Measuring job satisfaction in surveys: Bulgaria

Comparative analytical report

Questionnaire

Editorial disclaimer

This report has not been subjected to the standard Foundation editorial procedures

This Bulgarian national report is part of a comparative overview (EF/06/55/EN) of how job satisfaction is measured in national working conditions surveys based on 16 national contributions for the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO).

1. Aim and structure of the topic report questionnaire

The main objective of this topic report is to assess if and how the job satisfaction issue is dealt with in the national surveys and to bring forward some data and trends on job satisfaction. This topic report shall reveal how national surveys produce data on job satisfaction, focusing on the methodologies used and shall present available data on job satisfaction.

Thus, the questionnaire is divided into three main sections. The first section is mainly focused on the national surveys dealing with job satisfaction (priority given to the national working conditions surveys) and the methodological frame used. In this section, the national correspondents are basically asked to identify which surveys deal with job satisfaction, what questions are made, how questions are made and what definitions are used in those questions.

The second section is addressed to gather available data on general job satisfaction and job satisfaction broken down by some of its determinants. Whenever possible, trends should be identified.

Finally, the last section is focused on the analytical aspects of job satisfaction. In this section, national correspondents are asked to identify correlations between job satisfaction and other variables related to organisational practices that may be present in national surveys data reports and to identify interesting pieces of conceptual or meta analysis of job satisfaction.

2. Questions to the national correspondents

Section 1: Survey sources(s) and questions

1 – Is job satisfaction an issue addressed in your national working conditions surveys?

Yes.
Do other national surveys include any questions on job satisfaction?

No.

Please identify sources and survey methodology (also mention first year of implementation, regularity (periodicity), time frame (e.g. over the last twelve months), population, sample size and frame, data collection methodology, etc.).

Two nationwide working conditions surveys have been conducted in Bulgaria to date.

The first survey on Working conditions in Bulgaria was carried out in 2001 by the European Foundation as part of the European Working Conditions Survey for candidate countries (further referred to as EWCS).

The second survey was conducted in 2005 independently of the Foundation, but using an adapted version of the Foundation's questionnaire. The survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Working Conditions Fund. This survey was entitled the Quality of Life and Working Conditions survey, sometimes referred to by the EF as Bulgarian National Working Conditions Survey (NWCS).

Both surveys address the issue of job satisfaction only partially, because their primary concern is satisfaction with working conditions. Bulgarian respondents understand satisfaction with working conditions in a narrow sense – mainly as an evaluation of health and safety at work with an emphasis on physical working conditions.

Survey methodology (NWCS)

Territorial scope: National

Fieldwork: June 2005

First year of implementation: 2005

Editions: 2005

Next forecasted edition: not forecasted

Population: 7,761,049 Bulgarian citizens as of 31 December 2004, of which 2,922,000 people belong to working population in 2004

Sampling strategy: Representative two-stage cluster sample (100 clusters)

Sample size: 1,002 people of working population, aged 18+

Maximum sampling error (accuracy): +/- 4% at 95% confidence interval

Response rate: Initial – 95%; final – 100% (during a second round)

Interviews: Face-to-face standardised interview

Location of interviews: At home

Group discussions: 32 persons (three focus groups)

Leading researcher: Emilia Chengelova, PhD

Website: EWCO, Bulgaria: National Working Conditions Survey
2 – The questions regarding job satisfaction in national surveys are single-item questions? Or multi-facet questions? Are there ‘indirect’ job satisfaction questions in the survey, e.g. scale questions of the type ‘Your job gives you the feeling of work well done’?

Both types are implemented.

Questions about overall job satisfaction are direct and single-item. Both working conditions surveys contain only one direct question addressing specifically satisfaction with working conditions.

By contrast, questions approaching different facets of job satisfaction are usually ‘indirect’.

- Please specify how questions are formulated (i.e. the text of the questions used in the surveys) and, if applicable, identify different facets used.

Direct single-item questions:

NWCS 2005, A53: To what extent are you satisfied with the working conditions in your main job?

EWCS 2001, Q34: On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with working conditions in your main paid job?

- If possible, briefly mention the evolution in questions used in national surveys: which questions were added, which questions were removed, etc.

The second working conditions survey did not remove, but added and slightly modified some questions related to job satisfaction. The layout of the questionnaire was also different – all questions were put in tables; also shading, borders and font styles were appropriately implemented.

A) Added questions – five (four of them concern the satisfaction with work/non-work life balance):

A55: When you come home from work, are you able to converse properly with your family, or do you need some time to yourself first?

A56: Do you think your family/friends feel discommoded because of your job?

A57: Does your job allow you to give sufficient time to your close friends/relatives?

A58: Do you have needs that you can't meet because of overload at work?

D9: Are your average family monthly incomes enough to meet your basic needs (fees for electricity, water supply, phone, central heating)?

B) Modified scales:

1) scales of the question about satisfaction with working conditions:

2001, Q34 – very satisfied; 2005, A53 – completely satisfied

2) scales of Q33, 2001 and A52, 2005 (Do you think you will be able to do the same job you are doing now when you are 60 years old?)

2001, Q33 – I wouldn't want to…(spontaneously); 2005, A52 – I wouldn't want to do this job when 60.
C) Modified wording but not meaning:

1) Q17, 2001 is transformed into A26, 2005

Q17: In general, do your working hours fit in with your family or social commitments outside work?
A26: As a whole, to what extent is your working time convenient for your family and other engagements outside work?

2) Q34, 2001 is transformed into A53, 2005

Q34: On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with working conditions in your main paid job?
A53: To what extent are you satisfied with the working conditions in your main job?

- Is there a scale being used? What kind of scale?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NWCS 2005, A53</th>
<th>EWCS 2001, Q34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completely</strong> satisfied</td>
<td><strong>Very</strong> satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly satisfied</td>
<td>Fairly satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very satisfied</td>
<td>Not very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all satisfied</td>
<td>Not at all satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only the wording for the highest degree of satisfaction is changed as the 2005 survey required a more determined positive evaluation.
**Indirect questions and scales approaching different facets of job satisfaction**

**Table 2: Facets of job satisfaction indirectly traced in national working conditions surveys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet/Year</th>
<th>NWCS, 2005</th>
<th>EWCS, 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Satisfaction with income</strong>&lt;br&gt; No. of question&lt;br&gt; Wording</td>
<td>D9&lt;br&gt;Are your average family monthly incomes enough to meet your basic needs (fees for electricity, water supply, phone, central heating)?</td>
<td>extremely insufficient, fairly sufficient, completely sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Satisfaction with type of work (sustainability)</strong>&lt;br&gt; No. of question&lt;br&gt; Wording</td>
<td>A52&lt;br&gt;Do you think you will be able to do the same job you are doing now when you are 60 years old?&lt;br&gt;Yes, I think so; no, I don't think so; I wouldn't want to do this job when 60</td>
<td>Q33&lt;br&gt;Identical with A52&lt;br&gt;Yes, I think so; no, I don't think so; I wouldn't want to …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Satisfaction with working hours (part-timers)</strong>&lt;br&gt; No. of question&lt;br&gt; Wording</td>
<td>A23&lt;br&gt;If you work part-time, would you like to work more hours, less hours, the same hours</td>
<td>Q14&lt;br&gt;Identical with A23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Satisfaction with working time</strong>&lt;br&gt; No. of question</td>
<td>Questions A26 (2005) and Q17 (2001) are closely related to work/non-work life fit, but they may be regarded as relevant in this context, too (see point 5 below).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Satisfaction with work-life balance</strong>&lt;br&gt; No. of questions&lt;br&gt; Wording</td>
<td>A26, A55, A56, A57, A58&lt;br&gt;A26: As a whole, to what extent is your working time convenient for your family and other engagements outside work?&lt;br&gt;A55: When you come home from work, are you able to converse properly with your family, or do you need some time to yourself first?&lt;br&gt;Q17&lt;br&gt;In general, do your working hours fit in with your family or social commitments outside work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scales</td>
<td>A56: Do you think your family/friends feel discommoded because of your job?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A57: Does your job allow you to give sufficient time to your close friends/relatives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A58: Do you have needs that you can't meet because of overload at work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A26: Very convenient, fairly convenient, not very convenient, extremely inconvenient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A55: I don't need time to myself first - I don't feel tired; I need about half an hour; I need at least one hour; I need at least two hours; I need more than two hours; even the whole evening is not enough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A56: Yes, all the time; yes, sometimes; no such problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A57: Yes, it does – my job is not overly demanding; No, it doesn't, but I manage – though it requires an extra effort; No, it doesn't – I can't manage and my relationships suffer as a result</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A58: no time to visit theatre, cinema, concerts; no time for reading books; no time for reading specialized literature; no time for reading magazines; no, I don't have unsatisfied needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Remark:** surveys address neither directly nor indirectly satisfaction with job security, distance to work/commuting and general job satisfaction (the latter being understood as a broader concept than working conditions).

3 – *If definitions of overall job satisfaction/job satisfaction facets are used in questions in national surveys, please give them.*

No such definitions are given.

**Section 2: Survey data and trends**

4 – *Provide data, including trends if possible, on general job satisfaction.*

Sources: 1) [Quality of Life and Working Conditions survey](#), NWCS 2005; 2) First survey on [Working conditions in Bulgaria](#), EWCS 2001;

**Note:** 'Don't know' answers are not shown in most of the graphs for better graphical appearance. Usually they have relatively small values (1-2%).
Within the four-year interval between the two surveys (NWCS and EWCS), overall satisfaction with working conditions increased from 64% to 73%. The most substantial positive changes are observed at the two extremes of the scale, i.e. increased percentages for 'completely/very satisfied' and decreased percentages for 'not at all satisfied'.

Figure 1: Rate of overall satisfaction with working conditions

Sources: NWCS 2005 and EWCS 2001

Please also provide the latest data available on the following possible job satisfaction correlates:

- gender
- age (use, if possible, the Labour Force Survey age classes: 15 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64 and 65 years old or more)
- marital status
- parenting/number of children
- education
- job status (permanent/fixed-term, employee/self-employed, full/part-time)
- occupational background (current job)
- sector of employment/major industry (use, if possible, the standard NACE classification, 1 digit)

Job satisfaction correlates

Latest data: Quality of Life and Working Conditions survey (NWCS, June 2005).

Gender

There is no correlation in a statistical sense between gender and job satisfaction (V=0.083). However, there is a tendency to higher women's satisfaction as far as 70% of men and 76% of
women are satisfied. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of answers within each gender group, i.e. the basis for calculation here is each gender group =100%. Essentially, these are % of women and % of men giving certain answers about the rate of satisfaction.

**Figure 2: Satisfaction with working conditions by sex**

![Graph showing satisfaction with working conditions by sex](image)

On the whole, there is no notable difference in the opinion of males and females, except for the 'not at all satisfied' category. Nonetheless, some gender differences and related trends were traced by applying a more differentiated approach. For analytical reasons, breakdowns can be elaborated within the answer categories regarding rate of satisfaction (i.e. each answer category =100%). This type of breakdown shows that gender difference is observed at the ends of the scale: among those completely satisfied, 56% are women and 44% are men. By contrast, among those being non-satisfied at all, 59% are men and 41% are women. The reversed values by gender are easily visible in Figure 3. In this sense, the Bulgarian survey somewhat confirms the well-known gender paradox of women's higher satisfaction. At the moment it holds true for the extremes of the scale, which suggests that if the question about satisfaction were dichotomous (yes/no) the gender job satisfaction paradox would be confirmed more strongly.

**Figure 3: Gender job satisfaction paradox**

![Graph showing gender job satisfaction paradox](image)

Source: NWCS 2005
Age

It is not possible to use the LFS age classes because the survey used another groupings. Within this survey, almost all breakdowns by age bring out the group of 36-45 as most problematic, including in terms of satisfaction with working conditions. This is the generation that had to stand at most all the negative consequences of the transition crisis in its private and professional life (being 20-30 years old in 1990).

*Figure 4: Satisfaction with working conditions by age*

Source: NWCS 2005
**Marital status**

Those living separated, widowed persons and single persons express higher satisfaction. Second marriage creates essential disadvantages for satisfaction with working conditions. The correlation with marital status is much stronger than with sex and age.

*Figure 5: Satisfaction with working conditions by marital status*

Source: NWCS 2005

**Parenting/number of children**

The questionnaire does not include relevant questions.
**Education**

Correlation with education is much stronger than with sex and age, and is equal to the correlation with marital status. The more educated people are, the higher is their satisfaction with working conditions. It holds especially for those being completely satisfied, i.e. higher educational levels influence the rate of complete satisfaction but not the rate of moderate satisfaction. The proportion of those reporting to be 'fairly satisfied' is equal in all groups, except in the lowest educational group.

*Figure 6: Satisfaction with working conditions by education*

![Satisfaction with working conditions by education](image)

Source: NWCS 2005
**Job status**

The highest levels of satisfaction are expressed by self-employed with workers (86%), while people on fixed-term contracts are less satisfied (only 56% against a national average of 73%).

*Figure 7: Satisfaction with working conditions by employment status*

![Satisfaction with working conditions by employment status](image)

Source: NWCS 2005

**Part-time/full-time status**

There is no significant difference between part-time and full-time employees.

*Figure 8: Satisfaction with working conditions by part-time/full-time status*

![Satisfaction with working conditions by part-time/full-time status](image)

Source: NWCS 2005
**Occupational background (current job)**

The correlation here is moderate (ISCO categories used, ILO 1988). The highest satisfaction with working conditions is expressed by the groups of: Legislators, senior officials and managers (87%); Clerks (84%); Technicians and associated professionals (78%); and Professionals (77%). Although the total for the latter is by 1 pp lower than that of the former, I would count the group of professionals as being more satisfied than the group of technicians and associated professionals, because the share of those completely satisfied among professionals is much bigger than that in the group of technicians and associated professionals (42 and 33% respectively).

Some 83% of skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers also report high satisfaction with working conditions, but the share of the group in the sample is too small for an accurate conclusion for this particular professional category to be made.

Least satisfied appear Craft and related trades workers (56%, they also report the lowest rate of complete satisfaction - 13%); Plant and machine operators, and assemblers (57%); and Elementary occupations (62%).

*Figure 9: Satisfaction with working conditions by occupation*

Source: NWCS 2005
I would suggest to consider also the correlation with managerial/subordinate position as an important aspect of the notion 'type of work'. Moreover, this correlation is slightly stronger than that with occupation and sector. **Managerial positions** are defined as having at least one subordinate (20% reported managerial positions). Overall, managers express higher satisfaction (by 7 percentage points). A further look at the answer category 'completely satisfied' reveals a slight increase of the difference – 9 pp.

**Figure 10: Satisfaction with working conditions by managerial/subordinate position**

Source: NWCS 2005

**Sector of employment/major industry (use, if possible, the standard NACE classification, 1 digit)**

The correlation with satisfaction with working conditions is moderate (NACE classification used).

**Preliminary note:** The sectoral data need careful interpretation because the breakdown by sectors disaggregates the cases too much (too many sectors – 17) and thus in some cells only few cases remain, which may affect the reliability of correlates. This is particularly true for small sectors.

Levels of satisfaction that significantly diverge from the national average (73%) upwards are reported in: financial intermediation (90.5%); public administration and defence, compulsory social security (86.5%); wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles etc (80%); health and
social work (79%) and education (78%). There are three more sectors reporting higher levels of satisfaction but their results should be interpreted even more carefully because of their relatively scarce appearance in the sample, which suggests a dubious representativeness for these sectors. I refer to the following sectors: real estate, renting and business activities (100%, i.e. all reported answers are only “completely and fairly satisfied”); activities of households (91%) and hotels and restaurants (79%).

Significant negative divergence from the average is observed in the following industries: mining and quarrying (56.5%); transport, storage and communication (59%); manufacturing (61%) and construction (64%). The remainder of sectors shows results close to the average.

Section 3: Secondary analysis of survey data on job satisfaction

5 – Is there any assessment of the relationship between job satisfaction and other variables related to organisational practices/independent work-related practices in national survey data analysis/reports? Briefly mention the main findings on the cross-tabulation between the following factors and job satisfaction:

- Job autonomy
- Working time and work-life balance issues
- Worker participation / involvement

Note: In case you do not have any available information on the cross-tabulations referred to above, please try to provide data on the relationship between the following factors and job satisfaction: work-related stress and income/salary.

There are no such assessments, but the information needed for cross-tabulations is available, so the national correspondent was able to provide that for the purposes of this topic report.

Job autonomy

The opportunity to alternate different aspects of the work process has a moderate correlation with overall job satisfaction. It is weaker than the correlation with income, work-life fit and fatigue, but stronger compared to education, marital and employment status. Facets of autonomy are ranked by level of influence on satisfaction with working conditions as follows: order of tasks, work methods, opportunity to include new tasks, work pace and (with much weaker power) volume of work.

Working hours

The length of working hours provides one of the strongest correlations with job satisfaction. The proportion of people working long hours has not changed as compared with 2001. Some 31% still work more than 45 hours a week and one in two works at least 2 Saturdays monthly. As a result, the rate of satisfaction with working time/work-life fit has not changed either (except a decrease in the proportion of those not at all satisfied). Overall fatigue remains the most common work-related outcome ranked first in 2005 (22%) and 2001 (51%).
Overall, standard working hours (30-39 and 40-44) provide highest rates of satisfaction (78%). Long working hours (more than 45) significantly decrease the share of satisfied employees by about 12 pp on average (from 70-78% to 60-64%) and increase dissatisfaction almost twice (from 19-20% to 35-39%).

The group working 21-29 hours diverges strongly and positively from all others because it comprises only women. This fact may be considered as another evidence confirming indirectly the gender job satisfaction paradox commented previously in relation to Figure 3.

**Work/non-work life balance**

According to the strength of correlation this issue ranked 2nd in the survey (after income). Among those reporting a very good balance, 85% are also satisfied with working conditions. Among the employees reporting a 'not very good/not at all good fit', the proportion of those satisfied with working conditions falls to 53% in both groups (i.e., there is a drastic drop of overall satisfaction by 32 percentage points). Conversely, a very good balance corresponds to only 13% dissatisfied, whereas lack of balance yields 46% dissatisfied with working conditions. The 'fairly good fit' is associated with satisfaction of 75% of respondents (close to national average, 73%).
Worker participation/involvement

Similar to autonomy, correlations here are moderate. Currently, there is little genuine participation by workers in decision-making. In most cases discussions involve only salaried employees and rarely result in involvement of medium- and top-company management. The consequence is that there is no great difference between those discussing problems with colleagues and those not discussing. Complaining to each other does not raise much the rate of satisfaction since the decision-makers are not largely involved in the process. On the whole, however, the opportunity to comment with any other people raises somewhat the level of job satisfaction.

Source: NWCS 2005

(For further details please consult the Annex to the present report, and Work-life balance in Bulgaria).
6 – Please answer one of the following questions (6a, 6b or 6c - 500 words maximum):

6a – Are there any examples of interesting conceptual or meta-analysis of job satisfaction per se – interpretative approaches to job satisfaction? Please summarise the main findings.

We have no such examples.

6b – Are there any examples of interesting survey approaches to quantifying and measuring job satisfaction – methodological aspects of capturing job satisfaction data in surveys? Please summarise the main findings.

Yes.

Although the recent survey adopted an existing questionnaire developed previously by the EF, the researchers found room for methodological improvements in two areas: complementary focus groups and new questions.

Focus groups' examples

- Positive

'I am doing what I have always wanted to do – I have a job in a tourist agency. My bosses are good, I have a computer. The room is twice bigger than this one. We are 5 people. We have a staff room and a small kitchen' (office manager).

- Negative

'I have no free time, no day off. I work permanently at two jobs plus additional work for home….' (woman, office servant)

'…working time…forget it. It is until 2 pm, but we usually leave at 5-5.30 pm' (man, doctor).
New questions

Among the five added questions, three seem interesting:

**A55:** When you come home from work, are you able to converse properly with your family, or do you need some time to yourself first?

**A56:** Do you think your family/friends feel discommoded because of your job?

**D9:** Are your average family monthly incomes enough to meet your basic needs (fees for electricity, water supply, phone, central heating)?

The scales are given in Table 2 above; the findings regarding A55 and A56 are available at EWCO website (news updates 2005); the findings for D9 are supplied in the Annex.

6c – Is there any interesting piece of analysis of job satisfaction and its correlations? Please summarise the main research findings (preferably in relation to one of the job satisfaction correlations identified in 5).

We have no such examples.

Commentary

From a methodological viewpoint, the preferred way of questioning about overall satisfaction with working conditions is single-item and direct. By contrast, the facets of job satisfaction are covered by sets of indirect questions. Compared with the EF survey of 2001, the recent national survey placed greater emphasis on work/non-work life balance due to the insistence of Mr. Donev, who was in charge of the survey on behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. His experience and intuition about the sources of satisfaction in Bulgaria proved of great help at the stage of survey design, because work-life balance ranked 2nd after income. Mr. Donev also formulated the illuminating question A55.

The recent data available (NWCS, 2005) gives grounds for some conclusions about determinants of satisfaction with working conditions (based on the ranking of Cramer's coefficient value, V).

On the whole, the standard independent variables (i.e. factors) like gender and age do not tell much about the sources of satisfaction with working conditions in Bulgaria. Of course, some specific gender and age differences exist, but on the whole the correlations are weak because their impact is mediated by other variables. Other background variables like education, occupation and sector of activity are not among the strongest determinants, either, although their impact is notably more tangible than that of age and sex.

**Ranking of correlates regarding satisfaction with working conditions (2005 indicators and relevant questions)**

1. Individual earnings (D8 and D9)
2. Family/friends discommoded because of job (A56)
3. a. Time for family/friends (A57)  
   b. Overall work-life fit (A26)
4. Overall fatigue/ time needed to recover after work (A45.13 and A55).
5. Managerial/subordinate position (A6)
Conclusion

The grouping of these variables (2, 3a and 3b sub-indicators belong to work-life fit) indicates that the three most significant determinants of satisfaction with working conditions in Bulgaria are:

Table 3: Determinants of satisfaction with working conditions (2005)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>INCOME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>WORK-LIFE BALANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>FATIGUE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: these are composite variables

This configuration of main determinants explains why regular omnibus surveys ask only about incomes and do not cover other facets of job satisfaction. It also justifies inserting a question about income adequacy in the recent national survey in order to capture an indicator which was missing in the earlier EF survey. Low incomes in the country and related poor living standards are well captured by other surveys of the European Foundation – for example, by the First European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS, 2003). There is no doubt that Bulgarian economic development joined the trajectory of low wage economies with related consequences in terms of 'working poor'.

The final ranking of the composite variables underlines the significance of the extrinsic considerations influencing the satisfaction with working conditions. Probably the same factors determine the rate of overall job satisfaction, too, but working conditions surveys do not supply sufficient range of indicators for an explicit conclusion. Indeed, the subject of this topic report – job satisfaction – is not measured entirely in Bulgarian surveys.

Readers should be reminded that working conditions are perceived by Bulgarian respondents as being health and safety at work with an emphasis on physical working environment. Therefore, the reported levels of satisfaction with working conditions should be considered strictly in this sense, i.e. as part of an overall job satisfaction. Unfortunately, at the moment this facet is not of primary importance for most employees. In short, if we measure at the moment the rate of overall job satisfaction by including indicators of satisfaction with other facets of job quality like salary, job security, workers' rights, etc., the overall job satisfaction will be much lower as compared to the satisfaction with working conditions. In other words, the fact that 73% of working population is satisfied with working conditions does not mean that the share of those satisfied with their jobs will be so high.

(For more data and analysis, please consult the annex)
Data sources:
Quality of Life and Working Conditions survey, NWCS 2005
First survey on Working conditions in Bulgaria, EWCS 2001

Analytical sources:
Not used – the present analysis is prepared by the national correspondent specifically for this topic report.

Author: Rumyana Gladicheva
Annex: Indirect multi-facet measurement of job satisfaction
(data and methodological pitfalls)

Some facets of job satisfaction measured indirectly in the Bulgarian surveys give positive incentives to methodological reflection. Therefore, this annex has elements of methodological and meta-analysis of the oppositions (dilemmas): 'intrinsic – extrinsic' considerations of job satisfaction, 'single-item – multi-facet' questions and 'direct – indirect' questioning. The annex will try to contribute to the analysis of some methodological inadequacies identified by other researchers active in this area.

More data on some strong correlates

On the one hand, the recent survey findings underline the notable impact of some indirectly measured indicators on the rate of satisfaction with working conditions. For example, issues like satisfaction with salary/income (1st ranked influencing factor) and overall satisfaction with work-life balance (ranking 2nd) can't be neglected, although they are measured indirectly. On the other, the surveys provide evidence, which highlights some controversies between the facets and the overall rate of satisfaction. Moreover, the data related to these controversies exemplify some methodological pitfalls.

Data sources used in the annex:

1) Quality of Life and Working Conditions survey, NWCS 2005;
2) First survey on Working conditions in Bulgaria, EWCS 2001;
3) Nationwide omnibus survey, carried out by Sova Harris™, 2005

Satisfaction with working time and work-life balance

Satisfaction with working time is treated in close relation to work/non-work life fit, so the trends may be regarded as relevant in both contexts. The work/non-work life balance manifests one of the strongest correlates in the survey (ranking 2nd after income). The 2005’s data do not show any change of the situation regarding satisfaction with working hours/work-life fit, except a decrease in proportion of those not at all satisfied with the balance (by five percentage points). Lack of change is not surprising given that the share of people working long hours has not changed either (31% of working population still work more than 45 hours).

In general, the importance of work-life balance revealed in the survey was not a surprise for Bulgarian researchers from another perspective. A historically determined and still valid typical national socio-cultural feature of Bulgarians is that they are more committed to family and home than to the public sphere of work. As the Bulgarian expert in public opinion surveys Virginia Vergova often says Bulgarians are more likely to believe that the job may interfere with private life than vice-versa. It is also very well known that Bulgarians are more inclined to look for a job located near their house than to look for a house near a better job. These considerations are very important from the viewpoint of policy-making as they underline some deeply embedded and nationally determined attitudes regarding the ranking of basic needs and values.
Satisfaction with part-time work

Such practices as atypical work arrangements are new to Bulgaria. They are not widespread and the findings point out some of the reasons for that. The survey final conclusions state that long working hours, related fatigue and lack of work-life fit are currently among the biggest problems. If so, one can conclude that part-time jobs could be a relevant alternative but at the moment they are not and the data confirm this. Part-time work is not much deployed in Bulgaria, and only 6% of the workforce made use of this option in 2005 compared with 10% in 2001. The decline itself indicates some general dissatisfaction with part-time work, mainly because it is not voluntary but imposed by a lack of full-time options. Currently, more than one third of part-time workers would like to work more hours. It is because of poor remuneration per hour being compensated by working more hours. In theoretical sources it is known as 'substitution effect' meaning that people substitute leisure time for working time. So, the key point here is low income not allowing people to switch to part-time jobs in order to fit better work and non-work life and to decrease the level of overall fatigue and stress.

On the whole, after a period of 'getting acquainted' with this form of flexibility (25% don't know answers in 2001), the group of part-timers seems to be adjusted and half of them feel satisfied (50% want to work the same hours in 2005).
Methodological inadequacies and comments

Some methodological inadequacies (mainly single-item questioning) have led to the collection of controversial data that appear difficult to interpret.

Satisfaction with income/salary

The 2001 survey does not ask about satisfaction with income/salary. Yet, the 2005 survey does that (question D9) and reveals that incomes are: extremely insufficient to meet basic needs for 47% of employed people; fairly sufficient for basic needs according to 45% of respondents, and they are completely sufficient for 8% (the latter is compliant with the share of self-employed, 9%).

Note: Pay attention that the question asks about sufficiency of incomes to meet only basic needs. Basic needs are defined in the questionnaire as electricity, water supply, phone and central heating (food and clothing are not listed).

In case of indirect questioning the researcher and not the respondent makes the conclusion about the rate of satisfaction by creating new scale of interpretation. For example, the answer 'extremely insufficient incomes' is considered equivalent to 'extremely dissatisfied' with salary.

If interpreting data in terms of satisfaction with salary (as if we ask 'Are you satisfied with earnings?'), the situation is as follows:
Figure 16: Satisfaction with earnings indirectly measured

Source: NWCS 2005

These data are essentially compliant with proportions derived from other national surveys (Figure 17). It gives grounds to conclude that this extrinsic facet of job satisfaction is properly measured in the recent working conditions survey.

Figure 17: Which of the following statements holds for you?

Source: Nationwide omnibus survey of Sova Harris™, 2005 (Well being and income module)

In addition, relevant questions in both surveys address only basic needs. However, people in 21st century have developed also some other needs than the basic ones listed – to spend summer holiday on sea cost, to buy a computer, new fridge or car, etc. It means that the real satisfaction with salary is actually lower than the indicated above. In fact, only between 5 and 8% of working population (mainly self-employed with or without workers) may be regarded as satisfied with their incomes.

Here the gap between the reported overall satisfaction with working conditions (73%, Figure 1 in the report) and satisfaction with income is what calls for attention. Discrepancies are drastic: 30% are completely satisfied with working conditions (mostly intrinsic components) against only 8% completely satisfied with salary (a basic extrinsic component). Not at all satisfied with working
conditions are only 8% compared with 47% extremely dissatisfied with wages. This situation needs more reflection from the perspective of 'intrinsic – extrinsic' considerations of job satisfaction. The medium of the scale (fairly satisfied) is stable: 44% are fairly satisfied with incomes and exactly the same share are fairly satisfied with working conditions.

**Methodological remark 1: 'intrinsic – extrinsic' components/considerations of job satisfaction**

The discrepancies mentioned should be analysed in depth, because Bulgarian data prove the strongest correlation precisely between satisfaction with working conditions and salary. The increase in satisfaction with salary correlates positively with increase in satisfaction with working conditions, i.e. among those completely satisfied with wages, 45% report complete satisfaction with working conditions, while among extremely dissatisfied with wages half as many people (21%) report complete satisfaction with working conditions.

*Figure 18: Satisfaction with income and satisfaction with working conditions*

![Graph showing satisfaction with income and working conditions](image)

Source: NWCS 2005

Regarding the contradiction 'intrinsic – extrinsic' components of job satisfaction, the interesting groups are (Figure 18):

- **First group**: those 21% being extremely dissatisfied with wages (extrinsic, job) and at the same time completely satisfied with working conditions (intrinsic, work). Examples for such an internally stratified group in Bulgaria may be: university teachers, low- and medium-level civil servants, some office workers.

- **Second group**: those 47% being extremely dissatisfied with wages and at the same time fairly satisfied with working conditions (like school teachers, who took part in a national strike in December 2005 over payment and lack of basic facilities in schools).

- **Third group**: those 5% being completely satisfied with wages (extrinsic) and at the same time not at all satisfied with working conditions (intrinsic).
• Forth group: those 13% being completely satisfied with wages and at the same time not very satisfied with working conditions.

So, in total, we have 68% extremely dissatisfied with wages but reporting satisfaction with working conditions and 18% completely satisfied with wages but not satisfied with working conditions. Examples for the latter – industrialized sectors with poor/hazardous working conditions compensated by higher salaries.

**Conclusion**

At the moment payment is perceived as a bigger work-related problem than working conditions, which is consistent with some other sources dealing with employees' perceptions. For example, only 1% of complaints submitted to the General Labour Inspectorate addresses working conditions while most of them concern payment. It means that at the moment the reported high satisfaction with working conditions (73%) has not much to do with an overall job satisfaction if currently measured, because working conditions appear at best of secondary importance for the employees. It is important for a comparative topic report on job satisfaction to interpret carefully data by distinguishing between job satisfaction (indeed not investigated completely in Bulgarian surveys) and satisfaction with working conditions.

**Methodological remark 2: 'single-item / multi-facet' questioning**

The abovementioned contradictions mean that some of the respondents made the distinction between 'intrinsic – extrinsic' components (as Michael Rose suggests). The problem is that there is no way to identify what part made and what did not make this distinction by the single-item questioning. That is why we can't draw accurate conclusions. These effects of illogical relationships between the part (facets) and the whole (completeness) can be called 'job satisfaction inconsistency'. Probably, the single-item question on satisfaction with working conditions at best measured an estimation of working environment and some intrinsic components (work itself, work contents, autonomy, etc.) or it is unknown what it actually measured, at worst. Sub-indicators, even being indirectly asked (multi-facet questions) certainly measured properly extrinsic components (job, and its components like salary). Taking into account all the considerations regarding 'intrinsic – extrinsic' facets and 'payment – job satisfaction' in particular, I would join the authors skeptical about the single-item questioning as it tends to mix essentially different categories of indicators.

What I am saying is that (1) intrinsic and extrinsic indicators must be clearly separated and (2) multi-facet questions are more than necessary.

By synthesizing a set of multi-facet questions (indirect or direct), the state of overall job satisfaction may be reconstructed. However, in case of multi-facet questioning the final general 'diagnosis' is left to the researcher, which may not coincide with the respondent's opinion. It is so because the respondent’s subjective perception does not always coincide with the conclusion of the researcher based on more objective multi-facet indicators. Some authors point out the subjective nature of the notion of overall job satisfaction, which is not a problem in itself as people have the right to subjective assessment. Thus, it is important enough to be investigated but not enough from the point of view of policy making, because in my view people make decisions about their jobs on objective considerations and not always based on subjective attitudes (even their own). Overall job satisfaction is often measured as a socio-psychological attitude but as is well-known, general attitudes (being quite abstract) do not always indicate readiness for immediate action in some direction as action may depend on concrete circumstances. That is why
it gives no reliable background for policy makers. My own research experience shows that the multi-facet approach (especially the indirect one) indicates significantly lower rates of job satisfaction compared to direct single-item questioning about overall satisfaction. In other words, respondents probably add some subjective 'added value' to the overall satisfaction measured by a single indicator, being grateful to have a job at all (compared to being unemployed) or because they like certain work content (teaching, painting, driving). As a result, the objective assessment of researchers based on multi-facet indicators appears lower and it will be better to know the size of this gap and its determinants.

More puzzles: some sub-sectoral correlates

The NWCS 2005 used two different kinds of sectoral grouping and each of them serves different knowledge needs. The first one is a standard NACE breakdown already reported under the relevant heading of the topic report. From the viewpoint of representativeness this one is more reliable.

However, a second grouping, which addresses not only the large sectors, but also particular sub-sectors was also used. For example, the sector entitled in NACE 'Transport, storage and communication' (I) was split because of the completely different situation in transport (much below the country average) as compared with telecommunications (above the average). In addition, for the purposes of a national policy-making some subsectors may be of particular interest to the state and possible improvement of working conditions. Moreover, at the time of the survey fieldwork a basic concern of policy-makers in Bulgaria was the issue of the compensation system for poor working conditions (how to remove this system without inducing industrial conflicts). Thus, both data (sectoral and subsectoral) are valid but the representativeness of the second one (by subsectors) may be diminished. It is so because subsectors supply even smaller number of cases for processing. Nonetheless, this information for some specific subsectors was useful for policy-makers because the general trends appeared close to the statistical data from other sources.

The data about subsectors with specific state of working conditions show that the levels of satisfaction that significantly diverge from the national average (73%) upwards are reported in: pharmaceutical industry, telecommunications, manufacture of basic metals, electricity, healthcare and manufacture of precious and non-ferrous metals. Income in all these subsectors notably exceeds the country average.

Significant negative divergence from the average is observed in the following sub-industries: textile and clothing (34%), wood processing/furniture (47%) and transport (52%). In this group hazardous and/or poor working conditions are combined with remuneration which is lower than the country average. A rate of satisfaction standing below the country average is found also in glass, ceramic and porcelain (53%), and chemicals (59%), but in both subsectors salaries exceed the country average.

Notice: statistical data about sectoral/subsectoral salaries in Bulgaria are available at:

The breakdown by subsectors may give sufficient material for more methodological reflection on 'intrinsic – extrinsic' dimensions of job satisfaction and way of questioning. How did it happen that precisely the subsectors that have the poorest and most hazardous working conditions reported levels of satisfaction with working conditions that are even higher than the national average? The answer is simple: because of the sufficient remuneration in these sectors and
(probably) lower expectations. The effect of lower expectations is not an exception, as observed in surveys throughout the world. It is also similar to the gender job satisfaction paradox.

However, the subsectoral correlate is an instance of a methodological puzzle from another viewpoint: what do researchers mean when asking 'Are you satisfied with working conditions' and what do respondents mean when answering this question? In the sectors with obviously poor working conditions the latter are probably perceived as something given (even though they are poor) and respondents have actually answered the question of how they are compensated for these poor conditions via payment etc.

- Legend for Figure 19 (although this breakdown does not use NACE classification the relevant NACE codes are given):
  1. Metallurgy – basic metals (DJ 27.1, 27.2, 27.3)
  2. Telecommunications (I 64)
  3. Chemicals (DF; DG except DG24.2, 24.4; DH)
  4. Glass, ceramic and porcelain (DI)
  5. Wood processing and furniture (DD, DN36)
  6. Metallurgy – precious and non-ferrous metals (DJ 27.4)
  7. Textile and clothing (DB)
  8. Electrical and optical equipment (DL)
  9. Construction (F)
  10. Manufacturing (mainly C, DA, DJ28, DK, DM, DN37, etc)
  11. Electricity (E 40.1)
  12. Healthcare (part of N)
  13. Transport (I 60-63)
  14. Pharmaceutical industry (DG 24.2, 24.4)

**Figure 19: Satisfaction with working conditions in specific sub-sectors**
(Note: because of possible deterioration of the representativeness regarding sub-sectoral breakdown I would advise to consider data with caution)

Source: NWCS 2005
The description of the situation in some sectors may be complemented by data from other surveys. For example, a company survey in the Banking sector (2004) reveals a prevalence of positive degrees of satisfaction, particularly moderate ones – from the $5^{th}$ to the $8^{th}$ notch on a scale from 1 ('not at all satisfied') to 10 ('completely satisfied'). The highest concentration hits exactly the centre of the scale (5$^{th}$ and 6$^{th}$), i.e. the transition points from negative to positive evaluation. The total is closer to women's assessment because women prevail in the surveyed population (79%). Interestingly, female banking employees do not confirm the gender satisfaction paradox. Gender difference is observed in the 5$^{th}$ and 7$^{th}$ degrees of satisfaction, in that women are less satisfied.

![Figure 20: Satisfaction with working conditions (banking employees)](image)

Source: Banking sector company survey 2004; 1,023 employees interviewed

**Methodological remark 3: 'direct – indirect' questioning**

Both single-item and multi-facet indirect questions do not contain the word 'satisfaction' and are not subject to direct evaluation by the respondent (i.e. How satisfied are you with your …?). Nonetheless, indirect questions are probably better indicators because of their potential to reveal some unconscious attitudes of the respondents previously not considered even by themselves. I will try to develop this point on the example of sustainability of work by showing how satisfaction with type of work (intrinsic) may be indirectly measured through an aspect of sustainability of work.

Given the wording of the response categories used in the survey question on sustainability of work, this too may have some value as an indicator of overall satisfaction with the nature of work currently performed. The relevant answer category here is 'I wouldn't want to do this job when 60', which suggests certain dissatisfaction with current work. The share of people expressing such a negative attitude has doubled from 2001 to 2005.
The data show that some 17% of the respondents are essentially dissatisfied with the nature of work, i.e. they don't like what they are currently doing (contents of work, occupation). It may not have much to do with concrete working environment, payment, job security etc. as the latter may be of good quality. This purely intrinsic aspect has to be methodologically isolated from some other intrinsic components, too (from work organization for example).

The answer 'I wouldn't want to do this job when 60' is quite inspiring because its idea may be used as a backbone for creation of the question: 'Would you like to do this job/work when 60'? Scales may be different, but the indicator is valuable. Such an indirect question could measure perfectly the general evaluation of work itself and in this sense it is better to use 'work' instead of 'job' in the question's wording.

**Methodological conclusion**

The rate of satisfaction with working conditions is quite high given that on the whole the quality of work in Bulgaria (objectively measured) is poor. The rates of satisfaction with some extrinsic facets are much lower than the general evaluation of working conditions and may be more representative of the real overall situation.

In my opinion, the single-item question should be used as a controlling question to the multi-facet questions, just to indicate the added abstract value of a job/work itself (the gap between the expert's and the respondent's assessment; intrinsic and extrinsic considerations). In short, **both types of questioning should be implemented only in parallel**. It is also important to provide cross-checks between questions. For example, in order to confirm the main sources of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with present job, a multi-facet question like this may be asked:

'Under what conditions would you leave your present job?'
(scale: I would not leave under any conditions; on the condition of … (better salary, better physical working conditions/facilities, better bosses, better colleagues, better treatment, more secure employment contract, etc). It is again an indirect question about the topic at hand.

On the whole, methodologically, I would give priority to **indirect multi-facet questions**. Initially such an approach may look more difficult but it is not at all as compared with difficulties to interpret data from a single-item question and its correlates. Moreover, final results will be more worthwhile and will compensate for the previous researchers' brainstorming.

**Author: Rumyana Gladicheva**