

Characteristics of companies using new working time schedules

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Objectives

After world war two, many new working time schedules emerged in western countries. We studied the backgrounds of companies using two of them (annualized working time hours and on call work) and compared these with organizations applying classical shift work.

Method

Every two years the Dutch OSA Institute of Labor Studies carries out a survey among a stratified sample of Dutch companies with at least 5 employees. In 2001 a net sample of 3199 companies was investigated by means of an oral interview. Nineteen background characteristics were selected for further analysis. Results were analyzed by means of logistic regression.

Results

Shift work is used in about 30% of all Dutch companies. We confirmed the hypothesis that shift work is applied in large and economically stable organizations (1.99 times more often in organizations of 100 or more employees; 0.57 less often in organizations with a co-working owner; 0.77 less often in organizations with increasing costs), with stably contracted personnel (1.37 more often shortness of personnel) and a stable market share (0.75 less often in organizations that operate in a strongly competitive sales market).

A system of annualized working time hours is used in 18.6% of all Dutch organizations. We confirmed that this working time method is applied by stable organizations with stably contracted personnel that operate in a cyclic but in the long term slowly changing sales market (1.85 times more often seasonal market cycles; 1.67 more often changes in organization volume). They cope with the temporary use of new personnel by attraction of temporary employment agency personnel (1.56).

On call work is applied in 23.1% of all Dutch organizations. These mostly small organizations (1.55 more often in organizations of 10-49 employees) operate in competitive and short term unstable sales markets (1.52 more often). They do not face shortness of personnel (0.52 times less often), have a high percentage of contracted personnel (1.82 more often), and hire more often temporary agency office workers (1.71). They face strong increases in production costs (2.22 more often) in the nearby future.

Conclusions

2001 was an economically favorable year with only a beginning of decline. Results may be colored by a relatively large need of companies for having more qualified personnel, but also by care to cut labor investments. Applying working time strategies may be a question of a more complex choice system, compared to the nineteen variables we analyzed. At the same many working time strategies are applied in Dutch companies, so that it is likely that we did not analyze the entire picture.