



The Centre for Future Studies

## **Futures Observatory**

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### **Strategic Insights**

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#### **Job satisfaction in the UK**

British workers are more satisfied with their work than is commonly thought according to *Joy of work?* a report from the Centre for Future Studies.

Work has an important role for people's sense of well being. Children and partners are the most important contributory factors for the people who have them. But work is rated as being almost as important as friends and taking leisure time.

Britons are largely happy with their lot:

- More than 70% of people felt that life was good
- Over 75% felt they were happy with their life
- 80% were satisfied with their life
- Two thirds felt they had achieved their goals.

#### **The UK's three-tier labour market**

- Two thirds of British workers reported that were satisfied or very satisfied with their work or job.
- 15% (more than 4 million employees) said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their jobs.
- Unemployed and economically inactive people suffer from a 'well-being deficit', reporting a level of life satisfaction at just over half that of those in work or caring for others. Conversely, the self-employed were the most happy with their lot despite working the longest hours.

Respondents reported that pay was less important than the content of their jobs and fulfilling personal ambitions. But people are happier with their jobs than with their pay. Nevertheless, almost 50% were very satisfied with their pay and 60% were very satisfied with the hours they worked. 42.2 % reported that their most important relationships were at work

Nick Isles, the report's author, said that, "On the whole work works. The majority of UK workers are reasonably happy with their lot and happy in their work. However a third of British workers are at best neutral about their job and at worst very dissatisfied. And this does not include the economically inactive who are marginalised from the economic benefits of a near full employment economy and too often excluded from other facets of the 'good life' - like decent housing, access to credit, and access to good public services.

"It should not be possible for people to work more than 60 hours a week and be paid less than £11,000 a year. The Government needs to strengthen the mechanisms for inspecting and reporting bad practice in this area."

Workophiles - married to the job, but worth it

On the basis of the findings, 2.4 million people in the UK can be classified as workophiles, preferring work to home. According to the report, they regard work/life balance as the language of wimps. Most of them are in higher income brackets and are unlikely to be bringing up children.

In fact, the majority of people working over 50 hours a week are well paid. 1 in 5 of those earning £60,000 work more than 60 hours a week. 70% of those earning between £46,000 and £51,000 a year work up to 60 hours a week with 7.7% working more than that.

### **The picture is not completely rosy**

More than 4.2 million employees are unhappy with their work or job. This dissatisfaction results in higher rates of absence, higher rates of turnover, lower levels of customer satisfaction and ultimately lower levels of productivity.

Over 400,000 employees are genuine wage slaves who earn less than £16,000 a year despite working more than 60 hours a week. Almost 40% agreed that they worked long hours for fear of losing their job. This is especially so for women (52% compared with 35% of men). People earning less than £16,000 a year are nearly six times as likely to fear the sack if they don't work long hours as those on more than £41,000 per annum. But most people believe that working long hours is still the route to advancement, with 60.1% believing it will speed up promotion.

### **Job hoppers**

More than a third of the UK workforce are either actively looking for a new job or planning to do so. Younger workers are the most likely to be searching for new jobs and careers with twice as many people in the 16-24 year old category (10.3%) than those in the 45-54 year old age group (5.7%) starting a new job. Twice as many women (29.5%) than men (14.3%) are considering moving.

