

Definition and measurement

Measures of work satisfaction are taken from Wave III of the *International Social Science Programme*. The last Work Orientation wave of ISSP was in 2005. Previous waves were conducted in 1989 and 1997. The survey is addressed to people aged 16 and over working either as an employee or as a self-employed. 21 OECD countries participated in the latest wave of this survey. The survey has high and variable rates of non-response between countries and over time, as well as different country sampling frames, all of which may undermine comparability.

The basic indicator of work satisfaction used here is to the share of all employees reporting that they felt “completely”, “very” or “fairly” satisfied in their main job (out of seven response categories). Also shown are measures of job values and job outcomes reported by respondents. Job values are based on questions that ask “for you personally, how important” are a range of factors (with six response categories). Similarly, job outcomes are based on questions that ask whether respondents agree or disagree to different statements about their current job (always with six response categories). In both cases, the questions posed imply no ranking among categories. Sample sizes are small, between around 1000 and 2000. Data for Belgium are limited to Flanders, those for Germany to the western *Länder*, and those for the United Kingdom exclude Northern Ireland.

Most people are satisfied with their jobs (CO2.1). On average across 21 OECD countries, the share of people reporting to be completely, very or fairly satisfied with their jobs was close to 80%. Figures ranged from around 70% in Korea to more than 90% in Mexico and Switzerland. Around 12% of respondents were completely satisfied, on average, as compared to 30% being very satisfied, and to 40% being fairly satisfied.

More people are becoming satisfied with their jobs. Since 1997, in the 11 OECD countries where comparison is possible, the share of employees satisfied has improved by around 5 points. Large rises are found in Sweden while falls occur in France, Spain and Denmark (CO2.1).

There is little difference in job satisfaction by gender and age. Across the 21 OECD countries covered in the 2005 survey, women were as satisfied with work as men. Women reported lower job satisfaction than men in Portugal, Switzerland, Belgium, Korea, Germany, Japan and the United States, and higher job satisfaction in Ireland, the Czech Republic, Australia, Mexico and Finland. Job satisfaction increases slightly with age until 65, although there are several country exceptions (ISSP 2005).

Job security is the attribute most valued by workers. Next come high income, opportunities for advancements and working time flexibility, although with large quantitative differences across countries (ISSP 2005).

Most people are happy with their current combination of hours and pay. When asked whether they would prefer to work the same number of hours for the same money, more hours for more money, or fewer hours for less money, a majority in all countries were satisfied with the same number of hours and money. Around a third of respondents wanted to work more hours for more money. Up to half or more in Mexico and France wanted more hours and more money. In Denmark, however, there are more people wanting shorter hours/less money than wanting longer hours/more money. Differences between the two groups preferring change are also negligible in other Nordic countries and Switzerland (ISSP 2005).

Further reading

International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) (2005), *Work Orientations III, Data and Documentation*, www.gesis.org/en/services/data/survey-data/issp/modules-study-overview/work-orientations/2005/.

Vecernik, J. (2003), “Skating on Thin Ice: A Comparison of Work Values and Job Satisfaction in CEE and EU Countries”, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 44, pp. 444-471, December.

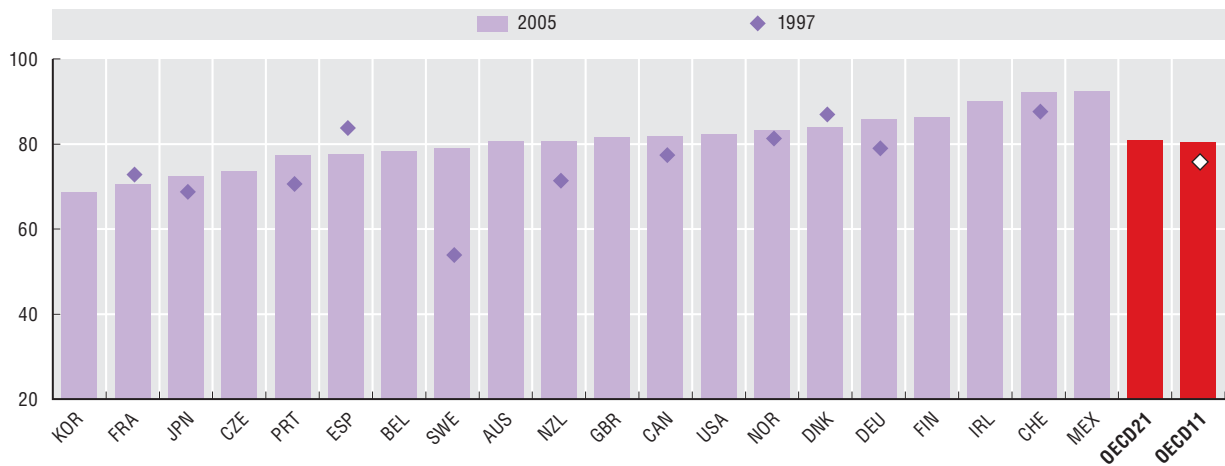
Figure and table notes

Figure CO2.1: Countries are ranked, from left to right, in increasing order of share of people satisfied in their jobs.

Table CO2.2: These data are based on selected outcomes, not a coding of open ended responses.

CO2.1. High and rising: work satisfaction across the OECD

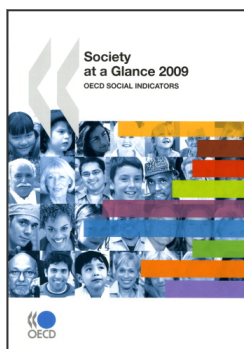
Percentage of all employees completely, very or fairly satisfied with their job, 2005

**CO2.2. Job attributes and job characteristics most valued by respondents, 2005**

	Important attributes of all jobs				Characteristics of the job held by respondents								Preferences on working time	
	Job security	High income	Opportunities for advancement	Decide time of work	Job security	High income	Opportunities for advancement	Hard work				Prefer to spend less time on the job	Prefer to spend more time on the job	
								Come home from work exhausted	Hard physical work	Stressful work	Dangerous conditions			
Australia	95	71	83	55	64	24	25	90	45	85	29	67	33	
Belgium	96	80	81	64	65	23	26	80	45	81	34	69	31	
Canada	91	82	82	60	64	34	31	86	40	85	29	78	22	
Czech Republic	94	86	57	54	51	17	14	88	48	62	32	78	22	
Denmark	81	59	41	61	74	41	23	87	48	81	29	82	18	
Finland	94	82	47	72	60	30	20	84	47	84	36	72	28	
France	92	82	77	57	51	13	12	92	52	87	33	61	39	
Germany	96	77	76	54	71	25	23	86	46	81	28	39	61	
Hungary	99	93	67	47	55	15	15	94	59	71	47	31	69	
Ireland	94	79	88	58	75	33	36	82	42	66	25	62	38	
Japan	85	78	27	52	61	24	10	74	43	72	25	74	26	
Korea	97	93	91	68	40	16	25	83	69	87	39	21	79	
Mexico	98	92	97	79	71	26	44	80	47	60	32	16	84	
New Zealand	93	70	83	61	68	30	31	84	48	78	33	71	29	
Norway	93	70	52	61	62	18	13	86	42	86	33	67	33	
Portugal	97	93	93	69	62	16	36	88	49	73	29	47	53	
Spain	97	95	88	78	69	26	24	79	51	72	37	63	37	
Sweden	93	74	49	70	65	19	21	86	51	89	33	83	17	
Switzerland	93	60	65	69	68	32	34	82	40	76	25	60	40	
United Kingdom	95	74	78	54	68	20	27	90	51	86	24	72	28	
United States	93	81	88	53	74	27	38	85	47	79	32	54	46	
OECD21	94	80	72	62	64	24	25	85	48	78	32	60	40	

Source: ISSP Work Orientation, wave III (2005).

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