

# Shift-work isn't just shift-work

## 21 baua: Facts

**Shift-work continues to be a frequently found working time model. It is associated with physically exhausting production work that is carried out primarily by men. This is one of the possible reasons that gender aspects are rarely integrated into the valid and applicable health and safety protection regulations. The findings of the BIBB/BauA 2012 Employment Survey make clear that different working conditions exist in typical male and female occupations - and that this is also the case with shift-workers.**

On account of the increasing flexibility of the labour market, atypical forms of employment such as shift-work and night-work, are to be observed today more frequently than in the nineties. Shift-work is still predominantly carried out by men and frequently takes place in industry and the trades (Beer-mann & Kretschmer, 2015).

### Gender and the labour market

In Germany there is an unequal distribution of men and women employed in different areas of the economy and occupational groups. Accordingly researchers differentiate between typical occupations for men, typical occupations for women and those for both genders. In shift-work, too, the gender aspect appears to play a role. For this reason the data of the BIBB/BAuA 2012 Employment Survey were analysed in respect of the working conditions frequently found for employed shift-workers (with and without night-work component) in typical occupations for women and typical occupations for men.

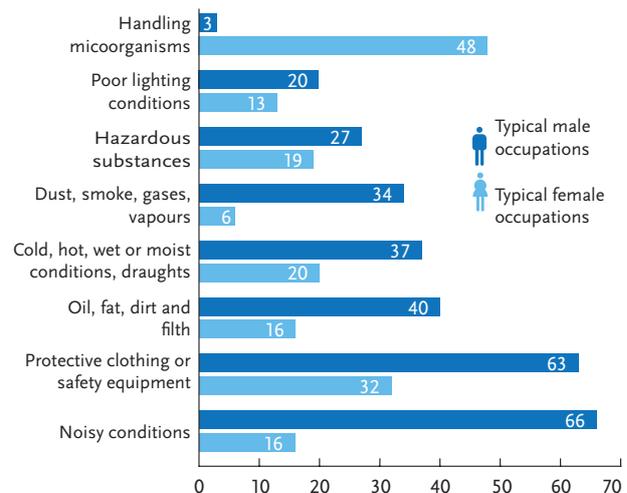
Female occupations	Male occupations
Health associate professionals	Metal, machinery and related trades workers
Sales workers	Stationary plant and machine operators
Personal care workers (e.g. nursing assistants, Home-based personal care workers)	Drivers and mobile plant operators
Cleaners and helpers	Science and engineering associate professionals

**Table 1** Typical female occupations and typical male occupations (according to ISCO-2008) with shift-work

In this fact sheet, occupations dominated by women are those where the proportion of women working is over 60% percent. Typically male professions are characterized by a proportion of women of less than 40 percent. Used here were the occupations systematic „International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008“ (ISCO-2008). Almost one third of all shift-workers (male and female) work in typical female occupations and nearly half in typical male occupations. Examples of typical female and male occupations are given in Table 1.

### Environmental working conditions

The shift-workers in typical male occupations (e.g. metal workers) report more frequently that they are subject to unfavourable work environment conditions than the ones in typical female occupations (see Fig. 1).

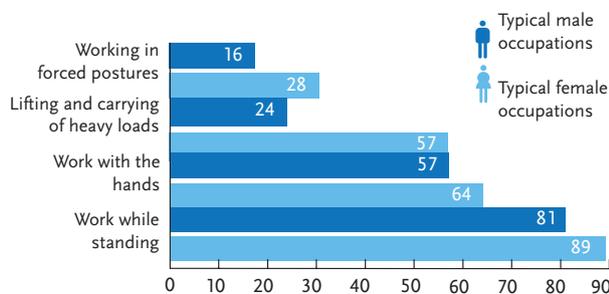


**Fig. 1** Work environment conditions frequently in typical female and typical male occupations (in %)

This includes the frequently occurring working conditions of „Noisy conditions“ (66% vs. 16%), „Wearing protective clothing/ safety equipment“ (63% vs. 32%) or „Dust, smoke, gases, vapours“ (34% vs. 6%). In typical female occupations (e.g. in the health sector) only “handling microorganisms” (48% vs. 3%) is mentioned more often than in the typical male occupations.

### Physical working conditions

Shift-workers in typical female occupations report more frequently that they are confronted with work conditions that are unfavourable in a physical sense. They report more often having to work while standing (89% vs. 81%), with their hands (great dexterity, fast sequences of movement or great strength) (64% vs. 57%), in forced postures (28% vs. 16%) and having to lift and carry heavy loads (24% vs. 16%) than people working in typical male occupations (see Fig. 2).



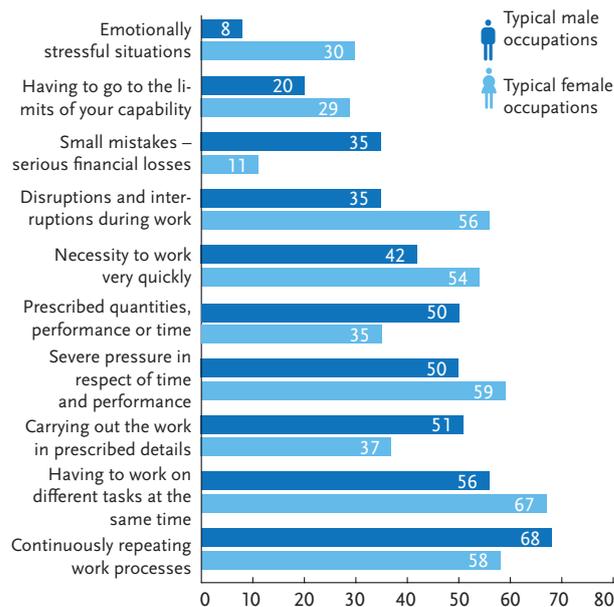
**Fig. 2** Physically demanding working conditions reported frequently by shift-workers in typical female occupations and in typical male occupations (in %)

### Psychological demands

In shift-work the following work conditions - amongst others - were frequently reported in the typical female occupations: „emotionally stressful situations“ (30% vs. 8%), „disruptions and interruptions during work“ (56% vs. 35%) or „necessity to work very quickly“ (54% vs. 42%) (see Fig. 3). With the typical male occupations, the psychological demands „carrying out the work in prescribed details“ (51% vs. 37%), „prescribed quantities, performance or time“ (50% vs. 35%) and „one and the same process is repeated in every detail“ (68% vs. 58%) are more frequent.

### Conclusion

The results make clear that - contrary to the classical picture of shift-work - persons working in typical female occupations frequently also have to carry out physically demanding jobs or work under unfavourable work-environment conditions. They also show that mental stress such as monotonous tasks, multitasking or severe pres



**Fig. 3** Frequently reported mental demands in typical female and typical male occupations (in %)

sure in respect of deadlines and performance are also not so rare in typical male occupations.

Consideration and interpretation of the work requirements as well as consideration of the development and implementation of suitable measures in the area of accidents at work prevention (e.g. risk assessment) lead to the recommendation that the specific work conditions and risks present in typical female and typical male occupations should be taken into account. Above all in occupations dominated by one or the other gender it is recommended that the gender perspective should be integrated into the health and safety protection areas so that the particular minority groups (i.e. men in typical female occupations and women in typical male occupations) are considered and not disadvantaged.

### Further information

- 1 B. Beermann & V. Kretschmer (2015). Schichtarbeit und Betriebliche Gesundheitsförderung [Shift-work and worksite health promotion]. In: Fehlzeiten-Report 2015 (pp. 205-214).
- 2 Factsheet 15. Nightwork in the spotlight – frequent stress at work remains a problem. [www.baua.de/DE/Angebote/Publikationen/Fakten/BIBB-BAuA-15e.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](http://www.baua.de/DE/Angebote/Publikationen/Fakten/BIBB-BAuA-15e.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2)