



Information for the use of the EU LFS data extractions

This document summarises the information available on the LFS data provided in CSV (comma separated variables) formats. All sections refer to the EU-LFS webpage in Statistics Explained accessible at:

[EU Labour Force Survey \(Statistics Explained\)](#)

• Guidelines for the publication

The EU Labour Force Survey, like all surveys, is based upon a sample of the population. The results are therefore subject to the usual types of errors associated with sampling techniques. Based upon the sample size and design in the various Member States, Eurostat implements basic guidelines intended to avoid publication of figures which are statistically unreliable.

Please read carefully the guidelines for publication (reliability limits to be applied to the results) presented in the article in Statistics Explained [EU-LFS – data and publication](#), section “publication guidelines and thresholds”.

The column VALUE or POP (in case of averages of hours worked, periods or rates) of the CSV files(s) provided represent population in thousands (weighted figures).

The column FLAG shows the values which are not publishable or publishable with warnings due to small sample size:

- Values with a flag 'a' are not publishable, because of low reliability.
- Values with a flag 'b' are publishable but this should always be done with a warning concerning their reliability. By convention, they appear between brackets or with a flag 'u'. Aggregation with (an)other line(s) of the CSV file is advised.
- Values with a flag 'c' are based on 3 or fewer responding units in the sample - as an indicative rule of thumb, this typically corresponds to population estimates of some 200-400 persons or less.

Values with a 'a' or 'c' flag have been deleted in the CSV file. The entry itself however is still visible and a blank cell indicates that a value below reliability or confidentiality limits has been removed.

In case of extractions on averages of hours worked or periods, VALUE represent the weighted average and POP the corresponding population in thousands.

• Variables and codes

Three types of LFS results are available: yearly data (best sample available for all variablesⁱ), quarterly data and annual averages data of quarterly data (for quarterly variables).

You will find additional information in the article [EU-LFS – Methodology](#) in Statistics Explained:

- the periodicity of each LFS variable, [LFS user guide](#) (column 'periodicity' Y/Q of the code listⁱⁱ);
- the meaning of variables names and codes used in the CSV file, [LFS user guide](#) (code list – For the column POP, see above);

- the classification used and levels of aggregation available as well as transition rules in cases a particular classification was changed/modified in the article [EU-LFS – Methodology](#), sections classifications and LFS coding lists and explanatory notes;
- the reference period used for the extraction in the CSV file column QUARTER (**Q1** to **Q4** for quarterly data, **_A** for annual averages of quarterly data, **_Y** for yearly data. Before the introduction of the continuous survey i.e. until 2004 **_S** (for spring data) is used instead of **_Y** and **_A**).

• **Comparability of results across the time**

The following factors may somewhat detract from perfect comparability over time: population figures used for population adjustment are revised at certain intervals on the basis of new population censuses; reference periods may not have remained the same for a given country due to the transition to a quarterly continuous survey; countries may modify their sample designs; in order to improve the quality of results, countries may change the content or order of their questionnaire.

The column FLAG_BREAK indicates values which are not comparable with previous quarterly or annual results due to a break in series. Therefore values with a FLAG_BREAK 'b' should always be printed with a warning indicating the non-comparability with previous results.

All kinds of breaks in the LFS series are listed in the article [EU-LFS – data and publication](#), section “comparability over time and across countries”.

Additional general information per variable is provided in [EU-LFS Explanatory notes](#).

• **File format**

Data is provided in CSV format (comma separated variables). CSV files are easily imported in all standard statistical packages and standard office software. (Depending on the regional settings of your system, the comma may however not be recognised as a list separator by all programs.)

Some software restricts the number of rows that can be read from one file. In that case, you can use a small [tool](#) for splitting the csv file into several smaller files.

ⁱ Spring series until 2004 (quarter 2 in most countries, quarter 1 in FR and AT, quarter 1 for PL in 1999, quarter 4 for IT in 1992). Annual sample from 2005 (4 quarters covered, full sample or subset, with some minors exception for IE, FI, UK and CH).

ⁱⁱ For instance, FTPTREAS (reasons for working part-time is available on yearly datasets only) while FTPT is available for quarterly and annual averages extractions (larger sample)