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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Do all job changes increase wellbeing?

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**Abstract**

We provide a comprehensive framework, based on person–environment fit, for evaluating the relationship between types of job change and wellbeing, and estimate it using fixed-effects methods applied to UK longitudinal data. Changing job is associated with large swings in job satisfaction, but not all job changes are equal. Changes in workplace are associated with increased job satisfaction only when they are associated with a change in job role. The largest associations are for changing employers. These associations extend beyond job satisfaction to mental health and, to a lesser extent, life satisfaction. Changes in broader wellbeing are especially pronounced for women.

**JEL CLASSIFICATION**

I31, J62, J63

## INTRODUCTION

Job mobility is not only a pervasive feature of modern labor markets but can also be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it brings potential benefits to both workers and firms, such as better matches of skills, opportunities for career advancement, and the development of new talent, however, there are potential downsides, particularly for workers, including loss of firm-specific human capital and separation from work-based communities and social networks. While the impacts of job mobility on earnings have been explored in previous studies (Light, 2005; Garcia Perez and Rebollo Sanz, 2005), research into the implications for subjective wellbeing is more limited. Within this literature, the main focus has been on the impacts of promotion (Johnston & Lee, 2013) or changing employer (Chadi and Hetschko, 2018, 2020), but there is little evidence on how wellbeing relates to other types of job changes: internal moves with the same employers or on how these internal moves compare with external moves, that is, changing employers. We extend this sparse evidence base to provide a comprehensive account of the relationships between different types of job changes and subjective

wellbeing. We focus on job satisfaction but include broader wellbeing as captured by life satisfaction and mental health. The relationships estimated are longitudinal correlations rather than causal effects, but by embedding our analysis in a rich theoretical framework (person–environment fit), we can draw plausible and informative inferences.

A job comprises of many elements: contract type, levels of responsibility and pay, the type of work undertaken, work conditions, and interpersonal relations at work. When a job change occurs, it may involve a change in one or more of these elements. Aside from involuntary turnover (end of contract, made redundant, and family reasons), a person may change jobs to improve their current position such as: achieving greater rewards in terms of pay, status and job security, a better fit between their skills and the requirements of the job, or to ensure that their goals, aspirations and values are in congruence with other dimensions of the work environment (such as organizational culture and relationship with co-workers, Bidwell & Mollick, 2015). As a result, the wellbeing impact of a job change is likely to depend on the type of job change and the motivation behind the change. For example, changing workplace, even without a change in the type of work, may lead to changes in wellbeing due to the association between wellbeing and social environment at work (Daniels et al., 2017; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). A change which involves a new employer, on the other hand, may impact upon wellbeing due to combinations of change in type of work, workplace characteristics, and possibly other life domains including place of residence. Additionally, moves within and across employers differ in terms of the accompanying changes in responsibility and pay (Bidwell & Mollick, 2015) which may then translate into varying wellbeing outcomes.

Drawing on the literature documenting the relationship between person–environment fit and wellbeing (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002, 2005), we propose a new taxonomy of job changes by distinguishing between changes in workplace, job role, and employer that occur separately or in combination. For employer changes, we further differentiate between moves to a better job (voluntary moves), dismissal or redundancy (involuntary moves), and departures following the end of a contract. We also explore whether the changes in wellbeing associated with different types of job changes are related to changes in wages, type of contract (temporary vs. permanent) and working hours (e.g., part-time vs. full-time).

We take job satisfaction as our primary wellbeing outcome as it is an overall evaluation of job-related wellbeing and captures elements of fulfillment at work, potential for progression, organizational support, and social relations in the workplace. In addition, job satisfaction is a strong indicator of employee engagement and is linked with productivity (Whitman et al., 2010). A job change is often an important life event, which can be accompanied by other changes such as moving home and different commuting times. As we know that change is stressful and key life events can lead to changes in mental health (Clark & Georgellis, 2012), we also explore the spill-over association of job changes with measures of general wellbeing using cognitive measures (overall life satisfaction) and affective or experience measures (mental health) (Luhmann et al., 2012). In line with the anticipation and adaptation literature (Chadi & Hetschko, 2018, 2020; Diriwaechter & Shvartsman, 2018; Griffeth et al., 2000), we also examine whether wellbeing changes precede and/or follow job changes. A wellbeing change may precede a job change if, for example, workers anticipate redundancies, but also declining job satisfaction may trigger a move (Griffeth et al., 2000). In this case, the causality may run in both directions. Finally, we estimate separate models for men and women to allow for their different employment trajectories and experiences of job change. Our analysis is for the UK and is based on longitudinal data from Understanding Society covering the period 2009–2018 (University of Essex et al., 2019).

## CONCEPTUALIZING JOB CHANGE AND WELLBEING

Before proceeding to the empirical analysis, we outline a theoretical framework which will guide the interpretation of our results. We draw on the concept of person–environment fit

(Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) to distinguish between different types of job changes and their potential link to wellbeing. As illustrated by von Bertalanffy (1972), people are simultaneously embedded into multiple domains associated with the work environment. One of the key environmental domains relates to the tasks which people are required to perform in a given job role. A good *person–job fit* occurs when a person has the knowledge, skills and abilities that meet the requirements of the job (i.e., demands–abilities fit) and/or the job satisfies the needs and preferences of the person (i.e., needs–supplies fit) (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). Additionally, a job often involves interaction with co-workers or working in groups/teams. A good *person–group fit* is realized when a person is compatible with their co-workers/team members, for example, they share similar goals, values, or personality (Adkins et al., 1996; Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001). Compatibility within such dyadic relationships (person and co-workers) can also take the form of *person–supervisor fit*, indicating the value, goal, or personality match between the supervisors and the subordinates (Krishnan, 2002; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002; Witt, 1998). At a more aggregate level, work environment also speaks to the social context which the entire organization presents; this includes organizational values, goals and mission. A good *person–organization fit* is achieved when the person shares organizational values and feels part of the organizational culture (Chatman, 1989; Elfenbein & O'Reilly, 2007; Kristof, 1996).

Existing research documents that a better fit between the person and the multiple domains of work environment is associated with positive employee outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction, career development, organizational commitment, and decreased turnover intentions and behaviors (Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; Boon & Biron, 2016). Despite the potential overlap, there is also a consensus that these multiple domains of person–environment fit have unique effects on employee outcomes (such as wellbeing) and should be analyzed separately (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002, 2005; O'Reilly III et al., 1991). People are shown to distinguish between different aspects of their work environment; for example, they may perceive varying degrees of fit at job- and organizational-level (Kristof, 1996). Therefore, while a better fit with the various aspects of their work environment contributes positively to work experiences, overall job satisfaction is shown to be more strongly linked to person–job fit. Turnover decisions are also differentially affected by various types of fit, with the highest association to poor person–organization fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Finally, there is evidence that the organization as a community could support and foster the fit between the person and the work environment. The most comprehensive theoretical explanation of the link between psychosocial work characteristics and employee health and wellbeing is provided by the Job-Demands-Resources (JDR) model (Demerouti et al., 2001). The JDR model suggests that when job resources (for example, job autonomy, social support, and skill variety) exceed job demands (for example, work pressure, emotional, cognitive, and physical demands), employee wellbeing will improve. Likewise, exposure to work environments with high job demands and insufficient job resources will lead to stress and lower wellbeing.[1] Studies have shown that employees can proactively initiate changes in their jobs (with further possible support from the organization) to achieve a better balance between job demands/resources with their abilities and needs. This so-called "job crafting" is noted as a key person–environment fit behavior (Parker & Collins, 2010) which eventually increases employee wellbeing (Demerouti, 2014; Tims et al., 2016).[2]

Drawing on this conceptual framework, we propose a new taxonomy of job changes to reflect a person's fit with various aspects of work environment. First, we consider job changes within the same employer and distinguish between (i) changes in workplace (without a change in job role),

[1]There is a vast body of empricial evidence documenting the link between unfavorable work conditions (e.g., job insecurity, limited/no autonomy, excessive work demands, and working hours) and worsening wellbeing outcomes (see, for example, Bardasi & Francesconi, 2004; Bell & Blanchflower, 2019; Green & Leeves, 2013; Loretto et al., 2010).

[2]Job crafting and the organizational culture motivating individuals to craft their job could co-exist with the wider top-down job redesign interventions undertaken by the organization in an attempt to improve person–environment fit. (Demerouti, 2014).

(ii) changes in job role (without a change in workplace), and (iii) changes in both the workplace and job role. Regarding the first type of change, we might expect a poor wellbeing outcome if a person moves to a new workplace where the person–group fit is poor. However, if the change in workplace is a voluntary decision and part of the person's job crafting strategy in which they are going to do a job that they enjoy, with people that make them feel part of a community, there may be a boost to wellbeing, as improvements in group cohesion and social support are linked to increased employee wellbeing (Daniels et al., 2017). The second type of change, on the other hand, could capture the person–job fit, where we expect a strong link to job satisfaction; if a move brings a better fit with the job, the associated wellbeing outcome may be positive. The third category illustrates the cases where people change both the workplace and the job role internally within the same employer. This may reflect a combined effect of person–job and person–group/supervisor fit. Employees with poor person–job fit may try to develop their skills to meet the demands of the job, or they may change jobs internally to ensure a better demands–abilities fit and supplies–needs fit (job crafting) (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Tims et al., 2016).

If employees have a weak person–organization fit then it is more likely that they will eventually leave the company, which explains the stronger link between person–organization fit and employee turnover (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). To reflect this, in our final categorization, we explore (iv) changes in employer as a type of job change which may express people's attempt to pursue their goals in a different organization (which may or may not be accompanied by a change in job role) that may offer a better fit between the person and the organizational culture. Similarly, one can argue that finding a job which meets a persons' aspirations and interests may require a change in the sector of employment or occupation and, thereby, may be more likely to be achieved through an external move by changing employer. Distinguishing between internal moves (those within the same employer), and external moves (to a new employer) can also be useful as they tend to bring different rewards in terms of pay and responsibility. Evidence suggests that while the pay effects are comparable, an internal move is more likely to bring increased responsibility (Bidwell & Mollick, 2015). Since changing employer might be accompanied by more significant changes in the dimensions of person–environment fit (combinations of change in type of work, workplace environment, and organizational culture) and comparable pay-rewards to an internal move, the associated wellbeing outcome may be more pronounced. However, it is important to remain cautious as the person may not be able to achieve fit in all the dimensions with a new employer.

Finally, acknowledging that not all the job changes represent a voluntary choice, for those who change employer (new employer), we differentiate between job changes that involve finding a better job (voluntary moves), those that were the result of dismissal/redundancy (involuntary moves) and those that followed the end of a contract.

As men and women tend to take up different jobs and experience different career trajectories, a different relationship between the various domains of person–environment fit and wellbeing outcomes may arise (Cifre et al., 2013; Merecz & Andysz, 2014). Gender roles and stereotypes along with expensive childcare, inadequate work and family reconciliation policies are among the key factors documented as the barriers for women's advancement into jobs with higher pay, status, or prestige (Charles, 2003; Rubery & Fagan, 1995). Achieving a better fit could be more difficult for women due to the obstacles outside their control, such as the "glass ceiling" blocking their potential of having a job that meets their skills and abilities (Merecz & Andysz, 2014). More generally, organizations supporting a better fit with their needs in terms of work–family balance may be of particular importance for women.

Not only might men and women be exposed to different environmental job features due to their varying career trajectories, they may differ in terms of their reaction to stressful conditions (Roxburgh, 1996). Evidence suggests that although men generally achieve a better person–job fit compared to women, a better fit between the actual job and desired job features are associated with increased job satisfaction for women but not for men (Cifre et al., 2013).

Moreover, there is also suggestive evidence that women may value the interpersonal relationships at work and the congruence between their goals, personality traits, or attitudes and the organizational culture more than men (Merecz & Andysz, 2014). We may therefore expect a more pronounced relationship between job changes and wellbeing outcomes for women, if the change in job results in a better fit.

## PREVIOUS LITERATURE

Aside from the literature on person–environment fit and work conditions, most existing empirical research into job changes and wellbeing focuses on promotions as a form of job change. This literature shows that while promotions could initially boost job satisfaction by providing better rewards and increased control, the positive (honeymoon) effect fades over time (Johnston & Lee, 2013 and Kosteas, 2011 for the US). This short-lived effect is often explained by "*hedonic treadmill*" (Brickman & Campbell, 1971) and "*set point*" theories (Diener et al., 1999; Headey & Wearing, 1992) where people return to their baseline wellbeing levels following certain life events.[3] The return to baseline effect could also be explained by *prospect theory* (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), which states that individuals evaluate their conditions by using reference points which change when conditions change; as a result, people quickly adapt to having higher wage (Diriwaechter & Shvartsman, 2018) or better conditions (Johnston & Lee, 2013), so that this becomes the new normal. In terms of more general wellbeing measures, such as life satisfaction and mental health, research either finds no statistically significant association with promotions (Johnston & Lee, 2013) or if there is an effect, as with job satisfaction, it is short-lived. In the longer term, promotions may even be associated with worsened mental health and symptoms of depression (Boyce & Oswald, 2012; Johnston & Lee, 2013). These results could be explained by increased job demands following a promotion that can offset benefits such as increased income, job control, and job security.

Only Chadi and Hetschko (2018, 2020) compare the wellbeing impact of other types of job changes in Germany, in particular whether the job change results from a positive choice (voluntary quit decided by the employee) or a constraint, specifically when the employee is forced to move because of a plant/firm shutdown. However, their focus is on moves to a new employer, thus avoiding the complexities of job mobility within employers. By contrast, in our analysis, we include consideration of multiple aspects of a work environment and explicitly distinguish between internal and external mobility.

## DATA AND METHOD

We analyze the relationship between the different types of job changes and subjective wellbeing using Understanding Society (UKHLS), a longitudinal household survey of a nationally representative sample of households living in the UK that started in 2009 and followed sample members annually. We use first 10 waves of the data (until 2019). All adult members of the sampled households are eligible for the main interviews and information is collected about different aspects of their lives including their mental health and wellbeing, labor market experience such as their current employment status, job characteristics, as well as changes in these, that

[3]Hedonic adaptation theories stress that lasting subjective wellbeing effects are not possible as changes in wellbeing upon life events are inevitably followed by an adaptation back to baseline level (Brickman & Campbell, 1971; Lucas et al., 2004). Similarly, according to set point theory, individuals have subjective wellbeing set points; while they initially react to certain events, they return to their baseline wellbeing levels that are linked to personality factors (Headey & Wearing, 1992; Lucas et al., 2004).

allow us to identify the different types of job changes that may occur between two consecutive interviews (see the Appendix S1 for details).

The main outcome of interest in our analysis is job satisfaction, which is measured on a seven point fully labeled scale ranging from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 7 (completely satisfied). In addition, to see if the effects of the different types of job changes spill over into broader aspects of wellbeing, we examine life satisfaction (measured on the same scale as job satisfaction) and two measures of mental health: the mental health component of the 12-item self-reported health module SF12 (MCS) and the 0–36 scale summary measure of the 12-item General health questionnaire (GHQ). For the GHQ scale higher values indicate worse mental health.

Our key explanatory variables are the different types of job changes, defined according to the taxonomy outlined above, and operationalized using survey questions about changes in the work (paid employment) situation between two consecutive waves (see the Appendix S1 for further details):

We focus on respondents who are 16 years and above and in paid employment in two consecutive waves to allow us to measure wellbeing and job characteristics at both time points. For those who change jobs between two consecutive waves, we restrict our sample to those who do so without intervening spells of non-employment or self-employment. This results in a sample of 7434 men and 9194 women, and 25,757 and 31,704 person-year observations, respectively. The results are robust to inclusion of respondents who experience intervening spells out of employment. We exclude the self-employed from the analysis.

We model the association of the different types of job changes with job satisfaction as follows:

$$JS_{it} = JC'_{it-1}\beta_1 + JC'_{it}\beta_2 + JC'_{it+1}\beta_3 + X'_{it}\beta_4 + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

where $JS_{it}$ is job satisfaction of individual $i$ at time $t$, which we treat as a continuous variable. The main explanatory variable is a set of dummies identifying the different types of job changes ($JC_{it}$) that individual $i$ may have experienced between $t$-1 and $t$; we use 'no change' as reference. Job satisfaction is measured at the following interview, which may occur up to 12 months after the job change.

As the literature suggests that the effect of shocks on wellbeing tends to be temporary (Diener et al., 1999; Headey & Wearing, 1992), we expect to observe some adaptation to the new job. In addition, the literature suggests the possibility of either an anticipation effect (when wellbeing changes in expectation of the job change) or a triggering effect (when changes in wellbeing result in actively seeking a job change). To control for adaptation, we include a one-year lag ($JC_{it-1}$) of the dummy variables identifying job changes, while to control for the presence of anticipation or triggering effects we include a one-year lead ($JC_{it+1}$). The lag represents a change that occurred in the previous year (i.e., between 0 and 12 months *before* job satisfaction is measured), while the lead represents a change that will occur in the following year (i.e., between 24 and 13 months *after* job satisfaction is measured). The magnitude of the lag parameter $\beta_1$, relative to the parameter on contemporaneous job change $\beta_2$, captures any adaptation to the new job. The lead parameter $\beta_3$ may capture anticipation of a known future job change; it could be positive or negative depending on the type of change and how it is perceived (e.g., voluntary move vs. redundancy). The lead parameter may also reflect a decline in job satisfaction that triggers a job move; in this case, we would expect a negative coefficient.[4] This is an example of reverse causality – in our specification, we are unable to separate it from forward causality (anticipation) and thus our estimates should be considered as correlations only (as discussed below).

[4]We experimented with various combinations of one, two, and three-year lags and leads and found either no or small and inconsistent effects for the two- and three-year lags and leads, possibly due to small sample sizes. As our focus is mainly on the different types of job changes, rather than the duration of their effects, the specification with only one lag and one lead seems a good compromise to retain a meaningful sample size.

We control for various factors that may influence the current level of job satisfaction ($X_{it}$): age and its square as a measure of work experience, the log of hourly wages, dummies for marital status, presence of dependent children in the household, whether the respondent is currently on parental leave, the main industry and occupation groups, whether the current job is part-time, temporary, as well as year dummies.

We specify fixed effects (FE) $\alpha_i$ to control for time-invariant unobserved factors, while $\varepsilon_{it}$ represents time-varying unobserved factors. The inclusion of FE means that we can be confident that the estimates are not biased by time-invariant confounders such as intrinsic motivation, personality traits, or a mental health condition that is stable over time. However, FE estimation does not control for time-varying omitted variables or, as noted, eliminate reverse causality. Overall, our analysis should be seen as a longitudinal correlational study that quantifies variations in wellbeing as workers transition through different job changes.

In further specifications, we also include changes in the main job characteristics to analyze whether they can explain the relationship of the different types of job changes with job satisfaction:

$$JS_{it} = JC'_{it-1}\beta_1 + JC'_{it}\beta_2 + JC'_{it+1}\beta_3 + X'_{it}\beta_4 + C'_{it-1}\delta_1 + C'_{it}\delta_2 + C'_{it+1}\delta_3 + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

where $C_{it}$ represents variables measuring changes in job characteristics, while $C_{it-1}$ and $C_{it+1}$ represent the one-year lag and leads of these changes. We include each type of change in a separate specification: dummies for moving from a part-time to a full-time job or vice-versa with no change as the reference (we also experimented with other measures of changes in hours of work); dummies for moving from a temporary into a permanent job and vice-versa, with no change as reference; or a variable measuring change in the log of hourly wages. Note that these changes may occur even for those who do not experience any type of job change.

For those respondents for whom the job change involves a new employer, the survey asks about the reason for the job change (this information is not available for moves within the same employer). To compare voluntary and involuntary job changes, we estimate additional models similar to the one in Equation (1), and estimated on the same sample, but in which the dummy for the new job is further divided by the different reasons for the job change:

$$JS_{it} = JC'_{it-1}\beta_1 + JC'_{it}\beta_2 + JC'_{it+1}\beta_3 + RC'_{it-1}\gamma_1 + RC'_{it}\gamma_2 + RC'_{it+1}\gamma_3 + X'_{it}\beta_4 + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

where $JC_{it}$ are now dummies for changes in workplace or changes in job roles (but not new employer), while $RC_{it}$ are a set of three dummies for those who move to a new employer. These dummies specify the reason for the change and our reference category is again no change ($JC_{it}=0$ and $RC_{it}=0$). The main reasons for changing employers (new employer) are: (i) left for a better job, (ii) made redundant, dismissed, (iii) temporary job and (iv) other reasons. The other reasons category includes taking retirement, health reasons, left to have a baby, look after family, look after other person, moved area, and any other reasons, with expected differences by gender, but since the majority of responses remain in a residual category of 'Other reasons', these are all grouped to improve cell-sizes. Our further analysis of life satisfaction and mental health is also based on Equation (3).

# RESULTS

## Type of job change

We examine the pattern of different types of job changes in our dataset (Table 1). Nearly 40% of men and women make at least one change within our observation period. About 15% of women and 16% of men are observed changing employer once, while a smaller proportion (4%–5%) are observed changing more than once. The rest, about 20%, remain with the same

**TABLE 1** Percentage of job changes.

| | Women | Men |
|---|---|---|
| | Percentage | Percentage |
| No change | 61.8 | 61.0 |
| Change in workplace: same employer, same job role, different workplace | | |
| One change | 4.9 | 6.1 |
| Multiple changes (2–5 changes) | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| Change in job role: same employer, different job role, same workplace | | |
| One change | 7.6 | 7.3 |
| Multiple changes (2–5 changes) | 1.3 | 1.4 |
| Change in job role and workplace: same employer, different job role, different workplace | | |
| One change | 3.4 | 2.9 |
| Multiple changes (2–4 changes) | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| New employer | | |
| One change | 15.1 | 15.6 |
| Multiple changes (2–7 changes) | 4.7 | 4.4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Number of individuals | 9194 | 7434 |

employer but change workplace and/or job role: around 5–7% change their workplace but not their job role, 7%–9% only change their job role but not their workplace, and 3%–4% change both their job role and workplace.[5]

In Table 2, we report the association of different types of job changes with job satisfaction for men and women (Equation (1)). Employees experience an increase in job satisfaction in the year they make a change; the largest association is for those who moved to a new employer (0.53 for women and 0.45 for men), followed by those who changed workplace and job role (0.37 for women and 0.41 for men), and then those who changed job role only (0.29 for women and 0.34 for men). The coefficient associated with a change of workplace but not of job role is not statistically significant. While, as noted, these coefficients cannot be interpreted causally, they are consistent with our theoretical expectation that a change in job role may boost job satisfaction if it results in a better person–job fit; and in line with our prior that wellbeing outcomes associated with a change of employer may be more pronounced than a change within the employer as it may bring about changes in various dimensions of person–environment fit.

The coefficient of job satisfaction for the year before a job change is statistically significant for all types of job change for women, including changing workplace only or job role only; while for men, the associations are significant for a change of employer and a change of both job role and workplace. The negative coefficients could reflect pessimism about the upcoming changes, although this does not seem consistent with the positive coefficients in the year of change. Alternatively, and more likely, the coefficients reflect a triggering effect, whereby a drop in job satisfaction lead employees to seek a job change. The coefficients for the year after the change suggest that job satisfaction returns fully or partially to its original level the year after the change. This is consistent with a honeymoon effect, which appears to be the

[5]Although some of these job changes represent relative small percentages of the sample, the sample itself is large, for example, the smallest cell (Table 1) is 2.9% of 7434 men who change job role and workplace which includes 215 observations.

**TABLE 2** Effect of job changes on job satisfaction (fixed effects) detailed classification of job changes.

| | Women | Men |
|---|---|---|
| Change in workplace | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.123** (0.059) | −0.022 (0.055) |
| Year *of* change | −0.019 (0.058) | 0.011 (0.054) |
| Year *after* change[b] | −0.044 (0.055) | −0.007 (0.051) |
| Change in job role | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.151*** (0.045) | −0.069 (0.046) |
| Year *of* change | 0.287*** (0.043) | 0.338*** (0.046) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.079* (0.042) | 0.088** (0.044) |
| Change job role and workplace | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.362*** (0.071) | −0.230*** (0.082) |
| Year *of* change | 0.366*** (0.071) | 0.414*** (0.081) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.267*** (0.071) | −0.048 (0.079) |
| Change employer | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.674*** (0.034) | −0.652*** (0.035) |
| Year *of* change | 0.526*** (0.035) | 0.450*** (0.036) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.163*** (0.034) | 0.141*** (0.034) |
| R2 (within individual) | 0.0451 | 0.0471 |
| No. of person-year observations | 31,704 | 25,757 |

*Note*: Standard errors in parenthesis; <0.10*, <0.05**, <0.01***. Controls include: age, age squared, marital status, presence of dependent children in the household, whether took maternity/paternity leave after last interview, log hourly wages, whether job is part-time/full-time, whether job is temporary/permanent, occupation, industry, year dummies.

[a]Year before change captures anticipation or triggering effects.

[b]Year after change captures adaptation effects.

longest-lived for workers who change employer and for women who change job role and workplace. Results suggesting triggering effects and the longer lasting honeymoon effect for women are in line with the previous literature pointing out that good social relationships at work and a better fit with the desired job features are more likely to influence women's job satisfaction (Cifre et al., 2013; Merecz & Andysz, 2014).

## Changes in job characteristics

To investigate whether the estimated associations reflect changes in observable job characteristics, we now add controls for changes in working hours, type of contract (temporary/permanent), or wages (Equation (2); see Table S1 for women and Table S2 for men). While changes in some of the job characteristics (for example, changes in hours worked and wages) are associated with changes in job satisfaction, the job change coefficients themselves are very similar to those reported in Table 2, implying that these job characteristics do not explain the observed changes in job satisfaction following job changes.

An external move is still associated with the highest boost to wellbeing even when we control for changes (and perhaps improvements) in observable job characteristics (e.g., wages, hours, occupation, or contract type). This might be an indication of the importance of the person–organization fit – a better fit between the person's goals, aspirations and

values and those of the organization – is the key element in how people feel about their jobs. Once again, the results are consistent with triggering and honeymoon effects that are more pronounced for women.

## Reasons for moving to a new employer

We next explore changes in job satisfaction according to the main self-reported reason for the change in employer (Equation (3)). Most job-to-job moves across employers are the result of moves to a better job (53%–59%), while less than 20% are the result of the end of the previous job either because the temporary job ended (4%–7%) or due to redundancy, or dismissal (9%–14%). The remaining 23%–32% are for other reasons – we do not discuss these results as we are not able to ascertain what these "other reasons" are.

As we would expect, and in line with existing studies, the first column of Tables 3a and 3b shows that those who change employer for a better job, experience the largest job satisfaction boost (of 0.65 for women and 0.52 for men) in the year of the change. This boost however is short-lived as it drops to 0.17 and 0.10 respectively in the following year. Like Chadi and Hetschko (2018), we find that employees (whether male or female) who change employer because they were made redundant or dismissed do not experience any increase in job satisfaction compared with baseline (although there are substantial dips in satisfaction, 0.79 for women and 0.73 for men, the year before). This possibly reflects the constraints facing this group in terms of more limited time for job search and the fact that our sample only includes those who move directly from one job to the next and excludes all those who experienced a spell of unemployment after a redundancy, dismissal, or end of contract.

The results are rather more ambiguous for those who change jobs because their previous temporary contract ended. In contrast to the other types of employer move, neither women nor men experience a change in job satisfaction the year before the new job. While some respondents may see the end of a temporary job as a negative event, others may see it as an opportunity to start a new career. It could also be that the job change is fully anticipated (as the job is temporary, there should not be a triggering effect). Similarly, there is only weak evidence for an increase in job satisfaction in the year of change. Women's job satisfaction is higher (by 0.40 points), but the coefficient is only significant at 10%, and there is no significant association for men. Moreover, for men the new job is associated with *lower* job satisfaction in the year after the change (by 0.51 points). This would indicate that, at least for men, a temporary contract ultimately leads to a worsening, not an improvement, in job satisfaction. However, a caveat to this and the other estimates related to temporary contracts is that the cell sizes are relatively small.[6]

In summary, the most rewarding type of change is a move to a new employer for a perceived new better job: not only is this type of change associated with a larger increase in job satisfaction, the increase also lasts longer than for other types of job changes. A move to a new employer is associated with a bigger change in people's working lives and is likely to reflect not only changes in the organizational context, but also new working/social environment with improved perceived support or a change in geographical location. A change in job role with the same employer is also associated with an increase in job satisfaction, although smaller and shorter lived than a move to a new employer and better job, while a move to a new employer because of the previous job coming to an end due to redundancy, dismissal, or end of contract is not generally associated with an increase in job satisfaction.

[6]There are 138 observations on men and 229 observations on women whose temporary contracts ended.

**TABLE 3A** Association of job changes with subjective wellbeing (fixed effects), women.

| | | | Mental health | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Job satisfaction** | **Life satisfaction** | **MCS** | **GHQ (higher is worse)** |
| Change in workplace | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.097 (0.064) | −0.030 (0.070) | −0.535 (0.413) | −0.002 (0.239) |
| Year *of* change | −0.005 (0.063) | −0.058 (0.069) | 0.276 (0.404) | −0.173 (0.234) |
| Year *after* change[b] | −0.019 (0.060) | −0.104 (0.066) | 0.429 (0.386) | −0.294 (0.223) |
| Change in job role | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.155*** (0.047) | −0.003 (0.051) | −0.764** (0.302) | 0.435** (0.175) |
| Year *of* change | 0.298*** (0.046) | 0.106** (0.050) | 0.253 (0.294) | −0.432** (0.170) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.079* (0.045) | 0.007 (0.049) | −0.113 (0.289) | −0.090 (0.167) |
| Change job role and workplace | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.439*** (0.075) | −0.000 (0.082) | −1.320*** (0.483) | 0.558** (0.280) |
| Year *of* change | 0.345*** (0.076) | 0.069 (0.084) | 0.908* (0.491) | −0.800*** (0.284) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.218*** (0.074) | 0.033 (0.082) | 0.716 (0.479) | −0.668** (0.277) |
| Change employer: promoted or left for better job | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.784*** (0.073) | −0.068 (0.080) | −1.506*** (0.469) | 0.765*** (0.271) |
| Year *of* change | 0.652*** (0.065) | 0.174** (0.071) | 1.433*** (0.418) | −1.266*** (0.242) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.165*** (0.056) | −0.055 (0.061) | 0.859** (0.359) | −0.249 (0.208) |
| Change employer: redundant, dismissed | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.785*** (0.158) | −0.355** (0.174) | −2.252** (1.019) | 1.584*** (0.589) |
| Year *of* change | 0.102 (0.150) | 0.276* (0.165) | 1.353 (0.969) | −0.866 (0.560) |
| Year *after* change[b] | −0.142 (0.121) | −0.155 (0.133) | 0.851 (0.781) | 0.064 (0.452) |
| Change employer: temporary job ended | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.361 (0.298) | 0.336 (0.327) | −3.628* (1.921) | 1.271 (1.111) |
| Year *of* change | 0.404* (0.222) | 0.042 (0.244) | −1.056 (1.431) | −0.332 (0.828) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.079 (0.158) | −0.046 (0.173) | 0.405 (1.016) | 0.728 (0.588) |
| Change employer: other reasons | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.821*** (0.094) | −0.057 (0.104) | −2.044*** (0.608) | 1.858*** (0.351) |
| Year *of* change | 0.330*** (0.089) | 0.269*** (0.098) | 1.788*** (0.576) | −1.038*** (0.333) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.028 (0.072) | −0.039 (0.079) | 0.112 (0.462) | −0.258 (0.267) |
| R2 (within individual) | 0.0366 | 00103 | 0.0110 | 0.0133 |
| Person-year observations | 26,769 | 26,769 | 26,769 | 26,769 |

*Note*: Standard errors in parenthesis; <0.10*, <0.05**, <0.01***. Controls include: age, age squared, marital status, presence of dependent children in the household, whether took maternity/paternity leave after last interview, log hourly wages, whether job is part-time/full-time, whether job is temporary or not, occupation, industry, year dummies.

[a]Year before change captures anticipation or triggering effects.

[b]Year after change captures adaptation effects.

## Other wellbeing measures

Next, we examine whether there is any spill-over association of job change to general measures of wellbeing – life satisfaction and mental health (measured by GHQ and MCS); the results are reported in the last three columns of Tables 3a and 3b.

**TABLE 3B** Association of job changes with subjective wellbeing (fixed effects), men.

| | | | Mental health | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Job Satisfaction** | **Life Satisfaction** | **MCS** | **GHQ (higher is worse)** |
| Change in workplace | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | 0.023 (0.057) | −0.004 (0.062) | −0.510 (0.351) | 0.073 (0.197) |
| Year *of* change | 0.014 (0.056) | −0.026 (0.061) | −0.406 (0.343) | 0.017 (0.193) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.044 (0.053) | −0.006 (0.058) | 0.563* (0.328) | −0.103 (0.184) |
| Change in job role | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.091* (0.048) | 0.023 (0.052) | 0.185 (0.295) | −0.113 (0.166) |
| Year *of* change | 0.335*** (0.047) | 0.045 (0.051) | 0.446 (0.289) | −0.587*** (0.163) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.100** (0.045) | 0.004 (0.049) | 0.384 (0.277) | −0.112 (0.156) |
| Change job role and workplace | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.207** (0.085) | −0.046 (0.092) | −0.400 (0.521) | 0.260 (0.293) |
| Year *of* change | 0.454*** (0.085) | −0.132 (0.092) | 0.113 (0.523) | −0.336 (0.294) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.038 (0.084) | −0.161* (0.091) | −0.085 (0.514) | 0.130 (0.289) |
| Change employer: promoted or left for better job | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.891*** (0.067) | −0.164** (0.072) | −1.229*** (0.410) | 0.782*** (0.230) |
| Year *of* change | 0.522*** (0.060) | 0.002 (0.065) | 0.830** (0.368) | −1.047*** (0.207) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.104** (0.048) | −0.000 (0.052) | 0.244 (0.297) | −0.124 (0.167) |
| Change employer: redundant, dismissed | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.730*** (0.158) | −0.196 (0.171) | −1.540 (0.967) | 0.856 (0.544) |
| Year *of* change | 0.178 (0.138) | −0.124 (0.150) | 1.367 (0.849) | −0.279 (0.478) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.003 (0.105) | −0.099 (0.114) | −0.298 (0.644) | 0.105 (0.362) |
| Change employer: temporary job ended | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | 0.513 (0.347) | 0.307 (0.377) | 3.090 (2.131) | −1.487 (1.198) |
| Year *of* change | 0.371 (0.302) | −0.008 (0.328) | 2.083 (1.852) | −1.283 (1.041) |
| Year *after* change[b] | −0.514** (0.231) | −0.333 (0.250) | 1.417 (1.415) | 0.466 (0.796) |
| Change employer: other reasons | | | | |
| Year *before* change[a] | −0.653*** (0.116) | −0.140 (0.125) | −1.800** (0.709) | 0.730* (0.399) |
| Year *of* change | 0.228** (0.104) | −0.207* (0.113) | −0.108 (0.636) | −0.506 (0.358) |
| Year *after* change[b] | 0.017 (0.086) | −0.094 (0.093) | 0.014 (0.528) | 0.001 (0.297) |
| R2 (within individual) | 0.0398 | 0.0099 | 0.0101 | 0.0131 |
| Person-year observations | 21,688 | 21,688 | 21,688 | 21,688 |

*Note*: Standard errors in parenthesis; <0.10*, <0.05**, <0.01***. Controls include: age, age squared, marital status, presence of dependent children in the household, whether took maternity/paternity leave after last interview, log hourly wages, whether job is part-time/full-time, whether job is temporary or not, occupation, industry, year dummies.

[a]Year before change captures anticipation or triggering effects.

[b]Year after change captures adaptation effects.

The association of the different types of job changes with mental health follow a similar pattern to that on job satisfaction, although they are less precisely estimated and more muted for men. For women, a change in job role within the same employer, especially when it is accompanied by change in workplace, is associated with improvements in mental health. Therefore, our results suggest that the social environment at work and the person–job fit, which we found to be important for women in terms of job satisfaction, may also matter for their mental health.

The positive associations with mental health of a job change to a new employer with a perceived better job are large: the association with GHQ for women is 1.3 points.

Our results are also consistent with the presence of triggering effects (or perhaps less likely, anticipation effects) among women (significant at 5%) across all types of job change except for the end of a temporary job and a workplace move in the same job role. The only evidence of triggering effects for men is before a move to a better job with a new employer, and this is also the only job change that leads to an improvement in their mental health across both measures.

There is limited evidence of an association of job change with life satisfaction and, where it exists, it is concentrated among women, for whom we see boosts in life satisfaction in the year of a change in job role (without a change of workplace) and change of employer for a promotion or better job. We also observe a significant drop in life satisfaction in the year before being made redundant or dismissed for women, and before a move to a better job among men. For women, the stronger association with a job change and life satisfaction may reflect a move to a role or an organization which offers a better fit with their needs in terms of work–family balance.

The fact that we observe more evidence of spill-overs from job changes into other wellbeing measures for women, justifies our approach of considering men and women separately. In line with the previous work, good interpersonal relationships and fit with the job role may be more important for women's job satisfaction and we show that these dimensions may also be important for their mental health and life satisfaction. On the other hand, changes in employer are associated with improvements in wellbeing for both men and women, especially when the move is to a better job. This provides some indicative evidence that the congruence between the person and the organizational values matter for both men and women.

### Limitations

This is a longitudinal correlational study, and the value of our analysis is to track workers longitudinally and document variations in wellbeing as they transition through different job changes. As we include fixed effects (FE) to control for time-invariant factors, we can be confident that the estimates are not biased by time-invariant unobserved confounders such as intrinsic motivation or personality traits. However, FE has the drawback that it does not eliminate reverse causality or account for time varying unobserved confounders. Perhaps, the most likely form of reverse causality is due to triggering effects, whereby a drop in wellbeing leads to a future job change (rather than a future job change affecting current wellbeing which is the anticipation effect). But, we cannot be certain and the coefficients associated with future job changes thus confound triggering and anticipation effects. Aside from these issues, our results only apply to the subset of individuals who changed jobs, who are arguably not a random sample of all employees. A further consideration is that some cell sizes are relatively small, the smallest being 138 observations on men whose temporary contract ended.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have documented the association between different types of job changes and various measures of wellbeing. We have shown that changing jobs has a strong positive association with job satisfaction, and that the type of job change matters. The largest and longer lasting effects are associated with moves to a new employer (especially when the move is to a better job), which may reflect a more significant change in the person–environment fit, including a better fit of a person's goals and aspirations with the values of the organization. We also found a positive – but less strong – association with wellbeing when people change job roles

while remaining with the same employer: these changes may reflect job crafting behavior to improve the person job fit, and appear to be more pronounced for women. These boosts in wellbeing are not explained by changes in job characteristics such as wages, occupation, contract type (temporary/permanent), or hours worked, even though some of these changes (type of contract, e.g., related to wages, hours or permanency, or occupation) have a positive short-term effect on job satisfaction.

Our estimates indicate that the wellbeing changes associated with job mobility extend beyond job satisfaction to mental health and, to a lesser extent, life satisfaction. Changes in these broader wellbeing outcomes are especially pronounced for women, perhaps reflecting the interaction of person–environment fit and work–family balance. In particular, the boost in women's mental health associated with moving employers to a better job is large (1.3 points). For comparison, Clark and Georgellis (2012) find that unemployment is followed by a 0.8–0.9 point drop in GHQ.

We find that wellbeing typically drops before a job change and rises in the year of the change. However, the effect is short-lived and either totally or largely disappears 1 year later. Does the short duration of a boost mean that a job change does not matter for wellbeing, in which case there may be no particular consequences for policy on job mobility? Not necessarily: the decline in job satisfaction may have been a trigger to seek new employment or undertake job crafting to achieve a better person–environment fit, and had they stayed in the previous job their job satisfaction may have followed a downward trajectory. We should reiterate that our analysis is correlational, not causal, and we do not observe the counterfactual of no job change (which could be a further decline in wellbeing). Furthermore, our estimates only apply to the selected group of those who did in fact manage to change jobs.

We also find that dismissed or redundant workers (or those leaving a temporary contract) regain their previous level of job satisfaction when they find another job. This is a reassuring result, although it needs to be qualified by the fact that our sample excludes the long-term unemployed who were not be able to find another job by the next interview.

The results presented in this paper should be of interest to managers and organizations, as they show that employee wellbeing and different types of job changes are strongly correlated. Our estimates indicate the importance of person–job and person–organization fit: organizations could redesign jobs to achieve a better fit with the person and the job and the organizational culture (top-down job redesign interventions). Organizations could also support employees' job-crafting efforts as these are likely to bring positive wellbeing outcomes and reduce employee turnover. In addition, to the extent that absenteeism is the result of stress from poor quality job or a poorly matched job and a precursor to job quits, improving employee wellbeing can increase productivity.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None of the authors has any conflict of interest which would affect their objectivity.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data files used for the analysis cannot be made available due to data access restrictions. Understanding Society (End User License version) data files were used for this analysis. These data files can be accessed from the UK Data Service by registered users after they agree to the terms and conditions of accessing the data. The code used to transform the data files can be made available by the authors on request.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

**Appendix S1**

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