

Working Time Report Germany – Overview of Duration, Location and Flexibility of Working Time



baua: Report brief

On average, German employees work 38.4 hours per week. The majority of employees would like to reduce their working hours, and about half of them want to work fewer than 5 days a week. 39 percent of employees regularly work on weekends. At the same time, the opportunities for many employees to organize their working hours flexibly have increased significantly. These and other results of the BAuA-Working Time Survey 2021 are presented in the current Working Time Report Germany.

Working hours are not only crucial for safety and health at work, but also determine how much time remains for recovery and private life. The Working Time Report Germany (BAuA, 2022) provides a representative overview of the working times in Germany. The data source is the BAuA-Working Time Survey 2021 (see Infobox). The Working Time Report presents the distribution of different working time characteristics. It also focuses on the relationship between working time characteristics, health and well-being. This brief report summarizes the key findings of the report on duration, location and flexibility of working time.

BAuA-Working Time Survey 2021

About 20,000 persons participated in the BAuA-Working Time Survey 2021 (Häring et al., 2022). Of these, about 13,500 were first-time respondents and 6,500 respondents had already participated in at least one of the previous survey waves. In a 40-minute telephone interview, information was collected on various working time characteristics and other working conditions. The survey also focused on health and satisfaction. The results are representative of people in Germany who are in paid employment for at least 10 hours per week. In this brief report, the data refer to employees aged 15 to 65.

Duration of working time: actual and preferred weekly working time, overtime and shortened rest periods.

On average, employees in Germany work 38.4 hours per week. With 43.0 hours per week, full-time employees work an average of 4.3 hours more than their contractual working hours. Women are significantly more likely to work part-time than men, especially long part-time hours, i.e., 20 to 34 hours per week (see Fig. 1).

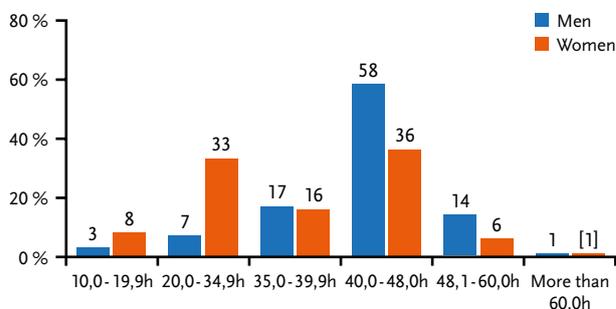


Fig. 1 Duration of actual weekly working time for men and women (n=17,761), [] too few cases

More than half of dependent employees (53 %) would like to reduce their working time. Employees want to work an average of 34.4 hours per week, which corresponds to a reduction of about 4 hours. Women with very long working hours want to reduce their working hours significantly more than men with very long working hours. Men working part-time, on the other hand, want to extend their working hours significantly more often than women working part-time. Around half of all employees would also like to work fewer than 5 days per week. There is hardly any difference between men and women in this aspect.

Shortened rest periods of less than 11 hours occur regularly, i. e., at least once a month, for 16 percent of all German employees.

Long working hours, overtime and shortened rest periods are closely related to time or performance pressure (for overtime see Fig. 2). In addition, these aspects are associated with the more frequent occurrence of health complaints. Employees with long working hours, overtime and shortened rest periods are also significantly less likely to be satisfied with their work-life balance.

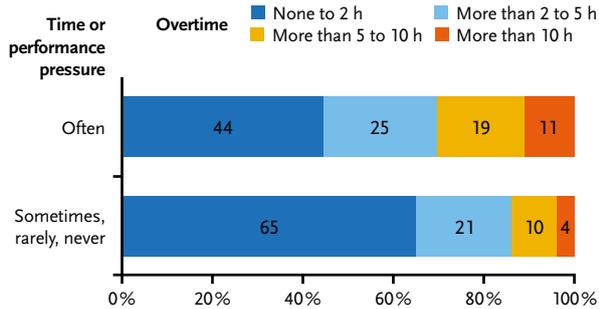


Fig. 2 Overtime and time or performance pressure (n = 17,315), rounding errors possible

Location of working hours: Weekend work, work outside 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and shift work.

Slightly less than four out of ten employees (39%) in Germany regularly work on weekends. 18 percent work weekends only on Saturdays, 2 percent only on Sundays, and one-fifth work both Saturdays and Sundays.

In addition, four out of five employees (80%) normally work between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. during the day, while 20% also work outside these hours.

18 percent of employees work in shifts: 1 percent of employees work exclusively in early or late shifts, another 8 percent work in rotating shifts without night shifts, 7 percent in rotating shifts with night shifts and 1 percent in permanent night shifts. The vast majority of employees in Germany – 82 percent – do not work in shifts.

Work at weekends, outside the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and shift work are often associated with poorer general health and more psychosomatic health complaints (for shift work, see Fig. 3). Employees with such atypical working time characteristics are also less likely to be satisfied with their work-life balance.

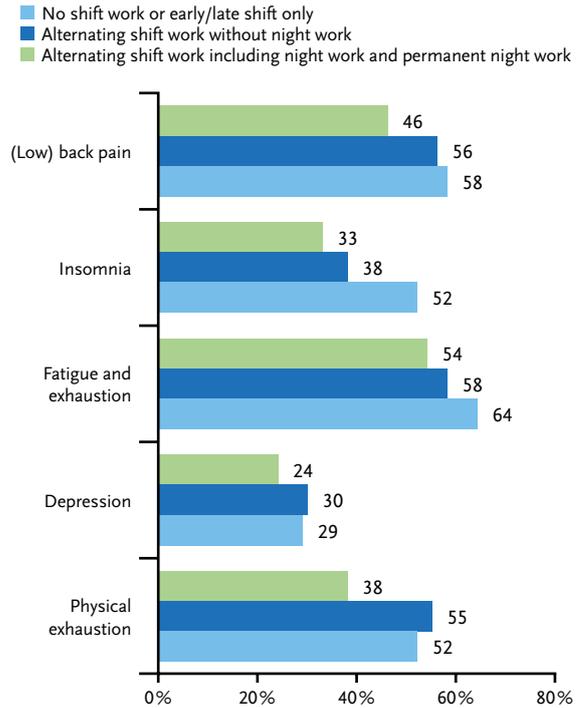


Fig. 3 Health complaints and shift/night work (17,510 ≤ n ≤ 17,519)

Flexibility of working time: Working time control, flexibility demands and working time recording

Working time control (employee-oriented flexibility) has increased in recent years. The majority of employees can influence when they take hours off, and another two-thirds can influence when they take vacation or days off. Just under half of employees can influence when they start and finish work. Overall, these aspects of working time control are associated with better health and greater satisfaction with work-life balance.

Flexibility demands (employer-oriented flexibility) are also part of everyday working life for some employees. One-tenth of employees report frequent changes in working hours due to operational reasons, which are often communicated at very short notice (e.g., on the same day or the day before). In Germany, 4 percent of employees work on demand (“Arbeit auf Abruf”), 5 percent have on-call duties (“Bereitschaftsdienst¹⁾), and 6 percent work on standby (“Rufbereitschaft²⁾). Twenty-two percent of employees are expected to be available, and 13 percent of employees are actually contacted frequently outside working hours.

1 Employees usually stay at the place of work or in the immediate vicinity so that they can start work as immediately as possible.
 2 Employees can determine their own whereabouts and only have to be ready for a possible work assignment.

Flexibility demands are associated with poorer health and lower satisfaction with work-life balance. The demands result from the lack of predictability and plannability of working time. Being on call is often associated with increased psychosomatic health complaints. In addition, employees who are expected to be available outside working hours report that they are more often affected by health impairments and are less often satisfied with their work-life balance. This relation is even more evident for employees who are actually contacted frequently outside working hours, e.g., by colleagues, supervisors or customers.

The recording of working hours is widespread in Germany. In eight out of ten employees, working time is recorded by the company (47%) or by the employees themselves (32%). If working time is recorded by the company, it is almost always booked to a working time account (see Fig. 4). On average, employees with working time recording are more satisfied with their work-life balance.

- Operational recording of working time with working time account
- Self-documentation of working time with working time account
- Operational recording of working time without working time account
- Self-documentation of working time without working time account
- No working time recording

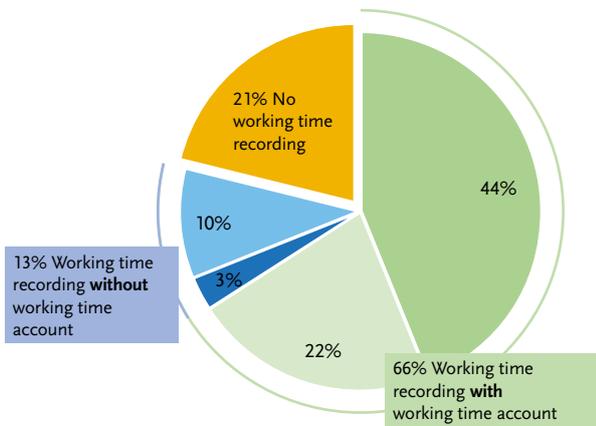


Fig. 4 Type of working time recording and working time accounts (n = 17,475)

Conclusion

The results of the Working Time Report Germany provide an overview of the prevalence and distribution of various aspects of working times in Germany. They underline that the design of the duration, location and flexibility of working hours plays a crucial role for safety and health of employees. Working times are also related to the perceived balance between private life and work. Flexible working times are becoming increasingly important. One of the key challenges for occupational safety and health in the future will be not only to use this scope for flexibility, but also to design it in a way that promotes health.

The full working time report is available (only in German) online on the BAuA website:

BAuA (2022). Arbeitszeitreport Deutschland: Ergebnisse der BAuA-Arbeitszeitbefragung 2021 [Working Time Report Germany: Results of the BAuA-Working Time Survey 2021]. (baua: Bericht). Dortmund/Berlin/Dresden: Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. <https://doi.org/10.21934/baua:bericht20221103>

Further publications and information on the subject of working time can also be found on the BAuA website via this link: https://www.baua.de/EN/Topics/Work-design/Working-time/_functions/Publications-search_Formular.html?nn=29e79ad1-d889-4e07-8d59-fe19d1dfa971

References

Häring, A., Schütz, H., Kleudgen, M., Nold, J., Vieten, L., Entgelmeier, I. & Backhaus, N. (2022). Methodenbericht und Fragebogen zur BAuA-Arbeitszeitbefragung 2021 [Method report and questionnaire for the BAuA-Working Time Survey 2021] (baua: Bericht). Dortmund/Berlin/Dresden: Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. <https://doi.org/10.21934/baua:bericht20220918>

Suggested citation

Backhaus, Nils; Nold, Johanna; Vieten, Laura, 2023. Working Time Report Germany – Overview of Length, Location and Flexibility of Working Time. Dortmund: Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. baua: Report brief.

English translation. German original available: doi:10.21934/baua:berichtkompakt20230116