



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Quality of life in the Spanish workplace, 2003

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This report is available in electronic format only.

The main results of the 2003 survey on quality of life in the workplace suggest that, in general, Spanish workers are satisfied at work. Most of them approve of their safety conditions and feel positive about relations with their colleagues. In addition, stress levels seem to have gone down. However, the gender gap remains particularly acute when it comes to types of contracts, working hours, carrying out house chores, and taking care of children and the elderly.

Introduction

The [2003 survey on quality of life in the workplace](#) (in Spanish; Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo 2003) is the fifth edition of a survey which has been carried out annually by the [Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#) since 1999. The study aims at assessing the situation for workers in the workplace, providing data on the activities they carry out and their relations at work, along with subjective information arising from the workers' own perceptions about their working conditions.

Results

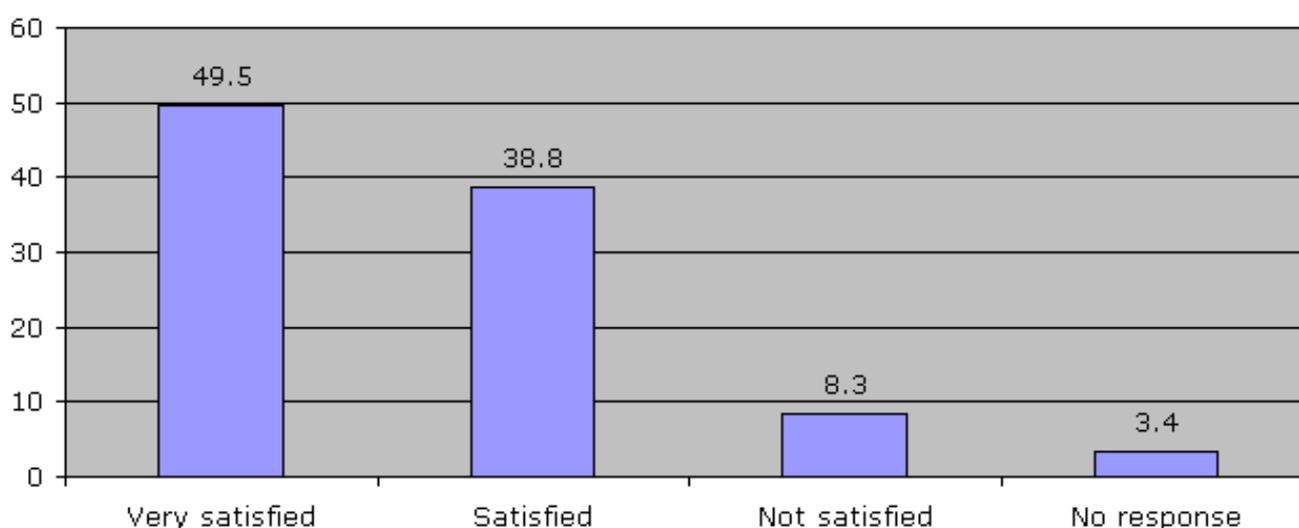
Following the survey analysis, this report presents the principal results under six main topics:

- Satisfaction in the workplace
- Work environment
- Work organisation
- Training and career development
- Labour and geographic mobility
- Work-life balance

Satisfaction in the workplace

According to the workers themselves, the average degree of satisfaction in the workplace is 6.84 points on a scale ranging from zero to 10, being slightly higher among men (6.90 points) than women (6.73 points). Regarding the degree of work satisfaction, 88.3% of Spanish workers are either satisfied or very satisfied with their respective jobs (49.5% report being very satisfied), compared with 8.3% who are not satisfied with their occupation.

Figure1 Levels of satisfaction among workers, 2003



Source: 2003 Survey on quality of life in the workplace, Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004

The highest degrees of satisfaction are reported by men, workers aged above 30, those in services, university degree holders, salaried women working at their family businesses, male entrepreneurs or professionals with employees, male cooperative workers, and those in large companies. Business and public administration managers report the highest average satisfaction, compared with non-qualified workers, who show the lowest average satisfaction.

The underlying causes of satisfaction among workers are: enjoying the job (28% of replies), comradeship (12%) and a good salary (7.6%). Although men and women equally value enjoying their work (28% for men; 27.9% for women), there are remarkable differences in other factors, based on gender, age, educational attainment and occupation. For instance, men value a good salary (9%), professional stability (4.9%) and independence (5.1%) more than their female counterparts, who rate these factors at 5.2%, 3.6% and 3.6%, respectively. Women particularly appreciate comradeship (13.1% for women; 11.3% for men), suitable working hours (9.6% for women; 6.2% for men) and personal development (5.9% for women; 4.3% for men).

The principal causes of dissatisfaction at work are: having a low salary (23.2%), inconvenient working hours (14.4%) and physically demanding work (12.5%).

Work environment

On average, workers rate the degree of attractiveness and interest of their job at 6.83 points (on a scale of zero to 10); 63.5% of them rating it as attractive or interesting. Men, older workers, university degree holders and employees in large firms show the highest average values in finding their work interesting.

The average degree of monotony and boredom in the workplace of workers is set at 3.24 points. It is very similar among men and women but drops as educational attainment increases. 57% of the workers surveyed never or hardly ever get bored; 30.1% get bored sometimes and 11.4% are always (or frequently) bored. The latter is most commonly found among non-qualified workers.

The survey shows that the average level of work stress is 4.44 points. Fewer than a third (27.6%) of those surveyed work in stressful conditions always or frequently, while 39.8% never or hardly ever feel stressed at work. University degree holders, public administration employees, and technicians and professionals are the groups rating their work as most stressful.

Table 1 Average stress level of workers (from 0 to 10), by professional status, 2003

Professional status	Average stress level at work
Employees	4.52
- Public sector	5.13
- Private sector	4.37
Self-employed with employees	5.00
Self-employed without employees	3.89
Non-salaried worker employed at the family business	2.02
Employee at the family business	3.51
Cooperative worker	3.65
Average	4.44

Source: 2003 Survey on quality of life in the workplace, Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004.

76.3% of workers are satisfied or very satisfied with their physical work environment, compared with 6.5% who

report being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Similarly, 77.1% of workers are satisfied with health and safety conditions in the workplace, while 6.8% rate these as dissatisfactory or very dissatisfactory. More than 70% of workers state that they never or hardly ever work in dangerous conditions, compared with 13.4% who always (or frequently) perceive risks at work.

The rate of danger varies significantly across sectors, the most dangerous being mining (65.9% of workers always or frequently work in dangerous conditions), fishing (35.6%), construction (32.2%) and transport (29.0%). More than three quarters of workers (77.1%) who work in dangerous conditions always (or frequently) protect themselves against risks, while 5.6% never or hardly ever do so.

More than two thirds of workers (71.2%) are given information by the company or find it themselves (always or frequently), but 11.8% never or hardly ever have such information.

Data also reveal that 27.7% of male employees work on a temporary contract, while the figure rises to 34.4% for female employees. Almost 90% of workers work full time, compared with 10% who work part time. Of that 10%, more than half have voluntarily opted for part-time work, while the remainder have been forced to accept such a position. Female part-time work exceeds male part-time work by 18 percentage points (21.1% and 3.3%, respectively - see Table 2). Further gender differences include the fact that 59% of working women work full day shifts without a lunch break, 15 percentage points more than their male counterparts (43.3%). Less than half of employees (40.6%) have to work some Saturdays, while 21% have to work some Sundays.

Table 2 % distribution of workers by working hours, by gender, 2003

Working hours	% workers		
	Men	Total	Women
Full-time	78.2	96.2	89.4
Part-time	21.1:	3.3:	10.0:
- (Voluntary)	(11.5)	(2.0)	(5.6)
- (Involuntary)	(9.6)	(1.3)	(4.4)
No answer given	0.7	0.5	0.6

Source: 2003 Survey on quality of life in the workplace, Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004.

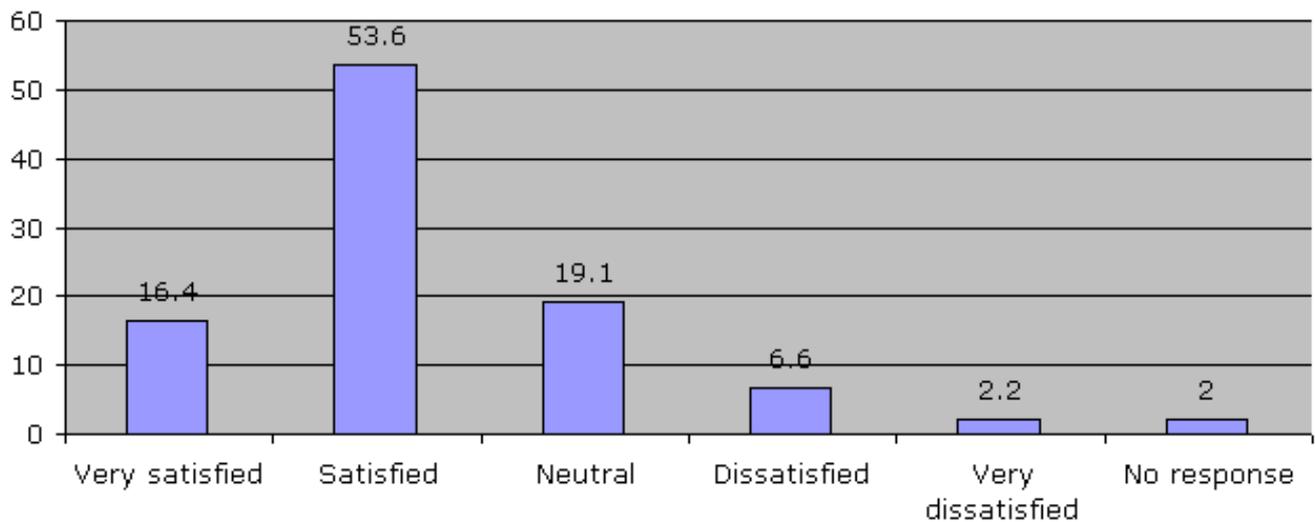
Regarding their salary, 46.8% of workers are either satisfied or very satisfied, while 24.1% are dissatisfied. Men, youngest workers, university degree holders, entrepreneurs and professionals with employees, and business and public administration managers report the highest satisfaction with their respective salaries.

Concerning social benefits provided by companies to their workers, 7% receive support for nursery school, housing and old-age pensions; between 11% and 15% of workers receive support for health, education and food; 19.7% receive transport benefits; and 23.4% are granted training benefits. Benefits among employees in the public sector are greater than among those in the private sector. For example, 30.1% of public sector workers have access to health and 15.8% to housing benefits, figures which are well above the 9.1% and 3.3% of private sector workers who have access to these benefits, respectively.

Work organisation

More than two thirds of Spanish workers (70%) are satisfied with their work organisation, the highest levels being reported by private sector workers. The lowest satisfaction degree is reported among public sector workers with educational attainment below primary education (2.2%).

Figure 2 Satisfaction with work organisation among workers, 2003



Source: 2003 Survey on quality of life in the workplace, Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004

Fewer than one fifth of Spanish workers (16.8%) carry out supervisory tasks at work, with a marked difference being found by gender: 20.2% of men have such a role, compared with 11.2% of women. Workers in the 45-54 age group, university degree holders, entrepreneurs and professionals with employees, business and public administration managers, workers in financial services and employees in large companies report the highest likelihood of carrying out supervisory tasks at work. The most frequent tasks are checking the completion of work (89%), and arranging work and tasks (86.1%).

More than four fifths of surveyed workers (82.1%) report doing the same work each day, a finding particularly frequent among women, 55-64 year-old employees, workers with less than primary education, private sector employees and those working in very small companies. Two thirds of employees (66.3%) who change tasks need to acquire new knowledge as a result of the change.

Regarding work pace, 57.1% of workers never have to adapt to the pace of a machine while 68% report that their work never depends on reaching a target.

Half of men and women (56% and 52.5%, respectively) are satisfied with the autonomy they are granted to carry out their job. It is worth noting that 23.3% of men and 26.9% of women are dissatisfied in this respect.

Over two thirds of Spanish workers (72.2%) have a good relationship with their colleagues, and 58.6% consider that relations between managers and employees are good.

Concerning the degree of involvement with the company, 66.9% of men and 68.4% of women report knowing well or quite well the organisation chart and business goals. The average knowledge that workers have of the company's goals is set at 6.90 points (6.93 among men and 6.85 among women), the highest levels being found among university degree holders, public sector employees, business and public administration managers, technicians and professionals, and workers in financial services.

Almost one third of women (30.8%) are unwilling to work longer hours in order to help the company; true also for 23.9% of men. On the other hand, 21.3% of male employees strongly agree (15.5% for women) and 28.8% agree (15.7% for women) with working longer hours to help the company.

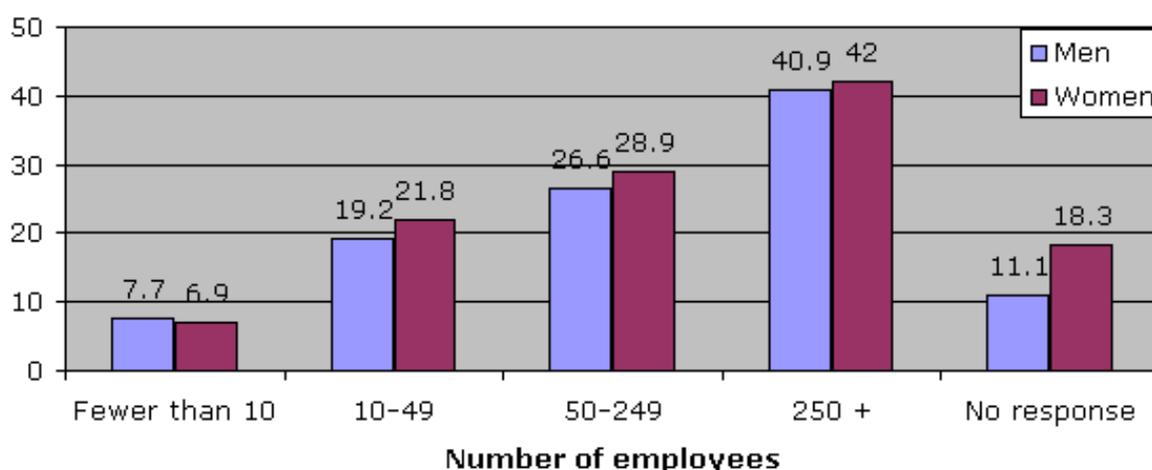
One third of men (33.6%) and 28.8% of women are very proud of working at their organisation. The average level

of pride is set at 7.51 points, being slightly higher among men (7.57) than women (7.41). The highest level of pride is reported by older workers, university degree holders, public administration employees, technicians and professionals, and workers in education. However, this does not mean that workers always adopt company problems as their own: 32.8% of women and 27% of men feel unrelated to the problems of their company.

Training and career development

Continuing training is offered to 31.7% of employees; this percentage is directly related to the size of the company. Thus, only 11.9% of the employees in the smallest companies (fewer than 10 employees) receive any training, well below the 31.1% in small firms (10-49 employees), the 46.6% in medium firms (50-249 employees), and the 69.4% in large firms (more than 250 employees). University degree holders (62.4%), and business and public administration managers (80.9%) take part more frequently in continuing training activities.

Figure 3 % of employees taking part in training activities, by gender and by company size, 2003



Source: 2003 Survey on quality of life in the workplace, Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004

Three quarters of the surveyed workers (75.8%) believe that they have adequate training for their position, while 17.7% state that they are over qualified for the job. At 23.5%, women report being over qualified more frequently than do men (14.2%). Among university degree holders, this figure rises to 26.6%.

More than half of surveyed employees (55.7%) consider that their chances of being promoted are not related to their training. In addition, 52.7% believe that acquiring new knowledge through training does not increase their likelihood of being promoted; 20.6% think the opposite. Finally, 83% of surveyed employees regard the company training they have received as useful for their work, while 8.8% feel it has not been of use. It could be concluded that workers consider training to be more useful in equipping them to carry out existing functions than in aiding career development.

Labour and geographic mobility

More than a quarter of surveyed employees (28%) reported that they were still working for their first employer, the percentage being greater among women (32.8%) than men (25.1%). University degree holders, employees at businesses run by their family, and technicians and professionals remain most frequently with their first employer. Meanwhile, 72% of surveyed workers have changed employer at least once, the most common reasons being promotion (29.2%), increased salary (17.2%) and a better contract (14.2%). Greatest labour mobility is found among workers with only primary education level (see Table 3).

Table 3 % of workers who have changed jobs at least once, by educational attainment, 2003

Educational attainment	% of workers
Under primary education	77.6
Primary education	81.5
Secondary education	72.3
University education	62.4
Average	72.0

Source: 2003 Survey on quality of life in the workplace, Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004.

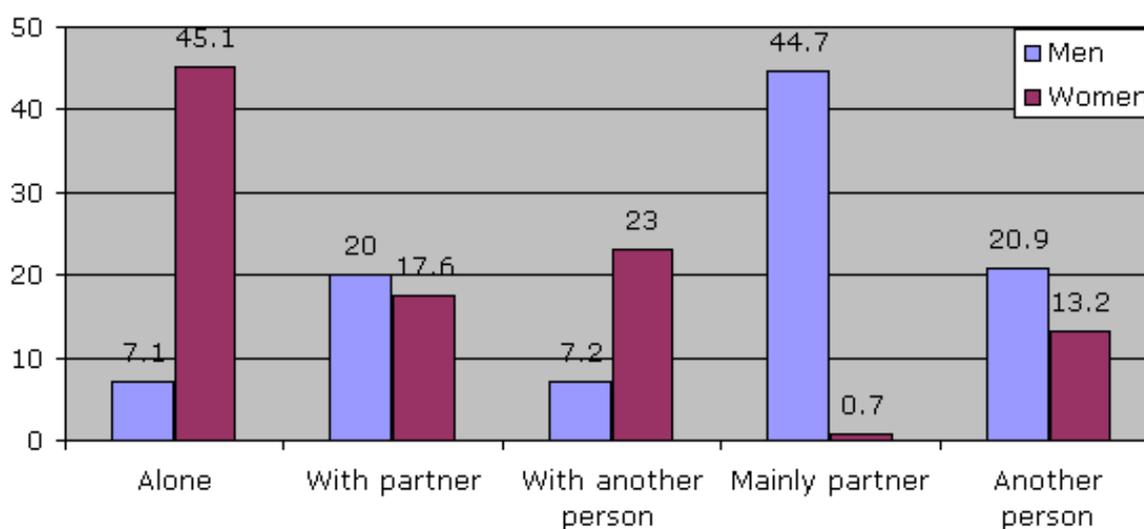
Almost 90% of workers are not looking for a new job. Among the remaining 10.4% wishing to change jobs, 52.1% are looking for an improved situation in general terms, and 36.8% want to change due to the temporary status and insecurity of their current occupation.

Concerning geographic mobility, 25.5% of Spanish workers work in a region different to the one in which they were born, so 74.5% are currently working in their region of birth. Madrid and Catalonia report the greatest intake of workers from other regions.

Work-life balance

Almost half of female workers (45.1%) take on the household chores without any help, which is true for just 7.1% of male workers. 23.0% of women (7.2% of men) share these tasks with someone else (who is not their partner) and 13.2% (20.9% for men) hire someone to do this work.

Figure 4 Responsibility of household chores, by gender, 2003



Source: 2003 Survey on quality of life in the workplace, Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004

A breakdown of tasks reveals that female workers carry out most of the household chores by themselves, with the exception of house repairs. Furthermore, responsibility for housework is mainly taken on by women, irrespective of

having children or not. Meanwhile, 40% of female workers with children under 12 take care of them mainly by themselves outside work, while this percentage drops to just 3.1% among their male counterparts. This huge discrepancy also holds in caring for the elderly.

Trends

The survey on quality of life in the workplace has been carried out since 1999, which limits the trends to a five-year period. This section presents the most significant changes in data, as shown in Table 4 below. Most indicators have remained relatively stable in the period under consideration, the most significant changes being the following:

- The principal conclusion of the 2003 survey is that the average satisfaction degree of Spanish workers is quite high (6.84 points on a scale from zero to 10), consolidating the upward trend observed since 1999. This finding is reinforced by results across a series of indicators. Thus, around 80% of workers are satisfied with the physical environment, and health and safety conditions of their work. In addition, 70% of them regard their job as interesting and are satisfied with their social relations with colleagues at work. Satisfaction with salary and participation in company decisions is at 50%.
- There is a small reduction in the average degree of stress, which has dropped from 4.9 points in 1999 to 4.4 in 2003.
- The average degree of participation, that is to say, the extent to which workers may give their opinion and make suggestions about their job, has gone down from 5.9 points in 1999 to 5.2 in 2003.
- After a small decline in 2001, the average level of knowledge of the company's goals among workers has risen again to 6.9 points in 2003 (6.4 in 1999).
- The percentage of workers who rate their jobs as interesting has fallen below 64% in 2003 from a high of 68.1% in 2001.
- Enjoying one's work is still the greatest cause of satisfaction at work, though its relative weight is less than it was in 1999. A good working atmosphere/comradeship and suitable working hours have increased their ratings.

Table 4 Evolution of some selected indicators, 1999, 2001 and 2003

	1999	2001	2003
1. Average satisfaction level (*)	6.6	6.8	6.8
2. Average stress level (*)	4.9	4.8	4.4
3. Average degree of pride in work carried out (*)	7.8	7.5	7.5
4. Average level of monotony (*)	3.6	3.2	3.2
5. Average level of participation (*)	5.9	5.7	5.2
6. Average level of knowledge of company goals (*)	6.4	6.1	6.9
7. % distribution of workers who rate their job as interesting			
- agree	65.3	68.1	63.5
- neutral	20.2	17.6	21.0
- disagree	13.7	13.8	14.2
- no response	0.9	0.6	1.3

8. % distribution of workers by satisfaction factors at work			
- Enjoy job	34.3	24.5	28.0
- Good salary	7.5	7.7	7.6
- Good working atmosphere/comradeship	9.6	11.8	12.0
- Good working hours	4.6	7.5	7.5
- Stability	5.2	3.4	4.4
- Autonomy/independence when making decisions	4.9	5.9	4.5
- Vocational/personal development	6.9	7.4	4.9
- Own/family business	6.8	4.4	5.8
- Other	20.3	27.4	25.4
(*) On a scale ranging from zero to 10			
Source: Survey on quality of life in the workplace, Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid. 1999, 2001, 2003.			

Methodology

The 2003 survey on quality of life in the workplace provides statistical information on life quality at work in Spain. The survey aims at:

- finding out about life quality in the workplace for workers (both salaried workers and self-employed). In particular, the survey aims at gathering information on situations and activities at work, along with the subjective perception that people have of their working conditions and relationships, and their degree of satisfaction in the workplace.
- obtaining information on the labour situation of workers (regarding their job, professional career, integration at work and promotion procedures, and the family structure and situation), since all these factors play a key role in assessing life quality in the workplace.
- obtaining socio-economic data of workers in order to relate results with their labour situation.

Table 5 Details on the survey on quality of life in the workplace

Survey name	Survey on quality of life in the workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo)
Organisation	Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Frequency	Annual. First edition: 1999. Latest edition: 2003
Geographic coverage	The whole of Spain except Ceuta and Melilla (Spanish territories in Northern Africa)
Surveyed population	Working people, both employed and self-employed, aged 16 and above, living in family households
Sample	6,020 surveyed people
Interviews	Interviews are carried out in person (not by telephone),

	at the households of the surveyed workers
Website	http://www.mtas.es/estadisticas/ECVT/Welcome.htm (in Spanish)
Source: Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo 2003 (2003 Survey on quality of life in the workplace), Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004. Available at: http://www.mtas.es/estadisticas/ECVT/Welcome.htm	

Commentary

The survey on quality of life in the workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo) has a short history, as the first results date from 1999. Obviously, this fact impedes the identification of long-term trends on the issue. However, the survey is a valuable tool for obtaining a complete overview of current working conditions in the Spanish labour market; a second official Spanish survey on the issue of working conditions (National Survey on Working Conditions) focuses primarily on occupational health and safety. The survey on quality of life in the workplace aims at a wider perspective, dealing with issues such as satisfaction at work, work environment and organisation, continuing training and career development, labour and geographic mobility and achieving a work-life balance.

From a policy perspective, the results of the survey provide two interesting conclusions. They underline the need to focus the attention of policymakers on several sectors in which workers seem to be particularly at risk of experiencing dangerous working conditions (such as mining, fishing, construction and transport). The survey also shows the significant gender differences that remain in working conditions (satisfaction at work, salary, temporary status, etc), especially when referring to the issue of reconciling work and family life, where the gap is most obvious.

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