

INTRODUCTION

Rapid globalization, technological change, increased labour market flexibility and growing informalization of work are affecting people's social and economic security worldwide.¹ Attempts have been made to identify and analyse the various forms of insecurity that result from this process.² However, little is known about people's individual perceptions of insecurity in work and life.

In order to fill this gap, the ILO's InFocus Programme on Socio-Economic Security (IFP/SES) launched a special household survey, known as People's Security Surveys (PSSs), to gather data directly from samples of individuals in 13 countries across three developing regions and Eastern Europe. Developing the PSS concept and conducting the national surveys have required an enormous effort on the part of a team of researchers whose contributions the *International Labour Review* is pleased to acknowledge in this special issue.

Each country PSS was carried out by a national collaborating team, which helped to develop the PSS and adapt it to national conditions, under the responsibility of a member of the IFP/SES staff. Thus, Guy Standing, the Director of the IFP/SES and a major contributor to the development of the PSS approach, was mainly responsible for the surveys in Indonesia and South Africa. Richard Anker, in addition to coordinating work on the PSS for cross-country comparability and developing conceptual frameworks and practical tools, was responsible for Bangladesh and Hungary. Azfar Khan took primary responsibility for Ethiopia, Pakistan and Tanzania; Lena Lavinias, for Argentina, Brazil and Chile; Sukti Dasgupta, for India; Deborah Levison and Sriram Natrajan, for China; and Igor Chernyshev, for Ukraine. María Mercedes Jeria Cáceres was responsible for overseeing sampling; and

¹ See for instance the speech by Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO at the 9th International Congress of the Basic Income European Network on Income Security as a Right (Geneva, 12-14 September 2002).

² On the global spread of labour and income insecurity, for example, see Guy Standing: *Beyond the new paternalism: Basic security as equality* (London/New York, Verso, 2002).

virtually everyone in the ILO's IFP/SES worked on analysing the data.³ This special issue of the *Review* contains a selection of articles that present the PSS methodology and analyse the findings of the surveys conducted so far.⁴

The first article, by *Richard Anker*, describes the eight forms of socio-economic security targeted by the PSS: non-work-related, basic security and seven forms of work-related security (income security, labour market security, employment security, work security, job security, skills reproduction security and representation security). While presenting the PSS methodology, which consists in examining each of the above eight dimensions of socio-economic security from four different angles (actual, perceived, coping strategy, and distributional justice), Anker provides convincing methodological justification for a specially designed PSS to secure a more accurate measurement and better understanding of socio-economic security for the formulation of appropriate policy responses. The importance of this approach stems from the significant divergence often observed between public opinion and informed expert opinion on major economic issues. In the United States, for instance, the up-beat views of economists on the overall employment effects of downsizing, immigration and trade agreements stand in sharp contrast to the views expressed by the general public.⁵

The second article, by *Joseph A. Ritter and Richard Anker*, uses PSS data to identify and measure the determinants of job satisfaction as perceived by the job incumbents themselves, both employees and self-employed workers. Here, the authors' initial bivariate analysis finds strong associations between overall job satisfaction and specific characteristics of workers and their jobs. The relationships thus identified are then tested with regression techniques in order to remove such biases and distortions in their estimation as might arise from correlations among the explanatory variables themselves. For instance, a strong link is observed between job satisfaction and perceived job security after controlling for the effects of individual, workplace and job characteristics through the regression analysis. The positive association that is found to exist between trade union membership and job satisfaction is remarkable in two respects. First, this contradicts the findings of analogous research on industrialized countries and, second, another article in this issue of the *Review* (by *Sukti Dasgupta*) shows that only a small proportion of workers – unionized and non-unionized workers alike –

³ In addition to the above, this includes Laszlo Zsoldos, Florence Bonnet, Smita Barbattini and Helen Mandrillon.

⁴ A selected number of other papers on the PSS were presented at an international conference in the ILO and can be obtained in English, French and Spanish from www.ilo.org/ses.

⁵ See Bryan Caplan: "Systematic biased beliefs about economics: Robust evidence of judgemental anomalies from the survey of Americans and economists on the economy", in *Economic Journal* (Oxford), No. 112 (April 2002), pp. 433-458.

have a positive attitude towards the ability of trade unions to represent workers adequately.

The third article, by *María Mercedes Jeria Cáceres*, reaffirms certain simple truths on skill reproduction security for three Latin American countries, but it also warns of the tendency towards worsening income inequality caused by structural and institutional biases inherent in the training systems. The PSS data show that employees tend to be provided with training only after they have been promoted — and promotion is automatically accompanied by a relative improvement in income security. Training programmes in the three countries considered appear to be biased in favour of paid employees (as opposed to the self-employed), workers employed in large enterprises, and those with higher levels of educational attainment. Cáceres also powerfully brings out the significance of representation security in people's quality of life at work. For instance, her analysis finds an association between the existence of a union at the workplace and the number of employees receiving training. This is hardly surprising: Ritter and Anker, in their contribution, note a positive association between union membership and job satisfaction, while another article (by Sukti Dasgupta) reports a correlation between union membership and employment and income security.

The fourth article in this special issue of the *Review*, co-authored by *Deborah Levison, Joseph A. Ritter, Rosamund Stock and Richard Anker*, analyses the data gathered on people's perceptions of sophisticated concepts of distributive and social justice in four continents. Here, the authors arrive at two basic conclusions. First, there is a clear people's verdict in favour of needs-based policies targeting the poor or those with reduced capabilities through the provision of direct government assistance or by setting lower limits to income levels. This finding is unaffected by the demographic (age, sex) and socio-economic (education) profiles and levels of (in)security of respondents. Second, people from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds universally support policies which promote equality of opportunity as a means of achieving socio-economic equality. It is indeed striking that earlier opinion surveys (cited in the article) have drawn similar conclusions across a range of industrialized and former communist countries.⁶

There appear to be grounds for both optimism and pessimism regarding the future of organized labour. On the one hand, despite the challenges of globalization and increasing labour market flexibility, trade unions seem to have managed to broaden their role beyond the

⁶ That people in industrialized countries are more deeply concerned about equality of opportunity, rather than the cross-sectoral distribution of income, has been reaffirmed recently (see Alberto Alesina, Edward Glaeser and Bruce Sacerdote: "Why doesn't the United States have a European-style welfare state?", with comments by Steven N. Durlauf and Frank Levy, in *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* (Washington, DC), No. 2, 2001, pp. 187-277).

representation of workers' interests, to include the promotion of economic growth and the development of democratic institutions as well.⁷ On the other hand, there is concern over the low level of union density and the declining trend in trade union membership globally. In 1997, more than half of a sample of 92 countries were found to have union membership rates of less than 20 per cent; and half of another sample of 72 countries had experienced a considerable drop in trade union membership over the past ten years.⁸ Against this background, the findings of the fifth article in this issue of the *Review*, by *Sukti Dasgupta*, are particularly significant in that they provide evidence of the benefits of trade union membership from samples of employees in Bangladesh, Brazil, Hungary and Tanzania.⁹ For instance, a correlation is observed between union membership and employment and income security. However, the PSS results also confirm the likelihood of female, young, less-educated and informal-sector workers being excluded from voice representation through unions. Moreover, the majority of union members and non-members expressed scepticism as to the ability of trade unions to uphold workers' rights adequately, thereby offering little hope of a reversal of the trend decline in trade union density.

While the opening article by Richard Anker elaborates on the eight forms of socio-economic security covered by the PSS, the final article by *Guy Standing* logically attempts to synthesize the various indicators of socio-economic security into a composite index using data from Indonesia for illustration. Specifically, Standing combines the individual indicators of six forms of security – income, skills reproduction, job security, work security, employment security and voice representation – into a single Decent Work Index constructed separately for men and women in urban and rural Indonesia and on the basis of household vulnerability. This article is also a prelude to a forthcoming special issue of the *Review* devoted to decent work, compiling the different approaches adopted in the design of statistical indicators for measuring and monitoring decent work across countries.

⁷ A. V. Jose (ed.): *Organized labour in the 21st century*. Geneva, ILO, 2002.

⁸ ILO: *World Labour Report 1997-98: Industrial relations, democracy and social stability*. Geneva, ILO, 1997.

⁹ Except in Brazil, voice representation security (measured by the proportion of unionized workers in the sample) is very low and the last article in this issue of the *Review* shows that the vast majority of Indonesians have no voice representation security at all.