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Topic 2: Measuring the dimensions of quality of work with statistical indicators: current national experiences, relevance and usability of the proposed set of statistical indicators and sources of data collection

INDICATORS TO MEASURE THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE DIMENSIONS IN THE UK

Invited paper by Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom*

Introduction

1. The UK has a long history of monitoring the state of the social dialogue. Currently, there are a number of complementary sources of information that allow the UK to analyse this important area of labour market statistics with a degree of confidence. The analysis is important from a policy perspective, even at a time when the indicators that monitor the failure of the social dialogue process, namely labour disputes figures, are at a historically low level.

2. Before we look at the indicators, it is worth considering the legislative framework that influences and shapes the social partnership. Such a review will allow us to assess whether the level of conflict between social partners is because there is the freedom for either party to express themselves, and take what they might consider to be appropriate and legitimate action, or if the absence of any demonstration of the failure of a dialogue is because the balance of power is tipped too heavily in favour of one or other of the parties in the relationship.

The legislative backcloth

3. The primary legislation concerning the social dialogue derives from the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act of 1992, though important amendments to the Act were made in the Employment Relations Act of 1999 and more recently in the Employment Relations

* Paper prepared by Derek Bird, Office for National Statistics.

Act 2004. The 1999 Act shifted the balance of power, providing greater protection for workers and their rights of association. Thus, the current framework sees individuals having a statutory right to join a trade union, and a trade union has a statutory right to seek recognition by the employer at an enterprise. This creates an environment where collective bargaining can occur in anticipation of a reduction in damage that poor labour relations can cause, for example in respect of loss of production and low productivity. In this context, collective bargaining covers negotiation of pay, hours of work and holidays.

4. In cases where an employer refuses to recognise a union it has the right to be heard by the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC), which has legal powers to force recognition (and all that comes with it) subject to certain conditions. For the CAC to provide a ruling the bargaining unit in which the union is seeking recognition must have 21 or more employees, where at least 10 per cent must be members of the union and a majority of employees in the unit must be likely to favour recognition. Additionally, a union must secure a majority of those voting for recognition and at least 40 per cent of the workers in the bargaining unit. Thus, the penetration of unionism is likely to be greater in larger enterprises.

5. In addition to the right to join a union and for the union to be recognised, legislation also protects employees involved in a strike from dismissal. It also legislates such that union officials may accompany employees at disciplinary or grievance hearings and outlaws discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of union membership. Importantly, the governance arrangements that come with the legislative framework provide the first of the sources of information on the social dialogue, in the form of administrative information that is required to be provided to and published by the Certification Officer. {PRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT=Welcome to Certification Officer"}The Certification Officer is responsible for¹:

- (a) maintaining a list of trade unions and employers' associations;
- (b) receiving and scrutinising annual returns from trade unions and employers' associations;
- (c) determining complaints concerning trade union elections, certain other ballots and breaches of trade union rules;
- (d) ensuring observance of statutory requirements governing mergers between trade unions and between employers' associations;
- (e) overseeing the political funds and the finances of trade unions and employers' associations;
- (f) certifying the independence of trade unions.

6. This statutory duty allows the Certification Officer to produce annual estimates of the number of employers' associations and trade unions, and the number of members of those trade unions. The production of information based on union administrative records dates back to 1892, so the current set continues a long lineage of reporting. However, as with much administrative information there are drawbacks, in that the returns are not made with policy analysis or statistical reporting in mind, rather for the statutory purposes that serve the Certification Officer. As a result, the amount of information available is limited, and subject to some degree of error. For example, while the Certification Officer's annual report tells us how many employers' associations and trade unions there are, the number of union members reported may be an overestimate because they historically have included members that may have left the labour market and become economically inactive. Similarly, it is not possible to disaggregate

¹ See <http://www.certoffice.org/pages/index.cfm?pageID=home> for more information on the role of the Certification Officer.

the information by region, industry sector, etc and so production of estimates of employer association and union density is difficult. Thus, the Certification Officer's information is typically used as a check total against which to quality assure alternative estimates based on statistical surveys.

7. Before we consider those survey sources of estimates we will consider briefly the definitions of a trade union and an employers' association, which apply under law in the United Kingdom. According to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 a "**trade union**" means an organisation (whether temporary or permanent) -

- (a) which consists wholly or mainly of workers of one or more descriptions and whose principal purposes include the regulation of relations between workers of that description or those descriptions and employers or employers' associations; or
- (b) which consists wholly or mainly of -
 - (i) constituent or affiliated organisations which fulfil the conditions in paragraph (a) (or themselves consist wholly or mainly of constituent or affiliated organisations which fulfil those conditions), or
 - (ii) representatives of such constituent or affiliated organisations,

and whose principal purposes include the regulation of relations between workers and employers or between workers and employers' associations, or the regulation of relations between its constituent or affiliated organisations.

8. An "**employers' association**" means an organisation (whether temporary or permanent) -

- (a) which consists wholly or mainly of employers or individual owners of undertakings of one or more descriptions and whose principal purposes include the regulation of relations between employers of that description or those descriptions and workers or trade unions; or
- (b) which consists wholly or mainly of -
 - (i) constituent or affiliated organisations which fulfil the conditions in paragraph (a) (or themselves consist wholly or mainly of constituent or affiliated organisations which fulfil those conditions), or
 - (ii) representatives of such constituent or affiliated organisations,

and whose principal purposes include the regulation of relations between employers and workers or between employers and trade unions, or the regulation of relations between its constituent or affiliated organisations.

9. These definitions guide the collection of statistics on union membership and employers' associations, while for definitions of strikes, lock-outs and associated variables we must turn to the International Labour Office's (ILO) *Resolution concerning statistics of strikes, lockouts and other action due to labour disputes*, adopted by the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in January 1993.

Trade union membership statistics

10. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is responsible, in conjunction with the Office for National Statistics, for publishing the trade union National Statistics. As noted above, official government statistics on union membership have been collected regularly for over a century, but today the primary source of information on union membership is the UK's Labour Force Survey (LFS). In the past, analyses of trade union membership were published by ONS in articles in its journal Labour Market Trends, but from 2004 these were replaced by the publication of an annual National Statistics report, the latest of which refers to trade union membership in 2005².

11. The annual report contains estimates of trade union membership from the LFS for autumn 2005 for both employees, and all those who are in employment. Estimates are presented for the number and proportion of people in employment who are trade union members in both the United Kingdom and Great Britain, and for employees whose pay and conditions are affected by collective agreements. The report also provides trade union densities by age, sex, ethnicity, income, major occupation, industry, full and part-time employment, sector, nation and region. Additionally, information is provided on collective agreement coverage and trade union presence.

Trade union questions in the Labour Force Survey

12. A question in the LFS on trade union membership has been asked annually since 1989 of all individuals in employment. Questions on trade union presence and recognition were introduced in 1993 and the question on collective agreements was introduced in 1996. The questions relating to trade union membership were reordered and reworded in 1999; these changes affect the time-series for trade union presence and collective agreements.

13. The union questions were altered substantially in the 1999 questionnaire. The exact wording and sequence of the questions is shown below.

14. The following should be noted:

- the question that asks whether any of the people at the respondent's place of work are members of a trade union or staff association is designed to measure trade union presence. Previously, it was asked of all in employment; now it is only asked to those who say that they are not union members.
- before 1999 the question on whether the respondent's pay and conditions were directly affected by collective agreements (TUCOV) was only asked where the respondent first identified unions as being present at the workplace (TUPRES), and then whether or not they were recognized (TUREC). This meant that the number of people whose pay and conditions were affected by collective agreement was an underestimate. For this reason the routing of the question was changed in the 1999 LFS and is now asked of all in employment³.
- it is possible that some non-sampling error arises in the series of questions on trade unions because of measurement problems. Around a third of the sample responses are

² See <http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/file25737.pdf>

³ Because of this change, users of the survey results over time must be aware that data derived from the TUCOV variable in the 1999 dataset are not directly comparable with those of previous years due to the change in the question's coverage.

from proxy respondents, and the data show that this group is less likely to be union members than those responding on their own behalf.

- on the question of coverage of collective agreements, it is known from surveys of employers that only a small proportion of public sector workplaces are not covered, and that these arrangements are generally made at head office level or across many organisations. It is therefore likely that employees who are not union members and who work in small workplaces in the public sector may be unaware that collective bargaining arrangements apply to their organisation. Consequently there may be a downward bias to this measure.

Table 1. Structure of trade union questions in the LFS	
Previous union questions	Current union questions
<p>All in employment: TUPRES At your place of work, are there any unions, staff associations or groups of unions?</p> <p>If yes: TUREC Is it/are any of them recognized by management for negotiating pay and conditions of employment?</p> <p>If yes: TUCOV Are your pay and conditions of employment directly affected by agreements between your employer and any trade union(s) or staff association?</p> <p>All in employment: UNION Are you a member of a trade union or staff association?</p>	<p>All in employment: UNION Are you a member of a trade union or staff association?</p> <p>If no: TUPRES Are any of the people at your place of work members of a trade union or staff association?</p> <p>All in employment: TUCOV Are your pay and conditions of employment affected by agreements between your employer and any trade union(s) or staff association?</p>
<p>Source: Office for National Statistics (www.statistics.gov.uk)</p>	

15. Thus, by combining information collected through these questions the LFS provides a rich source of information on union membership, collective agreements, trade union presence and union density. As well as the demographic characteristics of the union members, it is possible to analyse the information according to the nature of the employers' business, the length of service of the employee, their earnings, and whether there is a premium accruing to them either as a consequence of their union membership or because of the presence of collective bargaining at the workplace.

The Workplace Employment relations Survey (WERS)

16. The second source of information on union membership, density and collective agreements is the Workplace Employment relations Survey (WERS). This survey has been conducted five times, beginning in 1980 and subsequently in 1984, 1990, 1998 and most recently in 2004. The survey provides a nationally representative account of the state of employment relations and working life inside British workplaces. The survey is jointly sponsored by the DTI,

the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Policy Studies Institute (PSI).

17. In keeping with its predecessors, WERS 2004 contained both a cross-section and a panel element.

18. The Cross-section survey contained the following components:

- A face-to-face interview with the senior manager that has responsibility for employment relations or personnel issues (average duration: 110 minutes);
- A four-page, self-completion questionnaire on the financial performance of the establishment over the past 12 months;
- A face-to-face interview with a trade union representative and a non-union employee representative, where present (average duration: 45 minutes); and,
- An eight-page, self-completion questionnaire distributed to a random selection of up to 25 employees at each workplace.

19. The Panel Survey (covering 1998-2004) returned to a random selection of workplaces that participated in the 1998 Cross-Section Survey. A face-to-face interview was conducted with a main management respondent, with the specific intention of identifying change since 1998. Around 1,000 establishments took part in the Panel survey.

20. For the 2004 survey, face-to-face interviews were conducted with around 3,200 managers and almost 1,000 worker representatives. Over 20,000 employees completed and returned a self-completion questionnaire.

21. WERS has documented and comprehensively monitored the state of employment relations in workplaces in Britain over the past two decades. The survey design has remained consistent in parts throughout the series, in order to generate data that are comparable across the period 1980–2004, though equally it has responded to changing interests in the employment relations' arena by adding new areas of enquiry and reducing other areas in scope. In particular, the 1998 survey underwent substantial re-design and marked the move away from detailed questioning on union organisation and collective bargaining and towards a greater focus on the management of employees.

22. WERS 2004 collected data on the membership of trade unions or independent staff associations from two sources. The Survey of Employees provides a first-hand account of whether each employee is a union member, whilst the Cross-Section Survey of Managers provides the manager's estimate of the number of union members within each sampled workplace. The findings from the latest WERS provide an up to date account of the state of employment relations in Britain, together with information on changes that have occurred in workplaces since the last survey was conducted.

The design and conduct of the survey

23. Whilst WERS underwent significant re-design in 1998 due to changes in the world of work, the Sponsors considered that further major revisions to both the structure and content of the 2004 survey were not necessary. Further, the need for continuity in design and content were considered to be important, particularly given the strong interest in assessing the nature and extent of change since the last survey was conducted. Nonetheless, a consultation exercise with various user groups (policymakers, practitioners, think-tanks, academic researchers) suggested

the need for change in a number of key areas and these are reflected in the final survey design and survey instruments.

Survey Content

24. The various parts of the survey cover different aspects of social dialogue. In broad terms, the management survey covered areas such as trust, business strategy and computer use. The Survey of Employees, included questions on well-being, trust and computer use as well as questions on job satisfaction, work-life balance and consultation. The following lists show the extent of the areas covered in the survey:

25. The Cross-Section management interview in WERS 2004 contains questions on:

- Recruitment and training
- Consultation and communication
- Employee representation
- Payment systems
- Grievance and discipline
- Equal opportunities
- Work-life balance
- Health and safety
- Flexibility and performance

26. The Cross-Section interview with employee representatives contains questions on:

- Structure of representation at the workplace
- Time spent on representative duties
- Means of communication with employees
- Incidence of negotiation and consultation over pay and other matters
- Involvement in redundancies, discipline and grievance matters
- Incidence of collective disputes and industrial action
- Relations with managers
- Union recruitment

27. The Cross-Section questionnaire for employees contains questions on:

- Working hours
- Job influence
- Job satisfaction
- Working arrangements
- Training and skills
- Information and consultation
- Employee representation
- Pay

Coverage

28. An important innovation in WERS 2004 was the greater coverage of small workplaces, with funding from the Small Business Service enabling workplaces that employed between five and nine employees to be included in the Cross-Section Survey for the first time. Their inclusion expands the scope of the survey so that it covers 700,000 workplaces (37 per cent of all

workplaces in Britain) and 22.5 million employees (91 per cent of all employees in employment). The survey population is all British workplaces with five or more employees, excluding those within the following Sections of the Standard Industrial Classification (2003): A (Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry); B (Fishing); C (Mining and Quarrying); P (Private Households with employed persons); and Q (Extra-territorial organisations and bodies). The sample for the cross-section was drawn from the Office for National Statistics' Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). In addition to the industry exclusions, workplaces that took part in the 1998 WERS were also excluded to avoid duplication in sample selection between the cross-section and the panel.

29. The majority of these workplaces are small: some 76 per cent have fewer than 25 employees. Yet whilst they are numerous, small workplaces – which might include workshops, small retail outlets, restaurants or surgeries – account for only one quarter of all employees in employment. The majority of jobs are located in larger workplaces, such as hospitals, manufacturing plants or local government offices. Indeed, workplaces with 500 or more employees account for only 1 per cent of workplaces but 20 per cent of all employees.

Survey structure

30. The survey contained both a cross-section and a panel element. For the purposes of the survey, a workplace was defined as comprising 'the activities of a single employer at a single set of premises'. Branches of a high street bank, a head office or a factory are thus workplaces in their own right. The main element of the Cross-Section was an interview with the senior manager responsible for employment relations on a day-to-day basis at the workplace (the 'Cross-Section Survey of Managers'). Most interviews with managers (86 per cent) took place on site, with the remainder being conducted elsewhere, typically at the head office. The manager was a designated personnel specialist in 28 per cent of workplaces where interviews were conducted on site.

31. There were three further elements to the Cross-Section Survey. First, a short self-completion questionnaire was distributed to a random selection of (up to) 25 employees (the 'Survey of Employees'). Second, interviews were conducted with both a union and non-union representative at the workplace, where present (the 'Survey of Employee Representatives'). This meant that, in some workplaces, two interviews were conducted with employee representatives. It represented a departure from previous surveys where a single interview took place with an employee representative, and where preference was given to interviewing union representatives in workplaces where both a union and a non-union employee representative were present.

32. Third, a new self-completion questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data about the financial performance of the workplace (the 'Financial Performance Questionnaire'), was adopted. The 1998 to 2004 Panel Survey was conducted in a random sub-sample of workplaces that had participated in the 1998 survey, had continued to be in operation throughout the six-year period, and had employed at least 10 employees ('continuing workplaces'). In these workplaces, a single interview was conducted with the manager. The panel element of WERS is integral to understanding change. Combining data from the 1998 and 2004 Cross-Section Surveys of Managers together with data from the Panel Survey allows an assessment of how much change is due to alterations in the composition of the population of workplaces – for example, the move away from manufacturing towards service-sector workplaces – and how much is due to changes in the behaviour of continuing workplaces.

Data availability

33. The survey data are publicly available for secondary analysis for bona fide research purposes from the UK Data Archive, based at the University of Essex in November 2005. The previous surveys in the WERS series are also available from the Archive (see <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>).

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

34. The next source we consider is the Office for National Statistics' annual structural survey of earnings and hours of work. While the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is, as its name suggests, primarily designed to provide statistics on earnings and hours of work, it also includes a question on the collective agreement arrangements in workplaces. The ASHE survey is relatively new, replacing its predecessor the New Earnings Survey (NES) in 2004. ASHE asks employers to indicate whether an employee's pay was set with reference to an agreement affecting more than one employee, for example where it is agreed collectively by a trade union or worker's committee. Where it is, the employer is asked to indicate the nature of the agreement. These are categorized as:

- National or industry agreement
- Sub-national agreement
- Organisational agreement
- Workplace agreement
- National or industry supplemented by a sub-national, organisational or workplace agreement.

35. The ASHE is based on a random one per cent sample of employees in employment and as well as collective agreements captures information, or is linked with administrative data, on the employee and the workplace. Thus, it is possible to analyse the collective agreement data in conjunction with pay, hours of work, gender, age, location, occupation, industry, size of enterprise and length of service

36. However, the limitation of information to broad brush categories set out in the bullet points above means that some users' needs are no longer being met. This is because the NES provided information on employees that were covered by specific collective agreements, which were used by both parties in the social dialogue when negotiating new pay rates. The following table gives an example of the type of collective agreements where information was previously available, but where they no longer are;

National Health Service

- Hospital doctors and dentists
- Other doctors and dentists
- Administration and clerical staff Whitley Council
- Nurses and midwifery staff
- Ancillary staff Whitley Council
- Maintenance staff
- Professional and technical staff A Whitley Council
- Professional and technical staff B Whitley Council
- Ambulancemen Whitley Council

Universities (old & new)

- Academic and academic related staff (old)
- Clinical academic staff (old)
- Lecturers (new)
- Clerical staff (old)
- Computer operators (old)
- Technical staff (old)
- Administrative, professional, technical and clerical staff (new)
- Manual staff (old)
- Manual staff (new)

Police and Fire Services

- Police service - ranks below sergeant only
- Fire service - operational ranks below leading fire officer
- Fire service - operational ranks from leading fire officers and above
- Fire service - control room and non-operational staff

37. In response to continuing interest in these and other agreements categories, in particular from Public Sector Pay Review Bodies, ONS has undertaken work to attempt to model the categories using other classification variables available in ASHE. A methodology that relies on a pragmatic approach has been developed, which produces results close to figures originally published in NES. However, some of the original agreements have not been able to be modelled or have been combined with other agreements to produce a new category.

38. Initially, the work involved identifying employees who had been allocated to specific collective agreements in the past and their characteristics used to define the models for allocating people in the current datasets. However, when the estimates were produced there were concerns that the results were significantly different from the historic figures for these series. Some of the levels were very different and the number of jobs allocated to individual collective agreements was sometimes many times higher than the existing information. The problem with the initial method was that it included everyone with similar characteristics to any individual who had previously been allocated to a category, i.e. if a retail assistant had been miscoded to the teaching collective agreement, all retail assistants with pay set by a collective agreement would now be included in the wrong category. As a result, an alternative approach was adopted, using a more pragmatic method to defining the collective agreement groupings. While still being informed by historical information, the key driver for the revised approach was to define the collective agreement group from the descriptions and categories of the various classifications, i.e. a teaching collective agreement would generally include those individuals in teaching occupations and the education industry with pay set by a collective agreement. Although most of the NES categories could be modelled in this way, there were some that proved problematic. For example, it was not possible to distinguish between similar occupations within 'old' and 'new' universities. This work is ongoing within ONS and is likely to lead to publication in the shape of provisional estimates for user comment in the near future. It is expected that the generation of more specific information on collective agreements for individual occupational or industry groups will improve the utility of these statistics.

Statistics on strikes and lockouts

39. The final area that we will consider relates to the ILO Resolution concerning statistics of strikes, lockouts and other action due to labour disputes, adopted by the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 1993). The UK has a very long history in respect of collecting information on labour disputes; indeed it is able to produce a series that stretches back over on hundred years, with a reasonably consistent methodology underpinning the estimates over the length of the period. Analyses of the statistics are published in annual articles that look at the state of the social dialogue in the UK, and separately in an international comparisons article, again produced each year. The international comparisons article draws heavily on information published by the ILO and the OECD. The following section looks at various aspects of the statistics and then goes on to compare the UK approach with that set out in the ILO resolution.

Coverage

40. Information about labour disputes in the UK is collected by ONS from a number of sources. Certain major industries and public bodies provide regular centralised returns, but more often the information is collected directly from the employer or trade union involved after ONS have been notified of a dispute or have identified one from press reports. Until September 1996, the Employment Service local office network collected this information on behalf of ONS. ONS publishes figures on labour disputes each month. They appear in the Labour Market Statistics first release and are published in Tables 6.29 and 6.30 in the Labour Market Data section of Economic & Labour Market Review.

Definition of stoppages

41. The statistics cover stoppages of work in progress in the UK during a year caused by labour disputes between employers and workers, or between workers and other workers, connected with terms and conditions of employment. A distinction can be drawn between stoppages that started in the current year and those that started in earlier years.

42. The statistics exclude disputes that do not result in a stoppage of work, for example work-to-rules and go-slows; this is because their effects are not quantifiable to any degree of certainty. Stoppages involving fewer than 10 workers or lasting less than one day are also excluded unless the total number of working days lost in the dispute is 100 or more.

43. Stoppages over issues not directly linked to terms and conditions between workers and employers are omitted, although in most years this is not significant. For example, in 1986 one stoppage was considered to be political (a protest in the coal industry against the visit of an MP) and it was excluded from the figures. The total working days lost amounted to less than 1,000. The next known dispute to be excluded was in 1991. This involved a boycott by self-employed market traders who, after increased rent and changes to the market rules, kept their stalls closed for about 20 weeks.

44. The statistics include 'lock-outs', i.e. where an employer prevents their employees from working by refusing entry to the place of work, and 'unlawful', i.e. unlawfully organised strikes. However, no distinction is made between a 'strike' and a 'lock-out' or between 'lawful' and 'unlawful' stoppages. This is principally because of the practical difficulty in deciding which category a particular stoppage falls into. It was for similar reasons that a distinction between 'official' and 'unofficial' disputes was no longer made after 1981.

Working days lost

45. Working days lost are defined as the number of days not worked by people involved in a dispute at their place of work. In measuring the number of working days lost, account is taken only of the time lost in the basic working week. Overtime work is excluded, as is weekend working where it is not a regular practice. Where an establishment is open every day, and runs two or more shifts, the statistics will record the number of working days lost for each shift. In recording the number of days lost, allowance is made for public and known annual holidays, such as factory fortnights, occurring within the strike's duration. No allowance is made for absence from work for such reasons as sickness and unauthorised leave. To allow the data to be seen in context the estimates are also calculated as rates of days lost per 1,000 workers, this approach facilitates the international comparisons referred to above.

46. Where strikes last less than the basic working day, the hours lost are converted to full-day equivalents. Similarly, days lost by part-time workers are converted to full-day equivalents. The number of working days lost in a stoppage reflects the actual number of workers involved at each point in the stoppage. This is generally less than the total derived by multiplying the duration of the stoppage by the total number of workers involved at any time during the stoppage, because some workers would not have been involved throughout.

47. In disputes where employers dismiss their employees and subsequently reinstate them, the working days lost figure includes those days lost by workers during the period of dismissal.

48. For disputes where employers dismiss their employees and replace them with another workforce the statistics cannot assume that working days lost by the sacked workers continue indefinitely. In such cases the statistics measure the number of days lost in terms of the size of the replacement workforce. For example, where an employer initially recruits 100 workers and wishes to build up to 300, the number of working days lost on day one will be 200 and will then progressively reduce on subsequent days, eventually to zero when the new workforce reaches the target of 300.

Number of stoppages

49. There are difficulties in ensuring complete recording of stoppages, in particular for short disputes lasting only a day or so, or involving only a few workers. Because of this recording difficulty and the cut-off applied, the number of working days lost is considered to be a better indicator of the impact of labour disputes than the number of recorded stoppages.

Workers involved

50. The figures for workers involved are for workers both directly and indirectly involved at the establishment where the dispute occurred. Workers indirectly involved are those who are not themselves parties to the dispute but are laid off because of the dispute. However, the statistics exclude workers at other sites who are indirectly affected (because of a shortage of material from a supplier who is in dispute, for example). This is partially because of the difficulty in deciding to what extent a particular firm's production problems are due to the effects of a strike elsewhere or some other cause. Workers involved in more than one stoppage during the year are counted in the statistics for each stoppage in which they take part. Part-time workers are counted as whole units.

51. The statistics try to record the number of workers that are involved at any time in the stoppage. For example, consider a three-day strike where there were 200 workers involved on the first day; 300 on the second day, of whom 100 were involved for the first time; and 200 on

the third day, of whom 50 were involved for the first time. The total number of workers involved in the dispute is 350 - the sum of all those involved on the first day, and those joining for the first time on subsequent days. However, the number of workers taking strike action for the first time during a dispute cannot always be ascertained easily. In such cases the statistics record the highest number involved at any one time (300 in the above example). Take another example, where there are 200 workers involved in a stoppage on each of days one, two and three. It may be necessary to assume that there was a total of 200 workers involved, although it is possible, but unlikely, that as many as 600 workers could have been involved. For this reason, the statistics may under-estimate the number of workers involved in a dispute. However, the estimate of the number of working days lost is unaffected by this consideration.

Comparisons with the methods recommended by the ILO Resolution

52. The UK's statistics on strikes and lockouts conform fairly well to the definitions set out in the ILO Resolution, but the main differences in the methodologies are set out below (with the paragraph numbers relating to the ILO Resolution):

8. The statistics should cover all employees directly involved. If possible, employees indirectly involved should also be covered, and the data relating to them should be collected and presented separately. Where relevant to national circumstances and practices, self-employed workers directly involved in action due to labour disputes could also be covered, and the data relating to them collected and presented separately.

The ONS does not include self-employed staff in its figures but otherwise complies with the definition.

11. Where possible, the data should be collected, compiled and presented separately with respect to strikes and to lockouts. Where relevant, the corresponding data could also be compiled and presented separately for each of the other forms of action.

ONS counts strikes and lockouts as the same thing, it does not count them separately.

13. The criterion used to identify a single strike or a single lockout should be the labour dispute in question. Therefore, the following should be counted as one strike or one lockout:

c) temporary work stoppages, due to one labour dispute, occurring among employees in one establishment at a different time, or, where relevant, among one group of self-employed workers at different times, in which the period between stoppages is not more than two months;

If a strike continues for continuous months then it is counted as one strike. However, if a strike occurs in say, January then in March (with no strike action in February) it will be counted as separate strikes.

24 b (7) Disputes not arising from collective bargaining: protest (such as the expression of grievance with respect to a government policy or decision affecting conditions of work);

This is not a reason used by ONS, although all other reasons listed under 24b of the ILO resolution are. Also the ONS does not collect data for political strikes.

Conclusion

53. The UK has an extensive range of sources that yield information on the state of the social dialogue in the UK. These include long established surveys conducted on consistent bases, both over time and in accordance with international guidelines. The surveys are supplemented with data from administrative systems provided by the legislative framework within which the social dialogue sits. The surveys cover both households and businesses, and collect information from employers and employees, including worker representatives. The range of variables is wide and allows analyses of the characteristics of the employee, the workplace and the state of employee relations. The statistics, which continue to be developed and improved, are seen to be important indicators that are widely used in developing or monitoring labour market policies.

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