



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 2008)



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, p. 2).

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 [past 25 years], the combined weekly work hours of dual-earner couples with children under 18 at home has increased by an average 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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 6).

Fact 5 "Couples in which one or both partners are professionals have odds of being both overworked 50% to 90% higher than couples in which both are nonprofessionals" (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001, p. 1128).

Fact 6 "...nonprofessional husbands married to professional wives are more likely (than those married to nonprofessional wives) to find themselves working more than they would like" (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001, p. 1128–1129).

Fact 7 higher household income "increases the odds that both partners in a relationship will be induced to work more than they would like" (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001, p. 1129).



Are men or women more likely to work long hours?

Fact 1 "Men are significantly more likely to work long hours than women" (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 2).

Fact 2 "Men with children are slightly more likely to work longer hours than those without, while women with children are less likely to work long hours than those without" (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 2).



Fact 3 Among a sample of employed Israeli men and women, "...men, in comparison with women, had a greater likelihood of working long hours" (Harpaz & Snir, 2003, p. 310).

Fact 4 In 1999, "...of the men employed as managers and professionals, about 4 in 10 worked at least 49 hours per week, twice the share among women" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000, p. 1).



Which professions are most likely to be overworked?

Fact 1 "Managers, professionals, and operative and assembly workers are those occupations most likely to work long hours" (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 2).

Fact 2 "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, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 52).

Fact 3 Among a sample of employed Israeli men and women, "...professionals and managers, as compared with non-professional and non-managerial workers, (in clerical, services, production and agriculture occupations), had a greater likelihood of working long hours" (Harpaz & Snir, 2003, p. 310).

Fact 4 Among a sample of employed Israeli men and women "...private sector employees, as compared with public sector employees, had a greater likelihood of working long hours" (Harpaz & Snir, 2003, p. 310).

Fact 5 "...[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 6 "Amongst women who work long hours, two thirds are in managerial and professional occupations (23 per cent and 40 per cent respectively)" (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 2).

Fact 7 "In 1999, nearly 3 in 10 (managers and professionals) worked 49 hours or more per week, compared with about 2 in 10 for all nonfarm occupations" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000, p. 1).

Fact 8 "Wage and salaried Employees and small business Owners more frequently feel overwhelmed by the amount of work they have to do, with Employees feeling most overwhelmed" (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 54).

Fact 9 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, Qu, Stanton, & Weston, 2004, p. 265).

Fact 2 “Women, particularly those working long hours, are more likely to want to reduce their working hours” (Kodz et al, 2003, p. 5).

Fact 3 “Women are less likely to be satisfied with their job overall, the more hours they work. The reverse is true for men” (Kodz et al., 2003, p. 5).

Fact 4 “In the case of dual-earner couples in which one or both partners works more than 45 hours a week, nearly two thirds report that they are both working too much...” (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001, p. 1127).

Fact 5 “...[O]nly 3% of dual-career, long hours couples appear to share contentment with respect to their high levels of time commitments to work” (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001, p. 1127).

Fact 6 “Women who are nonprofessionals themselves but are married to professional husbands are significantly more likely than those married to nonprofessionals to feel like they would ideally spend less time at work” (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001, p. 1128).

Fact 7 “Neotraditional, full-time couples as well as couples with a husband employed part-time are most likely to feel free of the time squeeze. Indeed, 45% and 55% of these family types, respectively, report that their preferred work hours are consistent with (or below) their actual work hours” (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001, p. 1127).



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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 2).

Fact 2 “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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 3).

Fact 3 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, Qu, Stanton, & Weston, 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 “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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 2).

Fact 2 “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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 5).

Fact 3 “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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 4).

Fact 4 “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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 2).

Fact 5 “...[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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 5).

Fact 6 “...[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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 5).

Fact 7 “...[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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 4).



Fact 8 “More than 1/3 of employees (36%) do not plan to use their full vacation” (Galinsky, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 7).



Do long work hours affect employees' health?

Fact 1 “Only 8% of those with low overwork levels have high levels of depressive symptoms compared with 21% of those who are highly overworked” (Galinsky, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 3).

Fact 2 “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 3 “Fifty-two percent of employees experiencing high overwork levels report that their health is good versus 65% of those experiencing low overwork levels” (Galinsky, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 3).

Fact 4 “Only 6% who experience low overwork levels are highly stressed compared with 36% of those who are highly overworked” (Galinsky, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 3).

Fact 5 “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, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 3).

Fact 6 “...[E]mployees who do take a higher percentage of vacation days just to relax and enjoy themselves even when they feel overworked on the job are significantly less likely to return to work feeling overwhelmed by all they have to do after taking their longest vacation” (Galinsky, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 2005, p. 9).



How does overwork affect families?

Fact 1 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, Qu, Stanton, & Weston, 2004, p. 265–266).

Fact 2 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 3 "...[R]egardless of whether parents worked 40 or 60 hours per week, managers with children devoted about the same amount of time to their children" (Brett & Stroh, 2003, p. 72).

Fact 4 In a 2001 sample of Australian fathers: "Compared 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, Qu, Stanton, & Weston, 2004, p. 268).

Fact 5 "...[W]omen in dual-earner relationships are more likely to feel overworked when either they or their husbands work very long hours" (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001, p. 1128).



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, & Prottsas, 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 From 1994–1999, "...the number of persons at work in these occupations (managerial and professional) has risen by about 6.5 million, to 38.6 million. The number working 49 hours or more has increased by nearly 1.8 million, to 10.8 million" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000, p. 1).

Fact 5 "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).



How does the US compare with other countries on overwork?

Fact 1 "...1/3 of all U.S. employees • can be viewed as being chronically overworked" (Galinsky, Bond, Kim, Backon, Brownfield, & Sakai, 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 EU speaking 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/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, p. 1-4.

“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.” (pp. 3-4)

Bond, J.T., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E., & Prortas, D. (2002). *Highlights of the national study of the changing workforce*. No.3. New York, NY: 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” (Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce, 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 NCSW 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 (Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2002).

Brett, J.M., & Stroh, L.K. (2003). Working 61 hours a week: Why do managers do it? *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(1), 67-78.

"We invited male alumni of a Midwest graduate school of business who graduated between 1980 and 1990, who had U.S. addresses, and who were currently married with children living at home to participate in a survey study of work and family...a sample of 471 men who were working at least 35 hours per week...

We placed no demographic restrictions on the female sample...The average age of female participants was 38 years. Seventy-five percent of the female managers were married, and 54% had children living at home...a sample of 86 women who were working at least 35 hours per week..." (pp. 69-70)

Clarkberg, M., & Moen, P. (2001). Understanding the time-squeeze: Married couples' preferred and actual work-hour strategies. *American Behavioral Scientist, 44*(7), 1115-1135.

"We use data from the two waves of the National Study of Families and Households (NSFH). The NSFH collected data on a nationally representative sample of more than 10,000 men and women - and, when present, their spouses and partners - in 1987 through 1988 and then, again, in 1993 through 1994. In both waves of the survey, respondents and their partners (when present) were asked to estimate how many hours they actually worked last week as well as how many hours they would ideally like to work - these items constitute the core of subsequent analyses...Our subsample from the NSFH represents 4,554 couples, or a total of 9,108 interviews with individual men and women." (p. 1121)

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." (p. 2)

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*(2), 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)." (pp. 259-260)

Harpaz, I., & Snir, R. (2003). Workaholic: Its definition and nature. *Human Relations, 56*(3), 291-319.

"Data were collected in 1981 through the Meaning of Work international project and then again in 1993. In 1981, a questionnaire probing the meaning of work was completed by a representative sample of the Israeli labor force, consisting of 973 respondents...The (1981) sample population comprised 57.4% men and 42.6% women, with a mean age of 39.4 years, and 81.6% of the respondents were married...(For the 1993 sample)The questionnaire contained the same items as those in the 1981 sample...The 1993 sample consisted of 942 respondents, 57.9 percent of whom were men and 42.1 percent women; the mean age was 38.2 years, and 74.5 of the respondents were married." (pp. 301-303)



Heymann, J. (2006). *Forgotten families: Ending the growing crisis confronting children and working parents in the global economy*. New York, NY: 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 Organization for Economic Cooperation 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." (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 Employment Outlook, 2004, pp. 53-54)

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2000). *Are managers and professionals really working more?* Issues in Labor Statistics, Summary 00-12.

"The Current Population Survey (CPS) is conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. "(It is a monthly nationwide survey of a scientifically selected sample representing the non-institutional civilian population. The sample is located in 754 areas with coverage in every state and the District of Columbia and is subject to sampling error. At the present time, about 60,000 occupied households are eligible for interview every month; of these between 6 and 7 percent are, for various reasons, unavailable for interview." (U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States (2003). No. 605. Persons Doing Job-Related Work at Home: 2001. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/pop.pdf>, p. 1-2).