



**INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON PROGRAM**  
**DATA ACCESS AND ARCHIVE POLICY**

**December 2019**

## CONTENTS

<b>I. BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. DATA ACCESS OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IV. PROCEDURES FOR DATA ARCHIVE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>V. PROCEDURES FOR DATA ACCESS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ANNEX 1. ICP DATA ARCHIVE AND ACCESS PROCESS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>ANNEX 2. ICP DATA .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ANNEX 3. ICP METADATA.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>ANNEX 4. APPLICATION FOR DATA ACCESS AND STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY.....</b>	<b>13</b>

## I. BACKGROUND

The [International Comparison Program](#) (ICP) is an ongoing worldwide statistical initiative led by the World Bank under the auspices of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Its main objective is to provide comparable price and volume measures of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its expenditure aggregates among countries within and across regions.

The ICP relies on a collaborative partnership of international, regional, sub-regional and national agencies. The ICP Global Office, located within the World Bank, coordinates the program globally, and [Regional Implementing Agencies](#) coordinate the program in Africa, Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Asia and in Eurostat and the OECD member countries. National Implementing Agencies plan, coordinate and implement national ICP activities. The ICP is overseen by a [governance structure](#) that provides an overall framework for coordinating these efforts, setting the strategy and policy for the program, and ensuring the ICP's outputs are reliable, robust and relevant to users.

The ICP entails large price data collection and detailed GDP expenditure data compilation for participating countries. Its main outputs are indicators on purchasing power parities (PPPs), price level indices (PLIs), and real and per-capita real expenditures in international dollars for various headings under the [ICP Classification of Final Expenditure on GDP](#).

The use made of these published indicators has been expanding over recent years, with PPPs referenced frequently in media articles, blogs, academic research, policy reports, and development analyses. The ICP website curates around 400 references to ICP data use per year, while media tracking tools, such as Factiva and Google Alerts, identify many more references to PPPs each month. The main use of ICP indicators includes spatial comparisons of GDP and GDP per capita in PPP terms, and their correlation with other socio-economic indicators such as energy, emissions, education, health, labor, trade, and others. PPPs are also used to compare monetary values, such as expenditures or incomes, across countries, and the international poverty line of \$1.90 a day is an example of this application. This standard is the basis for monitoring progress towards the first of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) "No Poverty". Other SDGs use PPPs in their indicators to track progress towards "Zero hunger", "Good Health and Well-being", "Quality Education", "Decent Work", and "Economic Growth", "Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure", and "Reduced Inequalities".

In addition to these applications of PPPs and other ICP indicators, the data collected by the ICP on prices and expenditures support various analyses by policymakers and researchers from international, regional and national agencies, as well as academic and research institutions. Examples include analysis of the cost of nutritional food around the world, the cost of living for foreign service staff living overseas, consumption patterns and income elasticities, the effect of prices on the expenditure share on housing, the price of traditional goods and skill-intensive goods against GDP per capita, trade elasticity, and wage inequality indices to name but a few. Hence, the detailed datasets generated by the ICP are an important contributor to the overall value of the program.

The published data for the [ICP 2005 cycle](#) was restricted to main aggregates and categories, with some additional aggregates – a total of 24 headings. The [2005 ICP Data Access and Archiving policy](#) strongly limited access to unpublished detailed price and expenditure data: users were able to access basic heading level data and a limited set of national average prices at the item level for the 18 countries that participated in the global linking exercise. By the end of the 2005 round, it was clear that the user community was pressing for greater access to more detailed data in subsequent ICP rounds.

A total of 26 headings were published for the [ICP 2011 cycle](#). In response to mounting user demands for more detailed data, the ICP Executive Board endorsed the [2011 ICP Data Access and Archiving Policy](#), which improved access to include national average prices at the item level for all participating countries, while respecting confidentiality constraints and data quality limitations. To increase the quality and utility of the data collected, the ICP 2011 cycle also focused on collecting, archiving, and providing access to metadata. Moreover, throughout the course of the ICP 2011 cycle, calls for greater government transparency and accountability through the open data movement gained traction. These open data initiatives aimed at improving the availability and reuse of data.

Furthermore, the [Statistical Office of the European Union \(Eurostat\)](#) and the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) publish their respective results at a finer level of detail than the ICP, covering 61 and 50 headings respectively. [The Commonwealth of Independent States \(CIS\)](#) has also published its 2014 results at a similar level of detail as the OECD.

Recognizing that inadequate access to underlying ICP data inhibits research, policy development, and restricts feedback about quality, the [United Nations Friends of the Chair \(FOC\) evaluation of the 2011 ICP](#) noted the need “to reach out and demonstrate the value of ICP data to policymakers and other important users and donors, in particular showcasing to donors that ICP generally responds to user needs and strives for further openness with regard to access to data and metadata”. The evaluation concluded by recommending that “the Governing Board establish policies that improve openness with regard to access to ICP data and metadata.”

This document responds to the FOC’s recommendation by outlining an enhanced ICP Data Access and Archive Policy. Elements of this enhanced policy include the objectives, guiding principles, and procedures for data archive and access. The annexes provide additional information on the data archive and access process, ICP datasets and accompanying metadata, as well as the formal application for data access.

## II. DATA ACCESS OBJECTIVES

The long-standing objective of the ICP data access and archive policy is as follows: *Data derived from the ICP should be utilized to the maximum extent possible for statistical, research, and analytical purposes.* To enhance data access per the FOC’s recommendation, the current overall objectives are:

Objective 1: To provide users with more detailed results beyond what was published through the 2005 and 2011 ICP, the number of published headings such as groups and classes will be increased where feasible to a level agreed by the ICP Global Office and Regional Implementing Agencies, as delegated by the ICP Governing Board, taking into consideration data quality, availability and confidentiality<sup>1</sup>.

Objective 2: To enable in-depth policy analyses on specific fields of studies, expand user access to unpublished data at a finer level of detail, where feasible. To this latter point, National Implementing Agencies may voluntarily provide access to sub-national average prices and individual price observations, where applicable and permitted by national law.

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<sup>1</sup> The headings included in each published ICP dataset will be listed on the [ICP website](#).

The detailed ICP data access and archive policy objectives, reflecting the enhanced publication and access, are:

1. PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data for all countries are disseminated in ICP publications and through an ICP-dedicated online database at the agreed publication level, with supporting metadata.
2. PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data at various levels of detail below the publication level for all countries are available to users, with supporting metadata, through a formal application.
3. National average price data at the item level for items on the Global Core Lists for all countries, with supporting metadata and measures of quality, are available to users through a formal application, except when the confidentiality of respondents is jeopardized.
4. National average price data at the item level for regional items not on the Global Core Lists for all countries, with supporting metadata and measures of quality, are available to users through a formal application, except when the confidentiality of respondents is jeopardized.
5. Individual price observations and sub-national<sup>2</sup> average prices with supporting metadata are available to users where permitted by the laws of individual countries, as long as the confidentiality of respondents is protected<sup>3</sup>.

### III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles guide the management of ICP data and support the objective of enhancing data access:

1. **Appropriate use:** ICP data should be made available for analytical, research, and statistical purposes. Users should not misuse the data by attempting to deduce underlying confidential data.
2. **Equality of access:** ICP data are global public goods and thus should be made available on an equal basis to anyone who wants to use them, in the same way that most national statistical offices make data available to users.
3. **Preservation of respondent confidentiality:** provision of ICP data should be consistent with legal and other necessary arrangements that ensure the confidentiality of respondents.
4. **Transparency:** the principles and procedures for access to ICP data, as well as the applications of these data, should be transparent and publicly available.
5. **Consistency:** the principles and procedures for data access should strive to be consistent across all regions and countries, to promote equality in the treatment of all countries.
6. **Reciprocity:** reciprocity between participating countries should be established to the maximum extent possible. All ICP National Implementing Agencies are automatically considered as approved

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<sup>2</sup> Capital city or first-level administrative divisions within a country (e.g. states, provinces, etc.).

<sup>3</sup> For example, through data anonymization techniques.

users of ICP data. Non-participating countries are not considered as approved users of ICP data but may apply for access to these data following the procedures stipulated in Section V.

7. **Reliability:** releases of ICP data should be accompanied by appropriate metadata, including metadata that describes the quality limitations of the data.

8. **Quality limitations:** users of ICP data should be informed of the data's quality limitations and they should agree that the data are still useful for their purposes.

9. **Serviceability:** the ICP data should be archived to ensure it can be used to service future approved requests for access to data, it is available for possible use in future ICP comparisons, and it is available as a back-up in case these data are lost through disaster or other reasons by a region or a country.

10. **Disclosure limitations:** users accessing unpublished ICP data should not disseminate these data.

11. **Promotion of uses:** to promote the use of ICP data, users are required to share their research findings with the ICP Global Office, consistent with the disclosure limitations in this policy. The ICP Global Office will in turn share these research findings with ICP stakeholders.

12. **Limitations on users' findings:** indicators computed by users based on ICP data are not considered part of the official results of the ICP.

13. **Ease of access:** data access procedures should ensure a simple and expedited process for access to ICP data, while safeguarding the confidentiality of unpublished data.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES FOR DATA ARCHIVE**

This section describes the procedures for archiving the ICP data and metadata listed in Annexes 2 and 3.

1. **PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data for all countries are disseminated at the agreed publication level,** with supporting metadata. They are archived by the ICP Global Office and by the relevant Regional Implementing Agencies.

2. **PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data at various levels of detail below the publication level** for all countries, with supporting metadata, are archived by the ICP Global Office and by the relevant Regional Implementing Agencies.

3. **National and sub-national average price data at the item level for items on the Global Core Lists** for all countries, with supporting metadata and measures of quality, are archived by the ICP Global Office and by the relevant Regional Implementing Agencies.

4. **National and sub-national average price data at the item level for regional items not on the Global Core Lists** for all countries, with supporting metadata and measures of quality, are archived by the ICP Global Office and by the relevant Regional Implementing Agencies.

5. **Individual price observations and sub-national average price data** with supporting metadata are archived by National Implementing Agencies. However, some National Implementing Agencies may request the ICP Global Office and/or relevant Regional Implementing Agencies to archive the

individual price observations and sub-national average price because they do not have their own facilities to archive these data. If a country asks the ICP Global Office or relevant Regional Implementing Agency to archive these data, the country in question can choose to have the data encrypted and hold the encryption key.

The unpublished data archived by the ICP Global Office will be treated with confidentiality. The data will be archived in a secure database with limited access rights and administered by a designated data custodian. Access to the data (or any portions of the data) will be subject to the procedures specified in Section V.

## **V. PROCEDURES FOR DATA ACCESS**

This section describes the procedures for data access for the ICP data and metadata listed in Annexes 2 and 3.

1. **PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data for all countries at the agreed publication level**, with supporting metadata, will be disseminated in ICP publications and through an ICP-dedicated online database.
2. **PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data at various levels of detail below the publication level** for all countries, with supporting metadata, can be accessed by users through a formal online application addressed to the ICP Global Office.
3. **National average price data at the item level for items on the Global Core Lists** for all countries, with supporting metadata and measures of quality, can be accessed by users through a formal application addressed to the ICP Global Office, consistent with the confidentiality laws and processes of participating countries. National Implementing Agencies should inform the relevant Regional Implementing Agencies, who in turn will inform the ICP Global Office, which information is considered confidential, and hence cannot be shared. Item brands and models will be anonymized before sharing with users.
4. **National average price data at the item level for regional items not on the Global Core Lists** for all countries, with supporting metadata and measures of quality, can be accessed by users through a formal application addressed to the ICP Global Office, consistent with the confidentiality laws and processes of participating countries. National Implementing Agencies should inform the relevant Regional Implementing Agencies, who in turn will inform the ICP Global Office, which information is considered confidential, and hence cannot be shared. Item brands and models will be anonymized before sharing with users.
5. **Individual price observations and sub-national average price data** with supporting metadata are available to users where permitted by the laws of individual countries, as long as the confidentiality of respondents is protected. Users may submit a formal application of access to these data to the National Implementing Agency, either directly or through the ICP Global Office or relevant Regional Implementing Agency.

Applying for access to ICP datasets above is initiated by the user(s) with a formal application and a signed declaration of use addressed to the [ICP Global Office](#). An outline of the information required in this application is shown in Annex 4. The ICP Global Office makes decisions on whether to approve requests,

in line with the access policy approved by the ICP Governing Board and outlined in this document. Once the ICP Global Office approves the formal data access request, it will notify the requesting user(s) and grant secure online access to a custom confidential dataset containing the data requested. Such access requires two-factor authentication, an approach that provides an additional layer of security.

Alternatively, users may approach relevant Regional Implementing Agencies for access to regional datasets, or relevant National Implementing Agencies for access to national datasets. In these cases, Regional and National Implementing Agencies follow the access policy agreed by the ICP Governing Board. This access to regional and national datasets does not require clearance from the ICP Global Office.

Annex 1 provides a summary of the data access and archive process for ICP data and metadata.



**ANNEX 1. ICP DATA ARCHIVE AND ACCESS PROCESS**

	<b>I</b> (ICP 2005, 2011 & 2017)	<b>II</b> (ICP 2005, 2011 & 2017)	<b>III</b> (ICP 2011 & 2017)	<b>IV</b> (ICP 2011 & 2017)	<b>V</b> (ICP 2017)
<b>Datasets</b>	<b>PPPs, PLIs and expenditures</b>	<b>PPPs, PLIs and expenditures</b>	<b>National average prices</b>	<b>National average prices</b>	<b>Individual price observations and sub-national average prices</b>
	Metadata	Metadata	Metadata and measures of quality	Metadata and measures of quality	Metadata and measures of quality
	Expenditure headings at the publication level	Expenditure headings below publication level	Global Core List items	Non-Global Core List items	Global Core and Non-Global Core List items
	All countries and geographical aggregates	All countries and geographical aggregates	All countries	All countries	Countries, where permitted by the laws
<b>Access</b>	Published, open data	Formal application to ICP Global Office	Formal application to ICP Global Office	Formal application to ICP Global Office or Regional Implementing Agency	Formal application to the National Implementing Agency directly or through the ICP Global Office or Regional Implementing Agency
<b>Archive</b>	ICP Global Office & Regional Implementing Agencies	ICP Global Office & Regional Implementing Agencies	ICP Global Office & Regional Implementing Agencies	ICP Global Office & Regional Implementing Agencies	National Implementing Agency or delegated to ICP Global Office or Regional Implementing Agency

## **ANNEX 2. ICP DATA**

### **A. Global Data**

1. Global PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data disseminated at the publication level for all countries.
2. Global PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data at various levels of detail below the publication level for all countries.
3. National annual average prices for items on the Global Core Lists<sup>4</sup> for all countries.
4. Disaggregated sub-national annual average prices for items on the Global Core Lists for all countries.
5. Population, market exchange rate, Consumer Price Index (CPI) and national accounts deflator data for all countries.

### **B. Regional Data**

1. Regional PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data disseminated at the publication level for countries in each region.
2. Regional PPPs, PLIs, and expenditure data at various levels of detail below the publication level for countries in each region.
3. National annual average prices for items on the Regional Lists<sup>5</sup> for countries in each region.
4. Disaggregated sub-national annual average prices for items on the Regional Lists for countries in each region.
5. Population, market exchange rate, CPI and national accounts deflator data for countries in each region.

### **C. Country Data**

1. National annual average prices for items priced from the Regional Lists and Global Core Lists.
2. Disaggregated sub-national annual average prices for items priced from the Regional Lists and Global Core Lists.
3. Individual price observations at the item level (microdata) for items priced from the Regional Lists and Global Core Lists with identifiers for the type of outlet, location, and urban/rural designation.
4. Population, market exchange rate, CPI and national accounts deflator data.

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<sup>4</sup> These include the Global Core Lists for consumer goods and services, housing, government, machinery and equipment, and construction.

<sup>5</sup> These include the Regional Lists for consumer goods and services, housing, government, machinery and equipment, and construction. These lists include items from the Global Core Lists selected for pricing in each region.

### **ANNEX 3. ICP METADATA**

#### **A. At the global level**

1. A broad description of ICP methodology, including a description of methodologies for consumer goods and services, housing, government, machinery and equipment, and construction, as well as the methodology for linking regional results and imputing PPPs for non-participating economies.
2. Global Core Lists, with supporting item descriptions.
3. The matrix of availability of price data for each item on the Global Core Lists for all countries.
4. The matrix of importance for consumer goods and services on the Global Core Lists for all countries.
5. Measures of quality, including the number of individual price observations and coefficients of variation for Global Core List items for all countries.
6. A table showing the reference PPPs used to impute global PPPs.
7. National accounts reporting forms and related country practice questionnaires for all countries.
8. Survey framework questionnaires for all countries.

#### **B. At the regional level**

1. A broad description of the ICP methodology implemented in each region, including the method implemented for housing.
2. Regional Lists, with supporting item descriptions.
3. The matrix of availability of price data for each item on the Regional Lists for all countries.
4. The matrix of importance for consumer goods and services on the Regional Lists for all countries.
5. Measures of quality, including the number of individual price observations and coefficients of variation for items on the Regional Lists for countries in each region.
6. A table showing the reference PPPs used to impute regional PPPs.
7. National accounts reporting forms and related country practice questionnaires for countries in each region.
8. Survey framework questionnaires for countries in each region.

#### **C. At the national level**

1. Detailed national survey framework for the ICP.
2. A table showing items for which prices were collected and quarters in which prices were collected.

3. Estimation method for national average prices, especially when the price survey was not spatially representative.
4. Price indices used to adjust prices collected temporally when the price survey did not cover the whole reference year.
5. Methodology for deriving expenditure data.

#### ANNEX 4. APPLICATION FOR DATA ACCESS AND STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Date:

From:

To: [ICP Global Office](#)

**Subject: Request for access to unpublished data and metadata from the International Comparison Program**

The following sections outline information which must accompany any request for access to **unpublished data and metadata** and define the limitations to their use.

**A. Written proposal.** Users must submit a written proposal that includes the following information:

1. Data, countries, and metadata for which access is requested.
2. Detailed project description including the context of the research proposal; topic JEL classification code(s) of the planned research<sup>6</sup>; research plan; state of the literature on the topic; intended use; expected results; dissemination plans; and statement of expected benefits to the ICP.
3. Brief curriculum vitae of all the researchers involved in the research.
4. Unique identifiers of the user accounts for whom access is requested (e.g. email addresses, etc.).

**B. Declaration of use.** The responsible senior manager, head of department, or dean of the organization sponsoring the researcher must include a signed declaration stating that:

1. Users will not misuse the data by attempting to deduce underlying confidential data.
2. Users were informed of the quality limitations, and they agree that the data are still useful for their purposes.
3. Users accessing unpublished ICP data should not disseminate these data nor share it with third parties. They should inform the ICP Global Office of the measures they will take to ensure the security of these data consistent with the disclosure limitations in the Data Access and Archive policy.
4. To promote the use of ICP data, users will share their research findings with the ICP Global Office, who will in turn share these findings with ICP stakeholders.
5. The calculations and documentation underlying the research will be provided to the ICP Global Office if requested.

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<sup>6</sup> Users must pick and provide up to 4 three-character classification codes relevant to their planned research from the [Journal of Economic Literature \(JEL\) classification system](#). The JEL classification system is a standard method of classifying literature in the field of economics.

6. Users are aware that indicators computed by them based on ICP data are not considered part of the official results of the ICP.
7. The ICP Global Office and Regional Implementation Agencies bear no responsibility for any use of the data or for interpretations or inferences based upon such use.
8. Noncompliance with this declaration will exclude the requesting organization from any further access to unpublished ICP data.