

PROSPERED Policy Databases - Family Cash Benefits Policy

INTRODUCTION

To assess changes in national policies over time and their effects on health outcomes, McGill University's PROSPERED team (called the MACHEquity project prior to 2017) collected longitudinal information dating back to 1995 on maternity leave, breastfeeding, child marriage and minimum wage policies in 121 countries that have been surveyed by either the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) or the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) at least once between those dates.

Scope: Family cash benefits variables are available for data-points between 2002 and 2012 inclusively.

Data Sources

For the family cash benefits database, we used the International Social Security Association's (ISSA) [Social Security Programs throughout the World \(SSPTW\)](#) info-base.

In a limited number of cases, the following sources were consulted to clarify or complement information available through SSPTW:

- National legislation collected through ILO's NATLEX database or governmental sources
- The Council of Europe's Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSCEO)
- The European Commission's Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC)

Coding Process

Coding is the process by which an individual researcher takes a piece of information from legislation, policy, or any other source and translates it into a set of characteristics that can be quantitatively analyzed. For each country, two researchers from our multilingual team coded data sources independently according to pre-defined coding rules and compared their results to ensure accuracy. Whenever coding required a judgment call by the coder, the rules underlying such decisions regarding complicated cases were systematically discussed, described in a coding manual and applied consistently across countries. Coding was conducted in the original language of the document by team members fluent in the language; when this was not possible, we used a version translated into one of the official UN languages.



Building of the Family Cash Benefits Longitudinal Database

The longitudinal database was constructed by using the cross-sectional 2012 policy databases developed collaboratively by MACHEquity and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) WORLD Policy Analysis Center (WORLD). We reviewed the date of the sources used; when a national law used in the 2012 databases and/or the law used as the basis for SSPTW reports published around 2012 had been enacted before 2002 and had not been amended or repealed since, it was assumed that its provisions remained applicable from 2002 through 2012. This information was also corroborated by previous versions of SSPTW back to 2002. If it was not possible to corroborate then data was captured as missing for all or the specific years.

Limitations

Our databases focus on national policies and therefore do not capture subnational differences or policies based on collective agreements available to subgroups of employees. In addition, our databases record the existence of policies and not their level of implementation. To our knowledge, there is currently no global source providing historical data or comprehensive information on implementation of policies.

Although our team makes every effort to assure the accuracy of the data, we realize that mistakes are possible due to human error or data omissions while coding. If you find an error in our databases, we ask that you contact us to report it and provide any available documentation through which the error can be verified and corrected.

Specifically for Family Cash Benefits database, please note that we are primarily using SSPTW reports for coding this database and since they are not provided annually if there is a change in policy we often do not know when exactly the change happened, only that the values have changed between one SSPTW report and the other. In these cases, the variables for the years between the two reports will be coded as -9 unless we are able to determine when the new policy was introduced.

The Family Benefits database focuses on cash payments only due to our inability to locate reliable information sources describing tax benefits without consulting country tax codes. Our main source for longitudinal coding, the SSPTW, does not describe tax benefits but rather focuses on cash payments.

VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS - FAMILY CASH BENEFITS

In all the variables below (XX refers to applicable year, i.e. 12=2012, 99= 1999 etc.)

Variable Name

fb_allowance_XX

Variable Description

Are cash family allowances provided nationally?

0 = no

1 = yes

2 = only as supplements or in specific circumstances

-9 = indeterminate

-6 = country was not an independent entity in that year

Description: This variable captures the existence of policy establishing allowances for families that specifies children as a condition for eligibility.

If family benefits are offered, but only in specific circumstances (beyond being means or income-tested) this variable gets coded as 2 and the rest of the variables for that country/year is coded as -7 (NA). Example of such policy would include the following: “Benefits are payable to unemployed single mothers with young children who are without sufficient resources to meet basic needs” or “the parent must be over age 60 or assessed as 60% disabled”. These benefits are structured more like a supplement for dependents provided under the Old Age, Disability, and Survivors program rather than the basic Family Benefit. For analysis purposes these cases should be treated as not having basic family benefit programs.

-9 = indeterminate

If the sources contradict themselves or it is not clear if the family benefit program exists in the country this variable gets coded as -9.

Cautions:

- Only cash benefits outside of tax policy are captured in our database.
- The ‘basic family benefit,’ includes ‘child benefit’ or ‘family benefit’. This covers any cash payments that occur on a long-term/continuous basis, which differs from one-time, or

short-term supplementary grants. Therefore, the benefits in this database do not include supplementary payments related to:

- o disability
- o multiple births
- o large families
- o child rearing
- o birth grants
- o prenatal grants
- o special child care allowance
- o parent income supplement
- o adoption grant
- o maintenance grant

The two most commonly listed supplements are: birth grant and prenatal grant.

- We always assume that a family meets all the qualifying conditions for receiving the benefit. These include: work tenure, social security contributions and being presently employed for at least x number of hours/days per week or days per year.

Variable Name

fb_meanstest_XX

Variable Description

Is there a means test applied to the basic family allowance program?)

0 = no

1 = yes

-7 = not applicable

-9 = indeterminate

-6 = country was not an independent entity in that year

Description: This variable captures if the basic family allowance is subject to income/means test.

Values in the dataset:

0 = no

If basic family benefits are offered to any family that meets qualifying conditions regardless of family income this variable is coded as 0.

1 = yes

If basic family benefits are offered subject to income/means test, this variable is coded as 1.

-7 = not applicable

If there are no family cash benefit programs in the country (fb_allowance variable = no) this variable is coded as -7.

-9 = indeterminate

If the sources contradict themselves or it is not clear if the benefits are subject to income test this variable gets coded as -9.

Cautions:

- Only income test applied to a basic amount is captured here. If a family allowance program provides supplemental benefits in addition to a basic benefit amount and the supplemental benefits are subject to income test but not the basic amount, this variable would be coded as 0 (“no”).