



INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTATÍSTICA
STATISTICS PORTUGAL

Policy of Statistical Confidentiality

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Policy of Statistical Confidentiality, last modified 2026/04/08

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ESTADISTICA

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Introduction

The mission of the Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P. (Statistics Portugal) is **to produce, in an independent and impartial manner, high-quality official statistical information relevant to society, while promoting the coordination, analysis, innovation and dissemination of national statistical activity and ensuring the integrated storage of data.**

In this context, it collects data from natural and legal persons, as well as administrative data from Public Administration services or bodies.

Statistics Portugal guides its action in the production of official statistics according to the following Values:

// Professionalism, ethics and respect for confidentiality.

// Technical independence, objectivity and impartiality.

// New skills and human resources enhancement;

// Commitment to quality.

// Creativity, innovation and continuous improvement of processes.

// Respect for data source owners.

// Successful partnerships with external entities.

// Satisfaction of different statistical needs

It is in this framework that the Statistical Confidentiality Policy is formalised, which is part of the Integrated Management System of Statistics Portugal (comprising Information Security Management and Quality Management), and constitutes the public commitment to compliance with the Principle of Statistical Confidentiality, undertaken by Statistics Portugal, as the central body responsible for coordinating and developing national statistical activity, by the Regional Statistical Services of the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira, and by entities with powers delegated by the Board of Directors of Statistics Portugal.

The Principle of Statistical Confidentiality is indispensable for trust in the [National Statistical System \(SEN\)](#) and is enshrined in the statistical legislation as one of the fundamental pillars of official statistical production.

This principle determines that all data of an individual nature collected by the authorities for statistical purposes is confidential and may not be disclosed to third parties. Its breach, whether intentional or not, is severely sanctioned by Law, constituting a very serious administrative offence and, in cases involving breach of the duty of professional secrecy, entailing disciplinary and criminal liability.

Reflecting its longstanding concern to ensure the confidentiality of the data it collects, processes and disseminates relating to natural and legal persons, Statistics Portugal incorporates into its statistical production process a set of practices and methods that protect data confidentiality and consist, on the one hand, of the application of statistical methods that minimise the risk of identification of data subjects and, on the other hand, of the adoption of technical and organisational measures that guarantee the security of the information at all stages of the statistical process, protecting it against destruction, loss and accidental or illicit alteration, and allowing the traceability of all accesses.

General framework

The Statistical Confidentiality Policy of Statistics Portugal stems from the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, from Law No. 22/2008, of 13 May, which establishes the principles, rules and structure of the [National Statistical System](#), and in particular the Principle of Statistical Confidentiality (Article 6), and from [Regulation \(EC\) No 223/2009](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March (Article 20 et seq.), as amended by Regulation (EU) 2024/3018 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November, with the general objective of adapting the legal framework of European statistics to present and future needs, ensuring that European statistics remain relevant in view of evolving and increasingly demanding user needs.

It is also governed by the principles agreed among EU Member States and enshrined in the European Statistics Code of Practice (2nd revision/2017), namely principle 5 on Statistical Confidentiality and, more broadly, by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, established by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 1994 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in January 2014 (principle 6).

Regarding the processing of personal data, the exercise of statistical activity also complies with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European

Parliament and of the Council of 27 April, which lays down the rules on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and with other legislation applicable in this area.

General rules on statistical confidentiality

The following general rules shall apply to the protection of statistical confidentiality of individual data concerning natural or legal persons:

// They may not be made available for sanctioning, inspection or any other similar purposes.

// No service or authority may order or authorise access or consultation thereof, in particular courts, police, inspection services or tax authorities.

// They may not be disclosed in a way that allows for the direct or indirect identification of the natural or legal persons to whom they relate, and they must be anonymised in accordance with best methodological practices.

// Professional secrecy applies to all those who work in the production of official statistics (national and European), even after their duties have ceased, whether they are employed by the public institutions that comprise the SEN, or are service providers or others who, in the course of their duties, have access to information of an individual nature.

// All hired staff (in any type of regime or collaboration) sign a confidentiality commitment statement. Any contracts or protocols related to official statistical activity and involving access to individual data must include a confidentiality commitment statement.

// The signature of the abovementioned statement does not exempt all those who carry out, or intend to carry out, work inherent to the exercise of official statistical activity from ensuring the use of appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure the physical and organisational security of all data to which they have access.

// Any contractual clauses which in any way, directly or indirectly, exempt from the obligation to safeguard the confidentiality of individual data are null and void.

// Breach of the rules inherent to the compliance with the Principle of Statistical Confidentiality shall determine immediate termination of the contract and forfeiture of any right to compensation, without prejudice to any disciplinary and/or criminal liability.

// The clear commitment to information confidentiality and protection of individual privacy is public and can be found on the websites of Statistics Portugal, the Regional Statistical Service of the Azores, the Regional Directorate of Statistics of Madeira and of the entities with powers delegated by the Board of Directors of Statistics Portugal, ensuring that all individual data collected are confidential, including those from administrative or other sources.

**Special rules for
making individual
data available**

Individual data can be made available on:

// The Public Administration, unless otherwise provided for by law.

// Legal persons, or data relating to the business or professional activity of a natural person, provided that such data are public by force of law

// Natural or legal persons, provided that there is unambiguous consent from the data subject.

// Natural or legal persons, with prior authorisation from the Higher Statistical Council (CSE), in exceptional situations, as provided for respectively in article 6 (5) and (6) of the SEN Law, and only in an anonymised form and subject to strict information security rules that ensure the confidentiality of the information and avoid any risk of identification.

// Natural or legal persons, intended for the pursuit of scientific purposes in the situations set out in Articles 7 and 8 of the SEN Law, only in an anonymised form and subject to an agreement between assignor and requestor and the application of strict rules that ensure the protection of confidentiality of the information and avoid any risk of identification.

**Statistical process:
methods and
procedures for
the protection
of statistical
confidentiality
confidencialidade**

The privacy of data providers and the confidentiality of the information they provide are inherent to the whole process of producing official statistics. It is in this context, in accordance with the best international statistical practices and in order to ensure the confidentiality of the information of each statistical operation throughout its life cycle, including the moment when the statistical results are disseminated, that in each new operation the information security requirements are revisited, reconsidered and documented.

The information security requirements are set out in the Information Security Policy and are broken down into policies and procedures that are divided, as to the nature of the aspects they aim to protect, into physical security measures (barriers that limit direct contact or access to information or to the infrastructure that supports it) and logical security measures (barriers that are based on the architecture defined for the technological infrastructure and which prevent and limit access to data).

In the case of individual data of natural persons, these practices and measures also make it possible to meet the requirements arising from the legal rules governing the protection of personal data and the defence of privacy, namely the

**Statistical
process: design,
collection,
processing,
analysis and
dissemination
phases**

Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, of 27 April) and other legislation applicable in this area.

It is therefore in this context that the phases of preparation and handling of individual information stand out, namely through the preparation of micro-data and the calculation of aggregate data (design and collection, processing and analysis phases).

Identificação de necessidades <i>Specify Needs</i>	Especificações <i>Design</i>	Desenvolvimento <i>Build</i>	Recolha <i>Collect</i>	Processamento <i>Process</i>	Análise <i>Analyse</i>	Divulgação <i>Disseminate</i>	Avaliação <i>Evaluate</i>
1.1 Identificar necessidades <i>Identify needs</i>	2.1 Especificar resultados e formatos de divulgação <i>Design outputs and dissemination</i>	3.1 Reutilizar ou desenvolver suportes para recolha <i>Reuse or build collection instruments</i>	4.1 Criar universo, base de amostragem e selecionar amostra <i>Create frame and select sample</i>	5.1 Integrar microdados <i>Integrate data</i>	6.1 Preparar resultados <i>Prepare draft outputs</i>	7.1 Atualizar sistemas de difusão <i>Update output systems</i>	8.1 Reunir elementos para avaliação <i>Gather evaluation inputs</i>
1.2 Confirmar necessidades <i>Consult and confirm needs</i>	2.2 Especificar conceitos, classificações e variáveis <i>Design variable</i>	3.2 Reutilizar ou desenvolver suportes para tratamento e análise <i>Reuse or build processing and analysis components</i>	4.2 Preparar recolha <i>Set up collection</i>	5.2 Classificar e codificar <i>Classify and code</i>	6.2 Validar resultados <i>Validate outputs</i>	7.2 Elaborar produtos de difusão <i>Produce dissemination products</i>	8.2 Avaliar <i>Conduct evaluation</i>
1.3 Estabelecer objetivos <i>Establish output objectives</i>	2.3 Especificar recolha <i>Design collection</i>	3.3 Reutilizar ou desenvolver suportes para difusão <i>Reuse or build dissemination components</i>	4.3 Executar recolha <i>Run collection</i>	5.3 Validar microdados <i>Review and validate</i>	6.3 Interpretar e explicar resultados <i>Interpret and explain outputs</i>	7.3 Divulgar produtos de difusão <i>Release dissemination products</i>	8.3 Estabelecer plano de ação <i>Agree an action plan</i>
1.4 Identificar conceitos <i>Identify concepts</i>	2.4 Especificar universo, base de amostragem e amostra <i>Design frame and sample</i>	3.4 Configurar fluxos <i>Configure workflows</i>	4.4 Finalizar recolha <i>Finalise collection</i>	5.4 Editar e imputar <i>Edit and impute</i>	6.4 Garantir confidencialidade <i>Apply disclosure control</i>	7.4 Promover produtos de difusão <i>Promote dissemination products</i>	
1.5 Avaliar disponibilidade e adequação da informação <i>Check data availability and suitability</i>	2.5 Especificar tratamento e análise <i>Design processing and analysis</i>	3.5 Testar sistema de produção <i>Test production systems</i>		5.5 Calcular variáveis derivadas e novas unidades <i>Derive new variables and units</i>	6.5 Finalizar resultados <i>Finalise outputs</i>	7.5 Prestar apoio a utilizadores <i>Provide user support</i>	
1.6 Preparar processo produtivo <i>Prepare and submit business case</i>	2.6 Especificar sistemas e fluxos de produção <i>Design production systems and workflow</i>	3.6 Testar processo de produção <i>Test statistical business process</i>		5.6 Calcular ponderadores <i>Calculate weights</i>			
		3.7 Finalizar sistema de produção <i>Finalise production systems</i>		5.7 Calcular agregados <i>Calculate aggregates</i>			
				5.8 Finalizar processamento <i>Finalise data files</i>			

Source: INE, I.P., Handbook of Statistical Production Process, 6rd edition – V.3.2, 2025.
Reference model: Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), UNECE

In all phases of the statistical production process, individual data are accessed according to the need-to-know principle, through privileges and access control as established within the framework of Information Security Management.

The design phases are characterised, namely, by the definition of the context of the statistical operation, the reason for carrying it out and the legal grounds, the list of available sources, the type of statistical operation and units to be surveyed, the planning of human resources, funding, IT and methodological requirements, the development of the collection media and the configuration of flows in order to ensure data security and information confidentiality.

Additionally, and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, in the case of statistical operations involving personal data that are likely to entail a high risk to the rights and freedoms of natural persons, a specific analysis called Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is conducted at the design specification stage (Phase 3) of the respective operation.

At the collection stage, the protection of confidentiality of individual data collected directly (primary information) from information providers through surveys is defined according to the different collection modes (electronic, face-to-face, telephone, postal, or combination of methods).

Information providers are informed in advance of the aspects determining the conduct of the survey, namely the exclusively statistical purpose of the data collected and the confidential nature of the information provided. Statistics Portugal also makes available, through its service dedicated to the [electronic data collection](#), additional information on each of the surveys, as well as a set of frequently asked questions ([companies](#) and [individuals and households](#)), which provide more detailed explanations.

The electronic transmission of data from other sources (indirect collection) is carried out in such a way as to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the information, through the selection of the most secure mechanisms in relation to the process agreed upon with the external sources, namely: Statistics Portugal's private cloud, dedicated circuits, secure network protocols, use of Virtual Private Network (VPN).

In the processing and analysis phases, data are processed in order to obtain new variables and units (from aggregation and other estimation methods) and thus calculate statistical aggregates and proceed to the final tabulation of results for dissemination.

The most appropriate statistical disclosure control methods are applied to each statistical operation, consisting of the analysis and modification/disruption of the original data in order to eliminate the possibility of direct identification or to minimise the identification or indirect identification of the data subjects, without involving disproportionate effort and costs.

With regard to the processing of data obtained from administrative, or other, sources, the treatment of data confidentiality follows the process described above.

contacts

Headquarters | Av. António José de Almeida 1000-043 LISBOA
General Telephone: + 351 218 426 100* E-mail: ine@ine.pt

User Support

Telephone: + 351 218 440 695*
E-mail: info@ine.pt

Support Centre in Portugal for European Statistics

Telephone: + 351 218 440 447*
E-mail: ESDS@ine.pt

Opening hours: 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.,
on working days

Assistance to Journalists

Direct Telephone: + 351 218 426 110*
General Telephone: + 351 218 426 100*
(ext:1248/1473)
E-mail: imprensa@ine.pt

Opening hours: 9:30 A.M. - 6:30 P.M.,
on working days

Library | Headquarters

Email: biblioteca@ine.pt

Opening hours: 9 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. / 2 P.M. to 5 P.M.,
working days

Support to respondents (companies/
organisations or households) | Data
Collection and Management Department
Telephone + 351 218 426 307*
E-mail: webinq@ine.pt

Opening hours: 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.,
on working days.

Porto Delegation | Edifício Scala

Rua do Vilar, 235 – 4050-626 Porto
General Telephone: + 351 226 072 000*
E-mail: dp@ine.pt

Opening hours: 9 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. / 2 P.M. - 5 P.M.,
on working days

Coimbra Delegation | Rua Aires de
Campos, Casa das Andorinhas
3000-014 COIMBRA
General Telephone + 351 239 790 400*
E-mail: dc@ine.pt

Library opening hours:
9 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. / 2 P.M. - 5 P.M.,
on working days

Évora Delegation | Rua Miguel

Bombarda, 36
7000-919 ÉVORA
General Telephone: + 351 266 757 700*
E-mail: de@ine.pt

Library opening hours:
9 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. / 2 P.M. - 5 P.M.,
on working days

Faro Delegation | Rua Cândido

Guerreiro, 43-3ªFte
8000-318 FARO
General Telephone: + 351 289 887 800*
E-mail: df@ine.pt

Library opening hours:
9 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. / 2 P.M. - 5 P.M.,
on working days

Regional Statistical Service of

the Azores | Rua da Rocha, 26
9700-169 ANGRA DO HEROÍSMO
General Telephone +351 295 204 020*
E-mail: srea@azores.gov.pt

Regional Directorate of Statistics

of Madeira | Calçada de Santa Clara, 38
9004-545 FUNCHAL
General Telephone +351 291 720 060*
E-mail: drem@ine.pt

* Call to national fixed network