

Figures Under the Microscope: Reliable Statistics for the Economy

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The phrase “what gets measured can be improved” was the motto of the recently dissolved National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval). Although the agency has been dissolved, its message is more relevant than ever: without reliable data as a compass, any attempt to improve the economy risks sailing blind. Accurate measurement of key phenomena such as employment, inflation, or poverty is not a minor technical task; it is a necessary condition for progress in economic and social development.

Official statistics constitute a public good—in both the economic sense and in terms of public access—of high strategic value. Their credibility rests on internationally recognized principles: impartiality, objectivity, relevance, accuracy, coherence, transparency, accessibility, replicability, and confidentiality. These pillars are not technical ornaments; they are the foundation of public trust and informed debate. When these principles are undermined, institutional legitimacy is eroded—and with it, the effectiveness of public policies.

It is therefore essential that analysts, the media, and decision-makers understand the methodology behind the generation and revision of statistics. A recent case illustrates the risks of ignoring this dynamic: following the release of employment figures in the United States, Donald Trump accused the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of manipulation, calling the report a “hoax” and dismissing its commissioner. The criticism arose after downward revisions to the May and June data—from an initially reported 139,000 jobs to 14,000 in the revised figures. While the magnitude of the adjustment may be unsettling, periodic revisions—whether upward or downward—are an inherent part of the commitment to accuracy and transparency. The Bureau, like many other statistical agencies, publishes a historical record of revisions where all stakeholders can see that even larger adjustments were made in January 2009 and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Mexican context, IMSS records as of July 2025 report a record increase of more than 1.2 million formal jobs, driven largely by the incorporation of digital platform workers—particularly in delivery and transportation—into the social security system. Beyond the regulatory debate around their formalization, this phenomenon is an atypical event that must be analyzed rigorously when evaluating employment trends in the second half of the year. It is a key variable in Mexico not only because of its statistical effect, but also due to its structural relevance in measuring formal employment, the main source of household income in the country.

Another relevant case will be the upcoming release of Mexico’s official poverty measurement, now under the responsibility of Inegi following Coneval’s dissolution, and to be published alongside the recent results of the 2024 National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (Enigh). While many analysts replicated Coneval’s methodology when the survey was released, Inegi will present its own version on August 13,

with technical clarifications and methodological adjustments. This institutional change poses a challenge for methodological continuity and comparability, and underscores the enormous responsibility involved in producing replicable and robust statistics.

The technical independence of statistical offices is as crucial as the autonomy of central banks. It is not merely desirable; it is indispensable. INEGI, in particular, enjoys high international prestige; it is a Mexican asset on the global stage and should remain so. Ensuring its institutional strength—with sufficient resources, legal backing, and a culture of integrity—is a necessary condition for withstanding political pressures and contributing to informed debate in Mexico and around the world. Protecting the independence of these institutions is not the State's responsibility alone. It is a collective responsibility—a commitment to truth and to building a more informed society.

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