

Twitter and other social media for official statistics: why, what and how

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1. In late 2010, Insee (National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies, France) decided to communicate on Twitter for three main reasons. The first one was to appear on social media because this would give a modern image for the Institute. The second one was to reach new audiences, especially among the younger generation. The third reason was to get closer to the public and create a community around Insee.

A survey showed us that people who knew us trusted the official statistics more than other people. With social media we can reach young people and we can reach people who have never visited our website: we can reach them through someone else, someone who regularly visits our website, who is in contact with us via social media and who contacts people who have never visited our website. For example, if there is a community around cyclists on social media, and if a member of this community is interested in economy and statistics, this member might send the messages we post about the number of cyclists and the number of people who are commuting by bicycle out to this community.

2. Why Twitter and not Facebook? Among different social media, Twitter has quite a few advantages. It does not take too much time to manage the account and to tweet, and the questions from your followers (140 characters) are not conducive to a real discussion. The public institutions that are on Facebook and Twitter, generally have many more followers on the latter.

In fact, our Twitter account has proved rather successful: today we have 30 000 followers, we need 10 hours per week to prepare and publish our tweets, and little time to answer around 100 questions from our followers per year (60 in 2013, 150 in 2014).

3. Insee decided to communicate two types of messages on Twitter in order to present the output of statistical production and to promote the work of the organisation. The account is automatically updated through the RSS feed (headlines of national publications, short-term economic indicators) and manually through communication tweets (regional production, and institutional information: census, institutional events, pedagogical or interactive tools on the website www.insee.fr...)¹.

We send about 35 tweets per week: 10 automatically about national production, 9 manually about regional production, 16 manually about institutional information. Each week we plan the tweets of the following week (*cf. an example appendix 1*).

The number of retweets of our tweets is about 240 per week. On average, a tweet is retweeted 7 times. This may seem like not much, but the number of engagements (retweets, favorites, url clicks, embedded media clicks...) is about 1 500 per week and the number of impressions (of our tweets on a screen) is about 140 000 per week. On average, we get 40 engagements and 4 000 impressions per tweet.

4. We are trying hard to increase the number of our followers on Twitter and to find more followers of a slightly “higher quality”. The next paragraphs explain some examples of our work: trying to answer the questions as soon as

¹ Insee has two accounts on Twitter, one in French ([@Insee_Fr](https://twitter.com/Insee_Fr)) and one in English ([@InseeFr_News](https://twitter.com/InseeFr_News)). We communicate only on the short term economic indicators on the English one (because they are translated in English, the others publications are not translated).

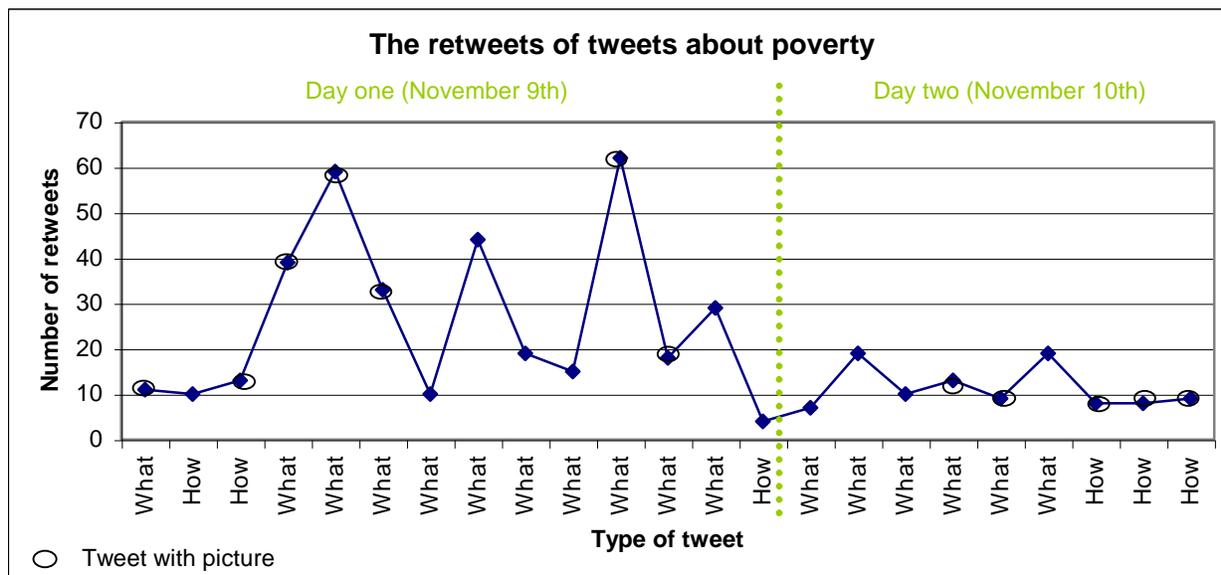
possible, tweeting pictures, writing several different tweets on one publication, having a verified account, and analysing the profiles of our followers.

5. Answering the questions as soon as possible is not easy. We have decided to answer only questions that are sent to us, i.e. the questions that are tweeted to “@Insee_Fr”. We try to answer them in one day, and if that is not possible, the next day. To do this, we plan our responses depending on the type of question: if the question is technical (most of the questions are technical), our user support answers; if the question is delicate, the communication and press unit answer it (or not) depending on the validation from the directorate of communication. They answer by themselves or with the help of an expert.

6. Tweeting pictures is new for us. We began to do that in July 2014. Between 1 January and 24 February 2015, we published 44 tweets including pictures among 500 tweets we published during this period. On average, each one was retweeted 14 times, more than a tweet without picture, which is retweeted only 7 times.

7. Writing several different tweets on the topic of one publication is a way of increasing the number of different angles and the retweets for this publication. In November 2014, we released a publication on poverty. We did 23 tweets on this subject in two days: 11 included a picture, and 12 did not include a picture; 17 presented messages/figures on poverty (what), and 6 presented how we measure poverty (how). Cf. appendix 2 to see these 23 tweets.

On average, a tweet with a picture was retweeted more than a tweet without a picture: 25 times against 15 times.



On the second day of the operation, the number of retweets fell: on average, a tweet was retweeted 11 times on the second day against 26 times on the first day. But this operation on the second day is still interesting because it has given us 100 extra retweets on the subject, and 11 retweets are more than the number of retweets of a tweet in 2014 (7 retweets on average in 2014).

8. Having a verified account depends on Twitter itself.

Twitter explains this on <https://support.twitter.com/articles/119135-faqs-about-verified-accounts#>

A verified account is any account with a blue verified badge on their Twitter profile.



Twitter verifies accounts to establish authenticity of identities of key individuals and brands on Twitter. Twitter verifies accounts on an ongoing basis to make it easier for users to find who they're looking for. We concentrate on highly sought users in music, acting, fashion, government, politics, religion, journalism, media, sports, business, and

other key interest areas. If you fall under one of the above categories and your Twitter account meets our qualifications for verification, we may reach out to you in the future. The criteria of Twitter are not listed very precisely.

9. Verified account holders have access to extra features, including a very interesting one that enables them to analyse the impact of their tweets. *Verified account holders have access to account analytics, including data and characteristics about Tweet engagement and followers.* However, it seems that every account can today access these account analytics on <https://analytics.twitter.com>. For example, on January 19th, we posted a tweet *Your census enumerator has a tricolor card signed by the mayor that he must be able to present to you #Census2015* (original version in French: *Votre agent recenseur a une carte tricolore signée du maire qu'il doit pouvoir vous présenter #RP2015*). <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/557092636738088960>



You can see on the picture above that the tweet was retweeted 94 times and liked 11 times. With the account analytics from the verified account, we can see that there were 485 engagements and 13 872 impressions. Cf. the following table, which details the number of engagements too.

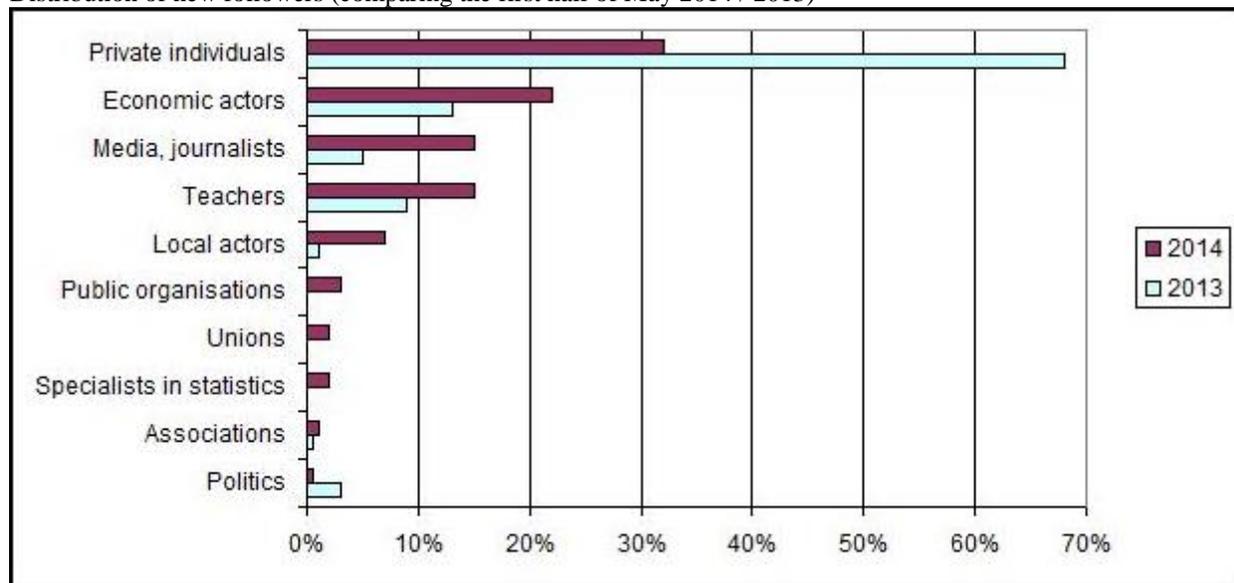
	Number	Commentary
Impressions	13 872	It is less than the number of followers because many followers follow a lot of accounts and do not go on Twitter frequently enough to see all the tweets of the accounts they follow.
Engagements	485	Retweets, replies, favorites, user profile clicks, url clicks, hashtag clicks, detail expands, permalink clicks, embedded media clicks, follows and email tweet
Engagement rate	0,03496	=485/13872
Retweets	94	94 as in the picture above
Replies	4	To reply to the tweet (to the author of the tweet)
Favorites	11	To say that you like the tweet
User profile clicks	20	To see the profile of Insee
url clicks	24	To see more information on the website of Insee
Hashtag clicks	13	To see other tweets containing the same keyword (#RP2015)
Detail expands	64	To see the tweet in a window with all the details
Permalink clicks	1	To insert the tweet in your website
Embedded media clicks	248	To see the picture (or the video) of the tweet in a window.
Follows	4	To subscribe to the Twitter account of Insee
Email tweet	2	To email the tweet

In this example, you can see that the picture is much more clicked than the url: 248 times compared with 24 times!

10. In addition to the analysis of the engagements of our followers, we analyse some characteristics of our followers: we look at who they are, how many followers they have, how many times they tweet and retweet.

It can take a lot of time to do that because the information is located in texts which are disseminated in a large number of accounts. We have looked for software that would automatically conduct the analysis, but have not found it yet. So we analyse only the most influential followers (those who have more than 2 000 followers; there are 1 500 of them) and our new followers who have joined us between 1st and 15th May (they are about 500 each year).

Distribution of new followers (comparing the first half of May 2014 / 2013)



For example, when we analyse the types of people who begin following us in the first half of May (cf. graph above), we see that many of our new followers opened their Twitter account as private individuals. It does not mean that they are not journalists or teachers, but this is the way they define themselves on Twitter.

Between 2013 and 2014, our new followers were less often private individuals (33% in 2014) and, in 2014, 50% of them said that they were economic actors, teachers or journalists.

11. Insee is also active on two other social media: Dailymotion for videos (as YouTube is known in France) and Slideshare, for sharing presentation and pedagogical documentation, to present its work and its methods, and explain how we produce our statistics. They are used less frequently than Twitter but they do have some distinct advantages.

12. On Dailymotion we show short movies to explain, in an educational way, how Insee builds an indicator and why there can be a gap between figures and people's perceptions. We produced four short movies of this type on the consumer price index, unemployment rate, growth rate and poverty rate.



A few months ago, we made a short movie of a new type prepared in motion (graphic) design. It combined different creative elements like typography, illustration, logos and shapes that were then animated or moved in a way that tells a story. Our first movie in motion graphic design explains how our statistics are designed and compiled (cf. www.insee.fr/en/publications-et-services/default.asp?page=video-comprendre.htm). It is inspired by a video from INE (statistics Spain) on the same subject (cf. this Spanish video on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpB_GahI2Jo).



Our videos can be found on www.insee.fr/en/publications-et-services/default.asp?page=videos.htm and on Dailymotion.

They were viewed 30 000 times in 2014 (15 000 times in 2013, three videos in this period; 5 000 times in 2012, two videos in this period).

13. On Slideshare we present Insee, its work, its methods and how our data are produced. We have published several documents, for instance, a presentation of figures about the quality of life, the Insee annual report and *Insee in short* (*Insee en Bref*, available in French only). *Insee in short* is a compilation of educational documents, built around the same topics as the videos and published at the same time.

The documents were viewed 20 000 times on Slideshare in the last three years. The documents viewed the most are *Insee in short*. These documents can also be found on our website and have been downloaded from our website more than 150 000 times in 2014 (50 000 times in 2013, for three *Insee in short* at this period).

14. Summing up, after a couple of years, we have found that our strategy on social media is still relevant and is beginning to show interesting results. The number of impressions of our tweets, the number of views of our videos and the number of downloads of our educational documents *Insee in short* have been increasing for years and now reach substantial numbers of people. Regarding various communication modes on a specific subject, we can choose one or several actions among press conferences, press releases, news in our newsletter, tweets etc. Twitter provides a good way to communicate very quickly and without going into too much detail.

Insee is a member of a club for communication directors in the French central administration. In this club, we discuss the communication strategy in general and talk about social media. Most members use social media as much as us or less than us. Some members use them more than us, for example, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The club gives us new ideas for possible changes in our social media policy.

15. Regarding the future, we are studying some options to adapt our social media strategy. They are: live tweeting and retweeting in order to be a more active member of a community, presenting our videos on Youtube to reach the people who go on YouTube as well as or instead of Dailymotion, and using LinkedIn and/or Viadeo (as LinkedIn is known in France) to promote our institution and its human resources (such as job vacancies, job exams and external events organised by Insee).

Appendix 1: Tweets program for the week from 2 to 6 February (sent for validation)

Paris, January 30, 2015

1	Odil, un outil pour faire une étude de marché avant la création de son entreprise #Entreprises #SalonEntrepreneurs www.insee.fr/fr/service/default.asp?page=entreprises/odil.htm	2 Feb. 09:30
2	#RP2015 Plus de 5,5 millions de personnes ont déjà répondu au recensement. Et vous ?	2 Feb. 12:30
3	#MidiPyrénées #Aquitaine 2013 : une nouvelle bonne année pour la filière aérospatiale dans le grand Sud-Ouest www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=4&ref_id=22067	2 Feb. 14:00
4	37 000 agents de la fonction publique cesseraient leur activité à l'horizon 2025 en #HauteNormandie www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=14&ref_id=22066	2 Feb. 15:00
5	IP1535 Déchets industriels titre *	
6	IP1535 Déchets industriels angle 1/3 *	2 Feb. 17:30
7	IP1535 Déchets industriels angle 2/3 *	2 Feb. 17:35
8	IP1535 Déchets industriels angle 3/3 *	2 Feb. 17:40
9	@SDEntrepreneurs Retrouvez-nous dès demain au salon des #entrepreneurs, Paris, Palais des Congrès www.insee.fr/fr/insee-statistique-publique/connaitre/colloques/calendriercolloques.asp	3 Feb. 09:30
10	Campings et hôtels limousins : une saison estivale 2014 contrastée Limousin www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=9&ref_id=22061	3 Feb. 14:00
11	La filière aéronautique du grand Sud-Ouest suit la cadence #MidiPyrénées #Aquitaine http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=4&ref_id=22031	3 Feb. 15:00
12	Le #Recensement, c'est sûr : les informations collectées sont strictement confidentielles #RP2015 Video dailymotion	3 Feb. 17:30
13	@SDEntrepreneurs #SalonEntrepreneurs Nous y sommes ! Stand 258, info sur Odil, Sirene, Alisse et nos autres outils	4 Feb. 09:30
14	Et demain, ne manquez pas notre atelier « L'offre de l'Insee aux entreprises » à 15h15 #SalonEntrepreneurs #entreprises @SDEntrepreneurs	4 Feb. 09:31
15	#RP2015 Les grandes étapes du #Recensement : que se passe-t-il avant et après la collecte ? www.le-recensement-et-moi.fr/rpetmoi/comment-ca-marche	4 Feb. 11:30
16	#RégionCentre 4 000 petites et moyennes entreprises exportatrices en région Centre-Val de Loire www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=21&ref_id=22095	4 Feb. 14:00
17	#Lorraine Modes de vie : vers des ménages plus âgés et plus petits www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=17&ref_id=22075	4 Feb. 15:00
18	IP1536 Les conditions de vie des enfants après le divorce titre *	
19	IP1536 Les conditions de vie des enfants après le divorce angle 1/3 *	4 Feb. 17:30
20	IP1536 Les conditions de vie des enfants après le divorce angle 1/3 *	4 Feb. 17:35
21	IP1536 Les conditions de vie des enfants après le divorce angle 1/3 *	4 Feb. 17:40
22	According to business leaders, in the manufacturing industry, investment will increase by 3% in 2015 www.insee.fr/fr/themes/info-rapide.asp?id=15	5 Feb. 08:45
23	@SDEntrepreneurs Atelier « L'Offre de l'Insee aux entreprises » à 15h15, présentation d'Alisse, Odil, Sirene... www.salondesentrepreneurs.com/paris/conferences/3077/l-offre-de-l-inseeaux-entreprises#ascenc	5 Feb. 09:30
24	@SDEntrepreneurs Atelier « L'offre de l'Insee aux entreprises » dans 15 min, salle Paris niveau 2 #SalonEntrepreneurs	5 Feb. 15:00
25	#RP2015 Le #Recensement expliqué par ses acteurs, c'est ici : www.le-recensement-et-moi.fr/rpetmoi/espace-multimedia	5 Feb. 17:30
26	Notre rapport d'activité 2014 est en ligne : faits marquants, grandes opérations, travailler à l'Insee Lien en attente	6 Feb. 09:30
27	#Étudiants vous avez peut-être reçu la visite d'un agent recenseur, avez-vous répondu au questionnaire ? #RP2015 www.le-recensement-et-moi.fr/rpetmoi/etudiants	6 Feb. 11:30
28	L'agroalimentaire en #Picardie - De l'industrie au commerce de gros : des ctivités diversifiées et performantes www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=18&ref_id=22093	6 Feb. 13:00
29	Visualisez des indicateurs démo, éco et sociaux selon différents découpages sur nos cartes interactives #dataviz www.insee.fr/fr/bases-de-donnees/default.asp?page=statistiques-locales/cartesthematiques.htm	6 Feb. 17:30

* 4 pages- publications IP 1535 et 1536 not finished, tweets sent later for validation

Appendix 2: The 23 tweets about poverty in November 2014

(original version of the tweets: French)

Day 1 (9th November)

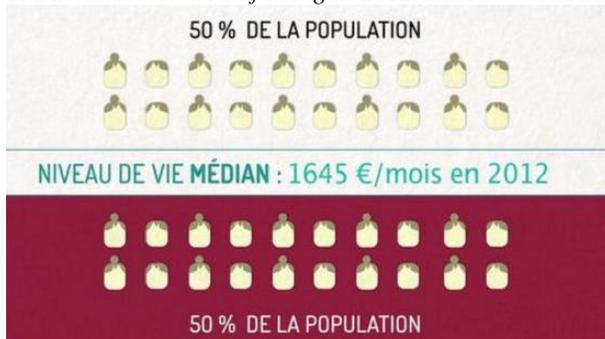
Tweet 1 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509107362334916609> What - 11 retweets
Standards of living in 2012: In 2012, in France, the median standard of living of the population is...<http://bit.ly/1s5LyFe>

Tweet 2 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509234786909425665> How - 10 retweets
How is calculated the standard of living? Standard of living of the household = disposable income divided by an indicator of its size #standardofliving

Tweet 3 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509236072627200000> How - 13 retweets - with image
Disposable income is what perceives a household less what it pays #standardofliving



Tweet 4 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509237276379844608> What - 39 retweets - with image
The median standard of living in 2012 is € 19 740€: 50% of pop. has more and 50% has less #standardofliving



Tweet 5 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509238546238930944> What - 59 retweets - with picture
The poverty line is equal to 60% of the median standard of living. In 2012, it is 987 € / month #standardofliving



Tweet 6 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509239829188456449> What - 33 retweets - with picture
Evolution of the poverty rate in France between 1996 and 2012



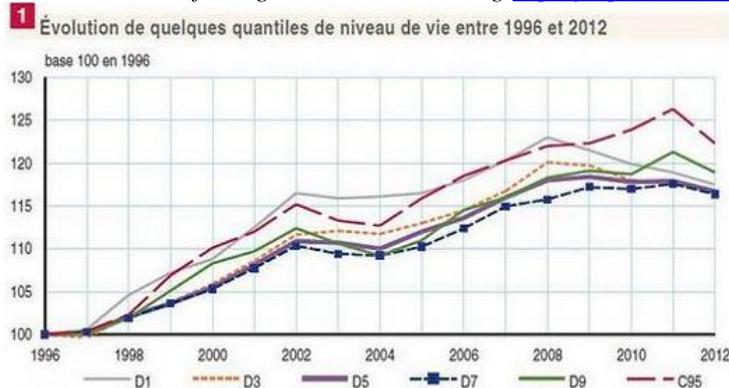
Tweet 7 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509248702788419584> What - 10 retweets
In 2012, median standard of living of people living in a household of metropolitan France is € 19,740
#standardofliving <http://j.mp/11PbHYr>

Tweet 8 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509248904727363584> What - 44 retweets
In 2012, 8.5 M. people live below the poverty line which is 987 € / month (60% of median standard of living)
<http://j.mp/1weIwyL>

Tweet 9 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509249652164947968> What - 19 retweets
1/2 In 2012, the 10% of the people the poorest have a standard of living below € 10,610 / year #standardofliving

Tweet 10 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509249741314883584>
2/2 The 10% wealthiest have 3.5 times more or € 37,430 / year #standardofliving <http://j.mp/11PbLqZ>
 What - 15 retweets

Tweet 11 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509252098425634816> What - 62 retweets - with picture
The whole scale of living standards is declining <http://j.mp/1wahMIQ>



Tweet 12 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509252651000020992> What - 18 retweets - with picture
In 2012, inequalities slightly reduced <http://j.mp/YsA2cs>

2 Niveaux de vie annuels et indicateurs d'inégalités de 1996 à 2012

	1996	2002	2005	2008	2009	2010	2010*	2011	2012
Seuils de niveau de vie (en milliers d'euros 2012)									
Niveau de vie médian (D5)	17,0	18,9	19,1	20,1	20,2	20,1	19,9	19,9	19,7
Premier décile de niveau de vie (D1)	9,1	10,5	10,5	11,1	11,0	10,9	10,8	10,7	10,6
Neuvième décile de niveau de vie (D9)	31,8	35,8	35,3	37,6	37,9	37,8	37,4	38,2	37,4
Rapports interdéciles									
D9/D1	3,5	3,4	3,3	3,4	3,4	3,5	3,5	3,6	3,5
D9/D5	1,9	1,9	1,9	1,9	1,9	1,9	1,9	1,9	1,9
D5/D1	1,9	1,8	1,8	1,8	1,8	1,8	1,8	1,9	1,9
Masses de niveau de vie détenues									
S20 (en %)	9,0	9,3	9,0	9,0	8,9	8,7	8,7	8,6	8,6
S50 (en %)	31,0	31,1	31,0	30,9	30,7	30,2	30,1	29,8	30,0

Tweet 13 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509252829794795520> What - 29 retweets
In 2012, growing poverty among single-parent families. On the contrary, the situation of pensioners is improving
<http://j.mp/1qLybtd>

Tweet 14 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509280100164960256> What - 4 retweets
To guide Insee Publication on standards of living, discover the educational kit on poverty measurement
<http://j.mp/1IPjIMO>

Day 2 (10th November)

Tweet 15 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509355677588803584> = Tweet 7 What - 7 retweets

Tweet 16 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509356815151165440> = Tweet 8 What - 19 retweets

Tweet 17 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509358381019054080> = Tweet 10 What - 10 retweets

Tweet 18 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509360596643368960> = Tweet 11 What - 13 retweets - with picture (cf. tweet 11)

Tweet 19 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509361862744350720> = Tweet 12 What - 13 retweets - with picture (cf. tweet 12)

Tweet 20 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509363127213764608> = Tweet 13 What - 10 retweets

Tweet 21 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509608068363984896> How - 8 retweets - with picture
Our new Insee in short to understand the measure of #poverty is viewed and downloaded @SlideShare
<http://fr.slideshare.net/InseeFr/1514-407-inseeenbrefbat>



Tweet 22 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509608801410887680> How - 8 retweets - with picture
A new video to answer questions that are raised about the measure of #poverty
[www.dailymotion.com/video/x25iwkm_la-mesure-de-la-pauvrete-en-questions_news ...](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x25iwkm_la-mesure-de-la-pauvrete-en-questions_news...) via @Dailymotion



Tweet 23 <https://twitter.com/InseeFr/status/509717999234736128> How - 13 retweets
A quizz of ten questions to better understand the measure of poverty <http://j.mp/1ISKCUd>