

Labour Force Survey Workshop 2013

Measuring job satisfaction in Italian Labour force survey

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1. Quality of employment and Well-being

In Italy ISTAT is working to measure quality employment within the conceptual framework of well-being and its measurement, an issue that in recent years has been discussed and analyzed by researchers, international organisations, official statistics and politics. A large and ambitious project to measure the well-being of the Italian society was carried out in agreement with the CNEL (*National Council of Economy and Labour*). The concepts of wellness varies according to times, places and cultures and is composed by different dimension.

In 2011 ISTAT and CNEL set up a "Steering Group on the Measurement of Progress in Italian Society", including representatives from entrepreneurs, trade unions and civil society. The Group aimed to develop a multi-dimensional approach to the measurement of "equitable and sustainable well-being" combining GDP with other measures, such as indicators of inequality and sustainability.

In addition, ISTAT set up a Scientific Committee to carry out the preparatory work for the development of statistical indicators, giving due relevance to international recommendations. The work done until now include following actions:

- Develop a shared definition of progress in Italian society, by defining the most relevant economic, social and environmental dimensions (health, work, material well-being, pollution, etc.) (December 2011);
- Performing an open, on-line public consultation among experts, civil society and individual citizens in order to gather inputs on the dimensions of well-being that are most relevant for the [Italian society](#) (January 2012);
- Select a set of high-quality statistical indicators that are representative of the different domains. The number of indicators should be small enough to facilitate its understanding by non-experts (March 2012);
- Communicate the results of this process, informing citizens of [indicator values](#) in the most thorough way possible. The first report and datawarehouse is online (March 2013);

The group of experts who worked in Italy has identified 12 dimensions, useful to analyze well-being of a society:

1. Environment
2. Health
3. Material well-being
4. Education and training
5. Work and life balance
6. Interpersonal relationship
7. Personal security
8. Subjective well-being
9. Landscape and cultural heritage
10. Research and innovation

11. Quality of services
12. Politics and institutions

For each dimension experts proposed a set of indicators based on existing data that is possible to analyze to understand the well-being of the Italian society and its recent trends.

2. Work and life balance: the new questions in LFS questionnaire

We want to focus on the fifth point, related to “work and life balance”. According to the Scientific Committee “A suitably paid job offering reasonable security and corresponding to the skills acquired through training and educational choices, represents a universal aspiration and makes a major contribution to individual wellbeing. If the lack of a “good job” has a negative effect on well-being, work commitments that make it impossible to reconcile work, social and family life have a similarly negative impact.”

To analyze this domain the Scientific Committee selected **5 dimensions** and **15 indicators**, varying between security of job, bargaining issues, temporary work, wages, skills, conciliation of work and family/personal life, safety of employment and job satisfaction. The Scientific Committee take in account international literature about Decent Work and Quality of employment. Figures on the domain have been full described on the First BES annual report released on March 2013.

Concerning available data from LFS, the Scientific Committee noted that we have no information about two important indicators and they recommended to include it in LFS as soon as possible:

- Job satisfaction
- Perception of insecurity in employment

Therefore we decided to implement our questionnaire providing information on these topics, with 10 new questions inserted in LFS core questionnaire since the first quarter of 2013. Literature and other existing surveys related to this issue were studied to find the best questions to be inserted in LFS core questionnaire.

Giving the face of increasing difficulty of assessing the “objective” quality of work, several studies have adopted an even more subjective measurement, job satisfaction, as an indicator to measure the overall quality of work. Referencing to various aspects can help reducing the misrepresentation of subjective assessments, even if the criterion of aggregations is open to possible criticism. Furthermore, the reference to various aspects provides interesting information on which elements are most important when assessing job satisfaction.

Job stability is among the most important elements when assessing job satisfaction. Data published on BES annual report show that there is a major link between legal instability and feelings of insecurity, at least in a country such as Italy where the social protection system for those who lose a job is inhomogeneous and there is low investment in active and passive labour policies. It is no mere coincidence that fixed-term employees and above all fixed-term contract workers (or semi-subordinate workers) declare a major insecurity for their jobs. More negative opinions compared to workers in other positions can also be seen with regard to the other aspects. Permanent employees are more satisfied with regard to job continuity and security (stability and number of hours worked), while independent workers are more satisfied with working conditions and environments. Moreover, comparative research shows that feeling of job insecurity perceived by workers cannot be closely linked to the legal instability of the job and rather seems to be linked to the performance of the labour market and, above all, to providence for those who lose their job. Therefore it is important to try to develop a specific indicator on this issue.

New questions inserted in LFS core questionnaire at experimental level are following:

“Next questions relate to assessments about job satisfaction and job security. This information is very important to understand well-being of workers”.

C73. How satisfied are you with your **current job**? Give a score from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates “no satisfaction at all” and 10 “full satisfaction”

C74. How satisfied are you with your **wage**?

C75. At work how satisfied are you with the **social relationship** (colleagues, clients, superiors, users, employees, etc.)?

C76. In the current job how satisfied are you with the **opportunities** of past and future **career**? (employees)

C76. α. How satisfied are you with your **job career** and **business**? Consider past and future opportunities

(*employer-coordinated freelance work contract or an occasional work contract*)

C76. β. How satisfied are you with **your business** and extend opportunities?

(Other self-employed)

C77. How satisfied are you with **number of working hours**?

C78. How satisfied are you with your **job security**?

C79. How satisfied are you with your **type of job**?

C80. How satisfied are you with **distances and times of journey**?

C81A. How much is **interesting the work** you are doing? Give a score from 0 to 10, where 0 means “not interesting” and 10 “total interesting”

C82. Do you consider likely **to lose** the current work/to cease the activity in the next six months? (Yes/No/DK)

C83. Do you consider **easy to find/to start a job similar** to the current job? (Yes/No/DK)

After some pilot interviews with CATI technique in November 2012, new questions were included since the first quarter of 2013 in the LFS questionnaire, at the end of the section about the main job. During the pilot test was possible to assess the reaction of respondents to the new questions. Apart from some problems of comprehension solved later, we verified, along with the interviewers involved in the trial, that respondents were generally interested in answering to this kind of questions. First results are still being processed and will be released by the 2013, after their validation. However, it is possible to analyze the pilot test results to identify on which aspects Italians employed feel more satisfied with and which is the level of perception about the security of their status.

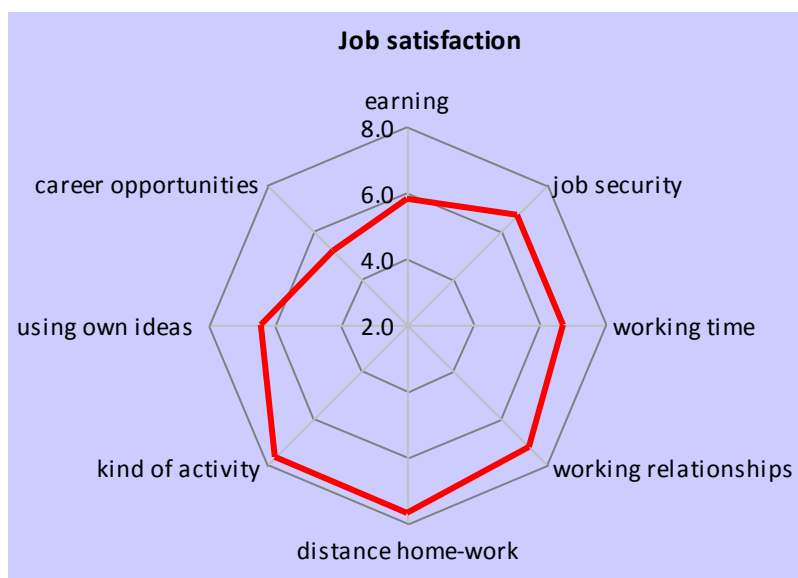
3. Pilot test: first results

Pilot interview were conducted in November 2012, asking to some households to answer for the fifth time to LFS questionnaire. Therefore new questions were tested in complete LFS process. 2,500 interviews were conducted, 1,000 of which with employed people who answered to new questions. In the original version the question C81 was about the satisfaction for the possibility to use their own ideas at work, but to facilitate the data comparison with other statistical sources, after the pilot test the question was replaced with the new C81A (“How much is interesting the work you are doing?”). Furthermore an item on satisfaction on Job stability is inserted.

Job satisfaction

Data show a quite good level of satisfaction: probably having a job is in itself an element of satisfaction, especially in times with a lack of demand and an high unemployment rate. The overall satisfaction declared by respondents is on average equal to a score of 7.1. Of eight dimensions considered, highest satisfaction was recorded for the kind of activity (7.7), distance of the workplace from home (7.7) and relations established in the workplace (7.2; Figure 1). The lowest score where related to the career (5.2) and the earning (5.8).

Figure 1 – Job satisfaction (average scores in pilot interviews)



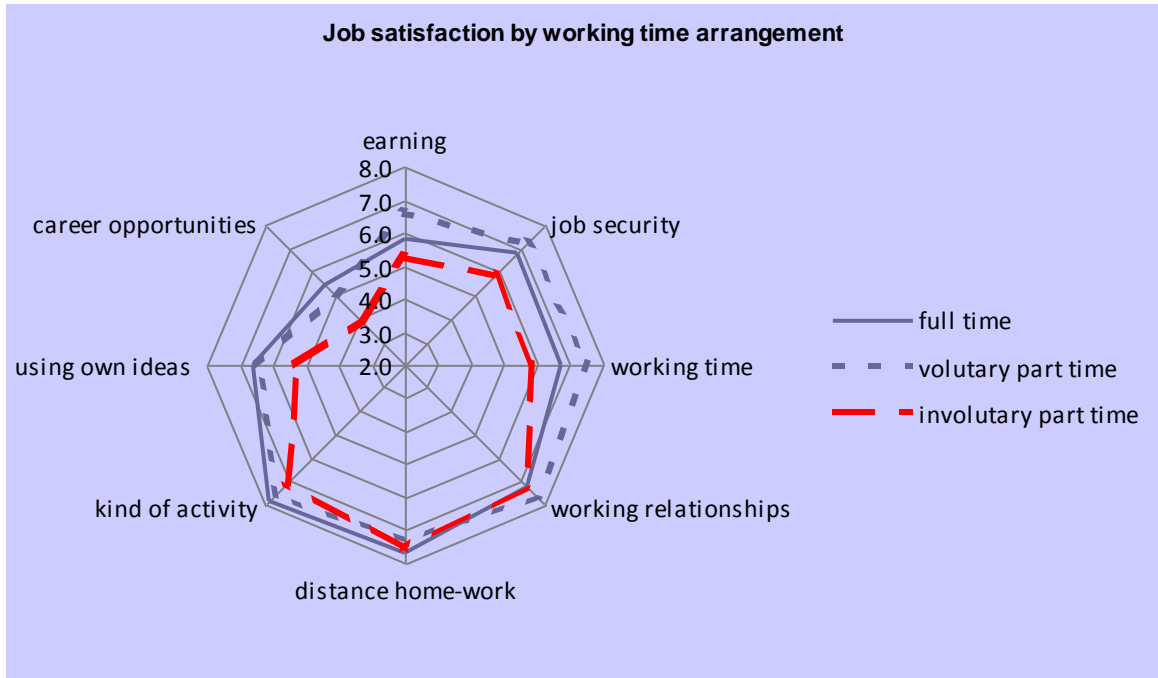
Women generally express satisfaction overall slightly higher than that of males (7.2 versus 7.0). Both male and female express the same (low) degree of satisfaction with the earning, while men are more satisfied with the possibility of using their own ideas in the work and for the kind of activity. Women are rather more satisfied for the stability of their work and for the distance from home to work. Career prospects, the dimension that records the lowest score, however, register a score slightly little higher for men (5.4 versus 5.0).

Concerning the age of interviewed the most satisfied with their work are workers aged between 35 and 54 years. In particular, for this group the greatest satisfaction is related to the type of activity, the possibility to use ideas and career opportunities. Older workers are, however, more satisfied than others for the distance from home to work and for earnings. Younger people are less satisfied for all dimensions, recording quite good scores for the distance from home to work and working relationship. The overall satisfaction increases with education. Graduates are more satisfied for all dimensions, with higher differences for the kind of activity (8.1) and the possibility to use their own ideas at work (7.1).

Employees are the most satisfied, especially those having a permanent job (7.2). They are of course more satisfied with the stability of their work, but also with earnings, working time, kind of activity and ability to use their own ideas, while fixed-term employees are slightly more satisfied with working relationship. Self-employed are significantly more satisfied with the kind of activity done, the possibility to use own ideas at work (score equal to 8.0 in each case) and distance home-work. Full-time employees are more satisfied than those who work part time. However, there is a difference between those who choose the part-time regime to solve personal needs, and those

forced to accept a part time arrangement not finding a full-time job. Involuntary part timers, in fact, express a lower satisfaction for the earning, stability and career opportunity (Figure 2). Who voluntarily chooses a part-time work is more satisfied with working time and also earnings.

Figure 2 – Job satisfaction by working time arrangement (average scores in pilot interviews)



Feeling of job insecurity

Concerning two questions on perception of job insecurity 22.1% of respondents expressed some fear concerning the possibility to lose their job in the six months following the interview, while more than 90% believe difficult in a short time to find a job with the same characteristics. If we combine answers of the two questions we obtain 4 type of respondents (Figure 3):

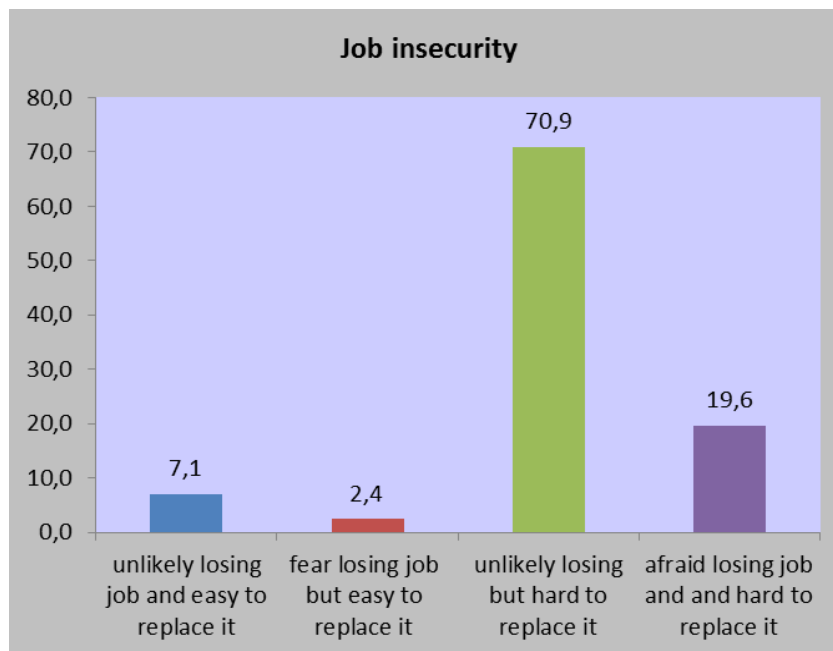
- 1) people who think that is unlikely losing their job, but if this happened it would be quite easy to replace it (7,1%);
- 2) people who are afraid to lose their job but believe that it would be easily replaced (2.4%);
- 3) people who think that is unlikely losing their job but if this happened it would be difficult to replace it (70.9%).
- 4) people who are afraid to lose their jobs and think that it would not be easily replaced (19.6%);

People who are afraid to lose their jobs and think that it would not be easily replace suffer by a greater insecurity. In this group are most frequent employees of the Southern regions, with a lower level of education and whit temporary work. The most favourable position (unlikely to lose and easy to find another job), is shared by people working with flexible arrangement, especially volunteer part timers.

Women are more afraid than men concerning the possibility to lose their work but they are more optimistic about the chance of replace it with a similar one, while most educated workers are less afraid of losing their job.

When LFS data on this issues will be available it would be interesting to analyse in depth characteristic of different types to understand in which condition the feeling of insecurity is more frequent.

Figure 3 – Job insecurity (percentage values)



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