



**United
Nations**

Department of
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Distributive Trade Statistics

Revision to the International Recommendations

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Background: Distributive Trade Statistics



**Wholesaling
goods** **Repair**



Retailing
Delivery



Storing goods



Displaying



- **Covering ISIC Rev. 4 section G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles**
- **Resale of goods** without substantial transformation, including negotiating transactions between buyers and sellers , transporting, storing, sorting, packing, and selling them to buyers
- **Excludes** the manufacture and sale of goods, which is generally classified as manufacturing
- **Includes** wholesale & retail sales of vehicles carried out by wholesalers/retailers, not manufacturers
- **An update to ISIC Rev. 5** would look at changes in section G and whether to include repair/maintenance of motor vehicles in section T



Definitions: Distributive Trade Statistics

Wholesaling: resale (sale without transformation) of new and used goods to retailers, business-to-business trade or resale to other wholesalers or acting as an agent or broker in buying merchandise for, or selling merchandise to, such companies.

Retailing: resale (sale without transformation) of new and used goods mainly to the general public by shops, department stores, stalls, e-commerce retailers, mail-order houses, hawkers and peddlers, consumer cooperatives, etc. Usually referred to as consumer goods or retail goods. Goods not usually entering the retail trade, such as cereal grains, ores, industrial machinery, etc., are excluded.

Repair and maintenance of motor vehicles: An update would consider whether these should be included.



Importance of Distributive Trade Statistics

Significant
component
of GDP



Retail
turnover as
indicator
economic
activity



Rising share
of value
added &
employment



Dominated by
informal sector
due to low
barrier to entry

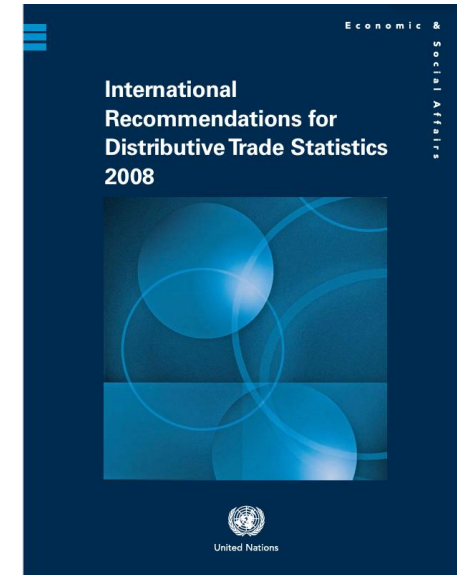


GVCs: links
domestic
producers &
consumers &
export/import



UN Manuals on Distributive Trade Statistics

- Need for a better cross-country comparability was recognized by the UN Statistical Commission in the 1950s.
- The [International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics 2008](#) and the [Indices of Distributive Trade: Handbook on Good Practices](#).
- Comprehensive methodological framework for the collection and compilation of distributive trade statistics in all countries.
- Experiences in compilation of distributive trade indices.
- [The Voorburg Group on Service Statistics](#) establishes and maintains internationally comparable methodology for measuring output & price indices for service industries, including distributive trade.

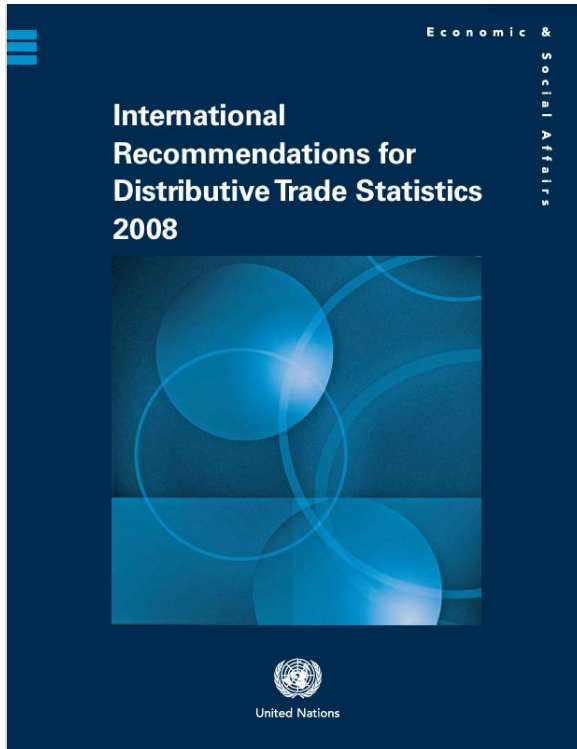


Indices of Distributive Trade: Handbook on Good Practices

10 May 2010
United Nations, 2010



International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics (IRDTS) 2008



- Recommendations on the:
 - Concepts and Definitions
 - Classifications and statistical units
 - Data sources and data compilation methods
 - Data quality, metadata and dissemination policies
- Also covers treatment of informal sector units, compilation of indices of distributive trade, seasonal adjustment.
- Consistent with industrial statistics, construction statistics and other related domains of structural and short-term statistics..
- IRDTS 2008 is harmonized with the SNA 2008.



Needs for a Revision of the Distributive Trade Statistics Recommendations

- A revision may be needed to ensure alignment with recent updates to major global statistical frameworks, including:
 - **2025 System of National Accounts (SNA)**
 - **ISIC Revision 5** and **CPC Version 3.0** classifications
 - **Standards** on international structural and short-term business statistics, international labour statistics, and other relevant indicator frameworks, including the Principal Indicators for Business and Trade Statistics
- UNCEBTS coordinated with the Voorburg Group to launch **a global assessment on the need for revision in June 2026**

Global Consultation on the Revision of the Distributive Trade Statistics Guidelines (2026)

Obtain feedback on the need
to revise the international
Distributive Trade Statistics
Guidelines

Obtain feedback on priority
areas and topics for such
a revision

Identify countries and orgs.
that publish, and have
expertise in, distributive trade
statistics and price indices

Identify which countries and
organizations are interested in
contributing to a revision

Identify other service sectors
for which international
guidelines are seen as
important (to gauge the level
of needs and interests)

UNCEBTS and Voorburg Group
will evaluate the results to
determine whether a revision
is supported and its feasibility



Global Consultation: Results at a Glance

Global consultation on revising IRDTS 2008 and HGP 2010

80

responses

76

national statistical offices of countries and areas

4

regional and international organizations

**Broad support for
updating the
recommendations**

Participation covered all regions

Africa

Asia and the Pacific

Europe

Latin America and the
Caribbean

Middle East and North Africa

Consultation period: June-July 2026



Awareness and Use of Existing Guidelines

IRDTs 2008

50 respondents reported awareness
40 reported using the recommendations

HGP 2010

37 respondents reported awareness
30 reported using the handbook

Recurring observation

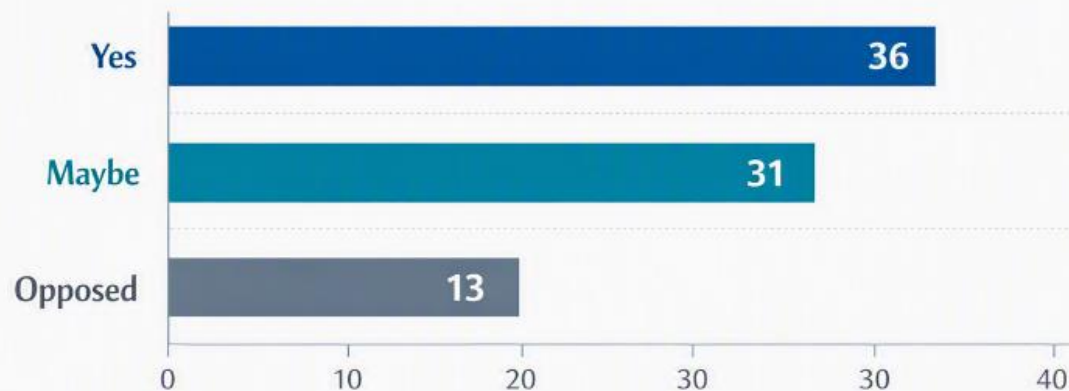
The recommendations remain technically useful, but are less visible as regional guidance has become more prominent. For some respondents, the global consultation was their first exposure to the guidelines.



Support for Revising the Guidelines

Support for Revising the Guidelines

Responses to whether the guidelines should be revised



80 respondents

answered "Yes" or "Maybe" or "No"

67 Yes and May be

Of which: 31 Maybe

13 Opposed

a smaller share of responses (16%)



Priority Topics for Revision

Topics shown in reported priority order

Priority Topics for Future Guidance



Leading needs

- 1 Scope of distributive trade statistics
- 2 Compilation of turnover indices
- 3 Data items and definitions
- 4 Value and volume indices of retail sales
- 5 Definition of distributive trade output



Current Production of Distributive Trade Statistics

Extensive production

Regions identified

North America, much of Europe, several Asian economies, and parts of Latin America

Typical outputs

- Retail and wholesale trade statistics
- Turnover indices
- Structural business statistics
- Volume and short-term indicators

Limited or developing production

Regions identified

Africa, parts of Western Asia, and small island and developing economies

Common needs

- Methodological frameworks
- Capacity building
- Statistical programme development
- Practical implementation support



Seasonal Adjustment and Advanced Indicators

12

Seasonally adjusted data

25

Trend-cycle estimates

4

Dedicated advanced indicators

Areas being explored

Flash estimates • Early indicators • Administrative-data-based indicators • Bank card transactions • Near real-time indicators



Interest in Contributing to Revision Work

25

respondents expressed
readiness
to contribute expertise

Retail trade statistics

**Wholesale trade
statistics**

**Short-term business
statistics**

**Structural business
statistics**

National accounts

Price statistics

Business registers

Digital data sources

**Methodological
development**

Organizations also identified experts willing to participate in task teams or focus groups.



Regional Perspectives and Priorities

Africa

Capacity building; programme development; price indices; practical examples

Asia and the Pacific

Digitalization; platform commerce; e-commerce; administrative data

Europe

Framework alignment; deflation; index construction; enterprise groups

Latin America and the Caribbean

Structural statistics; e-commerce; administrative records; informal sector

Middle East and North Africa

Programme expansion; infrastructure; price and turnover statistics

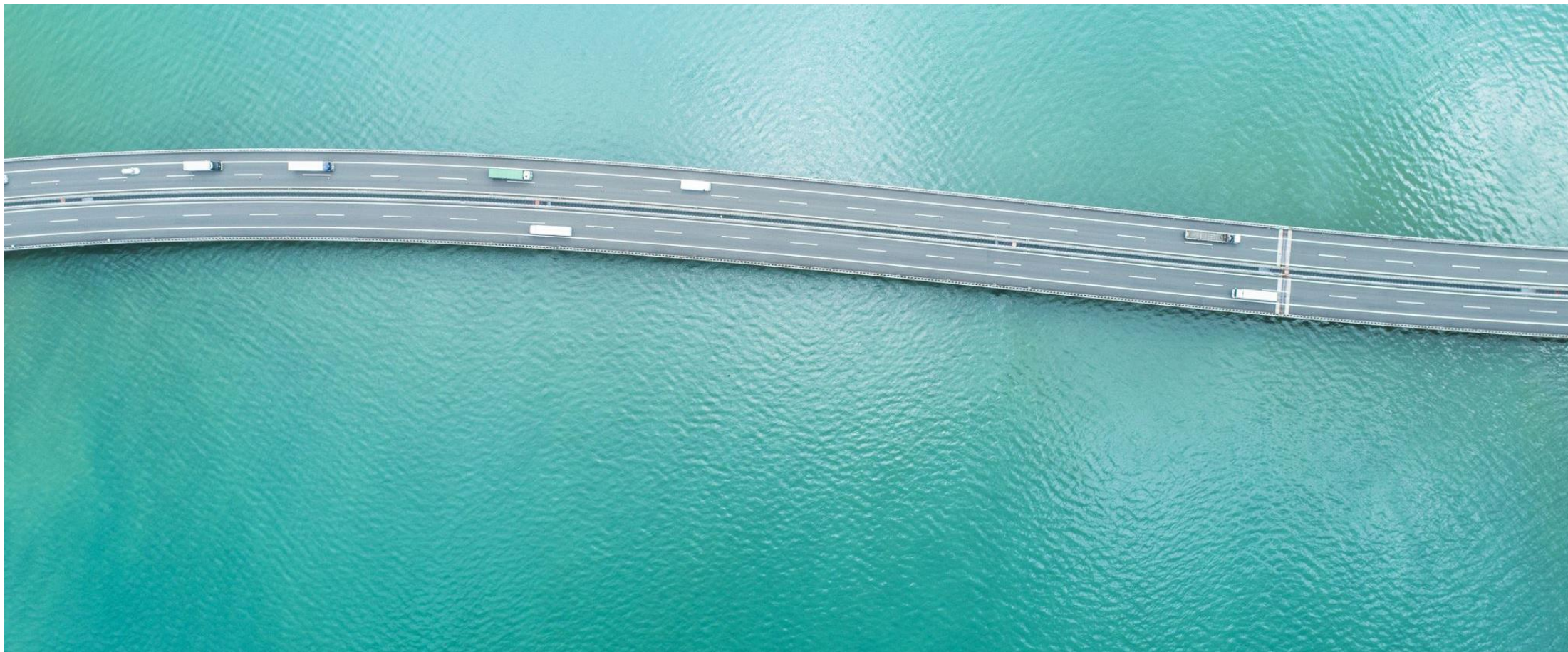
Way Forward

- Consultation feedback strongly supports revising the international recommendations.
- Responses will set priorities and identify country expertise.
- UNSD and the Voorburg Group would co-secretariat a UNCEBTS task team.
- Next steps: seek a Commission mandate, confirm co-chairs & contributors, and agree on a work plan.
- Voorburg Group members are invited to participate throughout the revision.

Points for Discussion

- What are the main challenges/priority topics in compiling DTS in your country?
- Would your country contribute to revising IRDTS?
- Bonus: Do other service sectors need dedicated guidance—for example, real estate, telecommunications, publishing, or professional services?

Thank you



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DESA
Statistics Division