

Which work conditions can encourage older workers to work overtime?

“Increasing pressure to work overtime needs to be met with favourable working conditions”

Raymond Montizaan and Annemarie Kuenn-Nelen – Maastricht University

Substantial parts of the workforce in industrialised countries work long hours with increasing overtime. This helps to solve the labour shortages caused by early retirement and an ageing work population. However, a balance should be struck between job demands and the need for workers to remain employable until retirement. Therefore how can working overtime be made less burdensome and stressful? We used a web survey completed by about 22,200 respondents to examine how work conditions, age, and health influence Dutch public sector employees' willingness to work overtime.

Principal Findings

- Total freedom in when the overtime is done, large involvement in the task, and high learning opportunities contribute to a higher motivation to work overtime.
- Task autonomy and cooperation with colleagues are less important stimuli for working overtime.
- More favourable working conditions will not stimulate older employees to work overtime in the same way that these stimulate younger workers.
- However, if they can overcome any health-related issues, then older employees are also willing to do considerably more overtime.



Figure: Stated preferences experiment results

Key Takeaways for the Industry

- Employers should enhance favourable working conditions for overtime to ensure the continuing employability of their staff.
- Although older workers are less responsive to favourable conditions, these outweigh the negative effects related to age and health.



Want to know more? Read the paper

‘Which work conditions can help older workers to work overtime?’