

Working when others have a day off – weekend working by employees

New temporal demands are changing the working environment: due to internet sales, global trade and the variously motivated demand for extended opening hours, employees increasingly have to work at the weekend in Germany as well. Thus, below the findings of the BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey 2012 on the subject of weekend working are reported. In addition to the extent of weekend work, information is also provided on the groups that are affected by this trend. Further the significance of weekend work for total weekly working hours, health and social integration is outlined.

How many employed persons work at the weekend?

In the survey, more than 17,000 employees were asked whether they worked at the weekend. Analyses showed that two thirds of those interviewed (66%) worked at least occasionally on Saturday or Sunday, or even on both days. More than one third (36%) stated to work on Saturdays, Sundays and on public holidays. The number of those working Saturdays, but not on Sundays, is just slightly lower at 28%, whereby 2% work only on Sunday and public holidays.

Who are these employees?

The majority (59%) of weekend workers are men. Fig. 1 illustrates how widespread weekend work is among men and women: 38% of the men stated that they work at least occasionally on Saturdays and Sundays, while 32% work only on Saturdays but not Sundays. Fewer women work at the weekend: 32% work on both weekend days, and 24% only on Saturdays. These differences between men and women are probably caused by a higher rate of part-time work among women. Among all weekend workers, especially service (28%), manufacturing and mining (25%)

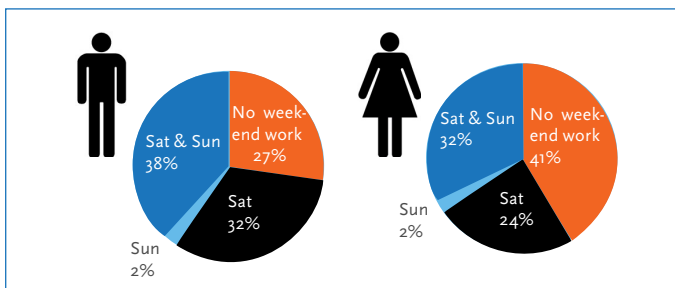


Fig. 1: Weekend work for men and women

and administrative occupations (14%) are represented. Work on Saturdays is mostly carried out by those in manufacturing occupations (29%) and trade (16%). Considering the extent of weekend work in individual occupational groups, further occupations become emerge: three quarters of employees in farming occupations and construction (74% in each case) work on Saturdays or on both weekend days. In transport occupations 70% of employees work at weekends.

What effect does weekend work have on total weekly working hours?

Only one in five weekend worker is a part-time employee, i.e. less than 35 hours per week (20%), while 30% of those who just work from Monday to Friday are employed part-time. Weekend workers are therefore mainly full-time employees. The weekly working hours actually worked are shown in Fig. 2 for full-time employees. It can be seen that about one sixth of Saturday workers work at least 48 hours per week (16%). If work is carried out on Saturdays and Sundays, this proportion even increases to 30%, while only 9% of employees who do not work weekends work 48 hours or more per week.

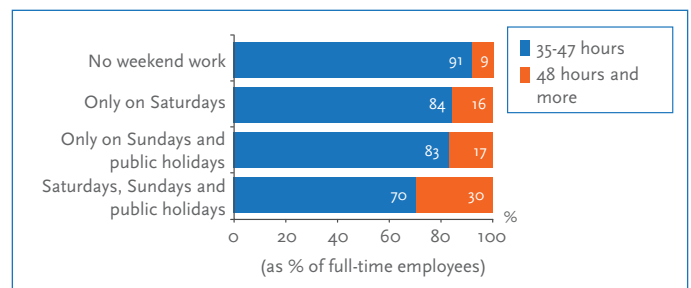


Fig. 2: Actual weekly working hours (without second job)

What about health?

Of those working on both Saturdays and Sundays, 30% assess their general state of health as “very good“ or “excellent“, compared to 34% of those who do not work weekends. As shown in Fig. 3, far more employees who work on Saturdays and Sundays are physically exhausted (42%) than employees who do not work weekends (28%). Also, those who work on Saturdays and Sundays are more often emotionally exhausted (29%) than those who work from Monday to Friday (22%).

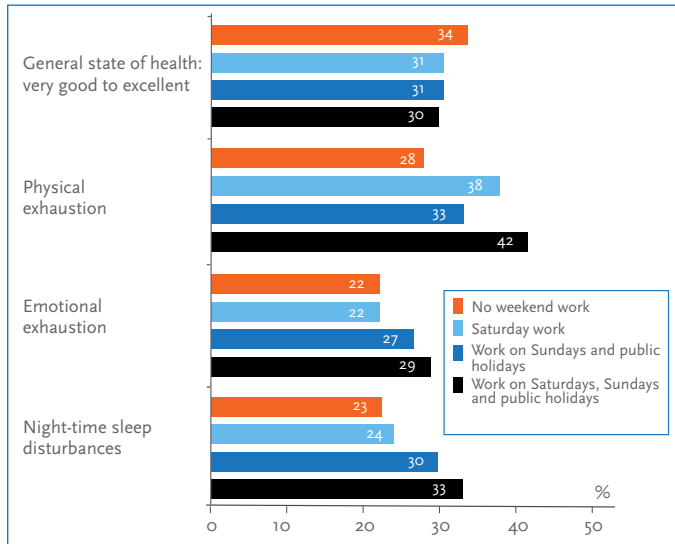


Fig. 3: Health of weekend workers

Further, the occurrence of night-time sleep disturbances is noticeable. They affect 30% of those who work on Sundays but only 23% of those who do not work weekends. The effects of sleep disorders are particularly far-reaching: weekends usually provide an opportunity for the body to recover from work-related stress. If this is not possible, e.g. because of lack of sleep, this carries the risk of extensive health problems – in particular in long periods of stress, which are described in more detail in the Stress Report 2012.

What about satisfaction and social aspects?

Further, differences between weekend workers and employees who do not work weekends with regard to satisfaction with working hours were detected: one in four employees who worked both Saturdays and Sundays stated to be “less satisfied“ or “dissatisfied“ with their hours of work (26%), in comparison to 13% of employees who do not work weekends. Additionally, social integration could also play an important role with regard to weekend work. Being

asked how often they succeeded in taking account of family and private interests when planning their work hours, about two thirds (67%) of persons who do not work weekends stated that they frequently succeeded, but only 58% of those who work Saturdays and Sundays claimed this. Problems in coordinating work and private life should be regarded critically especially with weekend work, because weekends play a key role in social integration. Working at the weekend causes, among other things, scheduling problems for traditional family activities and possible organisational difficulties regarding childcare.

Summary

Weekend work is a widespread phenomenon among employees in Germany, even if the framework conditions vary strongly. In the BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey greater physical and emotional exhaustion was seen among weekend workers, compared to those who do not work at the weekend, as well as significant constraints on organising private life. However, it can be assumed that some of the observed effects were not caused solely by the frequency of weekend work, but also in part by the types of occupation in which weekend work occurs frequently. In addition, the motives of employees should be observed for an exact evaluation: Often, individual situations and preferences flow into a person’s own choice of employment and hours of work, which can have different consequences for health and social life. However, as the reported data show, for many employees weekend work contains a series of problems. Thus, attempts should be made to counteract these as far as possible, e.g. through other working hour models or a reduction of constant availability.

You can find more information on weekend work, various working hour models and constant availability in the following publications:

Lohmann-Haislah, A. (2012). Stressreport Deutschland 2012. Dortmund: BAuA. Download available at: www.baua.de/dok/3430796

BAuA (2013). Im Takt? Gestaltung von flexiblen Arbeitszeitmodellen. Dortmund: BAuA. Download available at: www.baua.de/dok/697378

Pangert, B./Schüpbach, H. (2013). Die Auswirkungen arbeitsbezogener erweiterter Erreichbarkeit auf Life-Domain-Balance und Gesundheit. Dortmund: BAuA. Download available at: www.baua.de/dok/4580542

Source: www.baua.de/dok/6506806

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