

Executive summary

These OECD Guidelines aim to support the measurement of the quality of the working environment among official statistics. They describe the conceptual frameworks that have underpinned the measurement initiatives undertaken in this field in the past, discuss their operationalisation and methodological issues, and propose different survey modules that could be included by national statistical offices (NSOs) into their regular household surveys.

In this report, as well as in the broader OECD framework on job quality, the “working environment” is understood as a *combination of job characteristics* defining the setting where workers operate. The concept is multidimensional and encompasses a broad range of non-pecuniary characteristics of the job, ranging from the nature of the work tasks assigned to each worker to the physical and social conditions under which these tasks are carried out, the characteristics of the firm or organisation where work takes place, the scheduling of working time, the prospects that the job provides to workers and the intrinsic rewards associated with the job. The concept denotes those *observable characteristics* of the job as they are experienced by workers. These Guidelines recommend that job characteristics are measured by looking at *outcomes* rather than *procedures* (e.g. labour codes or firm-level practices), refer to experiences made by *individual workers* rather than what is observed at the aggregate level, and capture *objective* aspects of the job rather than *subjective* evaluations of it.

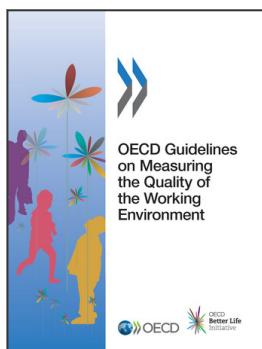
These Guidelines extend previous work on the measurement of social conditions and progress. They complement the OECD’s *Job Quality Framework* (Cazes, Hijzen and Saint Martin, 2015) as well as UNECE’s *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment* (2015), aiming to: i) improve the international comparability of measures in this field; ii) increase data availability on less conventional aspects of the working environment such as psychological risks, emotional demands and intrinsic rewards; iii) increase the periodicity of the data collected, facilitating monitoring and policy intervention; and iv) raise the number of countries for which high-quality measures of the quality of the working environment are currently produced.

These Guidelines are intended as a resource for both data producers and data users interested in the measurement of the quality of the working environment, with different chapters of this report addressing the needs of different types of users. Chapter 2 describes the current situation of data on the working environment and the policy initiatives that have focused on the working environment and the broader notion of job quality. Chapter 3 documents the significant inequalities in working conditions that exist between different groups of workers and the conceptual frameworks that have been used to understand how the working environment impacts upon workers’ well-being, their health and productivity. Chapter 4 presents the measurement framework used in this report to describe the quality of the working environment and how this framework compares to other used in the

literature in this field. Chapter 5 operationalises this measurement framework through survey questions that are empirically assessed for their statistical validity (by examining the extent to which questions from different international surveys produce consistent results across countries) covering six broad dimensions and 17 more detailed job characteristics included in them with each characteristic categorised as either a “job demand” or as a “job resource” available to workers. Finally, Chapter 6 provides guidance on a number of methodological issues that needs to be considered when collecting information on the quality of the working environment.

These Guidelines also propose three prototype question modules on the working environment (ranging from an *extended module* of 25 questions covering all the 17 job characteristics that could be included as a stand-alone module or survey, to a *condensed module* of 13 questions with the strongest evidence on statistical validity and limited to the 11 job characteristics that are most relevant for workers’ well-being, to a *core module* of four questions that could be included in non-specialised general social surveys and implemented on a yearly basis.

Overall, these Guidelines underscore how differences in the working environment shape the disparities that people experience in the labour markets, and the strong policy demands for better metrics of people’s working conditions (witnessed by the inclusion of targets relating to job quality and decent work in the 2030 Agenda).



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