



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EUROSTAT

Directorate F: Social statistics
Unit F-3: Labour market and lifelong learning

Average number of actual weekly hours - comparability across countries

Data collection for the number of actual hours worked is not yet fully harmonised across countries at EU level, but will be in the near future through the development of a joint questionnaire for all EU Member States. In order to avoid erroneous analyses and conclusions, Eurostat recommends not using the number of actual hours for international comparisons.

Please find below more information on working time concepts.

Working Time Concepts

Conceptually, the measurement of working time in official statistics is based on the Resolution Concerning the Measurement of Working Time adopted by the Eighteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2008.

In this Resolution, two of the most widely used measures of working time are ‘actual hours worked’ and ‘usual hours worked’.

The concept of hours actually worked is the key concept of the ICLS Resolution and refers to “the time spent in a job for the performance of activities that contribute to the production of goods and/or services during a specified short or long reference period” (ILO 2008, 43). These statistics are affected directly by changes in the number of people in employment and in the number of hours that people work. They are also affected by absences from work such as those due to holidays or sickness. The number of hours actually worked is used for national accounts purposes, notably for productivity measurement and analysis.

Hours usually worked are defined as “the typical value of hours actually worked in a job over a long observation period of a month, quarter, season or year” (ILO 2008, 45). Usual hours worked are relevant for the assessment of working conditions, such as excessive working time or time-related underemployment.

The data on actual and usual working hours published by Eurostat are based on the EU-Labour Force Survey (LFS).

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