

Outline of the Labour Force Survey

1. Purpose of the survey

The purpose of the Labour Force Survey is to elucidate the current state of employment and unemployment in this country every month.

2. History of the survey

This survey has been conducted every month since July 1947 after an experimental period of ten months from September 1946. It was designated in April 1950 as Designated Statistics, and identified in April 2009 as Fundamental Statistics under the Statistics Act. In order to tabulate the results of 10 regions, the number of EDs (enumeration districts) was increased in 1982. In January 2002, the Special Survey of the Labour Force Survey was integrated into the Labour Force Survey to publish the detailed results on employment and unemployment quarterly.

3. Population coverage

The universe of the survey is composed of all persons usually residing in this country, except foreign diplomatic and consular corps, their family members and foreign military personnel and their family members.

Actual enumeration takes place every month on a sample basis. About 40 thousand households in about 2,900 enumeration districts, which are earlier selected from approximately one million Population Census Enumeration Districts, are surveyed. Those 40 thousand households are selected for the basic questionnaire, of which 10 thousand for the special questionnaire.

The questions on employment status are asked to the members aged 15 years old and over (about 100 thousand persons in total) in those households.

4. Reference period (Reference week)

The survey is conducted as of the last day of each month, however, in December it is done as of the 26th.

The reference period to which questions on the employment status refer is one week ending on the last day of each month except December for which it is the one week from 20th to 26th.

5. Survey organization

The Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) is responsible for the survey, processing of the returns and publication of the reports.

The survey is conducted through the following channel.

Supervisors are selected from the staff of the prefectural governments and are responsible for training and supervision of enumerators.

Minister for MIC
(Director-General, Statistics Bureau)

Governors of Prefectures
(Prefectural governments)

Supervisors

Enumerators

Households

6. Field operation

The enumerator prepares a list of all dwelling units in the ED assigned to him or her. The supervisor selects the sample of dwelling units from the list according to the method instructed by the Statistics Bureau. Households in those selected dwelling units are surveyed.

There are two types of questionnaire in the Labour Force Survey: a Basic Questionnaire and a Special Questionnaire. Surveys are conducted using the Basic Questionnaire in the same two months in two successive years, and using the Special Questionnaire only in the second month of the second year (refer to Appendix 3).

Within the seven days before the survey week, the enumerator visits all the households in the sample dwelling units and asks them to fill out the questionnaires.

Within the three days after the close of the survey week, the enumerator visits the households again, and collects the questionnaires after checking the entries on the spot.

The collected questionnaires are then submitted to the prefectural office, checked by the supervisors, and sent to the Statistics Bureau.

7. Publication of results

The survey results are processed by the National Statistics Center.

(1)Basic Tabulation : Items obtained from the Basic Questionnaire

The monthly results for the whole of Japan, as a rule, are released at the end of the following month of the survey.

The "Annual Report on the Labour Force Survey" is published in May of the following year.

Moreover, quarterly regional results of the Basic

Tabulation are published at the end of the month following the final month of the quarter. They are also shown on the Annual Report.

(2)Detailed Tabulation : Items mainly obtained from the Special Questionnaire

The Detailed Tabulation from the Special Questionnaire is released quarterly, two months after the final month of the survey, while the “Annual Report on the Labour Force Survey” is published in May of the following year.