

Training schemes help jobless men feel better about themselves

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Do the UK government's welfare-to-work training schemes improve the happiness and well-being of its unemployed citizens? Yes, and especially that of jobless men, says Daniel Sage of the University of Stirling in the UK in an article in Springer's *Journal of Happiness Studies*. His detailed analysis of data from the UK's Annual Population Survey shows that such active labor market programs that mimic the routines of the workplace work best.

Being unemployed can have a long-term scarring effect on a person's subjective sense of well-being and levels of life worth, happiness, anxiety and life satisfaction. It can lead to various psychosocial ills, such as depression, feelings of shame and even suicide. Therefore governments have in recent years also become increasingly aware of how their interventions make the unemployed feel.

The subjective well-being of UK citizens in general was gauged for the first time in the 2011 to 2012 wave of its Annual Population Survey. Of the 165,000 respondents to this part of the survey, 521 people participated in government training schemes. Such active [labor market](#) programs link social security recipients with back-to-work interventions to help speed up their chances of re-employment. They include initiatives such as intensive schemes of employment assistance, training programs through which to acquire new skills and qualifications, workplace experience placements and job creation schemes.

Sage's analysis shows that welfare-to-work schemes indeed increase the

[life satisfaction](#), happiness and feelings of life worth of the jobless. Interestingly, these programs had a greater impact on how people thought about their lives (so-called evaluative measures of well-being) than on their emotions (so-called affective measures). In line with previous research, this suggests that employment status has a greater influence on how people judge themselves than on how they feel each day.

Sage does not find it surprising that men benefit the most from such programs, because unemployment tends to hit them harder. The smaller benefits of labor market programs for unemployed women reflect the difficulty some women have in balancing efforts to find paid work with other responsibilities, such as childcare.

Sage also found that work-oriented programs, that provide training, work experience and extra skills, were far more effective than employment assistance initiatives that offer intensified forms of support and advice, such as the UK government's Work Programme. This is because work-oriented programs tend to replicate the paid work environment through features such as time structure, social activity and routine.

"Moving people onto welfare-to-work schemes has the serious potential to improve quality of life amongst the unemployed," concludes Sage, who believes that such interventions are the way to go for governments serious about promoting the psychosocial resilience of jobless citizens. "Being part of such programs is however still not comparable with the well-being impact of re-employment."

More information: Sage, D. (2014). Do Active Labour Market Policies Promote the Subjective Well-Being of the Unemployed? Evidence from the UK National Well-Being Programme. *Journal of Happiness Studies*. [DOI: 10.1007/s10902-014-9549-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-014-9549-9)

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