

Title	A family of decent work indexes
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Abstract	<p>We first proposed a decent work index in late 1999, when the ILO's InFocus Programme on Socio-Economic Security was set up, and are delighted that so many others are taking up the idea as reflected in this special issue of the <i>Review</i> and in the ILO's Inter-Sectoral Task Force set up to promote the idea.¹ An index is indeed a useful tool. But it can be misused and is subject to certain failings that have to be taken into account. An index consists of a set of "indicators" of some underlying phenomena. In recent years, a plethora of indexes have been presented, most notably UNDP's Human Development Index. Often, they suffer from the lack of a theoretical model and from a tendency to consist of a "shopping list" of ad hoc "interesting" variables. It is essential that the proposed decent work index should avoid these pitfalls.</p> <p>An index must be based on a theoretical model and should be <i>transparent</i>. If the variables and formula underlying are hard to understand, there will be a suspicion that the results have been "massaged" into supporting some preconceived view. To complicate matters, any index raises problems of "weighting" of various variables and of "scaling" its components. Since there are no perfect rules for index building, all one can state with conviction is that the methodology should be transparent and replicable.</p> <p>In the model we set out in 1999, decent work was conceptualized as requiring basic security for all – in society, in the workplace and for individual workers.² We identified seven forms of security in the sphere of work (see <i>International Labour Review</i>, 2002). But for reasons elaborated elsewhere (Standing, 2002a), primacy should be given to basic income security and basic "voice" or representation security. Without reasonable income security, people lack real freedom to make rational choices and be socially responsible. Without collective and individual voice, the vulnerable will remain vulnerable.</p> <p>At the aggregate (macro) level, the objective can be defined in terms of creating laws, regulations and institutions that enable a growing number of people in all societies to work without oppression, in reasonable security and with steadily improving opportunity for personal development, while having enough income to support themselves and their families. At the workplace (meso) level, a decent work environment is one that provides adequate security for workers while fostering the dynamic efficiency of their enterprises. At the individual worker's (micro) level, decent work consists in having good opportunity to work with adequate levels of all forms of work-related security.</p> <p>Less abstractly, we may say that seven forms of labour-related security were pursued in the twentieth century, with varying degrees of success, namely: labour market security, employment security, job security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security and representation security. Governments have so far typically given priority to labour market security, employment security and, to some extent at least, work security. But if the Decent Work Agenda is to become reality, new forms of income security and representation security are required. Moreover, and this is a criticism of all the index building so far, we must move to measures of decent <i>work</i> rather than decent <i>labour</i>.³</p> <p>The first section of this article presents the database and general methodology used to construct the proposed family of decent work indexes. The second section is devoted to the macro-level index, with a sequential presentation of the sub-indexes used for each of the seven forms of socio-economic security. The third section presents the meso-level index, and the fourth, the micro-level index. A short closing section offers some concluding remarks.</p>