PROSPERED Policy Databases – Unemployment 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: Unemployment benefits variables are available for data-points between 2002 and 2012 inclusively, for 69 countries.

Data Sources

For the unemployment benefits database, we started with the International Social Security Association's (ISSA) Social Security Programs throughout the World (SSPTW) info-base to verify whether a country had unemployment insurance policy or not. For countries with UI policies, we used the methodology described below to capture the details of the policy and changes over time using national legislation together with SSPTW.

Full-text copies of relevant legislation, in addition to information on amendments and repeals, were located mainly through the ILO's NATLEX and TRAVAIL databases. When full-text legislation was not available through NATLEX or TRAVAIL, researchers located laws through national government websites, the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law website, the legislation library Lexadin, and the World Legal Information Institute. In some cases, hard copies of legislation were obtained from the McGill University library.

When needed, the following sources were consulted to clarify or complement information available through national legislation and SSPTW:

- 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 Longitudinal Databases

To code our databases, we first started with cross-sectional 2012 policy databases developed collaboratively by MACHEquity and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) WORLD Policy Analysis Center (WORLD). Second, we reviewed the date of the sources used; when a national law used in the 2012 databases 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. The same text was therefore used to code all variables for that particular country between 2002 and 2012.

When a national law used to code the 2012 databases was enacted sometime between 2002 and 2012, the same text was used to code variables in the years after the law was enacted, and researchers then searched for the legislation that was in force in the preceding years. All variables between 2002 and that later law were coded using the original full-text prior legislation. The most current and in-force laws were always located first, and changes in legislation were thereafter traced back to 2002.

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.

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VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS – UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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

Variable Name

ui_govt_prov _XX

Variable Description

Are unemployment benefits provided by the government?

Description: This variable captures the existence of policy establishing cash benefits in case of unemployment.

Values in the dataset:

0 = no UI policy

1 = UI policy exists

-9 = indeterminate

If the sources contradict themselves or it is not clear if the unemployment 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.

•We are only coding for the private sector, usually public servants will be subject to different rules and regulations. Labour codes may exclude certain types of workers such as part-time, seasonal, temporary, agricultural, domestic workers.

•This variable captures unemployment benefits provided by the government only. Often the private sector will also be required to pay severance if the employee has sufficient tenure.

•There are usually various qualifying conditions for receiving the benefit. These include: work tenure, social security contributions, reasons for dismissal, requirements to be registered with job-hunting agency etc.

•Governments have various policies with regards to when the entitlement to unemployment benefits end and how many times in one's life a person can be entitled to such benefits.

•In case further variables on the amount of benefits are required note that there are considerable differences in countries' unemployment benefits policies:

Examples:

Armenia: Between 2002-2006: 100% -60% of monthly benefit for 12 months (Wage replacement rate (wrr) depends on how a person lost his/her job: laid off, resigning, disciplinary dismissal); from 2006-on: 60% of min wage amount for 12 months

Egypt: Between 2002-2012: 60% of monthly earning for 16-28 weeks depending on the length of contributions (< or > than 24 months of contributions)

Jordan: 2011-2012: benefits on the sliding scale paid for 6 or 3 months (depending if < or > than 15 years of contributions); wrr per month: 75% (1st month) -> 65% (month 2) ->55% (month 3)-> 45% (for months 4-6) of monthly earnings

Variable Name

ui_paydurr_min_XX

Variable Description

What is the minimum number of weeks for which benefits are paid?

Description: This variable captures the minimum number of weeks over which cash benefits are paid in case of unemployment. In general the length varies with work tenure; the longer the work tenure the longer the entitlement to benefit payments.

Values in the dataset:

-7 = no UI benefits are provided in the country [or benefits paid as lump sum only if *ui_govt_prov _XX* = 1]

-9 = indeterminate

If the sources contradict themselves or it is not clear what is the minimum number of weeks over which the benefits are paid this variable gets coded as -9.

Cautions:

•Duration is reported in weeks. When sources stipulate duration in other units we use the following conversion: 1 month= of 4.3 weeks, 1 year=52 weeks

•If duration is given in days (without specifying calendar vs work days) we assume calendar days and convert it to weeks by dividing by 7.

•Sometimes specific duration (different than the general range of duration) is indicated for the 'first time job seekers'; we do not code for the 'first time job seekers' but rather for the duration of benefits that apply to an average worker with a contribution history.

•Sometimes specific duration is indicated for persons who had previously received unemployment benefits during an earlier period of unemployment; we only capture the range and length for the first period of unemployment.

•If variation depends on whether one receives training or not, we considered workers who are not receiving training.

Variable Name

ui_paydurr_max_XX

Variable Description

What is the maximum number of weeks for which benefits are paid?

Description: This variable captures the maximum number of weeks over which cash benefits are paid in case of unemployment. In general the length varies with work tenure; the longer the work tenure the longer the entitlement to benefit payments.

Values in the dataset:

-7 = no UI benefits are provided in the country [or benefits paid as lump sum only if *ui_govt_prov _XX* =1]

-9 = indeterminate

If the sources contradict themselves or it is not clear what is the maximum number of weeks over which the benefits are paid this variable gets coded as -9.

Cautions:

• Same as *ui_paydurr_max_XX*

Variable Name

ui_paydurr_1yrtenure_XX

Variable Description

For how many weeks are benefits paid after 1 year of work tenure/contributions?

Description: This variable captures the number of weeks of entitlement to cash benefits in case of unemployment for an employee with 1-year work tenure/contributions

Values in the dataset:

0 = benefits are not paid to employees with one year of work tenure or less

-7 = not applicable – no UI benefits provided [or benefits paid as lump sum only if *ui_govt_prov _XX* = 1]

-9 = indeterminate

Cautions:

•Some countries only provide UI benefits after more than one year of work tenure. In such cases this variable is coded as “0” weeks which means the benefits are provided in the country but more than one year of contributions is required before they are paid. (ex. Turkey: “Qualifying Conditions: Six hundred days of contributions in the 3 years before unemployment, including the last 120 days of employment.)

•Duration is reported in weeks. When sources stipulate duration in other units we use the following conversion: 1 month= of 4.3 weeks, 1 year=52 weeks

•If duration is given in days (without specifying calendar vs work days) we assume calendar days and convert it to weeks by dividing by 7.