



Questions and Answers about OVERWORK: A Sloan Work and Family Research Network Fact Sheet

Introduction

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared Fact Sheets that provide statistical answers to some important questions about work–family and work–life issues. This Fact Sheet includes statistics about Overwork. (Last updated: May 2009)



Who is working long hours?

- ✔ **Fact 1** People between the ages of 30 and 49 are the most likely to work long hours (Kodz et al., 2003).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “...the parents of teenagers are more overworked than parents with younger children. In addition, we found that employees with elder care responsibilities tend to be more overworked than employees without these responsibilities” (Galinsky, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 6).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Over this same period [the past 25 years], the combined weekly work hours of dual-earner couples with children under 18 at home has increased by an average of 10 hours per week, from 81 to 91 hours” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 15).
- ✔ **Fact 4** “Members of the Baby Boom generation (ages 40–59 in 2004) feel more overworked than employees in other generations” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 6).



Which professions are most likely to be overworked?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “Overall distribution of workers with extra hours that they considered mandatory shows they are concentrated in professional services (24.3 percent), retail trade (12.6 percent), transportation and communications (9.9 percent), and public administration (9.9 percent)” (Golden & Wiens–Tuers, 2005, p. 7).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “Mandatory overtime in public administration is 27 percent; in nondurable manufacturing it is 25 percent, and in transportation, communications and public utilities it is 23 percent” (Golden & Wiens–Tuers, 2005, p. 7).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “[T]he highest incidence of mandatory overtime include farming and fishing at 31 percent of workers, precision–production at 27 percent, mechanics and repairers at 25 percent, and laborers at 24 percent” (Golden & Wiens–Tuers, 2005, p. 7).



- ✔ **Fact 4** “[T]he largest number of workers with mandatory extra hours are in executive and administrative occupations (17.0 percent), service occupations (15.8 percent), and professional specialties (15.5 percent)” (Golden & Wiens–Tuers, 2005, p. 7).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “Small business owners work the longest hours (paid and unpaid) at their main or only job, with 38 percent working more than 50 hours per week...” (Bond et al., 2002, p. 52).
- ✔ **Fact 6** “[T]here are significant differences in the incidence of long hours working across the managerial grades with top managers the most likely to be working over sixty hours a week” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 7** “Amongst women who work long hours, two thirds are in managerial and professional occupations (23 percent and 40 percent respectively)” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 8** In a 2001 sample of Australian fathers, it was found that, “as the number of hours worked increases, the proportion employed in upper white–collar occupations increases (from 40.8 percent of those working 35 to 40 hours to 59.6 percent of those working 60 or more hours)” (Gray, Qu, Stanton, & Weston, 2004, p. 262).



Do employees want to work long hours?

- ✔ **Fact 1** In a 2001 sample of Australian fathers, it was found that, “over half of the fathers working more than 48 hours per week report that they would prefer to work fewer hours, with very few reporting that they would like to increase their work hours (3.7 percent of those working 49 to 59 hours per week and 0.6 percent of those working 60 hours or more per week)...44.2 percent of those working 49 to 59 hours and 41.3 percent of those working 60 or more hours indicate that they would not change their work hours” (Gray et al., 2004, p. 265).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “[Twenty–six] percent of all employed and 28 percent of all full–time workers regarded overtime work as mandatory” (Golden & Wiens–Tuers, 2005, p. 6).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Being female increases the odds that a respondent will worry about the effect of her long hours by almost 95%” (Wharton & Blair–Loy, 2006, p. 426).



How do people who are overworked feel about their workplaces?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “Thirty–nine percent of employees experiencing high overwork levels say they feel very angry toward their employers versus only 1% who experience low overwork levels” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 2).



- ✔ **Fact 2** “Only 64 percent of mandatory overtime workers reported ‘very good’ or ‘quite good’ relations with management compared to 73 percent of non-mandatory overtime workers” (Golden & Wiens-Tuers, 2005, p. 8).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Thirty-four percent of employees who experience high overwork levels versus only 12% of those experiencing low overwork levels say they often or very often resent their coworkers” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 3).
- ✔ **Fact 4** In a 2001 sample of Australian fathers, it was found that, “high satisfaction (with work hours) is indicated by 63.2 percent of fathers working 35 to 40 hours, 48.5 of those working 41 to 48 hours, 30.5 percent of those working 49 to 59 hours, and just 25.3 percent of the fathers working 60 or more hours” (Gray et al., 2004, p. 264).



How do employers treat employees who are overworked?

- ✔ **Fact 1** Over two-thirds of managerial and professional workers who work long hours are neither paid nor given time off to compensate for their extra work (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “Sixteen percent of mandatory overtime workers claimed they were harassed or threatened at work compared to 10.8 percent of non-mandatory overtime workers, and this difference is statistically significant” (Golden & Wiens-Tuers, 2005, p. 9).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “The typical worker in Europe enjoys significantly more paid holidays each year (6 to 8 weeks) than the typical worker in the United States” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004, p. 2).



How does overwork affect employees?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “Twenty-six percent of employees were overworked often or very often in the last month; 27% were overwhelmed by how much work they had to do often or very often in the last month; and 29% often or very often didn’t have the time to step back and process or reflect on the work they were doing during the last month” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “Sixty percent of employees who very often have to work on too many tasks at the same time feel highly overworked, compared with only 22% who sometimes experience excessive multi-tasking” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Twenty percent of employees reporting high overwork levels say they make a lot of mistakes at work versus none (0%) of those who experience low overwork levels” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 2).



✔ **Fact 4** “[O]ne in three employees (33%) is in contact with work once a week or more outside normal work hours. Those who are in contact with work once a week or more outside of normal work hours are more often highly overworked (44%) than those who have little or no contact (26%)” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 5).

✔ **Fact 5** “[T]hirty-one percent of employees who rarely or never work during vacation are highly overworked versus 55 percent who often or very often work on vacation” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 5).

✔ **Fact 6** “[E]ighty-nine percent of employees agree somewhat or strongly that they experience one or both of the following pressures at work: 1. My job requires that I work very hard, 2. I never seem to have enough time to get everything done on my job” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 4).



Do long work hours affect employees' health?

✔ **Fact 1** “Overtime schedules had the greatest incremental risk of injury, with overtime workers having a 61% higher injury hazard rate compared to workers in jobs without overtime, after controlling for age, gender, occupation, industry, and region” (Dembe, Erickson, Delbos, & Banks, 2005, p. 594).

✔ **Fact 2** “Only 8% of those with low overwork levels have high levels of depressive symptoms compared with 21% of those who are highly overworked” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 3** “Working people’s satisfaction with various aspects of their lives, for example, health, social life and leisure pursuits, tend to decrease with the number of hours worked...this negative effect is much more marked amongst women than men” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 7).

✔ **Fact 4** “Fifty-two percent of employees experiencing high overwork levels report that their health is good versus 65% of those experiencing low overwork levels” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 5** “Only 6% who experience low overwork levels are highly stressed compared with 36% of those who are highly overworked” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 6** “Only 41% of employees who experience high overwork levels say they are very successful in taking good care of themselves versus 68% of those experiencing low overwork levels” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 3).



How does overwork affect families?

✔ **Fact 1** “Employees who are family-centric (putting a higher priority on family than on work) or dual-centric (putting an equivalent priority on family and work) are less likely to be overworked than employees who are work-centric” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 5).



- ✔ **Fact 2** “For every additional hour worked, the odds that a respondent will express concern about the effect of long hours on his or her family and personal lives increase by 7%” (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006, p. 426).
- ✔ **Fact 3** In a 2001 sample of Australian fathers, it was found that, “working more than 40 hours indicated a stronger negative impact of work on family than fathers working 35 to 40 hours” (Gray et al., 2004, p. 265–266).
- ✔ **Fact 4** While researching the limitations that parents faced due to long work hours and inflexible schedules, Heymann found that, “in those families where parents faced barriers to helping children with homework, 66 percent had children who were experiencing behavioral or academic difficulties at school (compared to only 31 percent of children in families where the parents were able to help with homework). Similarly, in those families where parents faced barriers to participating in school meetings and other school events, 58 percent of their children experienced behavioral or academic difficulties in school (compared to 33 percent of children in families where parents were able to become involved in the school)” (Heymann, 2006, p. 60).
- ✔ **Fact 5** In a 2001 sample of Australian fathers, “[c]ompared with those who indicate high satisfaction with ‘standard hours,’ those who indicate high satisfaction with working 60 or more hours perceive a more positive effect of work on family life and indicate higher satisfaction with their jobs and with their relationships with their partner and children” (Gray et al., 2004, p. 268).



Are more employees overworked today than in the past?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “The combined weekly work hours (paid and unpaid) at all jobs of all couples—whether dual or single earners—has increased significantly over the past 25 years, from 70 hours to 82 hours” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 15).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “[D]uring the same period (1970–2002), per capita hours rose by 20% in the United States and by more than 15% in Canada and New Zealand” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004, p. 6).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “In Australia around a third of men now work long hours, which represents a significant increase from one fifth in 1984. Also fifteen percent of women work more than 48 hours a week” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 4** “The proportion of UK employees working long hours has increased over the last decade, notwithstanding that between 1988 and 1998 the basic average weekly standard hours fell for both men and women (from 40.2 to 39.3 and 37.4 to 36.8, respectively)” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 3).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “An increasing proportion of EU workers report working at a very high speed or to tight deadlines. It is important to note the substantial reduction in the proportion of people reporting never working at very



high speed (from 36% to 21%) and never working to tight deadlines (from 31% to 19%)” (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2005, p. 4).



How does the U.S. compare with other countries on overwork?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “[One-third] of all U.S. employees can be viewed as being chronically overworked” (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “In the USA a quarter of men and a tenth of women work more than 48 hours a week” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “[T]hirty-eight percent of Americans say they work more than 45 hours every week, versus 30% of Canadians and 28% of Britons” (Arora, 2004, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 4** “Just over one fifth (22 percent) of UK men working full-time work long hours compared with an average of one tenth (11 percent) across the other EU member states” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “Eleven percent of employees in the UK work long hours (over 48 hours a week)” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 6** “The USA, Australia and Japan have significantly higher proportions of long hours working than non-English [speaking EU] countries” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 5).
- ✔ **Fact 7** “Workers in all three nations report spending close to 40 hours a week on the job, on average: Americans work 42 hours, Canadians 41 hours, and Britons 39 hours” (Arora, 2004, p. 2).

The Network has additional resources related to this topic.

1. Visit a topic page on Overwork at: <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic.php?id=12>
Topic pages provide resources and information, including statistics, definitions, overviews & briefs, bills & statutes, interviews, teaching resources, audio/video, suggested readings, and links.
2. Visit our database of academic literature with citations and annotations of literature related to the issue of Overwork. You can connect to this database at: http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-0&local_base=BCL_WF



References

Arora, R. (2004, October 5). Are Americans really abject workaholics? *Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing*, 1–4. Retrieved on June 12, 2009, from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/13291/americans-really-abject-workaholics.aspx>

"Results in the United States are based on telephone interviews with 1,017 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Aug. 9–11, 2004; 1,005 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted July 8–11, 2004; 2, 250 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted June 9–30, 2004; and 1,000 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted May 2–4, 2004...The survey was conducted by Gallup USA.

Results in Canada are based on telephone interviews with 1,005 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Aug. 30–Sept. 6, 2004...The survey was conducted by Gallup Canada.

Results in Great Britain are based on telephone interviews with 1,009 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Aug. 25–Sept. 7, 2004...The survey was conducted by Gallup UK." (Arora, 2004, pp. 3–4)

Bond, J. T., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E., & Prottas, D. (2002). *Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce* (No.3). New York: Families and Work Institute.

"The NSCW surveys representative samples of the nation's workforce once every five years (1992, 1997, 2002). Sample sizes average 3,500, including both wage and salaried employees and self-employed workers" (Bond et al., 2002, p. v).

Several of the questions in the National Study of the Changing Workforce were taken from or based upon questions in the Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted three times by the Department of Labor from 1969 to 1977. Although the NSCW is more comprehensive than the QES in addressing issues related to both work and personal life and has a stronger business perspective, having comparable data from over a 25-year period has provided a unique opportunity to look at trends over time. The 2002 NSCW uses 25 years of trend data to examine five topics in depth: women in the workforce, dual-earner couples, the role of technology in employees' lives on and off the job, work-life supports on the job, and working for oneself versus someone else (Bond et al., 2002).

Dembe, A., Erickson, J., Delbos, R., & Banks, S. (2005). The impact of overtime and long work hours on occupational injuries and illnesses: New evidence from the United States. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 62, 588–597.

"Data for this study comes from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), which is sponsored by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and administered by the Ohio State University Center for Human Resource Research. The NLSY cohort is comprised of 12 686 men and women who were 14–22 years of age when first surveyed in 1979. Follow up interviews with NLSY respondents have been conducted annually from 1979 to 1994, and biannually since 1996" (Dembe et al., 2005, p. 589).

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. (2005). Fifteen years of working conditions in the EU: Charting the trends. Dublin: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2006/85/en/1/ef0685en.pdf>

"The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) is carried out every five years by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, a tripartite European Agency based in Dublin. The questionnaire is developed by the European Foundation team in close cooperation with an expert questionnaire development group. This group comprises representatives of the European social partners, other EU bodies (EU Commission, Eurostat, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work), international organisations (OECD, ILO), national statistical institutes, as well as leading European experts in the field. The sample of the EWCS is representative of persons in employment (according to the Eurostat definition this comprises both employees and the self-employed) in the countries covered for the respective periods. In each country, the EWCS sample followed a multi-stage, stratified and clustered design with a random walk procedure for the selection of the respondents at the last



stage. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the respondent's own household" (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2005, p. 8).

Galinsky, E., Bond, J. T., Kim, S. S., Backon, L., Brownfield, E., & Sakai, K. (2005). *Overwork in America: When the way we work becomes too much, executive summary*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

"Data for this report came from telephone interviews with a representative sample of 1,003 wage and salaried employees in the U.S. workforce" (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 2).

Golden, L., & Wiens-Tuers, B. (2005). Mandatory overtime work in the United States: Who, where, and what? *Labor Studies Journal*, 30, p. 1-25.

"This section of the paper uses the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) Quality of Working Life module to answer questions about *who* works mandatory overtime, *where* mandatory overtime is concentrated, *what* types of jobs are involved, and *what* outcomes appear to be associated with mandatory overtime. The GSS is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center and funded by the National Science Foundation. The GSS concept emerged from the Social Indicator movement to promote the use of social science to monitor social trends relevant to public policy. It has been conducted annually since 1972 (except for the years 1979, 1981, and 1992) and biennially beginning in 1994. The sample size for the Quality of Work Life module is 2,765 participants. The GSS uses full probability sample design, which gives each household equal probability of being included in the survey" (Golden & Wiens-Tuers, 2005, p. 5-6).

Gray, M., Qu, L., Stanton, D., & Weston, R. (2004). Long work hours and the wellbeing of fathers and their families. *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, 7, 255-273.

"The first wave of the HILDA survey was carried out in 2001 and involved face-to-face interviews with nearly 14,000 respondents aged 15 or more years from 7,682 households across Australia. The survey involves the use of several data collection instruments. After establishing contact with a member of the household, an interview was conducted with at least one member of the household to obtain household level information. Face-to-face interviews were then pursued with each household member aged 15 years and over. Finally, household members were asked to respond to a self-completion questionnaire.

...the analysis is restricted to employed fathers who lived with a partner in a household containing at least one child under the age of 15. Given our focus on the impact of longer work hours on wellbeing, we restrict the analysis to fathers whose usual work hours are full-time (that is, 35 hours or more per week)" (Gray et al., 2004, pp. 259-260).

Heymann, J. (2006). *Forgotten families: Ending the growing crisis confronting children and working parents in the global economy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Forgotten Families reports on global studies that were conducted over the course of a decade. It includes survey data from 55,000 households in seven countries and five regions, in-depth interviews of 1,000 families in six countries and five regions, and examinations of public policies in over 170 countries. While research has been conducted previously in North America, Europe and comparatively across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), this is the first study of its kind on a global scale.

Kodz, J., Davis, S., Lain, D., Sheppard, E., Rick, J., Strebler, M., Bates, P., Cummings, J., Meager, N., Anxo, D., Gineste, S., & Trinczek, R. (2003). *Working long hours in the UK: A review of the research literature, analysis of survey data and cross-national organizational case studies* (Employment Relations Research Series, No. 16), Executive Summary. London: Department of Trade & Industry.

"This report is based on a review of the research literature, secondary analysis of established social survey series: 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS98); the Labour Force Survey (LFS) including the European Community Labour Force Survey (ECLFS); and the British



Household Panel Survey (BHPS). It also provides new case studies of UK firms that have been 'matched' with similar EU firms (from France, Germany and Sweden) to 'test-out' and 'contextualize' survey evidence" (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 1).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2004). *Clocking in and clocking out: Recent trends in working hours, Policy Brief*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/42/49/33821328.pdf>

"...estimates of average hours actually worked per year per person in employment which have been collected by the OECD and published annually as Table F of the Statistical Annex to the OECD Employment Outlook for some years. These data are currently available for 24 OECD countries in OECD Annual Hours database. In the majority of cases, national statistical authorities produce these estimates and supply them to the OECD Secretariat. However, the Secretariat calculates these estimates for seven European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal) using data from the European Labour Force Survey.

To develop their estimates of average annual hours worked, countries use the best available data sources for different categories of workers, industries and components of variation from usual or normal working time (e.g. public holidays, annual leave, overtime, absences from work due to illness and to maternity). Since multiple sources of data are combined in often complex ways, it is difficult to assess the cross-country comparability of the resulting estimates" (OECD, 2004, pp. 53-54).

Wharton, A, & Blair-Loy, M. (2006). Long work hours and family life: A cross-national study of employees' concerns. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27, p. 415-436.

"In 1999, we administered a survey to a sample of professional and managerial employees in three divisions at International Finance. Our survey includes a wide range of items on respondents' attitudes and behaviors regarding balancing work and their other responsibilities. Most survey items were close-ended, although about one third of our respondents also answered an open-ended question at the end of the survey that asked for any additional comments about the issues raised in the questionnaire. The primary data analyzed in this article are drawn from 277 respondents in one of the divisions surveyed. This is a line division, which provides a core bank service. These respondents are urban, high-level financial professionals in the United States (in three large cities; N = 163), Hong Kong (N = 64), and England (London) (N = 50)" (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006, p. 422).
