

Call for communications

Conference “80 years of INSEE: a new look at official statistics”

Montrouge (France), 27–29 April 2026

In 2026, we will celebrate the 80th anniversary of INSEE, the French statistical office, as well as the 50th anniversary of the ‘Symposium on the History of Statistics’, held in 1976 in Vaucresson.

This symposium demonstrates the early commitment of INSEE and its members to engaging in historical reflection on their activities. This was the first time the French statistical office had taken such a step, bringing together historians, sociologists, and INSEE staff. This reflexivity persists in various forms, creating a peculiar INSEE tradition, as evidenced by the publication of a commemorative work for INSEE's 50th anniversary in 1996, the 'History of Statistics Days' in 2006, and a scientific symposium in 2016.

Over the last fifty years, a growing body of work (both within and outside INSEE) has contributed to a profound renewal of subjects, fields, and issues in the historical and social sciences of official statistics. This conference forms part of this ongoing development and, as in 1976, seeks to encourage critical, interdisciplinary dialogue between practitioners and researchers.

All disciplinary approaches are welcome. The conference is open to proposals from anyone who has worked in and/or with official statistics in any capacity. The proposed contributions can address the following areas, for example:

1) Institutions, actors, and networks

Official statistics rely on a variety of institutions and individuals. Who are the actors involved in producing official statistics? How do the social characteristics of these professionals as well as their training, working environments and commitments, influence the questions asked and the data produced? How do statistical institutions interact with other forecasting, planning, and research bodies, as well as with administrations, public policies, and politicians?

2) Methods, classifications, and surveys

The production of official statistics uses a wide range of tools: nomenclatures, collection tools, surveys, administrative data, censuses, other data sources (big data), etc. How do calculation tools and techniques (from mechanographic files to IT and AI) and data processing practices influence the statistics produced and their various formats (indicators, accounting tables, studies, etc.)? How do official statistics react to, or even take over, data or categories initially produced by private actors (trade unions, companies, etc.)?

3) Comparisons, harmonization, and circulation

The scope of official statistics is constantly evolving. There are many standard-setting institutions for the international harmonization and comparison of statistics. What practices exist for the international dissemination and circulation of statistical models, nomenclatures, and tools? How do the dynamics and exchanges between the national and international spheres influence official statistics and the institutions that produce them? From a comparative perspective, this raises the question of INSEE's specificity and its model (or counter-model) in relation to other statistical offices.

4) Reception, use, and criticism

Official statisticians also have the task of publishing and disseminating official figures to the public. The public's reactions to these figures vary widely, ranging from non-reception to criticism, and include uses in different contexts (media interventions, parliamentary debates, private discussions, etc.). Which numbers attract attention, and which are ignored? How do statistical organizations work to influence the way data is received? How does this reception impact the practices of other public administrations?

5) The writing and sources of the history of statistics

In France, as in other countries, the history of official statistics can be the subject of historical research in its own right. How has this history been written, and on what sources is it based? We will particularly examine the role of libraries and statistical archives as *knowledge places* ("lieux de savoir"): How are statistics archived? How can these archives be identified and accessed? What measures can be taken to deal with private, missing, incomplete, or dispersed archives?

These topics are proposed for guidance only, and other topics are welcome. The conference will also include the study of contemporary transformations in official statistics presented in the form of empirical material for future historical research.

For further information, please contact: dg75-colloque-histoire-2026@insee.fr.

The conference will take place at the INSEE headquarters in Montrouge, near Paris (France). Presentations may be given remotely. Abstracts should be sent to dg75-colloque-histoire-2026@insee.fr before **14 December 2025**. They can be written in English or French. They should be no longer than one page and include a title, four to six keywords, and a short biography of the speaker(s).

Depending on evaluation by the scientific committee, a collective publication of the contributions may be considered after the conference.

Limited funds are available to cover travel and accommodation costs for young researchers if necessary. Those interested are invited to express their interest when submitting their paper proposal.

Scientific Committee:

Mathieu Aguilera, Thomas Amossé, Jean-Pierre Beaud, Emmanuel Didier, Aykiz Doğan, Jean-Jacques Driesbeke, Quentin Dufour, Pauline Hervois, Agnès Hirsch, Morgane Labbé, Cécile Lefèvre, Félicien Pagnon, Gaël de Peretti, Laure Piguet, Léa Renard, Béatrice Touchelay (chair of the committee).

Organization and secretariat:

Camille Beaurepaire.