

The Establishment File of the German Social Insurance Statistics

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1. The German Social Insurance Statistics

The German Social Insurance Statistics („Statistik der sozialversicherungs-pflichtig Beschäftigten“, SIS) was introduced in West Germany in 1973. In eastern Germany, it became compulsory from January 1991 on, shortly after unification. The SIS requires all public and private employers to report certain information about every employee who is subject to obligatory social insurance, i.e. health and unemployment insurance along with pension funds. The information collected can be transformed into an establishment file that provides longitudinal information about the establishments and their employees.

In this contribution we give an overview of the content of the SIS establishment file as well as of the possibilities and the problems involved in using this data for scientific analyses. We first describe the coverage and information contained in the SIS (section 2) and give a brief outline of the process by which this information is raised and prepared. Section 3 deals with data errors and reliability problems, particularly the definition of an establishment and the identification of start-ups and closures. Section 4 depicts the main topics of studies based on the data and describes the current possibilities of data access.

2. Coverage and informational content

The German SIS is derived from information that every employer is obliged to report about those employees who have to contribute to the social insurance system. The statistics therefore contain only data about this group of persons. Civil servants, army personnel, self-employed and unemployed persons are not included. Due to some changes of the criteria for being obliged to contribute to the social insurance scheme there was some variation in the definition of the observation unit over time. In manufacturing, the SIS currently covers more than 90 percent of all employed persons. In the service sector, this share is about 80 percent. It is relatively low in agriculture (less than 24 percent) and in the public sector (about 50 percent). The employers report the informa-