



OECD GUIDELINES ON MEASURING THE QUALITY OF THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

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Motivation

- Why measure Quality of the Working Environment (QWE)?
 - QWE is an important determinant of people's well-being
 - It is linked to firm's productivity
- The OECD Job Quality Framework (OECD, 2015)
 - The JQ framework has three dimensions: earnings quality, labour market security and QWE
 - A Job Strain index has been created to measure QWE, but its construction was less informed by expert knowledge
 - An Expert Group has been set up to contribute to these Guidelines, whose goal is ultimately to inform NSOs and contribute to the policy debate
- The Business for Well-being OECD initiative
 - The impact of the private sector on people's well-being goes beyond QWE for employees (supply chain, consumers, planet...)
 - Forthcoming OECD initiative

What is the existing evidence ?

- The EU, ILO and UNECE have created frameworks for measuring QWE
- Many national and international surveys are available:
 - European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)
 - European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
 - European Social Survey (ESS)
 - International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)
 - Gallup World Poll

Overview of the Guidelines

- Chapter 1: Rationale and motivation
- Chapter 2: Available evidence
- Chapter 3: The main models to understand QWE
- Chapter 4: The measurement framework
- Chapter 5: Evaluation of questions used to capture the various dimensions of QWE
- Chapter 6: Methodological issues
- Annex: A prototype questions module
 - Extended module: 25 questions covering 17 job characteristics
 - Consented module: 13 questions covering 11 job characteristics
 - Core module: 4 questions covering the most important aspects of QWE

Measuring the quality of the working environment

- The 'working environment' is understood as a ***combination of job characteristics***, i.e. it is a multidimensional concept encompassing a broad range of non-pecuniary characteristics of the job:
 - nature of the work tasks assigned to each worker
 - physical and social conditions under which these tasks are carried out
 - characteristics of the firm or organisation where work takes place
 - scheduling of working time
 - career prospects
 - intrinsic rewards (e.g. feeling useful)
- The focus is not set on **job satisfaction** (which also encompasses a monetary element) but on **objective and observable features** of the work environment
- The Guidelines provide **3 prototype questionnaires** for inclusion into national surveys (extended=25 questions; condensed=13 questions; core=4

The Measurement Framework (1)

- Three main models are helpful to understand QWE:
 - The ***demand-control*** model: underlines the importance of job control in reducing risks of ill-health resulting from high levels of job demands
 - The ***effort-reward imbalance*** model: emphasises norms of reciprocity and perceived fairness
 - The ***job demands-resources*** model: points at the importance of balancing the demands of the job and the resources that are available to workers
- The **OECD Job Strain index** is based on the job demand-resources model, which is more general than the others two (or job satisfaction)

The Measurement Framework (2)

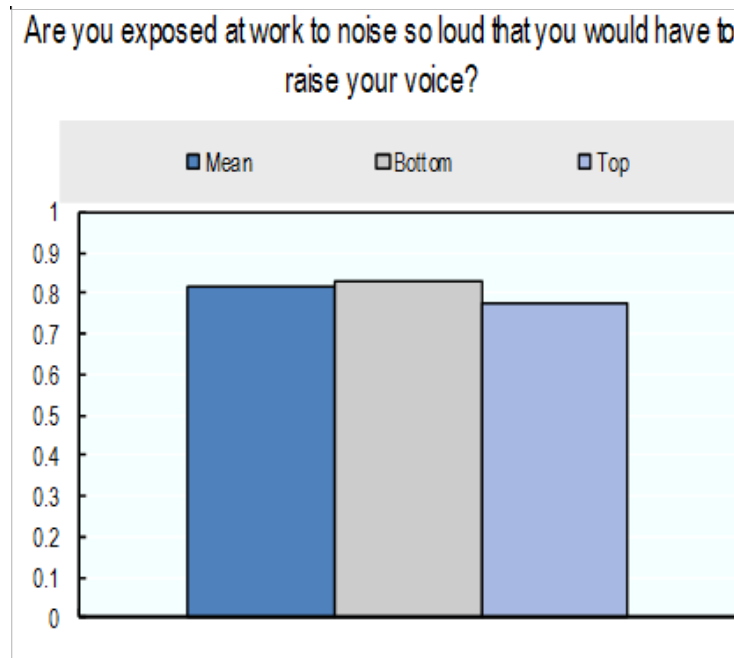
- QWE is then described along 17 key **job characteristics**, mixing objective and subjective data
- The job characteristics approach is simpler and more general than the *person-fit* approach
- The job demand-resource model and the job characteristics approach are crossed to better interpret the results

Job dimensions	Job characteristics	
	Job demand	Job resources
A. Physical and social environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1: Physical risk factors • A2: Physical demands • A3: Intimidation and discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A4: Social support at work
B. Job Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B1: Work intensity • B2: Emotional demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B3: Task discretion and autonomy
C. Organisational characteristics		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C1: Participation and workplace voice • C2: Good managerial practices • C3: Task clarity and performance feedback
D. Worktime arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D1: Unsocial work-schedule • D2: Inflexibility of working hours 	
E. Job prospects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E1: Perceptions of job insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E2: Training and learning opportunities • E3: Opportunity for career advancement
F. Intrinsic aspects		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F1: Opportunities for self-realisation • F2: Intrinsic rewards

The Measurement Framework (3)

- Survey questions have been selected along two criteria
 - **Importance of the issue** addressed from a well-being perspective
 - **Statistical robustness and validity:** evaluated by calculating the correlation of country rankings across two questions dealing with the same issue from different surveys (focusing on average score or shares of people with low/high scores)

Correlation coefficients across all different cut-offs for the survey item on exposure to noise between the European Working Condition Survey and the International Social Survey Programme



The Measurement Framework (4)

- Questions are presented as ***statements*** which allows using only **two scales** (i.e. less cognitive burden)

Scale A	Scale B
(1) Completely disagree	(1) Never
(2) Disagree	(2) Rarely
(3) Neither disagree nor agree	(3) Sometimes
(4) Agree	(4) Often
(5) Completely agree	(5) Always
(6) <i>Not applicable</i>	
(7) <i>Don't know</i>	
(8) <i>Refused to answer</i>	

- Example 1 (Scale A): ‘I am able to choose or change my methods of work’
- Example 2 (Scale B): ‘My job involves working at very high speed or to tight deadlines’

The Condensed Module

13 questions focusing on 11 key job characteristics (~3mn of survey time)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your main job?

All statements should be answered with the following response scales:

Scale A	Scale B
(1) Completely disagree	(1) Never
(2) Disagree	(2) Rarely
(3) Neither disagree nor agree	(3) Sometimes
(4) Agree	(4) Often
(5) Completely agree	(5) Always

(6) Not applicable

(7) Don't know

(8) Refused to answer

Survey question	Response scale	Job characteristics
1. I AM EXPOSED AT WORK TO HANDLING OR BEING IN SKIN CONTACT WITH CHEMICAL PRODUCTS OR SUBSTANCES.	Scale B	A1. Physical risk factors
2. MY JOB INVOLVES CARRYING OR MOVING HEAVY LOADS	Scale B	A2. Physical demands
3. I AM ASKED TO WORK IN MY FREE TIME TO MEET WORK DEMANDS.	Scale B	D1. Unsocial work schedule
4. FOR ME ARRANGING TO TAKE AN HOUR OR TWO OFF DURING WORKING HOURS TO TAKE CARE OF PERSONAL MATTERS IS DIFFICULT.	Scale A	D2. Flexibility of working hours
5. MY JOB INVOLVES WORKING AT VERY HIGH SPEED.	Scale B	B1. Work intensity
6. MY JOB INVOLVES WORKING TO TIGHT DEADLINES.	Scale B	
7. I AM EXPECTING TO LOSE MY JOB IN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS.	Scale A	E1. Perceptions of job insecurity
8. I LEARN NEW THINGS IN MY JOB.	Scale A	E2. Training and learning opportunities
9. I AM ABLE TO CHOOSE OR CHANGE MY METHODS OF WORK.	Scale A	B3. Task discretion and autonomy
10. MY WORK GIVES ME THE FEELING OF A JOB WELL DONE.	Scale A	F2. Intrinsic rewards
11. I GET ADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM MY COLLEAGUES IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS.	Scale A	A4. Social support at work
12. I CAN INFLUENCE DECISIONS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR MY WORK.	Scale A	C1. Organisational participation and workplace voice
13. CONSIDERING ALL MY EFFORTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS, I RECEIVE THE PRAISE AND RESPECT THAT MY WORK DESERVES. (R.)	Scale A	F2. Intrinsic rewards

The Core Module (1)

- The module includes the two most important items on job demands and the two most important ones for job resources
- **Job demands: work intensity** (B1, i.e. working to tight deadlines or at high speed) and **perceptions of job insecurity** (E1, i.e. risk of losing one's job).
- **Job resources : task discretion and autonomy** (B3, i.e. ability to choose or change methods of work) and **learning opportunities** (E2, i.e. learning new things on the job).
- Data on these 4 items would allow the construction of an OECD Job Strain index.

The Core Module (2)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your main job?

All statements should be answered with the following response scales:

Scale A	Scale B
(1) Completely disagree	(1) Never
(2) Disagree	(2) Rarely
(3) Neither disagree nor agree	(3) Sometimes
(4) Agree	(4) Often
(5) Completely agree	(5) Always

(6) Not applicable

(7) Don't know

(8) Refused to answer

Job demands:

1. My job involves working at very high speed or to tight deadlines

(Scale B)

2. I am expecting to lose my job in the next 6 months

(Scale A)

Job resources:

3. I am able to choose or change my methods of work

(Scale A)

4. I learn new things in my job

(Scale A)

The Job Strain summary indicator (1)

- The measurement framework is then operationalised by constructing a headline indicator of **job strain** :
- **At the individual level, one counts the number of:**
 1. **Job demands** = aspects of the job that require sustained physical and psychological efforts
 2. **Job resources** = job attributes that lead to personal accomplishment or that are instrumental in achieving work
- Job strain occurs when the **number of demands is larger than the number of resources**

	Low demands	High demands
Low resources	no demands, no resources	strained job
High resources	stimulating work environment	demanding job equipped with resources (potential compensating effect)

- **Job Strain index = Percentage of people with a strained job**

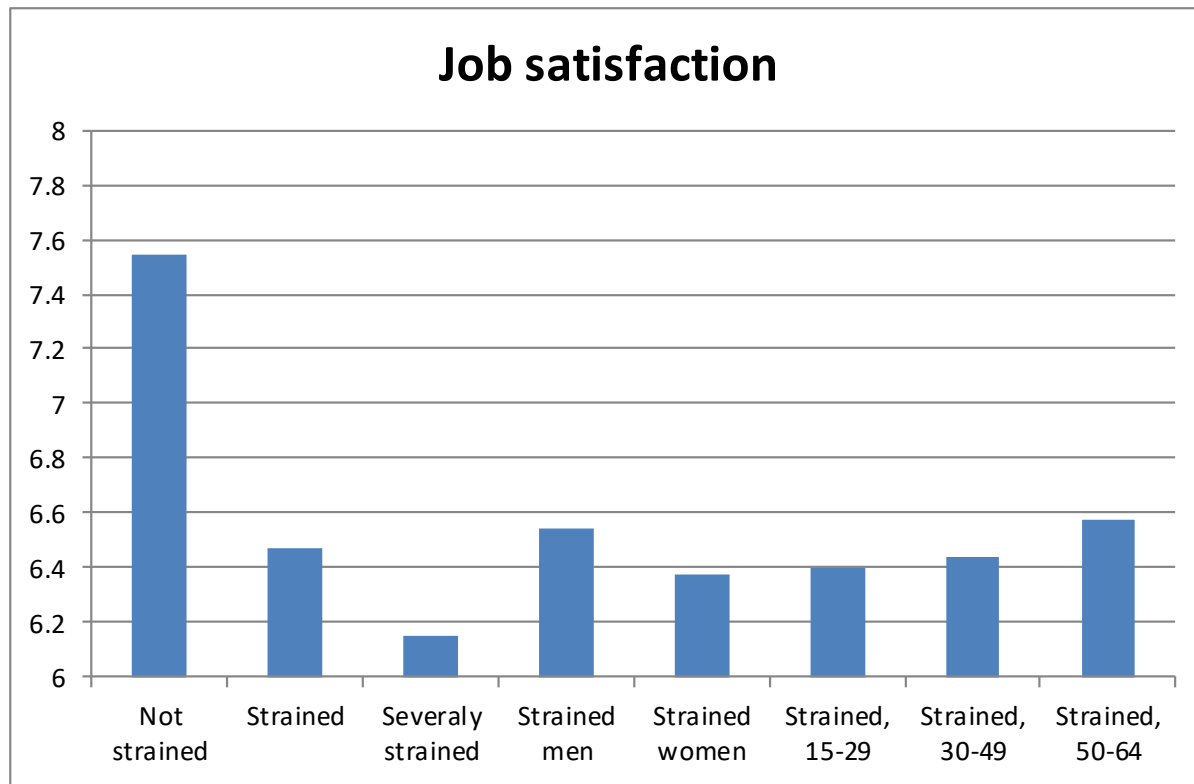
The Job Strain summary indicator (2)

Job characteristics in the Job Demand-Resource framework

Job dimensions	Job strain as a result of...	
	...too many job demands	...too few job resources
A. Physical and social environment	Physical demands Hard physical work (ISSP) Carrying or moving heavy loads (EWCS)	
B. Job Tasks	Work intensity Long working hours (ISSP and EWCS)	Task discretion and autonomy Free to organise daily work (ISSP) Change order of tasks/methods of work, set working arrangements (EWCS)
D. Worktime arrangements	Inflexibility of working hours Hard to take hours off (ISSP) Hard to take a break when you wish (EWCS)	
E. Job prospects	Perceptions of job insecurity Worry about the possibility of losing job (ISSP) Might lose job in the next 6 months (EWCS)	Training and learning opportunities Training over the past 12 months (ISSP) Training or on-the-job training over the past 12 months (EWCS) Opportunity for career advancement High opportunities for advancement (ISSP) Good prospects for career advancement (EWCS)
F. Intrinsic aspects	Intrinsic rewards Can help other people in the job (ISSP) Feeling of doing useful work (EWCS)	

Link to well-being (job satisfaction)

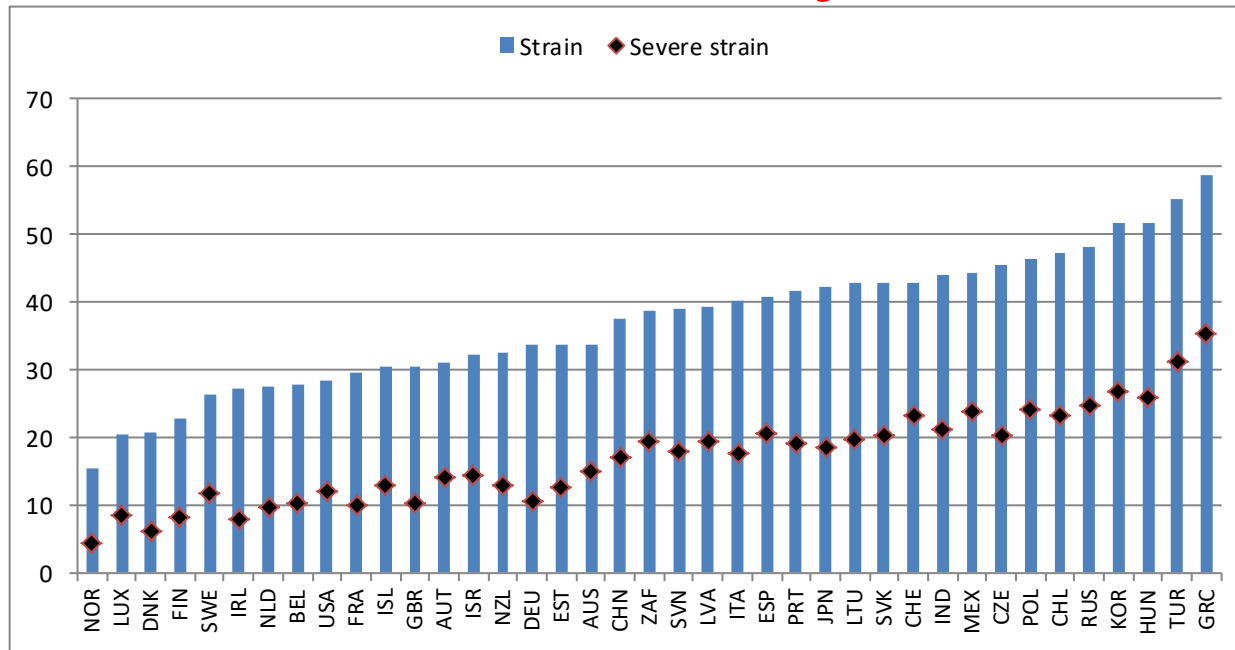
Job strain and average job satisfaction – ISSP



Source: International Social Survey Program Work Orientations Module III (2017)

Job strain in OECD countries

Share of workers under job strain - 2015

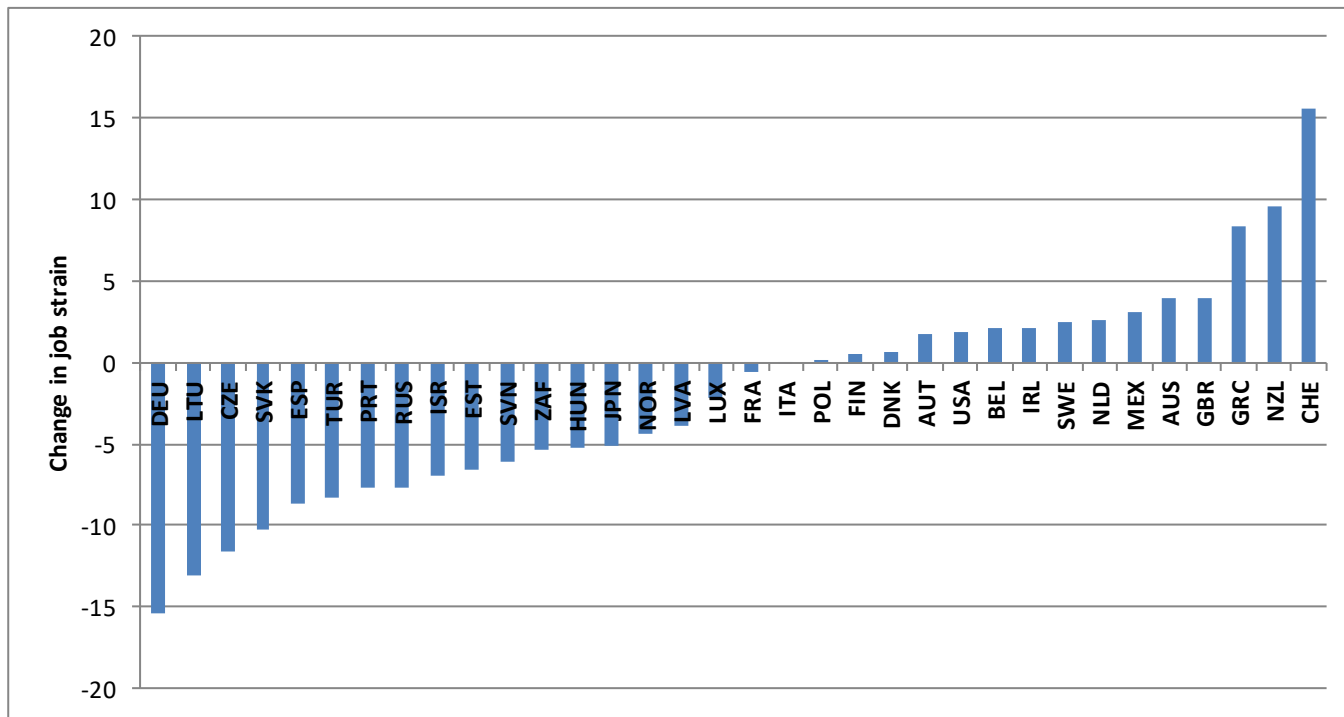


Note. Data on Korea are based on results of the 2005 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP).

Source: OECD Job Quality database (2017) based on the 6th European Working Conditions Survey (Forthcoming) and International Social Survey Program Work Orientations Module III.

Change in Job Strain 2005-2015

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Thank you!

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