

Title	Seven indicators to measure decent work: An international comparison
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Abstract	<p>As part of its effort to promote the goal of decent work for all, the International Labour Office is developing different sets of statistical indicators for measuring decent work across the world. In broad terms, the goal is to provide “opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity” (ILO, 1999, p. 3). Implicit in this statement are six dimensions of what constitutes decent work. The first two dimensions (opportunities for work and freedom of choice of employment) relate to the availability of work and the acceptability of the type of work involved. The other four dimensions (productive work, equity, security and dignity at work) are concerned with the extent to which the work is decent.</p> <p>Based on this general framework, a set of thirty statistical indicators has been identified for initial consideration (See Anker et al., 2002, and in this issue of the Review). These indicators are organized under ten headings concerned with decent work itself and an eleventh on economic and social context. Each of the first ten headings is meant to represent a characteristic of work that individuals would consider a key element of decent work. In the process of measurement and analysis that will be carried out in the next few years, certain indicators may be dropped for proving insufficiently informative or too complex, and others may be added to cover uncharted or difficult areas such as freedom of association and social dialogue. Pending the development of a comprehensive and widely accepted system of decent work indicators, one can at this stage shed light only on some specific aspects – hopefully with bright beams!</p> <p>This article presents a selection of seven particular indicators amenable to measurement for a large number of countries, with data on them compiled from national labour force surveys of recent years. Here, the indicators are slightly redefined and reset within a more concise framework. What the proposed indicators measure are in effect “decent work deficits”, namely low hourly pay, excessive hours of work for economic or involuntary reasons, national unemployment, children not at school (as a proxy for child labour), youth unemployment, the male-female gap in labour force participation, and old age without pension.</p> <p>Following a brief outline of methodology in the first section of the article, subsequent sections successively take up each of the proposed seven indicators. Each indicator is introduced in turn, with a succinct discussion of its significance, issues related to the quality and international comparability of the relevant data, illustrative tables and, where applicable, alternative approaches. A concluding section shows how the proposed set of indicators might be used to establish a ranking of countries – subject to a number of caveats</p>