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ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORK AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MEANINGFUL WORK IN LUXEMBOURG

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This newsletter will show how workers differ in their attitude to work. High levels of job orientation - i.e. a primarily financial motivation to work - is shown in particular by employees between 45-54 years old, as well as plant operators and employees working in the manufacturing industry. In contrast, there is a strong career orientation among male workers, workers in the youngest age category and managers. Persons working in public administration and health and social services report on average the most emphatic experience of meaningful

work. Managers, workers in academic professions, as well as persons who work in public administration and in health and social services perceive their job as a source of meaning to a particularly high degree. It turns out that a high job orientation has an unfavourable relationship with various well-being aspects, while the experience of meaningful work and the degree to which the job is perceived as a source of meaning are associated with higher well-being.

1. Attitudes towards work and the meaning of work

Workers differ in terms of the attitude they have towards their work. While some see their work predominantly as a necessity to finance their livelihood (job orientation), others focus more on making a career in their profession (career orientation), while others are particularly interested in fulfilling, socially useful work (meaningful work) (Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 1997). Assessing one's own work as meaningful is associated with a number of positive outcomes. Workers who rate their work as meaningful report higher levels of work engagement, job satisfaction, work performance and overall health (Allan *et al.*, 2019; Blustein *et al.*, 2023). In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for meaningful work increased (Xu *et al.*, 2023) and workers who perceived their work as meaningful were less likely to change jobs during this period (Heath *et al.*, 2022). Attitudes towards work and the perceived meaning of work are also related to a desire to reduce working hours: In particular, workers who have strong job orientation and see their own work as less meaningful and significant are more likely to want a reduction in working hours (Sischka & Steffgen, 2023a). The extent to which work participants assess their work as meaningful and significant depends on four factors in particular (Schnell, Hoffmann, 2020). Coherence refers to the degree of fit between work requirements and a person's personal characteristics, abilities and life plans. Significance

refers to the awareness that one's work brings positive benefits to other people or to society as a whole. Ethical orientation of an organisation: Meaning is experienced when a person can identify with the values and goals that are strived for and experienced in the respective workplace. Belonging describes the feeling of belonging to a group that is characterised by mutual acceptance, recognition and loyalty.

This newsletter analyses the different attitudes towards and the perceived meaning of work of employees in Luxembourg. It first examines how different groups of employees in Luxembourg differ in terms of work attitudes. First, the degree of job and career orientation is reviewed. Afterward, we analyse the extent to which employees perceive significance, ethical orientation of the organisation, coherence and belonging. Subsequently, the extent to which employees perceive their work as meaningful and experience their job as a source of meaning is examined. Finally, the correlations between work attitudes and various well-being dynamics are highlighted.

Here data of the Quality of Work Survey (QoW; wave 2022; Sischka & Steffgen, 2023b; Steffgen *et al.*, 2020) – an annual representative survey of workers in Luxembourg – is used (for details see box: Method)

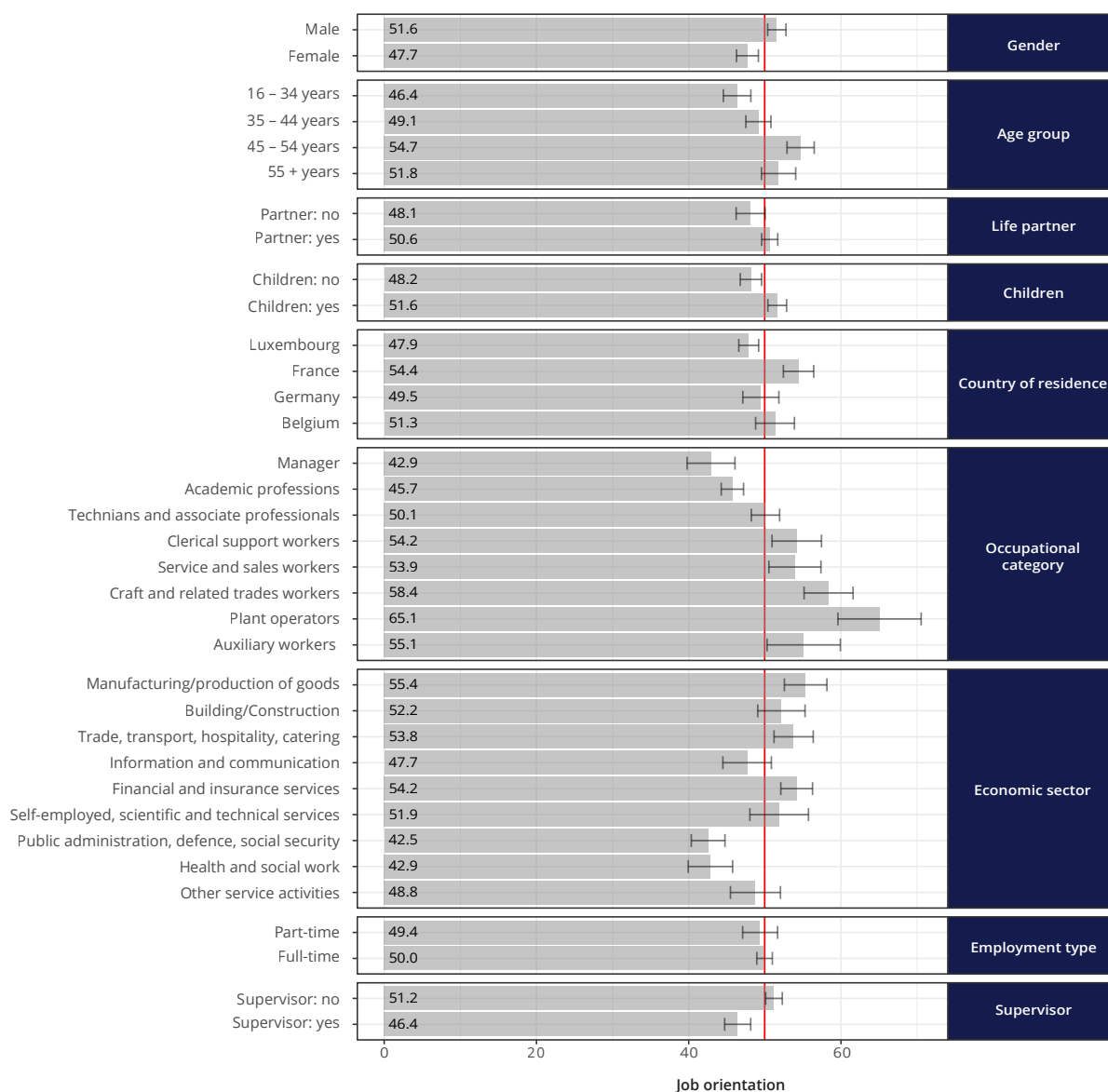
In this newsletter, only the masculine generic is used for the purpose of clarifying the text. It refers to any gender identity and thus includes both female and male persons, transgender persons as well as persons who do not feel they belong to either gender or persons who feel they belong to both genders.

2. Job orientation

Figure 1 shows the average degree of job orientation across all employees and broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics. Male workers tend to have greater job orientation than female workers. Broken down by age group, the youngest age group in particular has a lower average degree of job orientation. With regard to the presence of a partner/children, there are only minor differences. The greatest differences between the employees occur by occu-

pational category and economic sector. In particular, plant operators and employees who work in the skilled trades have greater job orientation. Broken down by economic sector, employees working in the manufacturing industry, trade, transport, hospitality, catering, financial and insurance services and construction display a higher degree of job orientation.

Figure 1: Job orientation broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



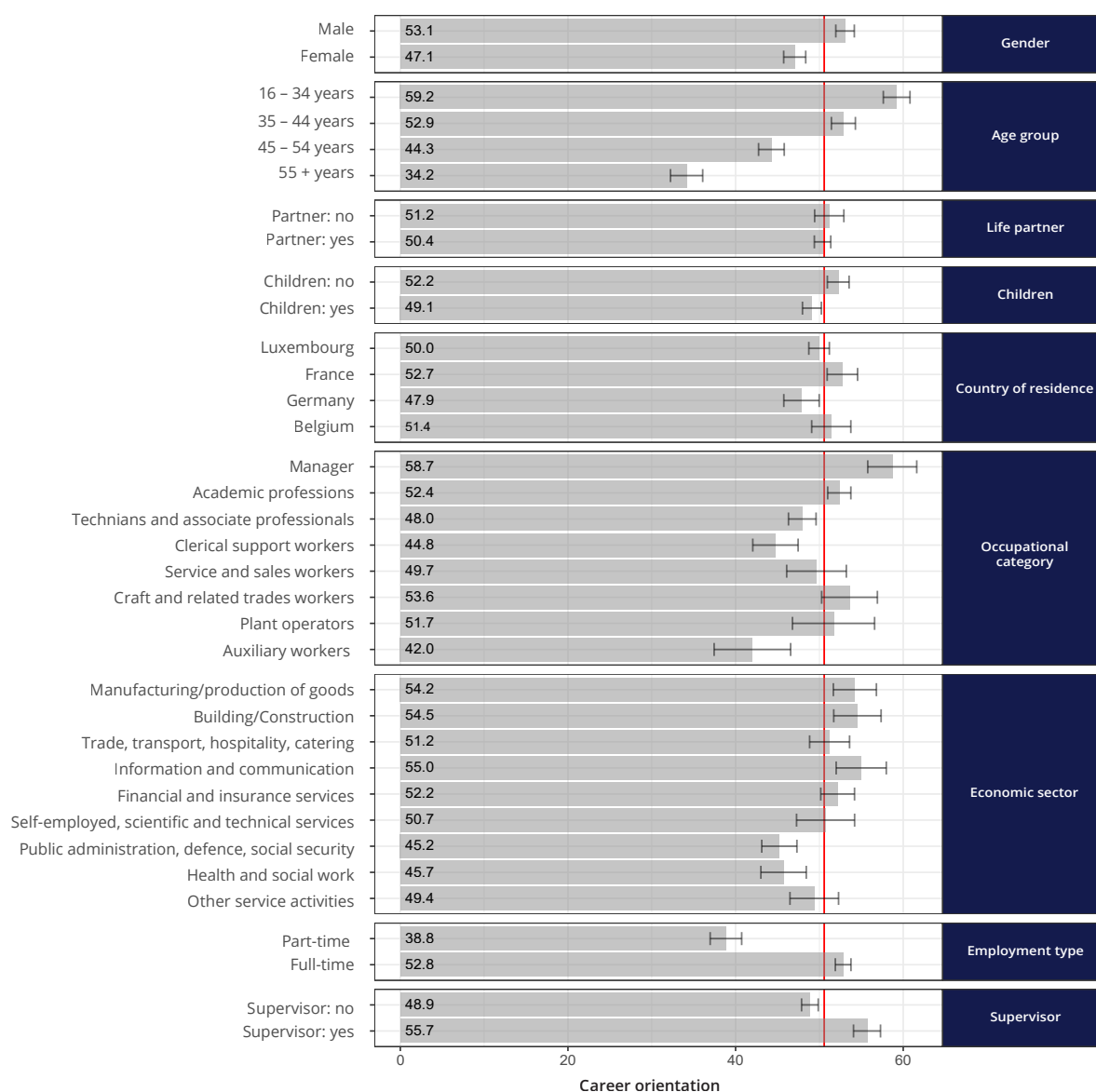
Note. Data from QoW 2022; mean of scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean for all workers.

3. Career Orientation

Figure 2 shows the average career orientation across all employees and broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics. Men have higher career orientation than female workers. Broken down by age groups, there is a clear decrease in career orientation with increasing age. Broken down by occupational category, managers show the highest and unskilled workers the lowest levels of career ori-

entation. When differentiated by economic sector, employees who work in the manufacturing industry, in the construction industry and in the information and communication sector show a high level of career orientation. Compared to employees who work part-time, employees who work full-time display a significantly higher career orientation.

Figure 2: Career orientation differentiated by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



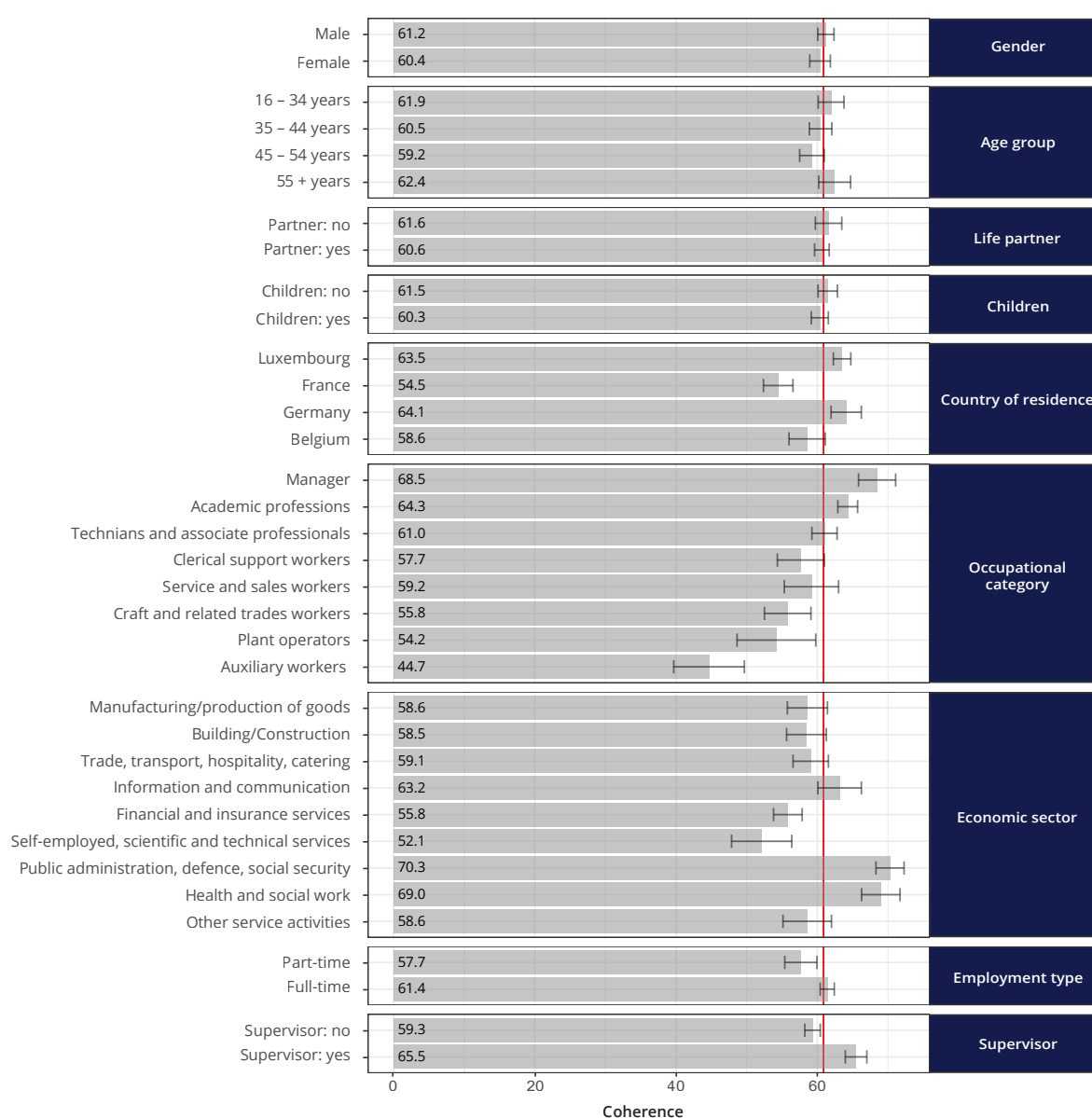
Note: Data from QoW 2022; mean of scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean for all workers.

4. Coherence

Figure 3 shows the average coherence for all employees broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics. Differentiated by gender, age and the presence of a partner/children, there are no substantial differences. Employees who live in France, on the other hand, show less coherence. Broken down by occupational category, managers show the

highest coherence and unskilled workers the lowest. Broken down by economic sector, employees working in public administration and in the health and social services sector in particular show a high level of coherence. Compared to employees not in a supervisor position, employees in a supervisor position show higher coherence.

Figure 3: Coherence broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



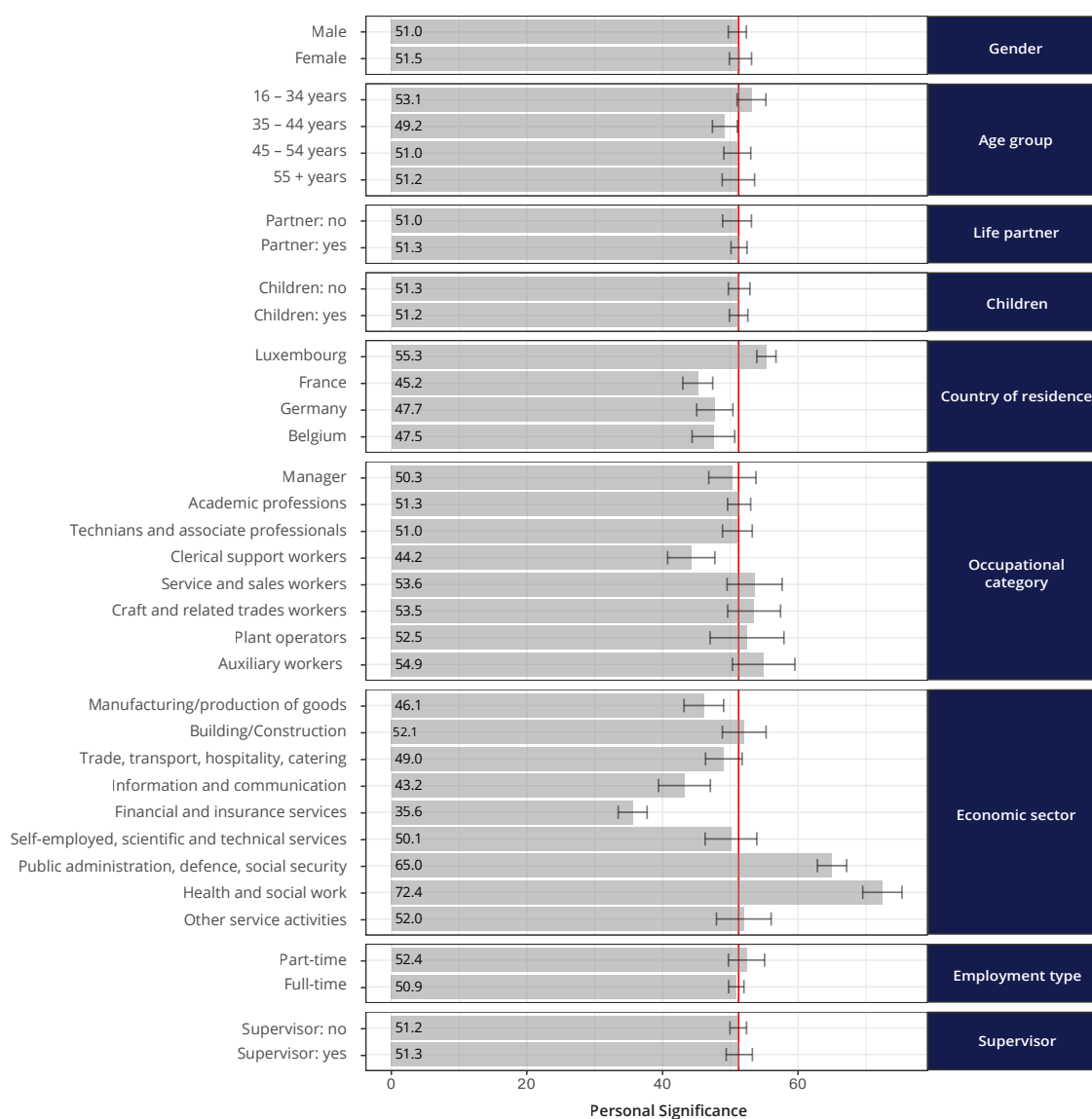
Note: Data from QoW 2022; mean of scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean for all workers.

5. Significance

Figure 4 shows the average importance for all employees broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics. Differentiated by gender, age and the presence of a partner/children, there are again no substantial differences. Employees living in Luxembourg, on the other hand, report on average that their work has higher importance for others or the society as a whole compared to persons living in France, Germany or Belgium. Broken down by occupational

category, office workers in particular report low significance of their work. Broken down by economic sector, employees working in public administration and in the health and social services sector in particular report that their work has a high degree of significance. There are no substantial differences when differentiated by full or part-time work or by supervisor position.

Figure 4: Significance differentiated by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



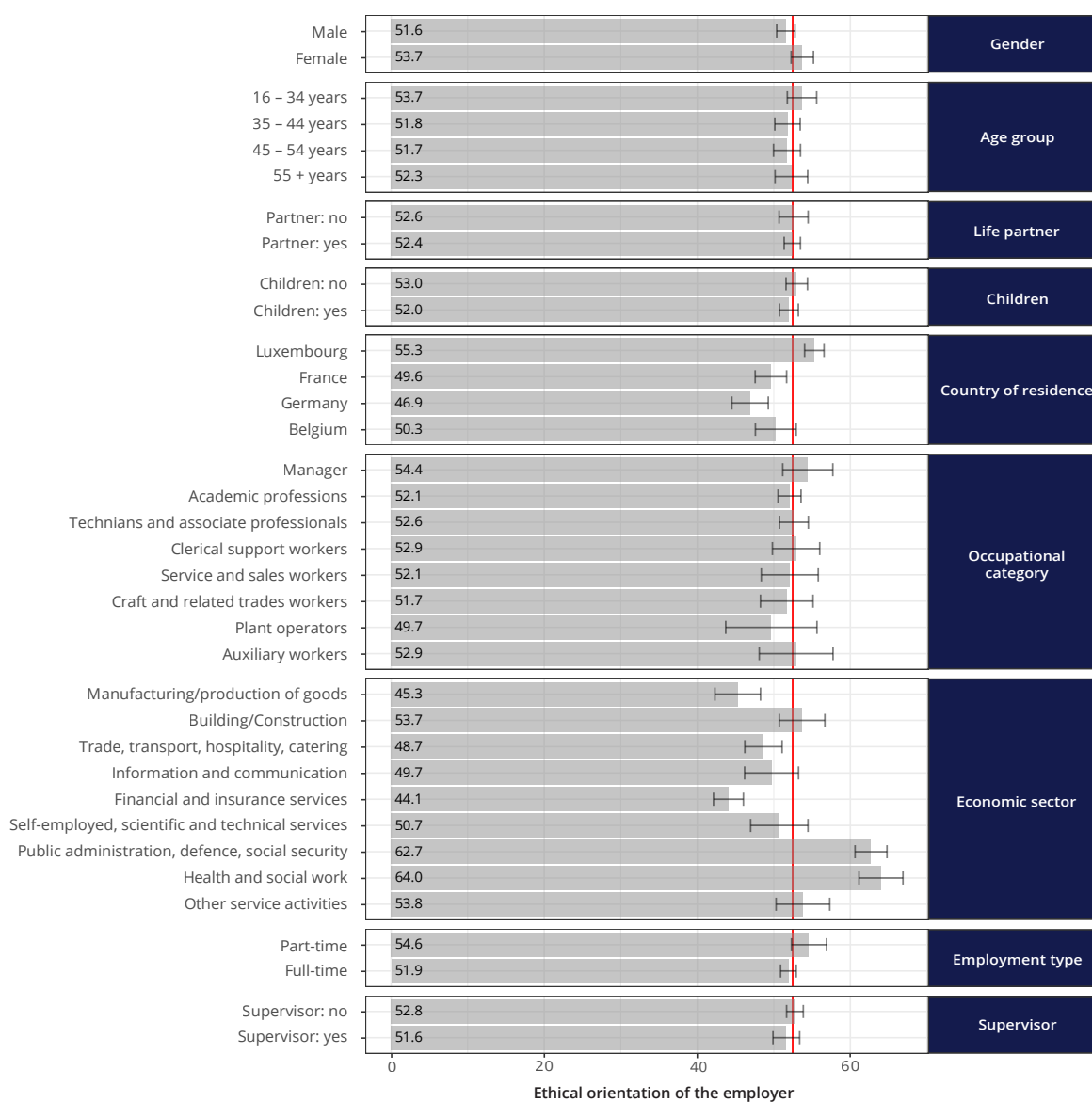
Note: Data from QoW 2022; mean of scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean for all workers.

6. Ethical orientation of the organisation

Figure 5 shows the average orientation across all employees and broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics. Differentiated by gender, age and the presence of a partner/children, there are again no substantial differences. Employees living in Luxembourg, on the other hand, report on average a higher orientation compared to employees living in France, Germany or Belgium. Broken down by occupa-

tional category, managers show the highest orientation and unskilled workers the lowest. Differentiated by economic sector, employees working in public administration and in the health and social services sector in particular show a high ethical orientation of their company. There are no substantial differences when differentiated by full or part-time work or by supervisor position.

Figure 5: Ethical orientation of their employer broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



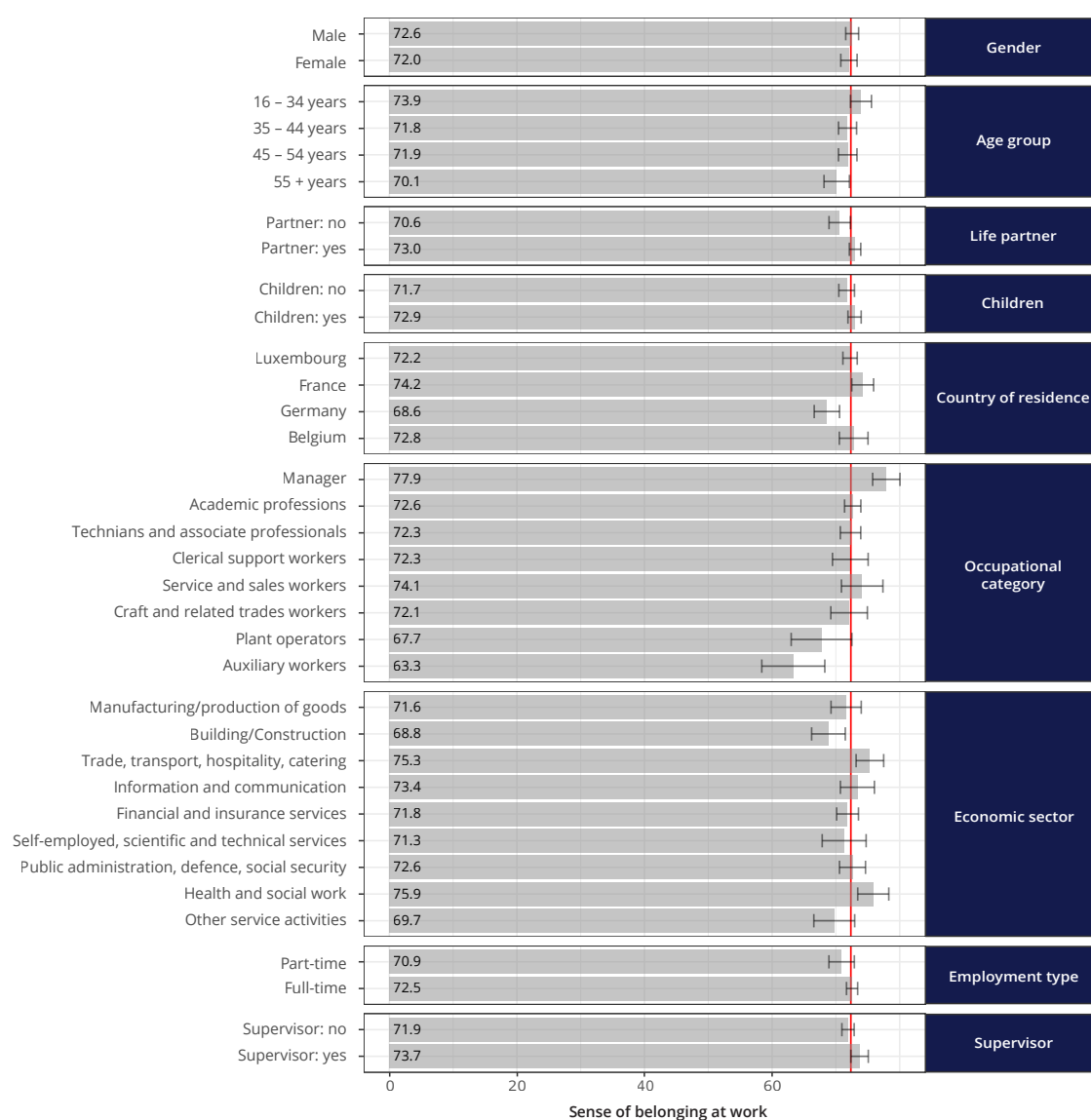
Note: Data from QoW 2022; mean of scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean for all workers.

7. Belonging

Figure 6 shows the average attachment across all employees and differentiated according by demographic and occupational characteristics. Differentiated by gender and the presence of a partner/children, there are again no substantial differences. Broken down by age group, the youngest employees report the highest perceived affiliation on average. Workers residing in Germany have on average the lowest perceived belonging compared to workers residing in Lux-

embourg, France or Belgium. Broken down by occupational category, managers have the highest and unskilled workers the lowest perceived sense of belonging. Broken down by economic sector, employees working in the health and social services sector as well as in trade, transport and hospitality have a high perceived affiliation to their work. Again, there are no substantial differences when differentiated by full or part-time work or by supervisor position.

Figure 6: Affiliation differentiated by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



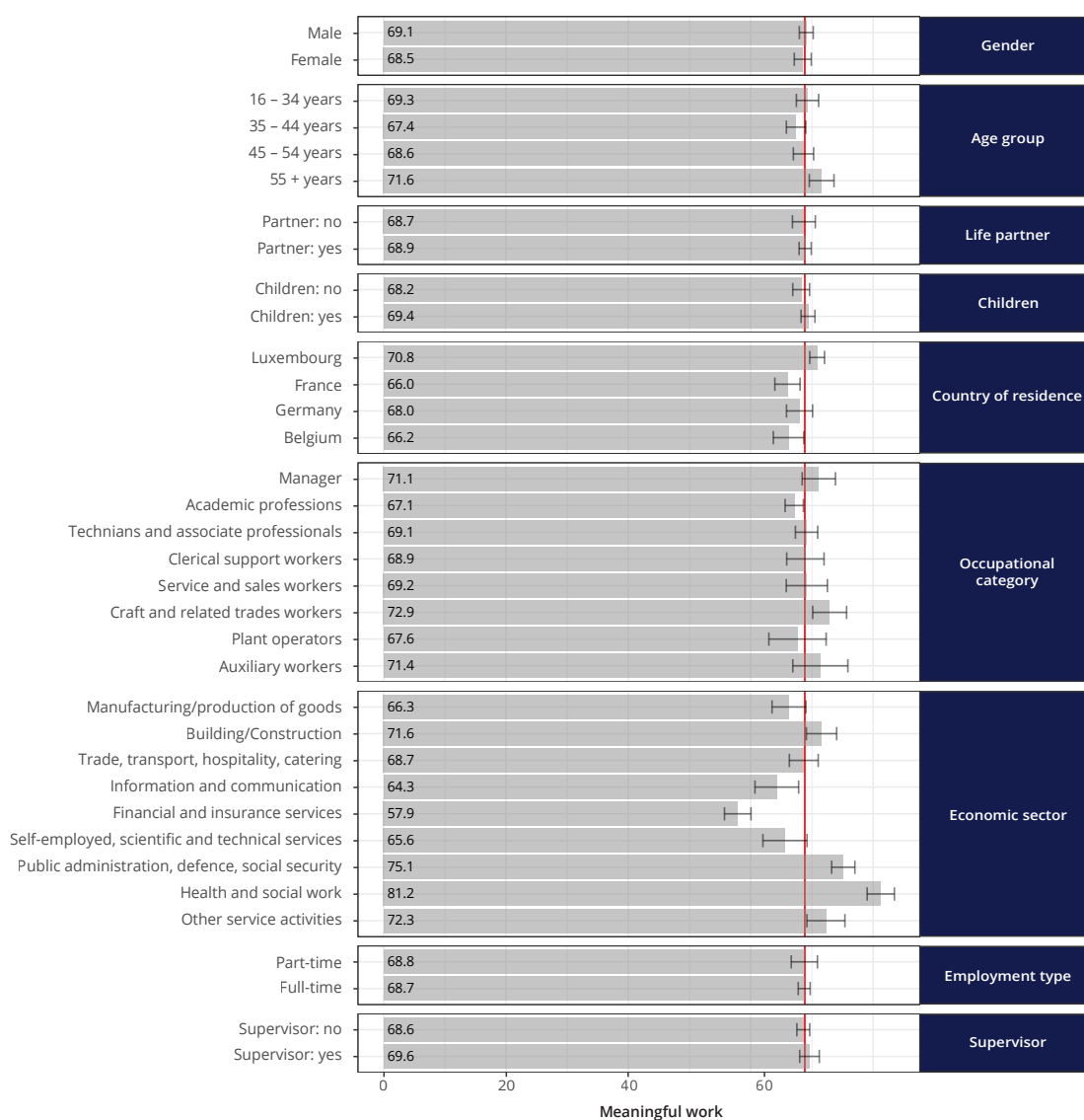
Note: Data from QoW 2022; mean of scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean across all workers.

8. Meaningful work

Figure 7 shows the average experience of meaningful work for all employees and broken down according to demographic and occupational characteristics. Differentiated by gender, age and the presence of a partner/children, there are again no substantial differences. Employees living in Luxembourg, on the other hand, report on average a higher sense of meaningful work compared to employees living in France, Germany or Belgium. Broken down by occupational category, craft and related trades workers have on average the highest

experience of meaningful work and employees in academic professions report on average the lowest experience of meaningful work. Broken down by economic sector, employees who work in the health and social services sector have the highest experience of meaningful work and employees who work in the financial and insurance services sector have the lowest experience of meaningful work. There are no substantial differences when differentiated by full or part-time work or by supervisor position.

Figure 7: Meaningful work broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



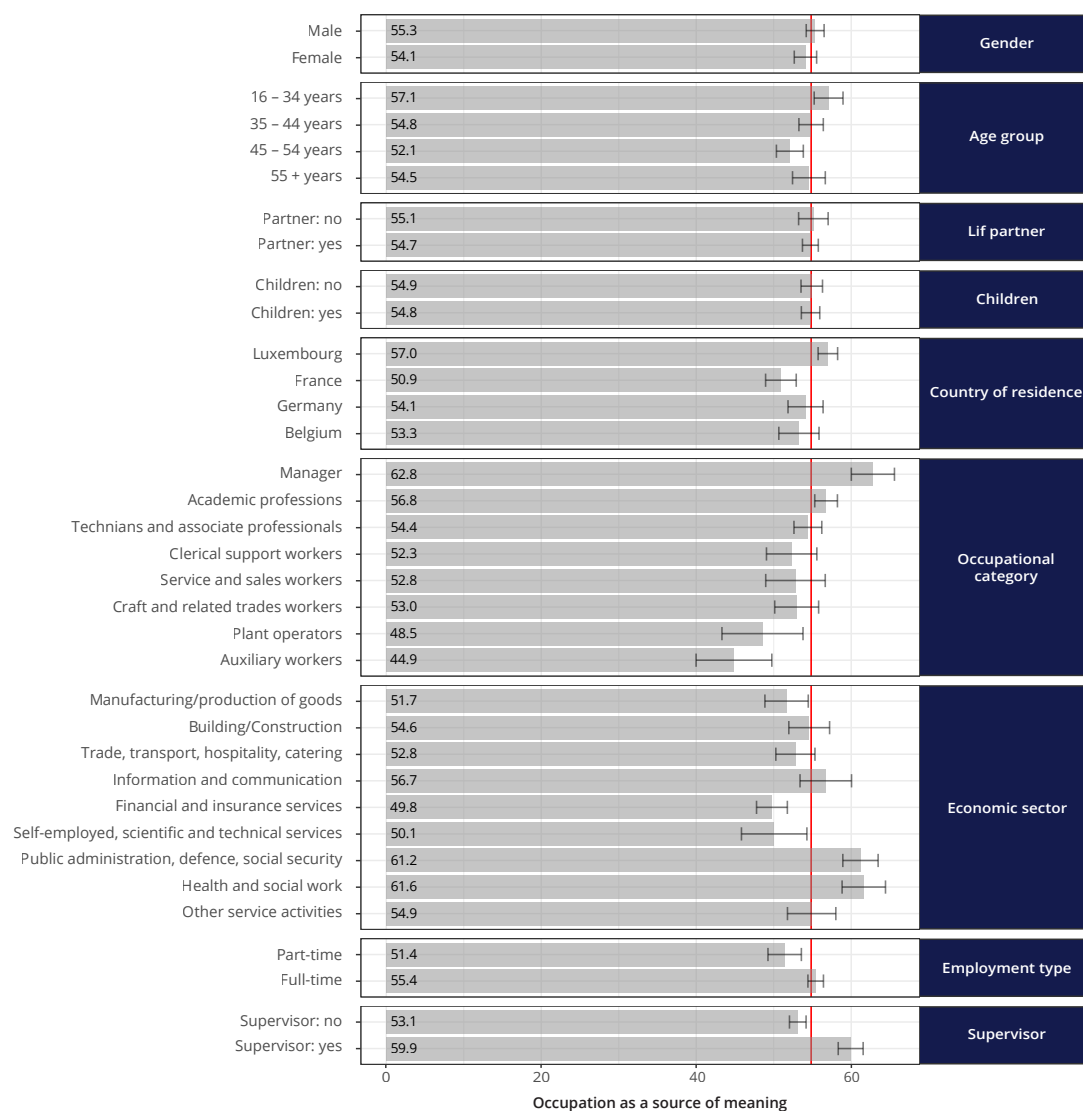
Note: Data from QoW 2022; mean of scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean across all workers.

9. Occupation as a source of meaning

Figure 8 shows the degree to which the occupation is perceived as a source of meaning for all employees broken down by demographical and occupational characteristics. Differentiated by gender and the presence of a partner/children, there are no substantial differences. When looked at by age group, on average the youngest employees find their work the most meaningful. Broken down by occupational category, managers show the highest and unskilled workers the lowest degree of perceiving their occupation as a source of meaning. Depend-

ing on the sector of the economy, it is above all workers in the health and social services sectors and in public administration who experience their occupation as particularly meaningful. Full time workers report on average a higher degree to which the job is perceived as a source of meaning compared to persons working part time. Compared to workers who do not hold a management position, workers who do hold a management position are more likely to experience their job as meaningful.

Figure 8: Occupation as a source of meaning differentiated by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



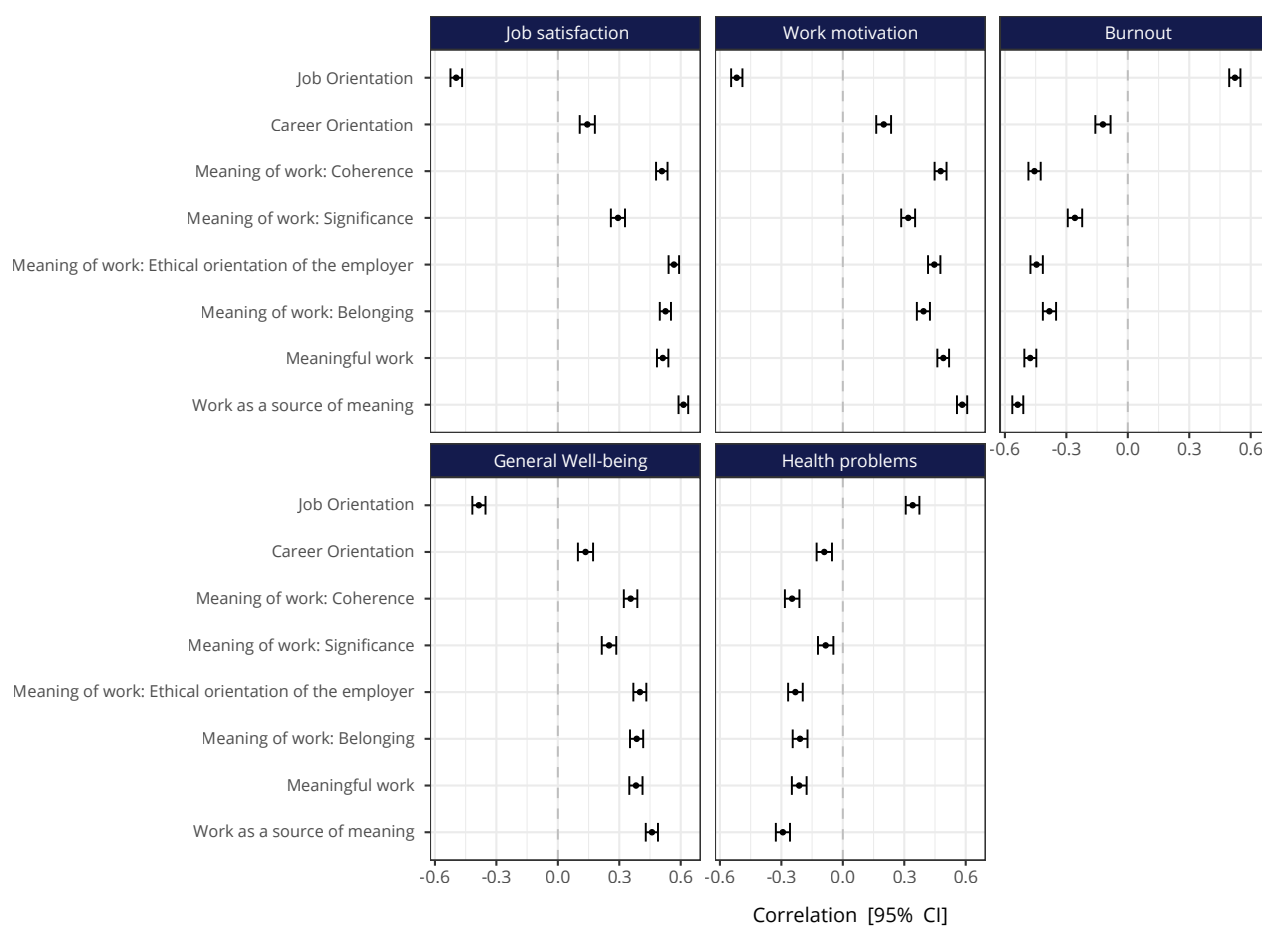
Note: Data from QoW 2022; mean of scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean across all workers.

10. Relationship between attitudes to and the meaning of work with well-being

Figure 9 shows the correlation of attitudes towards work and the meaning of work with the aspects of well-being. A person's job orientation is negatively associated with work satisfaction, work motivation and general well-being, and positively associated with burnout and health problems. In contrast, career orientation is positively associated with job satisfaction, work motivation and general well-being, and negatively associated

with burnout and health problems. The same pattern - but more pronounced - emerges for the four factors (coherence, significance, ethical orientation of the organisation, belonging) that play a central role in the experience of meaningful work, and the degree to which the job is perceived as a source of meaning.

Figure 9 : Occupation as a source of meaning differentiated by demographic and occupational characteristics (for 2022)



Note: QoW 2022 data; correlations with 95% confidence interval.

11. Summary and conclusion

This newsletter shows that workers differ in the attitude they have towards their work. In particular, employees between 45-54 years of age, plant operators and employees working in the processing industry show a high job orientation, i.e. a primarily financial motivation to work. On the other hand, male workers, workers in the youngest age category and managers show a strong career orientation.

Coherence - the degree of collusion between work requirements and a person's personal characteristics, skills and life plans - is again particularly strong among managers and academic professions, as well as employees working in public administration and health and social services. The perceived significance of one's own work is particularly pronounced among employees who reside in Luxembourg, as well as among employees who work in public administration and in health and social services. The ethical orientation of the employer is rated highly on average, especially by employees who reside in Luxembourg, as well as by managers and employees who work in public administration and in the health and social care sector. In particular, managers and employees working in the health and social care sector and in the trade, transport and hospitality sector report a high perceived sense of belonging.

Workers who work in public administration and health and social care report on average the highest experience of meaningful work. Managers, employees in academic professions, and employees working in public administration and health and social services report the highest level of perceiving the job as a source of meaning.

A high degree of job orientation shows an unfavourable correlation with the various well-being dimensions. In contrast, the various factors (coherence, meaningfulness, ethical orientation of the organisation, affiliation) that play a central role in the experience of meaningful work, and the degree to which the job is perceived as a source of meaning, are associated with higher well-being.

Employers can make various adjustments to increase employees perceived meaningfulness of work. These include introducing HR practices that focus on personal growth and development (*Fletcher, 2019*), increasing the focus on corporate social responsibility (*Aguinis & Glavas, 2019*) or implementing group intervention strategies (*Fletcher & Schofield, 2021*).

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Method

For the study "Quality of work Index", on the work situation and quality of employees in Luxembourg, approx. 1,500-2,700 interviews (CATI; CAWI) have been conducted annually since 2013 by Infas (since 2014) on behalf of the Chambre des Salariés Luxembourg and the University of Luxembourg (Table 1). The findings presented in this report refer to the surveys since 2018 (Sischka & Steffgen, 2023).

Table 1 : Methodological background of the QoW survey

Aim of the survey	Investigating the work situation and quality of workers in Luxembourg		
Conception, implementation, analysis	University of Luxembourg: Department of Behavioural and Cognitive Sciences, Chambre des salariés Luxembourg, since 2014 Infas Institute, previously TNS-ILRES		
Type of survey	Telephone interview (CATI) or online survey (CAWI; since 2018) in Luxembourgish, German, French, Portuguese or English		
Sample size	2022: 2,696		
Work setting scales	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
	Job orientation	4	0.78
	Career Orientation	4	0.80
	Coherence	3	0.87
	Significance	3	0.87
	Ethical orientation of the organisation	4	0.81
	Belonging	3	0.88
	Meaningful work	3	0.93
	Occupation as a source of meaning	4	0.89
Well-Being Scales	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
	Job satisfaction	3	0.81
	Work motivation	3	0.75
	Burnout	6	0.86
	General Well-Being (WHO-5)	5	0.90
	Health problems	7	0.78

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