



Measuring satisfaction with key elements of working life

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This report is available in electronic format only.

Based on the results of a 2006 survey, this report describes the importance of various aspects of working life and corresponding worker satisfaction. The majority of Czechs are satisfied with their job. Pay, fair reward for work performance and job security are considered the most important factors. However, only two out of five workers are satisfied with their pay. Overall, disparities in satisfaction levels emerge between different socioeconomic groups.

Introduction

A quantitative Quality of Working Life survey was carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre ([Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, CVVM](#)) and the Occupational Safety Research Institute ([Výzkumný ústav bezpečnosti práce, VÚBP](#)) in 2006. The survey formed part of a project entitled 'Influence of changes in the world of work on quality of life' financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs ([Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí, MPSV](#)) within the framework of its [Modern society and its transformations \(in Czech\)](#) programme. The survey's target group was employed people in the Czech Republic aged 15 years and over; there were 2,043 respondents in total.

The objectives of the survey were as follows:

- to find out what aspects of working life are important for Czechs and at the same time to assess their satisfaction with these aspects. The survey followed up on the Quality of Working Life survey from 2005, also conducted by CVVM and VÚBP, in which respondents rated the importance of and their satisfaction with 66 factors characterising working life and the work environment – these 66 elements were narrowed down to a final 18 aspects for the second survey (see Table 1 below);
- to capture people's perception of important individual characteristics in the labour market and invite respondents to self-evaluate their qualities and limitations;
- to determine the importance of occupational health and safety – the questions on this topic formed the basis for further VÚBP research on *The price of health* in 2007.

The following chapters give a brief summary of the results concerning workers' perception of the importance of various aspects of working life and their satisfaction with these aspects. Greater attention will be paid to factors where the biggest discrepancies were found between importance and satisfaction. The report will also focus on the aspects that scored the lowest: pay and earnings, fairness in remuneration, job security, work–life balance, opportunities for lifelong learning, personal development and career advancement, and possibilities for trade union membership. In addition, the analysis will examine statistically significant differences in the perception of the importance of and satisfaction with these aspects of work between various socioeconomic groups.

Importance of different aspects of working conditions

The concept of the quality of working life comprises many criteria. These can be divided into four basic categories: factors influencing career and job security; factors influencing mental and physical health; factors supporting the development of skills and abilities and personal growth; and work–life balance factors (Svobodová, 2006, p. 48; see also European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), 2002). The aspects considered in the survey covered all of these areas (Table 1).

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The majority of workers consider most of the aspects examined as important. Pay is regarded as the most important factor of working life, with 96% of respondents rating it ‘definitely important’ or ‘important’. It is followed by fair reward for work results (95%). Job security is important for 92% of economically active Czechs. Furthermore, nine out of 10 Czechs consider that the way in which their superiors behave and treat them is important, and they also value their relationships with colleagues. A fundamental aspect of working life for 85% of those surveyed is the amount of time that the job leaves them to spend with their family, pursue their interests and relax. The most important aspects of working life are therefore related to material security and good social relations in the workplace and away from the workplace.

At the other end of the spectrum, factors related to opportunities for lifelong learning and career advancement are only important for one in two Czechs. Less than half of workers (47%) attach importance to being proud of the company or organisation. The possibility of joining a trade union is only important for 18% of working Czechs.

Workers’ satisfaction with the various aspects is often lower than the importance they attribute to them. Respondents were most satisfied with their relationships with colleagues (with 77% being very satisfied or satisfied); this is followed by work autonomy and the low incidence of violence and bullying in the workplace (both 75%). Some 73% of workers believe that their work is useful and meaningful. The greatest disparity is found in aspects concerning pay levels and fair remuneration: Czech workers are least satisfied with these aspects (40%), even though they describe them as the most important. Respondents expressed a relatively low degree of satisfaction with factors that are simultaneously viewed as being among the least important: prospects for career advancement (32%), the possibility of trade union membership (41%) or opportunities for lifelong learning (46%).

Table 1: Importance of and satisfaction with different aspects of working conditions (%)

Aspect of work and working conditions	Importance		Satisfaction	
	Rank	% of ‘definitely important’ and ‘important’ answers	Rank	% of ‘very satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’ answers
Pay or wage level	1	96	16	40
Fair reward for work results	2	95	17	40
Job security	3	92	8	57
Superiors’ behaviour and conduct	4	90	9	55
Relationships with colleagues	5	89	1	77
Enough time for family, hobbies and relaxation	6	85	11	52
Interesting work	7	79	6	67
Useful and meaningful work	8	77	4	73
Technical and technological equipment in the workplace	9	76	7	64
Low incidence of violence and bullying in the workplace	10	76	2	75

Standard of occupational health and safety in the workplace	11	75	5	69
Work autonomy	12	70	2	75
Amount of time taken up by work	13	70	10	53
Non-financial job benefits	14	68	14	44
Opportunities for further learning and personal growth	15	54	13	46
Prospects for and possibility of career advancement	16	51	18	32
Ability to be proud of the company	17	47	12	51
Opportunity to join a trade union	18	18	15	41

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Pay and fair reward

The aspect of pay and earnings was important for the vast majority of respondents, with no statistically significant differences between socioeconomic groups. Fair remuneration is also an important factor for all Czech workers; however, women are more sensitive towards this aspect (with 96% of them regarding it as definitely important or important) than men are (94%). Pay levels and job security remain the most important factors in the Czech work environment.

Gender effects

Significant correlations arose in the assessment of satisfaction with pay between socioeconomic groups. From a gender perspective, the statistics show that men are more satisfied with their pay than women are (42% and 37% respectively). According to the Czech Statistical Office ([Český statistický úřad, CSÚ](#)), women in the Czech Republic – like women in most EU Member States – receive lower pay than men, earning on average 25% less. This persistent imbalance cannot be explained solely in terms of lower educational attainment, lower occupational positions or part-time work – which is not as widespread in the Czech Republic as in the EU as a whole (CSÚ, 2008). A number of surveys have shown that women do not attain the same earnings as men even in comparable positions (for example, Vlach, 2005).

Educational and occupational effects

People with a university education (57%) or who have a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (47%) are more satisfied with their pay than those without a GCSE (30%) and those with primary education or no education (23%). Workers in high-skilled occupations, such as managers and professionals, are also more satisfied with their pay (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Satisfaction with pay and fair remuneration, by occupation (%)



Satisfaction with pay and fair remuneration, by occupation (%)

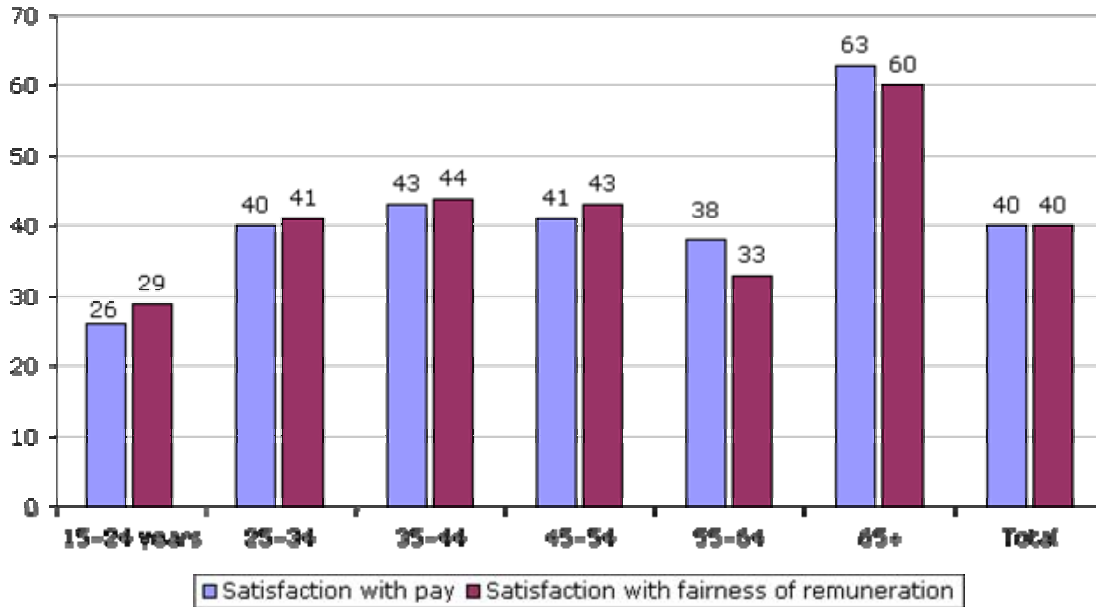
Notes: The data combine those who are very satisfied or satisfied with their pay or the fairness of their remuneration. The occupations are based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88).

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Impact of age

By age group, people aged 35–44 years are more satisfied, as are people working after retirement age (65+). For the latter group, economic activity – especially intellectual work and work in higher positions – is a matter of their own initiative and the income is likely to represent extra earnings alongside a pension rather than their sole livelihood. By contrast, young people at the outset of their working life (15–24 years of age) and people at pre-retirement age (55–64) – who represent groups at risk of unemployment – are less satisfied (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Satisfaction with pay and fair remuneration, by age (%)



Satisfaction with pay and fair remuneration, by age (%)

Note: The data combine those who are very satisfied or satisfied with their pay or the fairness of their remuneration.

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Influence of income

Satisfaction with pay also reflects the pay levels of different groups: those whose pay is higher are more satisfied with it. Those who are satisfied with their pay also regard the remuneration system as fairer, while people with low incomes view their work results as being unfairly rewarded. Overall, two main groups are dissatisfied with the fairness of their pay remuneration: newcomers to a job or to the labour market – that is, workers aged under 24 years or who have worked at their existing employer for less than three years – and low-skilled and low-income workers, often performing manual labour.

Job security

Like pay levels, job security is one of the most important aspects of working life. Statistically significant differences are found in attitudes to job security between basic socioeconomic groups.

Although this factor is more important for women than for men, more men are satisfied with their job security (Table 2). Nevertheless, no statistically significant difference arises in evaluating this aspect between men and women.

Job security is more important for people with secondary education than for those with basic education or no qualifications; the latter can depend on a social benefits system that ensures that they do not suffer a pronounced fall in income in the event of losing their job. Workers with a university education also place less priority on job security; their high qualifications mean that they do not have to worry so much about not finding another job. The higher their educational level, the more secure workers feel in their jobs.

Job security is important for people aged 35–54 years significantly more often than for other age groups, whereas it is less of a concern for young workers under the age of 25 years and those aged 65 years or more. While this factor is not as important for young people, they are significantly less satisfied with this aspect at the same time: only 43% expressed satisfaction with their job security.

Table 2: Importance of and satisfaction with job security, by gender, education level and age (%)

	Definitely important/important	Very satisfied/satisfied
Total	92	57
Gender		
Men	91	59
Women	93	55
Highest educational level		
Basic, no education	82	41
Secondary without GCSE*	93	48
Secondary with GCSE	93	62
University	89	77
Age		
15–24 years	81	43
25–34 years	92	63
35–44 years	95	59
45–54 years	94	54
55–64 years	88	56
65+ years	69	67

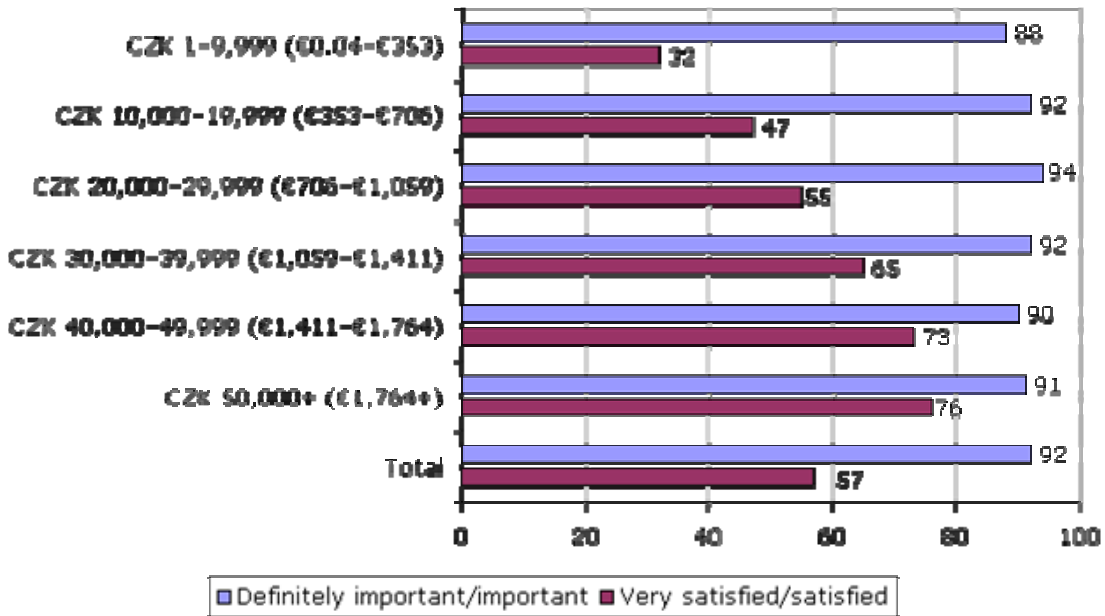
*Note: * GCSE = General Certificate of Secondary Education.*

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Influence of income

Job security is important to the majority of workers, regardless of their income. However, satisfaction with this factor differs according to income level. The more the monthly net income of a worker is, the greater the feeling of job security is (Figure 3). For example, 32% of workers in households earning a net monthly income of less than CZK 10,000 (€353 in 2006) are satisfied with their job security, compared with 76% of workers in households earning CZK 50,000 (€1,764) or more.

Figure 3: Importance of and satisfaction with job security, by monthly net household income (%)



Importance of and satisfaction with job security, by monthly net household income (%)

Note: The conversion from Czech koruna to euro used the average yearly exchange rate in 2006 of €1 = CZK 28.34, according to the Czech Central Bank (*Česká národní banka, ČNB*).

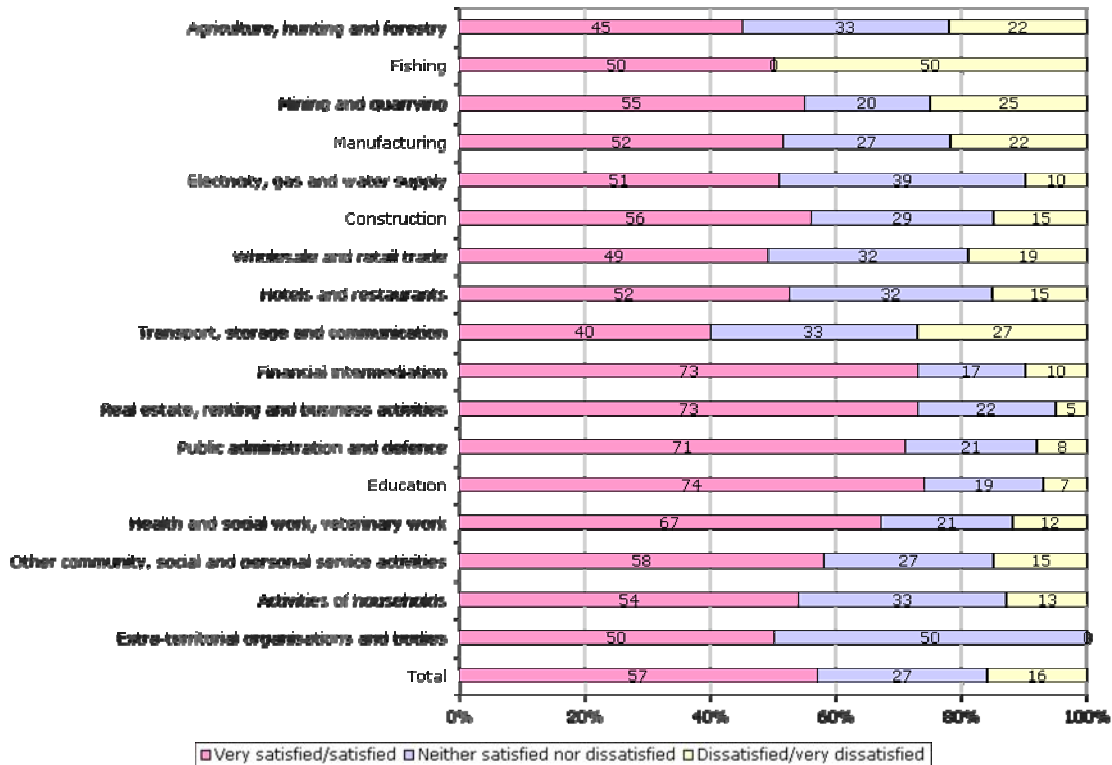
Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Effects of sector and employer type

While the importance of job security does not change by economic sector or type of employer, the opposite is true in the case of satisfaction with this aspect. Workers in the sectors of education, financial intermediation, real estate, public administration and health are statistically more satisfied than workers in transport, agriculture, wholesale and retail trade, fishing, public utilities, manufacturing, and hotels and restaurants (Figure 4).

Satisfaction with job security is also more often reported by employees of public organisations, such as state authorities, local government offices or public institutions. On the other hand, employees in companies that are more affected by economic developments – whether the enterprises are Czech-owned, foreign-owned or state-owned – feel less certain of their working future.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with job security, by sector (%)



Satisfaction with job security, by sector (%)

Notes: The values for workers in fishing, mining and quarrying, real estate activities, activities of households, and extra-territorial organisations and bodies may be distorted due to the low representation of respondents in these categories. The sectors are defined according to the General industrial classification of economic activities within the European Communities (*Nomenclature générale des activités économiques dans les Communautés européennes*, NACE).

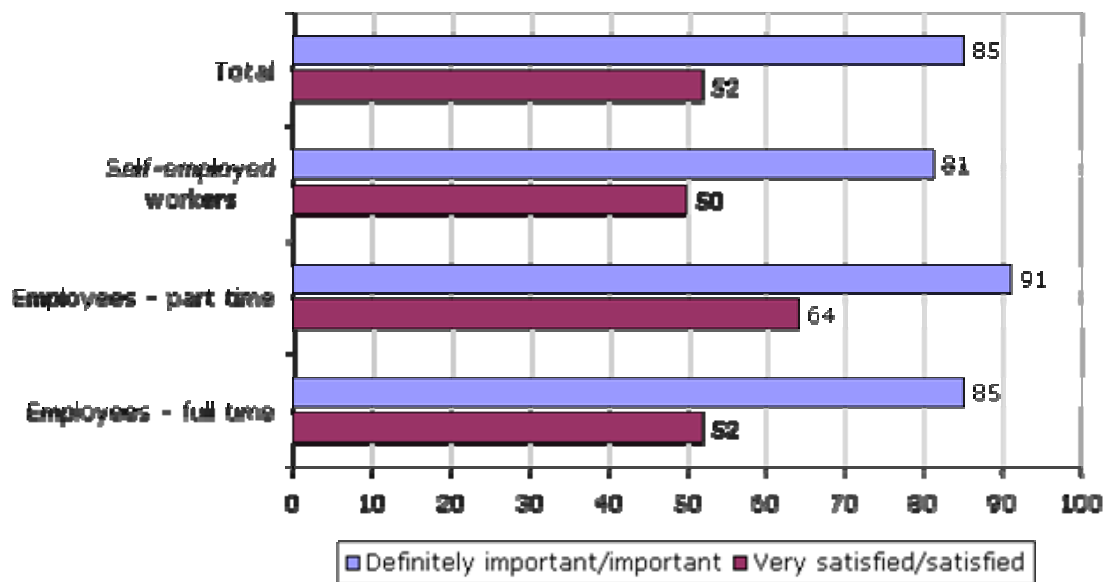
Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Work–life balance

Having enough time for family life, hobbies and relaxation is important for 85% of workers, particularly women, married people and parents of dependent children. Those aged under 24 years (77%) and single people (79%) attach less importance to this aspect. Paradoxically, the youngest age group is the most dissatisfied with their work–life balance, even though they generally do not have to care for a family and offspring. This logical discrepancy between the young generation’s low assessment of the importance of and higher degree of dissatisfaction with the amount of free time can be explained by a change of values towards leisure pursuits and consumption, requiring time for hobbies, enjoyment and having fun (Prudký, 2003). These demands increase the importance of free time and hobbies among the young generation in particular.

Every second worker (52%) is satisfied with the amount of time remaining for their personal life; almost one-fifth (19%) are dissatisfied, however. There is no significant statistical difference between the importance of this factor for employees and self-employed workers. Likewise, no difference is found between these groups in terms of satisfaction with the amount of time for their personal life. The only exception is employees working part time, who are more satisfied; however, these workers represent only 4% of the total number of respondents (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Importance of and satisfaction with work–life balance, by employment status (%)



Importance of and satisfaction with work–life balance, by employment status (%)

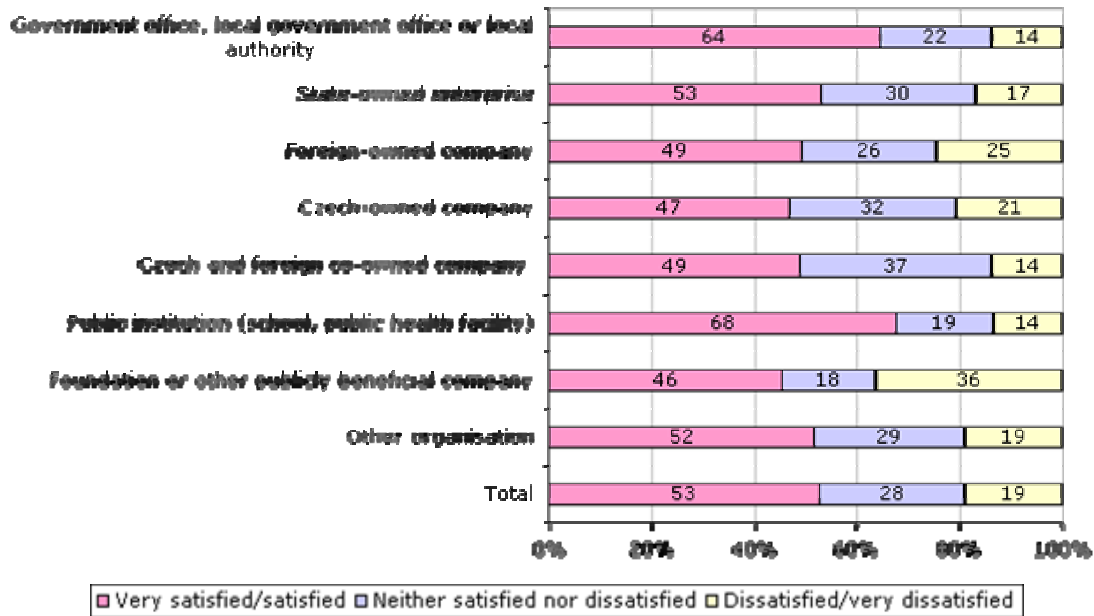
Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Influence of employer type

The type of employer is a more significant determinant of employees’ satisfaction with their work–life balance. Analysis shows that the public sector – comprising government offices, local government offices and public institutions – most often provides enough time for family, hobbies and relaxation (Figure 6). This is also the case for sectors typical to the public sector, such as public administration, education and other public and social services. The study finds these results despite the fact that the use of flexible forms of work is below average in these sectors (Hejzlarová and Tenglerová, 2008).

By way of contrast, employees in foreign-owned companies are more often dissatisfied with their work–life balance, as their workload is an obstacle to a satisfactory personal life. There is also a low level of satisfaction with the amount of time for personal life in the economic sectors of construction (40%), wholesale and retail trade (41%) and transport (38%), compared with the average.

Figure 6: Employees' satisfaction with work–life balance, by employer type (%)



Employees' satisfaction with work–life balance, by employer type (%)

Note: The values for employees working for foundations or other publicly beneficial companies may be distorted due to the low representation of respondents in these categories.

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Possibilities for training and personal development

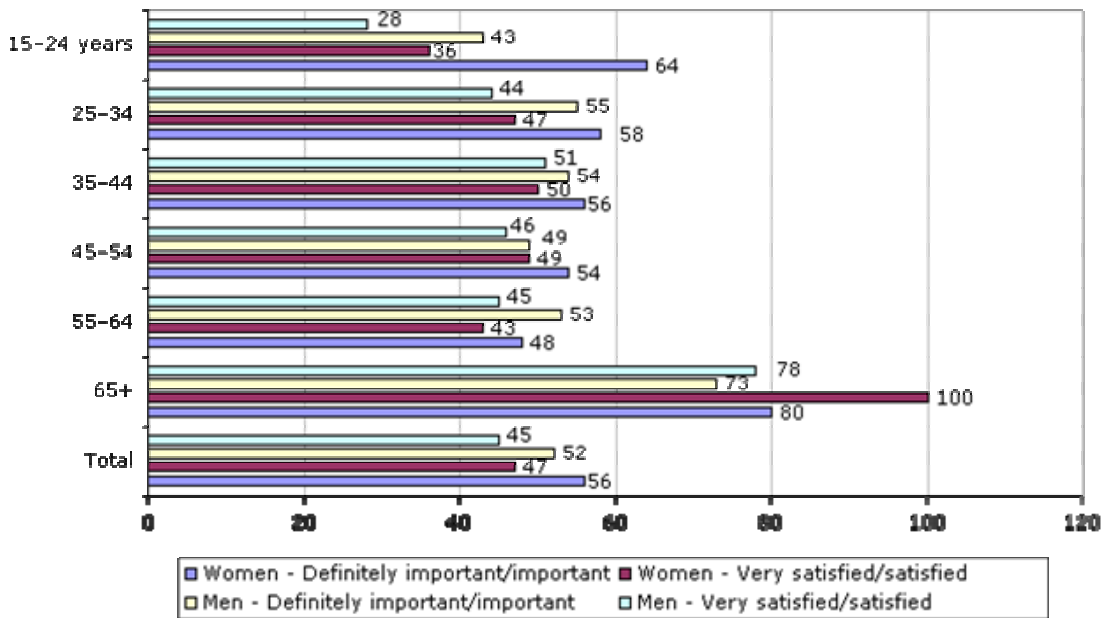
Opportunities for further learning and personal growth are not considered to be one of the most important aspects of work in the Czech Republic. Lifelong learning is still not a standard part of the working life of Czechs: employees and employers alike are not particularly concerned with vocational training and take part in it to a lesser extent than their counterparts in the 15 EU Member States before EU enlargement in 2004 (Matoušková and Kofroňová, 2006). Only 54% of Czechs consider this aspect important, according to the survey data; nevertheless, just 46% are satisfied with the possibilities for further learning, which shows that people are aware of the importance of training and qualifications for career development.

Age and gender effects

No statistically significant difference arises between men and women in terms of rating the importance of possibilities for training and personal development, or regarding satisfaction with this factor. The age of the worker does not influence the importance of training either.

Differences can be observed between age groups in their satisfaction with this aspect, however. Workers aged over 65 years are the most satisfied with possibilities for personal development; it should be noted that the percentages for this specific age group may be distorted due to the low representation of respondents in this category (Figure 7). By contrast, young workers aged 15 to 24 years – especially men (28%) – show the least satisfaction.

Figure 7: Importance of and satisfaction with possibilities for training and personal development, by age and gender (%)



Importance of and satisfaction with possibilities for training and personal development, by age and gender (%)

Note: The values for workers aged 65+ years may be distorted due to the low representation of respondents in this category.

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Impact of education

Workers with a higher level of educational attainment in high-skilled occupations value lifelong learning to a much greater extent than low-skilled workers in elementary occupations do (Figure 8). One of the assumptions is that those who attach great importance to education also seek and participate more in training, and so are statistically significantly more satisfied with the opportunities for training.

Figure 8: Importance of and satisfaction with opportunities for training and personal development, by occupation (%)



Importance of and satisfaction with opportunities for training and personal development, by occupation (%)

Note: The occupations are based on ISCO-88.

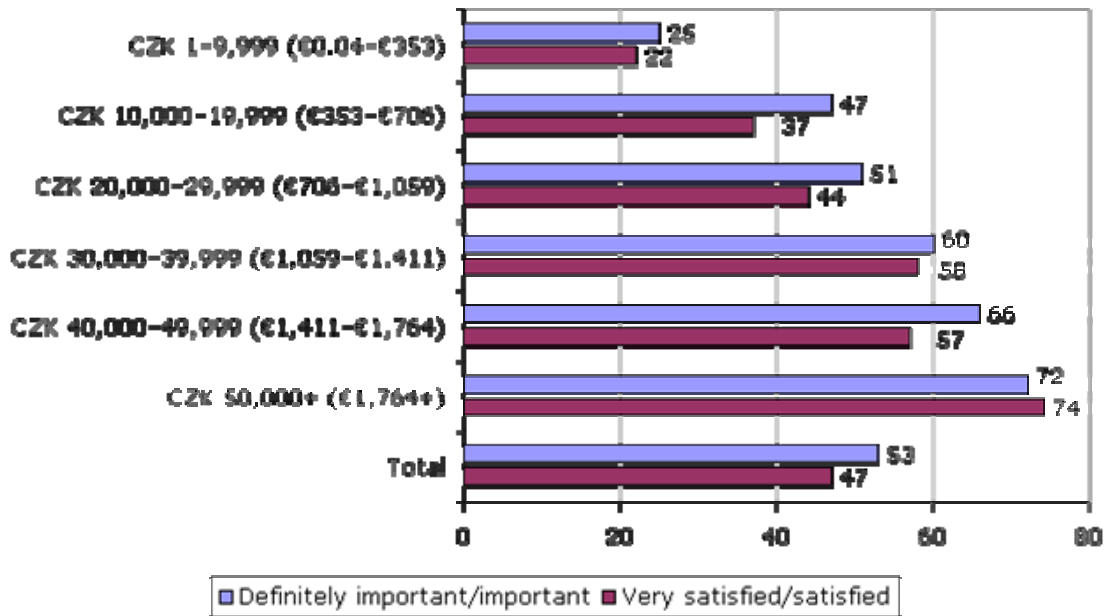
Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Influence of sector and income

Great differences can also be found between economic sectors. The importance ascribed to further learning and personal growth is significantly higher in sectors that demand high qualifications, such as financial intermediation (79%), education (76%), public administration and health (both 69%) and real estate (67%). Workers in these sectors also show above average satisfaction with the opportunities for lifelong learning: financial intermediation (77%), education and real estate (both 69%), public administration (59%) and health (58%).

The higher the monthly net income of the household, the more important the worker considers and the more satisfied the worker is with the possibilities for training and personal development (Figure 9). Many surveys – for example, Czesaná et al, 2007 – have revealed the problem of low-income groups showing little interest and participation in further education and the substantial gap between low and high-income workers in the Czech Republic in this regard.

Figure 9: Importance of and satisfaction with possibilities for training and personal development, by monthly net household income (%)



Importance of and satisfaction with possibilities for training and personal development, by monthly net household income (%)

Note: The conversion from Czech koruna to euro used the average yearly exchange rate in 2006 of €1 = CZK 28.34, according to the ČNB.

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Lifelong learning and personal growth are more important for self-employed people (61%) than for employees (53%); the latter are also less satisfied (45%) with the standard of training in the workplace than self-employed persons (58%). Satisfaction with the opportunities for training and career growth is higher among public sector workers – government office and local authority staff (60%), public institution staff (61%) – while employees of Czech-owned companies (36%) are significantly less satisfied.

Trade union membership

In the period following the overthrow of the communist regime in 1989, trade unions were often viewed as communist institutions. The membership and popularity of trade unions declined after 1989 and they only managed to regain legitimacy in public opinion in 2000 (Hála and Veverková, 2008). According to the results of the Quality of Working Life survey in 2006, just 18% of employed Czechs regard trade union membership as an important aspect of working life; in fact, 18% of workers are trade union members, according to the survey. However, 58% of respondents do not consider it as important. Meanwhile, 41% of employees are satisfied with the possibilities for trade union membership, almost one half (46%) are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and just 13% are dissatisfied. It is notable that the neutral expression of satisfaction with trade union membership (46%) was the highest among all of the aspects of working life examined.

Particularly significant sectoral differences emerge: trade union membership is a relatively important factor for workers in mining and quarrying, education and transport, whereas workers

in other sectors consider it important statistically less often (Table 3). In sectors where employees consider the aspect important, they are generally also more satisfied in this regard. Workers in construction, hotels and restaurants, and wholesale and retail trade are more often dissatisfied regarding the possibilities for trade union membership.

Table 3: Satisfaction with trade union membership, by sector (%)

	Importance (% of 'definitely important' and 'important' answers)	Satisfaction (% of 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied' answers)
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	14	32
Fishing	0	50
Mining and quarrying	39	64
Manufacturing	21	39
Electricity, gas and water supply	16	42
Construction	13	31
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and consumer goods	14	31
Hotels and restaurants	20	27
Transport, storage and communication	25	53
Financial intermediation	15	59
Real estate, renting and business activities	18	50
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security	23	43
Education	26	62
Health and social work, veterinary work	13	44
Other community, social and personal service activities	14	30
Activities of households	15	62
Extra-territorial organisations and bodies	0	0
Total	18	41

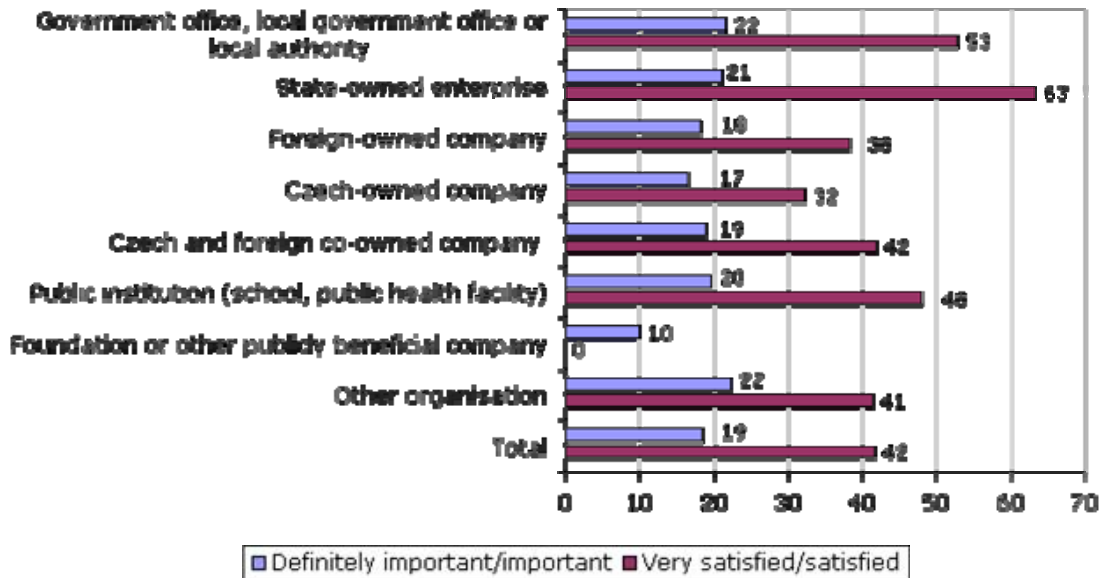
Notes: The values for workers in fishing, mining and quarrying, real estate activities, activities of households and extra-territorial organisations and bodies may be distorted due to the low representation of respondents in these categories. The sectors are defined according to NACE.

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Influence of employer type

Trade union organisations operate mainly in large companies and the survey results support that observation. This aspect is statistically more important among people working in enterprises with over 100 employees. On the other hand, employees in companies with up to 24 employees are more often dissatisfied in this regard; in most cases, there are no trade union organisations in these companies, which form the majority of enterprises in the Czech Republic. The results also reveal that trade union membership is least important for workers in Czech-owned companies, who are also more often dissatisfied with this aspect (Figure 10). By contrast, workers in public institutions are significantly more often satisfied with the opportunities for trade union membership.

Figure 10: Importance of and satisfaction with opportunities for trade union membership, by employer type (%)



Importance of and satisfaction with opportunities for trade union membership, by employer type (%)

Note: The values for employees working for foundations or other publicly beneficial companies may be distorted due to the low representation of respondents in these categories.

Source: Quality of Working Life survey, 2006

Commentary

The majority of Czechs are satisfied with their employment and with most of the aspects of working life examined. Czech people prefer stability in working relationships, look for job security and view changes – even those that could improve their situation – with mistrust and concern (Červenka, 2007).

Among Czech workers, there is a noticeable divide in the quality of working life, measured in terms of satisfaction with the two most important aspects of working life for Czechs – pay and job security. People with higher qualifications, workers in higher positions and with higher incomes, and workers aged 25–44 who are already established in their job and are approaching the peak of their career are generally more often satisfied with their pay and job security. On the other hand, workers with low incomes in low-skilled occupations and workers of pre-retirement age are often dissatisfied in this regard. Young workers aged 15–24 years are the group that is least satisfied with all the aspects considered.

Despite the frequent criticism of the public sector – regarding inefficiency, excessive bureaucracy or inflexibility – the survey shows that these workers are satisfied in relation to many aspects of working life, with the exception of pay levels. More specifically, public sector workers are satisfied with their job security, the opportunities for a good work–life balance and the possibilities for lifelong learning, personal and career growth, and trade union membership. By contrast, satisfaction with these elements of working life among employees of Czech-owned companies is notably lower.

To conclude, it should be mentioned that all of the survey results and findings are influenced by the timing of the survey. The study was conducted during a period of relative economic prosperity and negligible unemployment. It remains to be seen how people will perceive the importance of and their satisfaction with various aspects of the quality of working life during the current recession and global economic crisis.

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Annex: Methodology

The respondents of the 2006 Quality of Working Life survey were employed people in the Czech Republic aged 15 years or more. The survey sample is representative of those aged 15 years or over who were employees or self-employed during the week preceding the day of the survey, regardless of whether their working activity was permanent, temporary, seasonal or occasional, and whether they had one or more concurrent jobs. In this sense, for example, apprentices who receive wages, pay or other remuneration are treated as being employed under the same principle as other workers. Similarly, students and other people whose main activity is non-economic but who were employed during the previous week are also considered as being employed. The respondents were chosen by quota sampling on the basis of the ČSÚ Population and Housing Census from 2001. The data collection method was questionnaire-based standardised personal interviews between an interviewer and respondent. Some 2,043 respondents were questioned.

The following two rounds of questions were used in relation to the importance of and satisfaction with various aspects of working life.

Question 1: 'I'm now going to read out a list of various aspects that may generally play a role when you decide on a job. For each of them, please say whether the aspect is important to you personally in your life.'

- The work is interesting?
- The work is useful and meaningful?
- The work gives you opportunities for continued learning and personal growth?
- The degree of autonomy in your work?
- The amount of time taken up by your work?
- The standard of occupational health and safety in the workplace?
- The technical and technological equipment in the workplace?
- The level of pay or wages?
- Your work results are fairly remunerated?
- Non-financial job benefits, such as catering, longer leave or company telephone?
- The prospects and opportunities for career advancement?
- The behaviour and conduct of your superiors?
- Your relationships with colleagues?
- The low incidence of violence and bullying in the workplace?
- The opportunities for trade union membership?
- Being proud of the company?
- Job security?
- You have sufficient time for family, hobbies and relaxation?

Answers on the following scale: definitely important / important / neither important nor unimportant / unimportant / definitely unimportant (+ does not apply to me, don't know)

Question 2: ‘Now we will focus on your actual situation, based on the same aspects that you have just rated. This time, please tell me for each of them how satisfied you are personally in your current main job with:

- how interesting your work is?
- its usefulness and meaningfulness?
- opportunities for continued learning and personal growth?
- the degree of autonomy you have in your work?
- the amount of time your work takes up?
- the standard of occupational health and safety?
- the technical and technological equipment in your workplace?
- your pay or wages?
- the fairness of the remuneration of your work results?
- the non-financial benefits that your job offers, such as catering, longer leave or company telephone?
- the prospects and opportunities for career advancement?
- the behaviour and conduct of your superiors?
- your relationships with colleagues?
- the incidence of violence and bullying in the workplace in your current main job?
- the opportunity to join a trade union?
- whether you can be proud of the company/organisation?
- your current job security?
- the amount of time you have for family, hobbies and relaxation?

Answers on the following scale: very satisfied / satisfied / neither satisfied nor dissatisfied / unsatisfied / very unsatisfied (+ does not apply to me, don't know)

Several different socioeconomic characteristics were taken into account in the analyses: gender, age, education level, occupation (ISCO-88), sector (NACE), working time and status (full-time or part-time employees, self-employed), presence of trade unions in the company, perception of personal living standard, number of children, marital status and net monthly household income. Further characteristics were analysed only for employees: type of employer (public, private sector or non-governmental organisation (NGO)), size of company (number of employees in the enterprise or institution) and number of years working for one employer. In view of the limited scale of this report, only the most significant and interesting differences in the attitudes of various groups of respondents are highlighted.

Correlation analysis was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The correlation was tested using the statistical hypothesis chi-square test at a 5% significance level.

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