

Is any job better than no job?

Assessing the quality of jobs in Northern Ireland

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Concern with job quality in Northern Ireland

The latest draft NI Executive Programme for Government 2016-2021 included as 1 of its 14 strategic outcomes:

‘we have more people working in better jobs’

**DRAFT PROGRAMME
FOR GOVERNMENT
FRAMEWORK**
2016-21

Concern with job quality in Northern Ireland

Similarly, Department for the Economy recently published consultation Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland document - 'Economy 2030' - which aims to:

*'invest into bringing **more and better jobs** to Northern Ireland and increasing our competitiveness.'*

*'do all that we can to get more people into work **and earning more** so that everyone has the opportunity to share in the gains of growing prosperity.'*



Impetus for international concern with job quality

- Growing concern about the spread of 'bad jobs'.
 - Debate centred around questions such as:
 - Is work becoming more precarious?
 - Is work not being rewarded in the same way/to the same extent that it used to be?
 - Is work becoming increasingly polarised between 'good' and 'bad' jobs?
 - Are 'bad' jobs getting increasingly 'bad'?
- Growing concern given the potentially profound influence which job quality has for:
 - Overall wellbeing of the worker.
 - Business performance and outcomes.
 - Broader economic and societal wellbeing/progress.

Research Questions

- What is the quality of jobs available in Northern Ireland?
- Do particular groups of the workforce have a higher likelihood of working in poor quality jobs?
- What is the relationship between the different aspects of job quality?
i.e. do those who do badly on one aspect of job quality also do badly on other aspects?
- What impact does poor job quality have on the health and well-being outcomes of individuals?

Data & Methods

- Utilised the Poverty and Social Exclusion Northern Ireland (2012) survey.
- Interviews were carried out with 988 households and 2,311 individuals.
- Of these, 1,256 were working aged adults (18 to 64), with 722 in employment.
- Weighted data are used in all of the analyses
(Total weighted sample = 897)

Conceptualising and operationalising job quality

OECD Multidimensional Conceptualisation	Operationalisation
Quality of earnings	Income poverty Deprivation poverty PSE poverty
Job security	Perceived job security
Quality of working environment	Satisfaction/sense of value; Stress; Control/flexibility; Quality of the physical environment.

Findings: Earnings quality

	Poor	Not Poor
	%	%
Income poor	14.9	85.1
Deprivation poor	27.3	72.7
PSE poor	15.3	84.7

Key risk factors associated with in-work poverty

Age	Younger adults (and in particular those aged 25-34).
Education	No qualifications/below degree
Social class	Semi-routine/routine & small employers/own account workers.
Hours worked	Low hours (1-19 hours) Albeit the results in terms of the proportions who work between 20-40 and 41+ are still substantial).
Employment status	Part-time employees
Household composition	Households with children (in particular lone parent households)
Sector of employment	Private sector
Industrial sector	Construction sector workers highest risk, followed by services sector.

Findings: Job Security



Over **1** in **3** in *insecure* job.

Key risk factors associated with job insecurity

Educational qualifications	Strong gradient – no qualifications at highest risk
Social class	Lower supervisory occupations & self-employed/own account workers.
Hours worked	Gradient, particularly higher risk of those who work the least hours (1-19) to perceive job as insecure.
Employment status	Self-employed highest risk
Sector of employment	Private sector
Industrial sector	Construction sector (2/3's perceive as insecure) manufacturing sector & services sector (1/3 perceive as insecure)

Findings: Quality of the working environment

	Yes	No
	%	%
(High) Satisfaction/Sense of value	74.0	26.0
(Low) Stress	34.3	65.7
(High) Control or flexibility	51.1	48.9
(Good) Physical environment	54.6	45.4

Key factors associated with poor quality working environment

	High stress	Low satisfaction/value	Low control/flexibility	Poor physical environ
Gender	n.s.	n.s.	n.s. (different drivers)	Males
Age	Middle-aged adults (35-54)	Youngest adults (18-24)	Gradient with age (lower younger)	Younger
Educational qualifications	Degree or higher	Below degree	n.s.	No qualifications/Below degree
Social class	Managerial/Professional	Semi-routine/Routine	Semi-routine/Routine Lower supervisory	Lower supervisory/technical, Small employers, Semi routine/Routine
Hours worked	20+ hours	Low working hours (1-19)	High hours (41+)	n.s.
Employment status	Full-time	Part-time	Part-time	n.s.
Household composition	n.s.	Lone parents	Lone parents	n.s.
Sector of employment	Public sector	Private sector	n.s.	Private
Industrial sector	n.s.	Manufacturing	Manufacturing/Services	Other

Relationships between dimensions of job quality

- A story of both **distinct and common risk factors** across the dimensions of job quality.
- Distinct factors: Highlights importance of not just focusing on one aspect of job quality, as not always same groups who are doing badly.
- Nevertheless, across the 3 dimensions poor conditions is consistently more prevalent amongst:
 - Young.
 - Self-employed/Own-account workers.
 - Those with children (particularly lone parents).
 - Semi-routine/routine occupations.

Overlaps between the dimensions of job quality

- **35%** of working-age adults in paid employment have poor job quality on 1 of the 3 dimensions.
 - **13%** have poor job quality across 2 of the 3 dimensions.
 - **1%** are considered to have poor job quality across all 3 dimensions.
- The relatively small numbers who do badly on all 3 dimensions has important implications for the proposed '*Better Jobs Index*'.

Impact of poor earnings quality for workers health and wellbeing

	Low overall life satisfaction	Has long-standing illness or disability	General health fair or bad
	%	%	%
Employment status	***	***	***
All Employed	16.1	15.7	12.6
Unemployed	36.6	19.4	23.6
Economically inactive	39.2	51.3	49.1
Earnings quality	***	***	***
High earnings quality	18.8	14.1	11.3
Poor earnings quality	47.4	26.9	22.4

Policy implications

- To improve the quality of jobs in Northern Ireland policy needs focus at once on:
 - Creating more jobs in sectors where job quality is 'good' – a balancing act given that risk factors not always the same.
 - Improving the standards in poor/bad quality jobs.
 - Address the specific barriers which groups at higher risk of being in poor quality jobs have in obtaining good quality jobs.