

Summary

- Statistics are a form of numerical data where the objective is to quantify some aspect(s) of an individual, group or society. Statistics provide a wide variety of data that would normally be inaccessible to the sociologist (due to the cost of collection, for example).
- Collecting data about persons and their lives is difficult. It poses unique problems that data collection developers need to address in the design phase of the collection process. Two issues need to be addressed at the outset: what kind of data collection instrument should be used, and what unit of measurement should be employed.
- We can note two main sources of statistical data:
 - Official statistics refers to numerical data collected and published by Governments (for example, crime or marriage statistics).
 - Non-official statistics refers to numerical data collected and published by a variety of public and private organizations (the Rowntree Foundation, for example, publishes statistics on poverty).
- Official statistics are statistics published by government agencies or other public bodies such as international organizations. They provide quantitative or qualitative information on all major areas of citizens' lives, such as economic and social development, living conditions, health, education, and the environment. Official statistics result from the collection and processing of data into statistical information by a government institution or international organization. They are then disseminated to help users develop their knowledge about a particular topic or geographical area, make comparisons between countries or understand changes over time. Official statistics make information on economic and social development accessible to the public, allowing the impact of government policies to be assessed, thus improving accountability.
- Government produces official statistics for informed debate, decision-making and research both within Government and by the wider community. Objective, reliable, timely, trustworthy and accessible official statistics give people confidence in the integrity of Government and public decision-making. Hence, in producing official statistics it is important that the relevance, reliability and integrity of official statistics is maintained, and is perceived as such. For this purpose, the cooperation from respondents and providers

of information has to be maintained, and information given on a confidential basis must remain so.

- The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) under the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation was established in 1950, with the objective of obtaining comprehensive and continuing information relating to social, economic, demographic, industrial and agricultural statistics through sample surveys on countrywide basis. It has been, therefore, instrumental in developing a strong database that has helped the Central as well as State Governments in development planning and policy formulations.

- CSO is the principal data collecting, processing and disseminating agency responsible for coordinating, monitoring and supervising the National Statistical System. It thus has the statutory mandate to produce and provide government, the private sector, parastatal organizations, international organizations, the civil society and the general public with statistical information for evidence based decision-making, policy formulation and planning as well as investment purposes. The statutory mandate also includes the responsibility of providing advisory and technical service to all users on statistical matters.