

Male public sector workers boosted by change of political leadership

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Research involving the University of Southampton has shown that male public sector workers receive a short, positive boost to their job satisfaction when a political party which they support takes control after an election.

According to this new joint study by the universities of Southampton, Surrey and Bournemouth, men's job satisfaction experiences a boost for about a year from the point a party of their preference claims power. After this, however, their job satisfaction returns to normal levels.

Meanwhile, women experience a negative effect on job satisfaction for up to three years after a change in leadership – but this is regardless of whether or not the party of their choice has taken over. This suggests women are less prone to political influence than men – instead, their reduced job satisfaction is attributed to the more general adverse effects of organisational change and uncertainty.

The study – conducted by Hong Bui (Southampton), Vurain Tabvuma (Surrey) and Fabian Homberg (Bournemouth) analysed data from the British Household Panel Survey between 1991 and 2008. They wanted to examine how people in public service jobs react to regular changes in political leadership and whether policies are needed to help workers adapt to such changes.

Dr Hong Bui from the Southampton Business School says: "Our research suggests [public sector](#) managers do not have to spend scarce resources

helping their employees to become used to a new political direction, as any such effect is relatively short-lived.

"However, they should consider how they can help people with the basic organisational change which can occur after a switch in ruling party. They should concentrate on reducing uncertainty, as this has previously been shown to be a major cause in the decline of job satisfaction."

The research has received praise in the journal Public Administration Review from Dr Scott Frampton – an employee of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and retired US Marine Corps Officer.

Dr Frampton comments: "We have all experienced the feeling of 'job satisfaction' and likely thought it sublime, just as 'job dissatisfaction' has left us hollow and wondering whether our services matter.

"As a result, understanding [job satisfaction](#) in the public sector is important, and Tabvuma, Bui, and Homberg have tapped into a potential fountainhead of research that allows for better understanding of its mysteries. We should all join the conversation and climb on the shoulders of these leading scholars."

More information: "Adaptation to Externally Driven Change: The Impact of Political Change on Job Satisfaction in the Public Sector" can be found at: onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/puar.12204/pdf

Provided by University of Southampton

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