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WELL-BEING
AND HEALTH
AT WORK

N° 22 NEWS FROM THE
QUALITY OF WORK INDEX



MANY EMPLOYEES IN LUXEMBOURG WANT
TO REDUCE THEIR CONTRACTUAL
WORKING HOURS.

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This newsletter aims to illustrate how the number of weekly working hours desired by employees and the difference between desired weekly working hours and contractual weekly working hours have developed in Luxembourg in recent years. It is apparent that the percentage of employees who would like to work less increased significantly between 2018 and 2021 (from 32,8 % to 43,9 %). Those employees who would like to work less per week would like to work around 8 hours less on average. However, such changes differ depending

on employee groups. Male employees would like to work longer hours compared to female employees. When set off by age, it is mainly the oldest employees who on average would like to have the shortest working week. Persons who would like to work fewer hours also tend to report worse working conditions compared to workers whose desired working hours match their contractual working hours. Workers who would like to work less per week also report lower levels of well-being.

1. Seeking to reduce working hours

For some years now, the topic of reduced working time has been taken up again increasingly in various European countries (De Spiegelaere & Piasna, 2017; Gilmore, 2019; Haraldsson & Kellam, 2021) and is also back on the political agenda in Luxembourg. The main benefits of reduced working time cited include better quality of life for workers (Persson et al., 2022). In terms of society as a whole, a reduction in working hours could also have advantages for the environment, although data is still lacking here in order to be able to draw clear conclusions (Antal et al., 2021). A reduction in working hours could even have a positive effect on the unemployment rate and economic performance (Cárdenas & Villanueva, 2021).

Calls for a reduction in working hours are primarily justified by the increase in economic output. In 1930, John Maynard Keynes predicted that within 100 years (i.e., in 2030) the working week would amount to only 15 hours (Maurer & Sischnka, 2015). In fact, Western industrialised nations have experienced various forms of reductions in working hours over the last 150 years. Not only has the number of working hours per week been significantly reduced, but the number of working days per week has also decreased (from six to five) (De Spiegelaere & Piasna, 2017). However, it should be noted that this trend has abated, as working hours have

barely or not at all declined in many European countries over the last decades, and in some countries a rise in the number of working hours has even been observed. On the other hand, working hours are still broken down very differently over different occupational groups.

This newsletter seeks to contribute to the debate on reducing working time. It analyses how the desired weekly working time as well as the difference between desired weekly working time and contractual weekly working time (from now on only working time) of Luxembourgish employees has changed over time. In a further step, we examine how possible differences between desired and actual working time are related to various dimensions of work quality, quality of employment and well-being.

Here, data from the Quality of Work Survey (QoW; waves 2018-2021; Sischnka & Steffgen, 2021a; Steffgen et al., 2020) - an annual representative survey of workers from Luxembourg - is used (for details see the box titled: Method, p. 10). The results of the 2020 and 2021 QoW surveys must be interpreted against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a massive impact on the world of work (Beine et al., 2020; Béland et al., 2020; Eurofound, 2020; Sischnka & Steffgen, 2021b).

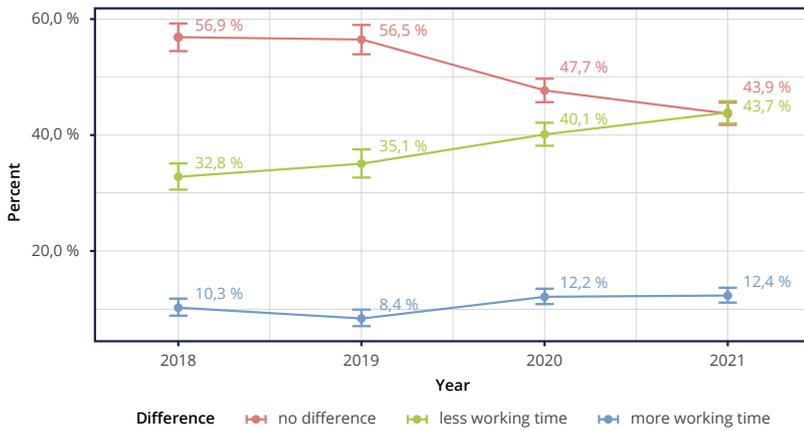
2. Changes in desired working time

Figure 1 shows trends for employees with differences between desired and contractual working hours from 2018 to 2021. It confirms that the percentage of employees who would like to work less than their current contractually agreed weekly working hours has risen steadily since 2018. The percentage of workers who would like to work more

than their current contracted hours per week has increased only slightly since 2019. Further analysis shows that workers who would like to work less would like to work on average around 31,7 hours per week (2021). This corresponds to a difference of 7,6 hours per week from contractual working times for 2021.

In this publication, only the masculine generic is used for the purpose of clarifying the text. It refers to any gender identity and thus includes both female and male persons, transgender persons as well as persons who do not feel they belong to either gender or persons who feel they belong to both genders.

Figure 1: Change in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working times



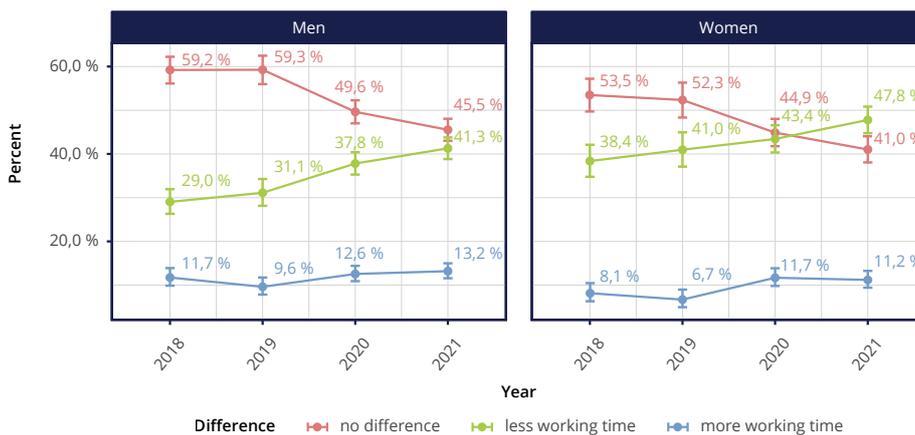
Note: QoW 2018-2021 data; percentages with 95 % confidence interval.

3. Changes in desired working hours by demographics

Figure 2 illustrates percentages of employees with differences between desired and contractual working time set off by gender. The percentage of those who would like to work fewer hours per week is growing among both male and

female employees. For 2021, employees who would like to work less reported desired working times of 32 hours on average, while female employees who would like to work less reported desired working times of 31 hours on average.

Figure 2: Change in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working time by gender

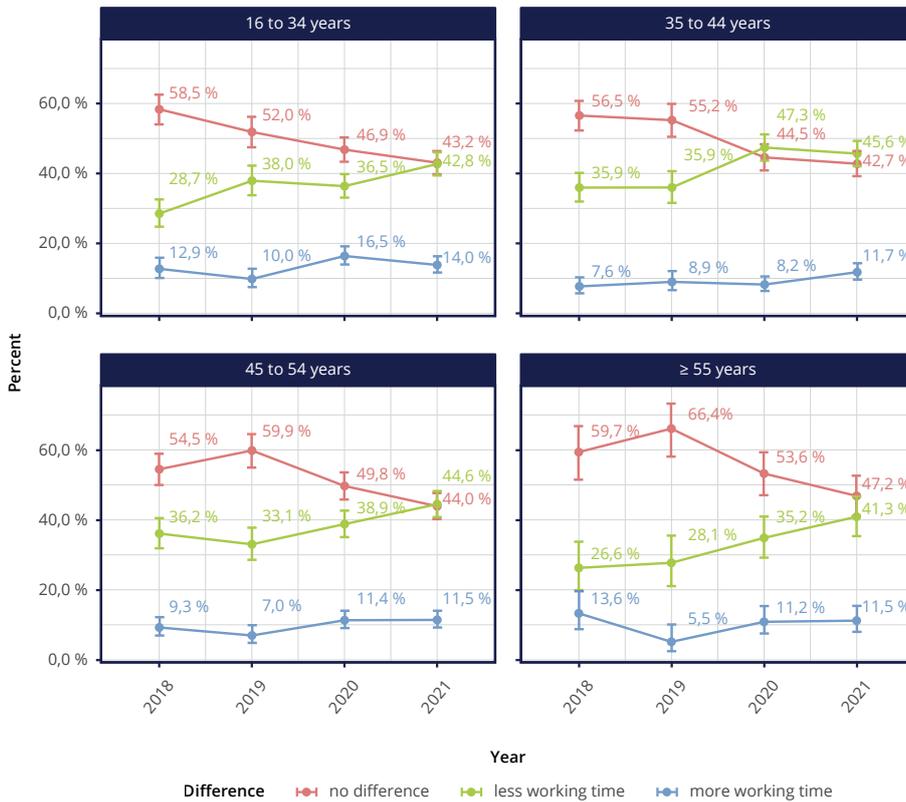


Note: QoW 2018-2021 data; percentages with 95 % confidence interval.

Figure 3 shows changes in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working hours set off by age. Between 2018 and 2021, the percentage of those who would like to work less increased in all age groups, while the percentage of those whose desired working hours match their contractual working hours decreased in all

age groups. However, the age groups differ with regard to the number of working hours desired per week. The oldest employees consistently report the lowest number of working hours desired per week over time. Differences between the number of working hours they desired and their contractual working hours are also the highest.

Figure 3: Change in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working time by age

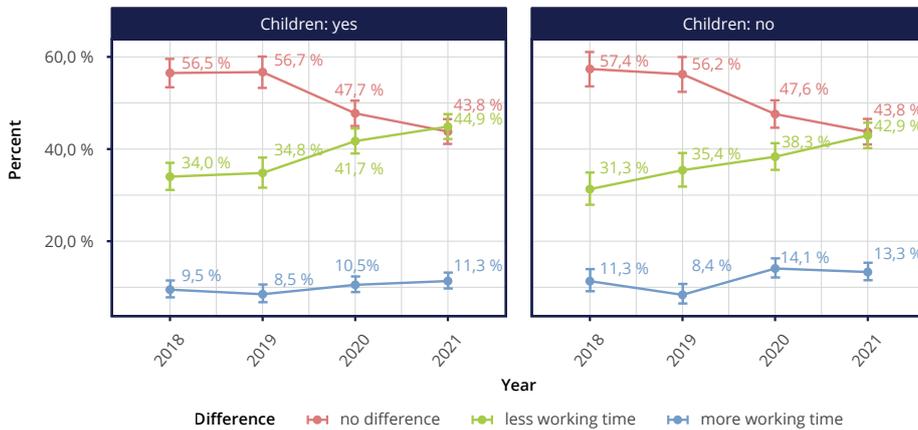


Note: QoW 2018-2021 data; percentages with 95 % confidence interval.

Figure 4 shows changes in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working hours, set off by whether or not they have children. For both groups, the percentage of those who would like to work less increases over time.

However, employees with children consistently indicate a wish for fewer working hours per week over time.

Figure 4: Changes to percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working time according to whether they have children



Note: QoW 2018-2021 data; percentages with 95 % confidence interval.

4. Changes in desired working time depending on occupational characteristics

Figure 5 shows changes in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working time, set off against work volumes. Among full-time employees, the percentage of those who would like to work less is constantly higher and also grows more strongly compared to part-time employees. Over time, part-time workers who would like to

work less consistently reported wishing to work lower numbers of hours per week (between 23 and 25 hours per week for a given period) compared to full-time workers (between 31 and 32 hours per week for a given period). Full-time workers tend to exhibit a greater difference between numbers of working hours desired and contractual working hours.

Figure 5: Changes in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working time by work volumes

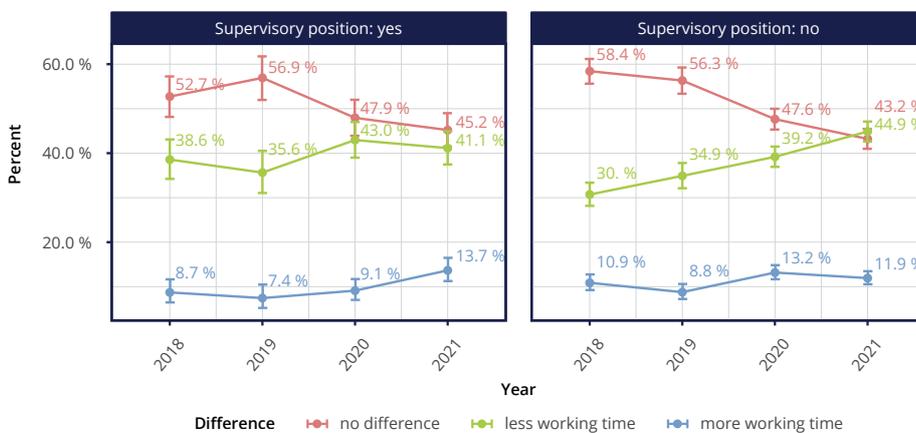


Note: QoW 2018-2021 data; percentages with 95 % confidence interval.

Figure 6 shows changes in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working hours set off by their supervisory status. While the percentage of those who would like to work fewer hours is consistently higher among employees in a supervisory position between 2018 and 2020 compared to employees not in a supervi-

sory position, the percentage of this group increases more significantly among employees not in a supervisory position. Employees in a managerial position tend to report wanting a higher number of working hours per week compared to employees not in a managerial position.

Figure 6: Changes in the percentage of employees with differences between desired and contractual working time by their supervisory status



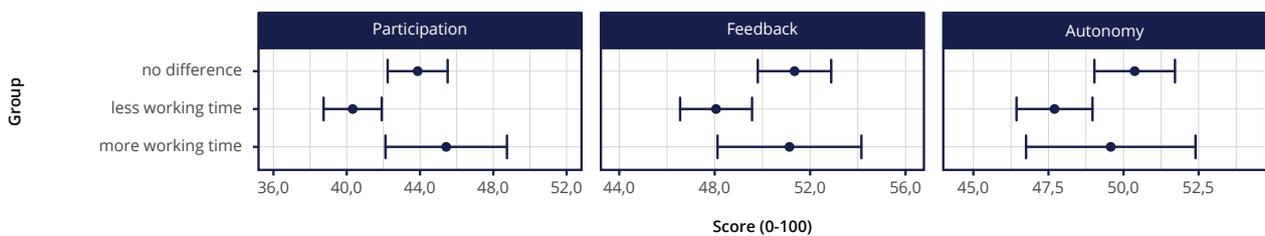
Note: QoW 2018-2021 data; percentages with 95 % confidence interval.

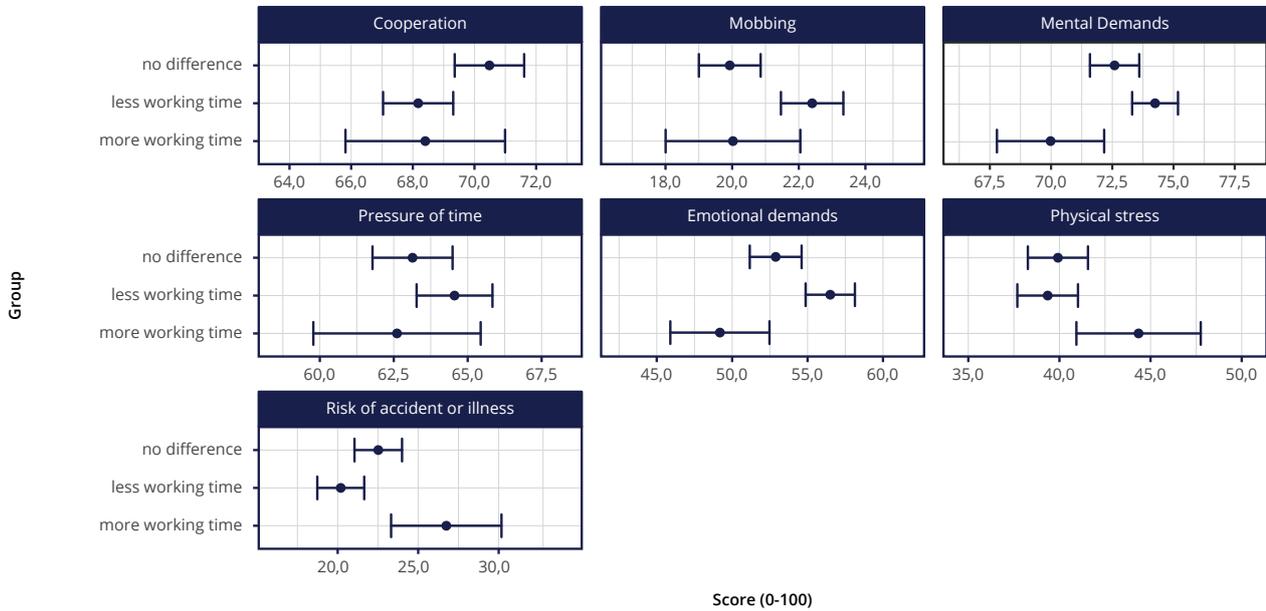
5. Relationship of differences between desired and contractual working time and quality of work

Figure 7 shows the relationship between desired and contractual working time differences and various aspects of work quality. Workers who would like to work less tend to report much worse working conditions (except regarding physical stress and risk of accidents), compared to workers with no differences between desired and contractual wor-

king hours and those who would like to work more. Accordingly, workers who would like to work less report lower levels of participation, feedback, autonomy and cooperation compared to workers without differences between desired and contractual working hours.

Figure 7: Relationship between quality of work and the differences between desired and contractual working times





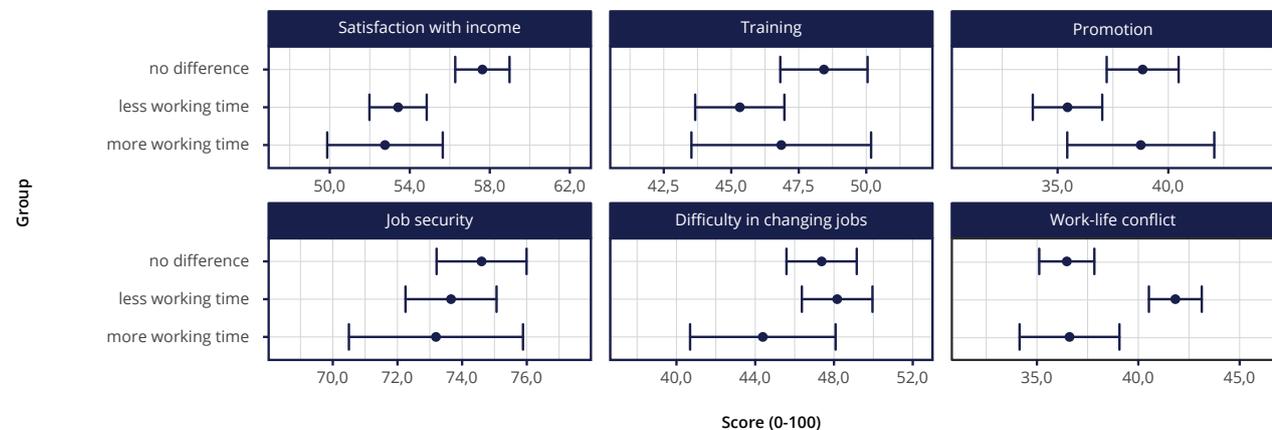
Note: QoW 2021 data; mean values of scales ranging from 0 to 100 with 95 % confidence interval.

6. Relationship of differences between desired and contractual working time and quality of employment

Figure 8 shows the relationship between desired and contractual working time differences and various aspects of quality of employment. Again, workers who would like to work less tend to report much worse conditions (except regarding

job security), compared to workers who have no differences between desired working hours and contractual working hours and those who would like to work more. In particular, work-life conflicts are especially pronounced in this group.

Figure 8: Differences between desired and contractual working time and quality of employment



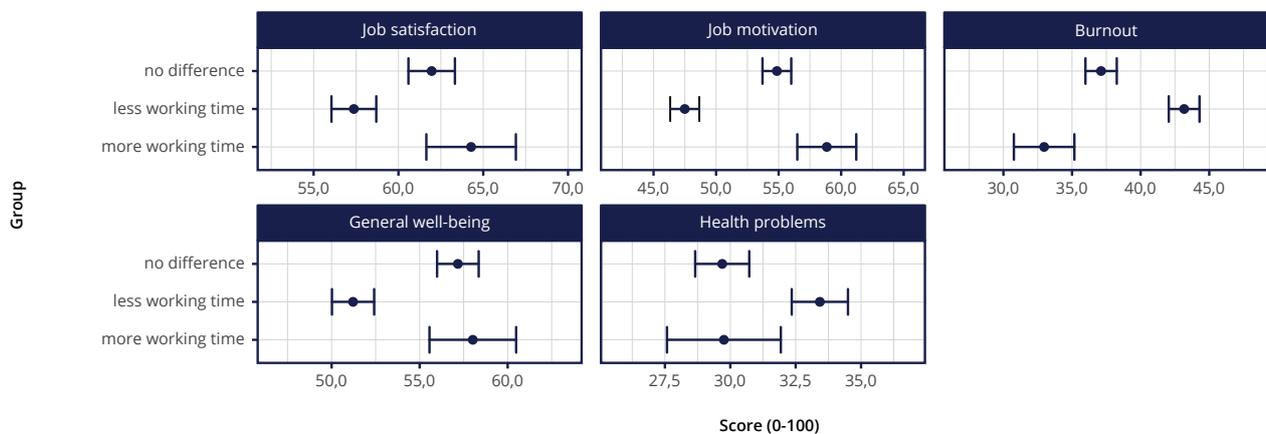
Note: QoW 2021 data; mean values of scales ranging from 0 to 100 with 95 % confidence interval.

7. Relationship between well-being and desired and contractual working times

Figure 9 shows the relationship between the aspects of well-being and working time differences. Employees who would like to work less show the lowest job satisfaction and work

motivation and the lowest general well-being. At the same time, this group has the highest level of burnout and the most health problems.

Figure 9: Relationship between well-being and desired and contractual working times



Note: QoW 2021 data; mean values of scales ranging from 0 to 100 with 95 % confidence interval.

8. Conclusions

The percentage of employees who would like to work less increased significantly between 2018 and 2021 (from 32,8 % to 43,9 %). Employees who would like to work less would like to work about eight hours less per week on average. However, these trends differ for different groups of employees. Male workers would like to work longer hours per week than female workers. Older workers, on the other hand, would like to work the shortest hours per week. Workers who would like

to work fewer hours tend to report worse working conditions compared to workers whose desired working hours match their contractual working hours. Workers who would like to work less also report lower levels of well-being. This finding is also consistent with other studies that determine that different negative aspects of work lead workers to want to reduce their working hours (Balderson et al., 2021).

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Method

For the "Quality of Work Index" study on the situation and work quality environments of Luxembourg employees, approximately 1 500-2 500 interviews (CATI; CAWI) have been conducted annually since 2013 and by Infas (since 2014) on behalf of the Chambre des Salariés Luxembourg and the University of Luxembourg (Table). The findings presented in this report refer to surveys conducted since 2018 (Sischka & Steffgen, 2021a).

Table 1: Methodology of the QoW survey

Objective of the survey	To investigate the situation and quality of work environment for workers in Luxembourg					
Conception, implementation and analysis	University of Luxembourg: Department of Behavioural and Cognitive Sciences, Luxembourg Chambre des Salariés, since 2014 Infas Institute, previously TNS-ILRES					
Type of survey	Telephone survey (CATI) or online survey (CAWI; since 2018) in Luxembourgish, German, French, Portuguese or English					
Sample size	2018: 1 689; 2019: 1 495; 2020: 2 364; 2021: 2 594					
Type of survey	Telephone survey (CATI) or online survey (CAWI; since 2018) in Luxembourgish, German, French, Portuguese or English					
Desired working time	If you were free to decide how many hours you wanted to work: How many hours per week would you currently prefer to work? Please keep in mind the fact that you have to earn an adequate living.					
Quality of work scales	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
	Participation	2	0,75-0,80	Mental demands	4	0,74-0,77
	Feedback	2	0,74-0,81	Pressure of time	2	0,75-0,79
	Autonomy	4	0,74-0,78	Emotional burdens	2	0,84-0,87
	Cooperation	4	0,82-0,84	Physical stress	2	0,73-0,76
	Mobbing	5	0,73-0,78	Risk of accident	2	0,79-0,85
Scales on quality of employment	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
	Income satisfaction	2	0,87-0,89	Workplace safety	2	0,73-0,78
	Training	2	0,82-0,85	Difficulty changing jobs	2	0,82-0,84
	Promotion	2	0,86-0,88	Work-life conflict	3	0,77-0,82
Wellbeing scales	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
	Job satisfaction	3	0,80-0,85	General Well-Being (WHO-5)	5	0,87-0,89
	Work motivation	3	0,70-0,76	Health problems	7	0,75-0,79
	Burnout	6	0,82-0,86			

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