

EMPLOYMENT AND THE IMPEMENTATION OF LABOR POTENTIAL

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QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE OF THE EMPLOYED POPULATION: MEASUREMENT EXPERIENCE IN THE VOLOGDA REGION



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In order to stimulate economic development and increase labor productivity, it is essential to improve the quality of work life. Sociological methods of its assessment have great research potential, as they allow to identify the content and specific pain points in the current employment of workers. The level of satisfaction being a traditional sociological tool is one of the generalizing indicators of the quality of working life. The aim of this study is to investigate changes in the perceptions of regional employees regarding the quality of their working lives during a period of significant socio-economic changes from 2020 to 2024, which were caused by external factors. The information base was formed by the data of the monitoring of the labor potential of the population, conducted by Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 2018–2024. The methodological toolkit of the study is based on the measurement of the quality of working life by the degree of job satisfaction. Frequency distribution and correlation analysis tools are used. Integral indices of satisfaction with components of working life and composite index of quality of working life are calculated. It is shown that the composite index of the quality of working life gradually increases and in 2024 reaches the highest values for the entire observation period. The most positive assessments were obtained with regard to the psychological climate, the social significance of work, the possibility of maintaining a balance between work and private life, job security, safety and technical equipment of the workplace. The problematic aspects of the quality of working life which have been stable for several years include the system of work remuneration, trade union activity, work with personnel (career, training, labor rights observance). The conclusions about socio-demographic, professional and territorial peculiarities of the perception of the quality of working life by the workers of the region are drawn. The research contributes to the expansion of scientific ideas about the transformation of the working population's perception of the quality of working life against the background of the growing influence of external challenges.

Quality of working life, regional monitoring, index, job satisfaction, labor potential, correlation.

Introduction

The average worker spends 40 hours a week at his or her workplace which is a quarter of a week, so the quality of working hours and, more broadly, the quality of working life during these hours, has important implications for the well-being of the employed (Bobkov, Chernykh, 2023). In the conditions of increasing social requirements both to ensure social justice in the distribution of material goods and to increase the level of social responsibility of business, as well as in connection with the complication of external conditions and transformation of social and labor relations, the quality of working life becomes a special motivator affecting the employees' labor potential formation, realization and development (Leonidova, 2022). According to the latest VCOM research, the top 5 priorities of job choice for Russians include the size of salary (50%), convenient mode and schedule (31%), opportunity for professional self-realization (28%), basic social package (26%), good working conditions (22%)¹. The list of priorities indicates that a combination of several key aspects is crucial for Russian workers: financial stability and reliable social protection, a comfortable workplace and conditions for professional development. In other words, in modern conditions, employees are not limited by the focus on satisfying only basic needs (salary, safety and technical equipment of the workplace), but also take into account aspects of personal convenience and comfortable working conditions, opportunities for the realization of professional and career goals.

In modern research practice, the quality of working life (QWL) is usually positioned by researchers as a component of the quality of life and is considered in two dimensions: the quality of employment and the quality of jobs (Bobkov et al., 2022; Chernykh, 2022). QWL concept implies providing the employee with such employment conditions that allow him/her to fully maintain material and socio-psychological well-being, realize a variety of needs, including personal and professional growth, career advancement, sufficient attention to the family,

etc. (Golovina, 2019; Loktyukhina, Chernykh, 2021), which ultimately contributes to high dedication and functional efficiency of labor (Temnitsky, 2012). In fact, QWL can be called one of the key factors in maintaining employee motivation, increasing their engagement, loyalty and productivity, i.e., a factor that determines the effective realization of employees' labor potential (Chernykh, 2023). In other words, QWL characterizes the environment of formation, preservation and development of labor potential. Based on this, in our study we understand the quality of working life as a set of working conditions that meet the needs of employees, ensure their physical, mental, economic and social well-being, and contribute to the fullest realization of their labor potential (Leonidova, Ivanovskaya, 2023).

Foreign and Russian authors provide evidence of a high dependence of organizational performance results on employee job satisfaction and the quality of work life in general in their numerous studies. In particular, they show that such components of QWL as constructive work with human resources and maintenance of psychological climate contribute to reducing stress at work and increase labor productivity (Foy et al., 2019). The positive impact of QWL aspects such as motivation system and organizational culture (Paais, Pattiruhu, 2020), providing opportunities for work-life balance (Aruldoss et al., 2021) on employee satisfaction and productivity has been found. Employer adherence to corporate social responsibility has been found to increase employee commitment to the organization and performance (Tarigan et al., 2021). It is shown that unfavorable working environment conditions lead to lower job satisfaction (Dhamija et al., 2019), and the signs of precarious employment and conflicts in the team negatively affect labor motivation, increase the likelihood of professional "burnout" and increase staff turnover (Galinsky, Stein, 1990; Benedict, Taylor, 1995). The direct and mediating influence of the quality of work life on the degree of staff motivation and productivity has been proved on the example of vari-

¹ Not only money, or about the factors of choosing a job in Russia. VCIOM. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/ne-tolko-dengi-ili-o-faktorakh-vybora-raboty-v-rossii> (accessed on October 21, 2024).

ous organizations (Hermawati, Mas, 2017; Suci et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022). Russian researchers, using the data of HSE Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey, identify correlations between job satisfaction and the amount of salary, the presence of subordinates, the level of employees' education, relationships within the team, the degree of trust in management, and also show that a high level of job satisfaction reduces the likelihood that an employee will seek to change jobs or already has additional employment (Chernykh, 2022). Interesting conclusions have been obtained with regard to such QWL aspects as relationships between employees, work content and balance of individual and corporate values, it is proved that they act as resource-buffers of problems in work organization: low degree of autonomy at the workplace, increased work intensity and instability of the work situation (Kozina, Serezhkina, 2021).

The problematics of the quality of work life of the working population is a subject of active interest for the researchers of Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences (VolRC RAS), who have access to the unique database of the regional monitoring survey of the labor potential of the population. As part of their research, they substantiated and tested the methods of objective and subjective assessment of the quality of working life (Belekova, 2019; Leonidova, Ivanovskaya, 2020a; Leonidova, Ivanovskaya, 2020b), studied the features of QWL of the employed population in the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods (Belekova, 2022), revealed differences in QWL among workers of large cities and districts of the Vologda Region (Belekova, 2023), assessed the impact of working conditions as an important element of QWL on labor productivity and estimated the potential losses of GRP from the disability of workers injured at work (Leonidova, Ivanovskaya, 2021).

The present study attempts to assess the ongoing transformations in the quality of working life of the employed population of the Vologda Region in the context of active changes in the socio-economic environment in 2020–2024. The main attention is paid to the dynamics of the perception of various aspects of working life

and QWL in general, including in the context of socio-demographic and professional characteristics of workers. In addition, the stability of the previously identified regularities will be verified, firstly, the relationship between job satisfaction in general and the assessment of individual components of QWL, and secondly, the relationship between QWL and the quality of employees' labor potential and the degree of their realization in work.

Methodological tools and information base of the study

The quality of working life is “a multidimensional, complex system that includes numerous indicators measuring working conditions, work environment and workplace characteristics, which are related to the satisfaction of the employee's needs for self-realization and self-expression” (Chernykh, 2023). In the scientific and expert environment there is no single meaningful and integrated quantitative and/or qualitative characterization of the working population's QWL. The choice of a methodology for assessing QWL and a set of specific indicators is determined by research goals and management objectives (Leonidova et al., 2021).

When studying the problems of the quality of working life and the realization of labor potential of the working population, special attention is paid to the subjective perception of employees of their position in the sphere of labor and employment (Popov, 2023), first of all, the degree of satisfaction with various aspects of working life. In particular, researchers have identified the relationships between job satisfaction and such factors as positive self-assessment of work results, high levels of work motivation and the degree of employees' commitment to the organization (Leonidova, Popov, 2014). In addition, it is shown that job satisfaction leads to an improvement in the emotional state of employees, a decrease in staff turnover, an increase in the quality of output products and labor productivity in general (Zaripova, Tarakanova, 2021). According to the position of many prominent researchers of social sciences, job satisfaction is a research con-

Table 1. Design of assessment of the quality of working life of the working population

Element of working life	Indicator	Private QWL indices
Remuneration of labor	Salary amount; system of material incentives; completeness of the social package	Labor remuneration index (LRI)
Working conditions and organization	Sanitary and hygienic environment and labor safety; technical equipment of the workplace; work of the trade union; compliance with labor legislation	Working Conditions and Organization Index (WCI)
Opportunities for utilization and development of human potential	Content of work performed; Opportunity for training, professional development; recognition of labor results, merits, successes (non-material incentives); opportunity to participate in management decision-making; opportunities for career growth	Human Resources Index (HRI)
Employment security	Sustainability of the organization's position in the market; significance of the organization for the territory; reliability of the employee's position in the organization	Employment Security Index (ESI)
Relations with coworkers and supervisors (psychological climate)	Relationships in the labor collective; relationship with the organization's management	Psychological Climate Index (PCI)
Use of working time	Possibility to combine labor and family/ personal responsibilities	Work-Life Balance Index (WLI)
Social significance of labor	Public utility and social significance of the profession/work	Social Significance of Labor Index (LSI)
Source: own compilation.		

struct and “characterizes the state of labor relations from the position of the subject of labor” (Tatarova, Bessokirnaya, 2017). Job satisfaction captures “the state of balance between the needs (demands) presented by the employee to the content, nature and conditions of work, and subjective assessment of the possibilities of realization of these demands”² (Ilyasov, 2013). All this makes this indicator an important component of intra-organizational management, municipal and regional social policy. In other words, job satisfaction acts simultaneously as an independent indicator characterizing labor relations, work life, and one of the indicators included in QWL (Chernykh, 2023; Green, 2006).

Within the framework of the study, we are based on a subjective approach to QWL assessment and to measure it we use the methodological approach developed earlier (Belekhova, 2019; Leonidova et al., 2021) and optimized by the composition of indicators, based on the in-

dicator of satisfaction with various aspects of work. We assess the QWL by such aspects as remuneration, working conditions and organization, opportunities for the use and development of human potential (or work with human resources), job security, psychological climate, use of working time, social significance of work (moral satisfaction from the work performed) (Belekhova, 2019). A detailed list of indicators for assessing the quality of labor life of the working population is given in *Table 1*.

Component-by-component assessment of QWL is conducted based on the question “How satisfied are you with different aspects of your working life?”. Respondents’ answers correspond to the scale: ‘not satisfied’, ‘rather not satisfied’, ‘can’t say whether I am satisfied or not’, ‘rather satisfied’, ‘satisfied’ (by analogy with a five-point Likert scale). The extreme response options (‘not satisfied’ and ‘rather not satisfied’; ‘rather satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’) are combined in the analysis, (Belekhova, 2019;

² Concise Dictionary of Sociology (1989). Ed. by D.M. Gvishiani, N.I. Lapin. Moscow: Politizdat.

Belekova, 2023). Component-by-component QWL assessment is supplemented by qualitative questions on the designated aspects of working life.

QWL integral evaluation is made up of individual evaluations of satisfaction with the designated aspects of working life. A five-point scale and arithmetic mean are used for calculation. Index values vary in the range from 1 to 5, i.e. the closer the index value is to 5, the higher the satisfaction and we can talk about a higher quality of working life for a given employee.

The empirical basis for assessing the quality of working life is the data of the Monitoring of the quality of labor potential of the Vologda Region population⁵, which is systematically conducted by Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The measurements are carried out every 2 years. We use the 2018–2024 waves for the study, as they present questions on the above-mentioned aspects of QWL. The choice of the time interval for the study 2018–2024 is determined not only by the availability of the data, but also by the possibility of using 2018 as a reference point. This year is characterized by relative stability of social and economic processes, which contrasts with the period 2020–2024, marked by significant changes in socio-economic life associated with the action of the epidemiological factor in 2020–2021, aggravation of the geopolitical situation and increased sanctions pressure in 2022–2023, changes in the conditions of economic activity due to limited labor resources, high capacity utilization and rising inflation in 2023–2024.

Data processing was carried out in SPSS Statistics and MS Excel programs.

The methodological solution of the research is to select only those respondents who were working at the time of the survey and to exclude from the analyzed population those respondents who chose the answers “I do not work (including child care leave, etc.)” (as not having a job, the conditions of which they could

assess) and “I do not have a main job, I have casual jobs” (as employed in extremely uncertain conditions, which, based on the nature of casual jobs, are likely to have many deviations from the normative parameters of decent work). Consequently, the sample for the study included only respondents who were employed at the time of the survey, i.e. those who were employed only in their main job, or who had a main job and an additional job, or who combined their main job with casual labor. Thus, the final sample size was 1,083 people in 2018, 1,130 in 2020, 1,142 in 2022, and 1,139 in 2024.

Results of the study

Overall satisfaction level and QWL indices

The overall level of job satisfaction of employees in the Vologda Region is quite high and is gradually increasing⁴: 65% in 2020, 71% in 2022–2024; there is a decrease in the share of those dissatisfied with work (from 10% in 2020 to 6% in 2024). According to the calculated private QWL indices (*Fig. 1*), in 2024, workers best assess the socio-psychological aspects of work (i.e., psychological climate, social significance of work, work-life balance) and job security. Note that evaluations of these aspects strengthen throughout the observation period. At the same time, respondents express noticeably lower satisfaction with working conditions and organization, training and promotion of personnel, and remuneration. The general analysis of the calculated QWL indices for 2020–2024 and comparison with the results of previous studies indicate a number of problems concerning the quality of working life at the enterprises of the Vologda Region, including the amount of wages and completeness of social guarantees, unsatisfactory working conditions in some areas of activity, difficulties in administrative interaction with the management (Belekova, 2019).

Throughout the entire period under study, higher estimates of the quality of working life

⁵ The sample size is 1,500 people (in each wave). The survey is conducted in the cities of Vologda and Cherepovets, in urban and rural areas of Babaevsky, Velikoustyugsky, Vozhegodsky, Gryazovetsky, Kirillovsky, Nikolsky, Tarnogsky, Sheksninsky okrugs. Sampling method: zoning with proportional placement of observation units. Type of sampling: quota sampling by sex and age. Method of empirical data collection: individual handout questionnaire survey. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

⁴ In 2018, the question “How satisfied are you with your job overall?” was not asked.

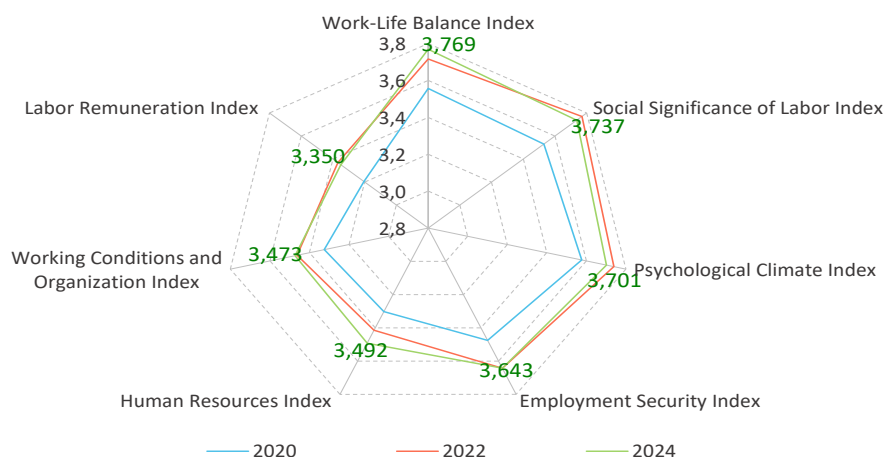


Figure 1. Indices of job satisfaction of the employed population of the Vologda Region, 2022–2024

Source: own calculation.

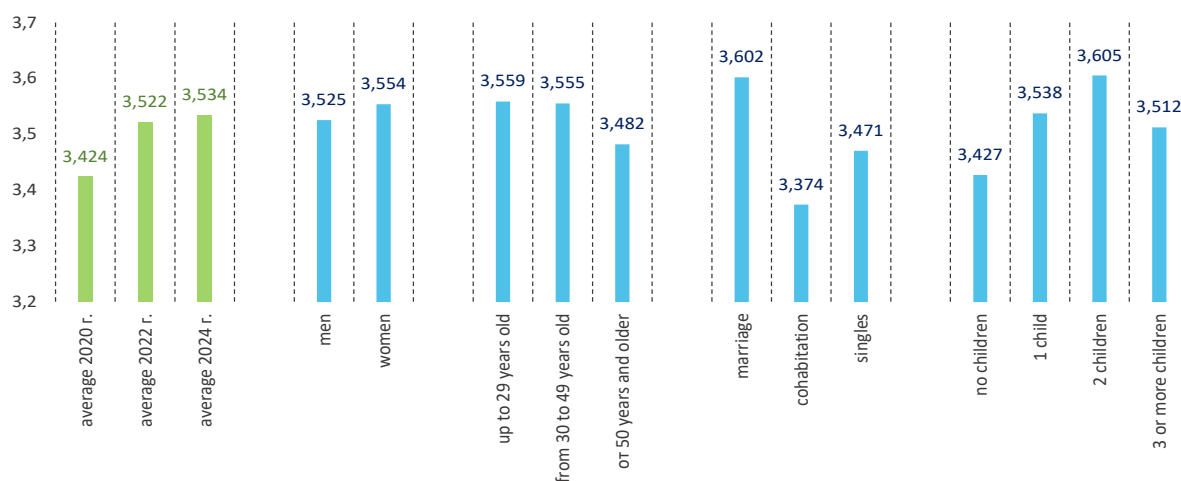


Figure 2. Summary index of QWL of the employed population of the Vologda Region in the context of socio-demographic characteristics, 2024

Source: own calculation.

are demonstrated by workers with the following socio-demographic characteristics: average working age (30–49 years), official marriage and children (Fig. 2). In 2022–2024, similar to the 2018 data, the overall level of job satisfaction was higher among women. In 2024, there is a comparable level of satisfaction in the groups of young (18–29 years old) and middle-aged (30–49 years old) workers.

An important regularity, confirmed in each monitoring wave, is that the best assessments of the quality of working life are inherent in those workers whose labor activity corresponds to the specialty they received, their aptitudes

and vocation (Tab. 2). This conclusion is true both for the aggregate assessment of QWL and for assessments of individual aspects of working life. Consequently, the correspondence with the specialty, professional interests and personal inclinations of workers are important motivating factors of their labor activity.

Labor remuneration

Salary at the main place of employment has been the main source of income for the majority of respondents (more than 93%) during the whole period of observations. At the same time, on average, about 15% of respondents receive additional income from secondary employment

Table 2. QWL indices of the employed population of the Vologda Region depending on the correspondence of the profession (main job) to the specialty, aptitudes and vocation, 2024

QWL index	Work in the specialty			Matching the profession with aptitudes and abilities		Matching the profession to the vocation	
	yes	no	did not receive *	yes	no	yes	no
Labor Remuneration Index	3.481	3.289	2.959	3.473	2.835	3.476	2.955
Working Conditions and Organization Index	3.548	3.408	3.137	3.538	3.122	3.549	3.187
Human Resources Index	3.575	3.455	3.123	3.565	3.198	3.569	3.227
Employment Security Index	3.702	3.576	3.412	3.726	3.331	3.707	3.463
Psychological Climate Index	3.765	3.673	3.340	3.759	3.472	3.737	3.584
Work-Life Balance Index	3.849	3.718	3.396	3.833	3.567	3.821	3.617
Social Significance of Labor Index	3.837	3.657	3.396	3.824	3.425	3.816	3.513
Quality of Working Life index (summary)	3.623	3.485	3.197	3.618	3.206	3.616	3.286
* Did not receive specialty(s). Source: own calculations.							

Table 3. Satisfaction with labor remuneration, % of the number of employed respondents

Answer choice	2018	2020	2022	2024	Change by region (+/-), p.p.	
					2024 to 2022	2024 to 2018
Satisfaction with labor remuneration						
Satisfied	36.6	44.8	50.2	48.4	-1.8	11.8
Difficult to say	33.8	25.9	30.4	28.5	-1.9	-5.3
Not satisfied	29.6	29.3	19.4	23.1	3.7	-6.5
Satisfaction with the system of material incentives						
Satisfied	35.1	38.6	46.5	45.7	-0.8	10.6
Difficult to say	37.3	33.4	29.4	27.0	-2.4	-10.3
Not satisfied	27.6	28.1	24.1	27.2	3.1	-0.4
Satisfaction with the completeness of the social package						
Satisfied	41.4	43.2	52.9	48.3	-4.6	6.9
Difficult to say	34.7	32.5	24.8	30.7	5.9	-4.0
Not satisfied	23.9	24.3	22.3	21.0	-1.3	-2.9
For reference: average monthly salary, rub.	19696	26349	33559	44509	–	–
Calculated by the data of the Monitoring of the quality of labor potential of the Vologda Region population.						

and casual part-time jobs. According to the monitoring data, the growth of average monthly wages of the Vologda Region employees is steadily recorded, by 27–33% in nominal terms compared to the previous wave of monitoring. According to the results of the last measurement in 2024, satisfaction with the size of labor remuneration has not changed after a significant increase in 2020 and 2022. About half of the region's employees are fully or rather satisfied with their salaries (*Tab. 3*).

During the period under review, the share of positive assessments of two other aspects of

labor remuneration, the social package and the system of material incentives, also increased, although less than half of respondents are satisfied with the latter. It is worth noting the reduction in 2024 of positive assessments of the social package provided by the employer: the reduction is insignificant (by 4.6 p.p.), but it may indicate an increase in the attention of employees to the observance of their labor rights and a growing orientation towards sustainable jobs.

There are no differences in the level of satisfaction with aspects of labor remuneration

by socio-demographic characteristics of employees, but there are peculiarities depending on the form of enterprise and type of activity. As of 2024, higher satisfaction with the size of wages, social package and the system of material incentives is characteristic for the employees of government bodies (regional and municipal), individual entrepreneurs and self-employed; those employed in budgetary institutions and public organizations are least satisfied with these aspects of working life. As for the type of activity, the best feeling is given to workers from the financial sphere (more than 70% of positive assessments), property operations (63% of satisfactory answers for each of the three aspects) and manufacturing industries (54–63% of positive assessments). Among those employed in the production and distribution of electricity, gas and water, science and education, some of the highest levels of unsatisfactory evaluations are recorded with regard to aspects of remuneration. Interestingly, those employed in public administration and military security demonstrate a very low level of satisfaction with wages (36.6%), while assessments of material incentives and the completeness of the social package are among the highest (54–61%).

Employees from the regions of the Region assess all aspects of labor remuneration more negatively compared to employees surveyed in large cities (by 5–6 p.p. on average). The year of 2020 was the only observation point when satisfaction with the amount of wages, the system of material incentives and the social package provided was not significantly higher among employees from the districts. This difference was probably due to the larger impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the economy of large cities, which manifested itself in the restrictions and suspensions of many manufacturing enterprises and service organizations, as a consequence, deterioration of their financial performance and labor income of the staff (Belekhova, 2023). The prevalence among workers from the districts of more critical assessments in relation to all aspects of wages correlates with the fact that they are more often exposed to negative processes: thus, in 2022, 11% of them regularly faced delayed and unpaid wages (compared to 3% in large cities), 16% had to switch to reduced working hours (11% respectively), 8% had to go on unpaid leave (7% respectively) (Belekhova, 2023). In 2024, the problem of regular delay or non-payment of wages re-

Table 4. Satisfaction with working conditions, % of the number of interviewed employees

Answer choice	2018	2020	2022	2024	Change by region (+/-), p.p.	
					2024 to 2022	2024 to 2018
Satisfaction with employment security						
Satisfied	48.5	53.3	60.6	55.2	-5.4	6.7
Difficult to say	33.3	28.2	25.8	30.4	4.6	-2.9
Not satisfied	18.2	18.5	13.5	14.4	0.9	-3.8
Satisfaction with technical equipment of the workplace						
Satisfied	53.0	52.3	62.4	56.8	-5.6	3.8
Difficult to say	31.0	31.9	25.1	29.0	3.9	-2.0
Not satisfied	16.0	15.8	12.5	14.2	1.7	-1.8
Satisfaction with the work of trade union and other work organization						
Satisfied	30.5	32.7	38.6	41.5	2.9	11.0
Difficult to say	42.0	42.0	30.8	37.1	6.3	-4.9
Not satisfied	27.5	25.2	30.6	21.3	-9.3	-6.2
Satisfaction with compliance with labor legislation in the organization*						
Satisfied	no data	47.6	56.6	55.0	-1.6	7.4**
Difficult to say	no data	35.1	29.6	31.5	1.9	-3.6**
Not satisfied	no data	17.3	13.8	13.5	-0.3	-3.8**
* No question was asked in the 2018 monitoring.						
** The change is calculated by 2020.						
Calculated by the data of the Monitoring of the quality of labor potential of the Vologda Region population.						

maintained urgent for workers in the districts of the Vologda Region (9% vs 3% in large cities).

Working conditions and organization of work

In general, there is an increase in the level of satisfaction of the Vologda Region employees with working conditions and organization of work in 2018–2024 (*Tab. 4*). At the same time, in 2024 there is a slight decrease (by 5 p.p.) in positive assessments of labor safety and technical equipment of the workplace, but still more than half of the region's employees are satisfied with these components of working life. It should be noted that according to the last measurement in 2024, the share of those who found it difficult to assess working conditions increased. This may indicate the presence of latent or long-term unsolved problems in this area.

The level of satisfaction with the organization of work is more stable compared to assessments of working conditions, but the share of uncertain answers is also growing, especially with regard to the work of trade unions. This fact is likely to be explained by the low awareness of workers about the activities of trade union organizations and the low level of direct participation in the trade union movement: in 2022–2024, only about a quarter of workers were in the past (16–17%) or are currently (16–17%) members of a trade union, while the majority (55–59%) have never been members of a trade union.

Based on the peculiarities of the distribution of assessments of satisfaction with working conditions and organization of work by socio-demographic characteristics of workers, we can speak about a higher quality of these aspects of working life among working women, family workers and workers with children. This distribution is quite expected, since the legal and regulatory framework in the field of labor protection sets restrictions on the involvement of women in work with difficult and harmful working conditions, while family workers, and even more so workers with children, are likely to be oriented towards more comfortable and safe working conditions in order to avoid unnecessary labor losses due to responsibility to their own family members.

There are differences by territory. Among employees in large cities, satisfaction with

working conditions is unambiguously higher, especially in terms of labor safety (in 2024, the difference was 13 p.p.), technical equipment of workplaces (13 p.p.) and compliance with labor legislation (17 p.p.). Focusing on the last point, we note that the formalization of labor relations does not differ significantly, the majority of workers in both large cities and districts have permanent employment (in 2024, 95 and 90% respectively) and open-ended employment contracts (75% in cities and 85% in districts). However, monitoring data show that workers from districts have fewer opportunities to engage in a dialog with their employer in terms of advocating for their interests in terms of respecting labor rights and improving working conditions without employment consequences – in 2022–2024, one in five (20%) of them said so, compared to 13% among workers from large cities.

Opportunities for utilization and development of human potential (human resources)

For 2018–2024, there is an increase in the satisfaction of the Vologda Region employees with the work with human resources (*Tab. 5*). The predominant part of the respondents (65%) positively assesses such an aspect as the content of the work performed. Much fewer respondents (50% of positive assessments in 2024) are satisfied with other components such as opportunities for professional training and the system of non-material incentives, although there is an upward trend.

A stable and very significant increase in the share of satisfactory assessments is recorded for career development opportunities (by 13 p.p. over 2018–2024) and participation in management decision-making (by 21 p.p. respectively). Such trends can be classified as very positive and effective from the point of view of the employee's realization in labor, because “participation of employees in the decision-making process and enterprise management, creation of transparent conditions for their self-fulfillment and career advancement are among the most important factors in the formation of a sense of belonging to the organization and involvement in labor activity” (Basova, Belekova, 2020).

Table 5. Satisfaction with human resources, % of the number of employees surveyed

Answer choice	2018	2020	2022	2024	Change by region (+/-), p.p.	
					2024 to 2022	2024 to 2018
Satisfaction with the content of the work performed						
Satisfied	52.5	56.5	65	62.1	-2.9	9.6
Difficult to say	32.2	30.8	26.2	27.4	1.2	-4.8
Not satisfied	15.3	12.7	8.8	10.5	1.7	-4.8
Satisfaction with learning and professional development opportunities						
Satisfied	40.4	45	48.1	50.0	1.9	9.6
Difficult to say	37.2	34.6	30.6	32.3	1.7	-4.9
Not satisfied	22.5	20.4	21.3	17.6	-3.7	-4.9
Satisfaction with recognition of work results, merits, successes (non-material incentives)*						
Satisfied	no data	40.8	45.7	50.6	4.9	9.8**
Difficult to say	no data	39.5	33.4	32.7	-0.7	-6.8**
Not satisfied	no data	19.7	20.9	16.8	-4.1	-2.9**
Satisfaction with career opportunities						
Satisfied	38.0	38.5	46.3	51.1	4.8	13.1
Difficult to say	38.6	39.4	31.0	31.8	0.8	-6.8
Not satisfied	23.4	22.1	22.7	17.1	-5.6	-6.3
Satisfaction with the opportunity to participate in managerial decision-making						
Satisfied	32.3	40.9	48.4	53.4	5	21.1
Difficult to say	41.2	39.2	31.4	32.6	1.2	-8.6
Not satisfied	26.5	19.9	20.2	14.0	-6.2	-12.5
* No question was asked in the 2018 monitoring.						
** The change is calculated by 2020.						
Calculated by the data of the Monitoring of the quality of labor potential of the Vologda Region population.						

Residents of large cities, people of young and middle age (from 18 to 49 years old), people with higher and incomplete higher professional education, individual entrepreneurs and those employed in public authorities/local self-government bodies, employees of manufacturing industries, health care organizations and real estate are more likely to demonstrate high satisfaction with working with personnel. In addition, high satisfaction with human resources is correlated with recent positive experience. Specifically, respondents who have been in training in the past six months are more satisfied with training and development opportunities, and respondents whose job position has improved over the past year are more satisfied with career advancement prospects.

Job security

Despite the high socio-economic turbulence in 2020–2022 and the difficulties of socio-economic development in 2023–2024 due to foreign political pressure and numerous economic

sanctions affecting both employers and spheres of everyday consumption of the population, the growth of employees' satisfaction with both the stability of their employer's position (by 10 p.p. in 2020–2022 and maintaining the level in 2024) and the reliability of their own position in the organization (by 9 p.p. in 2020–2022 and maintaining the level in 2024; *Tab. 6*) is registered. This may be due to the fact that under the influence of the above processes the labor market has entered “a period of deep structural transformation: ... unemployment rates fell to historic lows, vacancy rates soared to historic highs, there was a dramatic acceleration of labor force turnover, ... a vast overhang of unoccupied jobs was formed”, i.e. the labor market has become job-seeking, which does not exclude structural distortions in certain specialties (Kapelyushnikov, 2024). In a sense, these findings are confirmed, for example, by the fact that each year workers were significantly less likely to find themselves in situations where they had to take reduced working hours

Table 6. Satisfaction with employment, % of employed respondents

Answer choice	2018	2020	2022	2024	Change by region (+/-), p.p.	
					2024 to 2022	2024 to 2018
Satisfaction with the sustainability of the organization's position in the market*						
Satisfied	no data	48.9	59	59.7	0.7	10.8
Difficult to say	no data	35.8	28.6	28.6	0.0	-7.2
Not satisfied	no data	15.3	12.4	11.7	-0.7	-3.6
Satisfaction with the reliability of the position in the organization*						
Satisfied	no data	50.6	60	61.1	1.1	10.5
Difficult to say	no data	37.3	28.8	27.8	-1.0	-9.5
Not satisfied	no data	12.1	11.2	11.1	-0.1	-1.0
* No question was asked in the 2018 monitoring. Calculated by the data of the Monitoring of the quality of labor potential of the Vologda Region population.						

* No question was asked in the 2018 monitoring.

Calculated by the data of the Monitoring of the quality of labor potential of the Vologda Region population.

Table 7. Satisfaction with socio-psychological aspects of labor, % of the number of interviewed employees

Answer choice	2018	2020	2022	2024	Change by region (+/-), p.p.	
					2024 to 2022	2024 to 2018
Satisfaction with the relationship with the organization's management						
Satisfied	56.3	54.6	62.8	62.5	-0.3	6.2
Difficult to say	31.9	33.1	27.1	27.0	-0.1	-4.9
Not satisfied	11.8	12.3	10.1	10.5	0.4	-1.3
Satisfaction with relations in the labor collective						
Satisfied	57.9	61.4	70.6	65.4	-5.2	7.5
Difficult to say	31.2	29	20.8	25.7	4.9	-5.5
Not satisfied	10.9	9.6	8.6	8.9	0.3	-2
Satisfaction with the ability to combine work and personal responsibilities						
Satisfied	45.6	58.1	66.7	67.3	0.6	21.7
Difficult to say	37.3	29.8	22.6	24.3	1.7	-13
Not satisfied	17	12.1	10.7	8.4	-2.3	-8.6
Satisfaction with social utility and significance of labor						
Satisfied	46.2	54.5	66.4	64.5	-1.9	18.3
Difficult to say	38.4	32.9	24.2	27.8	3.6	-10.6
Not satisfied	15.4	12.6	9.4	7.7	-1.7	-7.7
Calculated by the data of the Monitoring of the quality of labor potential of the Vologda Region population.						

Calculated by the data of the Monitoring of the quality of labor potential of the Vologda Region population.

(18% in 2020, 13% in 2022, 10% in 2024) or to feel threatened with job loss (22, 13 and 8%). As with other aspects of working life, workers in large cities are more satisfied with their job security. At the same time, the assessments of those working in district centers are less unambiguous, i.e. there is a high proportion of respondents who found it difficult to give an answer.

Socio-psychological working conditions (psychological climate, work-life balance, social significance of work)

Over the entire observation period, the majority of surveyed employees give positive as-

sessments of relations with management (in 2022–2024, 63% on average for the Region) and colleagues (in 2022–2024, 68% on average for the Region; *Tab. 7*). The share of positive assessments of the psychological climate at work increases every year. Two thirds of the respondents are satisfied with other no less important components of the quality of labor life – the ability to combine work and family responsibilities (i.e., the balance of work and personal life) and the social significance of work; here, too, there is a steady increase in positive assessments. We can say that the quality of work-

ing life in terms of socio-psychological aspects related to interpersonal interactions and largely depending on the peculiarities of a person's character and perception is at a high level.

Some socio-demographic peculiarities are revealed in the distribution of satisfaction with these aspects of working life. In particular, married couples and workers with children more often express a positive opinion about the psychological climate, the balance between work and personal time, and the social significance of their labor than workers without children or those who are not officially married. If we consider the territorial aspect, the population of large cities demonstrates greater satisfaction with the considered aspects of work. At the same time, in the period under study there is constantly registered a higher dissatisfaction of workers in the districts of the region with the public utility and social significance of their labor.

As noted in the introduction, QWL studies emphasize the positive correlation between the general perception of work and aspects of working life. To test this pattern, a correlation analysis was conducted on the regional monitoring data (Table 8). The obtained value of the asymptotic two-sided significance

index $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.000$) indicates a statistically significant result. We emphasize that “the correlation coefficient expresses not causal (the conditionality of one attribute by another), but functional (mutual consistency of changes in attributes) dependence between attributes” (Belekhova, 2023).

The calculations show that there are positive correlations between overall job satisfaction and perceptions of various aspects of work, and they are predominantly of moderate and strong intensity. As of 2024, overall job satisfaction is most closely correlated with such components of the quality of working life as working conditions (correlation coefficient 0.766), work-life balance (0.589), social utility and importance of work (0.585), and relationships in the labor collective (0.584). It is worth noting that the positive impact of socio-psychological aspects, namely relationships with coworkers and work-life balance, has increased since 2020. Less significant links are established with the following aspects of working life: the content of the work performed, reliability of the position in the organization, relations with management, compliance with labor legislation. Weak connections are fixed between job satisfaction and

Table 8. Relationship between job satisfaction in general and satisfaction with the QWL components * (Spearman correlation coefficient)

No.	QWL components	2020	2022	2024
1	Working conditions in general	0.770	0.763	0.796
2	Opportunity to combine labor and personal responsibilities	0.446	0.534	0.589
3	Social utility and significance of labor	0.519	0.570	0.585
4	Relationships in the workplace	0.428	0.596	0.584
5	Content of the work performed	0.516	0.556	0.537
6	Reliability of position in the organization	0.471	0.543	0.533
7	Relationship with the management of the organization	0.440	0.568	0.532
8	Sustainability of the organization's position in the market	0.419	0.512	0.516
9	Compliance with labor legislation	0.462	0.525	0.481
10	Technical equipment of the workplace	0.399	0.502	0.473
11	Sanitary and hygienic environment and labor safety	0.425	0.430	0.473
12	Recognition of labor results, merits, successes (non-material incentives)	0.415	0.452	0.444
13	Opportunities for training, professional development	0.384	0.488	0.414
14	Completeness of social package	0.322	0.380	0.384
15	Material incentive system	0.287	0.349	0.350
16	Work of trade union and other labor organizations	0.298	0.327	0.335
17	Wage amount	0.281	0.298	0.335

* Ranked by 2024 values.

Source: own calculations.

labor remuneration, work of trade union. The described regularities persist throughout the entire observation period.

Emphasis on the relationship of job satisfaction with socio-psychological and organizational elements, as well as with the observance of employees' labor rights, established by the results of correlation analysis, suggests the need to pay increased attention to these components of the quality of working life in modern conditions. Of course, material components (the amount of wages, social guarantees, etc.) and working conditions do not lose their primary role, but they will not be able to maintain the overall positive attitude of employees if other aspects of working life are perceived as extremely unsatisfactory (Belekova, 2023).

Another regularity, identified earlier when studying QWL on the basis of the monitoring data of labor potential of the Vologda Region population, was a direct positive relationship between the employees' perception of the quality of working life and the state and realization of the qualitative characteristics of their labor potential (Leonidova et al., 2021). The comparison of QWL composite index, calculated on the basis of satisfaction assessments, and indices of qualitative characteristics of labor potential according to the actual monitoring data of 2024 allowed us to confirm this relationship (Tab. 9). According to the calculations, the group of employees who gave predominantly positive assessments of the quality of working life has almost all characteristics of labor potential higher than

Table 9. Ratio of indices of qualitative characteristics of labor potential and QWL composite index, units

Qualitative characteristic of labor potential (index)	Group of respondents by QWL index values					
	high scores (index level above 3.01)		medium/neutral scores (index level between 2.01 and 3.00)		low scores (index level below 2.00)	
	2020	2024	2020	2024	2020	2024
Physical health	0.721	0.741	0.692	0.719	0.679	0.709
Mental health	0.813	0.838	0.761	0.815	0.792	0.872
Cognitive potential	0.608	0.597	0.578	0.548	0.554	0.519
Creative potential	0.576	0.578	0.521	0.550	0.513	0.450
Social skills	0.748	0.755	0.710	0.703	0.664	0.698
Cultural level	0.709	0.716	0.628	0.622	0.546	0.604
Moral level	0.802	0.809	0.763	0.713	0.755	0.651
Need for achievement	0.658	0.647	0.593	0.606	0.558	0.494
LP quality index (generalized)	0.689	0.693	0.639	0.643	0.612	0.591

Source: own calculations.

Table 10. Correlation of the level of realization of labor potential qualities and QWL composite index, %

Level of realization of labor potential qualitative characteristics	Group of respondents by QWL index values					
	high scores (index level above 3.01)		medium/neutral scores (index level between 2.01 and 3.00)		low scores (index level below 2.00)	
	2020	2024	2020	2024	2020	2024
Physical health	87	88	84	83	79	78
Mental health	86	86	81	76	78	75
Cognitive potential	81	82	77	70	71	72
Creative potential	74	76	71	71	66	65
Social skills	85	86	81	81	73	69
Cultural level	83	84	78	79	73	70
Moral level	83	84	79	78	74	72
Need for achievement	77	78	69	69	59	59

Source: own calculations.

the groups of employees who gave neutral assessments or expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of working life.

The calculations allowed us to confirm another regularity – the level of realization of qualitative characteristics of labor potential is higher among employees who are more satisfied with the quality of working life (*Tab. 10*). The highest level of realization is observed with regard to such qualities as physical and mental health, social skills.

Conclusion

Thus, the study analyzed the dynamics of the working population's perception about the quality of their working life and assessed the changes that occur during the unstable socio-economic situation in recent years. Data from the regional monitoring of labor potential, based on QWL index assessment, was used to determine a generally positive perception of working life among the employed population in the Vologda Region. The composite index value is above 3, indicating a high level of satisfaction with working life. The overall level of satisfaction has been gradually increasing, reaching the highest values in 2024, with a score of 3.534 compared to 3.373 in 2020 and 3.522 in 2022.

There has been an increase in positive assessments of most aspects of working life in recent years. Between 2020 and 2022, this could be due to lower baseline levels in 2020, resulting from the lack of employment opportunities and moderate worker demands due to economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic. However, in 2022 and beyond, the reasons for this growth are likely to be more positive. We believe that the growth is the result of a combination of factors such as improvements in the social protection system, increased opportunities for career development, more vacancies in the job market, and a greater willingness to switch jobs for better working conditions.

The most positive assessments were given for such aspects of the working environment as the psychological climate (relationships with colleagues and managers), work-life balance,

job security, social significance of work, and safety and technical equipment of the workplace. These factors should be seen as the main motivators for staff.

Among the problematic aspects of employees working life, as recorded in regional empirical studies over the past few years, are issues related to the system of labor remuneration, including the amount of wages and social guarantees, trade union activities, and work with personnel, such as types of non-material incentives, opportunities for professional development and training, and conditions for career advancement. These issues still require special attention and resolution in order to fully realize employees' potential.

It is shown that socio-demographic and professional characteristics such as registered marriage, the presence of children, and working in accordance with one's specialty, abilities, and vocation correlate with high levels of QWL satisfaction. It has been confirmed that the quality of the labor potential and the level of realization of workers' qualitative characteristics in labor activity is higher among those with higher values of QWL satisfaction. The priority vector for improving the quality of employees' working life in modern reality are the socio-psychological and organizational aspects of work.

The scientific novelty of this study involves identification of the strengths in the working life quality of the employed population in the region, and identification of aspects of working conditions and organization that require immediate management action. The research also verifies the socio-demographic and professional characteristics of workers with high quality of working life, confirming direct correlations between the perception of quality of working life, job satisfaction, labor potential, and effectiveness in work. The results of the study provide insight into the changes in the subjective experience of work among the population in the context of destabilizing processes and increasing external pressures. They also allow us to understand the needs and priorities of workers from various geographic areas and socio-economic backgrounds.

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