

Encuesta Continua de Empleo (ECE) Continuous Employment Survey

Fact Sheet

May 2025



Type of survey

Labour force survey.

Frequency

Quarterly.

Owner institution

National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) of Costa Rica, with funding from the Central Bank of Costa Rica (BCCR).

Strategic objective

Generate regular information about the evolution of the main indicators of Costa Rica labour market in the short and long term.

Specific objectives

- Collect data on households concerning to the labour market, in an agile and timely way.
- Generate quarterly indicators of Costa Rica labour market.
- Analyze the dynamic of labour market in Costa Rica through indicators of change.
- Provide accurate information for analysis of the labour situation of the country.
- Support the design and evaluation of labour policies.

Legal framework

The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) was created by Law No. 7839 of October 15, 1998, with the purpose of producing statistical information through censuses, surveys and administrative records, which are very useful to know the reality of the country's population. On June 13, 2019, the new Law No. 9694, which strengthens the INEC, took effect. This new legislation regulates the National Statistics System (SEN), the institutions that compose it, and sets the basic rules for proper coordination. Therefore, INEC continues to exist but more strengthened.

Description

The ECE is a statistical survey that collects information about the employed, unemployed and not in the labour force population in Costa Rica. The data generated by ECE show seasonal variations in the labour market and contribute to enrich the official statistics of the INEC. The ECE started on May 31, 2010.

Universe of study

Population resident in Costa Rica, specifically in individual dwellings. The ECE excludes the population living in collective dwellings such as hospitals, convents, barracks or prisons.

Geographic coverage

1. National level.
2. Rural / urban area.
3. Costa Rica planning region (Central, Chorotega, Pacífico Central, Brunca, Huetar Caribe y Huetar Norte).

Subjects

The ECE questionnaire consists of 10 sections:

1. Households identification
2. Section A: Demographic characteristics
3. Section B: Labour force status (employed, unemployed and not in the labour force)
4. Section C: Employed population
5. Section D: Self-employed population (employers and own-account workers)
6. Section E: Employee population
7. Section F: Secondary employment
8. Section G: Employment with insufficient hours and inadequate employment
9. Section H: Unemployed population
10. Section I: Primary production for household consumption

Statistics and databases

Reference population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographic characteristics: persons of all ages.• Labour force status: persons aged 15 years and over.
Reference period of labour force status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employed: one week before the interview.• Unemployed: last four weeks before the interview.• Not in the labour force: one week before the interview.
Type of classifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic activity: Economic Activities Classification of Costa Rica 2011 (CAECR-2011), adaptation from the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) Rev.4, of the United Nations.• Occupation: Occupational Classification of Costa Rica 2011 (COCR-2011), adaptation from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) 08, International Labour Organization (ILO).• Education: Educational attainment and fields of education according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011, of UNESCO.• Institutional sector: Institutional Sector Classification based on the System of National Accounts (SNA) 1993, of the United Nations (UN).• Geographic level: province and canton according to the Territorial Division of Costa Rica. Planning regions based on MIDEPLAN. Country Codes with ECE's classification.
Number of variables	The anonymized database (without some variables to safeguard the confidentiality of the information) has 245 variables.
Imputation	The variables have not been imputed.
Confidentiality	The Law No.7839 ensures the confidentiality of the data collected by the INEC.
Disclosure Policy	The INEC has: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy for dissemination of statistics and distribution of microdata from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).• Regulation of the Policy for dissemination of statistics and distribution of microdata from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).
Quarters and years available	From Q3-2010 to the current quarter.

Sampling	
Sample design	Probabilistic, stratified, two-stage cluster and replicated.
Sampling frame	Sampling Frame Housing 2011 (MMV-2011). The current sample is drawn from the 2011 Census.
Sample size	9.528 dwellings per quarter, from 794 sample areas (Primary Sampling Units or UPM); i.e. 38.112 dwellings per year.
Sample rotation	25% of the dwellings rotate in the sample for each quarter. The ECE is a semipanel survey.

Data collection	
Collection period	The survey is conducted throughout the year, divided into quarters of 12 weeks.
Collection instrument	The ECE used PDA at the beginning, but from April 2013 has used Tablet.
Household respondent	Person aged 15 years or older, who is knowledgeable about the household. In the ECE, around 40% of the respondents gave their own information.
Fieldwork logistics	The country was divided into 10 strategic areas of fieldwork: San Jose 1, San José 2, Liberia, Cañas, Puntarenas, Guápiles, San Vito, Perez Zeledón, San Carlos and Limón, which are coordinated and assisted from INEC Headquarters.
Fieldwork staff	The ECE hires people in each area of fieldwork. There is a supervisor, interviewers and operators of mobile equipment (drivers) by area. The numbers of interviewers by area depends on the workload. Additionally, from INEC Headquarters people coordinate and support the fieldwork staff.
Collection frequency	Daily collection, which is performed simultaneously in all the fieldwork areas.
Type of interview	Direct interview. In some cases, the interview is performed by phone.
Collection method	The distribution of the workload is performed by electronic transfer from INEC Headquarters to field, and vice versa, through a computer system developed for that task. (INEC Headquarters ↔ Supervisor ↔ Interviewer).
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Platform. • Two training feedback. • New staff.
Number of fieldwork staff	10 area supervisors, 22 interviewers and 10 drivers. Furthermore, the ECE also has people in INEC Headquarters, that coordinates and supports the fieldwork.
Response rate	2025-Q1: 90,2%

Frequency of publication results
4 publications a year, 1 per quarter. (5 weeks after the end of the reference quarter)

Dissemination of results	
Documents www.inec.go.cr	Quarterly report, press release, questionnaires, methodological and technical documents, analysis papers about special topics.
Excel tables www.inec.go.cr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables related to the quarterly report, year comparison and sampling errors. • Other topics: formal employment, informal employment, youth and adult population, and main indicators by planning region.
Accelerated Data Program (ADP): http://sistemas.inec.cr/pad5/index.php/catalog/central	Is a computing standardized tool used for documenting statistical operations, sponsored by PARIS21, World Bank and other international partners. It contains information about the different processes of the ECE, methodological documents, Excel tables and database in SPSS.
Redatam https://sistemas.inec.cr:8443/bininec/RpWebEngine.exe/Portal?BASE=ECE&lang=esp	Is an online database processing system developed by CEPAL/CELADE, where is available the ECE database.
Workshops	Lectures or workshops for public institutions, private organizations and others.