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SOCIAL SURVEY 1974 -

A NORWEGIAN COMPANION TO SOCIAL INDICATORS 1973 <sup>1)</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION\*

During the last few years a whole family of official and semi-official social statistical reports has been published. Although differing in detail and format these reports have important elements in common. They focus on groups of individuals or households; their main objective is to provide data on factors commonly assumed relevant to the evaluation of human welfare and they stress synthesis of scattered, previously published statistics. Special efforts have been made to make the reports intelligible to a large number of readers, both among policy-makers, contributors in mass communication and the politically and socially interested public. The communication of existing data rather than the development of new or improved social statistics has thus been the primary focus of these publications.

The veteran among these reports is, of course, the Social Trends prepared by the Central Statistical Office of the United Kingdom. The fifth issue of this publication will be published this year. Another prominent member of the family is the French Données Sociales - the first edition of which was published by the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques in 1973. A second edition is to be issued this year. Furthermore, the German Government has published Gesellschaftliche Daten 1973, and the Japanese Government a White Paper on National Life 1973. A Swedish and a Norwegian report will be published later this year by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Sweden and Norway, respectively.

This list of publications may not be exhaustive but indicates that the US contribution - Social Indicators 1973 - has many relatives and that the popularity of these reports is quite widespread. The purpose of my presentation is to inform you about the Norwegian report, whose English title will be Social Survey 1974, and to compare it with Social Indicators 1973 so as to provide a basis for evaluating the relative merits and limitations of the two publications. The comparison will be divided into three sections: Criteria for Selection of Statistics, Content, and Presentation. In conclusion, I shall make some observations on perspectives for future work in this field.

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\* I am indebted to Mr. Eivind Hoffmann, editor of the Social Survey 1974, for much help in the elaboration of this paper and to Mrs. Susan Lingsom for improvement of language.

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF STATISTICS

In Social Indicators 1973 eight major social areas are examined and within each of these several so-called social concerns have been identified. "The concerns have been defined and selected to reveal the general status of the entire population; to depict conditions that are, or are likely to be, dealt with by national policies; and to encompass many of the important issues facing the Nation. - The concerns thus embody widely held basic social objectives: ..... For each of the identified social concerns, one or more indicators - statistical measures of important aspects of the concerns - have been identified. .... The choice of indicators is based upon two main criteria: That the indicators measure individual and family (rather than institutional or governmental) well-being and that they measure end products of, rather than inputs into, social systems." (Social Indicators 1973, p. XIII.) In short, this approach to the selection of statistics may be characterized as problem-oriented, at least as contrasted with the Norwegian approach.

In Norway there was also felt a need for principles to guide the selection of statistics for inclusion in our publication. We started with the same objective as the authors of the other reports listed, viz., to assemble in one publication the most important statistics available on individuals and households with the primary aim of illuminating conditions of living and the social structure. We tried to select data which large user groups would find convenient assembled in one volume, hoping thereby to achieve a better marketing of these statistics. However, how does one decide on the importance of individual statistics and guess the preferences of users? To do this we needed a conceptual framework. This framework can briefly be described as follows:

At the beginning of a time period an individual or a household is in some kind of an initial welfare situation, defined by personal characteristics such as age, health, educational level, housing situation, type of work, family situation, income and wealth. In addition, this initial situation of the individual or household is defined by certain institutional and environmental characteristics, such as the existing social security system, tax system, and political system. Determined partly by these characteristics and partly by the activities of governmental institutions,

enterprises and other individuals, each individual engages in various activities during the period such as earning, learning, consumption, political work and perhaps even criminal activities. These activities yield certain results and create a new situation at the end of the period - likewise influenced by governmental institutions, enterprises and other individuals. The statistics included in a social survey should illuminate the various elements in this picture. Thus, the approach for our selection of statistics is rather comprehensive, and the amount of data from which the selection had to take place is correspondingly large. Accordingly, the selection of statistics for the Norwegian publication is not restricted to direct indicators of welfare, but aims also at providing data for the illumination of relationships and interrelationships, dependence and interdependence, of such social phenomena which strongly influence welfare.

Our main criterion for choice of data within this frame of thought was their relevance as indicators of human welfare in the wide sense. Of course, this criterion offers no clear guideline. In many fields we do not even have a consensus on what is to be considered a desirable development in terms of human welfare. However, we tried to seek advice from representatives of a number of potential user groups, or to anticipate user preferences. We also sought guidance in corresponding foreign publications available at the time. Thus, within the general frame of reference just described, the method of choice was rather pragmatic and, of course, dependent upon the availability of data.

Similar to its American companion, our Social Survey 1974 emphasizes end products rather than inputs. However, within our conceptual framework the end product from one activity is often the input into another - both activities being relevant from a welfare point of view. Recognizing the sad fact that the end product of governmental activities is extremely hard and in some cases impossible to measure, we were not as reluctant as our American colleagues to use input data as substitutes for output data.

Similar to our American colleagues, we decided to restrict our choice of data almost entirely to statistics describing objective conditions - data on acts and facts. This is not only due to the fact that information on people's attitudes and opinions is not as abundant in Norway as in the US, but also because we feel that such data are extremely hard to interpret from a welfare point of view and that it in many cases would require a

longer and more careful presentation than possible in a publication of this kind.

Finally, I like to mention that a major requirement for inclusion of a statistical table or diagram in Social Survey 1974 was that national averages were available and that the distribution of characteristics for the total population could be presented. In other words, data covering only certain groups were, as a rule, excluded. Also in this respect the criterion for choice seems to have been about the same for the two publications under consideration.

It is a matter of judgement which approach is "best" for selection of statistics to be included in a publication of this kind. We found that for the users of such a publication in a country like Norway, with a mixed economy and a relatively highly developed public welfare system, the comprehensive approach chosen would most likely be more appropriate than a problem approach. This does not imply, of course, that the Norwegian society is without problems, or that these problems are not reflected in the Social Survey 1974. Many of the problems describable by statistics are covered by our publication, but are presented as a part of a total which hopefully provides a broad picture of the Norwegian society - in welfare terms. The reactions of the public to our publication may give us some basis for evaluating the degree to which this hope has been realized.

## CONTENT

Our Social Survey 1974 contains about twice as many tables as Social Indicators 1973. This is partly due to the fact that the Norwegian publication includes a chapter on social services with as many as 40 tables, whereas its American companion lacks such a chapter. However, also other chapters of the Norwegian publication covering almost exactly the same social areas as Social Indicators 1973, contain considerably more information than those of the American publication. This is a consequence of the different approaches to the selection of data.

There are also differences in the kind of information included in corresponding chapters. Some topics are included in Social Survey 1974 but not in Social Indicators 1973, and vice versa. The topics included in the

Norwegian publication but not in the American are to a large extent a consequence of a higher concern with the activities of government and institutions in general. I have already mentioned our chapter on social services containing data on those who receive benefits from the comprehensive social security schemes existing in Norway. Likewise, our inclusion of data on public consumption, membership in economic and civic organizations, and participation in civic activities, which are excluded in the American publication, reflects the different approaches in selecting statistics.

Some of the topics included in the American publication are not relevant for Norway. As examples I may mention the data on health insurance coverage, which is compulsory for all Norwegian inhabitants, and the data on paid vacations which by law is fixed at four weeks a year for all Norwegian wage-earners. Some other data in the American publication are simply not available in Norway, e.g., the data on relationship between victim and offender, on achievement on education tests, and on daily use of time - which we got too late for inclusion. Finally, the different approaches in selecting statistics also appears to have entailed inclusion in the American publication of some data which are excluded in the Norwegian. As examples I can mention the statistics on job satisfaction, specific data on the low income population, and statistics on satisfaction with and assessment of neighbourhood.

In spite of these differences the main impression one receives from a comparison of the content of the two publications is that the topics included are basically the same. The differences are in detail and emphasis and in the total amount of information, rather than in the relative allocation of information on social areas.

## PRESENTATION

As statisticians we all recognize that statistics in its numerical reflection may make even the most fascinating subject boring to the uninitiated. We also know how easy it is to misuse or even lie with statistics, inadvertently or by design. This poses a major communication problem to anyone preparing the kind of report which we are discussing - intended as it is for a wide distribution among non-experts. It seems that

the authors of all the reports referred to have been aware of this problem and have tried to tackle it. The Norwegian method for solving the problem differs somewhat from the American and it may be worthwhile to discuss the differences in method of presentation.

The organization of the two publications has three major differences: the sequence of chapters; the number of sections within chapters; and the sequence of the verbal, graphical, and numerical presentation.

The Social Survey 1974 is introduced by a chapter on population which is designed to provide a background for the subsequent chapters, hopefully facilitating the study of relationships between the social areas represented by these chapters. Furthermore, the chapter on crimes and criminals is placed towards the end instead of in the front, next to the health chapter, as it is in Social Indicators 1973. The chapters on employment and income are placed next to each other in both publications, but in the opposite sequence. These variances seem to follow from the differences in approach. The same applies to the organization within chapters. All chapters are divided into more sections in the Norwegian publication than in its American companion, reflecting the fact that sections of the former do not refer to separate social concerns but rather to themes.

The authors of Social Indicators 1973 have chosen to present the charts and the tables in separate parts of each chapter, with "Technical Notes" in between. A few additional comments are made at the beginning of chapters and sections. This means that to find information presented on a particular phenomenon you may have to look at four different pages; e.g., on life expectancy at the age of 30 and 50 information is presented on pages 2, 3, 23, and 28. In the Norwegian publication, efforts have been made to locate both the verbal, graphical, and numerical presentation of a particular point as closely together as possible.

Readers interested in further details on content and organization of the Social Survey 1974, as compared with Social Indicators 1973, are referred to the Appendix on: Headings of Chapters and Sections in Social Survey 1974 and Social Indicators 1973.

The layout of Statistical Indicators 1973 is admirable. I am sad to say that we have no hope of reaching anywhere near to the high level of the American achievement in this respect. Lack of resources and staff have also prevented us from utilizing graphical presentation to the same extent as in Social Indicators 1973. Naturally, the authors of both publications

have recognized the need for supplementing the tables and diagrams by verbal presentation. However, in this respect there is a considerable difference which may deserve a more detailed description.

In our attempts to promote the use of statistics in Norway, we have repeatedly found that most people have difficulties in extracting information from a statistical table. Graphical presentations may help, but as a rule words seem to be more easily understood. Surprisingly many of those who take interest in statistics, are unable to utilize the data without being led more or less by the hand through the table and explained in words what the statistics tell or do not tell. Therefore, aiming at making the Social Survey 1974 useful for a wide circle of readers, we deemed it necessary to supplement the tables with some text, restricting ourselves to pointing out some of the most interesting numerical information to be found in the tables and diagrams and issuing warnings against tempting and not quite obvious pitfalls and misinterpretations. This verbal presentation is made as close as possible to the relevant tables and diagrams. In addition, we have smuggled into this presentation some important methodological information and institutional information which in the American publication is presented in the "Technical Notes". Finally, we have attempted to make references and cross-references to other tables, inter alia, to point out relationships between data to be found in different tables and chapters. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Social Survey 1974 represents a statistical publication with supplementary comments rather than a verbal presentation with supplementary statistics.

The approach described above implies that there are no separate sections with "Technical Notes" in the Norwegian publication. This may be a disadvantage for advanced users. However, the Social Survey 1974 is not specially tailored for them, but rather for a much larger group of far less sophisticated users. Advanced users can utilize the many references that have been made to special publications which contain substantially more data as well as extensive and detailed technical notes.

To indicate the difference more concretely, I shall quote in English a few paragraphs intentionally selected from some chapters of the Norwegian publication.

The chapter on population is introduced by the following pedagogic remark: "Changes in the number of births - for example - determines variations in the demand for maternal care and the payment of family allowances.

Changes in the age structure of the population have consequences for the growth of the economically active population, the demand for education, and the need for homes for the aged. This chapter thus serves as a background for the rest of the publication."

A combined numerical and methodological commentary is made in connection to a table and a diagram in the section on households and families: "The average number of children per married couple has declined for a long period of time. The married couples in 1920 had on the average 4 children, while those of 1960 had 2.3 children on the average. These figures are influenced by the duration of the marriages as the number of children tend to increase with the duration. However, from 1920 to 1950 the average number of children per married couple decreased for all classes of duration. From 1950 to 1960 the number declined for all marriages of more than 8-9 years' duration, but increased slightly on the average for marriages of a shorter duration."

In the section giving a general survey of the health situation, we combine information on health with a cross-reference to related data: "There is not much information available on the number of people who have permanent or prolonged illness, e.g., are blind, deaf or disabled for other reasons. According to the Health Survey 1968 39 per cent of those interviewed had a permanent illness or injury, but this includes even slight cases which caused no reduction in normal activity. In Chapter 5 on Social Services there is information on persons receiving disability pensions, which gives indication of the incidence of permanent cases of illness among persons below the age of 70."

Presenting numerical information on the level of education, both methodological and institutional information are added: "In the Population Censuses of 1950, 1960, and 1970, persons were asked to give their highest general education and all vocational educations. There was only small changes from 1950 to 1960 in the proportion of the population which had general education beyond primary school. This was partly due to the smallness of the relevant age groups. That there was no change from 1950 to 1960 in the proportion having vocational education, is mostly due to a change in definitions. In 1950 vocational education of 5 months or more was to be included, whereas in 1960 the lowest time limit was 10 months. - The returns from the 1970 Census show a substantial increase in the amount of general education beyond primary school (7 years) in the population during the period

1960-1970. This must be seen in conjunction with the large young age groups of this period, and the introduction of 9-years compulsory education in Norway."

The only data presented on attitudes are described in the following manner - in a section on housing environment: "About 70 per cent of all households (in the Housing Survey 1967) thought that the available playground was a safe one for their children. About the same proportion thought it was of good quality. The street or the sidewalk was thought to be unsafe by about 80 per cent of the households where the children only had such a playground. .... The inner courtyard as a playground was thought to be safe but of bad quality. Other types of playgrounds were mostly thought to be safe and of good quality."

While presenting numerical information on changes in the income distribution, we point out the potentially misleading influence of institutional factors: "Over the period 1950-1971 there has been a marked reduction in the relative differences between the average incomes in urban and rural municipalities. Some of this equalization may be due to the fact that some rural municipalities have become urban without being reclassified or that some rural municipalities have been merged with urban ones. This is clearly illustrated by the figures for the Hordaland and Bergen counties 1970 and 1971. Four municipalities which were formerly classified as part of Hordaland, were in 1971 classified as part of Bergen. This caused the average income of Hordaland relative to the rest of the country to decline substantially from 1970 to 1971, and that of Bergen to rise."

In the chapter on social services we give a survey on general public pension and assistance schemes. From this I quote the following:

"Disability assistance was introduced by law January 1, 1961, and now forms part of the National Insurance System. There is a graduated disability pension scheme for persons with 50 per cent disability degree or more."

From the numerical comments in the same chapter I quote: "By New Year 1967 4.1 per cent of the population in the age groups 18 years to 69 years received disability pension. The proportion was the same for women and for men. In 1972 this percentage had increased to 6.3."

These examples may suffice to demonstrate how verbal presentation of numerical information has been combined with comments of a pedagogic, methodological or institutional nature. In a number of cases the verbal comments merely repeat some of the most interesting information provided

by a table. User reactions will show whether this method of presentation has promoted careful interpretation and extensive utilization of the data presented.

Of course, we realized that commenting on data from a number of fields is a rather risky venture. In the first place, however, we abstained completely from explanation of the phenomena pointed out in the text. Secondly, we tried to take advantage of available expertise both inside and outside the Central Bureau of Statistics. The publication was prepared by a small project group within the Central Bureau of Statistics of Norway, but this group worked in close co-operation with the various subject matter divisions of the Bureau. A first draft of the manuscript was discussed informally with the specialized government agencies concerned and also with other experts outside the Bureau. Valuable information and comments were received and as far as possible were taken into consideration when preparing the final manuscript.

Permit me at this point to engage in sales promotion by informing you that all tables and diagrams (including notes) as well as the lists of tables and diagrams are described in English as well as in Norwegian. The methodological and technical parts of the main text are summarized in English. Moreover, I may mention that the planning of a new edition has already started. It will probably be published late 1976 and will contain the results from a number of important statistical investigations which now are being carried out. We have some reason to hope that for anyone being interested in the Norwegian society whether as such, as part of Scandinavia, or Europe or the World, the Social Survey 1974 and subsequent editions of this publication will provide a treasury of information accessible even for those who know no Norwegian.

#### PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

As pointed out in the introduction, work on Social Survey 1974 was restricted to presentation of already available data. No attempts were made to develop new or improved social statistics. However, we hoped that experience from the work on this publication would provide feedback for developmental work. Having completed the work on the first edition, we see that this hope was not quite unrealistic.

Another hope was not fulfilled. At the outset we thought that one objective of this publication should be to describe relationships between social data in different areas beyond cross-references between chapters and tables and the obvious adjustments made for changes in size and age distribution of the population. However, this idea was soon abandoned as being too ambitious at this stage. There is no chapter aiming at combining data from all or several social areas on the basis of standard definitions, classifications, and definitional relationships similar to those underlying the national economic accounts. The explanation is, of course, obvious. As yet, we have not been able to develop a logical system providing a similar synthesis of social and demographic statistics as represented by the national economic accounts for economic statistics.

Most of you presumably know that quite extensive work is going on internationally under the guidance of the United Nations statistical agencies developing a system of integrated social and demographic statistics which, it is hoped, will provide a much better basis for analysis of relationships and interrelationships than the present system. The central statistical agencies of a number of countries, including Norway, intend to make considerable efforts to fit social and demographic data into this system as soon as it is sufficiently developed.

This developmental work will not be sufficiently advanced to apply fully already in our Social Survey 1976. Nevertheless, I hope that this publication can be introduced by a new chapter containing some tables covering all or most of the social areas for which Social Survey 1974 provides data. We have already experimented with some tables where a standard classification by age provides a link between the various statistical areas. In these tables, the Norwegian population is visualized being cross-classified by age and by characteristics such as health, educational attainment, housing standard, occupation, income, and perhaps even criminality. There are numerous methodological difficulties and limitations involved in the construction of such tables, particularly if one aims at making the classification by welfare characteristics comprehensive. In my opinion the most urgent progress to be made in the next few editions is the presentation of an integrating introductory chapter. If we succeed, the Social Survey 1974 will represent a first step toward presentation of an integrated system of social and demographic statistics, in a similar manner as the data presented in Social Indicators 1973 are characterized as "a first step toward development of a more extensive social indicator system".

HEADINGS OF CHAPTERS AND SECTIONS IN SOCIAL SURVEY 1974 AND SOCIAL INDICATORS 1973<sup>1)</sup>*SOCIAL SURVEY 1974**SOCIAL INDICATORS 1973*

## 1. POPULATION

Size and composition of population  
Households and families  
Vital Statistics  
Births  
Deaths  
Migrations  
Marriages  
Adoptions

## 8. POPULATION

Population Growth  
Population Distribution

## 2. HEALTH

Health (episodes of illness,  
reduction in activity,  
physical mobility, in-patients)  
Expectation of life  
Diseases  
Injuries  
Cause of death  
Mortality by marital status and  
occupation  
Maternal and infant mortality  
Contact with physicians and health  
institutions  
Health personnel, hospitals,  
pharmaceuticals  
Public dental care  
Abortions

## 1. HEALTH

Long Life (life expectancy,  
death rates/causes, infant  
mortality)  
Disability  
Long-Term Disability - +  
Institutional (patients,  
admissions)  
Long-Term Disability -  
Non-institutional (limited  
activity - chronic conditions)  
Short-Term Disability  
Access to Medical Care (health  
insurance, expenditures)

## 3. EDUCATION

Level of education in the population  
Persons educationally active  
Primary school  
Special schools  
"Folk high schools"  
Secondary schools, upper stage  
Vocational schools and colleges  
Universities and colleges  
Adult education and popular  
education

## 3. EDUCATION

Basic Skills - Attainment (level  
of education, enrollment,  
graduation)  
Basic Skills - Achievement  
Higher and Continuing Education  
(enrollment, degrees earned,  
adult education)

1) In parenthesis ( ) are added some words to further indicate the content of the sections.

*SOCIAL SURVEY 1974*

## 4. HOUSING

Stock of dwellings and building  
of new dwellings  
Size of dwellings  
Equipment in the dwellings  
Environment of dwellings  
Tenure status to dwelling  
Building costs, financing

## 5. EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Employment (labour force,  
participation)  
Economically active foreigners  
Unemployment  
Working hours  
Membership in Trade unions and  
Employers' associations  
Labour conflicts, curtailment of  
operations, government measures  
to promote employment

## 6. INCOME AND CONSUMPTION

Wages  
Income of persons (level and  
distribution)  
Income of households (level and  
distribution)  
Personal property  
Private consumption  
Prices  
The Public Sector

## 7. SOCIAL SERVICES

Children and parents  
Illness, rehabilitation and  
disability  
Assistance to old people  
Social support  
Public expenditure on social security

*SOCIAL INDICATORS 1973*

## 6. HOUSING

Housing Quality  
The Housing Unit (standard)  
Living Space (crowding)  
The Neighborhood (satisfaction,  
assessment)

## 4. EMPLOYMENT

Employment Opportunities  
(unemployment, labor force,  
participation)  
Quality of Employment Life  
Job Satisfaction  
Working Conditions (earnings,  
hours worked, transportation  
to work, paid vacations,  
work injuries)

## 5. INCOME

Level of Income (families)  
Distribution of Income (families)  
Expenditure of Income (consumption,  
wealth)  
The Low-Income Population

*SOCIAL SURVEY 1974*

## 8. CRIMES AND CRIMINALS

Crimes investigated by the police  
 Results of investigations  
 Victims of crimes  
 Self-reported crimes  
 Persons charged for crimes  
 Recidivism among charged persons  
 Sanctions  
 Recidivism among offenders  
 Misdemeanours of drunkenness,  
 Traffic offences

## 9. PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Participation in elections  
 Correcting the list of candidates  
 Votes by party  
 Unpaid municipal offices  
 Membership in associations and organizations  
 Meetings and performances  
 Reading and musical activities.  
 Use of radio and television  
 Amount and division of work in the household  
 Holidays

*SOCIAL INDICATORS 1973*

## 2. PUBLIC SAFETY

Safety of Life and Property from Crime  
 Violent Crime (crimes, victims, offenders)  
 Property Crime (crimes, victims)  
 Freedom from Fear of Crime

## 7. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Leisure Time (daily use of time)  
 Outdoor Recreation  
 Television viewing