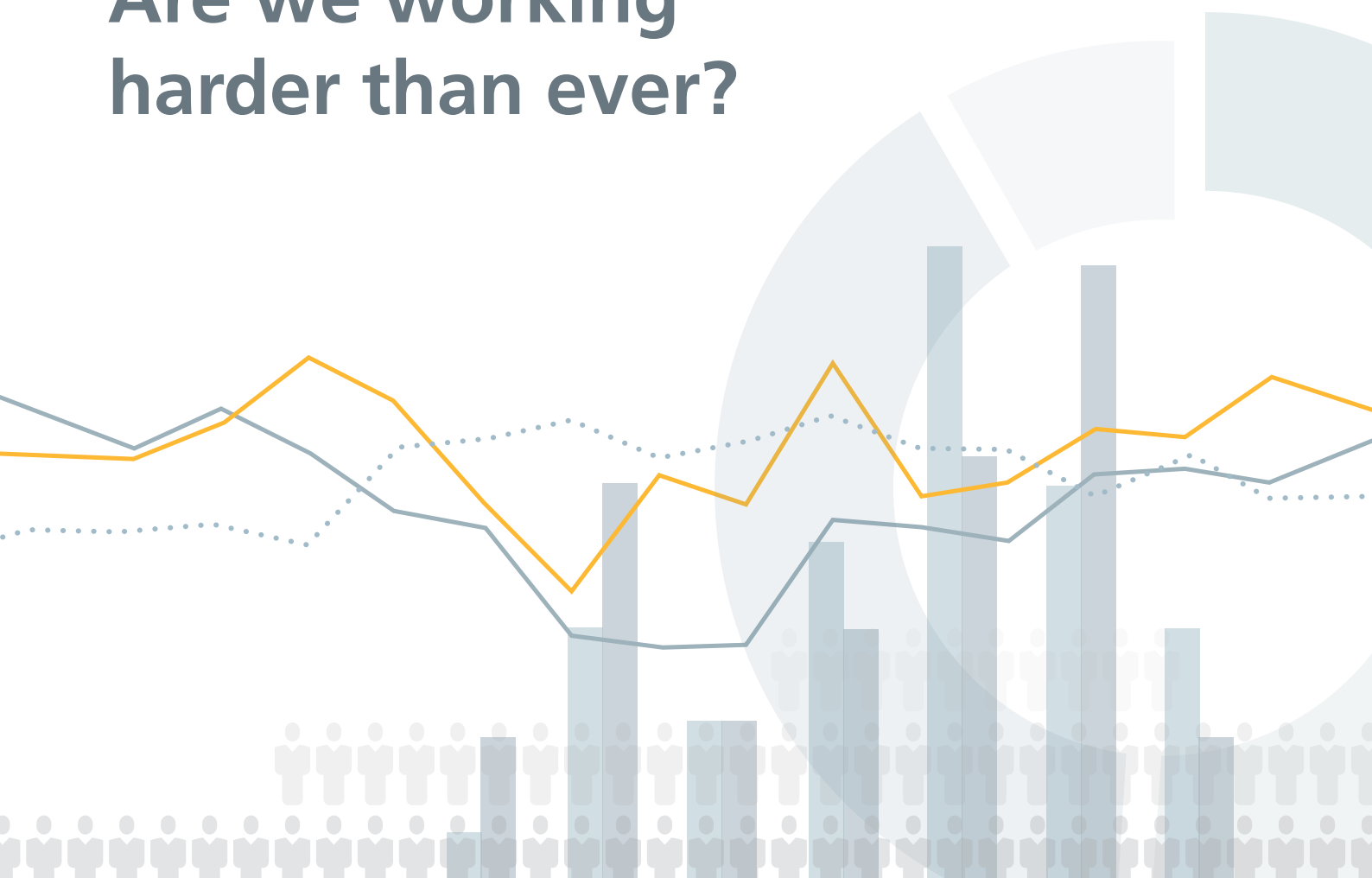


MEGATRENDS

The trends shaping work and working lives

Are we working harder than ever?



WORK



WORKFORCE



WORKPLACE

Championing better work and working lives

The CIPD's purpose is to **champion better work and working lives** by improving practices in people and organisation development, for the benefit of individuals, businesses, economies and society. Our research work plays a critical role – providing the content and credibility for us to drive practice, raise standards and offer advice, guidance and practical support to the profession. Our research also informs our advocacy and engagement with policy-makers and other opinion-formers on behalf of the profession we represent.

To increase our impact, in service of our purpose, we're focusing our research agenda on three core themes: the future of **work**, the diverse and changing nature of the **workforce**, and the culture and organisation of the **workplace**.

WORK

Our focus on work includes what work is and where, when and how work takes place, as well as trends and changes in skills and job needs, changing career patterns, global mobility, technological developments and new ways of working.



WORKFORCE

Our focus on the workforce includes demographics, generational shifts, attitudes and expectations, the changing skills base and trends in learning and education.

WORKPLACE

Our focus on the workplace includes how organisations are evolving and adapting, understanding of culture, trust and engagement, and how people are best organised, developed, managed, motivated and rewarded to perform at their best.

About us

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. We have over 130,000 members internationally – working in HR, learning and development, people management and consulting across private businesses and organisations in the public and voluntary sectors. We are an independent and not-for-profit organisation, guided in our work by the evidence and the front-line experience of our members.

cipd.co.uk/megatrends

#megatrends



Megatrends

Are we working harder than ever?

Contents

Foreword	2
Summary of key findings	4
What does the evidence say?	6
How hard do people think they work?	6
Are we working longer hours?	9
Which employees are most likely to think they are working hard?	11
What about other countries?	12
Conclusion	16
What are the potential explanations?	17
Is it the recession?	17
Is it because of technological change?	19
Is it because employees feel they are losing control over their work?	19
Is it down to poor management?	21
Or is it a result of more effective people management?	23
Or is it because we all just want more?	25
Conclusion	25
What are the implications?	26
What are the implications for employees?	26
What are the implications for employers?	32
What are the implications for public policy?	32
Conclusion	33
Endnotes	34



MEGATRENDS

Are we working harder than ever?

Foreword

In our recent *Megatrends* publication, we set out some of the big economic and social trends that have helped to shape work and working life in recent decades, such as de-industrialisation and demographic change. While the future is uncertain, it seems likely that many of these trends will continue to have an impact for years or even decades to come. Equally, past trends can stop having an impact – or even go into reverse – and new trends will emerge.

In this turbulent and changing environment, organisations need to be agile – to spot changing trends affecting them, work out how to respond to them and by doing so make them work to their benefit and thus maintain an advantage on the competition.

In *Megatrends*, we identified four potential emerging trends – issues where the data suggest there might have been a shift in practice, attitudes or outcomes that would have a significant impact on work and working lives. However, precisely because these are relatively new developments, it is still unclear whether these really are new trends or whether they are short-term disturbances to established patterns due to factors such as the economic difficulties that the UK and many other countries have faced in recent years.

In this series of publications, we take each of these four potential emerging trends and review the relevant evidence, discuss the potential explanations and explore the potential implications for work and working lives – including for business, for HR practice and for policy-makers. The aim is to draw the attention of our stakeholders to these issues, present the relevant facts and provide a platform for further discussion.

This fourth publication in the series asks whether we are working harder than ever. Employees seem to think they are. This is not because they are working longer hours. Rather it seems to be a sense of work becoming a more intense experience with greater workloads and pressures to meet deadlines, customer demands and performance targets.

Our analysis suggests that the recession has played a part in increasing work intensity, with greater job insecurity creating extra pressures for some employees. However, longer-term forces are also at work. Technological change and the expectations of customers and service users have made work more demanding. How people are managed makes a huge difference. Where jobs are poorly designed, give employees little control over their work and offer little or no support for employees, the

feeling of pressure can result in poor work performance, discontent and, in some cases, poor health. In contrast, the right combination of management practices, line management behaviour and organisational culture can unleash the enthusiasm, energy and creativity of committed employees.

Our purpose at the CIPD is to champion better work and working lives. We all need to recognise that the increases in productivity that we rely on to improve our standard of living arise in part because technology finds ways of making us work harder as well as smarter. The challenge to employees, employers and policy-makers is to manage this in a way that enhances, rather than diminishes, our lives in and out of work.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Cheese". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chief Executive, CIPD

Summary of key findings

- There is no single measure of how hard employees work. However, surveys point to an increase in work intensity throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s, with a further increase dating from the middle of the last decade.
- For example, the Skills and Employment Survey found that the proportion of employees in strong agreement that 'my job requires that I work very hard' increased from 32% in 1992 to 45% by 2012.
- According to surveys of employees, this increase in job demands appears to be due to increased workloads and tighter deadlines in most cases, rather than an increased pace of work.
- In autumn 2013, 41% of employees felt under excessive pressure at work at least once or twice a week, and 13% said they were under excessive pressure every single working day.
- If employees feel they are working harder, it is not because they are working longer hours. Average hours worked per year have been falling for decades and the average working week for a full-time employee has fallen since 1998. The proportion of employees that usually work over 45 hours each week has fallen from 26% in 1997 to under 20% in 2013.
- The proportion of employees in Britain in strong agreement that their job requires them to work very hard was, in 2010, the second highest in Europe (behind the Ukraine). Perceptions of workload and deadline pressures are above the European average.
- The recession and its aftermath may have contributed to increased work intensity. Employees under pressure on a regular basis are more likely than other employees to be concerned about their job security and more likely to be in a workplace where the recession led to cuts in jobs, pay or other benefits.
- Technological change has been an important driver of increased work intensity. It can enable both greater efficiency in work processes (less slack or downtime) and easier monitoring of employees' effort levels.
- The extent of autonomy and discretion that employees have over their work, and the extent to which they have a broader influence on workplace decisions, has an effect on how job demands affect employees. The evidence suggests that employee autonomy has been stable or may even have improved in recent years.
- How people are managed matters a lot. This includes the behaviour and capability of line managers, management style and workplace culture, the support given to employees, and the use of high-performance workplace practices that generate engagement and commitment. The effects can be positive as well as negative. Highly motivated employees are more likely to contribute more energy and effort on a voluntary basis, not because it is demanded of them. Employees who do not feel they get the support they need from their managers or colleagues are more likely to feel under pressure.
- Increased pressures in working life may also reflect a faster pace of life.

- A sense of having to work hard is not necessarily damaging to employee well-being. In a 2010 survey, employees who saw their jobs as most demanding had the highest average job satisfaction.
- Problems arise when job demands create a sense of excessive pressure. This often has a negative impact on work performance and relationships with managers, colleagues and customers or clients. Employees feeling under excessive pressure on a regular basis are also more likely to be dissatisfied with their job, more likely to be seeking to leave their employer, more likely to be suffering anxiety and stress and reporting negative effects on their physical and mental health.
- The challenge for employers is to manage processes of technological and organisational change in ways that optimise the positive benefits (greater productivity) and minimise the risks (increased pressure and stress). This might involve a greater focus on holistic aspects of job design, work organisation, employee involvement, management capability and organisational culture – rather than a narrower stress management, absence management or health and safety context.
- Estimates of the cost of illnesses arising from work-related stress centre around 1% of GDP and most of these costs are not met by employers. There may be an argument for policy-makers to also adopt a more holistic frame of reference – focusing on enhancing productivity and well-being in the workplace, with management of health and safety risks as just one element and just one possible set of policy levers.
- It is difficult to see work in the near future becoming less intense. However, further technological change may create opportunities to moderate, as well as intensify, the pace, pressures and conflicts of working life.

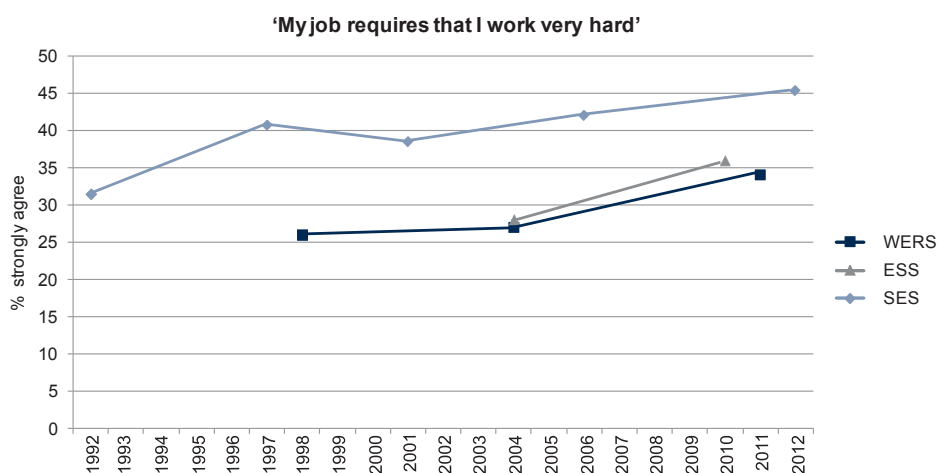
What does the evidence say?

The employment relationship is an exchange of effort (on the part of the employee) for reward (provided by the employer). In this publication, we look at whether the quantity and quality of effort that employees expend has changed in recent years; whether, indeed, people are working harder than ever.

How hard do people think they work?

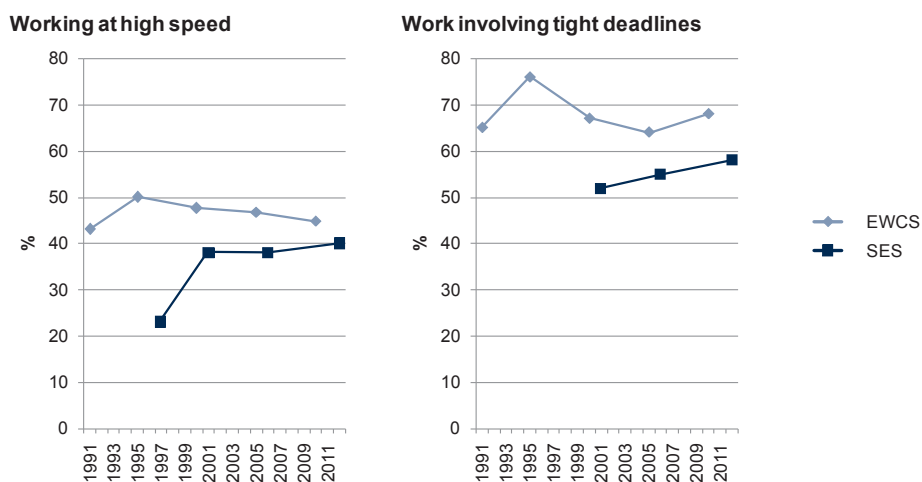
Three different surveys have over the last 20 years measured work intensity by asking people about the demands placed on them by their jobs. The Skills and

Figure 1: Trends in work intensity, 1992–2012



Sources: Skills and Employment Survey (SES); Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS); European Social Survey (ESS).

Figure 2: Components of work intensity, 1991–2012



EWCS: Respondents who said their job involved working at very high speed or to tight deadlines at least a quarter of the time.
 SES: Respondents who said they worked at very high speeds or to tight deadlines three-quarters or more of the time.
 Source: European Working Conditions Surveys, Skills and Employment Surveys.

Employment Survey (SES) found that the proportion of employees in strong agreement with the statement that 'my job requires that I work very hard' increased from 32% in 1992 to 45% by 2012.¹ Work intensity increased during the 1980s and for much of the 1990s before stabilising around the end of the 1990s.² However, there has been a further increase between 2006 and 2012. The Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS) and the European Social Survey (ESS), using the same question, report similar increases in work intensity since the middle of the last decade (see Figure 1).

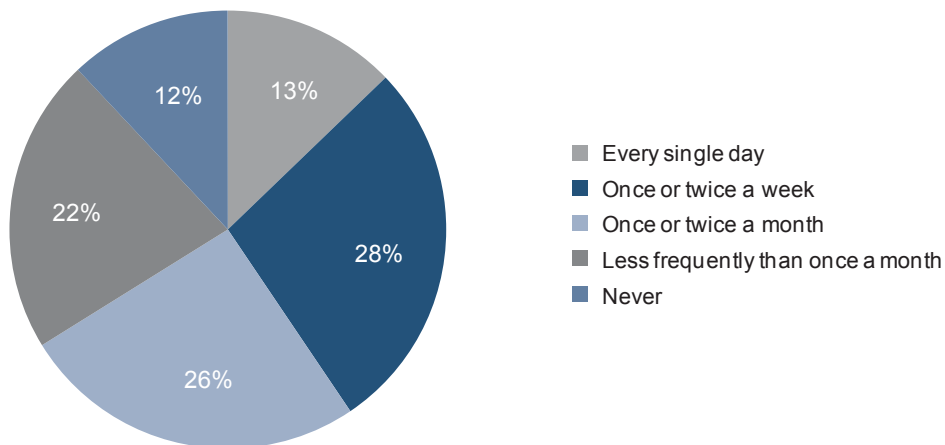
One aspect of working harder is the physical speed of work, such as assembly line work or computerised systems requiring employee input. The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) suggests that the proportion of employees saying their job involved working at high speed a quarter or more of the time has fallen slightly over time, from 50% in 1995 to 45% by 2010. SES, in contrast, using a tighter definition (jobs involving high-speed work for three-quarters of the time) reports a slight increase in high-speed jobs between 2006 and 2012. Both surveys

show that working to tight deadlines, however, is a more common phenomenon and also point to a recent upturn in the proportion of employees working to tight deadlines (see Figure 2).

A feeling of having to work hard may also arise when employees are faced with a heavy workload. Surveys suggest that employee perceptions have changed little in recent years. The proportion of employees in WERS who agreed with the statement that 'I never seem to have enough time to get my work done' was 40% in 2004 and 41% in 2011. The proportion of employees in ESS in agreement with a very similar question was 49% in both 2004 and 2010.³

The CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey asks employees whether they ever feel under 'excessive pressure' at work. In autumn 2013, 88% of employees said they feel under excessive pressure some of the time. Just over two-fifths (41%) of employees said they feel under excessive pressure at least once every week, with 13% feeling under excessive pressure every single day (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: How often employees feel under excessive pressure in their job, autumn 2013



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2013.

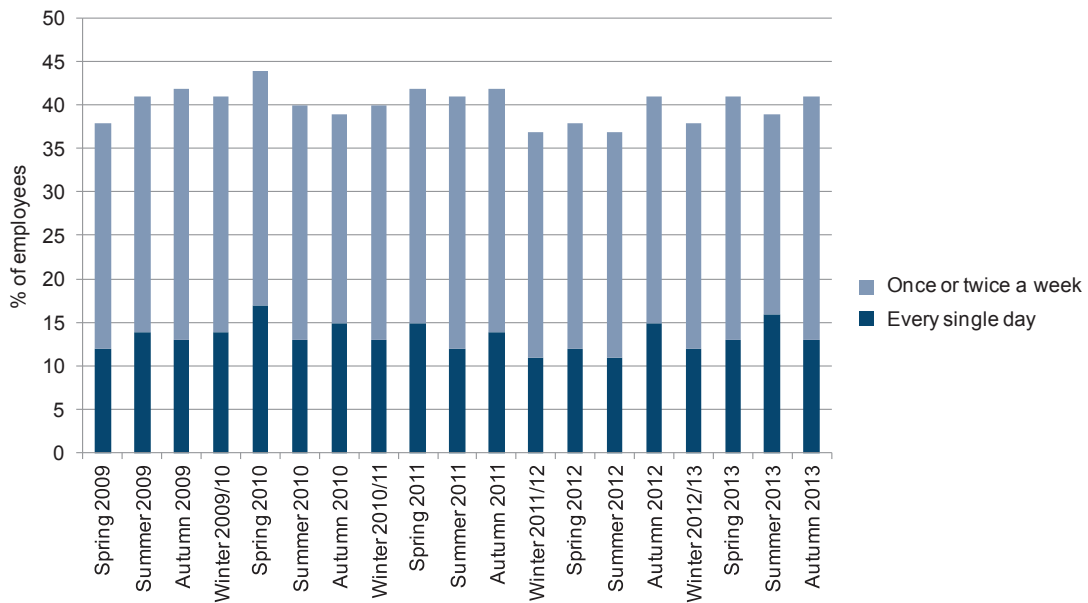
The proportion stating they feel under excessive pressure once a week or more has remained steady at about 40% since the survey commenced in 2009 (see Figure 4).

Workload is the most common reason given by employees for feeling under excessive pressure, cited by 68% of all employees who said they experienced excessive pressure at least once a month (see Figure 5). Pressure from targets, management style and poorly

managed change are also cited commonly, the latter two in greater proportions by those feeling under pressure every day. In contrast, relationships with line managers and colleagues and problems outside work are each an issue for only about a tenth of employees.

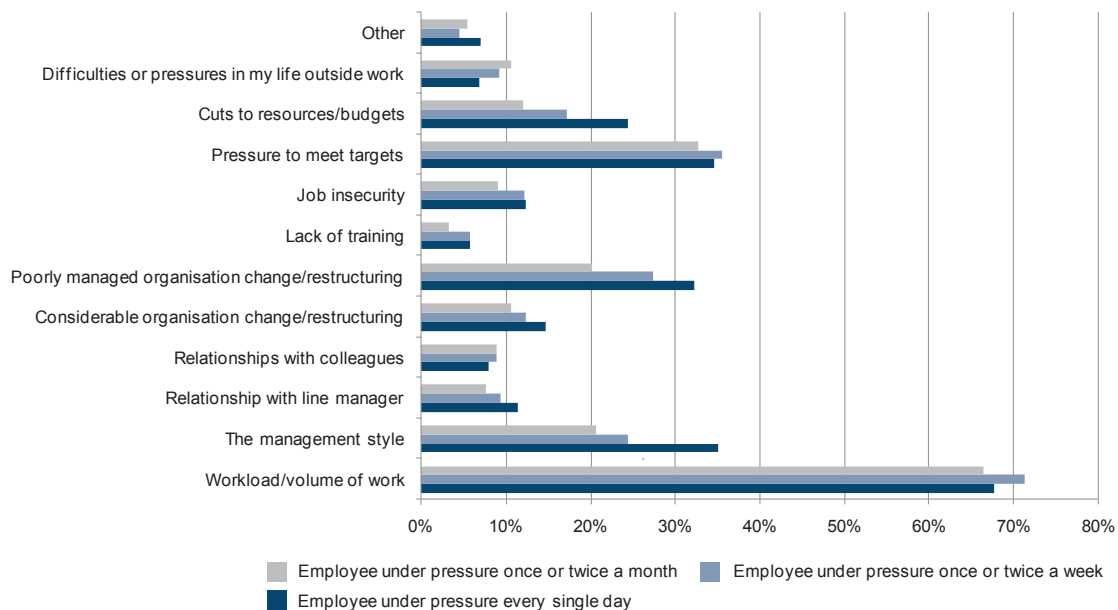
According to the CIPD *Employee Outlook* surveys, about a third of employees think their workload is 'too much' (Figure 6).

Figure 4: Employees who feel under excessive pressure on a weekly basis, 2009–13



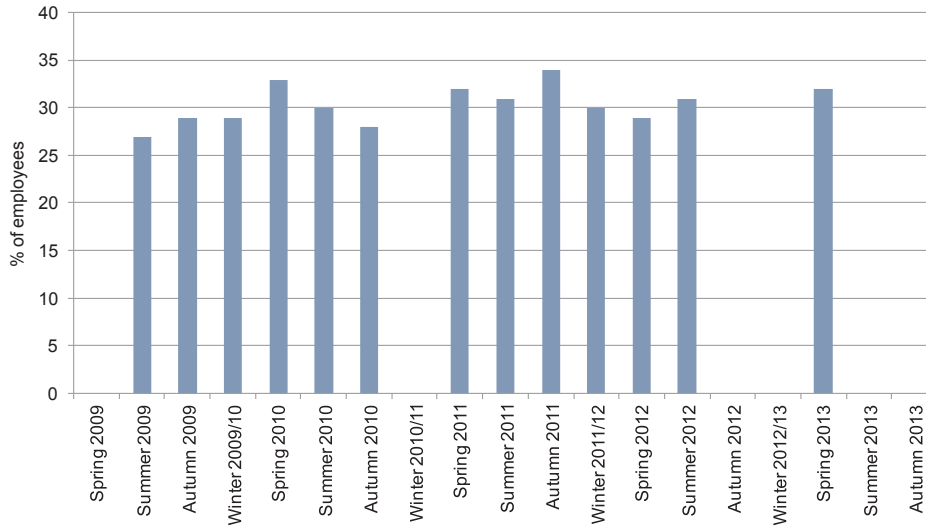
Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* surveys.

Figure 5: Reasons why employees feel they are under excessive pressure, summer 2013



Base: Employees who said they are under excessive pressure at least once a month. Respondents could select up to three reasons.
Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, summer 2013.

Figure 6: Employees who feel their workload is excessive, 2009–13



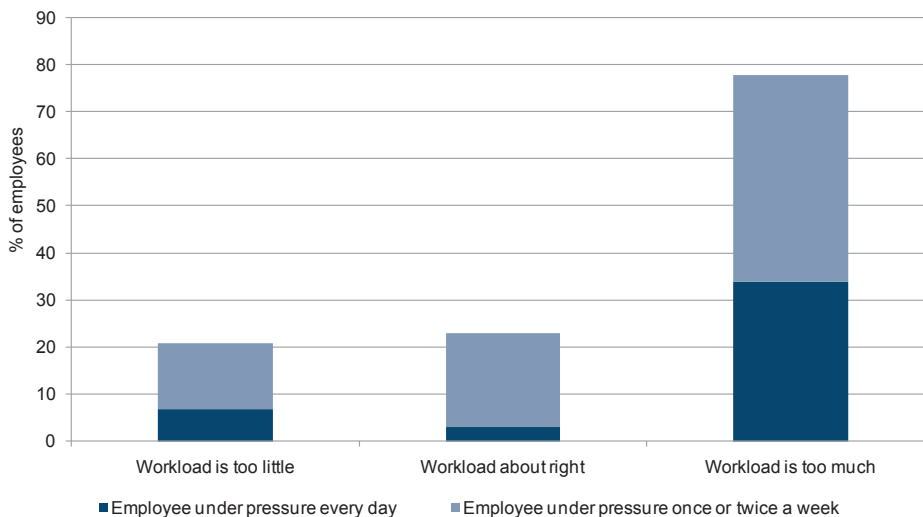
Employees who said their workload is 'too much'.
Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* surveys.

The survey also confirms that those with excessive workloads are much more likely to feel they are under excessive pressure on a regular basis (Figure 7).

Are we working longer hours?

Increased work intensity is not, in general, because we are working longer hours. We work fewer hours on average than our parents and grandparents, never mind previous

Figure 7: Relationship between employee perceptions of workload and excessive pressure, spring 2013



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, spring 2013.

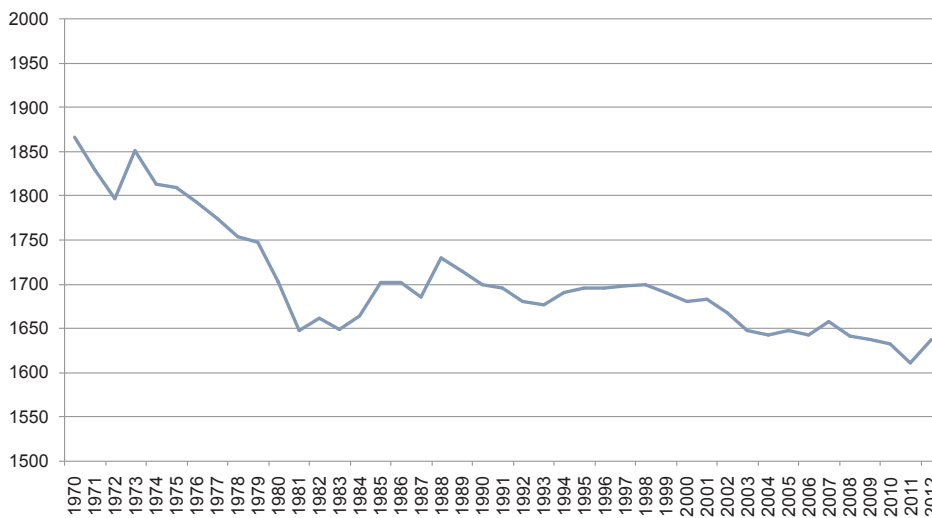
generations. Francis Green notes that the working week of 'fitters and turners' was almost 60 hours in the 1860s, compared with just over 40 at the end of the 1990s.⁴

Reductions in the length of the 'standard' working week, increased entitlements to annual leave and increased part-time working have together reduced the average hours worked each year by over 200 hours (12%) between 1970 and 2012 (see Figure 8).

The working week for the full-time employee did increase slightly during the 1980s and 1990s – suggesting that work intensification at that time might have included an element of working longer as well as harder – but it has been falling since 1998 (see Figure 9).

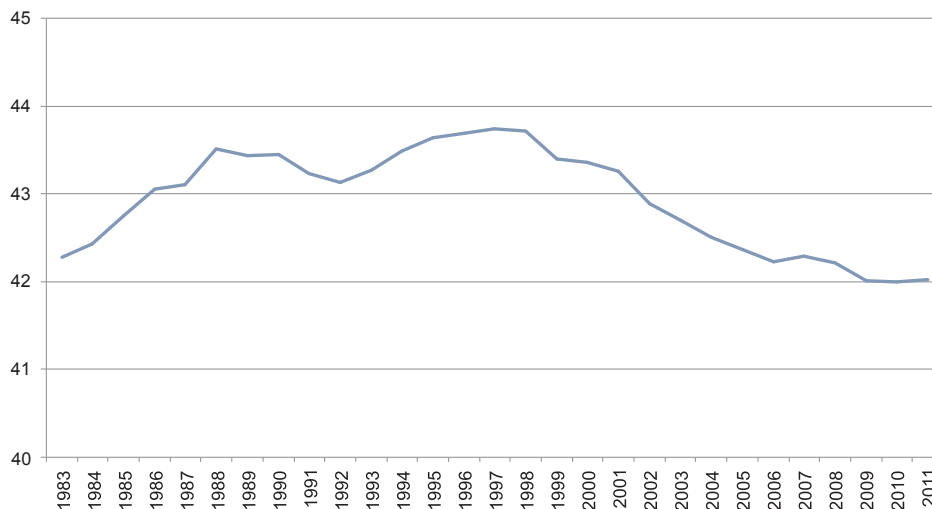
The proportion of employees working long hours each week – which, as we will see, is associated with an increased likelihood of reporting uncomfortable work pressures and other negative effects – has fallen significantly, from 26% in 1997 to just under 20% by 2013 (see Figure 10).

Figure 8: Average annual hours actually worked per worker, 1970–2012



Data are for dependent employment.
Source: OECD.

Figure 9: Average hours usually worked each week by full-time dependent employees, 1983–2011



Source: OECD.

Which employees are most likely to think they are working hard?

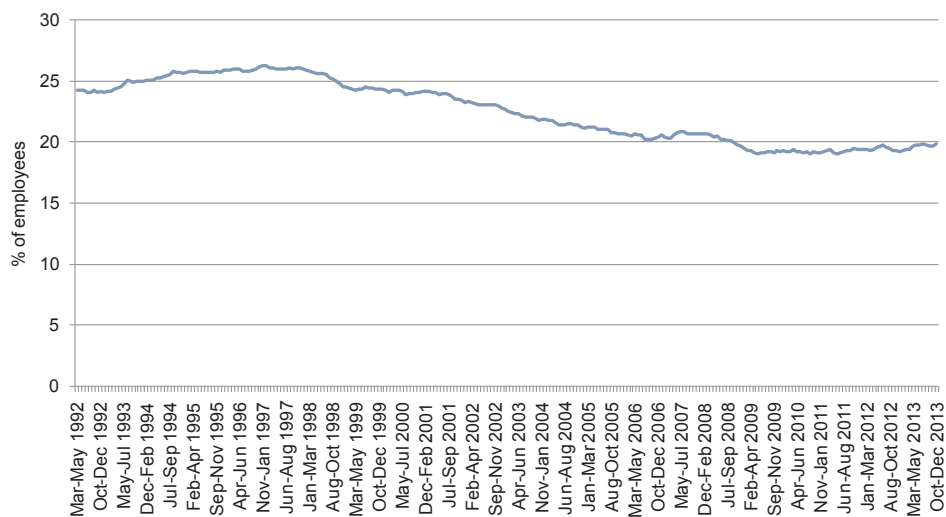
The SES suggests there are some systematic variations across the workforce in perceived work intensity (see Figure 11). Women are more likely than men to be in strong agreement that their job requires very hard work, and the gap has increased gradually over time. An analysis of the 1997 survey suggested that little of this variation was explained by women being in different types of jobs from men because of family obligations and the authors drew the inference that women are subject to more rigorous monitoring and more demanding performance standards than men.⁵ Full-time and public sector employees are also more likely to say they are working hard on this measure than part-time and private sector

employees respectively. We should also note that the size of these differences increases over time – when, as shown in Figure 1, this measure of work intensity was (with the exception of 1997–2001) trending upwards.

Earlier analysis of the SES from the 1990s found little variation among major occupational or industrial groups, although there were concentrations of high-strain jobs in a few specific areas, for example among school teachers.⁶

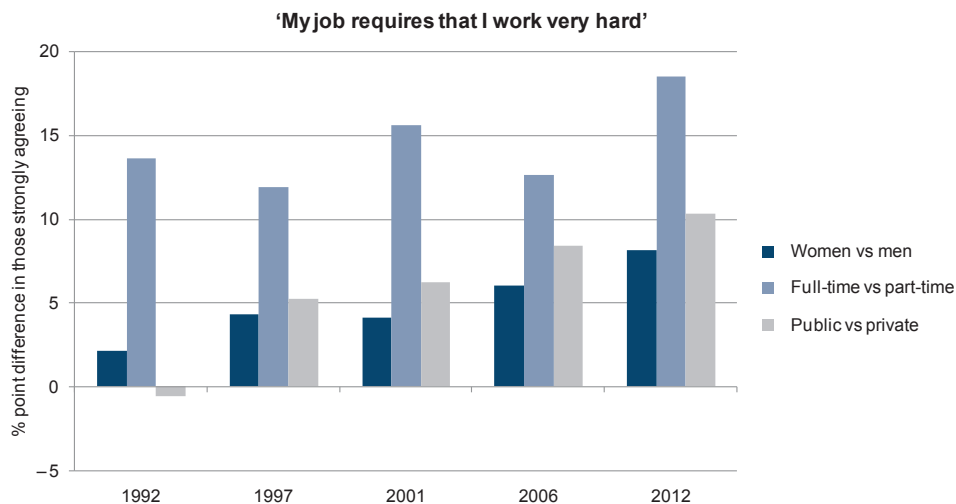
The 2011 WERS found similar variations by gender and public/private sector status among employees reporting they work very hard. Employees working 48 or more hours each week and those in managerial and professional occupations were also more likely to say they are required to work very hard.⁷

Figure 10: Employees usually working over 45 hours each week, 1992–2013



Source: Office for National Statistics.

Figure 11: Differences in work intensity across the workforce, 1992–2012



Source: Skills and Employment Surveys.

Recent CIPD *Employee Outlook* data do not show many significant variations across the workforce in the proportion of employees reporting excessive pressure at least once a week (see Figure 12). On this measure, differences between men and women and between public and private sector employees are small compared with SES or WERS. There are similarities in that those under pressure are more likely to be graduates, in managerial positions or members of a trade union. However, there is one striking relationship in the data that is consistent with the WERS data – those working the longest hours are much more likely to be feeling under pressure, whereas those working just a few hours feel much less pressurised.

The lack of many significant variations by industry, region and organisation size (except for micro firms) suggests that much of the variation in perceptions of work pressure is accounted for by other characteristics of individuals or the places where they work.

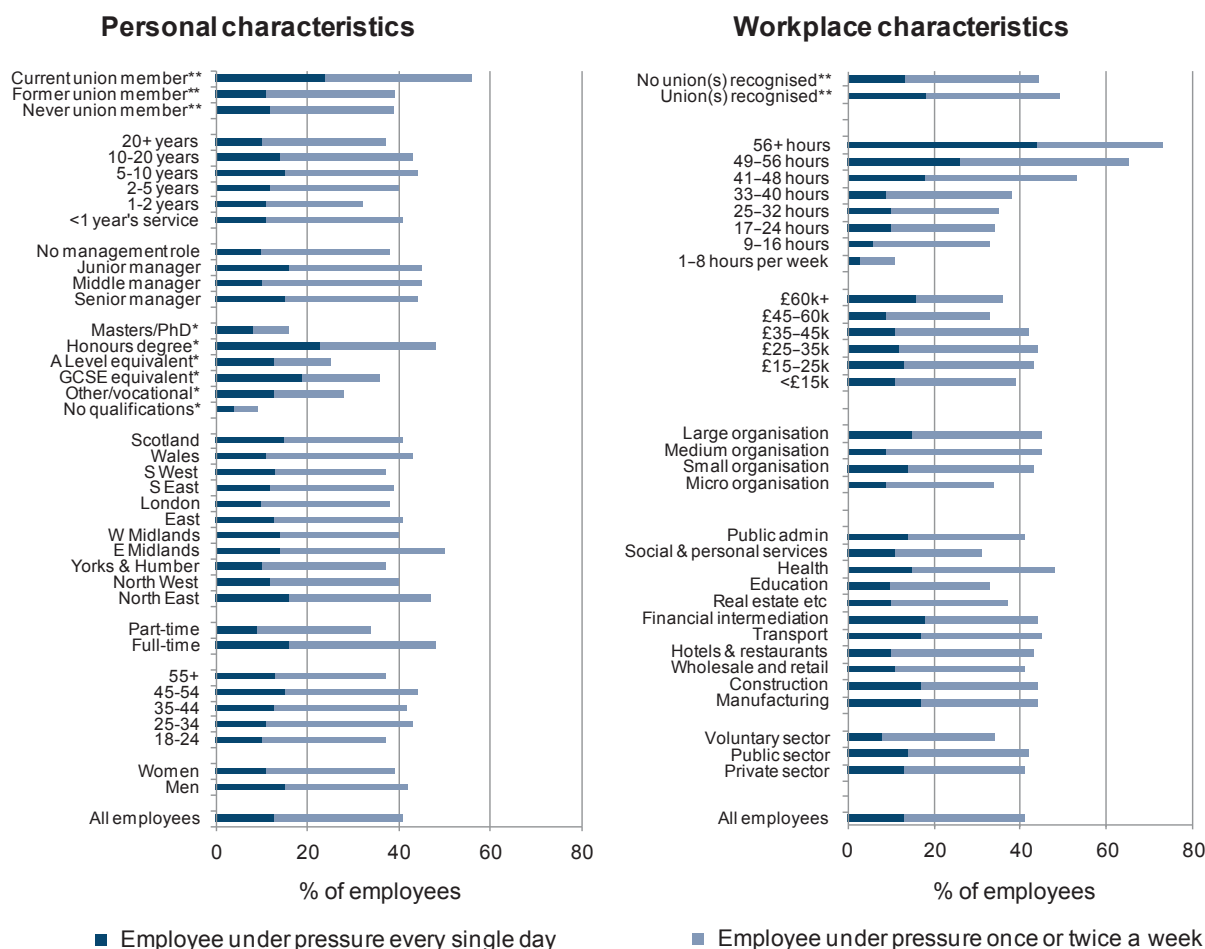
What about other countries?

The ESS shows that, in 2010, the proportion of employees in Great Britain in strong agreement that their job requires very hard work was the second highest in Europe (see Figure 13).⁸ A number of other countries – including the Ukraine, Slovakia, Ireland and Spain – saw similar increases to Great Britain and Northern Ireland in work intensity between the 2004 and 2010 surveys. However, this pattern was not universal: work intensity on this measure declined noticeably in Poland, Hungary and Slovenia.

In 2010, the UK had one of the lowest proportions of employees in Europe saying their jobs involve working at high speed, but an above-average proportion of employees saying their work involves tight deadlines (see Figures 14 and 15).

The 2010 ESS found enormous variation across Europe in the proportions of employees saying they never have enough time to get everything done in their jobs, from

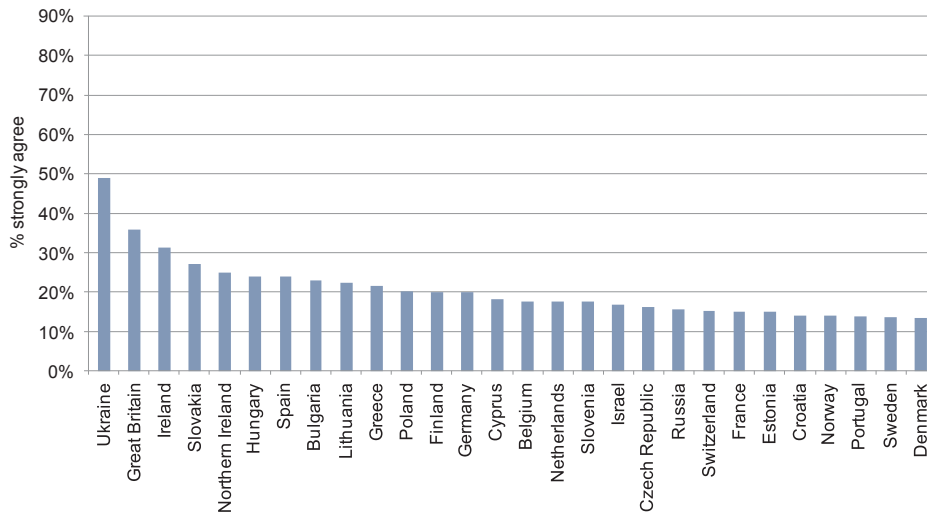
Figure 12: Personal and workplace characteristics of employees who feel under excessive pressure, autumn 2013



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2013 except * taken from winter 2012 survey and ** taken from autumn 2011 survey.

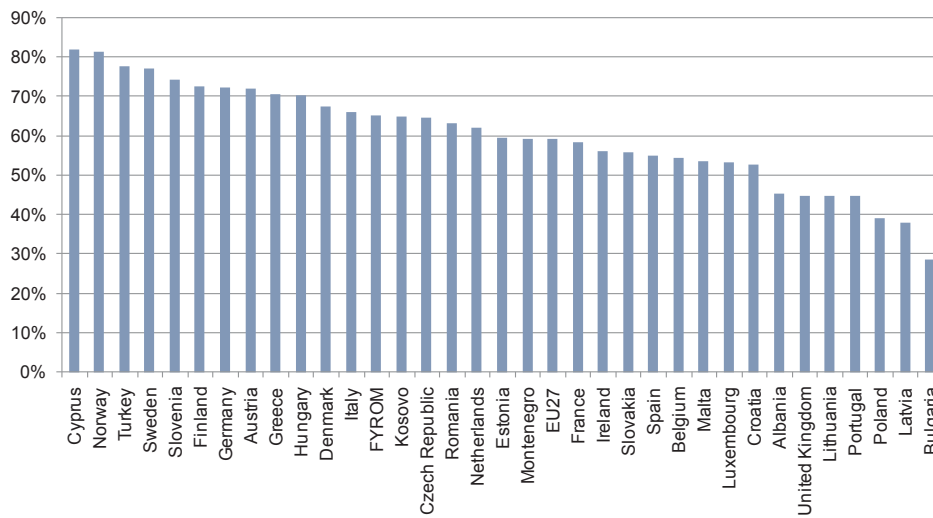
Figure 13: International comparisons of work intensity, 2010

'My job requires that I work very hard'



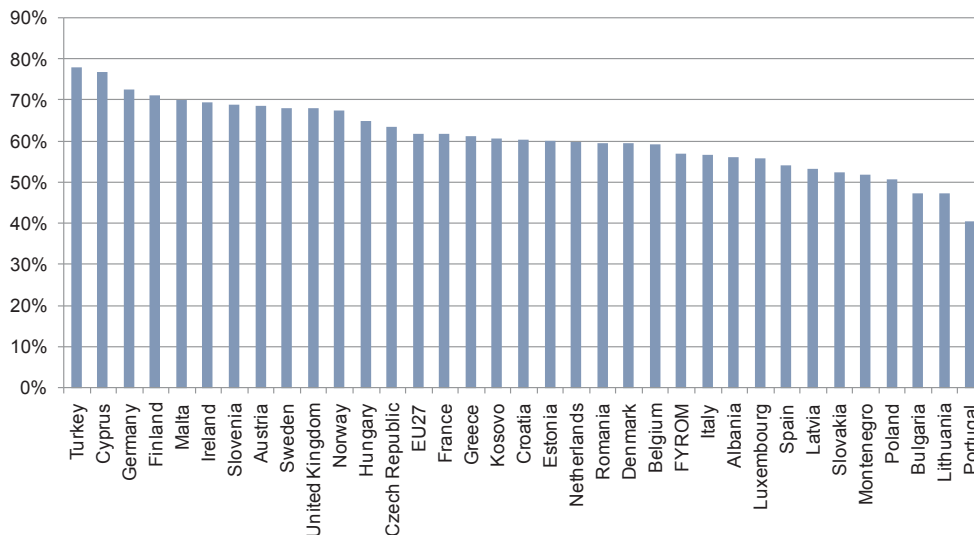
Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

Figure 14: International comparisons of employees working at very high speed, 2010



Percentage of respondents who said their job involved working at very high speed for a quarter or more of the time.
Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2010 .

Figure 15: International comparisons of employees working to tight deadlines, 2010



Percentage of respondents who said their job involved working to tight deadlines for a quarter or more of the time.
Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2010 .

20% in Lithuania and Poland to as much as 70% in Malta and Germany, with British and Northern Irish employees in the top half of the distribution (see Figure 16).

We have little information on these measures of work intensity for countries outside Europe. However, a 2012 survey using the same two questions reported in Figures 14 and 15 found high proportions of employees in Australia – over 70% – working at high speed and to tight deadlines.⁹

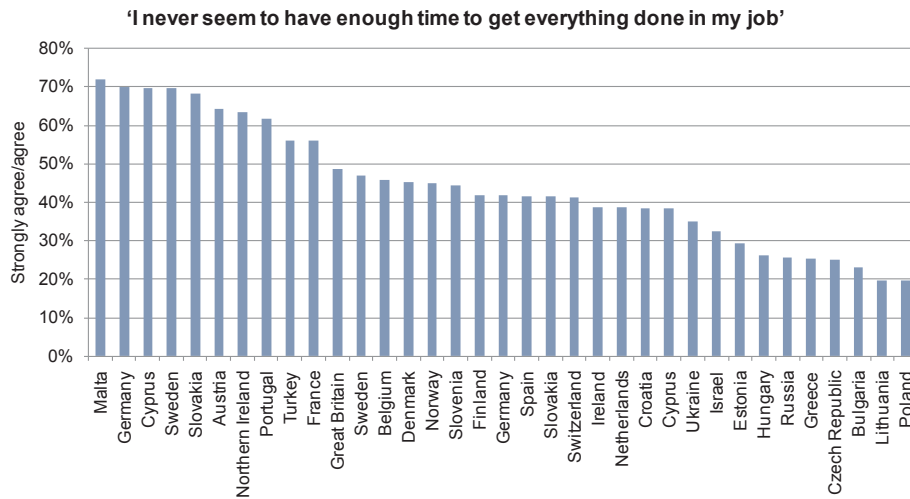
Annual working hours vary considerably across the OECD, although we should note that these data are not estimated using entirely comparable data and methods, so they should be regarded as illustrative (see Figure 17). We see here that, among the G7, the USA and Japan have the

longest average annual working hours, with the UK ranked in the middle of this group and with Germany having the shortest average annual hours. A number of East European economies and Latin American OECD members, however, have higher average working hours than the USA, which suggests there may be a similar relationship between prosperity and working hours across countries to the relationship observed over time within countries – that increased affluence sometimes translates into an individual (or collective) preference for less time at work.

Many countries have, like the UK, seen significant falls in annual hours worked over recent decades.¹⁰

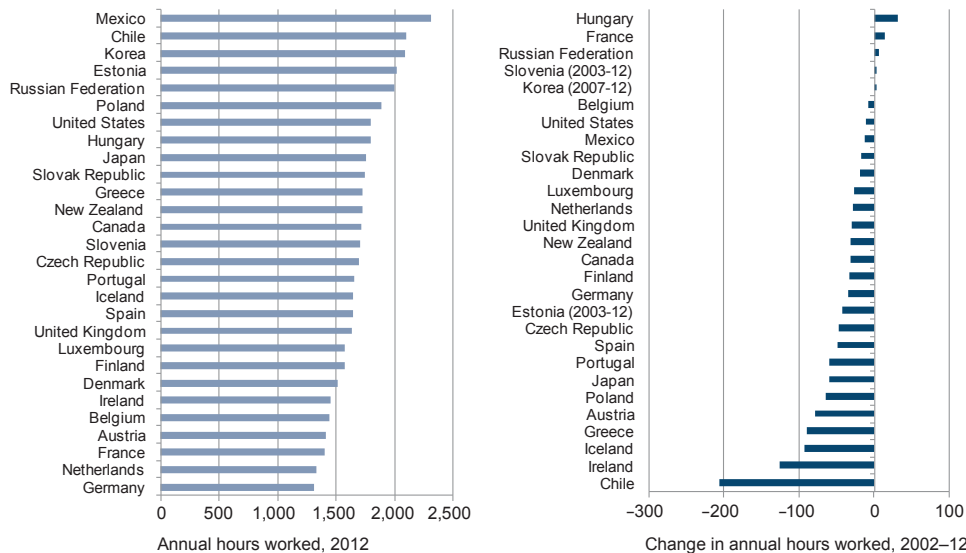
One exception to this trend is the USA. Between 1979 and 2007, one study has estimated that average annual hours

Figure 16: International comparisons of workload pressures, 2010



Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

Figure 17: International comparisons of average annual hours actually worked per worker, 2002–12



Data are for dependent employment.

Source: OECD.

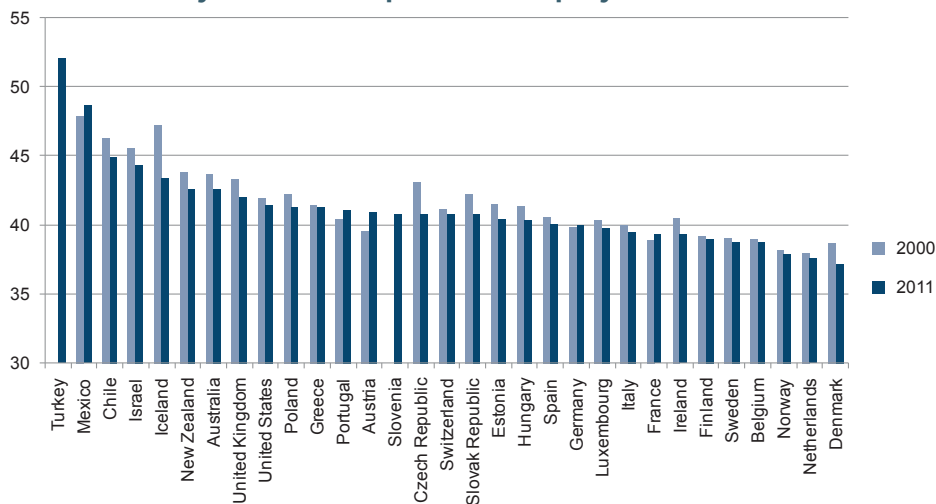
worked increased by 10.7%. Virtually all of this increase took place during the 1980s and 1990s, with average hours worked each year flat from 2000 onwards.¹¹

It has often been claimed in the past that the UK has ‘the longest working hours in Europe’. This has never, strictly speaking, been true. At best, the statement was only valid with regard to the weekly hours of full-time employees in those countries that were members of the EU prior to the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries in 2004. In 2011, average weekly working hours in the UK for full-time employees were slightly higher than in most continental European countries but not excessive compared with some non-EU OECD countries (see Figure 18).

Given the degree of political controversy in the UK over adoption of the Working Time Directive, it is surprising to see that the incidence of working over 48 hours each week is only slightly above the EU average (see Figure 19). This is because many of the more recent EU member states have relatively long working weeks where working every day of the week is quite common (possibly reflecting relatively high shares of employment in agriculture or simply a need to work long hours to make ends meet).

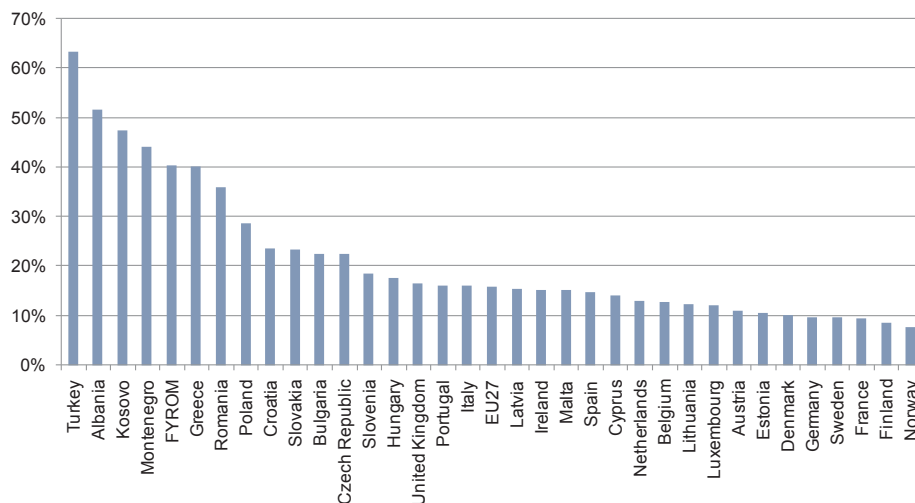
The proportion of UK employees saying they work for six or seven days of the week is also relatively small, although employees in the UK are more likely than employees in most European countries to say they work at evenings and weekends and/or can sometimes be required to work overtime at short notice.

Figure 18: International comparisons of average hours usually worked each week by full-time dependent employees, 2000–11



Source: OECD.

Figure 19: International comparisons of employees usually working over 48 hours a week, 2010



Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2010

Conclusion

Compared with 20 years ago, more employees think their jobs require them to work very hard. This sense of working harder is not being driven by changes in working hours – indeed, both average hours worked over the year and the length of the average working week have been falling since the end of the 1990s. Rather it is that work is a more demanding and intense experience, principally due to the pressure of workload and deadlines.

The data point to an increase in work intensity on these measures over the past 20 or more years. Although the trend has been upwards, it has not been consistent. The measures reviewed here tended to increase during the 1990s before pausing – or even falling – for a period running from the late 1990s to the middle of the last decade. Since then, work intensity measures have again tended to increase.

The proportion of employees in the UK saying their job requires them to work very hard is amongst the highest in Europe. It is not clear exactly why this is the case. The UK scores above average – but is not exceptional – in terms of perceived pressures arising from workloads and deadlines. But UK employees are less likely than employees in many other countries to say their jobs involve high-paced

working. There could, of course, be other aspects of work not covered in this section which have a particular impact in the UK and contribute to this perception of work being very demanding. Or we could simply be exposing the limitations involved in drawing inferences from international social surveys when responses to identical questions can be shaped by different social norms and expectations.

There are some big gaps in the available evidence. First, there is little on the psychological characteristics of individuals and whether these affect perceptions of work intensity. Second, there is little evidence on whether perceptions of working hard or of feeling under pressure are concentrated in particular workplaces, or whether they are spread more widely across the working population.

What are the potential explanations?

In this section, we consider potential explanations for the increase in perceptions of work intensity that we appear to have seen and consider their validity.

Is it the recession?

The indicators of work intensity reported in Figure 1 showed an increase in the period from the middle of the last decade to the early years of this decade. This would be consistent with the recession causing an increase in work intensity – although it is not proof by itself.

There are plausible reasons why the recession might have led to an increase in measures of work intensity. Difficult business conditions might have led to some employers cutting hours or reducing paid overtime without cutting workloads proportionately. To keep hold of work, or secure new work, businesses may have cut costs, reduced timescales or changed other aspects of production or service delivery that demanded more from the workforce. In the public sector, cuts in budgets and staffing would

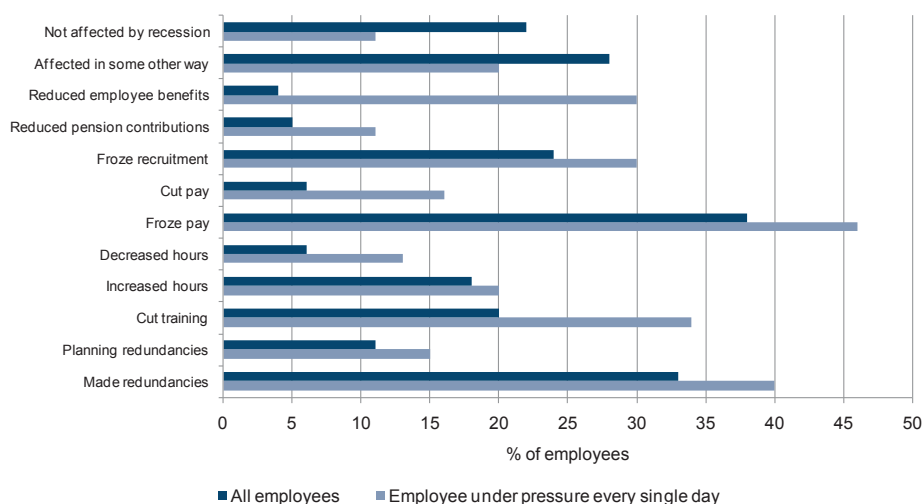
have a similar effect. Equally, a fear of losing their job may have motivated employees to work harder – to save the business and/or their position in it.

The indicator of employees feeling under excessive pressure at work collected by the CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey shows no noticeable time series variation. However, it only started to be collected in 2009 once the recession was already under way.

Employees feeling under excessive pressure every day were more likely than employees as a whole to say their workplace had been affected by the recession and, in particular, that there had been redundancies or cuts to pay, training or other employee benefits (see Figure 20).

Employees feeling under excessive pressure on at least a weekly basis were also more likely to identify negative effects on the workplace arising from the recession, such as an increase in stress, bullying, conflict and people taking time off sick (see Figure 21 on page 18).

Figure 20: Employee perceptions of the impact of the recession on their workplace, autumn 2013



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2013.

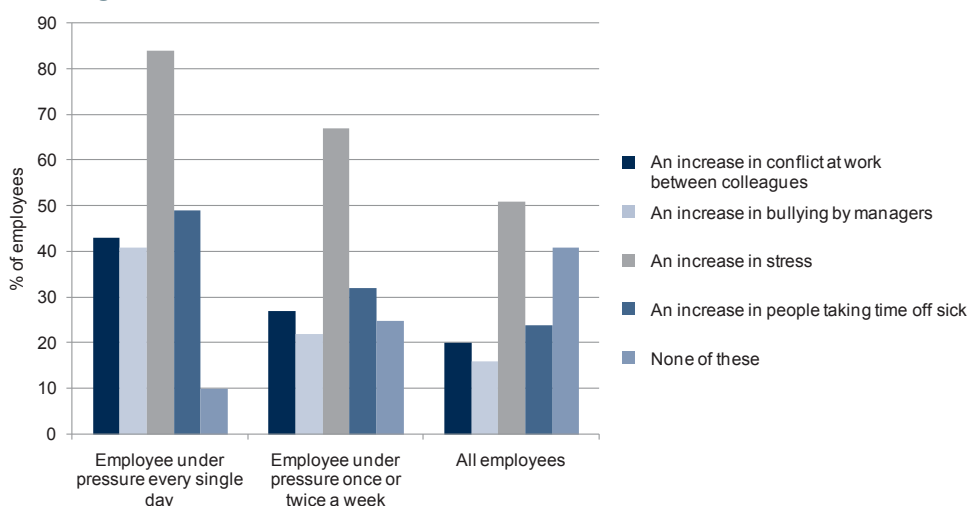
Employees feeling under excessive pressure were also most likely to think they were going to lose their job (see Figure 22). This may be because they were more likely to be in workplaces where jobs were threatened or it may be because employees feeling under pressure were more anxious about losing their jobs than their colleagues.

According to the SES, the proportion of employees who feared losing their job increased from 18% in 2006 to 25% by 2012.¹²

However, analysis of the 2004 and 2011 WERS surveys suggested that the increase in the proportion of employees stating that their job required them to work hard was little affected in general by how the workplace

had fared during the recession, suggesting broader factors may have been more important.¹³ An earlier analysis of the 1990 and 1998 WERS also found that job insecurity was not an important factor in explaining changes in work intensity during the 1990s, although the measure of job insecurity used in the study (the proportion of temporary employees at the workplace) may not capture job insecurity very well.¹⁴ In contrast, a recent US study that analysed computer-tracked productivity data from 23,000 employees at a large technology services company over the period from 2006 to 2010 found that effort increased most among workers in states where the unemployment rate rose the most, suggesting that (fear of) unemployment induced greater effort.¹⁵

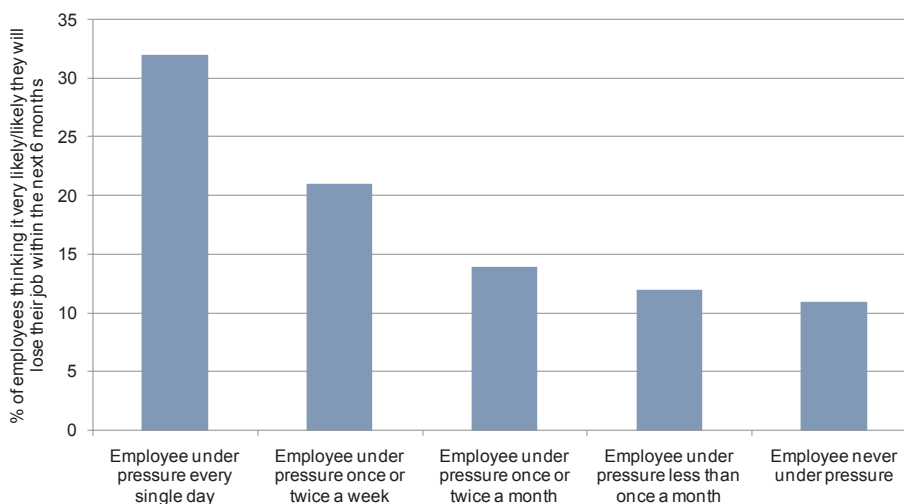
Figure 21: Employee perceptions of the impact of the recession on working relations, summer 2012



Base: Employees whose workplace was affected by the recession.

Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, summer 2012.

Figure 22: Relationship between job insecurity and feeling under excessive pressure, autumn 2013



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2013.

Is it because of technological change?

Technology can increase work intensity through two channels.

First, it can be used to reduce slack or down time in processes, so that more activity can be crammed into working time: *'New technologies have enabled a "closing up" of the gaps in the working day, and a squeezing of more and more activities into a given time. Computers schedule tasks much more efficiently, so that there are no pauses between when one ends and the other begins. ... Mobile phones give the flexibility to fill previously slack times and spaces with work.'*¹⁶ ICT also increases the potential productivity of working time spent away from the workplace and of non-working time.¹⁷

Second, technology has in many cases made it easier for employers to monitor the work of each individual employee.¹⁸ Effort levels – and differences between employees – become more apparent.

Francis Green describes this as 'effort-biased technical change'.¹⁹ Technology does not necessarily require everyone to work harder, but it means that the measurable difference in performance between those who work hard(er) and those who do not increases – and this in turn leads to greater differentials in wages and other rewards. The overall effect is an increase in both the average level of work effort and the differences in effort levels between workers.

There is evidence that technological change in the workplace is associated with increased work intensity. Employees in the 2012 SES were more likely to register strong agreement with the 'my job requires that I

work very hard' question if their workplace had seen computerisation or other ICT-related technological change.²⁰ This finding is consistent with earlier analysis of the 1990 and 1998 WERS and 1992 and 2001 SES.²¹

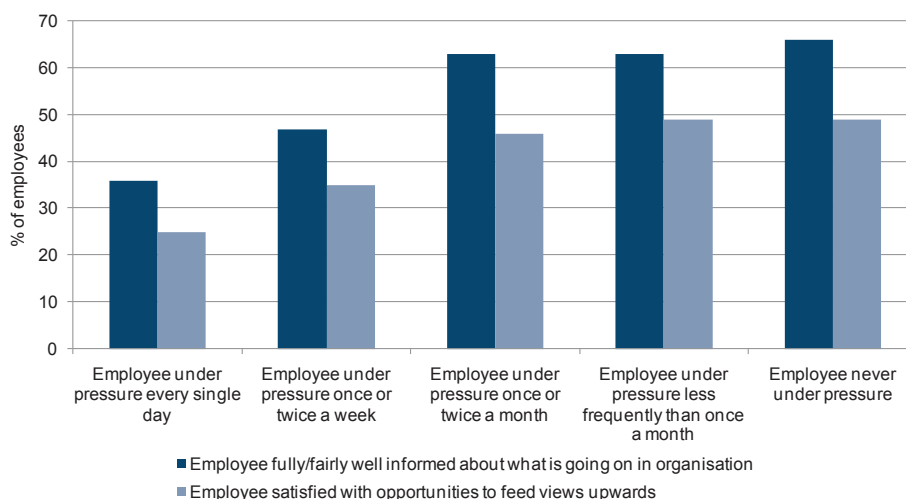
The impact of any given technological change on an organisation and its employees will, of course, depend on how it is implemented, in particular whether implementation took account of the nature of work and the working environment in which the technology was being introduced.²² It has been suggested that the fall in perceived work intensity observed in the UK in the late 1990s and early 2000s may have been because employees were starting to find computers easier to use due to better equipment, better training and management having learned from the mistakes made during initial attempts at computerisation.²³

Is it because employees feel they are losing control over their work?

Control affects how workers respond to job demands and the effect these have on them. Control in this context could refer to the degree of autonomy or control individuals have over their work (including when they start and finish work, the tasks they carry out, how they carry them out and the order in which they are carried out). It could also refer to the amount of influence they have – either individually or collectively – over decisions that affect them.

Employees feeling under excessive pressure on a regular basis were less satisfied than other employees with the arrangements in place for informing them about what is going on within their organisation and with the arrangements for feeding back their views to senior management (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: Relationship between feeling under excessive pressure and satisfaction with employee voice, autumn 2012



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2012.

According to the SES, perceived task autonomy declined during the 1990s but hardly changed between 2001 and 2012.²⁴ EWCS data report task autonomy falling between 1995 and 2005, with a slight increase between 2005 and 2010. WERS data collected from managers suggests little change in employee autonomy since the late 1990s. Data collected from employees suggest a slight increase in employee autonomy between 2004 and 2011 (see Figure 24).

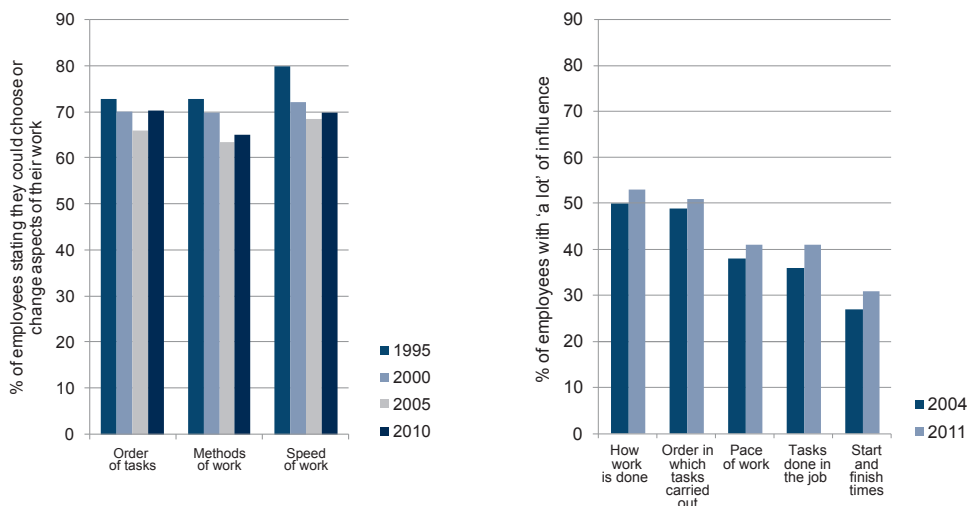
According to WERS, in 2011, 62% of employees were satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of influence they had over their work, which in turn had a positive effect on job satisfaction.²⁵

According to the EWCS, UK workers had relatively low control over the pace of their work, in the sense that, with the exception of Greece, they were more likely than

workers elsewhere to identify multiple sources of control over how quickly they did their work (see Figure 25). These sources of control included managers but would also include machines, colleagues and customers. In other words, UK employees felt they are more likely to be pulled in multiple directions than employees in other European countries.

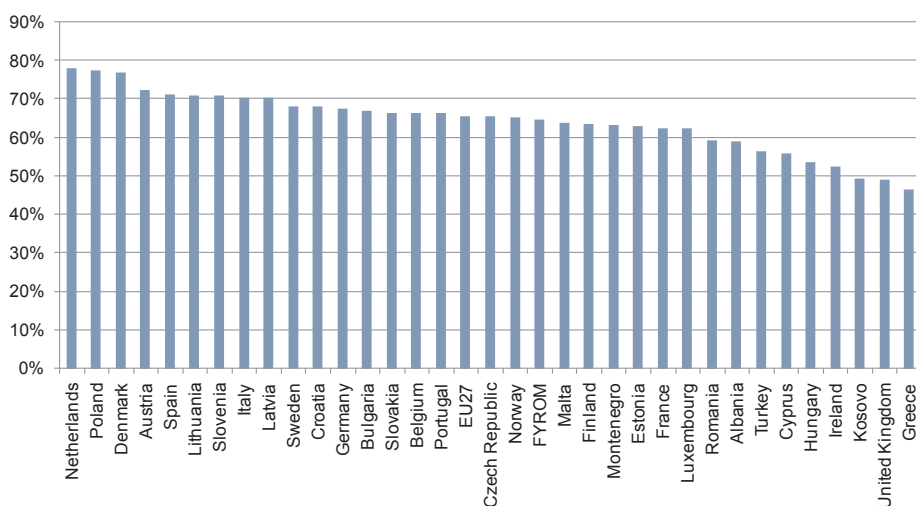
People feeling under excessive pressure are less likely than other employees to be satisfied with employee voice at their workplace. But as we saw in a previous *Megatrends* report, employee perceptions of information provision and opportunities to feed back their views have held up or even improved over time.²⁶ Similarly, the various surveys reviewed in this section suggest that individual task autonomy has remained stable or increased slightly since the mid-2000s. Thus the recent increase in work intensity appears not to have been

Figure 24: Trends in employee autonomy



Sources: European Working Conditions Surveys (left panel); Workplace Employment Relations Study (right panel).

Figure 25: International comparisons of perceived control over the pace of work, 2010



Percentage of respondents who said the pace of work was determined by less than three of the following influences: colleagues, customers, numerical targets, machines or their boss.

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2010

accompanied by a general decline in control – even though control matters a lot to how job demands affect the individual employee.

Is it down to poor management?

Workload – determined by management – and other management actions and behaviours feature prominently in the reasons given by employees for feeling under excessive pressure at work.

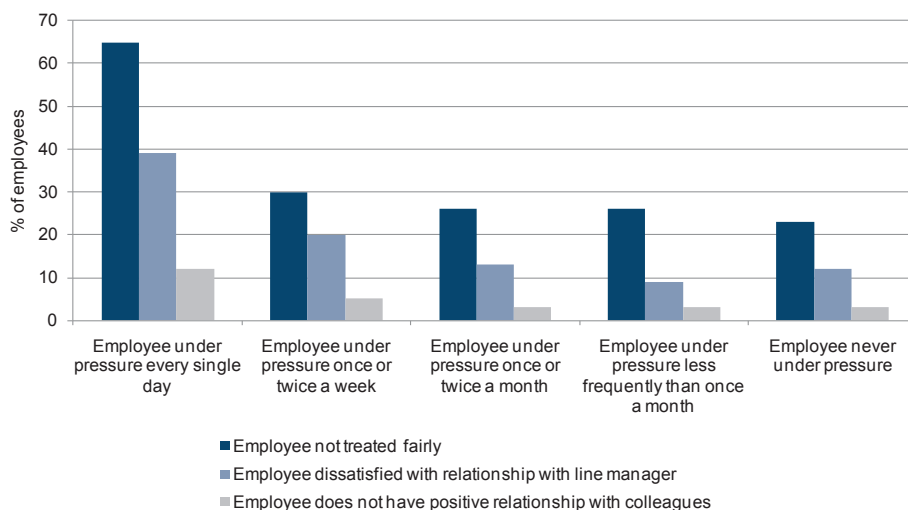
Those employees under pressure every day are much more likely than other employees to feel they are not treated fairly at work. In addition, over a third of this

group are dissatisfied with their relationship with their line manager and over a tenth have poor relationships with work colleagues (see Figure 26).

There is also a clear relationship between employees feeling under pressure and line manager behaviour (see Figure 27). Across 14 different behaviours, those under pressure at least once a week are less likely to say their line manager always or usually exhibits these (positive) behaviours

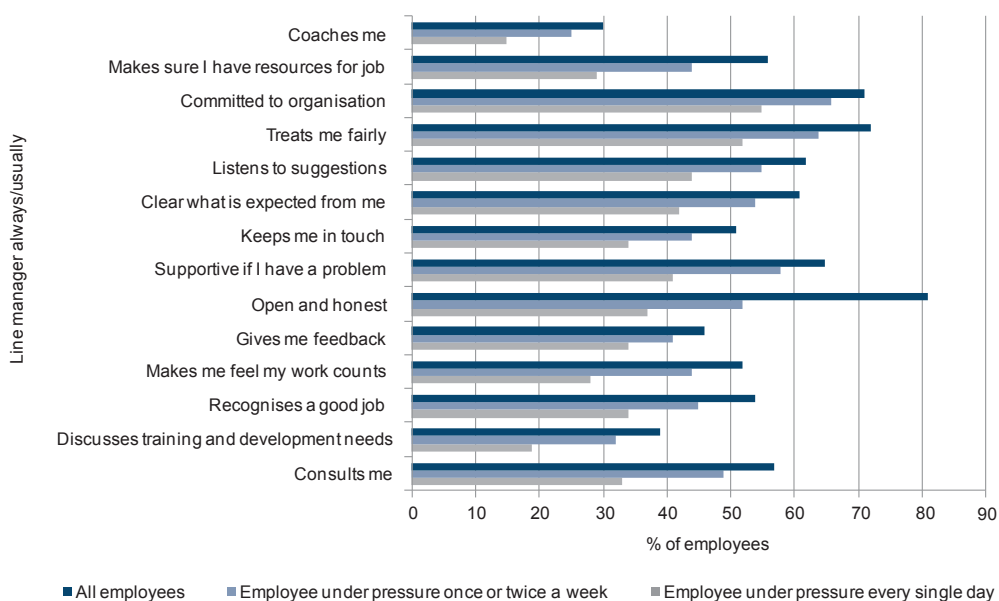
If we compare the responses for employees under pressure every day with all employee responses, the biggest differences are for 'consults me', 'makes me feel my work counts', 'supportive if I have a problem' (all 24

Figure 26: Relationship between dissatisfaction with working relationships and feeling under excessive pressure, autumn 2013



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2013.

Figure 27: Relationship between line manager behaviours and feeling under excessive pressure, summer 2012



Base: All employees who always or sometimes had a line manager or supervisor (91% of sample).

Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, summer 2012.

percentage point differences), 'makes sure I have the resources for the job' (27 percentage point difference) and 'open and honest' (a massive 44 percentage point difference). Those under constant pressure have negative views of the integrity and trustworthiness of their managers – as well as of the practical support they provide to those feeling the strain. We should note, of course, that these data measure perceptions. One employee might form a different view from another about identical line management behaviour.

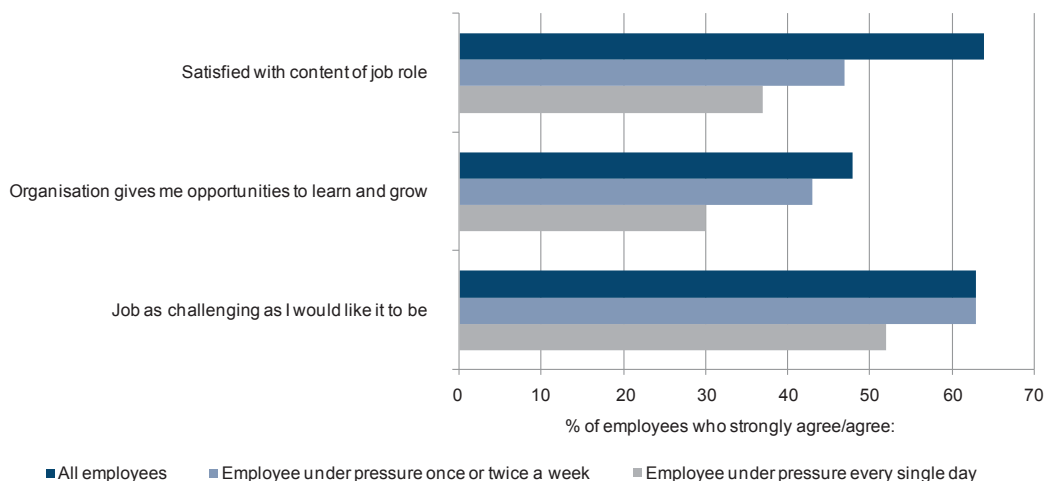
Employees feeling under excessive pressure also say they spend less time with their line managers discussing work-related issues. In the spring 2012 CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, 82% of employees said they spend up to one hour per month individually with their line manager discussing work-related issues, whereas, for those reporting excessive pressure every single day, this figure rose to 89%. Of course,

this may be a consequence, as well as a cause, of excessive work pressures.

Job design may also be an issue. Employees feeling under pressure on a regular basis are less likely than other employees to be satisfied with their job role or to feel that their organisation gives them opportunities to learn and grow (see Figure 28).

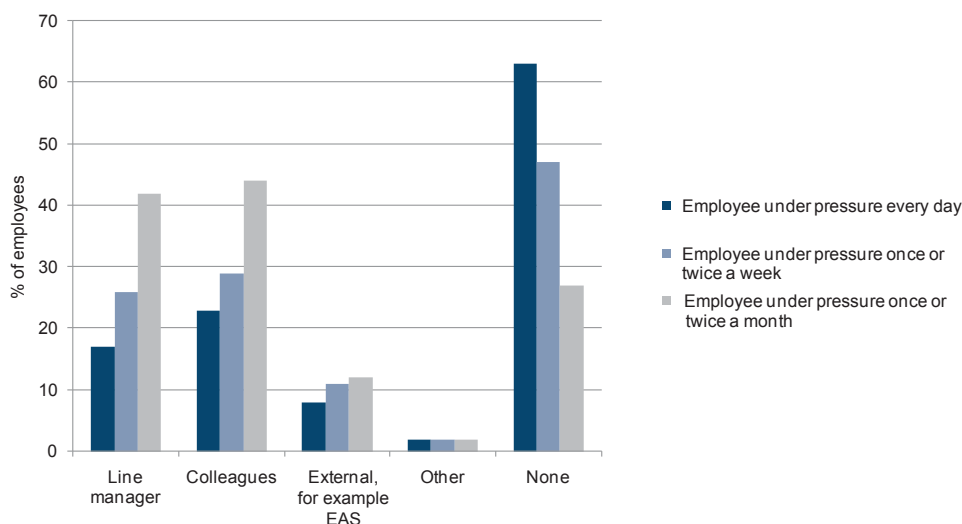
The support available to employees facing job pressures is an important factor influencing their well-being. Employees under pressure are less likely than other employees to say there is support available within the workplace (see Figure 29). In particular, while few employees say they have access to formal support, such as employee assistance schemes, employees under the greatest pressure are much less likely than other employees to say they can rely on support from their line manager or colleagues.

Figure 28: Relationship between perceptions of job role and feeling under excessive pressure, summer 2012



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, summer 2012.

Figure 29: Support available to employees under excessive pressure, summer 2013



Respondents could select more than one support mechanism.

Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, summer 2013.

Support can also be indirect through mechanisms such as flexible working. In the winter 2011–12 CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, 19% of employees said their employer did not provide any of an extensive menu of flexible working options; this percentage rose to 29% for those under excessive pressure every single day. The latter group were also more likely to identify the attitudes of senior managers, line managers and colleagues as obstacles to flexible working.²⁷

Or is it a result of more effective people management?

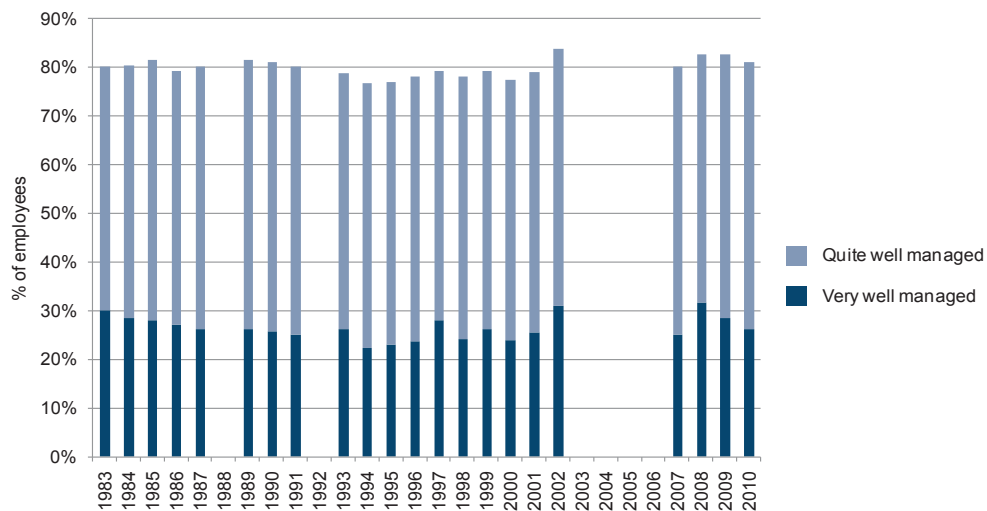
Work intensification can also be an outcome of management practices designed to increase employee engagement and commitment, thus tapping into reserves of discretionary effort. A wide range of high-performance

working (HPW) practices might have this effect, including employee involvement, teamworking, quality circle initiatives, multi-skilling, flexible working, performance-related pay and access to other fringe benefits and so on

Most employees think their workplace is reasonably well managed (see Figure 30).

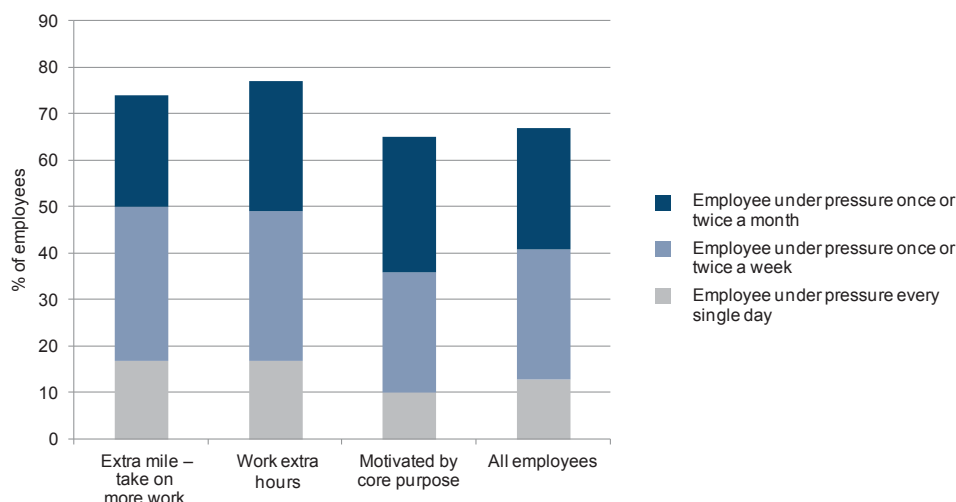
Well-motivated employees are no more likely than other employees to feel under excessive pressure (see Figure 31). Even when motivation feeds through into a willingness to take on extra work or work extra hours, this is associated with quite small increases in the likelihood of feeling under excessive pressure. This does suggest that higher levels of engagement and commitment largely release discretionary effort rather than imposed effort.

Figure 30: Employee perceptions of how well their workplace is managed, 1983–2010



Source: British Social Attitudes Survey.

Figure 31: Excessive pressure among motivated employees, autumn 2013



Base: employees who strongly agree/agree with the following statements: 'I will often take on more work to help relieve my colleagues' workload' (59% of employees); 'I often work more hours than I am paid or contracted to do' (58% of employees); and 'I am highly motivated by my organisation's core purpose' (53% of employees).

Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2013.

In 2010, just over 70% of employees in the UK said their organisation motivated them to deliver their best job performance, compared with the EU average of 62% (see Figure 32).

Direct participation by employees in decisions affecting them can produce a greater sense of responsibility and thus enhance effort.²⁸ Teamworking may also be associated with increased effort by enhancing employees' interest in the behaviour of fellow team members. This can provide additional support for those under pressure and it can also give employees stronger incentives to prevent fellow team members from shirking.²⁹ The SES suggests there has been a steady increase between 1992 and 2012 in the proportion of employees saying they work in a team, although semi-autonomous and self-managing teams are much less common and have not increased to the same degree.³⁰

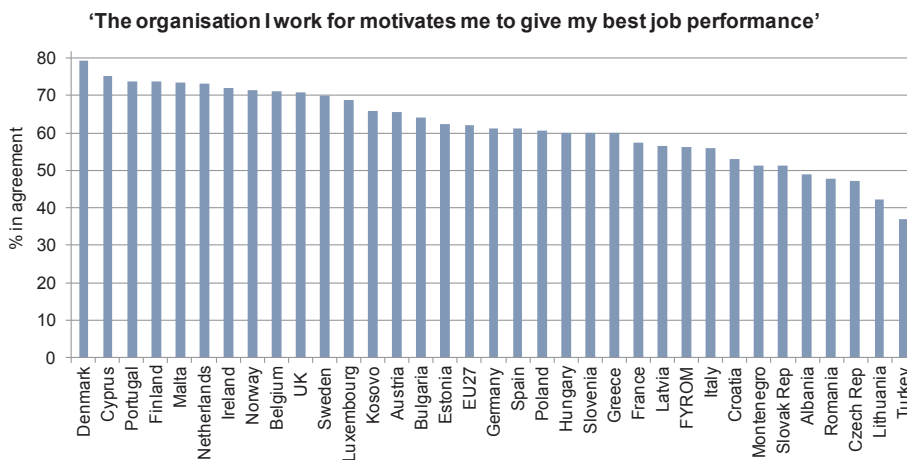
We saw in the previous section that a lack of availability of flexible working, or a culture that discourages its take-up, is associated with higher proportions of employees reporting excessive work pressures. There is evidence that the provision of flexible working can increase work intensification in both positive and negative ways: for example, where reduced working hours is not accompanied by sufficient reduction in workload, the effect can be increased pressure on the individual; however, the availability of working from home can, in some cases, strengthen commitment and loyalty to the organisation and trigger greater effort by the employee as a 'thank you'.³¹

Multivariate analysis of the 1990 and 1998 WERS found that organisational change had a positive and statistically significant impact on work intensification in small establishments, although its impact was not as great as technological change.³²

Hence a variety of what can be termed HPW practices have an impact on the intensity of work, but this is often through the release of discretionary effort on the part of the employee rather than effort imposed by new ways of working or new incentive structures. The impact will depend to a great degree on what changes are introduced, the context and how they are communicated to, and perceived by, employees:

Essentially, job stress and high commitment/involvement are two sides of the same coin. The difference between the two sides lies in the way workers internalise these practices and how they assess their own positions within the organisation and HPW practices. If workers see that the practices are beneficial to their well-being as well as to the organisation, they will embrace the working environment in a particular way and will interpret their experience of HPW practices positively. ... If workers see no personal benefit at all, any new or additional practices will be seen as 'extras' that they do not want, irrespective of the benefits to the organisation.³³

Figure 32: International comparisons of employee motivation, 2010



Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2010.

Or is it because we all just want more?

It could be that increased work intensity in part reflects a faster pace of life. As consumers we have become more demanding. The speed of modern communications technology means we expect a swift response to any enquiry, comment, request or order:

The pace of work has increased and a lot of that is technology driven and society has become very instant. If people get a text message there's an expectation to answer it straight away and I think that is being perpetuated in the workplace.³⁴

The benchmarks set by private service industries for speed of response and customer service have spread to public services. Increased demand from clients has been a source of work intensification for many public service and professional groups, especially those where a sense of vocation or public service is an important motivating factor. For example, a survey of five professional groups (lawyers, pharmacists, HR managers, midwives, counselling psychologists) in 2000–01 found that 90% said that work had become more demanding over the previous decade (55% said it was much more demanding) and 83% said work effort had increased. The top reported motivators were clients, self-discretion and vocational commitment. Pay or appraisal pressures were far less commonly cited.³⁵

Conclusion

There is some evidence that the recession has had an impact on work intensity through its impact on job insecurity. However, it is not the whole explanation. Technological change enables greater work intensity and there is solid evidence that, in practice, it has had that effect.

An individual's sense of control over their work and the degree of autonomy they have are important factors influencing how work pressures affect people, although there is no evidence of a general decline in employee autonomy over the last decade.

How people are managed matters a lot. This includes the behaviour and capability of line managers, management style and workplace culture, the support given to employees, and whether HPW practices are used – and, if so, how they are used and in what circumstances. The effects can be positive as well as negative. Increased use of some HPW practices could have released greater discretionary effort by employees.

Nor should we discount the possibility that increased pressures in working life may reflect a faster pace of life in general. Employees are also consumers and service users and, to various degrees, the expectations they have in those parts of their life affect the expectations placed on them in their working life.

What are the implications?

In this section we consider the consequences of increased work intensity for employees, employers and policy-makers.

What are the implications for employees?

Demanding jobs need not diminish job satisfaction. As discussed in the previous section, employees who are motivated and engaged may well be putting more effort into their job – and greater demands might even spur on greater commitment and intensity of effort. Data from the 2010 ESS show that the 35% of employees who strongly agreed that their job required them to work hard had a higher mean job satisfaction score than those who saw their jobs as less demanding (see Figure 33).

In contrast, workload pressures had a slight negative effect on job satisfaction. Employees who thought they never had enough time to get everything done had slightly lower job satisfaction than employees who did not support this statement. Looking at time satisfaction

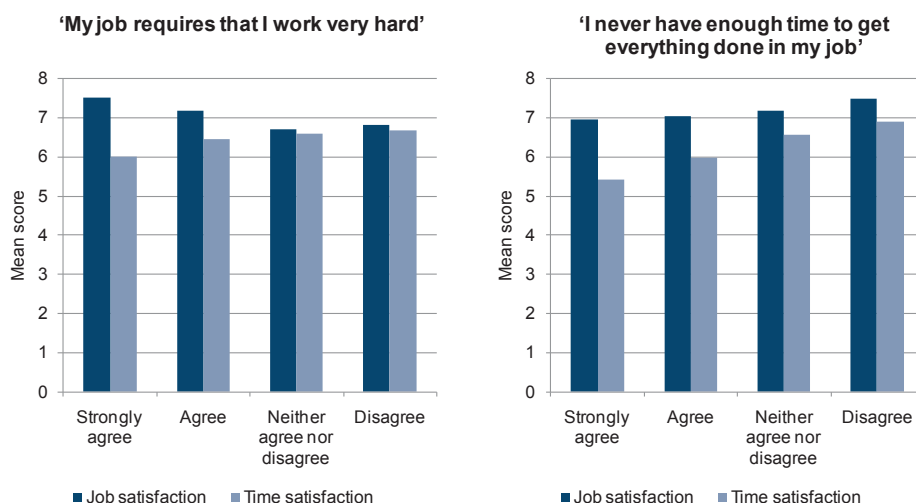
– shorthand for balance between time spent on paid employment and time spent on other tasks – there is a negative relationship with both job demands and workload although, of the two variables, workload again has a stronger negative impact.

Multivariate analysis of the 2011 WERS produced similar results. Controlling for other factors, employees who said their job required them to work very hard had higher job satisfaction whereas employees who said they never had enough time to get their job done had reduced job satisfaction.³⁶

Problems arise when the demands placed on employees turn into uncomfortable pressure on a frequent or permanent basis – perhaps because they have no sense of control over the situation or no one to turn to for support.

The most common adverse effects reported by employees feeling under excessive pressure were feeling anxious or depressed, skipping or cutting short lunch and other breaks,

Figure 33: Relationship between work intensity and job and time satisfaction, 2010



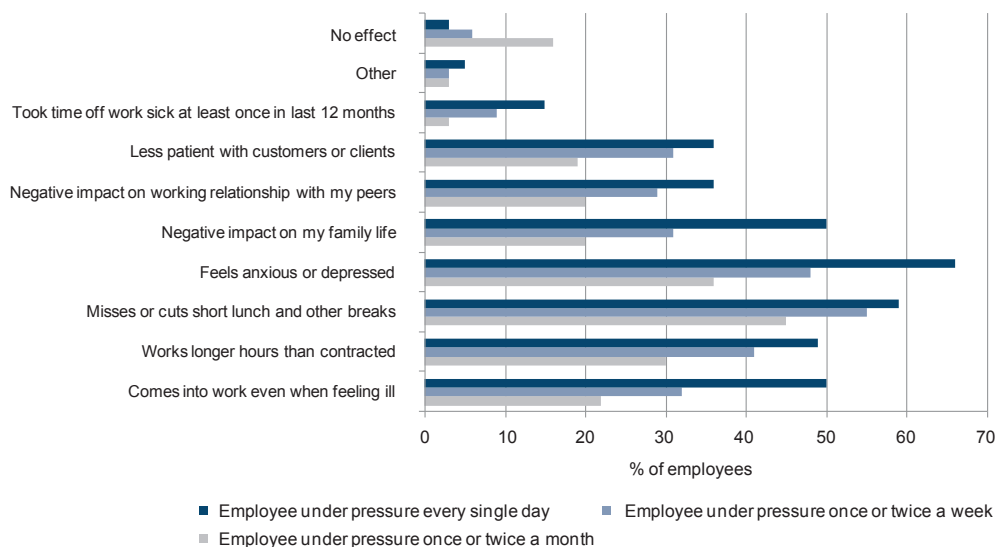
Job satisfaction and 'time satisfaction' (satisfaction with balance between time on job and time on other tasks) were measured using a scale from zero to ten. 'Strongly disagree' responses to both questions were too few for meaningful analysis.

Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

working longer hours than contracted, negative effects on family life and going into work even when feeling ill (see Figure 34). In all cases, those experiencing pressure most often were more likely to report adverse effects. It was only where excessive pressure was occasional – once or twice a month – that a significant proportion of employees (16%) reported no adverse effects.

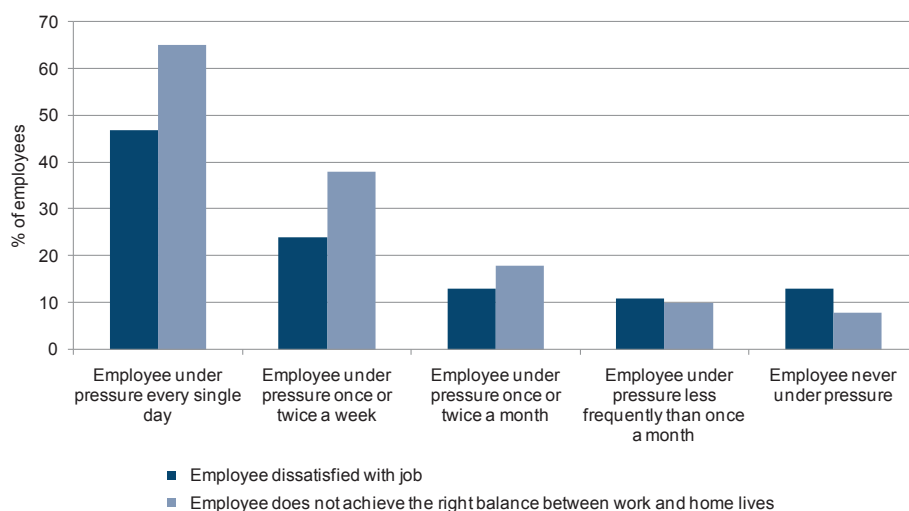
Dissatisfaction with their jobs and with the balance between work and home life is much greater among those employees under uncomfortable pressure on a weekly or daily basis (see Figure 35). According to the summer 2010 CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, for the minority under excessive pressure every day, disengagement often translated into emotional detachment from their job.

Figure 34: Effects on employees of feeling under excessive pressure, summer 2013



Respondents could select all responses that applied to them.
Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, summer 2013

Figure 35: Relationship between employee disaffection and feeling under excessive pressure, autumn 2013



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2013.

Most of those under excessive pressure say it has a negative effect on work performance, with those under the greatest pressure most likely to identify a negative effect (see Figure 36).

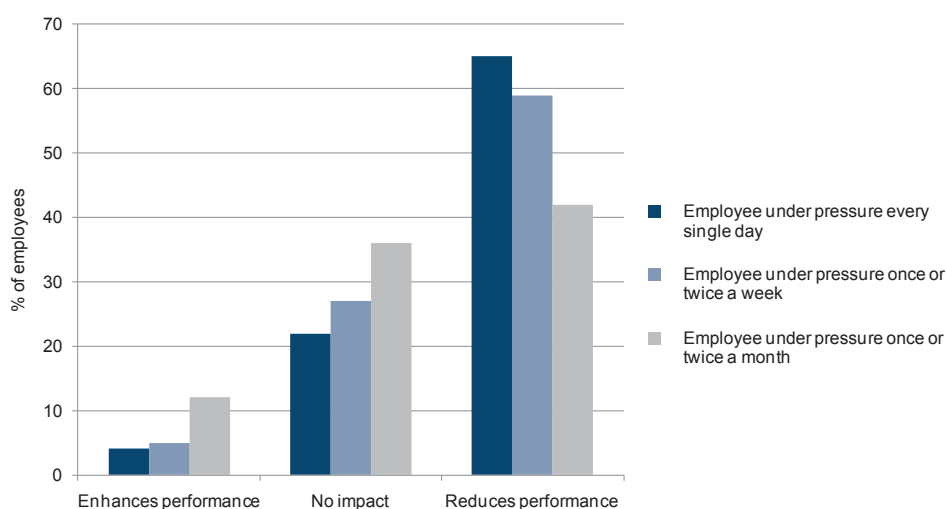
Those employees regularly under pressure are also more likely than other employees to be looking to leave their job and less likely to recommend their organisation to others as an employer (see Figure 37).

Data from various CIPD *Employee Outlook* surveys show that employees feeling under excessive pressure on a

regular basis have worse health outcomes than other employees. For example, the summer 2010 survey found that 44% of employees under pressure every single day said they had suffered from stress in the last 12 months, compared with 17% of employees as a whole. They were less satisfied with life in general and held less positive assessments of their physical and mental health (see Figures 38 and 39).³⁷

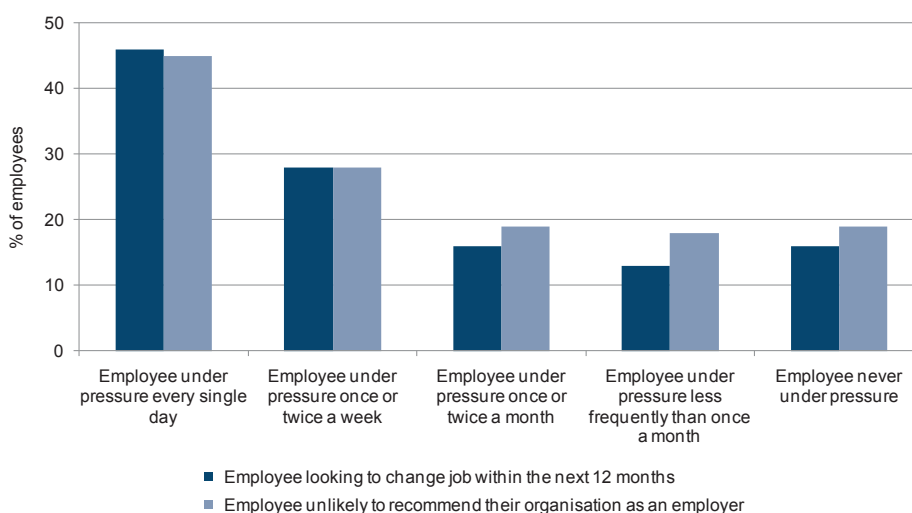
As a result, employees under excessive pressure on a regular basis took more time off work on sick leave. These employees were also, in addition, more likely to have

Figure 36: Effect on work performance of employees feeling under excessive pressure, summer 2013



Base: Employees who felt under excessive pressure at least once a month. Excludes 'don't know' responses.
Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, summer 2013

Figure 37: Relationship between leaving intentions and feeling under excessive pressure, autumn 2013



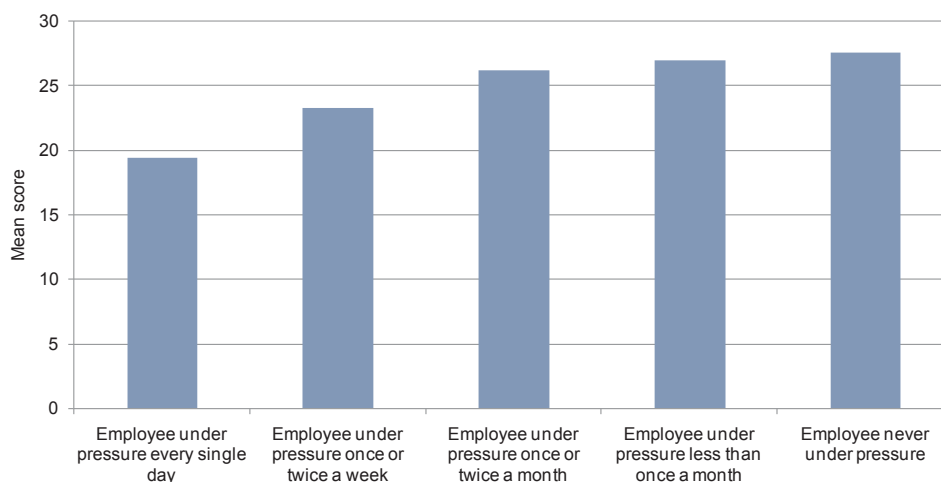
Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, autumn 2013.

gone to work when ill. The summer 2013 CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey found that 67% of employees said they had gone to work when ill within the last 12 months, but this proportion rose to 88% among employees under excessive pressure every single day. Among this latter group, concerns about management doubting their commitment and a feeling that employees were expected to go to work at all costs were especially prevalent. Hence differences in sick absence are likely to understate differences in ill health.

These findings are consistent with a 2010 literature review conducted on behalf of the British Academy, which found that work stress (associated with high job demands and lack of control and with feelings of excessive pressure) was associated with higher risks of cardio-vascular disorders, depression, suicide and work-related accidents and injuries.³⁸

Stress is consistently identified as the most important cause of long-term absence among non-manual employees,

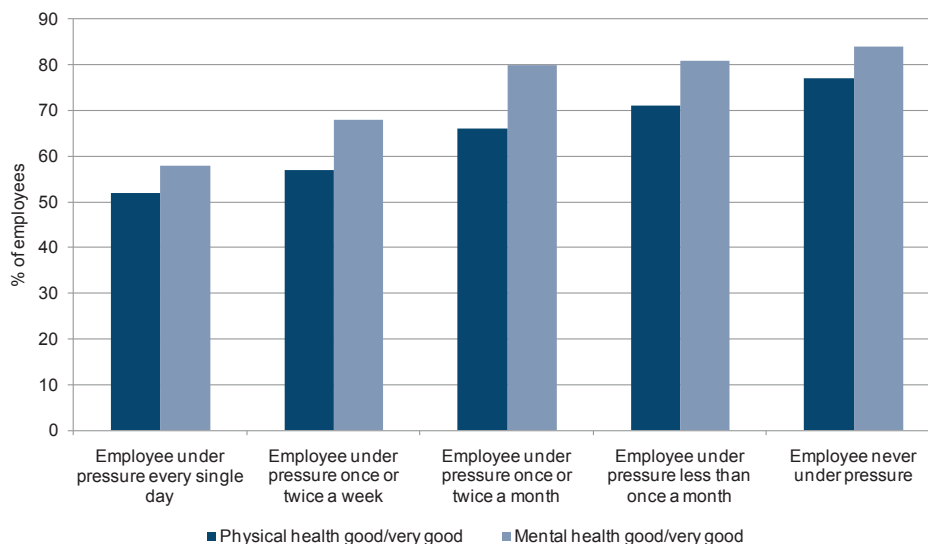
Figure 38: Relationship between life satisfaction and feeling under excessive pressure, summer 2012



Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their lives, whether they felt their lives were worthwhile, how happy they felt yesterday, and their feelings of anxiety. In each case they were asked to rate their feelings on a scale of 1 to 10. The score on the Y axis is the sum of the four means for each group (the scale on the anxiety question was reversed so that higher scores always implied more positive feelings).

Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, summer 2012.

Figure 39: Relationship between employee assessment of current physical and mental health and feeling under excessive pressure, spring 2011



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* survey, spring 2011.

according to employers responding to the CIPD *Absence Management* survey.³⁹ Furthermore, according to employers, stress-related absence is increasing over time (see Figure 40).

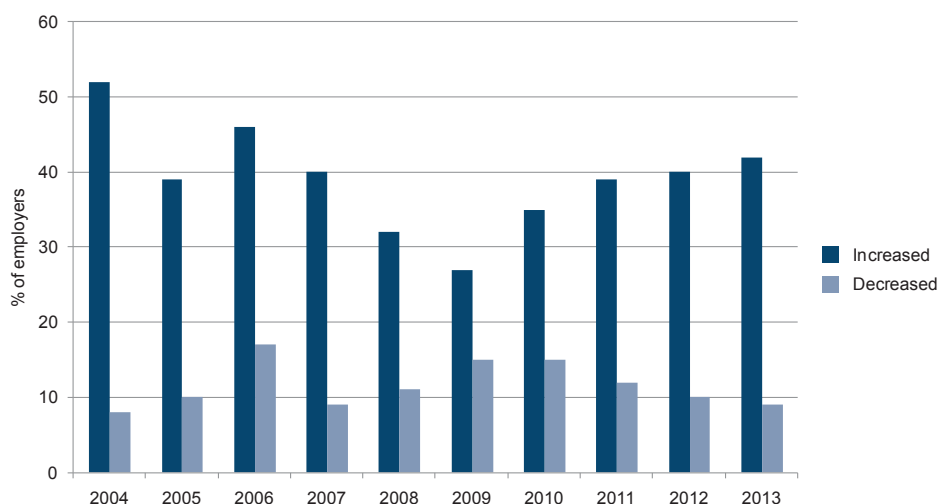
Workload is consistently cited by employers as the most common cause of stress-related absence followed by management style and poorly managed organisational change or restructuring. These findings are consistent with employees' accounts of the main causes of excessive work pressures.

In 2013, according to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), 15 million days were lost through sickness absence as a result of stress, depression and anxiety, some 12% of all days

lost through sick absence.⁴⁰ Work-related stress may have become more common over time. The proportion of employees in the UK who described their work as always or often stressful was 30% in 1989 and 33% in 2005.⁴¹ LFS analyses published by the Health and Safety Executive suggested the incidence of work-related stress (the number of cases) had been broadly stable over the decade to 2011/12, although the more recent LFS data point to some increase in working days lost since 2010.⁴²

International comparisons of adverse health effects from work, even when using identical questions, might be affected by differences across countries in how questions are interpreted.⁴³ The UK is just below the EU average in terms of its incidence of perceived stress at work (see Figure 41).

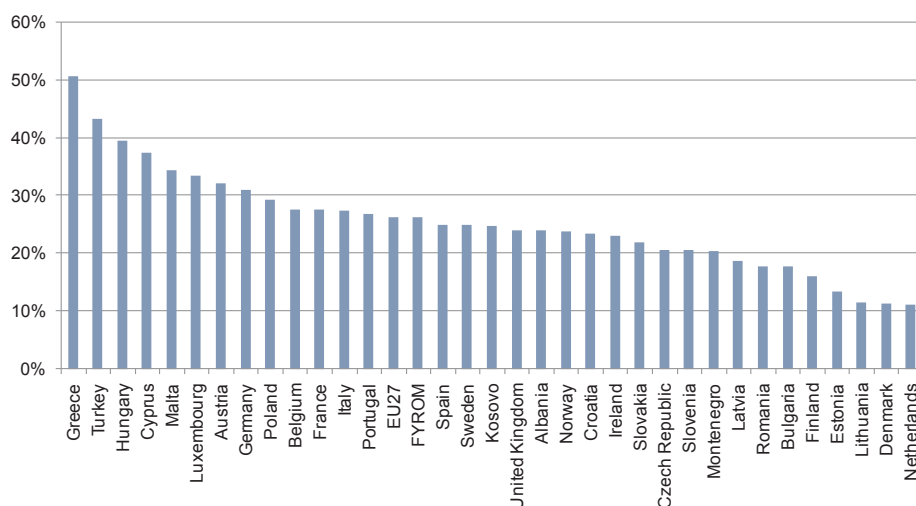
Figure 40: Employer perceptions of change in stress-related absence, 2004–13



Respondents were asked whether stress-related absence had increased, decreased or stayed the same in the preceding 12 months.

Source: CIPD *Absence Management* surveys.

Figure 41: International comparisons of employees experiencing stress at work, 2010



Percentage of respondents who said they always or often experienced stress at work.

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2010.

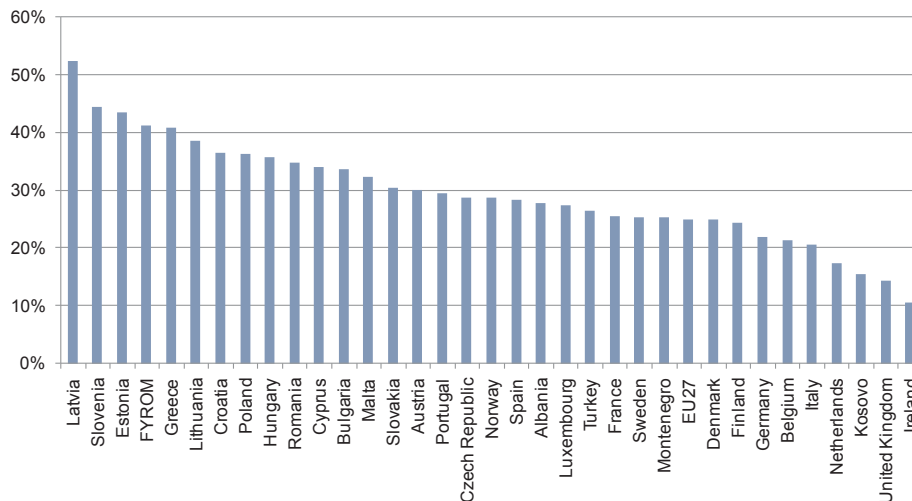
A cross-European survey conducted in 2012/13 came to similar conclusions: 44% of UK employees thought work-related stress was very common or fairly common at their workplace, compared with an EU average of 51%. This survey also found that 65% of UK employees thought that work-related stress was controlled very well or fairly well at their workplace, compared with an EU average of 53%.⁴⁴

The UK also has a very low proportion of employees thinking that their health had been affected negatively by their work (see Figure 42).

The UK was also well below the EU average in terms of the proportion of employees reporting five or more days' sickness absence within the past year (see Figure 43).

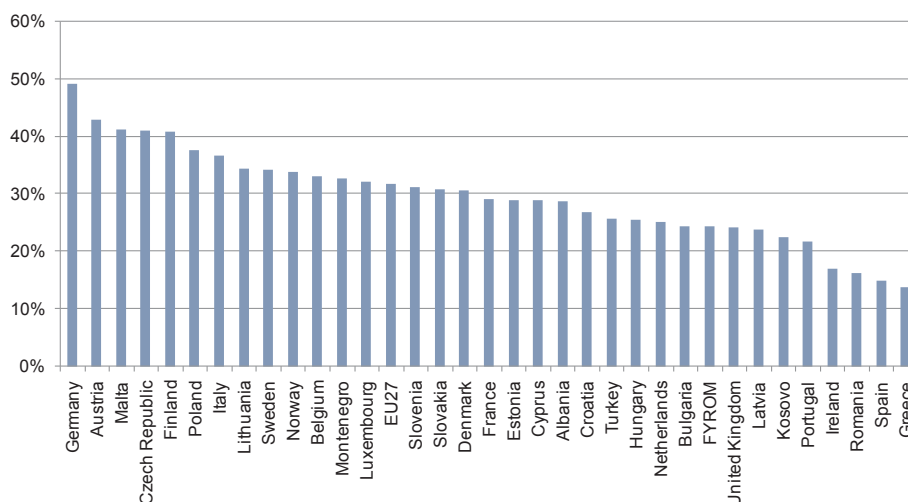
This result might be less sensitive to any cross-country differences in interpretation as it is measuring a specific behaviour that, in principle, can be measured objectively. However, the amount of sickness absence taken will depend on a broader range of factors than employee health alone – including arrangements for compensation while on sickness absence, legal protection for those absent from work and management policies regarding sickness absence. In Germany, for example, employers pay 100% of an employee's salary for the first month of sick leave whereas UK employers are required to pay just 15%, with the remainder either paid by the state or by the employee (through reduced salary payments), although many UK employers will provide more generous compensation than the legal minimum.⁴⁵

Figure 42: International comparisons of employees stating work has a negative impact on their health, 2010



Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2010.

Figure 43: International comparisons of prevalence of sickness absence from work, 2010



Percentage of respondents who said they had five or more days' absence from work due to health reasons in the past 12 months. Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2010.

Bearing these caveats in mind, the data suggest that relatively high perceptions of work intensity among UK employees are not reflected in relatively high perceptions of work-related stress or ill-health.

What are the implications for employers?

Clearly, greater work intensity can in some cases increase the productivity of employees – and thus organisational performance. However, the previous section has shown that work intensity leads to a range of negative effects when it creates excessive pressure and stress on employees. These negative effects include diminished employee performance, deteriorating relationships within the workplace and with customers and clients, dissatisfaction and disengagement, increased turnover and sickness absence.

The evidence suggests that how employers design jobs, involve employees, train people and provide career structures and opportunities for advancement can all affect how employees feel about their jobs and how they respond to the demands placed upon them.⁴⁶ A recent Work Foundation report suggests that a focus on ‘good work’ can improve the quality of work and employee engagement even in relatively low-wage, low-skill and high-strain environments such as call-handling.⁴⁷

The introduction of new technology and organisational change tend to be associated with increased work intensity and, when these are seen as poorly managed, they can be a source of pressure and stress. In some organisations, there may be scope for greater emphasis on job design as a means of preventing excessive pressure and stress – rather than as a means of addressing the symptoms. The 2013 CIPD *Absence Management* survey found that, whereas 71% of employers taking steps to manage stress used staff surveys and 62% used risk assessments and flexible working, just 31% used changes in work organisation (which included adaptation of job roles).

Autonomy and participation in workplace decision-making can ameliorate the effects of increased work demands. The evidence suggests that the majority of employees are satisfied with the flow of information from their employers about what is happening in the workplace but there is a demand from many employees for greater influence on decisions that affect them. Again, this points to the importance of careful attention to job design and work organisation – building an appropriate degree of employee discretion and scope for feedback into work processes.

A supportive environment can reduce the risk of work demands building to excessive pressure and stress-related

ill-health. Line managers are especially important as the first line of support, although there may be scope in some organisations for developing the role of colleagues as a support group. We saw in Figure 29 that less than 10% of employees under pressure on a regular or occasional basis identified an employee assistance scheme as a source of support. Yet, according to the 2013 CIPD *Absence Management* survey, 51% of employer respondents provided an EAS available to all employees. This suggests that many employees may not be aware that their employer provides an EAS – or that they do not regard it as a useful source of assistance in dealing with work pressures.

Line managers can sometimes be the cause of excessive pressure and stress in the workplace. Upgrading their confidence and competence in managing the impact on staff of cuts in budgets or increases in workload in a way that is seen to be fair and objective is likely to reduce the risk of change leading to disengagement or burnout.

Line management behaviour, however, cannot be considered in isolation from the prevailing organisational culture. The evidence suggests that management style and prevailing attitudes about, for example, the acceptability of flexible working or taking time off when ill appear to be more common issues for those employees under continuous pressure. There might be a fine line between an organisational emphasis on delivery and results (as desired by corporate management) and an expectation of delivery at all costs (as seen by employees and line managers).

Employers will also need to consider whether there is a trade-off between work intensity (and productivity) and innovation. Technological and organisational change can improve efficiency and reduce downtime. However, by increasing the amount of time employees are focused on the task right in front of them, some of the opportunities for the chance connections and interactions that facilitate innovation might disappear. There is also a risk that heavy work demands crowd out various aspects of skills development and knowledge exchange (such as keeping abreast of relevant professional developments or finding out what’s happening elsewhere in the organisation).

What are the implications for public policy?

We need to remember that increases in productivity arise in part through technological change, which, as we have seen, is associated with increased work intensity. Hence, to a certain extent, increased work intensity has been associated with increased material well-being for individuals and other related social benefits (such as increased life expectancy).

However, in some circumstances, work intensity has negative outcomes for individuals and for society. Estimates of the cost of work-related stress centre around 1% of GDP.⁴⁸ There may also be other negative outcomes associated with work intensity because of the effects it can have on people's lives outside work. Employees under a great deal of pressure because of work will have less time and energy to devote to their families and communities.

Much of the costs of these negative effects – or of countering them – are not borne by employers (and, sometimes, not even by the employee except indirectly as a taxpayer). Thus there is a rationale for policy-makers to take an interest in work intensity and look for ways of influencing it, provided there are viable interventions that meet important tests of practicality, even-handedness, proportionality and economic efficiency.

The principal policy interventions currently in place are to manage the health and safety risks arising from long-hours working and work-related stress. The Working Time Regulations, in principle, prohibit employees from involuntarily working over 48 hours each week and their introduction in 1998 may well be associated with the subsequent decline in long-hours working. Employers, of course, are under a general duty to have regard to the health and safety of their workers, including the prevention and management of stress-related ill-health. The HSE Management Standards provide a good practice framework for employers, although awareness of them and their use within business could be increased. The 2013 CIPD *Absence Management* survey found that only 30% of employers taking steps to reduce stress used the management standards.

Thus what might be needed is a change of focus, taking a wider perspective. This would include the outcomes that policy was aiming to achieve – improved productivity and employee well-being – as well as the range of policy levers available. This mirrors the change of focus we advocated in the previous section, with employers paying more attention to job design, workplace environment and management behaviours and culture when working out how they build a more productive workplace.

Conclusion

The evidence suggests that, on average, work has become a more intense and demanding experience over the past two decades – and that the last five to ten years has seen increased intensity alongside a fall in working hours.

Increased work intensity is not necessarily a bad thing. Technological change has been one of the factors making work a more demanding experience but it is also one of the main causes of increased productivity (and thus wages). And many engaged and motivated employees respond positively to work demands – they want to achieve more.

Looking ahead, will work become ever more intense? If the recession did in some cases lead to increased demands on employees, we should not assume that recovery will lead to an easing of pressure. Even if employee perceptions of job insecurity begin to abate, it is difficult to see many organisations taking conscious decisions to reduce workloads or adopt a more relaxed approach to deadlines unless this becomes a critical business issue (to the point of having a negative impact on customer satisfaction or service delivery or damaging the reputation of the organisation).

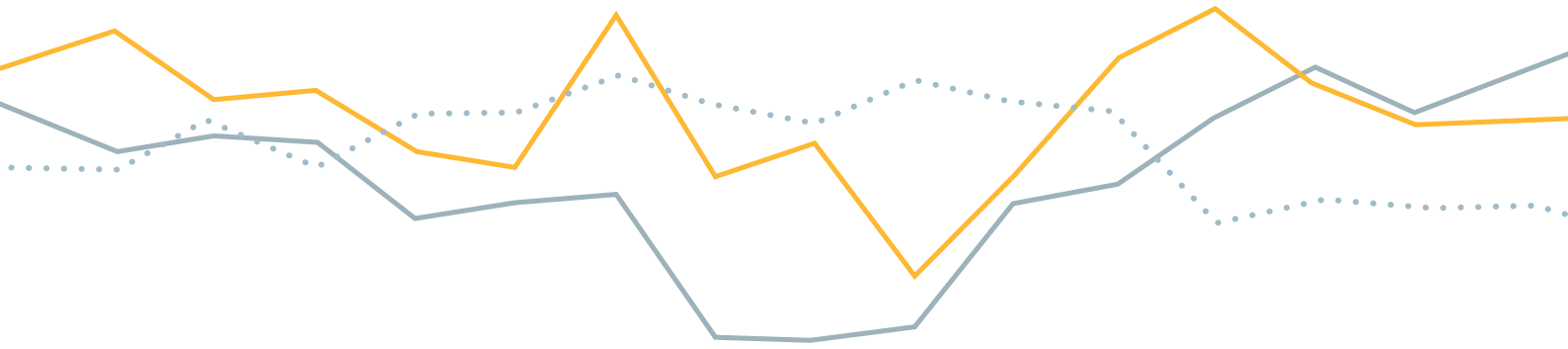
Technological change will continue to transform workplaces and the nature of work itself. In recent times, it appears to have been associated with increased work intensity – a faster pace of work, tighter deadlines, less discretion over how tasks are performed. But we should not forget that technology can have important benefits beyond its impact on productivity – for example, by reducing human error, which in some circumstances can be (literally) a life-saver. There is no inherent reason why further technological change cannot enhance, rather than intensify, working life. Flexible working is a much more viable option now for millions of employees because of ICT – although job and workplace design and the attitudes of managers and employees have not always changed as quickly as the technology. Ultimately, the impact on our working lives will be determined by employees, employers and policy-makers.

Endnotes

- 1 See FELSTEAD, A., GALLIE, D., GREEN, F. and INANC, H. (2013) *Work intensification in Britain: first findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012*. London: Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies, the Institute of Education. The SES research team focuses on the percentage of respondents in strong agreement with the 'my job requires that I work very hard' statement. This is probably because, if all those who agreed with the statement were included, the proportion across all the surveys reported here is typically between 80% and 90% of all employees. Such a high proportion makes it of limited use for analytical purposes. It may also simply be reflecting a feeling by employees that they have to answer this question in the positive.
- 2 GREEN, F., (2001), It's been a hard day's night: the concentration and intensification of work in late twentieth century Britain., *British Journal of Industrial Relations.*, Vol 39, No. 1., March., pp53–80.
- 3 Of the 36% of UK employees surveyed in the 2010 ESS who strongly agreed that their job requires them to work very hard, approximately two-thirds also agreed that they never had enough time to get everything done in their job.
- 4 GREEN, F. (2001) *op cit*.
- 5 GORMAN, E. and KMEC, J. (2007) We (have to) try harder: gender and required work effort in Britain and the United States. *Gender and Society*. Vol 21. pp828–57.
- 6 GREEN, F. (2008) Work effort and worker well-being in the age of affluence. In: COOPER, C. and BURKE, R. (eds) *The long work hours culture: causes, consequences and choices*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publications.
- 7 VAN WONROOY, B. et al (2013) *Employment relations in the shadow of the recession*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- 8 Counting agree and strongly agree responses together, the proportion was higher in Great Britain and Northern Ireland than it was in the Ukraine.
- 9 See the findings of the 2012 Australian Work and Life Index survey, reported in SKINNER, N., HUTCHINSON, C. and POCOCK, B. (2012) *The big squeeze: work, home and care in 2012*. Adelaide: Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia.
- 10 The slight increase in average hours worked in France since 2002 presumably reflects changes to the 35-hour week law that gave employees some additional leeway to work longer hours.
- 11 MISHEL, L. (2013) *Vast majority of wage earners are working harder and for not much more: Trends in U.S. work hours and wages over 1979–2007*. Economic Policy Institute, Issue Brief #348, January.
- 12 GALLIE, D., FELSTEAD, A., GREEN, F. and INANC, H. (2013) *Fear at work in Britain: First findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012*. London: Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies, the Institute of Education.
- 13 VAN WONROOY, B. et al. (2013) *op cit*.
- 14 GREEN, F. (2002) *Why has work effort become more intense?* Department of Economics Discussion Paper, University of Kent, No. 02/07.
- 15 LAZEAR, E., SHAW, K. and STANTON, C. (2013) *Making do with less: working harder during recessions*. NBER Working Paper No. 19328.
- 16 GREEN, F. (2009) Job quality in Britain. *Praxis*. No 1. July. UK Commission for Employment and Skills.
- 17 GREEN, F. (2002) *op cit*.

- 18 See, for example, Greenan, N., Kocoglu, N., Walkowiak, E., Makó, C. and Csizmadia, P. (2009). *The role of technology in value chain restructuring*. European Commission. WORKS project, Project number: CIT3-CT-2005-006193, which concludes that ‘case studies point out that the main organisational change associated with ICT diffusion is a higher standardisation of work and in less extent an increase of work control through electronic systems’ (p112).
- 19 GREEN, F. (2002) *op cit*.
- 20 FELSTEAD et al. (2013) *op cit*.
- 21 See GREEN, F. (2002) *op cit*. and GREEN, F. (2004) Work intensification, discretion and the decline in well-being at work. *Eastern Economic Journal*. Vol 30, No 4. Fall. pp615–25.
- 22 CARAYON, P. (2007) Healthy and efficient work with computers and information and communications technology – are there limits? *SJWEH Suppl*. No 3. pp10–16.
- 23 See Brendan Burchell quoted in British Sociological Association press release, 8 September 2010; and SPARHAM, E. and SUNG, J. (2006) *High performance work practices – work intensification or win-win?* Centre for Labour Market Studies Working Paper No 50.
- 24 GREEN, F. (2009) *op cit*.
- 25 VAN WONROOY, B. et al. (2013) *op cit*.
- 26 CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL AND DEVELOPMENT. (2013) *Are organisations losing the trust of their workers?* London: CIPD.
- 27 The summer 2010 CIPD *Employee Outlook* found that 80% of employees said their employer is very or fairly flexible in handling unplanned leave. That proportion fell to 63% for those under excessive pressure every single day.
- 28 GONZALEZ, M. (2009) *Workers’ involvement at the workplace and job quality in Europe*. REC-WP 08/2009. Working Papers on the Reconciliation of Work and Welfare in Europe. Edinburgh: RECOWOWE Publication, Dissemination and Dialogue Centre.
- 29 VOGL, G. (2009) Work as community: narratives of solidarity and teamwork in the contemporary workplace: who owns them? *Sociological Research Online*. Vol 14, No 4.
- 30 INANC, H., FELSTEAD, A., GALLIE, D. and GREEN, F. (2013) *Job control in Britain: First findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012*. London: Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies, the Institute of Education.
- 31 See RUSSELL, H., O’CONNELL, P. and MCGINNITY, F. (2007) *The impact of flexible working arrangements on worklife conflict and work pressure in Ireland*. ESRI Working Paper No 189, April, and KELLIHER, C. and ANDERSON, D. (2010) Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work. *Human Relations*. Vol 63, No 1. pp83–106, respectively.
- 32 GREEN, F. (2002) *op cit*.
- 33 SPARHAM, E. and SUNG, J. (2006) *op cit*.
- 34 John Jackson, Group HR Director at Amdipharm, quotation from the CIPD Megatrends podcast, available at www.cipd.co.uk/podcasts/_articles/_megatrends-podcast.htm?link=title
- 35 KONZELMANN, S., MANKELOW, R. and WILKINSON, F. (2007) *Work intensification and employment insecurity in professional work*. Working Paper. Cambridge Centre for Business Research.
- 36 VAN WONROOY, B. (2013) *op cit*.

- 37 An analysis of the 2003 European Quality of Life Survey found that, controlling for other factors, there was a statistically significant negative effect on overall life satisfaction of having a job involving considerable time pressures. See DROBNIC, S., BEHAM, B. and PRAG, P. (2010) Good job, good life? Working conditions and quality of life in Europe. *Soc Indic Res.* Vol 99. pp205–25.
- 38 CHANDOLA, T. (2010) *Stress at work*. London: British Academy.
- 39 CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL AND DEVELOPMENT. (2013) *Absence management*. Annual survey report. London: CIPD.
- 40 OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS. (2014) *Sickness absence in the labour market*.
- 41 Source: British Social Attitudes surveys.
- 42 HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE. (2013) *Stress and psychological disorders in Great Britain 2013*. Available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress/stress.pdf>
- 43 CHANDOLA, T. (2010) *op cit*.
- 44 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work Pan-European poll on occupational safety and health, results available at <https://osha.europa.eu/en/safety-health-in-figures>
- 45 ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT. (2014) *Out of office: An overview of workplace absenteeism in Europe*.
- 46 See SPARHAM, E. and SUNG, J. (2006) *op cit*. and FAUTH, R. and MCVERRY, A. (2008) *Can good work keep employees healthy? Evidence from across the EU*. Knowledge Economy Programme Report. London: The Work Foundation, June.
- 47 ANDERTON, E. and BEVAN, S. (2014) *Constrained work? Job enrichment and employee engagement in low wage, low skill jobs*. London: The Work Foundation, February.
- 48 CHANDOLA, T. (2010) *op cit*.



Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
151 The Broadway London SW19 1JQ UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 8612 6200 Fax: +44 (0)20 8612 6201
Email: cipd@cipd.co.uk Website: cipd.co.uk
Incorporated by Royal Charter Registered charity no.1079797

