the socio-economic conditions of the country, it is required to recruit, train and place professional staff to all government agencies requiring statistical service. In addition, it provides statistical consultancy services to the agencies that require assistance on statistical matters, through its technical divisions. Thus, the DCS serves as a focal point and performs the services of a central statistical agency.

The Department of Census & Statistics is organized with a centrally located headquarters with technical divisions, an island wide net work of field offices attached to district secretariats and divisional offices, and branch offices in some important ministries, departments and provincial councils. With a 1300 strong cadre, DCS is one of the largest departments in the government. Approximately half of the cadre is posted to DCS branches in the ministries, departments, districts and DS divisions. The current structure of the DCS is essentially a cross between the subject matter and functional approaches. It will be observed that many of the units deal with specific subject matter fields, - agricultural statistics, national accounts, household surveys etc., and the administrative units are essentially functionally oriented

Vision

To be the leader in the region in producing timely statistical information to achieve the country's development goals.

Mission

Making contribution to the socio economic development of the country by providing accurate timely statistics, more effectively by means of new technology, and utilizing the services of

dedicated staff under a strategic leadership to become a prosperous nation in the globalized environment.

Role and functions of the DCS

The Department of census & Statistics (DCS) functions as the central government agency under the Ministry of Finance & Planning responsible for the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of reliable and timely statistical data relating to population and housing, agriculture, industries, trade and services, national accounts, prices, and other social and economic activities of the country for the purpose of planning, formulation and implementation of development programs. In order to achieve this, the following subjects and functions have been assigned to the DCS but the scope of these activities has increased very much over time.

1. Conducting socio-economic censuses covering population, housing, agriculture, manufacturing, trade, construction and various other topics depending on the national requirements.
2. Conducting national household, establishment and agricultural surveys on subject areas such as demography, health, labor force, household income and expenditure, nutrition, poverty, industries, trade and services, construction activities, agriculture and other important subject areas of general interest.
3. Collection and compilation of statistics generated through various administrative records such as vital registration forms, embarkation/disembarkation cards, customs declarations, Medical records, police records, prison records etc.

Coordination of statistical activities and programs through the provision of trained staff needed by the ministries, departments, other government agencies and the administration of a network of sub national level statistical offices (in each district) for collection and dissemination of statistics.

Brief history and other relevant background information

The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) is an amalgamation of two units, the

statistics section and the Census section, which functioned separately under the Donoughmore Constitution. The statistics section was part of the former Department of Commerce and Industries. The census section comprised the Census Department which was created on December 1, 1944 for the purpose of taking the Census of Population in 1946.

Both these units had been under the control of the Ministry of Labour, Industry and Commerce. With the inauguration of the Soulbury Constitution they were brought under a new department namely the Department of Census, Statistics and Planning which was assigned under the Ministry of Home Affairs, through a gazette notification dated September 29, 1947. This department was renamed as the Department of Census and Statistics and assigned to the Ministry of Finance by the gazette notification dated May 18, 1948.

The DCS continued to function under the Ministry of Finance till 1970 and thereafter under the Ministry of Planning and Employment until 1977. Since 1977, it was functioning under the Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation and from 1994 under the Ministry of Finance, Planning, Ethnic affairs and National Integration and thus came under the purview of the President. Then again for a short period, the DCS was functioning under the Ministry of Plan Implementation and was transferred back to the Ministry of Finance and Planning. At Present DCS was functioning under the newly created Ministry of Interior since the beginning of the year 2002. Since 2004, DCS has been functioning under the Ministry of Finance and Planning.

Legal Framework

There are two ordinances namely Census Ordinance and Statistics Ordinance under which the DCS collects data through censuses and surveys. They were established in order to secure the reliability and thereby the usefulness of statistics by ensuring the protection of the privacy of the respondents. These ordinances stipulate that statistics which are highly important for policy planning and decision making of the government should be collected by the DCS.

Census Ordinance

The first legal sanction in Sri Lanka provided under the Census Ordinance was framed in 1868 on the lines of the English law for the conduct of the first Census in 1871. This ordinance was amended in 1880 and repealed in 1900. A new ordinance was drafted thereafter new ordinance include provisions to make the census taking procedure more flexible, the right to have access and to make any marks or numbers to any land, building, vessel or any other place by the census officer for the Purpose of census taking. In the new ordinance the census officer was declared to be a public servant within the meaning of the penal code and the officer in charge of each administrative district was given legal status as Census Commissioner of his district. Legal sanction was also given under the new ordinance for census officers to ask questions relating to census schedule and the respondents were required to answer to the best of their knowledge and belief. Breach of census rules, abuse of power by a census officer, obstructing an officer in carrying out his duties and similar acts and omissions were made punishable. The Census Ordinance of 1900 substantially remained the basis for census taking in Sri Lanka throughout the years, with minor amendments in 1945, 1955, 1980 and 2000, and it covers not only the Census of Population and Housing but also Censuses of Agriculture Industry, Commerce etc. The amendments made in 1980 include the provision of legal sanctity for the confidentiality of the information collected at the census. Thus the Census Ordinance casts an obligation on the part of the respondents to answer all questions asked at a census, and at the same time it safeguards the respondents by causing any information collected at a census, to be inadmissible as evidence in a court of law. The amendments made in 2000 include some changes to suit the present administrative set up in the country and also to increase the penalty.

Statistics Ordinance

The Statistics Ordinance which was enacted in 1935 provides for the establishments of an official Bureau of Statistics and for the supply of information there to. This ordinance was amended in 1955. The statistics ordinance also contains provision as in the Census Ordinance to safeguard the confidentiality of the information provided by the respondent. The Ordinance also prevent the disclosure or arrangement of data, to facilitate the identification of any particulars as being relating to any individual person or business in any report, summary

of statistics, or other publications, prepared based on the data collected under the Statistics Ordinance.

Technical and Services Divisions

The activities undertaken by the DCS are grouped and organized under 15 technical and service divisions and one unit (Data Dissemination Unit) at present. These divisions are being headed either by a Director or a Deputy Director with a number of professional staff attached to each of the divisions depending on the workload. These divisions are responsible for undertaking Censuses and Surveys, compilation of indicators, and collection of other information relating to the subject assigned to them. The divisions that have been established and the subjects assigned to them are listed below.

- Division 1 – Population Census and Demography Division
- Division 2 – Industries, Construction, Trade and Services Division
- Division 3 - Agriculture & Environmental Statistics Division
- Division 4 - National Accounts Division
- Division 5 - Publication Division
- Division 6 - Library and Documentation Division
- Division 7 – Information and Communication Technology Division
- Division 8 –Establishments and Accounts Division
- Division 9 - Sample Surveys Division
- Division 10 - Printing Division
- Division 11 - Field Management Division
- Division 12 - Training Division
- Division 15 - Research & Special Studies Division
- Division 16 - Prices and Wages Division
- Division 18 - Cartography Division
- Data Dissemination Unit

Branch Offices in Ministries and Departments

The DCS maintains 43 branch offices at present in various key Ministries, Departments and other governments agencies, which are placed in charge of either a Deputy Director, Senior Statistician, Statistician or Statistical Officer. The statistical personal in these branch offices

are under the immediate administrative control of their respective Heads of Ministries, Departments, even though they belong to the cadre of the DCS. However they obtain advice and guidance from the technical divisions of the DCS. The organization of the work program of line ministries is the responsibility of the concerned ministry, but DCS contributes to technical improvements in statistical data collection activities of these ministries through the professional staff based in these branch offices and headquarters.

District Offices

The DCS has established 25 District Statistical Offices, located in the District Secretariats. Each office is in charge of a Deputy Director/Senior Statistician/ Statistician, who is assisted by a team of Statistical Officers. A single Statistical Officer is attached to the Divisional Secretary's office. These officers are engaged in routine data collection and provide DCS with a foot print at the lowest level of the Governmental structure. All statistical activities in the districts and the DSDs are handled by these officers.

Statistical Staff in provincial Councils

Department continued to provide statistical services to provincial councils by deploying professional statistical staff. Arrangements were made with the provincial councils for the department to provide them with statistical personnel through temporary release of staff . This arrangement has ensured better statistical co-ordination maintenance of statistical standards and rationalization of staff.

Committee system within the DCS

The DCS has formed committees under the following subject areas; Demography, Agriculture, Industries and Provincial Council statistics. These committees consists of members from the respective technical divisions and the various branch offices of the Ministries and Departments related to the subject area, i.e. demography committee is made up of the Ministry of health / nutrition, Dept. of Registrar General, Ministry of education, Dept. of Emigration and Immigration etc. The Field Management division is responsible for organizing regular quarterly meetings of these three committees with the heads of branch officers in various Ministries, Departments and other Government agencies, under the chairmanship of the Directors, in order to coordinate the work and discuss the problems encountered by the respective branch officers, in implementing their work Program.

Formation of a National Data Committee

At the interest of the planners, policy makers and other data users of the National Statistical System of the country, the Government of Sri Lanka, with the initiative of Secretary to the Treasury, has established a National Data Committee (NDC) to create more productive statistical system to fulfill data needs of users within an acceptable timeframe. This is one of the milestones of the ongoing Statistical Capacity Upgrading Project implemented by the Department of Census and Statistics, which is one of the two components of the Public Sector Capacity Building Project of the Government of Sri Lanka, jointly funded by the World Bank and the Government.

The National Statistical System has a long history of providing salient statistics for planning, policy formulation and monitoring the development functions. The Department of Census and Statistics is the pivotal agency for producing statistical needs of the country while some departments also provide data in their own specific areas in a limited way. Policy planners, local and international research communities, international organizations are some of the important data users of the present National Statistical System.

Statistics play a vital role in decision making and undoubtedly precise, consistent and timely statistics are the essential ingredients for better planning. The prime objective of the National Data Committee is to strengthen the existing statistical system by acting as a coordinating body between data producers and data users.

The Committee will identify the national statistical priorities and provide necessary guidance to the Department of Census and Statistics and other relevant institutions thereby contributing towards strengthening the National Statistical System of the country.

The NDC will be chaired by Deputy Secretary to the Treasury and the core Members of Committee are the Management level officers of the Departments of Census and Statistics, National Planning and representatives from the Presidential Secretariat, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Demographic Department of the University of Colombo, Institute of Policy. Representatives from other ministries, public and private sector institutions will also be invited to the Committee as and when necessary.

Scope and the Objectives of NDC

Statistics play a vital role in decision making and undoubtedly precise, consistent and timely statistics are the essential ingredients for better planning. The prime objective of the National Data Committee is to strengthen the existing statistical system by acting as a coordinating body between data producers and data users. Broad objectives covered by the NDC are as follows.

- i. NDC should identify statistical needs of data users and guide the National statistical system to provide comprehensive, high quality data in the most economical way.
- ii. The committee is expected to strengthen the timely data collection through administrative records. For instance, when government or non government institution is unable to produce accurate and timely administrative records for the quarterly GDP compilation, NDC should intervene to resolve the issue.
- iii. The committee is authorized to take legal action on any misuse or any mis interpretation of statistical data.
- iv. The committee should identify dual compilation of statistics and take necessary steps to discontinue such practices.
- v. The committee is authorized to invite data users to share available statistics and extend their contribution to enhance the National Statistical System.

It is expected that NDC contributes towards the National Statistical System by identifying statistical needs of the planners, policy makers and other data users that needs to be fulfilled through the National Statistical System.

Key Responsibilities

Key responsibilities are created to achieve the above objectives. NDC is expected to address on the following areas:

- a. Identify current statistical data needs of users and make recommendations on National Statistical data priorities.

- b. Identify data producing institutions and scrutinize their contribution towards the current National Statistical System.
- c. Identify functioning capacity of statistical units in various Ministries. Ensure that statistical units have the necessary support from the Ministry to compile statistics independently.
- d. Identify Government institutions where new statistical units need to be set up.
- e. Review current administrative recording systems. Make recommendations on existing methodologies used to compile indicators from administrative data.
- f. Recommend a method to access available administrative data and introduce a coordination mechanism to share accurate data within the National Statistical System.
 - i. Identify government and non government institutions which are currently supplying data for the compilation of quarterly GDP estimates.
 - ii. Take necessary steps to improve the supply of quarterly data by introducing a system to share accurate and timely data.
- g. Ensure that all data sources adhere to a common set of definitions /classifications/ standards in data collection exercises.
- h. Ensure that all documents related to data collection are archived within the National Statistical System.

Censuses conduct by the DCS

Census of Population and Housing

- Sri Lanka has a long history of census taking.
- Started in 1871, 139 years ago; Sri Lanka has the longest history of census takings among South Asian Countries.
- Usually once in 10 years; Last census was held in 2011 it is the 14th Census and covered entire country (all districts including Northern and Eastern Provinces) after 30 years.

Industry Census

- The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) usually conducts Census of Industry once in 10 years in order to have a full coverage of industrial establishments within the territorial boundary of Sri Lanka.
- The earliest attempt made at seeking information from the industrial sector was in the “Census of Agriculture and Industries”, which was conducted in conjunction with the Population Census in 1946.
- The last Census of Industry held in 2003/4 is the sixth of its kind in a series of Industrial Censuses conducted by the DCS for over nearly six decades.
- The next Census of Industry will be held in 2013/14.

Agriculture Census

- Unlike the Census of Population where there is almost a tradition of decennial censuses since 1871, there has been no regularity in regard to Census of Agriculture in Sri Lanka.
- A census of Production, virtually agricultural production was taken in 1921 and was followed by partial censuses in 1924 and 1929. In these censuses, particulars on crop areas, livestock numbers and production were recorded at village level.
- In more recent times there were Censuses of Agriculture in 1946, 1952, 1962, 1973 and 1982. At the Census of 1946, a plot-wise enumeration was undertaken. This was the first comprehensive Census of Agriculture taken in Sri Lanka.
- A deviation from this pattern of parcel wise enumeration was first attempted at the Census of Agriculture 1952.
- The Census of Agriculture 1962 enumerated all holdings above 50 acres on a complete basis and a sample of 10 percent in the case of holdings less than 50 acres.
- The Census of Agriculture 1973, the large holdings defined as estates were completely enumerated for detail information on the various characteristics while a sample of small holdings were selected and enumerated.
- The Census of Agriculture and Livestock conducted in the year 1982 was a hundred percent enumeration of agricultural holdings of both sectors i.e. Small Holdings and Estate similar to the Census of Agriculture 2002.

- The next Census of Agriculture will be conducted in the year 2014.

Sample surveys conducted by the DCS:

Some of the surveys conducted by the department are

1. Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey
2. Household Income and Expenditure Survey
3. Demographic and Health Survey
4. Test Purchasing Survey
5. Survey of Construction Industries
6. Annual Survey of Industries
7. Crop Estimating Survey on Paddy
8. Crop Estimating Survey on Big-Onion
9. Estimating of Potato Production

1. Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey

Sri Lanka Labour Force survey (LFS) is one of the main household surveys conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS). It is designed on a quarterly basis, to measure the levels and trends of employment, unemployment and labour force in Sri Lanka on a continuous basis. This survey was commenced from the first quarter of 1990 and is being continued by the DCS. The information collected at LFS serve as the macro-economic indicators for monitoring the current performance of the economy and they also serve to evaluate government policies and programs, and therefore, LFS plays an important role focusing several standpoints. 1st and 2nd quarterly report of the labour force survey in 2013 was done.

2. Household Income and Expenditure Survey

Household Income and Expenditure survey (HIES) is one of the main household surveys conducted by the Department. HIES has been conducted since 1990/91 as a separate survey Under the National Household Survey Program. Survey conducted once in five years up to 2006/07 and thereafter it is done once in three years. The latest survey is HIES 2012/13

Sample survey is carried in 12 consecutive monthly rounds and uses an island -wide representative sample. General sample size is 25,000 housing units which provide adequate and reliable statistics at district level.

3. Demographic and Health Survey

The Sri Lanka Demographic and Health Survey (SLDHS) was carried out by the Department for the Health Sector Development Project (HSDP) of the Ministry of Health care and Nutrition in collaboration with the World Bank. The last survey of demographic and health was held in 2006/2007.

4. Test Purchasing Survey

The major task of the Prices and Wages Division of the Department is to compute and publish the Consumers' Price Index (CPI) of Sri Lanka on monthly basis.

In order to estimate prices for the purpose of computing the index the test purchasing survey is carried out. The information on required goods and services is collected continuously from selected outlets according to exact specifications.

5. Survey of Construction Industries

Survey of Construction Industry was conducted in 1993 for the first time by the Department mainly to finish data; regarding input and output. The department continued to conduct the survey ones in two years to cater to the requirements of the data users which increased along with the rapid development of the construction industry in Sri Lanka. The last Survey of Construction Industries (2011) was aimed to cover 975 sample units in all provinces during the reference year 2010.

6. Annual Survey of Industries

The Department conducted the 25th survey of the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) series in 2011 with the reference period as 2010. DCS started to conduct its series of Annual Survey of Manufacturing Industries (ASMI) in 1979 by using 1978 as the reference year. The frame of

this survey was restricted to manufacturing establishments registered with the Ministry of Industries and the State owned industrial establishments. (i.e. Public Corporations, Departmental undertakings, Govt. owned Business undertakings). The last survey of this series was carried out in 1982. After the Census of Industry conducted in 1983, the ASMI was replaced by the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) covering Mining and Quarrying, Manufacturing and Generation and Distribution of Electricity, Gas and Water. The Industrial frame generated at the Census of Industry conducted in 1983 was used as the sample frame to conduct the series of Annual Survey of Industries from 1984 to 2003. The current sample frame which was developed after the industrial census conducted in 2004 has been used to conduct the annual survey of industries since 2005.

7. Crop Estimating Survey of Paddy

The above survey has been conducting by the Department since 1952. There are two cultivation seasons in Sri Lanka, namely Maha and Yala season. Maha season falls in between September (previous year) and April (current year) while Yala season is in between May and August in the same year. In Maha seasons there are over 5000 crop cutting experiments are done while in Yala seasons, the number of experiments are done is over 3000. Final figures related to the Asweddumized, Sown and Harvested extent pertaining to 2011/12 Maha and 2012 Yala were prepared.

8. Crop Estimating Survey of Big-Onion

The above Survey has been conducted biannually, during the months of July/August in major big Onion producing districts namely: Matale, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Mahaweli “H” area. The last survey of big-onion was held in 2010.

9. Estimating of Potato Production

This survey was carried out by the Department in August 1998 in major potato producing areas namely NuwaraEliya & Badulla in order to estimate the domestic production. It has been repeated similar type of exercise three times per year in order to estimate the probable production on a Monthly basis during the year. The last survey of potato production was in 2010.

Data Dissemination

All statistics compiled by DCS are disseminated by official web site as well as printed reports. And also press releases, press briefings, articles are used and micro data is released according to the dissemination policy.

Micro-data Dissemination policy

Under the Statistical ordinance, micro data cannot be released with identifications for public use. Procedures are in place to ensure that information relating to any particular individual person, household or undertaking will be kept strictly confidential and will not be divulged to external parties. Information on individual or individual household/establishment will not be divulged or published in such a form that will facilitate the identification of any particular person or establishment as the data have been collected under the Census/Statistical ordinance, according to which the information at individual level cannot be divulged and such information is strictly confidential. Therefore, all direct identifiers will be removed (name, address, ID number, business name, reference number, telephone number etc.) before the release of the data file. The following rules apply to micro data released by the Department of Census and Statistics.

- The micro-data pertaining to Censuses will not be released.
- Micro-data of other sample surveys is released free of charge. Only the requests of Government Institutions/Semi Government Institutions, Recognized Universities, and Students engaged in higher studies and selected international agencies are entertained. However, the Data users are required to strictly adhere to the terms stipulated in the agreement form.
- All the data requests should be made to Director General (DG) of the DCS as the sole authority of releasing data is vested with the DG, DCS. DCS of Sri Lanka reserves sole right to approve or reject any data request made depending on the confidential nature of the data set and intended purpose of the study or analysis.

- Requests for micro data should be made through the agreement form designed by DCS for this purpose (Form D.R.1). The agreement form should be filled in triplicate and the study/project proposal should accompany the filled agreement form. If requests are made for the micro data of more than one survey, a separate agreement should be signed.
- If the data request is from a student, a letter from the respective Department Head/Dean/Supervisor, recommending the issue of data, should also be accompanied.
- If the request is approved, only 25% of the data file is released at the first stage. The release of the full data file is considered only after reviewing the draft report prepared on the basis of the 25% sample data file.
- The released data file should be used only for the specific study/analysis mentioned in the agreement form and shall not be used for any other purpose without the prior approval of the Director General of the DCS. Moreover, Copies of the micro-data file, obtained from the DCS, shall not be given to anyone else without the prior written approval of the Director General of the DCS.
- The draft report of the Study/Analysis based on full data file should be submitted to the DCS and the concurrence of the DG, DCS, should be obtained before publishing it. Once published, a copy of the final report should be submitted to the DCS.

Data Release Calendar

The DCS releases selected statistical information including certain census & survey reports on pre announced dates in the Advanced Data Released calendar (ADRC) published in the department website. Any revisions to these dates will be informed to the users by publishing revised dates in the ADRC at least two weeks before the scheduled dates given in the calendar. The objective of the ADRC is to let data users know when the data will be released by the DCS and to make all data accessible to all parties at the same time. DCS mainly disseminate data either by publishing in the department's website or printed reports. Dates for these two data dissemination channels are given in this calendar. Dates are decided for one year at a time.

