

## Working for free

In Britain, a league table has been drawn up by the TUC (Trade Union Congress) that allows workers to compare the amount of unpaid overtime they do. But do extra hours lead to greater productivity?

1 Who do you think does the most unpaid overtime, according to the TUC survey? Put the following jobs in order from 1 (most unpaid overtime) to 7 (least unpaid overtime) and then compare your answers with a partner.

call centre staff	office managers	factory workers	accountants
IT professionals	company directors	marketing and sales managers	

2 Now read paragraph 2 of the article and check your answers to exercise 1.

### Unpaid overtime

British workers are giving away the equivalent of £23 billion of free work every year through unpaid overtime, according to research by the TUC, an organisation that represents more than 70 British trade unions. It states that more than five million workers do unpaid overtime beyond their contracted hours.

A league table has been drawn up showing which groups of workers do the longest unpaid overtime and, not surprisingly, company directors come out on top, averaging 12.5 hours per week. They are followed by marketing and sales managers who put in an additional 9.3 hours, and office managers 8.3 hours. Accountants average an extra 7.9 hours and IT professionals 6.8. Factory workers do an average of 5.9 hours of overtime and call centre staff a comparatively low 3.7 hours.

Despite the well-publicised fact that workers in Britain put in longer hours than elsewhere in Europe, they are not necessarily as productive. When assessed on output per hour, workers in France achieve a higher rate of productivity; many employees there work a maximum 35-hour week. Figures recently released from the Office for National Statistics show that both the USA and Germany are also more productive per hour than Britain.

Additional research has shown that workplace stress is now the fastest growing cause of absence from work, costing British companies a staggering £3.7 billion a year. One investigation found that last year, over 13 million working days were lost to stress-related illnesses. However, one critic of the report claims that stress is exaggerated and that people put in long hours voluntarily, often to improve their chances of promotion.

3 Read the whole article. What is your reaction to the figures in the text?

4 Circle one word in each line that does not collocate with the word in **bold** on the right.

a sales	area	assistant	agent	office	general	<b>manager</b>
b paid	professional	unpaid	unlimited	excessive	voluntary	<b>overtime</b>
c potentially	highly	great	fairly	enormously	extremely	<b>productive</b>
d acute	economical	financial	emotional	psychological	high	<b>stress</b>

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups and report your ideas to the class.

- a Should unpaid overtime be banned? Is this feasible?
- b How would you describe the working culture in your country? Does it differ in different professions?
- c Is it better for productivity to work longer or fewer hours?