Resolution concerning the development of social security statistics,
adopted by the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians
(April-May 1957)

The Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians,

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Considering that comprehensive and up-to-date statistics on the nature and extent of social protection afforded are an essential prerequisite for the formulation of policy, the execution of programmes and the appraisal of progress realised in the field of social security,

Considering further that the elaborate records required to be maintained for the operations of social security schemes constitute potentially important sources of wider economic and social statistics not directly needed for programme appraisal,

Believing that at present social security records in most countries are not used to the full extent of their potentialities,

Considering that the development of social security statistics in many countries has suffered from the fact that in the past adequate consideration has not been given to co-ordinating social security statistics with other national statistics,

Adopts, this third day of May 1957, the following resolution:

General objectives

1.   Each country should encourage the development of a system of social security statistics adequate to serve the following major objectives:

(a)   to provide basic data for the administrative control of the social security schemes and the appraisal of their operational efficiency;

(b)   to provide a basis for the appraisal of the financial structure of the schemes, for actuarial valuations and for short- and long-term forecasts;

(c)   to provide a means of appraising the social security system as an instrument of social policy and in particular to provide a basis for the evaluation of the lever of social security protection afforded to the various population groups;

(d)   to provide general information on social security;

(e)   to supply data for international comparisons in the field of social security; and

(f)   to supply data from administrative and accounting records to satisfy important outside needs in the fields of labour, economic, health, demographic and other statistics.

2.   While the same basic information may serve most of the objectives outlined in paragraph 1 above, this resolution bears especially on the minimum requirements of statistics for the objectives (c), (d), (e) and (f) of

paragraph 1 above.

Statistics for the appraisal of social security systems

       3.   For the purpose of this resolution the field of social security statistics is that covered under paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 below.

       4.   The social security statistics of a country should cover at least (1) the contingencies and (2) the types of schemes envisaged in international labour Convention No. 102 on social security (minimum standards), 1952, namely -

(1)   contingencies relating to -

      (a)   medical care;

      (b)   sickness benefit;

      (c)   unemployment benefit;

      (d)   old-age benefit;

      (e)   employment injury benefit;

      (f)   family benefit;

      (g)   maternity benefit;

      (h)   invalidity benefit;

      (i)   survivors' benefit.

(2)   schemes organised or supervised under national law or regulations in accordance with the following principles:

      (a)   social insurance, compulsory schemes as well as non-compulsory schemes; the latter within the meaning of Article 6 of Convention No. 102;

      (b)   public service;

      (c)   social assistance.

       5.   The statistics indicated in paragraph 4 should be supplemented by statistics of schemes covering the contingencies mentioned in paragraph 4(1) although not organised according to the principles in paragraph 4(2) (e.g. group insurance and pensions under private schemes; provident funds), particularly when such schemes account for a significant proportion of the social protection available.

       6.   In countries where the national concept of social security is wider or covers contingencies not envisaged under paragraph 4(1) above, statistics should be compiled for such additional schemes or contingencies (e.g. benefits granted to war victims, to servicemen and ex-servicemen; assistance in case of naturel catastrophes; domestic help in case of sickness and old age; housing for the disabled and for the aged; holidays with pay). Statistics of such schemes should be susceptible of separate identification.

7.   (1)   Statistical information should be compiled on the following items:

(a)   participants;

(b)   beneficiaries;

(c)   benefits;

(d)   expenditure and income.

(2)   Where a scheme covers more than one contingency the statistics should, in so far as possible, be compiled separately for each of them.

(3)   Such statistics should be compiled at regular intervals, the periodicity varying according to the different schemes and the conditions in the countries concerned. In many cases yearly statistical data may be desirable.

(4)   The term "participant" is used to include, as appropriate, each of the terms "covered person", "protected person", "insured person", "contributor", etc., depending on the branch of social security and the type of organisational characteristics underlying the scheme.

(5)   By the term "beneficiary" is meant the person in respect of whom social security benefit is granted, irrespective of whether he is a titular beneficiary or not. Where the size of benefits depends on the number of dependants, the number of titular beneficiaries and of dependants should be indicated separately. At intervals the number of children and of adults among such dependants should be shown separately.

(6)   The statistics of participants and of beneficiaries should be classified wherever possible according to the most significant demographic characteristics, such as sex, age group and, in certain cases, marital status.

8.   The statistics of participants and of beneficiaries where appropriate should permit separate identification of the economically active persons included. Economically active persons included should be classified at intervals according to occupation or industry or broad occupational or industrial group as may be appropriate. Where the contribution or benefit structure of the social security scheme is related to wages, earnings or income, breakdowns according to these characteristics are also desired.

9.   (1)   Where there is considerable variation in the benefits afforded to the various groups covered under the social security scheme, figures should be compiled to show the distribution of beneficiaries by size of benefit. Wherever this is not feasible or not essential, at least the average rates of benefit by case or by beneficiary should be shown.

(2)   The statistics of benefit should, where appropriate, include data on benefit days (weeks) and the distribution of cases or beneficiaries according to benefit duration.

10.   (1)   The different items of expenditure should be presented for each scheme in sufficient detail related to the different types of benefit. Wherever appropriate, the cost of administration should be shown separately. Transfers to other schemes and to reserves should be indicated wherever applicable.

(2)   The different items of income should be shown according to their source as follows:

(a)   contributions of insured persons;

(b)   employer contributions;

(c)   special taxes allocated to social security;

(d)   participation of the State;

(e)   participation of other public authorities;

(f)   income from capital;

(g)   transfers from other social security schemes;

(h)   other receipts.

(3)   If the scheme under consideration implies the creation and maintenance of reserves, summary data on investments should be given.

11.   In the interest of a clearer understanding of the statistics by the users, compilations of social security statistics should be accompanied by definitions of terms, an indication of the coverage, essential benefit provisions and reference period of the data, and descriptions of the methods used.

12.   (1)   Each country should arrange for the unified presentation of social security statistics at the national level in order to provide an adequate overall picture of the operations of the social security system. The composite national statistics should be presented in sufficient detail to permit the presentation of items according to different principles of classification.

(2)   Two major principles for the classification of social security statistics should be applied, both being essential. According to the first, the major emphasis is on the contingency covered, regardless of the administrative structure. According to the second, the chief emphasis is on the existing types of schemes and the administrative structure underlying them.

13.   Social security statistics should consist not only of statistical compilations of the data for each item of information, but should also include relative measures which show relationships with relevant social, demographic and economic data, thus providing significant informative indications of the progress towards the achievement of most of the major objectives outlined in paragraph 1. Some of the more significant relative measures are indicated in the appendix to the resolution. Countries should give due consideration to the computation of the relative measures indicated there.

14.   (1)   Social security statistics compiled for national purposes may, subject to important reservations, also be used for international or regional comparisons.

(2)   The contingencies and types of schemes covered under the international labour Convention No. 102 on social security (minimum standards), 1952, supplemented by schemes indicated in paragraph 5 (and 6 where appropriate), provide a basis for international comparisons in the field of social security.

(3)   There is need for caution in making international comparisons in the field of social security. Great differences exist among countries with respect to the stage of development of each social security scheme, the institutional arrangement for the administration of the scheme, the social, demographic and economic structure of the different countries, and other differences which may affect the comparability of the social security statistics of the countries compared.

(4)   If countries provide detailed breakdowns and append methodological and other explanatory information when publishing statistics on social security, this will help to overcome some of the difficulties in international comparisons.

Utilisation of social security data for other statistics

15.   (1)   Every country should fully explore the possibilities for the utilisation of social security records as sources of social, demographic, economic and other general statistics. Although statistics obtained from social security records are subject to certain important reservations, including those indicated in subparagraph (2) below, they should be recognised as forming an integral part of the national system of statistics.

(2)   In the wider use of social security records due account should be taken of the limitations imposed by the coverage and other provisions governing the social security scheme. Moreover, it should be noted that the administrative and financial arrangements of the social security scheme generally condition the type and nature of the statistics which can be expected to flow from it.

16.   The use which can be made of social security data in the development of general-purpose statistics will depend on the circumstances in each individual country. The following uses, however, merit particular consideration:

(a)   as indicators of the number and characteristics of establishments;

(b)   as a universe from which to draw samples;

(c)   in the preparation of national accounts;

(d)   as a source of information on employment, unemployment and underemployment;

(e)   as a source of information on morbidity and invalidity;

(f)   as a source of information on health service personnel, the capacity of health service institutions and other aspects of medical care directly administered under the social security scheme;

(g)   as a source of statistics of industrial accidents and occupational diseases;

(h)   on occasion, but sometimes within important limitations, as a source of statistics on the labour force, wages, demographic statistics and migration.

17.   The following elements of social security records, in so far as they are maintained by the various schemes, are particularly useful as sources of general-purpose statistics:

(a)   register of insured persons and individual records of participants;

(b)   register of employers or establishments;

(c)   periodic employer reports on contribution payments;

(d)   individual records of beneficiaries.

18.   Three general categories of statistics derived from social security sources may be distinguished, in

terms of frequency of collection:

(a)   current series, consisting of data obtained periodically and sufficiently up to date to be independently useful in the field under observation;

(b)   benchmark data, useful particularly as a basis for projecting or correcting current series obtained from other sources;

(c)   data for special studies, permitting occasional analysis in considerable detail of problems of special interest.

Measures for promoting further development of social security statistics

19.   Each country is urged to consider practical steps to overcome obstacles impeding the use of social security data in developing statistics for different purposes, including such obstacles as the use of non-standard definitions and classifications by social security agencies, changes in the scope of data, and inaccessibility of the records for statistical processing.

20.   Remedial measures to cope with obstacles mentioned in paragraph 19 should include -

(a)   steps to stimulate interest on the part of social security administrators and potential users of social security data;

(b)   allocation to social security agencies, under appropriate circumstances, of funds for statistical purposes;

(c)   advance planning for the use of such data at the time social security schemes are introduced, extended or revised;

(d)   technical and administrative measures such as the inclusion of supplementary questions in social security forms and the requiring of duplicate report forms for statistical use.

21.   Full advantage should be taken of the technique of sampling, as a practical means of studying social security data which is still too often neglected. Not only simple sampling procedures such as systematic sampling may be used but also more complicated methods; especially in the latter case expert advice should be sought in the application of sampling procedures.

22.   The problems of concepts, definitions of terms and classification in statistics in the field of social security are of a twofold nature. Firstly, there are terms of special significance in the field of social security statistics for which common national definitions are generally lacking and, secondly, there are other terms common to statistics derived from social security sources and to social and economic statistics obtained from other sources for which such national definitions do generally exist. Countries should endeavour firstly to develop, so far as possible, a national nomenclature of the terms with comparable definitions to be used by the various social security agencies in the country; secondly, countries should develop measures to reduce to a minimum the divergencies in the concepts, definitions and classifications of common interest to social security agencies and to national statistical agencies.

23.   In the development and application of consistent concepts, definitions and classifications, full consideration should be given to existing international standards recommended by appropriate bodies. The following international classifications are especially relevant to statistics in the field of social security, and conformity with them is considered to be particularly desirable:

(a)   the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities;

(b)   the International Standard Classification of Occupations;

(c)   the Standard Age Intervals Recommended by the Population Commission for Census and Related Purposes;

(d)   the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death; also the Special List of 50 Causes for Tabulation of Morbidity for Social Security Purposes.

24.   To aid in accomplishing the objectives outlined in this resolution and particularly to promote the development of consistent concepts, definitions and classifications, each country should develop an appropriate mechanism to co-ordinate -

(a)   the statistics of different social security agencies among themselves;

(b)   statistics based on social security data with other relevant social, demographic and economic statistics compiled in the country.

25.   In developing the co-ordinating mechanism in a country, due account should be taken of the general nature of the country's administrative structure, the number and dispersion of its social security agencies, and arrangements previously existing for co-ordination of statistical activities.

Appendix: Typical examples of relative measures in social security

A.   Extent of social security coverage

The number of participants as percentage of the relevant population groups, e.g. gainfully occupied population, employed population, number employed in a given industry, etc.

B.   Incidence and severity of contingency

Sickness: unemployment

(i)   The number of new beneficiaries or cases during a given period, e.g. a year, as percentage of the average number of participants.

(ii)   The number of benefit days (or weeks) during a given period divided by the average number of participants.

(iii)   The average number of benefit days (or weeks) per case, e.g. per case terminated during a given period.

Old age

The number of old-age pensioners classified by appropriate age groups, related to the total population in the corresponding age groups.

Employment injury

Relative measures to be used in employment injury statistics have already been dealt with on an international basis where frequency and severity rates for industrial injuries are concerned.

C.   Level of benefits

(i)   The total amount of benefits for a given period divided by the number of benefit days (or weeks).

(ii)   The average rate of benefit as percentage of the appropriate average wages, earnings or income.

D.   Economic incidence of social security

Expenditure for social security as percentage of national income or of consumption expenditure.

E.   Trends in real per capita expenditure for social security

Expenditure for social security throughout the years divided by the number of total population, economically active population, participants, etc., and the results deflated by an appropriate price indicator.