Work, wages and wellbeing - Online questionnaire responses

As part of its inquiry into work, wages and wellbeing, the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee asked the public to share their recent experiences of the labour market. This note explores some of the headline findings from the online questionnaire which received over 600 responses during the summer of 2015.

The online form was self-selecting; it was disseminated using the Parliament’s website, Facebook page and Twitter feed. It was also shared through the Committee’s own Twitter feed, and a number of stakeholder organisations as well as all local authorities were made aware of the survey and asked to share details among their own staff and networks. Our aim was to encourage as many people as possible to share their experiences with the Committee.

Who responded?

- The online form was open between June and August, receiving 607 responses. Of these, 357 (58%) were female and 252 (42%) were male.
- There were responses from all local authority areas of Scotland, except Shetland Islands.
- 29% of all respondents are employed in Edinburgh and 18% employed in Glasgow.
- All age groups responded to our call for evidence, with 5% of respondents in the under-25 age group, 19% between 25 and 34, 40% between 35 and 49, and 37% 50 years old or over.
- Roughly 60% of respondents work in the public sector, 30% in the private sector and 10% in the third sector. 5% of respondents were self-employed.

Good or bad jobs?

“\textit{I enjoy the job I do, but wish we (staff) were better valued, as in were paid a higher salary. Looking after people with various levels of dementia and mobility issues is physically and mentally draining. Add to this personal money worries and it can cause a turn-around in staff which is not beneficial to the service users.}”

\textit{Care Assistant, Glasgow}

Respondents were asked whether they considered their current job to be ‘good’ or ‘bad’.

They were then asked to provide reasons for their answer.

- 74% of respondents said they thought their job was ‘good’ and 26% answered ‘bad’.
- Of those saying their job was “good” most highlighted decent pay and job security. Job satisfaction and feeling valued by employers were also frequently mentioned.
- The most common reasons people gave for their job being ‘bad’ were low pay, poor management, hours and job insecurity.
Work, wages and wellbeing

“I have autonomy. Good working conditions which include flexible working, pleasant environment, adequate leave & pay. I also enjoy what I do and feel it has meaning and purpose.”

Programme Manager, Edinburgh

Reasons why people thought their job was ‘bad’

Has the quality of your job improved or deteriorated since you started?

- 382 respondents have been in their current job for 5 years or more.
- Of this group, 259 (68%) said their job had deteriorated since starting, 70 (18%) felt their job had improved and 53 (14%) thought job quality had stayed at the same level since they started.

Whilst I have a good salary, the general rise in prices means it is worth less to me now that when I started in this job. I am also finding myself working longer hours to do more at work, this is exacerbated to some extent by poor management.”

Information officer, Edinburgh

“I have been promoted twice into more interesting roles since starting. Additionally, the company became a living wage employer during my time here - when I started, I was earning just over £7 per hour and my pay has improved since then.”

Business consultant, Edinburgh
Has your mental or physical health ever been impacted by your job?

- Respondents were asked whether or not their mental or physical health had ever been impacted by their job. 379 respondents (62%) answered “yes” and 228 (38%) answered “no”.
- Respondents were given an opportunity to explain their answers. Of those who answered, the vast majority (88%) mentioned stress, anxiety or depression. Around 7% complained of extreme tiredness, and 6% mentioned back problems or other musculoskeletal issues.
- It is worth noting that a small number of respondents highlighted the positive health impacts of re-joining the labour market after a period out of work.

Two episodes of stress depression 3-4 months off one of six months requiring psychiatric evaluation and counselling. Back injury and two operations.

Health visitor, West Lothian

“I was on a zero hours contract; then a full time temporary, now on a part time permanent with some weeks having more hours. I can’t live like this, not knowing how much money I’m earning to keep my family.”

Council employee, Stirling
Work, wages and wellbeing

What factors would most improve your job quality?

- Respondents were given the choice of 8 factors which would improve their jobs and asked to rank them from 1 to 8.
- Many respondents identified one or two factors of importance and were relatively indifferent to the others.

The four factors receiving the highest number of top rankings were:

- Higher hourly pay
- Better managers
- More opportunities for flexible working
- More say over workplace changes

“Staff have minimal involvement in organisational decision making and there is a lack of communication between senior managers and staff.”

*Third sector worker, Glasgow*

“All I want is a secure, permanent job with variety and scope to add value to the firm’s business and utilise my skills set and qualifications.”

*Temporary administrator, Edinburgh*

For more information visit [www.scottish.parliament.uk/workwageswellbeing](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/workwageswellbeing) or contact the Committee at—

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