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Report of the Task Group on Core Indicators (TGCI)

This report (non-paper) by the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Task Group on Core Indicators (TGCI) to the 7th meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy (WG-ECDE) informs of progress in its work to review the core list of ICT indicators on e-commerce and the digital economy promoted and collected by UNCTAD. The report proposes a revised core list of 11 indicators, including 2 new indicators, with 3 indicators proposed for discontinuation. It further proposes revised wording for some indicators and their related methodological guidance. The report also identifies issues that may be developed further by the TGCI, including incorporating forthcoming guidance on measuring AI by other organizations, discussing other stand-alone core indicators, providing more detailed methodological guidance in a future revision of the UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Digital Economy Statistics, and addressing gender dimensions. It asks the Working Group to endorse the proposed revisions to the core list of indicators, extend the TGCI to continue its methodological work, report back on progress at the 2027 meeting of WG-ECDE, and provide any comments on the report by 15 Jan 2027 to emeasurement@unctad.org.

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1. Background and Objective of the Task Group

The list of core indicators on information and communication technology (ICT) was first proposed at the request of the World Summit of the Information Society (2003 and 2005), and its development was led by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, which subsequently presented it to the UN Statistical Commission for endorsement in 2007.1 The Commission encouraged countries to use the list as a basis for their ICT measurement activities.

From within that set of core indicators, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) became custodian of the core indicators on ICT use by businesses and on the ICT sector and conducts a biennial data compilation of the latest available statistics corresponding to the indicators.

The UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy2 sets out guidance on the collection of data using surveys of business ICT as a basis for compiling the core indicators. It thereby helps countries translate the core indicator list into practical data collection and compilation.

While the core indicators have seen good uptake, with improving availability over the past 20 years, developing countries lag behind developed countries. At the same time, the digitalization of the economy and rapid technological progress have increased the need for useful indicators, and some of the core indicators have lost policy relevance. Furthermore, there is a need to incorporate indicators that address new policy considerations and statistical developments.

In this context, the sixth meeting of the UNCTAD Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy (WG-ECDE) in December 20253 decided that a review should be undertaken to ensure the core indicators are fit for purpose and relevant to the latest developments in digitalization of business. In May 2026, the International Group of Experts (IGE) on E-commerce and the Digital Economy, to which the WG-ECDE reports, resolved to establish a Task Group on updating the Core Indicators (TGCI) to act as a forum for detailed technical discussions to review and update the list.4 The TGCI reports to the WG-ECDE.

The objective of the TGCI is to propose a revised set of core indicators, with a view to endorsement by the WG-ECDE in December 2026.

To that end, the TGCI would:

- Review the 12 core indicators on the use of ICT by businesses and 2 indicators on the ICT sector.
- Consider the policy relevance of each indicator.
- Consider all relevant aspects – including recommended breakdowns (e.g. according to firm characteristics, economic activity, location, etc.) and underlying definitions.
- Consider adjustments to response categories and updates to survey-based methodologies.
- Consider circumstances specific to developing countries, notably the role of specific technologies.
- Identify new, policy relevant indicators to be considered for inclusion amongst the revised set of core indicators.
- Include the indicator on e-commerce value proposed by the Task Group on Measuring E-commerce Value (TG-eCOM).

The TGCI **would not** review the 6 other core indicators that are compiled from statistics on international trade of ICT goods, ICT services, and digitally deliverable services.

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[1] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/pages/coreindicators/default.aspx

[2] https://unctad.org/publication/manual-production-statistics-digital-economy-2020

[3] https://unctad.org/meeting/working-group-measuring-e-commerce-and-digital-economy-6th-meeting

[4] https://unctad.org/meeting/intergovernmental-group-experts-e-commerce-and-digital-economy-9th-session

This report by the TGCI informs the WG-ECDE about the progress in its work during 2026.

The UNCTAD Secretariat acknowledges the contributions of all TGCI participants including the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (Argentina), the NIC.br - Brazilian Network Information Center, the Banco Central de Costa Rica (BCCR), the Banco Central de la República Dominicana, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry (India), the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (India), the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (India), the Bank of Jamaica, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mauritius), the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (Mexico), the National Trade Facilitation Committee (Somalia), Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business (Spain), the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Spain), the Electronic Transactions Development Agency (Thailand), the Turkish Statistical Office, the Ministry of Trade (Turkey), the Office for National Statistics (United Kingdom), the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (United Kingdom), and the National Statistics Committee (Uzbekistan), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

2. Work completed in 2026

- **May 2026:** Formal request by the IGE to create the TGCI; expressions of interest from experts to participate in the TGCI; terms of reference drafted; request for the set up of the TGCI online collaboration platform on MS Teams.
- **Meeting 1, 1 June 2026:** The TGCI discussed its **terms of reference**, methods of work and proposed meeting calendar, and received an introduction to the online platform.
- **Meeting 2, 7 July 2026:** The TGCI reviewed the **existing list** of core indicators on ICT use by businesses and the ICT sector, discussing the relevance, definitions, feasibility of collection, policy usefulness, and possible reformulation of each one. A demo of the TGCI online platform was provided with experts requested to confirm access.
- **Meeting 3, 4 August 2026:** The TGCI discussed **new areas** and indicators for possible inclusion in the revised core list. The discussion built on inputs received during the Working Group meeting of December 2025, national experiences from TGCI members, and a consultation by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development on the measurement framework (indicators) to monitor the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society.[5]
- **Meeting 4, 3 September 2026:** The TGCI **continued discussing new indicators**, focusing on the indicator on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by businesses. It also addressed ongoing work related to the measurement of e-commerce value and the possible inclusion of an indicator on the use of social media for business purposes (needing further discussion).
- **Meeting 5, 6 October 2026:** The TGCI **reviewed the consolidated proposal** for revisions to the core indicators on ICT use by businesses, considered the outline of its report to the Working Group, and agreed on the process for finalizing the draft.
- **30 October 2026:** The TGCI **reviewed and provided comments to the advanced draft of its report** to the Working Group.

[5] As per paragraph 117 of the General Assembly resolution A/RES/80/173, available at https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/80/173

3. Methodological outputs

The TGCI proposes for the consideration of the WG, a revised list of core indicators on ICT use by businesses that has a total of 11 core indicators, including 2 new ones on the value of e-commerce and on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by businesses. The TGCI also proposes to discontinue 3 indicators. Finally, the 2 indicators related to the ICT sector were discussed briefly and experts requested UNCTAD to obtain additional input from the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the workforce indicator, and to obtain further input regarding the value-added indicator. The TGCI invites comments from the Working Group as well. **Table 1** summarizes the results of the TGCI discussions and then each indicator is laid out in more detail.

In addition, TG members concluded that the links between business digitalisation and gender should be considered. **Section 4** presents a proposed approach for addressing this dimension.

The TGCI also considers that some issues require additional discussion and could not yet propose specific indicators that could be obtained through business surveys. The WG may wish to request the TGCI to continue its work to establish such indicators and also suggest other dimensions that it should consider.

Table 1: Revised list of core indicators on ICT use by businesses – overview

ID	Indicator	Proposal
B1	Proportion of businesses using computers	Maintain. It reflects basic digital infrastructure in many developing countries. Expand the definition of computers. Methodological guidance must define/give examples.
B2	Proportion of persons employed routinely using computers	Maintain. Expand the definition of computers.
B3	Proportion of businesses using the Internet	Maintain. Reformulate or clarify "using the Internet".
B4	Proportion of persons employed routinely using the Internet	Maintain. Reformulate or clarify "using the Internet".
B5	Proportion of businesses with a web presence	Maintain. Reformulate or clarify "Web presence" to reflect, among other things, social media accounts.
B6	Proportion of businesses with an intranet	Discontinue.
B7	Proportion of businesses receiving orders over the Internet	Maintain. Clarify what it includes/excludes and relationship to the statistical definition of e-commerce.
B8	Proportion of businesses placing orders over the Internet	Maintain. Clarify what it includes/excludes.
B9	Proportion of businesses using the Internet by type of access	Maintain. Reformulate disaggregation.
B10	Proportion of businesses with a Local Area Network	Discontinue.
B11	Proportion of businesses with an extranet	Discontinue.

B12	Proportion of businesses using the Internet by type of activity	Maintain. Revise types of activity to reflect social media, cloud services.
tbd	Value of e-commerce sales and digitally ordered exports	Addition
tbd	Proportion of businesses using artificial intelligence (AI) by type of activity	Addition
ICT1	Proportion of total business sector workforce involved in the ICT sector	Maintain. Invite views from WG and the ILO.
ICT2	Value added in the ICT sector	Maintain. Invite views from WG and government offices involved in national accounts, such as Central Banks.

a. Indicators to be maintained

The 9 indicators below were considered relevant to digital policies and should be maintained. Some require rewording and updating of the methodological guidance, including in the definition of concepts and clarifications. The changes are shown as strikethrough text for deletions and highlighted text for additions.

B1: Proportion of businesses using computers
Summary of discussion: While several countries no longer collect this indicator because computer use is close to universal, the discussion acknowledged that survey coverage largely reflects the formal sector, and the indicator also leaves out other non-computer electronic devices that could be used for digital business or access to the Internet. For less digitally advanced countries it may still be a valuable indicator of basic digital infrastructure. The TGCI agreed to leave it in the core list with the understanding that it needs to be reformulated to include other devices.
Definition of concepts: Computers include desktop computers, laptop computers, tablet computers, and other handheld computing devices such as smartphones. This indicator includes devices with embedded computing abilities, such as smartphones. Although the ITU does not include smartphones in their definition of computers in their model household survey, Eurostat does include smartphones as they are relevant for business digitalization. Countries may wish to retain a distinction between computers (desktops, laptops and tablets) and smartphones in their data collection. In developing countries, this would allow to identify businesses that rely entirely on smartphones and those using other computing devices. Breakdowns could identify businesses using computers only, smartphones only, or both. Note: The European Community survey on ICT usage in enterprises has included smartphones within the definition of "computer", on the bases that these devices are relevant to assessing business digitalisation. By contrast, the ITU does not include smartphones in their definition of computers in their model survey, though this concerns households and individuals rather than businesses.
Clarifications and methodological issues:

~~A computer refers to a desktop or a laptop computer.~~

The proportion of businesses using computers is calculated by dividing the number of in-scope businesses using computers during the ~~12-month~~ reference period by the total number of in-scope businesses.

Model question:

Did your business use computer(s) during <reference period>? Yes/ No

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

- TOTAL
- 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
- 10–49 (small businesses)
- 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
- 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing the extent to which businesses in different sectors and of different sizes use computers is important for policymaking aimed at fostering a more inclusive digital economy and to assess the effectiveness of policy measures seeking to increase ICT use by enterprises.

B2: Proportion of persons employed routinely using computers for business purposes

Summary of discussion:

The TGCI agreed to keep this indicator as a complement to B1. If the B1 indicator expands the concept of "computer" to include a range of devices, the B2 indicator may also provide information on broader ICT use or ICT skills among employees. The TGCI suggested to clarify that the indicator should only consider computer use for business functions, so "for business purposes" was added to the name of the indicator.

Definition of concepts:

Persons employed refer to all persons working for the business, not only those working in clerical jobs. They include short-term and casual employees, contributing family workers and self-employed persons, who may be paid or unpaid. The definition is aligned with UNSD and ILO standards.

Computers include desktop computers, laptop computers, tablet computers, and other handheld computing devices such as smartphones.

The indicator includes devices with embedded computing abilities, such as smartphones. Although the ITU does not include smartphones in their definition of computers in their model household survey, Eurostat does include smartphones as they are relevant for business digitalization.

Countries may wish to retain a distinction between computers (desktops, laptops and tablets) and smartphones in their data collection. In developing countries, this would allow to identify businesses that rely entirely on smartphones and those using other computing devices. Breakdowns could identify businesses using computers only, smartphones only, or both.

Note: The European Community survey on ICT usage in enterprises has included smartphones within the definition of "computer", on the bases that these devices are relevant to assessing business digitalisation. By contrast, the ITU does not include smartphones in their definition of computers in their model survey, though this concerns households and individuals rather than businesses.

Clarifications and methodological issues:

The proportion of persons employed routinely using computers (in all in-scope businesses) by the total number of persons employed (in all in-scope businesses).

Filters: The question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question "Did your business use computer(s)?"

"Routinely" refers to use at least once a week.

Model question:

What percentage of persons employed in your business routinely used a computer at work during <reference period>? Percentage values (no decimals) from 0% to 100%

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

- TOTAL
- 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
- 10–49 (small businesses)
- 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
- 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Measuring the extent to which employees routinely use computers provides a basic indicator of the extent or intensity of ICT usage within an enterprise, beyond the binary indicator of whether they use computers or not. Differences in the extent of computer use may indicate the presence of barriers to ICT adoption and a need for policy action, while monitoring over time can help in assessing the impact of policy measures aimed at promoting ICT use by enterprises.

B3: Proportion of businesses using the internet

Summary of discussion:

This indicator was generally considered relevant for assessing digital divides by enterprise size so should be maintained. Supporting text has been clarified.

Definition of concepts:

~~The Internet is a world-wide public computer network. It provides access to a number of communication services including the World Wide Web and carries email, news, entertainment and data files, irrespective of the device used (not assumed to be only via a computer it may also be by mobile phone, games machine, digital TV etc.). Access can be via a fixed or mobile network.~~

The Internet is a worldwide public computer network supporting a wide range of communication and information tools and services. Internet use refers to carrying out activities that involve sending or receiving data over the Internet, regardless of the device used or whether the connection is through a fixed or mobile network. Examples include browsing websites, sending or receiving email or instant messages, making voice or video calls, using cloud-based applications, transferring data between business systems, and the automated sending or receiving of data by Internet-connected devices, such as sensors, machinery, vehicles and other Internet of Things devices.

Clarifications and methodological issues:

The proportion of businesses using the Internet during the reference period is calculated by dividing the number of in-scope businesses using the Internet by the total number of in-scope businesses.

Model question:

Did your business use the Internet during <reference period>? Yes/ No

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

- TOTAL
- 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
- 10–49 (small businesses)
- 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
- 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing the extent to which businesses in different sectors and of different sizes use the Internet is important for policymaking aimed at fostering more inclusive e-commerce and a more inclusive digital economy and to assess the effectiveness of policy measures seeking to increase Internet use by enterprises.

B4: Proportion of persons employed routinely using the Internet for business purposes

Summary of discussion:

This indicator was generally considered relevant for assessing digital divides by employee access so should be maintained. The TGCI suggested to clarify that the indicator should only consider internet use for business functions, so "for business purposes" was added to the name of the indicator.

Definition of concepts:

The Internet is a worldwide public computer network supporting a wide range of communication and information tools and services. Internet use refers to carrying out activities that involve sending or receiving data over the Internet, regardless of the device used or whether the connection is through a fixed or mobile network. Examples include browsing websites, sending or receiving email or instant messages, making voice or video calls, using cloud-based applications, transferring data between business systems, and the automated sending or receiving of data by Internet-connected devices, such as sensors, machinery, vehicles and other Internet of Things devices.

Clarifications and methodological issues:

The proportion of persons employed routinely using the Internet is calculated by dividing the number of persons employed routinely using the Internet (across all in-scope businesses) by the total number of persons employed (in all in-scope businesses).

Persons employed: as above

Computer: as above

Internet: as above. The wording refers to actual use of the internet rather than having access.

Filters: the question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question “Did your business use the Internet?”

“Routinely” refers to use at least once a week.

Model question:

What percentage of persons employed in your business routinely used the Internet at work during <reference period>? Percentage values (no decimals) from 0% to 100%

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

- TOTAL
- 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
- 10–49 (small businesses)
- 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
- 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing the extent to which employees routinely use the Internet is important for policymaking to assess the ICT skills level in enterprises in different sectors and of different sizes, and to assess the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at promoting Internet use by enterprises.

B5: Proportion of businesses with a web presence

Summary of discussion:

The TGCI agreed that the indicator remains important, but the definition should explicitly include controlled presence on third-party platforms such as social media pages, marketplaces, and similar channels. This supporting text has been clarified.

Definition of concepts:

~~A web presence includes a website, home page or presence on another entity's website (including a related business). It excludes inclusion in an on-line directory and any other web pages where the business does not have control over the content of the page.~~

Web presence refers to information or content about a business that is available on the Internet and that the business, or another party acting on its behalf, creates, manages or updates. It includes the business's own website or home page, as well as business-managed pages or profiles on third-party websites, such as social media platforms and online marketplaces. It excludes listings in online directories and content on other web pages that the business has no control over.

Clarifications and methodological issues:

The proportion of businesses with a web presence is calculated by dividing the number of in-scope businesses with a web presence by the total in-scope businesses.

Filters: The question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question "Did your business use the Internet?"

Model question:

Did your business have a web presence as at <reference date>? Yes/ No

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

- TOTAL
- 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
- 10–49 (small businesses)
- 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
- 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing the extent to which enterprises in different sectors and of different size have a web presence is important for policymaking to assess the extent to which enterprises are visible online, which is essential for reaching potential buyers through e-commerce.

B7: Proportion of businesses receiving orders over the Internet, by ordering channel

Summary of discussion:

The TGCI considered that the wording of this indicator should be made consistent with the Guidelines and Recommendations on Measuring the Value of E-commerce. Related online Transactions, while maintaining the flexibility to include the receiving of orders over the Internet but via methods not

meeting the definition of e-commerce. The definition of concepts, methodological clarifications and model question have been adjusted accordingly.

Definition of concepts:

An **e-commerce transaction** is the sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over computer networks by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders. The goods or services are ordered by those methods, but the payment and the ultimate delivery of the goods or services do not have to be conducted online. An e-commerce transaction can be between enterprises, households, individuals, governments, and other public or private organisations.

> **Include:** Orders made via webpages, apps, extranets, and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). The type is defined by the method of making the order.
>
> **Exclude:** Orders made by telephone calls, facsimiles, on-premises mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes), manually typed messages (including but not limited to e-mails).

Source: OECD (2025)[6]

Channel d below (under Clarifications and methodological issues section) can be implemented optionally to measure "Other remote online orders", which do not count toward e-commerce.

Other remote online orders refers to the sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over the Internet or other computer networks, by methods not specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders.

> **Include**: orders made through unstructured exchanges of messages between the buyer and seller, including but not limited to manually typed messages, recorded voice messages or recorded video messages, sent by e-mail, messaging apps, social media platforms or other communication tools.
>
> **Exclude**: e-commerce orders (those conducted by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders); orders made by telephone calls (voice or video), facsimiles, on-premises mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes).

Clarifications and methodological issues:

~~Orders received include orders received via the Internet whether or not payment was made on line. They include orders received via websites, specialized Internet marketplaces, extranets, EDI over the Internet, Internet-enabled mobile phones and email. They also include orders received on behalf of other organizations – and orders received by other organizations on behalf of the business. Orders received exclude orders that were cancelled or not completed. In theory, a business without access to the Internet could receive Internet orders via agents. Where this is thought to be common, countries could alter the scope of the question to those businesses using computer(s).~~

For international comparability, it is recommended to prioritize measuring e-commerce ordering (channels a-c detailed below).

The proportion of businesses receiving orders over the Internet is divided by the total number of in-scope businesses.

[6] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/10/the-2025-oecd-definition-of-e-commerce-and-guidelines-for-interpretation_3e7e5a61.html

A complementary calculation presents businesses receiving orders over the Internet as a proportion of in-scope businesses using the Internet.

Where other remote online orders are included in the proportion of businesses receiving orders over the Internet, this should be clearly documented in metadata and communicated to users.

It is recommended to ask about receiving orders at any time throughout the previous accounting or calendar year.

Filters: The question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question “Did your business use the Internet?”

In theory, a business without access to the Internet could receive Internet orders via an agent. Where this is thought to be common, countries could alter the scope of the question to those businesses using computers.

Definitions of ordering channels

The channel is determined by the interface the customer uses to place the order.

Payment may or may not be made digitally, and digital payment may be part of the order confirmation process; however, this does not affect which channel should be selected.

Digital payment does not mean that ordering should be reported under one of these channels if the order was otherwise placed using a channel that is not listed, such as on-premises or by phone.

a. E-commerce marketplaces and other platforms that operate websites or apps used by multiple businesses or producers to receive orders for goods or services

Includes orders received through platforms mainly used for selling goods (e.g. Alibaba, Amazon, eBay, Shopee), for ordering accommodation, transport, delivery or other physically delivered services (e.g. Airbnb, Booking.com, TaskRabbit, Uber/UberEATS), and for ordering digitally delivered services or digital products (e.g. Coursera, Fiverr, Upwork, app stores such as Apple’s App Store and Google Play).

Includes orders received through shopping or ordering features integrated into social media platforms or messaging apps, such as WhatsApp Cart or TikTok Shop.

Does not include orders placed or agreed only through message conversations or email where no integrated shopping or ordering feature is used.

Does not include orders placed using on-premises ordering methods, such as self-service kiosks or QR codes scanned at the seller’s premises to access, for example, a product listing, menu, ordering form or payment page.

b. Other websites or apps (not covered in a)

Includes orders received through websites or apps used only for your enterprise’s own sales, such as an online store or web shop where customers add items to a basket/cart, or an online order form, booking form or reservation system.

Also includes password-protected customer or partner portals, such as extranets, where customers can place orders, bookings or reservations for your enterprise’s goods or services.

Includes websites or apps created, hosted or technically provided by a third party, where the website or app is presented as your enterprise’s own sales channel and is not an e-commerce marketplace or other platform covered in a.

Does not include orders received or agreed through manually typed messages, recorded voice messages or recorded video messages sent via messaging apps, social media platforms, email or other communication tools.

Does not include orders placed using on-premises ordering methods, such as self-service kiosks or QR codes scanned at the seller's premises to access, for example, a product listing, menu, ordering form or payment page.

c. EDI-type system-to-system messages

Includes orders received using Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) messages. These orders are:

• sent and received in an agreed or standard format that can be read and processed by business systems;

• generated by the customer's business, procurement or ERP system and transmitted to your enterprise's business management or ERP system, either directly or through a shared system or EDI service provider;

Includes automatic system-generated demand-driven orders.

Examples of EDI standards and formats include EDIFACT and XML-based EDI formats such as UBL and RosettaNet. <Recommended to add national or industry-specific examples>

Does not include orders made by customers through a website, app, online marketplace or other platform where EDI messages are used in the background for order handling or processing. These orders should be included under a or b according to the type of ordering interface used by the customer.

d. [OPTIONAL] Orders received or agreed through online message conversations

Includes orders received or agreed through manually typed messages, recorded voice messages or recorded video messages sent via messaging apps, social media platforms, email or other communication tools.

Does not include orders placed using shopping, ordering or booking features built into a website, app, online marketplace or platform. These orders should be included under a or b according to the type of website or app used by the customer.

Does not include orders placed by live voice or video calls, fax, or on-premises ordering methods such as self-service kiosks or QR codes scanned at the seller's premises to access, for example, a product listing, menu, ordering form or payment page.

It is recommended to adjust examples to be relevant to the businesses being surveyed.

Model question:

Did your business receive orders or goods or services (that is, make sales) via the Internet during <reference period>? Yes/ No

IF YES:

During <reference period>, did your enterprise receive orders for goods or services via the following channels?

a. E-commerce marketplaces and other platforms that operate websites or apps used by multiple businesses or producers to receive orders for goods or services

b. Other websites or apps not covered above

c. EDI-type system-to-system messages

d. [Optional] Orders received or agreed through online message conversations

Disaggregation and classifications:

By ordering channel:

- E-commerce channels
    a. Sales through websites and apps operated by e-commerce marketplaces and other digital intermediation platforms
    b. Sales through other websites and apps
    c. Sales through EDI e-commerce
    d. [Optional] Orders received or agreed through online message conversations

By customer location:

- same economic territory (domestic e-commerce)
- abroad (international e-commerce = digitally ordered export)

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

• TOTAL

• 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)

• 10–49 (small businesses)

• 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)

• 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing the extent to which enterprises in different sectors and of different size are receiving orders over the Internet is important for policymaking to assess the uptake of e-commerce, and to assess the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at promoting e-commerce use by enterprises. Furthermore, the channels used have different policy implications. For example, selling through e-commerce marketplaces may imply dependence on those platforms to be able to engage in domestic or international sales. By contrast, selling through online message conversations may suggest room for policy action to support the uptake of e-commerce sales channels.

B8: Proportion of businesses placing orders over the Internet

Summary of discussion:

The TGCI considered that this indicator should be reviewed for consistency with the Guidelines and Recommendations on Measuring the Value of E-commerce Related online Transactions. While a more complex approach, along the lines of the model proposed for B7 above, would also be possible for B8, it is proposed to keep a more streamlined approach for B8 on account of there being a lower level of analytical and policy interest in details on business ordering over the Internet.

Definition of concepts:

An **e-commerce transaction** is the sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over computer networks by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders. The

goods or services are ordered by those methods, but the payment and the ultimate delivery of the goods or services do not have to be conducted online. An e-commerce transaction can be between enterprises, households, individuals, governments, and other public or private organisations.

> **Include:** Orders made via webpages, apps, extranets, and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). The type is defined by the method of making the order.
>
> **Exclude:** Orders made by telephone calls, facsimiles, on-premises mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes), manually typed messages (including but not limited to e-mails).

Source: OECD (2025)[7]

An optional ordering channel can be implemented optionally to measure "Other remote online orders", which do not count toward e-commerce.

Other remote online orders refers to the sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over the Internet or other computer networks, by methods not specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders.

> **Include**: orders made through unstructured exchanges of messages between the buyer and seller, including but not limited to manually typed messages, recorded voice messages or recorded video messages, sent by e-mail, messaging apps, social media platforms or other communication tools.
>
> **Exclude**: e-commerce orders (those conducted by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders); orders made by telephone calls (voice or video), facsimiles, on-premises mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes).

Clarifications and methodological issues:

For international comparability, it is recommended to prioritise measuring e-commerce ordering.

The proportion of businesses placing orders over the Internet is divided by the total number of in-scope businesses.

A complementary calculation presents businesses placing orders over the Internet as a proportion of in-scope businesses using the Internet.

Where Other remote online orders are included in the Proportion of businesses placing orders over the Internet, this should be clearly documented in metadata and communicated to users.

Orders placed include orders placed via the Internet whether or not payment was made on line. They include orders placed via websites, specialized Internet marketplaces, extranets, EDI over the Internet, Internet-enabled mobile phones and email. Orders placed exclude orders that were cancelled or not completed. In theory, a business without access to the Internet could place Internet orders via agents. Where this is thought to be common, countries could alter the scope of the question to those businesses using computer(s).

Filters: The question is only asked of those businesses answeing 'yes' to the question "Did your business use the Internet?"

[7] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/10/the-2025-oecd-definition-of-e-commerce-and-guidelines-for-interpretation_3e7e5a61.html

Model question:

Did your business place orders for goods or services (that is, make purchases) via the Internet during <reference period>? Yes/ No

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

- TOTAL
- 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
- 10–49 (small businesses)
- 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
- 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing the extent to which enterprises in different sectors and of different size are placing orders over the Internet is important for policymaking to assess the uptake of e-commerce, and to assess the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at promoting e-commerce use by enterprises.

B9: Proportion of businesses using the Internet by type of access ~~(Narrowband, fixed broadband and mobile broadband)~~

Summary of discussion:

The TGCI suggested dropping narrowband as a response category and focusing instead on quality and speed of connection, or connection technology (fixed versus mobile broadband, 4G/5G, optic fibre, etc. as relevant). This can be addressed in the name of the indicator (delete the parentheses) and in the methodological guidance. Adjusted response categories and breakdowns have been adapted from the Eurostat,OECD and ITU model questionnaires.

Definition of concepts:

This indicator should be calculated as the proportion of in-scope Internet-using businesses that use each type of access service, for instance, the proportion of Internet-using businesses that use a 5G mobile broadband subscription as their means of Internet access.

Clarifications and methodological issues:

~~It is expected that countries will collect data at a finer level than 'narrowband' and 'broadband'. The categories chosen by countries should allow aggregation to ranges of speed, as well as fixed and mobile broadband, as defined below. As businesses can use more than one type of access service, multiple responses are possible. Possible country variations to the responae categories are: remove the categories where items are not feasible; add or split categories according to technologies available and country data requirements.~~

It is recommended to adjust the categories offered based on the subscription technologies available to businesses.

Filters: The question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question “Did your business use the Internet?”

Model question:

How did your business connect to the Internet during <reference period>?

Fixed connection:

- Fibre broadband
- Cable broadband
- DSL or other fixed wired broadband
- Fixed wireless broadband

Mobile connection

- 5G or later-generation mobile broadband
- 3G or 4G mobile broadband
- Other mobile Internet connection

Satellite connection (including fixed or mobile satellite Internet service)

Yes/ No or tick box for each response category. Businesses may use more than one type of connection. The reference period should be consistent with the reference period used B3.

The list of response categories should allow the grouping into narrowband and broadband, and for the latter, into fixed and mobile.

Disaggregation and classifications:

By maximum contracted download speed of the business’ fastest Internet connection:

- Less than 30 Mbit/s
- At least 30 Mbit/s but less than 100 Mbit/s
- At least 100 Mbit/s but less than 500 Mbit/s
- At least 500 Mbit/s but less than 1 Gbit/s
- At least 1 Gbit/s

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

- TOTAL
- 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
- 10–49 (small businesses)
- 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
- 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing the quality of Internet access for enterprises in different sectors and of different size is important for policymaking to assess the potential for more advanced use of the Internet, and to assess the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at promoting such use by enterprises.

B12: Proportion of businesses using the Internet by type of activity

Summary of discussion:

The TGCI agreed the indicator is important for understanding the depth of business digitalization but might be too broad in its current form. Some of the response categories may be reformulated or become separate indicators (such as use of AI and use of social media). New response categories have been proposed to reflect the evolving digitalization of business. Proposals are invited for further additions or adjustments.

Definition of concepts:

The proportioning of businesses using the Internet by type of activity can be calculated as: either the proportion of in-scope businesses or the proportion of Internet-using businesses that undertook each activity. For international comparability, output is most simply presented as the porpotion of in-scope businesses undertaking each activity, for instance, the proportion of businesses using the Internet for sending or receiving emails. An alternative presentation is the proportion of business internet users undertaking each activity.

Social media refers to Internet-based platforms or services that enable users to create and share content, and to interact with content or with other users. Content may include text, images, audio, video, live broadcasts and links. Social media includes, but is not limited to, social networking, professional networking, content-sharing and live-streaming platforms, blogs, microblogs and online forums.

Cloud computing refers to **ICT services** that are used **over the internet** to access software, computing power, storage capacity etc. **where the services have all of the following characteristics:**

- are delivered from **servers** of service providers;
- can be easily **scaled** up or down (e.g. number of users or change of storage capacity);
- can be used **on-demand by the user,** at least after the initial set up (without human interaction with the service provider);
- are **paid** for, either per user, by capacity used, or are pre-paid.

Cloud computing may include connections via Virtual Private Networks (VPN).

Clarifications and methodological issues:

Internet: as above.

Businesses should be asked about all Internet activities (that is, the question used by countries should specify multiple responses). Activities are not necessarily mutually exclusive and hence multiple responses are possible as the business may use the Internet for various purposes. Possible country variations to response categories are to add or split categories according to country data requirements.

Filters: The question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question “Did your business use the Internet?”

Model question:

For which of the following activities did your business use the Internet during <reference period>?

Response categories:

Access to information

- Getting information about goods or services

- Getting information from general government organizations

- Getting information about market conditions, opportunities, or competitors

Communication

- Sending or receiving e-mail

- Telephoning over the Internet/ VoIP or using video conferencing

- Online messaging conversations (in written or recorded audio/video form, through apps such as Whatsapp, Teams, Slack, etc.)

Social media

- Social media presence: maintaining a business page, profile or account on social media

- Social media promotion: marketing of goods or services, customer engagement

- Social media selling: receiving orders for goods or services, including "social commerce", "live commerce"

Interaction with government, providers and customers

- Internet banking

- Accessing other financial services

- Interacting with general government organizations

- Providing customer services

- Delivering products online (digital delivery of goods or services to customers)

- Taking payment from customers

- Making payments to providers and other third-parties

Human resource management

- Internal or external recruitment

- Staff training

Paid cloud computing services

- Software applications (e.g. office, finance or accounting software, enterprise resource planning software, antivirus or other security software)

- Storage of files, hosting of databases

- Computing power to run the business' own software

- Computing platform providing a hosted environment for application development, testing or deployment (e.g. reusable software modules, application programming interfaces (APIs))

- Artificial intelligence (AI) software or systems generating text, images, video, audio content or codes (as a cloud computing service)
Please do not consider AI features embedded in other software or systems you are using.

Yes/ No or tick box for each response category

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

• TOTAL

• 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)

• 10–49 (small businesses)

• 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)

• 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing how enterprises in different sectors and of different size make use of the Internet is important for policymaking to assess the extent to which enterprises are taking full advantage of digital technologies, and to assess the impact of such use on productivity and growth. This kind of information is also important for assessing the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at promoting more advanced Internet use of businesses.

ICT1: Proportion of total business sector workforce involved in the ICT sector

Summary of discussion:

The TGCI noted that this indicator remains policy relevant but is often not collected through business ICT surveys or reported to UNCTAD by national statistical offices.

The main issue identified was not necessarily the indicator itself, but the need for clearer compilation guidance. The TGCI proposes that the UNCTAD secretariat involve the statistical unit of the ILO, which is also conducting methodological development to measure employment in the "digital sector".

Definition of concepts:

The proportion of total business sector workforce involved in the ICT sector is calculated by dividing the ICT sector workforce by the total business sector workforce (expressed as a percentage).

Clarifications and methodological issues:

ICT workforce (or ICT employment) consists of those persons employed in businesses that are classified as belonging to the ICT sector. Total business workforce represents all persons engaged in domestic production in the business sector. In a national accounts framework, employment can be measured in terms of headcounts, jobs, full-time equivalents (FTE) or hours worked. Currently, total headcounts or jobs are used for most countries. Further inputs on methodological guidance will be sought from ILO.

Model question: Not applicable

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U).

Policy relevance:

With growing digitalization of the economy and society, it becomes increasingly important for countries to have a minimum level of capabilities in the ICT goods and services producing sector. It is therefore important for policymakers to know how the ICT sector's share of the total business sector

workforce is evolving over time. With the increase of digitally-deliverable services, it's also important to measure employment in this area.

ICT2: Value added in the ICT sector (as a percentage of total business sector value added).
Summary of discussion: This indicator is considered relevant but, depending on the country, the competent authority calculating this indicator may be a central bank, ministry, or another specialized agency rather than the National Statistical Office. The group considered that guidance should be revised to reflect this institutional reality. The recommended approach to data compilation on this indicator might also need to be revised.
Definition of concepts: Value added in the ICT sector is calculated as the estimated value added of the ICT sector divided by total business sector value added (expressed as a percentage).
Clarifications and methodological issues: Value added for a particular industry represents its contribution to national GDP. It is sometimes referred to as GDP by industry and is not directly measured (but is estimated in a national accounts framework). In general, it is calculated as the difference between production (gross output) and intermediate inputs (the energy, materials and services required to produce final output).
Model question: Not applicable
Disaggregation and classifications: By industry (using ISIC Rev.~~4~~5) at section level (A to U).
Policy relevance: The ICT sector comprises many different activities that contribute in different ways to economic growth and development. It is important for policymakers to know how the ICT sector is contributing to overall value added in the economy, and how that share is evolving over time.

b. Indicators to be discontinued

B6: Proportion of businesses with an intranet
Reason to discontinue: The indicator was viewed as outdated in its current wording. If it were to be replaced or broadened to cover cloud-based business tools for communication and collaboration, it would be covered as a response category in B12. Bearing in mind that the core indicators should remain a short, focused list, the policy relevance is no longer strong enough to make this a stand-alone core indicator.
Definition of concepts:

The proportion of businesses with an intranet is calculated by dividing the number of in-scope businesses with an intranet by the total number of in-scope businesses.
Clarifications and methodological issues: An intranet refers to an internal communications network using Internet protocols and allowing communication within an organization (and to other authorized persons). It is typically set up behind a firewall to control access. The question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question “Did your business use computer(s)?”
Model question: Did your business have an intranet as at <reference date>? Yes/ No
Disaggregation and classifications: By industry (using ISIC Rev.4) at section level (A to U) By size of enterprise: • TOTAL • 0–9 employees (micro-businesses) • 10–49 (small businesses) • 50–249 (medium-sized businesses) • 250 or more (large businesses)
Policy relevance: As basic business functions such as internal communication and collaboration are increasingly cloud-based, the extent to which enterprises have an intranet is no longer important to assess the way in which businesses are leveraging digital technologies.

B10: Proportion of businesses with a local area network (LAN)
Reason to discontinue: The TGCI considered this indicator difficult for respondents to understand and less relevant in a post-pandemic context with remote work and cloud-based systems. UNCTAD also noted that few countries collect or report this indicator. The group proposed removing it from the core list.
Definition of concepts: The proportion of businesses with a LAN is calcultad by dividing the number of in-scope businesses with a LAN by the total number of in-scope businesses.
Clarifications and methodological issues: A LAN refers to a network connecting computers within a localized area such as a single building, department or site; it may be wireless. Filters: The question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question “Did your business use computer(s)?”

Model question:

Did your business have a local area network (LAN) as at <reference date>? Yes/ No

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.4) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

- TOTAL
- 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
- 10–49 (small businesses)
- 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
- 250 or more (large businesses)

Policy relevance:

Knowing the extent to which enterprises in different sectors and of different size have a local area network (LAN) is no longer important to assess the way in which businesses are leveraging digital technologies overall.

B11: Proportion of businesses with an extranet

Reason to discontinue:

Participants noted that the current definition is outdated and does not capture modern cloud-based services, remote access or staff connectivity. The original concept focused on links with business partners, suppliers, vendors, and customers, which can be covered by the response categories in B12. UNCTAD also noted few countries collected nor reported this indicator.

Definition of concepts:

The proportion of businesses with an extranet is calculated by dividing the number of in-scope businesses with and extranet by the total number of in-scope businesses.

Clarifications and methodological issues:

An extranet is a closed network that uses Internet protocols to securely share a business' information with suppliers, vendors, customers or other businesses partners. It can take the form of a secure extension of an Intranet that allows external users to access some parts of the business' Intranet.

Filters: The question is only asked of those businesses answering 'yes' to the question "Did your business use computer(s)?"

Model question:

Did your business have an extranet as at <reference date>? Yes/ No

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.4) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

• TOTAL • 0–9 employees (micro-businesses) • 10–49 (small businesses) • 50–249 (medium-sized businesses) • 250 or more (large businesses)
Policy relevance: Knowing the extent to which enterprises in different sectors and of different size have an extranet is no longer important to assess the way in which businesses are leveraging digital technologies, which can be covered by other indicators.

c. Indicators to be added

Bxx: Value of e-commerce sales and digitally ordered exports
Reason to add: The indicator on the value of e-commerce is the result of the work of the Task Group on measuring e-commerce value (TG-eCOM) and is contained in the guidelines and recommendations for measuring e-commerce value that are also presented to the WG in this session. The TG-eCOM worked from 2025-2026 to develop the methodological guidance.
Definition of concepts: An **e-commerce transaction** is the sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over computer networks by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders. The goods or services are ordered by those methods, but the payment and the ultimate delivery of the goods or services do not have to be conducted online. An e-commerce transaction can be between enterprises, households, individuals, governments, and other public or private organisations. **Include**: Orders made via webpages, apps, extranets, and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). The type is defined by the method of making the order. **Exclude**: Orders made by telephone calls, facsimiles, on-premises mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes), manually typed messages (including but not limited to e-mails). Source: OECD (2025) **a. E-commerce marketplaces and other platforms that operate websites or apps used by multiple businesses or producers to receive orders for goods or services** Includes orders received through platforms mainly used for selling goods (e.g. Alibaba, Amazon, eBay, Shopee), for ordering accommodation, transport, delivery or other physically delivered services (e.g. Airbnb, Booking.com, TaskRabbit, Uber/UberEATS), and for ordering digitally delivered services or digital products (e.g. Coursera, Fiverr, Upwork, app stores such as Apple's App Store and Google Play). Includes orders received through shopping or ordering features integrated into social media platforms or messaging apps, such as WhatsApp Cart or TikTok Shop.

Does not include orders placed or agreed only through message conversations or email where no integrated shopping or ordering feature is used.

Does not include orders placed using on-premises ordering methods, such as self-service kiosks or QR codes scanned at the seller's premises to access, for example, a product listing, menu, ordering form or payment page.

b. Other websites or apps (not covered in a)

Includes orders received through websites or apps used only for your enterprise's own sales, such as an online store or web shop where customers add items to a basket/cart, or an online order form, booking form or reservation system.

Also includes password-protected customer or partner portals, such as extranets, where customers can place orders, bookings or reservations for your enterprise's goods or services.

Includes websites or apps created, hosted or technically provided by a third party, where the website or app is presented as your enterprise's own sales channel and is not an e-commerce marketplace or other platform covered in a.

Does not include orders received or agreed through manually typed messages, recorded voice messages or recorded video messages sent via messaging apps, social media platforms, email or other communication tools.

Does not include orders placed using on-premises ordering methods, such as self-service kiosks or QR codes scanned at the seller's premises to access, for example, a product listing, menu, ordering form or payment page.

c. EDI-type system-to-system messages

Includes orders received using Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) messages. These orders are:

• sent and received in an agreed or standard format that can be read and processed by business systems;

• generated by the customer's business, procurement or ERP system and transmitted to your enterprise's business management or ERP system, either directly or through a shared system or EDI service provider;

Includes automatic system-generated demand-driven orders.

Examples of EDI standards and formats include EDIFACT and XML-based EDI formats such as UBL and RosettaNet. <Recommended to add national or industry-specific examples>

Does not include orders made by customers through a website, app, online marketplace or other platform where EDI messages are used in the background for order handling or processing. These orders should be included under a or b according to the type of ordering interface used by the customer.

Turnover comprises the totals invoiced by the observation unit during the reference period: this corresponds to the total value of market sales of goods and services to third parties.

Turnover includes:

- *all duties and taxes on the goods or services invoiced by the unit with the exception of the value-added tax (VAT) invoiced by the unit vis-à-vis its customer and other similar deductible taxes directly linked to turnover;*

- *all other charges (transport, packaging, etc.) passed on to the customer, even if these charges are listed separately on the invoice.*

Reductions in price, rebates and discounts, as well as the value of returned packing must be deducted.

Excluded are:

- *income classified as other operating income, financial income and extraordinary income in company accounts;*
- *operating subsidies received from public authorities*

Source: Eurostat (n.d.)

Although the word "turnover" is not used universally, the same measure of value may be applied using a different name suited to the compiling country.

In International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), which are followed by enterprises in financial record keeping, "turnover" is referred to as "revenue from contracts with customers".

E-commerce value consists of turnover resulting from sales arising through e-commerce orders.

Clarifications and methodological issues:

Filters: this question should only be served to responding businesses answering "yes" to the question "In YYYY, did your enterprise make e-commerce sales of goods or services?"

It is important to choose the adequate respondent for this question in order to obtain accurate responses. For example, in ICT surveys, respondents from IT departments often lack detailed knowledge of sales revenue. An alternate respondent may be needed and guidance to this effect provided in the data collection.

Disaggregation and classifications:

By e-commerce channel:
• TOTAL
• Sales through websites and apps operated by e-commerce marketplaces and other digital intermediation platforms
• Sales through other websites and apps
• Sales through EDI e-commerce

By customer location:

- same economic territory (domestic e-commerce)
- abroad (international e-commerce = digitally ordered export)

By economic activity (using ISIC Rev.5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:
• TOTAL
• 0–9 employees (micro-businesses)
• 10–49 (small businesses)
• 50–249 (medium-sized businesses)
• 250 or more (large businesses)

Indicator construction:

It is recommended to publish two indicators based on this collection:

1. The value of e-commerce sales in millions of national currency
2. The value of e-commerce sale as a percentage of turnover from sales of goods and services

Policy relevance:

Knowing the extent to which enterprises in different economic activities and of different size are generating revenue by receiving orders over the Internet is important for policymaking to assess the economic contribution of e-commerce, and to assess the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at promoting e-commerce use by enterprises.

Furthermore, knowing the share of e-commerce sales value generated through different e-commerce channels supports assessment of dependence on third-party platforms.

It is recommended to publish the monetary value of e-commerce (with breakdowns) as this helps to support integration in analyses and statistical frameworks.

Bxx: Proportion of businesses using artificial intelligence (AI) by type of activity

Reason to add:

An indicator on the use of AI by businesses was the most pressing request from experts, especially in the context of the very rapid growth of this industry and in the capabilities of AI agents.

An OECD handbook (forthcoming) on the production of internationally harmonized statistics on AI using ICT access and usage surveys will offer a draft framework that covers AI definitions, concepts, measurement approaches for businesses, households, and individuals, and guidance on statistical indicators and analysis. The framework links AI activities, business functions, purposes, and several other dimensions to assess the depth and maturity of AI adoption by enterprises.

The OECD presented the draft handbook to the TGCI in September, but the handbook will be published after the WG-ECDE. The TGCI agreed that methodological guidance on this indicator should be aligned with the OECD handbook, once it's published.

The discussion noted that the International Telecommunications Union has also developed indicators on the use of AI by households, including activities of what individuals are doing with AI that can be complementary to the business statistics.

Definition of concepts:

The OECD handbook develops a practical AI definition for survey purposes, describing AI as systems that use data to reason, learn, and adapt in order to generate outputs such as predictions, recommendations, content, or actions.

A working definition from Eurostat is that "artificial intelligence refers to systems that use technologies such as: text mining, computer vision, speech recognition, natural language generation, machine learning, deep learning to gather and/or use data to predict, recommend or decide, with varying levels of autonomy, the best action to achieve specific goals."[8]

The proportiong of businesses using AI by type of activity can be calculated as: either the proportion of in-scope businesses or the proportion of AI-using businesses that undertook each activity. For international comparability, output is most simply presented as the proportion of in-scope

[8] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/SEPDF/cache/120443.pdf

businesses undertaking each activity. An alternative presentation is the proportion of business AI users undertaking each activity.

Clarifications and methodological issues:

This indicator would resemble in its construction the current indicator B12 on use of the Internet by type of activity. In surveys, a filter question on whether a business uses AI may be introduced, and methodological guidance must refer to institutional use of AI (the use of AI is intentional business practice). In effect, the indicator would refer to a business (intentional) decision to use AI, and not incidental use of AI (embedded in search engines, social media and other commonly used software) or use of AI by employees.

The response categories will need to be further defined, but guidance can be provided by the Eurostat model questionnaires and the OECD handbook on measuring AI (forthcoming). This will ensure the comparability of indicators (the Eurostat framework, for example, has been tested in non-EU countries such as Brazil).

Businesses should be asked about all AI activities (that is, the question used by countries should specify multiple responses), hence multiple responses are possible. Possible country variations to response categories are to add or split categories according to country data requirements.

Methodological guidance may propose a filter question to first determine if the business uses AI.

Model question:

The following model question is for illustrative purposes. It is proposed that the TG-CI should be mandated to finalise the question in light of the OECD Handbook on Measuring AI in ICT Surveys due to be finalized in 2027.

For which of the following activities did your business use AI during <reference period>?

Response categories:

Future methodological guidance will propose response categories for this indicator, considering the EU model questionnaire and the forthcoming OECD handbook. Response categories may include, but are not limited to, use of AI software or systems to:

- To analyze written language (text mining)
- To convert spoken language into a machine-readable format (speech recognition)
- To generate written, spoken language or programming codes (natural language generation, speech synthesis)
- To generate pictures, videos, sound/audio
- To identify objects or people based on images (image recognition, image processing)
- To do machine learning (e.g. deep learning) for data analysis
- To automate different workflows or assist in decision-making (AI based software robotic process automation)
- To enable machines to physically move by observing their surroundings and take autonomous decisions.
- For ICT security

Disaggregation and classifications:

By industry (using ISIC Rev.5) at section level (A to U)

By size of enterprise:

• TOTAL • 0–9 employees (micro-businesses) • 10–49 (small businesses) • 50–249 (medium-sized businesses) • 250 or more (large businesses)
Policy relevance: Knowing how enterprises in different sectors and of different size make use of AI is important for policymaking to assess the extent to which enterprises are taking full advantage of this emerging technology, and to assess the impact of such use on productivity and growth. This kind of information is also important for assessing the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at promoting or regulating AI use by businesses.

4. ICT usage in business and gender

The use of ICT in business is not inherently gendered. Indeed, nor are businesses themselves. However, gender is a characteristic of the people that own, run, and work for businesses. And technology use varies with gender. Figures from the ITU[9] show that men systematically use the Internet more than women and are more likely to engage in online selling. However, shopping online is in general more common among women than among men.

Digital technologies can create opportunities for women to engage more in commercial activities and international trade. For example, e-commerce can lower entry barriers to economic activity by offering increased flexibility and providing access to wider markets. This gives e-commerce powerful potential as a tool for economic empowerment of women and other groups that face barriers to engaging in economic activity. Research by UN Trade and Development[10] has found that "women across the global South are increasingly turning to digital entrepreneurship as a pathway to economic empowerment, innovation and community impact." However, "those opportunities are not equitably distributed" and structural constraints can still limit these benefits. Supporting women-led digital businesses is "not only a matter of equity, but also a strategic imperative for inclusive and sustainable development".

For policymakers, this means that aggregate business statistics, while essential, may not by themselves reveal whether opportunities and constraints are distributed evenly across population groups, regions, or types of businesses. Where feasible and relevant to national priorities, compilers may therefore seek to complement headline business ICT usage statistics with appropriate disaggregations or linked indicators that shed light on inclusion and disparities, while remaining mindful of data availability, quality, respondent burden, and the limits of what can be robustly inferred from existing sources.

When it comes to businesses, UN Trade and Development guidance promotes using business registers, employer-employee data, surveys and other sources to assess the gender composition of the firm's ownership, management and workforce.[11] By defining thresholds for these, such as where women are the majority, firms can be categorised as "women owned", "women led", etc. Variations in the propensity to

[9] The gender digital divide. In *ITU Facts and Figures 2025.* Retrieved from https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2025/10/15/ff25-the-gender-digital-divide/

[10] https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2025d4_en.pdf

[11] https://unctad.org/publication/compilation-guidelines-measurement-gender-trade-statistics

use ICTs, including engagement in e-commerce and digital trade and the value generated through these activities can then be compared between firms that do and do not meet these thresholds.

To support this, the following breakdown is proposed for application across all core indicators:

- Women characterized firms

Where these satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- Majority women owned
- Majority women led
- Majority of employees are women

Women's ownership, leadership and workforce participation could also be reported as separate dimensions to distinguish between women's participation in decision-making and economic production. Guidance on how these criteria should be applied to firms of different sizes will be incorporated in the revised Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy based on practices identified in the UN Trade and Development Compilation guidelines for measurement of gender-in-trade statistics and other relevant sources.

5. Emerging issues and proposed future work

Revision of the list of core indicators on ICT use by businesses and on the ICT sector would lead in-turn to a revision of the UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy, which sets out guidance on how the indicators can be collected and compiled in practice.

Input from the Task Group has identified various areas to be addressed, elaborated, or clarified in the revised Manual including:

- Stating the possibility to use different reporting periods – such as 3 vs 12 months - for business ICT usage questions, and providing guidance to help practitioners select the reporting period suited to respondents in their country;
- Addressing unincorporated household market enterprises (which are sometimes referred to as "informal businesses", notably considerations related to their coverage
- Clarifying how breakdowns can be operationalized in practice. For some breakdowns it will be necessary to include "don't know" and "not applicable" responses in survey forms. And some breakdowns, such as connection speeds may be adapted to the country context and guidance to that effect provided on questionnaires.
- Alignment with the ISIC Rev.5-based definition of the ICT sector as established in the OECD (2025) technical paper *"OECD definitions of the ICT sector, the content and media sector, and information industries based on ISIC Rev.5"*[12]
- The methodological guidance on the two ICT sector indicators might require adjustment, after inputs are sought from the ILO and national accounts experts.

A proposal was made to develop a typology of social media platforms, which would allow the distribution of enterprises across social media platforms, which is not static and changes over time, to be monitored. This could potentially be implemented as a follow-on question or expansion to the social media items in question B12. This remains an area for further discussion and development by the TG-CI.

[12] https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/06/oecd-definitions-of-the-ict-sector-the-content-and-media-sector-and-information-industries-based-on-isic-rev-5_455bfea7/b9576889-en.pdf

Similarly, a suggestion was also made that a more detailed indicator on cloud computing could be developed. This would follow-on from and complement the cloud computing items already included in question B12.

A proposal was also received for the development of a stand-alone indicator on digital payments.

In addition, the OECD handbook on measuring AI, which will be released in 2027, should form the basis for the new AI indicator.

Comments on this report and the revised list of core indicators can be submitted to the UNCTAD Secretariat (emeasurement@unctad.org) until 15 January 2027.

The TGCI will resume in 2027 to discuss the issues and proposals outlined above, as well as further inputs received from the consultation, and ultimately to finalize the revised set of core Indicators.

6. Decisions requested from the Working Group

Based on this report, the TGCI requests the Working Group to:

a. Note the relevance of the core list and measurement to national digital economy policies and ongoing international processes related to digital for development.

b. Endorse the progress made so far including the indicators to be maintained (with adjustments as indicated), the indicators to be removed, and the two new indicators on e-commerce and on use of AI, and without the indicators to be deleted.

c. Request the TGCI to continue its work and deliver the revised list of core indicators on ICT usage in business to the 2027 meeting of WG-ECDE.

d. Provide comments on the report by 15 Jan 2027 to emeasurement@unctad.org.