

GHANA STATISTICAL SERVICE



MICRODATA DISSEMINATION POLICY

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MICRODATA DISSEMINATION POLICY-GHANA

Rationale for the dissemination policy

The purpose of this dissemination policy is to set out the conditions and format in which anonymized microdata files from the official statistics production process of the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), may be released to users in a clear and defined manner and in keeping with Principles 4 and 5 of the African Charter on Statistics which states, among others, that:

- African statistics shall not be made inaccessible in any way whatsoever. This concomitant right of access for all users without restriction shall be guaranteed by domestic law. Microdata may be made available to users on condition that the pertinent laws and procedures are respected and confidentiality is maintained.
- African statistics shall be disseminated in a manner that ensures that all users are able to use them simultaneously.
- National Statistical Offices, African statisticians and all those operating in the field of statistics in Africa shall absolutely guarantee the protection of the private life and business secrets of data providers, the confidentiality of the information so provided and the use of such information for strictly statistical purposes.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to provide guidelines for disseminating microdata emanating from the official statistics process, including but not limited to:

- Defining the structure, terms and conditions for sharing microdata;
- Ensuring the confidentiality of individual data units;
- Lessening the difficulties which users face in accessing microdata files;
- Promoting a wider use of microdata in research and in decision making;
- Providing partial support to researchers.

Coverage of Policy and Types of Files

This policy shall cover two types of microdata from household and establishment surveys as well as censuses conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service. The two types of files are:

Public Use Files (PUFs): These are files from which all direct identifiers such as addresses and names have been removed. Respondent characteristics may also be suppressed and geographical details reduced. These files have been highly anonymized to ensure that the identification of individuals is highly unlikely. They are disseminated for general use and usually available for download from the National Data Archive (NADA) <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/nada/index.php/home> by individuals who identify themselves by providing their particulars and agreeing to the terms and conditions of use.

Licensed files: Access to these files requires a signed agreement i.e. the Licensed Data Request Agreement Form (See Appendix B) between the head of the researcher's organization and the Government Statistician or his/her designated representative to permit them to access data files that are more sensitive than PUFs. For example, datasets which make available geographic variables beyond the domain level or full details of some indirect identifier variables. For these files, all direct identifiers have been removed and some detailed characteristics may be collapsed or removed.

Confidentiality

The policy is based on the Statistical Service Law, 1985 (PNDC Law 135) which states the following in sections 18 and 19:

Section 18

The provisions of this Law shall not affect any Law relating to the disclosure or non-disclosure of any official, secret or confidential information or trade secret.

Section 19

(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, except with the prior consent in writing of the person making the return or giving the answer or in the case of an undertaking, the owner for

the time being of the undertaking, no person shall publish, or show to any other person not employed in the execution of duty under this Law any of the following:

- (a) an individual return or part of the return for the purposes of this Law;
- (b) an answer given to any question put for the purposes of this Law;
- (c) a report, abstract or other document, containing particulars comprised in any such return or answer so arranged as to identify such particulars with any person or undertaking.

(2) Subsection (1) of this Section shall not apply to any information transmitted by the Government Statistician to the Ghana Statistical Service Board, Ministries, Departments and Agencies or other Government Organizations for the purpose of its functions.

(3) Nothing contained in this section shall prevent or restrict the publication of any report, abstract or other document which would make identification of any undertaking possible merely by reason of the fact that the particulars relate to an undertaking which is the only undertaking within its particular sphere of activities, if the report, abstract or other document is so arranged as to disclose, in respect of such undertaking, only the following information, that is:

- (a) the quantity and the value of any description of goods manufactured, produced, exported or sold;
- (b) the number, the economic and social characteristics of persons employed;
- (c) the amount and extent of any investment; and
- (d) any other information which has been furnished or supplied under this Law, to the publication of which no supplying been made in writing by the person furnishing or supplying the information prior to the publication of the report, abstract or other document.

(4) Nothing contained in this section shall be taken to require the disclosure to a Ministry, Department, Agency or other Government Organization for the purposes of taxation, of any information acquired under the provisions of this Law.

Therefore, all information collected under the Statistical Service Law is to be used only for statistical purposes and all persons covered under the law are expected to ensure confidentiality of all individual information obtained from respondents.

Degree of Anonymization

All direct and indirect identifiers will be removed before the release of the data file. In so doing, varying approaches, depending on the type of data, shall be employed.

There are two main types of anonymized files that may be produced under the terms of this policy. The major differences among these files are the levels of geographic and detailed characteristics.

- Files that have less geographic detail and fewer characteristic/variable details (i.e., geographic detail and data dictionary elements are hidden or geography has been collapsed and characteristic details have been reduced).
- Files that have more geographic detail but the data dictionary provides less geographic detail and more characteristic/variable details.

To the extent possible, geographic detail included in the anonymized microdata files will be at the domain level. Moreover, suppression of variable details will be kept at a minimum. It is however, within discretion of the Data Release Committee (DRC) to determine which variables to suppress/collapse in view of the risk of identity disclosure of its respondents.

Timing and Release

Recognizing the important needs of users and the importance of timely and quality data, the GSS will strive to release documented microdata files based on the following criteria:

- Monthly Survey Data : One month after the release of survey results
National Survey Data : Two months after the release of results
Census Data : Within six months of the release of final results

Dissemination channels for microdata

Access to microdata files will be granted through the following channels;

- Public Use files may be downloaded directly from the National Data Archive at <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/nada/index.php/home>.
- Written application addressed to the Government Statistician and/or a completed GSS Licensed Data Request Agreement Form may be submitted to the GSS by mail via info@statsghana.gov.gh or may be sent to the Ghana Statistical Service Head Office for processing. Once processing is completed, the microdata will be made available to the researcher in soft formats via CD, pen drive or any other appropriate file sharing channel.

Terms and conditions for access

Conditions for Release of Data:

- The data shall be released for the purpose of research and analysis to further enhance understanding about the economy, society, and the people of Ghana and in the advancement of science.
- A draft copy of any publication arising from the use of the data may be submitted to the Ghana Statistical Service for study and comment. GSS reserves the right to intervene when there is misuse or misinterpretation of its data; this is in keeping with principle four of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics which states: *the statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.*
- Any publication from the data shall be duly acknowledged and properly cited.
- In the spirit of knowledge sharing, users are encouraged to make an effort to collaborate with professional staff of the Ghana Statistical Service in the analysis and interpretation of the data.
- Requests for microdata shall be met upon completion and submission of the Data Request Agreement Form.

Class of Users

Microdata files are intended for specialized users with advanced quantitative skills, such as:

- Policymakers and researchers employed by line-ministries and planning departments who are engaged in the development of locality, district, regional and national strategies and programs, including the monitoring and evaluation of these programs;
- International agencies involved in the conduct of research and special studies aimed at identifying development and support opportunities in their area of interest;
- Research and academic institutions involved in social and economic research;
- Students and lecturers mainly engaged in educational activities; and
- Other users who are involved in conducting scientific research.

Roles and Responsibilities

A Data Release Committee (DRC) shall be set up within the Resource and Data Centre and will be responsible for the release of anonymized microdata files. The DRC shall be expected to:

- Approve all data files for uploading on the GSS website and provide guidance to the Data Warehouse Unit or Data Processing Manager on how to improve micro data files before their release;
- Revise as necessary the guidelines used to create anonymized microdata files; and
- Ensure that each set of microdata is well documented and all metadata related to it made available.

The DRC shall include but not limited to members of the Resource and Data Center of the GSS, the Head of the Data Processing Section and the Government Statistician or his/her representative who shall give final approval for the upload of the data to the website for public use.

Fees

In keeping with the Ghana Open Data Initiative (2012) and the recognition of statistics as a public good, microdata shall be made available at no cost to data users.

Copyright and Citation Requirements

All GSS data users shall acknowledge that any available property rights, including copyright in the data, are owned by GSS and ensure that proper citations are used. The data user may also provide the GSS with a copy of the final report, paper or article. Such reports would be kept in the GSS library for reference.

Dispute Resolution

In the event of any dispute between the Requester and GSS, or between any two parties related to the microdata, the Government Statistician will give opportunity to all the aggrieved party / parties to present their case(s). The decision of the Government Statistician will be final.

Disclaimer

Under no circumstance shall the GSS become liable to users of its data, or any other party, for any loss or damage, consequential or otherwise, including but not limited to time, money, or goodwill, arising from the use, operation or modification of the data.

In using these microdata, users further agree to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the GSS for any and all liability of any nature arising out of or resulting from the lack of accuracy or correctness of the data, or the use of the data.

Amendment of the Policy

This policy shall be revised from time to time based on changes in the legal framework, technology and studies and evaluations such as the conduct of User Satisfaction Surveys.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

Microdata

For the purposes of this policy, microdata are defined as files of records from household and establishment surveys and censuses pertaining to individual respondent units such as household, individual, establishment, agricultural holding, etc. and are intended for use by users with more advanced statistical skills.

Anonymization

“Anonymization” refers to the process of removing direct and indirect identifiers from the survey file to conceal the characteristics and identity of individual respondents.

Anonymized Microdata Files. These are microdata files that have been anonymized for dissemination purposes.

Direct identifiers. These include such information as names, addresses or other direct personal identifiers which must be removed from all files made available to users.

Indirect identifiers. These refer to characteristics which are shared with several other respondents and, when combined with other information, can lead to compromising the identity of the respondent.

Census. A Census is a survey conducted on the full set of observation units or objects belonging to a given population or universe. It is the complete enumeration of a population or groups at a point in time with respect to well-defined characteristics. The statistical data that will be collected by the Census will be for use of the government, business and industry, social scientists and other researchers, and the public in general.

Survey. Survey is a scientific statistical collection of data on individuals, households, establishments or other organizational units where only a sample of units in the population is enumerated.

Dissemination. “Dissemination” refers to the act of making microdata files, with supporting metadata, available for access and use.

Metadata. A description of the data for the users to understand the data in detail. This includes, among others, description of the source, compilation, and methodology, time of dissemination, and institution and persons responsible for the compilation.

Domain. In terms of geographic coverage, domain refers to the lowest level of geographic disaggregation where the data is representative, e.g. region.

Degree of Anonymization

Two main types of anonymized files will be produced under the terms of this policy. The major differences among these files are the levels of geographic and characteristic detail.

The degree of anonymization refers to the extent and manner in which the respondent's characteristics and geographic detail in the survey have been suppressed in order to ensure respondent confidentiality.

APPENDIX B: LICENSED DATA REQUEST AGREEMENT FORM (AMENDED)

**AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE GHANA STATISTICAL SERVICE
AND**

Person(s) Requesting Data:
Institutional Affiliation:
Business Address:
E-Mail Address:
Contact Number:
Purpose of Data Request:
Dataset(s) Requested
.....

(Attach copy of Study Outline):

Conditions for Release of Licensed Data Files:

1. The licensed data shall not be copied or released to any other person or organisation, directly or indirectly, without the written consent of the Government Statistician or her representative.
2. A draft copy of any publication/product emanating from the data may be submitted to the Government Statistician for the study and comments of the Ghana Statistical Service and also for documentation purposes.
3. Any publication from the data shall be duly acknowledged and properly cited.
4. The data shall be used for the purpose of research and data analysis to further understanding about the economy, society and people of Ghana and in the advancement of science.
5. Every effort shall be made to collaborate with professional staff of the Ghana Statistical Service or other qualified Ghanaians in the analysis of the data.
6. Requests for licensed microdata shall be serviced **ONLY** upon completion and submission of this data request agreement form.
7. All administrative costs involved in making the licensed data available shall be borne by the Requester.

I/We agree that all data released under this agreement are confidential and remain the property of the Ghana Statistical Service and also that, GSS reserves the right to intervene when there is misuse or misinterpretation of this data, in keeping with principle four of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics which states that statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics. I/We therefore undertake to observe the terms and conditions specified above, knowing that if I/We default, the necessary legal action may be taken against me/us.

Signature:

Signature:

Name:

Name: **DR. PHILOMENA NYARKO
GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN**

Date:
PERSON(S) REQUESTING DATA

Date:
GHANA STATISTICAL SERVICE