

# Bureau of Labor Statistics

Bureau of Labor Statistics  
U.S. Department of Labor



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## Bureau of Labor Statistics Data Integrity Guidelines

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The following guidelines must be followed by all Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) program offices and BLS employees to ensure the integrity of information maintained and disseminated by the BLS.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) information quality guidelines define "Integrity" as the security of information—protection of the information from unauthorized access or revision, to ensure that the information is not compromised through corruption or falsification.

### Confidential nature of BLS records

Data collected or maintained by, or under the auspices of, the BLS under a pledge of confidentiality shall be treated in a manner that will assure that individually identifiable data will be used only for statistical purposes and will be accessible only to authorized persons.

Pre-release economic series data prepared for release to the public will not be disclosed or used in an unauthorized manner before they have been cleared for release, and will be accessible only to authorized persons.

Authorized persons include only those individuals who are responsible for collecting, processing, or using the data in furtherance of statistical purposes or for the other stated purposes for which the data were collected. Authorized persons are authorized access to only those data that are integral to the program on which they work, and only to the extent required to perform their duties.

When non-BLS employees are granted access to confidential BLS data or Privacy Act data, they must be notified of their responsibility for taking specific actions to protect the data from unauthorized disclosure. The vehicle for providing this notification is the written contract or other agreement that authorizes them to receive the data. Accordingly, if a commercial contract, cooperative agreement, inter-agency agreement, letter of agreement, memorandum of understanding, or other agreement provides a non-BLS employee access to BLS confidential data or Privacy Act data, it must contain appropriate provisions to safeguard the data from unauthorized disclosure. The authorization document will state the purpose for which the data will be used and that all persons with access to the data will follow the BLS confidentiality policy, including signing the BLS Non-disclosure Affidavit. These provisions are required whether the data are accessed on or off BLS premises. They also are required when access to the data may be incidental to the work conducted under the contract or other agreement (such as in systems development projects, survey mail-out processing, etc.).

### Data collection

The integrity of the BLS data collection process requires that all survey information be sound and complete. Data must be obtained from the appropriate company official or respondent and the data entries must accurately report the data and responses they provided. The administrative aspects of the data collection process, such as work time reported and travel voucher entries, must be factually reported. Therefore, employees must not deliberately misrepresent the source of the data, the method of data collection, the data received from respondents, or entries on administrative reporting forms.

All BLS programs must follow the appropriate procedure for requesting authorization of processes for the electronic transmission of respondent-identifying data to or from respondents.

#### Procedures for safeguarding confidential information

Program office managers are responsible for implementing procedural and physical safeguards to protect confidential information from disclosure or misuse within their offices, including:

- Preparing written procedures for the identification, labeling, handling, and disposal of confidential data. Ensuring that all employees within their organizations are familiar with and understand these procedures.
- Ensuring that new employees are informed about the different types of confidential data maintained in their work areas and the special precautions that are to be taken with their use, storage, and disposal.
- Developing data collection instruments and collection methodology in conformance with OMB guidelines on confidentiality.
- Ensuring that commercial contracts, cooperative and inter-agency agreements, letters of agreement, and memoranda of understanding, which give non-BLS employees access to confidential data, contain the proper confidentiality- and security-related clauses.

All BLS employees are responsible for following the rules of conduct in the handling of personal information contained in the records covered under the Privacy Act of 1974, which are in the custody of the BLS.

#### Dissemination of news and data releases

Public information documents require advance Bureau-level clearance through the Associate Commissioner for Publications, who is responsible for seeing that each publication meets BLS publication standards and also the standards set by the Department of Labor, the Congressional Joint Committee on Printing, and OMB. BLS offices also are required to consult the Associate Commissioner for Publications before instituting an automated process to disseminate news releases or other products to the public.

No advance release of embargoed data shall be made unless directed by the Commissioner of Labor Statistics under the discretion granted under OMB Statistical Directive Number 3. BLS organizations shall strictly follow the Commissioner's specifications in making an advance release.

## Data security

The BLS has established appropriate computer security measures to safeguard the BLS' data processing environment against destruction or corruption of data or systems, unauthorized disclosure of data, and loss of service. These security measures are part of an overall management control process that includes program management, financial management, physical and personnel security, statistical data security, and information technology (IT) security. Associate, Assistant and Regional Commissioners, and Directors are assigned overall responsibility for directing the application of such controls to the Automated Information Systems and/or application systems, which they manage. The BLS Data Security Steering Committee provides overall direction to BLS security efforts.

### **Related links:**

- [BLS Guidelines for Informing Users of Data Quality and Methodology \(DRAFT\)](#)
- [About BLS](#)

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