Tanzania - Informal Sector Survey 2025

NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS, OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN

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Identification

SURVEY ID NUMBER
TZA-NBS-ISS-2025-v01

TITLE
Informal Sector Survey 2025

TRANSLATED TITLE
Utafiti wa Sekta Isiyo Rasmi wa Mwaka 2025

COUNTRY

Name	Country code
United Republic of Tanzania	TZA

STUDY TYPE
Informal Sector Survey [hh/iss]

SERIES INFORMATION
The Informal Sector Survey 2025 (2025 ISS) is a national statistical survey designed to generate reliable, comprehensive and internationally comparable data on the size, structure, characteristics and economic contribution of the informal sector in the United Republic of Tanzania. The survey provides information on informal sector establishments, their operational characteristics, employment, production, income, business performance and other relevant indicators to support evidence-based policymaking, development planning and the formulation of strategies for the promotion of decent work and sustainable economic development.

The ISS 2025 forms part of the national statistical programme aimed at strengthening the availability and quality of statistics on the informal sector in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. It provides an important evidence base for understanding informal economic activities, their contribution to employment and production, and the challenges faced by informal sector operators. The survey builds on previous informal sector data collection initiatives conducted in Tanzania, including the Informal Sector Surveys of 1991, 1995 and 2019 in Mainland Tanzania, and 1990 and 2013 in Zanzibar. As the first stand-alone informal sector survey of its kind conducted countrywide since Independence, the ISS 2025 represents a significant milestone in strengthening the production of integrated and comparable informal sector statistics for the United Republic of Tanzania.

The survey methodology and statistical concepts are informed by relevant international statistical standards and recommendations, including those of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), as applicable. The resulting data are intended to support national monitoring and reporting, contribute to the measurement of the informal economy, and facilitate comparisons with other countries, subject to differences in survey scope, definitions and methodology.

ABSTRACT
The Informal Sector Survey 2025 (2025 ISS) was conducted to generate reliable and nationally representative data on the characteristics, structure and economic contribution of the informal sector in the United Republic of Tanzania. The survey aimed to provide comprehensive information on informal sector establishments, including their economic activities, employment characteristics, business operations, production, income and other key indicators. The findings provide an evidence base for assessing the role of the informal sector in the national economy, supporting evidence-based policymaking, development planning and the formulation of policies and programmes aimed at promoting decent work, improving productivity and supporting the sustainable development of informal sector enterprises in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar.

KIND OF DATA
Sample survey data [ssd]

UNIT OF ANALYSIS
Households served as sampling units and informal sector operators as units of analysis

Version

VERSION DESCRIPTION
v1.0: Edited final data for public use .

VERSION DATE
2026-09-30

VERSION NOTES
Purpose: Generated reliable, nationally comparable labour statistics on size, structure and characteristics of the labour force.

Scope

NOTES
The 2025 Informal Sector Survey has been restricted to activities within the production boundary as defined in the 2008 SNA and covered both urban and rural areas to produce estimates at regional level. This restriction has been considered necessary to ensure that employment, production and income generation in the informal sector can be measured as a share of total employment, total sector product and Gross Domestic Product. The survey covered informal sector enterprises operating throughout the United Republic of Tanzania, including both Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. The survey focused on both agriculture and non-agricultural economic activities carried out by unincorporated enterprises that operate with a low level of organization, limited record-keeping practices, and are generally not registered under the formal regulatory framework. The survey scope excluded activities carried out solely for household consumption and formal sector enterprises. The findings are intended to support economic planning, policy formulation, as well as monitoring of the national, regional, and international development targets.

TOPICS

Topic	Vocabulary
Informal Sector Employment	Employed population, employment-to-population ratio.
Informal Sector Operators	Informal Sector Operator’s Main Customers and Suppliers, Main Competitors, Institutional Cooperation and Services for Informal Sector Businesses
Total Output	Average Annual Value Added, Gross Output, Intermediate Consumption
Operating Surplus	Annual operating surplus, average operating surplus
Capital investment	Fixed Asset, working Capital, Total Capital, Capital Equipment, Capital Purchased and Major Repairs, Current Capital Investment Fixed Asset, working Capital, Total Capital, Capital Equipment, Capital Purchased and Major Repairs, Current Capital Investment Fixed Asset, working Capital, Total Capital, Capital Equipment, Capital Purchased and Major Repairs, Current Capital Investment
Turnover	Average Monthly Turnover, Characteristics of Goods and Services Sold, Annual Turnover
Labour Productivity	Annual Gross Output Per Person, Annual Gross Value Added Per Person

KEYWORDS

Keyword
Informal Sector Operators
Informal Sector Employment
Average Annual Value Added
Gross Output and Labour Productivity

Coverage

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

The survey sample was designed to provide representative estimates on the Informal sector situtation at National level (Tanzania - URT, Mainland Tanzania - TZM & Zanzibar - ZNZ), Urban, Other urban, Rural areas and Dar es Salaam.

UNIVERSE

The survey covered all usual residents aged 15+ years resident in the households.

Producers and sponsors

PRIMARY INVESTIGATORS

Name	Affiliation
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS	GOVERNMENT OF TANZANIA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN	GOVERNMENT OF TANZANIA

PRODUCERS

Name	Affiliation	Role
Prime Minister's Office Labour, Employment and Relations	Government of the United Republic of Tanzania	Data Validation and Dissemination
The President's Office, Labour, Economic Affairs and Investment	Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar	Data Validation and Dissemination
International Labour Organization	United Nations (UN) Specialized Agency	Technical support and guidance on application of international statistical standards

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR

Name	Abbreviation	Role
Government of the United Republic of Tanzania	URT	FUNDING
WORLD BANK	WB	FUNDING
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION	ILO	TECHNICAL

OTHER IDENTIFICATIONS/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Name	Affiliation	Role
World Bank	WB	Fund management
International Labour Organisation	ILO	Technical support

Sampling

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The sampling frame for the 2025 ISS was derived from the inventory of Enumeration Areas (EAs) compiled during the 2022 Population and Housing Census (PHC). The sample was designed to provide representative estimates with a 95 percent confidence interval across three domains in Tanzania Mainland (TZM): rural areas, other urban areas and Dar es Salaam; and 7 domains for Zanzibar, namely: rural, urban, Kaskazini Pemba, Kaskazini Unguja, Kusini Pemba, Kusini Unguja and Mjini Magharibi. Prior to household selection, a fresh household listing operation was conducted in all selected EAs to establish an up-to-date sampling frame of residential households. In the second stage, a fixed number of eighteen (18) households were systematically selected from each listed EA. The household questionnaire was administered to collect demographic and socio-economic information on household members and to identify individuals engaged in informal sector activities who were interviewed using the individual questionnaire. The questionnaire collected information on the characteristics and

operations of informal sector enterprises, including business activities, ownership, employment, earnings, and business premises.

DEVIATIONS FROM THE SAMPLE DESIGN

The 2025 ISS survey estimates are derived from complex sampling procedures and are subject to various sources of error. These estimates may differ from the true population parameters due to unavoidable survey errors. Such errors, inherent in the survey process, arise from both sampling and non-sampling sources.
The key measures used to assess sampling error is the Coefficient of Variation (CV). The Coefficient of Variation is a standardized measure of dispersion that expresses the extent of variability in relation to the mean of the population. It is calculated as the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean and is usually expressed as a percentage.
Non-sampling errors are all other types of errors that may occur during the survey process, excluding those related to sampling. These can include errors in data collection, respondent misunderstandings, interviewer bias, data entry mistakes, non-response and processing errors.
Reducing non-sampling errors requires rigorous quality control measures at every stage of the survey - from questionnaire design and interviewer training to data validation and processing.

RESPONSE RATE

The overall response rate for URT is 92.85 percent; with response rate of Tanzania Mainland being 92.96 percent and 92.20 percent for Zanzibar.

WEIGHTING

The sampling weights were applied in the 2025 ISS to ensure the survey results represent the national population.
Each household's data was weighted to reflect its share in the population, correcting for the sample design.
The basic weight was calculated as the inverse of a household's probability of selection, derived from a multi-stage sampling process (from selection of Enumeration Areas to households). This ensured that each observation was properly scaled.
A structured Excel system was used to track sampling details such as household counts, selection probabilities and intervals allowing accurate computation of weights.

These weights were then applied during analysis to produce reliable, nationally representative labour force estimates.

Data Collection

DATES OF DATA COLLECTION

Start	End
2026-03	2026-05

DATA COLLECTION MODE

Face-to-face [f2f]

SUPERVISION

Data collection for the 2025 Informal Sector Survey (ISS) was carried out for 45 days. To maintain data quality and ensure adherence to survey protocols, regular field supervision was conducted throughout the data collection period both national and regional supervisors made systematic visits to the field to oversee enumerator performance and address any challenges encountered during data collection. These quality assurance measures were instrumental in minimizing non-sampling errors, such as incorrect recording of responses, inconsistent questionnaire administration or procedural deviations by enumerators.

DATA COLLECTION NOTES

The training program for the 2025 ISS was conducted in two key phases: the Training of Trainers (ToT) and the Training of Enumerators (ToE). This structured approach was designed to ensure the effective dissemination of knowledge and the consistent implementation of survey methodologies across all regions. The trainings were conducted concurrently in Zanzibar and Tanzania Mainland. The first phase, the Training of Trainers (ToT), brought together Regional Statistical Managers (RSMs) as main supervisors and other supervisors from NBS HQ. The primary objective of this phase was to equip the supervisors (RSMs and HQ representatives) with a comprehensive understanding of the ISS instruments, data collection protocols and supervisory procedures. As the RSMs were expected to oversee and support the enumerators during the actual data collection, it was crucial that they mastered both the content and the operational aspects of the survey. The ToT served not only as a capacity-building exercise but also as a foundation for maintaining high standards and consistency in the field.
The second phase, the Training of Enumerators (ToE), which was designed to prepare field staff for their roles in data collection. This phase of the training was intensive and focused on ensuring that all enumerators received uniform instruction and practical experience.

DATA COLLECTORS

Name	Abbreviation	Affiliation
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS	NBS	MINISTRY OF FINANCE
OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN	OCGS	PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - FINANCE AND PLANNING, ZANZIBAR (POFP)

Questionnaires

QUESTIONNAIRES

The survey instruments for the 2025 ISS comprised of questionnaires; listing forms; instructions manuals to enumerators and supervisors; and quality assurance guidelines.
All the survey instruments were developed by the surveys' Technical Committee in various working sessions prior to the main survey.
The questionnaires were developed in English and Kiswahili languages after extensive consultations with stakeholders and data users.
The consultations were in form of stakeholders meetings which provided an avenue for discussions between data producers, in this case NBS and OCGS and a wider community of data users. Comments from stakeholders regarding survey instruments were, if needed used to further refine the instruments.
The instructions manual to enumerators and supervisors were also developed in conjunction with survey questionnaires in both English and Kiswahili languages.

Data Processing

DATA EDITING

Data processing involved various activities which included: - receiving data electronically though severs immediately after being edited by the field supervisors; computer editing using logics built in the CAPI; and Data analysis and tabulation were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and STATA. After each quarter's dataset was processed and edited, detailed editing reports were generated and shared with regional supervisors. These reports served as important feedback tools, helping to improve the quality of supervision and data collection in subsequent rounds.

Data Appraisal

ESTIMATES OF SAMPLING ERROR

The ISS survey estimates are derived from complex sampling procedures and are subject to various sources of error. These estimates may differ from the true population parameters due to unavoidable survey errors. Such errors, inherent in the survey process, arise from both sampling and non-sampling sources.
The key measures used to assess sampling error is the Coefficient of Variation (CV). The Coefficient of Variation is a standardized measure of dispersion that expresses the extent of variability in relation to the mean of the population. It is calculated as the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean and is usually expressed as a percentage.
Non-sampling errors are all other types of errors that may occur during the survey process, excluding those related to sampling. These can include errors in data collection, respondent misunderstandings, interviewer bias, data entry mistakes, non-response and processing errors.
Reducing non-sampling errors requires rigorous quality control measures at every stage of the survey - from questionnaire design and interviewer training to data validation and processing.

Sampling and non-sampling errors were computed for the following variables;- Informal Sector Operator, Informal Sector, Youth informal Sector Operators Aged 15-35 years, Informal Businesses under Individual Ownership, Operators in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Informal Businesses Operating without Permanent Premises, Proportion of Main Customers and Principal Suppliers, Businesses reporting lack of or inadequate capital as an operating challenge, Businesses reporting difficulty getting markets/customers, Informal Sector Intermediate Consumption, Businesses indicating access to loans as assistance needed, Informal Sector Growth Output, Informal Sector Intermediate Consumption and Informal Sector Value Added.

DATA APPRAISAL

In addition to estimating sampling and non-sampling errors, the Total Survey Error (TSE) was computed to assess the overall difference between a population parameter (such as a mean or total) and its corresponding estimate derived from the sample survey. Understanding and minimizing TSE is essential for ensuring the quality, accuracy and reliability of survey results.

Furthermore, enumerators play a critical role in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of data collected at the household level. The quality of their work directly influences the production of reliable labour statistics, which are essential for evidence-based policy formulation, planning and decision-making on employment, unemployment and broader labour market dynamics.

Access policy

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CONFIDENTIALITY
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Public use files, accessible to all

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Data Dictionary

Data file	Cases	Variables