

# 2012 Swiss poll on occupational safety and health

Report for the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

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# 1. Key findings across Europe

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) commissioned Ipsos MORI to develop and conduct a survey of the general public about occupational health and safety. Ipsos MORI carried out surveys in 37 European countries, conducting a total of 36,573 interviews between 24<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2012.

Below, we summarise the findings from the survey across Europe.

## New and emerging risks in occupational safety and health

- Around eight in ten of the general public across Europe think that the number of people who will suffer from stress over the next five years will increase (78%), with as many as 49% expecting this to 'increase a lot'. While not directly comparable, the ESENER survey found the same proportion of managers thought stress was an issue (79%).
  - Views differ to some extent between the active (working) and inactive population (79% and 75% expect job-related stress to increase), with workers significantly more likely to expect it to 'increase a lot' (51% vs. 46%).
  - There are large national variations in those who expect job-related stress to 'increase a lot'. Those in Greece are most worried about rising stress (83% 'increase a lot'), while Norwegians are least worried (16% 'increase a lot').

## Importance of occupational safety and health for economic competitiveness and helping people work longer

- Most Europeans agree that good occupational safety and health practices are necessary for economic competitiveness (86% across Europe agree; 56% 'strongly agree').
  - Views are similar among the active (working) and inactive population (86% and 85% agree respectively).
  - Among the general public, there is some variation by age, with 61% of those aged 55+ 'strongly agreeing' compared to 49% of those aged under 35.
  - Regional differences are not particularly apparent, although there are some noticeable national differences within regions. Cyprus has the highest proportion of people who 'strongly agree' that workplaces need to follow good occupational health and safety practices in order to be economically competitive (81%) while Spain has the lowest (35% 'strongly agree').
- There is broad consensus that good occupational health and safety practices are important to help people work longer before they retire (87%, including 56% who say they are 'very important').
  - This high level of agreement is evident across all age groups and types of employment.
  - Regional differences are not particularly apparent, although there are some noticeable national differences within regions. Iceland has the highest proportion of people who consider good occupational health and safety practices as 'very important' to help people work longer before they retire (77%) and Hungary has the lowest (37% say it is 'very important').

## Working together for risk prevention

- On the whole, workers feel confident that an occupational health and safety problem raised with a supervisor would be addressed (74%, including 40% 'very confident'), although again a significant minority are not confident about this (23%, including 7% 'not at all confident').
  - Employees working for temp agencies are more doubtful than the average employee that health and safety problems raised with their supervisor would be addressed (39% not very or at all confident compared to 23% for the average employee).
  - Employees in small companies are less likely to feel confident than those in larger companies. For example, 26% of those in companies with less than 10 employees do not feel confident compared to just 19% in companies with more than 250 employees.
  - Regional patterns are evident with the Nordic countries and North Western Europe most likely to feel confident that a health and safety problem raised would be addressed and the South Eastern and Southern European countries least likely.<sup>1</sup>
- Generally Europeans consider themselves well informed about occupational health and safety (67%, including 24% 'very well informed'), but a significant minority say they are not informed (27%, including 8% 'not at all informed').
  - Around eight in ten workers are informed (82%, including 33% 'very well informed') compared to half of those who do not work (50% informed and 14% 'very well informed').
  - Again, there is a clear difference between the average (active) worker and those working for temp agencies. Around a third of people working for temp agencies say they are *not* informed on occupational health and safety risks (32%), compared to only 17% of all who are actively employed.
  - Organisation size also appears to affect the extent to which employees feel informed. For example, 42% of those who work in large organisations (with 250+ employees) consider themselves 'very well informed' compared to only 28% in companies with less than 10 employees.
  - Among the general public, younger and older people are more likely to feel not informed (29% of 18-34 year olds and 31% aged 55+ compared to only 21% aged 35-54). As in the 2009 poll, men feel better informed than women on health and safety risks at the workplace (70% vs. 64%). There is also a difference in feeling 'very well informed' (28% for men vs. 21% for women).
  - Similar regional differences are apparent with the Nordic countries and those in North Western Europe most likely to feel 'very well informed' and South Eastern and Southern European countries the least.
- The proportion of people who feel 'very well informed' about occupational health and safety has increased since the 2009 survey (from 20% to 26% for EU countries).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Nordic countries' comprise Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden; 'North Western Europe' comprises Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK). 'South Eastern Europe' comprises Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey; 'Southern Europe' comprises Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain.

<sup>2</sup> The 2009 study was conducted among the 27 EU Member States so the comparison is based on these countries only. However, it should be treated with caution as some countries have changed methodology over the two waves (face-to-face to telephone approach, or vice versa).

## 2. Switzerland country summary

**Fieldwork:** 1,033 interviews were carried out by telephone with adults aged 18 to 74 in Switzerland from 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2012. This was a nationally representative sample with quotas set by age, gender and region. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population aged 18+.

Overall, findings from Switzerland suggest that:

### **Job-related stress is expected to increase in Switzerland over the next five years**

Four in five Swiss believe that job-related stress will increase in Switzerland over the next five years (78%), with four in ten (41%) believing that it will 'increase a lot'. This is a similar to the European average where 77% expect job-related stress to increase, and 49% that it will 'increase a lot').

- There is no statistically significant difference of opinion between Swiss workers and those who do not work.

### **The Swiss public agrees that good health and safety practices play a very important role in economic competitiveness and when raising the retirement age**

Around nine in ten Swiss agree that good health and safety practices are important for Switzerland to be economically competitive (89%), which is higher than the average across Europe (86%).

- There is no statistically significant difference of opinion between Swiss workers and those who do not work.

Fewer than nine in ten Swiss believe that good health and safety practices are important to allow people to work for longer before they retire (86%), a similar proportion to the European average (87%).

- There is no statistically significant difference of opinion between Swiss workers and those who do not work.

### **Swiss workers are confident that health and safety issues will be addressed in their workplace**

Nearly nine in ten Swiss workers are confident that a health and safety problem would be addressed in their workplace if they raised it with their supervisor (89%). This is much higher than the European average (74%) and places Switzerland in the top 5 countries on this measure.

<b>The Swiss public consider themselves informed about health and safety in the workplace</b>
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More than four in five Swiss consider themselves informed about health and safety in the workplace (86%), which is again a much higher proportion than the European average (67%) and places Switzerland third of all countries taking part in the survey on this measure.

- Nine in ten Swiss workers consider themselves informed compared to seven in ten of those who do not work (90% vs. 72% respectively).

### 3. Technical summary

#### Background and summary of contract

This survey was commissioned by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) in Switzerland. The research was carried out on the back of work conducted for The European Agency for Health and Safety at Work (EU-OSHA). The Swiss SECO team work closely with EU-OSHA on occupational safety and health issues.

The first pan-EU poll for EU-OSHA was conducted in 2009, consisting of five questions asked of the general public in the 27 EU Member States.

Ipsos MORI were commissioned to conduct the second pan-European poll on occupational safety and health, also consisting of five questions (including one from the 2009 survey) eliciting the opinions of the general public and workers. Two demographic questions were asked across all countries allowing for the analysis of workers by size of organisation and the type of contract held (e.g. indefinite, fixed term, temp agency).

The Swiss contract for this research was separate to that of the EU-OSHA contract and covered fieldwork in Switzerland only. The fieldwork in Switzerland was conducted using a telephone Omnibus survey.

#### Research objectives

The main objective of the study is to provide information to support SECO and its collaboration with EU-OSHA. It is also hoped that the research will stimulate media interest in occupational health and safety issues, especially those which resonate with current and planned media activity.

#### Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed in partnership by Ipsos MORI and EU-OSHA and translated into the three main Swiss languages for SECO. In designing the questionnaire, a key consideration was to ensure that the questionnaire would provide the information to support EU-OSHA's work with its Focal Points and be topical so of interest to the media.

Ipsos MORI initially drew up a longer list of questions for the survey (divided into the main themes) which were reviewed by EU-OSHA. EU-OSHA, with their advisory groups, decided on a final set of five topical questions and two demographic questions. The final questions consisted of closed questions covering: (i) job-related stress; (ii) working to an older age; (iii) knowledge of workplace health and safety risks; (iv) confidence in one's supervisor addressing a health and safety problem; and (v) importance of health and safety for economic competitiveness. The demographic questions focused on contract type (i.e. whether indefinite, fixed term or temporary contract) and size of workplace (i.e. number of employees). EU-OSHA decided to retain one question from the 2009 survey: *Regarding safety and health risks at the workplace, do you consider yourself ....?* Very well informed/Fairly well informed/Not very well informed/Not at all informed/Don't know. A copy of the final questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

The questions were piloted on an Omnibus survey in Great Britain between 29<sup>th</sup> September and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2011. A total of 1,002 interviews were conducted with a representative sample of the general public. The main aim of the pilot was to test respondents' understanding of the questions. In addition, we wanted to review the proportion of 'Don't

knows' to make sure the questions were working as intended, as well as checking the level of understanding among the sections of the general public that are not currently working. Some minor changes were made to the questionnaire following the pilot.

Once the final questionnaire (in English) was signed-off by EU-OSHA, it was circulated to our international offices and local partners for translation into local languages. SECO provided valuable input into the translation into the three main Swiss languages prior to use in the field.

## Sampling

The telephone omnibus survey sample was based on Random Digit Dialling (RDD). The starting point for the selection of these samples is a database comprising all exchange codes allocated for residential use in Switzerland. A representative sample is then drawn by randomising the last digits of each number, and incorporating quotas when selecting respondents.

The Swiss population was further sampled by language (68% German, 32% French and 20% Italian) based on the characteristics of the population and weighted back to reflect the overall population structure.

The Swiss omnibus survey is based on general public aged 15 to 74. Those aged 15 to 17 were excluded from our analysis.

## Weighting

The sampling methods used for the omnibus are designed to be nationally representative. When aggregating the results at the overall level for the 37 European countries (or for groups of countries, e.g. EU Member States vs. 3 EEA members, 6 candidate countries), the data was also weighted by the population size of each country so smaller countries (e.g. Liechtenstein, Malta) are not over-represented in the results.

## Interpretation of the data

It should be remembered that final data from the quantitative survey are based on a sample of adults from each of the countries, rather than the entire population. Therefore, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences are statistically significant. Throughout this report, we report only on differences that are statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence (although calculations of statistical significance should be considered indicative, given that surveys are not truly random probability surveys).

In this report, aggregated scores (e.g. "strongly agree" plus "tend to agree") are based on combining the two percentages rather than the counts used in the data tables (which may differ by one percentage point). This is to match the PowerPoint reports that have been produced for each country. Not all findings, or response options, have been commented on in this report but are available in the data tables. Furthermore, percentages may not sum to 100% when we have excluded 'Don't know' responses.



# Appendices

## Appendix A: Questionnaire

### Introduction

INTRO TO READ OUT TO ALL AD HOC

**Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is .... I'm [IF TELEPHONE calling] from [ADD AGENCY], the independent research organisation. We are conducting a short survey about health and safety at the workplace in [ADD COUNTRY]. The interview should only take about five minutes.**

**I would like to reassure you that all your answers you give will be treated in the strictest confidence and it will not be possible for our client to identify any individual from the information you provide.**

READ OUT ON OMNIBUS

**Now some questions about health and safety at the workplace in [ADD COUNTRY].**

### Demographic questions

GENERAL PUBLIC

**QE3 Which of the following best describes your working status?**

READ OUT 1 TO 8. SINGLE CODE ONLY

1. Employed with an indefinite contract
2. Employed with a fixed term contract
3. Employed with a temporary employment agency contract in a single workplace
4. Employed with a temporary employment agency contract across multiple workplaces
5. Self-employed
6. Unemployed
7. In education or training
8. Retired
9. Other working (DO NOT READ OUT)
10. Other not working (DO NOT READ OUT)
11. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

WORKERS ONLY CODE 1 TO 5 OR 9 AT QE3

**QE1 Excluding yourself, how many people in total are employed in your workplace?**

**Please exclude people working at other sites or premises.**

CODE TO BAND. SINGLE CODE ONLY

- a) 0
- b) 1
- c) 2-4
- d) 5-9
- e) 10-49
- f) 50-99
- g) 100-249
- h) 250-499
- i) 500+
- j) Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

<b>Main questions</b>
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GENERAL PUBLIC

**Q1 Do you think the number of people suffering from job-related stress in [ADD COUNTRY] will increase, decrease or stay around the same over the next five years?**  
READ OUT SCALE. REVERSE SCALE 1 TO 5. SINGLE CODE ONLY

1. Increase a lot
2. Increase a little
3. Stay around the same
4. Decrease a little
5. Decrease a lot
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

GENERAL PUBLIC

**Q2 Regarding safety and health risks at the workplace, do you consider yourself ....?**  
READ OUT SCALE. REVERSE SCALE 1 TO 4. SINGLE CODE ONLY

1. Very well informed
2. Fairly well informed
3. Not very well informed
4. Not at all informed
5. Don't know / no answer (DO NOT READ OUT)

GENERAL PUBLIC

**Q3 Many European governments are considering or have decided to increase their retirement age because people are living for longer. In your view, how important, if at all, are good health and safety practices to help people work for longer before they retire?**

READ OUT 1 TO 4. REVERSE 1 TO 4. SINGLE CODE ONLY

1. Very important
2. Fairly important
3. Not very important
4. Not at all important
5. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

WORKERS ONLY CODE 1 TO 4 OR 9 AT QE3

**Q4 If you raised a health and safety problem in your workplace with your supervisor, how confident are you that it would be addressed?**

READ OUT SCALE. REVERSE SCALE 1 TO 4. SINGLE CODE ONLY

1. Very confident
2. Fairly confident
3. Not very confident
4. Not at all confident
5. Not applicable (DO NOT READ OUT)
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

GENERAL PUBLIC

**Q5 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement. In order for [INSERT COUNTRY] to be economically competitive, workplaces need to follow good health and safety practices?**

READ OUT SCALE. REVERSE SCALE 1 TO 5. SINGLE CODE ONLY

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

## Appendix B: Guide to statistical reliability

The final data are based on a sample, rather than the entire population in each country, so the percentage results are subject to sampling tolerances. These vary with the size of the sample and the percentage figure concerned. For example, assuming an unbiased random sample, for a question where 50% of the 35,540 sampled in this survey give a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary more or less than  $\pm 0.5$  percentage points from the true figure – the figure that would have been obtained had the entire population been interviewed. Examples of tolerances that apply in this report are given in the table below.

Sample size on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
36,573 (all respondents across Europe)	$\pm 0.3$	$\pm 0.5$	$\pm 0.5$
20,231 (all workers across Europe)	$\pm 0.4$	$\pm 0.6$	$\pm 0.7$
1,033 members of the general public in Switzerland	$\pm 1.8$	$\pm 2.8$	$\pm 3.1$

Tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results between different elements of the sample. A difference must be of at least a certain size to be statistically significant. The following table is a guide to the sampling tolerances applicable to comparisons between key subgroups in this survey.

Sample sizes on which survey results are based	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
17,410 men vs. 19,163 women in all countries across Europe	$\pm 0.6$	$\pm 0.9$	$\pm 1.0$
20,231 workers vs. 16,278 not working in all countries across Europe	$\pm 0.6$	$\pm 0.9$	$\pm 1.0$

It is important to note that, strictly speaking, the above confidence interval calculations assume an unbiased random sample. However, in practice it is reasonable to assume that these calculations provide a good indication of the true confidence intervals.