

South African labour statistics

There are two official sources of labour statistics in South Africa at present, namely the *Survey of Employment and Earnings* (SEE) and the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS). They respectively present establishment-based and household survey information; by extracting data from different labour constituencies, they together provide a more detailed picture of the nature and characteristics of the labour market.

The SEE is an enterprise-based quarterly survey covering a sample of approximately 10 200* employer units – both private and public enterprises and organisations in the formal non-agricultural sector of the South African economy. The information received is used to estimate key economic statistics of employment and gross earnings from employment. The survey was improved in September 2002 with a more comprehensive sample to include some additional areas of formal employment that were previously not surveyed.

Because it is a quarterly release, the SEE is more amenable to time series analyses and is a useful source of information concerning employment, productivity, benefits and labour costs. The survey, however, excludes unregistered or informal enterprises. Among registered non-agricultural businesses, the SEE includes only those with a declared turnover of R300 000 or more per annum. Data from the SEE are published on pages S-136, S-137 and S-156 of this *Bulletin*.

Comparison of SEE and LFS employment numbers, September 2003

	Number
SEE formal non-agricultural employment	6 368 000
LFS persons employed in agriculture.....	1 197 000
LFS persons employed in domestic service	1 022 000
LFS persons employed in informal sector	1 899 000
LFS persons employed in other sectors and enterprises not covered by SEE	1 136 000
LFS total employment	11 622 000

Source: Statistics South Africa, *Labour Force Survey*, September 2003; Statistics South Africa, *Survey of Employment and Earnings*, September 2003 and December 2003; and own calculations.

Statistics South Africa conducts a rotating panel LFS twice a year using a national sample of 30 000 households. From this sample, various national totals are inferred. The LFS is a relatively recent series, which started in February 2000. So far the results of eight survey rounds are in the public domain. From March 2003 the LFS has been rebased using Census 2001 statistics. The data categorised in the LFS include all public and private-sector workers – employees and self-employed – in the formal and informal sectors across all major groups of industries. The LFS is the only official source of data on unemployment.

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* Before September 2003 the sample consisted of approximately 8 500 private enterprises and public institutions.