

Deliver, store, and transport – Working conditions in transport and logistics occupations

23 baua: Facts

The transport and logistics sector is one of the most important sectors in Germany, right after the automotive industry and trade. Market liberalisation has led to increasing competitive pressure in Europe and thus to rationalisation, involving staff reduction or intermediate storage. However, goods still have to be delivered on time and means of transport have to be punctual. Therefore, work in transport and logistics occupations is characterised by high workload. In terms of sick leave, transport and logistics workers rank at the top, with 6% compared to 4% of all BKK-insured persons in 2015. Hence there is reason enough to take a closer look at this occupational group on the basis of the BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey 2012.

Transport and logistics occupations are characterised by very different activities. For this reason, two major occupational groups are presented below as representative examples (according to the Classification of Occupations; KldB, 2010): “occupations in warehousing and logistics, in postal and other delivery services, and in cargo handling” (short postal & logistics, n = 712) and “drivers of vehicles in road traffic”, such as drivers of passenger transport and transport of goods (vehicle driving, n = 483). The working conditions of these groups are compared to the average values of the total dependent employee population in Germany (short „overall“, n = 17,562). Additionally, particularly high exposure levels are shown in three occupational subgroups postal/delivery service, bus/tram driver and truck drivers.

High physical demands

The physical demands are higher for both occupational groups than for the average dependent employee (see Fig. 1). Postal & logistics occupations are characterised by frequent work while standing (80%), lifting and carrying heavy loads (50%), wearing protective clothing (43%), and frequent adverse climatic conditions (40%). The proportion of respondents who frequently have to lift and carry heavy loads and have unfavourable climatic conditions is twice as high as the average. The sub-group “postal/delivery service” is particularly often required to lift and carry heavy loads (67%) and to work in unfavourable climatic conditions (71%). Drivers are twice as often exposed to bright light and poor visibility conditions as the average dependent employee (20%) and more than two-and-a-half times more likely to experience adverse climatic

conditions (52%). In addition, about 25% are often exposed to vibrations, impacts, and reverberation at work, compared to an average of 4% among all dependent employees.

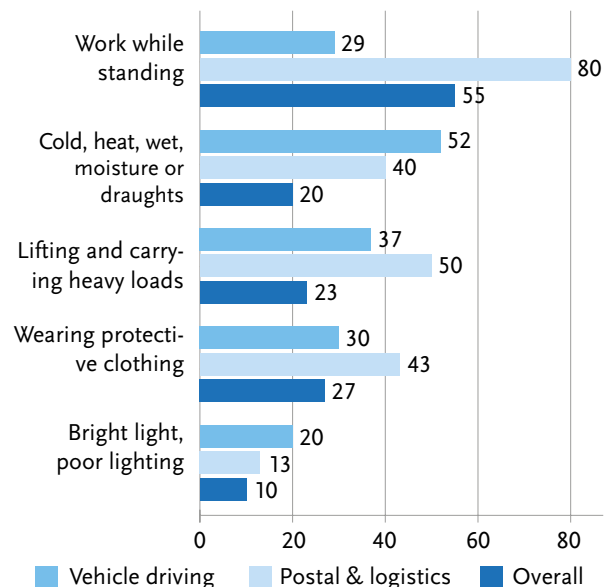


Fig. 1 Share of employees with frequent physical demands (in %)

High work intensity and little decision latitude

In both occupational groups, repetitive tasks (ca. 70% vs. 50% overall, see Fig. 2) and a prescribed performance of work (in each case 37% vs. 26% overall) are predominant. Accordingly, being faced with new tasks is comparatively rare. In particular, in the subgroup “bus/tram drivers”, the frequent specification of number of units, performance, or time (67%) is striking (vs. 30% overall). This also applies

to the “postal/delivery service” (53%). Almost two-thirds of vehicle drivers often work under great time pressure and pressure to perform (60% vs. 52% overall). Postal & logistics employees often have to work very quickly at above average rates (47% vs. 39% overall); 22% of them often work at the limits of capability (vs. 16% overall). In addition, the vehicle driving occupations are characterised by particularly long working hours of 48 hours or more (43%). In particular, more than half (54%) of all truck drivers work more than 48 hours a week. In the postal & logistics occupations, that proportion is only 10% (vs. 17% overall).

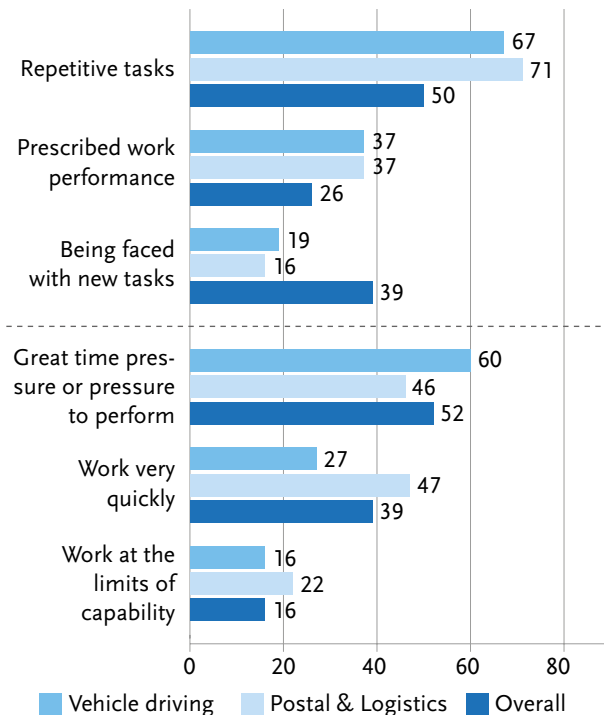


Fig. 2 Share of employees with frequent psychological demands (in %)

The decision latitude of transport and logistics workers is strikingly low compared to the average dependent employee. Only 42% of vehicle drivers and 49% of postal & logistics employees can frequently plan and organise their work themselves (vs. 67% overall). Only about one-fifth of vehicle drivers and postal & logistics workers have an influence on the amount of work, compared to an average of about one-third among all dependent employees. However, when it comes to getting help and support from supervisors and colleagues and cooperation, transport and logistics workers are not that different from the average dependent employee, with the exception of the postal/

delivery service. Here, getting support from supervisors and colleagues and collaborating with colleagues is much less common than among the average employment population.

Frequent physical exhaustion and health complaints

Postal & logistics employees (65%) and vehicle drivers (61%) more frequently report at least two musculoskeletal complaints in the last 12 months than the average dependent employee (51%) (see Fig. 3). Accordingly, their general health status is also appraised to be poorer, and physical exhaustion is reported at above average rates.

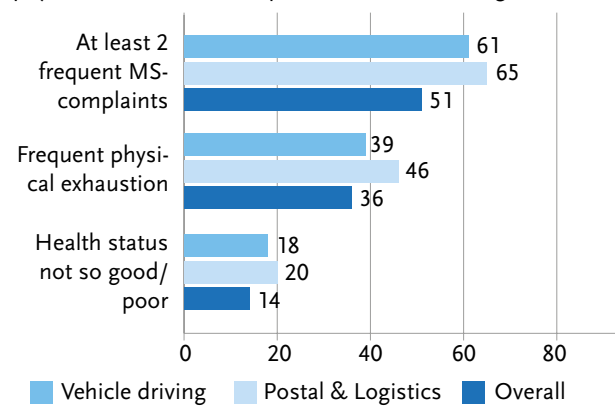


Fig. 3 Share of employees with health complaints (in %)

Conclusion

Compared to the average values for all dependent employees, work in the transport and logistics occupations is more frequently characterised by high work intensity, low decision latitude, and higher physical demands. These unfavourable working conditions are also reflected in more adverse health outcomes in these occupations. It is also important for entrepreneurs to keep an eye on the number of young talents they will need in the future, as only 20% of employees in vehicle driving are younger than 35. One starting point for this is to pay particular attention to the highly pronounced stress factors reported here when carrying out the legally prescribed risk assessment. Suitable measures can help protect the health of employees in the long term.

Further Information

A. Lohmann-Haislah, 2012. Stressreport Deutschland 2012: Psychische Anforderungen, Ressourcen und Befinden. Dortmund: BAuA. Verfügbar unter: www.baua.de/dok/3430796