

Working Time Report Germany 2016

Results at a glance



baua: Report brief

On average, full-time employees in Germany work nearly five hours longer per week than contractually agreed. Almost half of the employees would like to reduce their working hours. Those who have predictable working hours and control over their working hours are often healthier and have a better work-life balance. These are the results of the first BAuA working time report based on a representative national survey.

The organization of working time is becoming increasingly diverse due to a changing world of work. The Working Time Report Germany 2016¹ by the German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) provides an overview of working hours in Germany. It also investigates if employees' health and satisfaction are related to their working time. The BAuA Working Time Survey 2015, in which 20,000 workers in Germany were interviewed by telephone, provides the database. The survey is representative of the working population from age 15 in Germany with a minimum of 10 paid working hours per week. Further information can be found in the Working Time Report Germany 2016 as well as in the related methods report² (both reports are only available in German language). We present data of employees up to the age of 65 years. Results are available for the following four topics: Overview of working time, flexible working hours, working time requirements in different life situations, and working hours in special forms of employment.

Overview of working hours

77 percent of employees work at least 35 hours a week in total – including overtime etc., which is defined as full-time work in the BAuA Working Time Report (as opposed to part-time work with 10 to 34 weekly working hours). The majority of part-time employees work in so-called long part-time periods between 20 and 34 hours per week. Significantly more women than men work part-time (see Figure 1). The working time patterns of men and women under the age of 30 are very similar. Above the age of 30, part-time work becomes more important for women and less important for men.

Part-time work is the least prevalent in industry/manufacturing and in the craft sector, and the most prevalent in the service sector. Full-time employees work overtime more

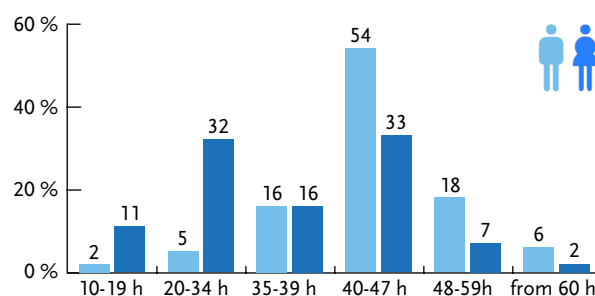


Fig. 1 Amount of actual weekly working hours of male and female dependent employees.

often than part-time workers: nearly half of them work over two hours a week more than contractually agreed. On average, full-time employees work nearly five hours longer than contractually agreed. The most common reason for overtime is that the work cannot be done otherwise. In line with this, longer working hours and overtime are often accompanied by heavy deadline or performance pressure, excessive workload, and cancelled breaks.

For full-time workers, longer working hours and working more overtime are associated with a higher prevalence of health conditions such as sleep disturbances and fatigue. In addition, long hours are often associated with poorer overall health and less satisfaction with the work-life balance.

Work on weekends and work outside the typical time between 7am and 7pm pose a special strain. In particular, weekend work is widespread: 43 percent of employees work at least once a month on weekends – half of them on Sundays or public holidays. While work on Saturdays is most frequent in crafts and services, work on Sundays or public holidays is widespread especially in public service. In industry/manufacturing weekend work is a little less common.

One fifth of the employees work outside the period between 7am and 7pm. Their schedule includes, for example, fixed early, fixed late or night shifts or alternating shifts. Alternating shifts – especially those including night work – are most widespread in industry/manufacturing. Employees working on weekends or shifts are less likely to be satisfied with their work-life balance and more likely to report health problems (see Figure 2).

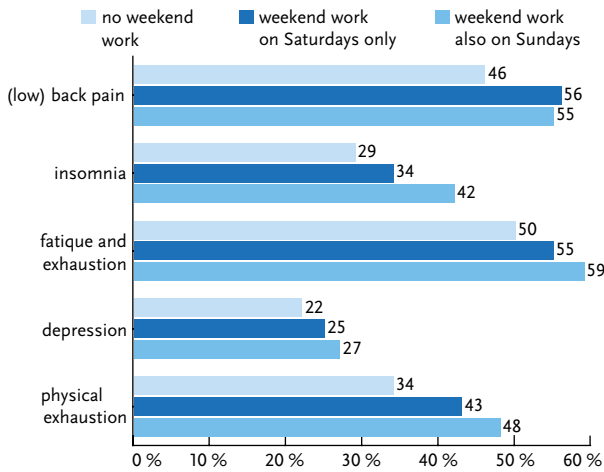


Fig. 2 Employees working on weekends report various health problems more often.

Flexible working hours

Flexible working hours are an opportunity to meet employees' needs for a good work-life balance as well as company needs. Thus, employees can be granted temporal flexibility options. Equally, flexibility requirements can be imposed on them.

Examples of flexibility options are the extent of employees' control over their daily start and end times, or over the timing of breaks or taking time off. Employees in larger companies and in industry/manufacturing more often have these flexibility options than employees in small or medium-sized companies and in the trades sector. Moreover, highly qualified employees often have more control over their working time than those with less education.

The documentation of working hours is the prerequisite for managing working time accounts. The working hours of one fifth of the employees are not recorded. For about half of the employees they are recorded by the organization, and one third of the employees document their working hours themselves. In turn, six out of ten employees have a working time account. Employees in industry/manufacturing and the public sector can dispose of the accumulated time in their working time account more often than employees in the service and trades sectors.

Flexibility requirements exist when working hours are changed at short notice due to organizational demands, but also when employees are working on call or when

they have to be constantly available even outside working hours. More than one in seven employees experience frequent changes in working hours due to organizational needs, and about one in four experience occasional changes. Frequently, such changes are announced at very short notice, i.e., on the same day or the day before. Employees in industry/manufacturing are the least affected by frequent changes in working hours. 12 percent of all dependent employees work on-call and therefore experience high flexibility demands. More than a fifth of employees are expected to be available in private life for work demands, and more than one in ten are actually often contacted for work-related reasons.

Employees who have control over their working time are on average more satisfied with their work-life balance, and they more often assess their health status to be good. On the other hand, employees who are subject to flexibility requirements are less often satisfied with their work-life balance and report more health problems. Thus, for the health of employees it is crucial whether working time flexibility constrains or increases employees' control over their working time.

Working time preferences in different life situations

Which working time requirements do employees have and what does their actual working time look like? About half of them do not want to change the amount of their current working hours. However, one in three part-time workers would like to work more hours per week. This is especially true for employees who think that their household income is insufficient. By contrast, more than half of full-time employees would like to reduce their working hours. Especially employees with long working hours and high work intensity would like to work less. Both full-time and part-time workers who wish to reduce working hours report more health problems than employees who do not have that desire.

Women's working hours are more closely related to their life situation than men's. Women with children often reduce their working hours. Their actual working hours often match their desired working hours. The overall working time of couples with children is lower than that of couples without children. This can be explained almost completely by the shorter working hours of women (see Figure 3). Regarding men, both the desired and actual working hours remain stable over many life situations. A big difference between desired and actual working hours can be found in the group of single parents. They have more financial difficulties, and they are more often dissatisfied with the compatibility of family and work.

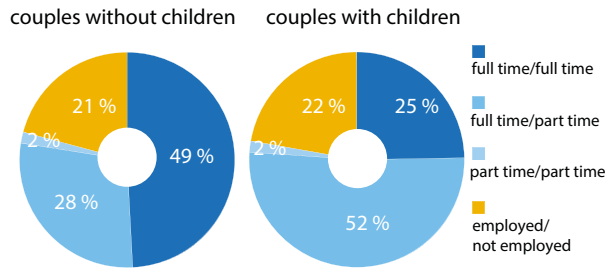


Fig. 3 In couples with children and at least one of the partners employed, most often one person works full-time, the other part-time.

Working hours in special forms of employment

Eight percent of respondents are self-employed. Half of them are solo self-employed (i.e., self-employed with no employees), the other half are self-employed with employees.



Fig. 4 Weekly working hours of solo self-employed, self-employed with employees and dependent employees.

The latter usually have long working hours. The group of solo self-employed includes part-time workers, full-time employees and a group with excessive working hours in roughly equal shares (see Figure 4). Self-employed people work less often outside usual daytime working hours between 7am and 7pm than dependent employees. Weekend

work, on the other hand, is more widespread among the self-employed. Likewise, they are more likely to be affected by changes in working hours and on-call work. At the same time, however, self-employed workers have more control over their working hours. Overall, they rate their health better than dependent employees and report health problems less often.

Seven percent of the workforce holds multiple jobs. Most of them are women. About half of all multiple jobholders are dependently employed in both the main and the secondary employment. Multiple job holders often work more hours per week than employees without a second job. Weekend work is also more widespread among them.

Conclusion

The findings of the Working Time Report Germany 2016 show that the organization of working hours plays an important role for the health of employees. At the same time, flexible working hours are becoming increasingly important. Organizing them in a way that workers are provided with sufficient rest and a good balance between work and private life is a task that the working world has to face.

Additional Information

- 1 A. M. Wöhrmann, S. Gerstenberg, L. Hünefeld, F. Pundt, A. Reeske-Behrens, F. Brenscheidt und B. Beermann, 2016. Arbeitszeitreport Deutschland 2016. Dortmund: BAuA.
- 2 A. Häring, H. Schütz, R. Gilberg, M. Kleudgen, A. M. Wöhrmann und F. Brenscheidt, 2016. Methodenbericht und Fragebogen zur BAuA-Arbeitszeitbefragung 2015. Dortmund: BAuA.
- 3 Further information can be found at www.baua.de/EN with the keyword „working time“.