



International
Labour
Office



STATISTICS ON COOPERATIVES

COUNTRY IN FOCUS: CANADA¹

This is one of the notes prepared for the **Countries in Focus on Statistics of Cooperatives series** produced by the *International Labour Organization (ILO)* and the *Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC)* as part of a larger initiative to increase understanding of the ways in which countries around the world are producing and using statistics on cooperatives. Currently reliable and comparable statistics on cooperatives are missing in most countries of the world. These statistics are essential to measuring the impact of cooperatives on members, workers and the economy as a whole.

Cooperatives in Canada

The Canadian structure of federalism (power-sharing between the ten provinces and three territories with the federal government) influences the regulatory disposition towards cooperatives. In Canada, cooperatives are usually classified as financial or non-financial. **Finance Canada** provides oversight to financial cooperatives while the provincial or federal government regulates non-financial cooperatives. Only non-financial cooperatives with business activities in more than one province are subject to federal regulation. Non-financial cooperatives with business activities in only one province are subject to that province's regulatory framework.

How are statistics on cooperatives generated in Canada?

Despite providing oversight, Finance Canada does not disclose data on financial cooperatives. The **Canadian Credit Union Association (CCUA)** and **Statistics Canada** both collect data on financial cooperatives. CCUA collects data from members for internal reporting including credit unions, caisses populaires and regional centres. Statistics Canada releases financial data on credit unions in the survey on '**Financial and Taxation Statistics for Enterprises**'.

Since 2013, the **Cooperative Policy Unit of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada** has collected and published data on non-financial cooperatives. As of 2015, the Cooperative Policy Unit issues a biannual publication covering all provinces (except for Quebec) and territories. Cooperatives in Quebec are required to submit annual reports to the Quebec Ministry of Economy, Science and Innovation (MESI), which then shares aggregated data with the Cooperative Policy Unit every two years. Combining the information collected from MESI with their own survey, the Cooperative Policy Unit issues publications on cooperatives throughout the country. The survey response rate ranges between 65 and 75 per cent.

¹ The information is extracted from Carini, C., Borzaga, C. & Carpita, M. (2017) *Case studies on Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom*. Geneva: ILO.





What statistics are available in Canada?

It is important to note that the data on cooperatives collected by the provincial and territorial registers varies widely, given that each has its own Cooperative Act. On a national level, **Statistics Canada's survey** on financial cooperatives covers purely financial data commonly found in financial statements, including assets, liabilities, and equity. CCUA collects similar information from its members.

The Cooperative Policy Unit's publication on non-financial cooperatives covers: 1) number of cooperatives, 2) number of members, 3) number of employees, and 4) the cooperative's economic performance. The **2012 publication** additionally included geographical area and sector of economic activity.

Reflections on Canada's approach to cooperative statistics

Canada has extensive experience (dating from the 1930s) collecting data on cooperatives. The regulatory framework—especially when applied to non-financial cooperatives—permits for comparative analysis between different provinces and territories without losing the holistic spirit. Classifications are based on cooperative structure and sector of economic activity. The data collection methods are aligned with international standards, providing comparative opportunities, though the quality of data could be better standardised across provincial registers. Combining information from Finance Canada, Statistics Canada, and CCUA allows for qualitative analysis. However, data on cooperatives cannot be compared with those on SMEs, since this latter category also includes cooperatives.

Statistics from Canada cover a breadth of variables and are easily accessible online in English or in French. Statistics on cooperatives are released biannually, though the data from 2011 and 2012 were not published until 2015.

The 19th Session of the **International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)** in 2013 included cooperatives in the Conference agenda for the first time in its history. The discussion converged towards the need for accurate, reliable, relevant and comparable statistics on the economic and social impact of cooperatives on the economies. A Resolution was passed with a view to carry out further developmental work on the measurement of cooperatives and carry out pilot studies in a number of countries to test various measurement approaches on collecting data on cooperatives.

The initiative on statistics on cooperatives is a collaboration between the ILO, COPAC, the cooperative movement, UN agencies, national statistics offices, government agencies and academic institutions to improve the quality and accessibility of statistical data on cooperatives. The outcome of this work will be guidelines for discussion at the 20th ICLS in October 2018.

COPAC is a multi-stakeholder partnership of global public and private institutions that promotes and advocates for people-centred, self-sustaining cooperative enterprises, guided by the principles of economic, social and environmental sustainable development. The current members of COPAC are the ILO, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Co-operative Alliance and the World Farmers' Organisation.

To find out more, please visit the **ILO COOP**, **ILO Department of Statistics** or **COPAC websites**.

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