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The Best and the  
Hardest Jobs in Austria -  
Low-Stress and  
High-Stress Jobs

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Health-related stress of employees is high

**The current evaluation of the Austrian Employee Health Monitor has shown the high level of health-related stress of employees.**

However, for some employees things are easier than for others. They work in jobs where physical or mental stress is rare.

**The Employee Health Monitor has identified the five best and the five hardest occupations in Austria based on the occurrence of physical and/or mental stress.**

At the lower end of the ranking there are the cooks and waiters/waitresses, professional drivers, factory workers, construction workers and medical staff (physicians and nursing staff). At the top of the charts there are the managers, office employees, people working in accounting and bookkeeping, specialist salespeople as well as kindergarten teachers.

Sick to work

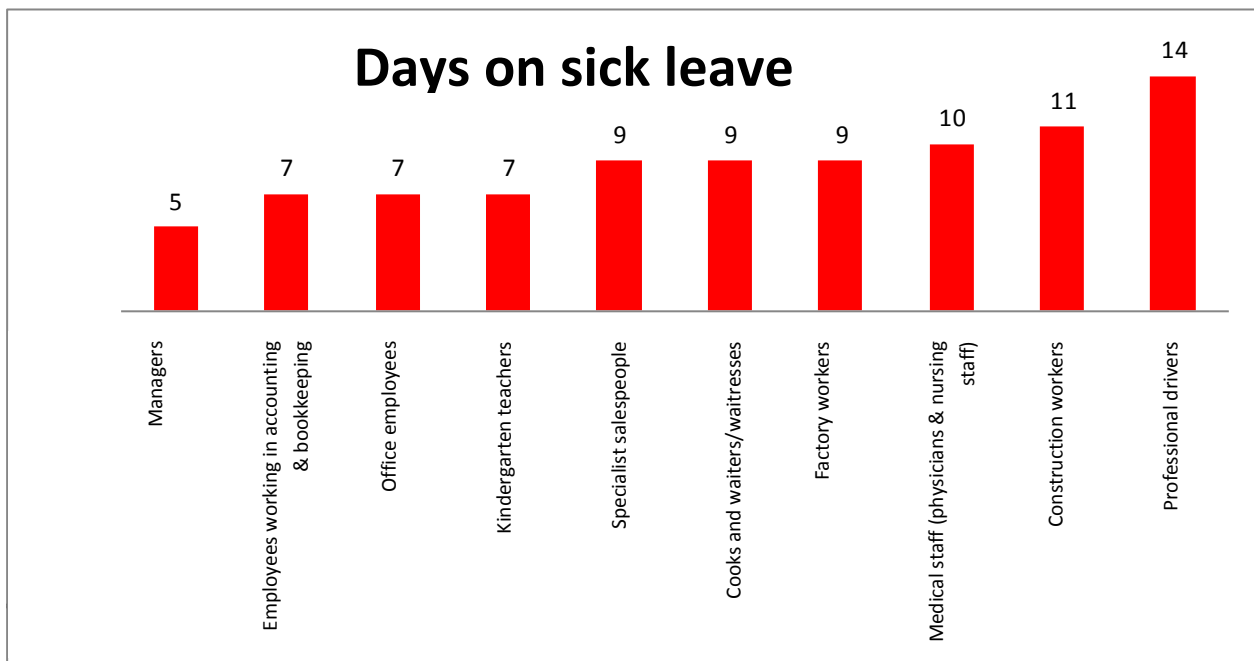
The Employee Health Monitor shows that professional drivers worked while they were sick on twelve days during the past six months, and that they stayed at home on 14 days because of ill health.

The situation of construction workers is hardly any better: sick to work on nine days and eleven days on sick leave.

Kindergarten teachers, too, went to work while sick on nine days and called in sick on seven days.

In the past half-year, medical staff went to work sick on eight days and were away on sick leave on ten days.

Managers went to work while ill on six days and had to stay at home because of sickness on five days.



Though on not so many days, 46 percent of the managers went to work while sick at least once in the past six months. Accountants (43 percent) and kindergarten teachers (39 percent) lead the ranking here. While only 32 percent of the construction workers went to work while they were sick, they did so over several days.

### Physical discomforts because of work

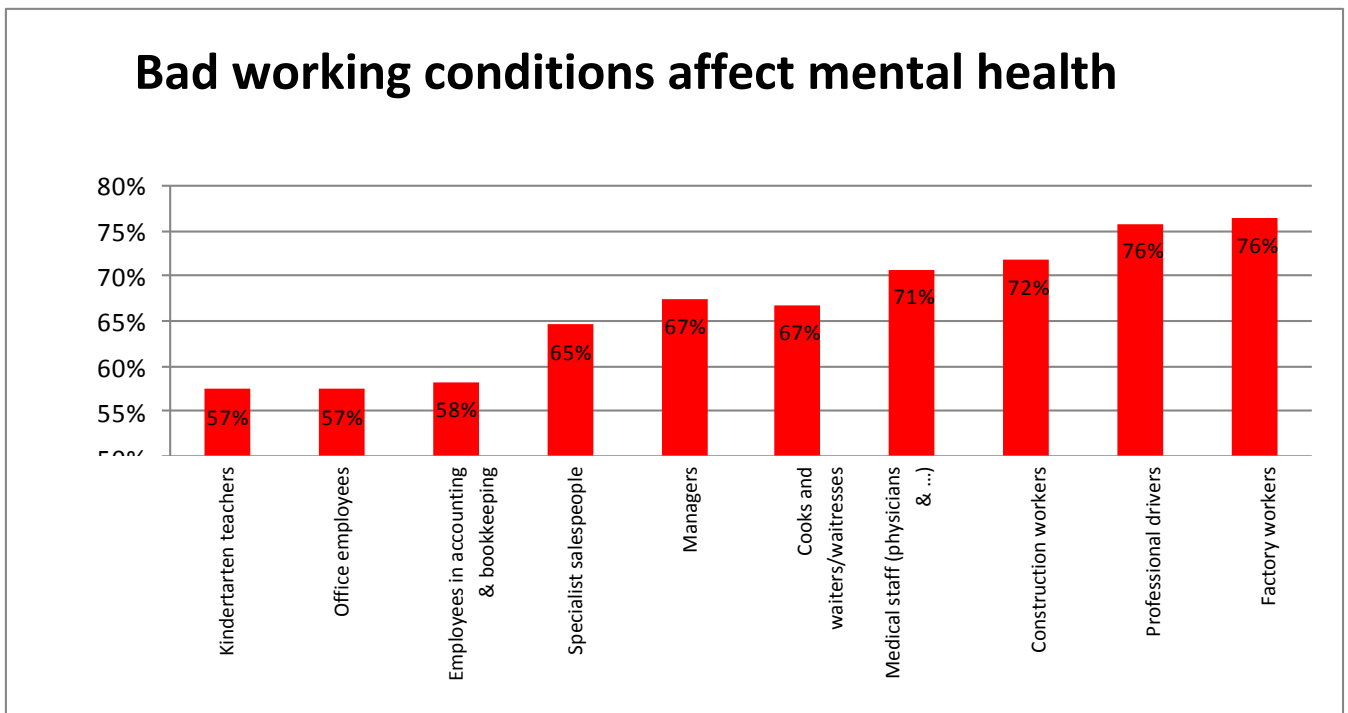
The ailment most frequently mentioned by employees is backache. Between 59 percent (factory workers) and 70 percent (construction workers) of the people working in the five "hardest" jobs have problems with their backs. A high share of them (63 to 76 percent) attribute these problems directly to the job.

Employees in the five occupations at the top of the scale, on the other hand, suffer from other stress such as exhaustion (55 percent of the managers), while backache is also an issue for them (e.g. for 70 percent of the kindergarten teachers).

Office employees (37 percent of the accountants, for example) are more likely to suffer from problems with the eyes because of VDU work, whereas cooks and waiters/waitresses complain of pain in the legs (36 percent) more often than the average.

## Mental stress

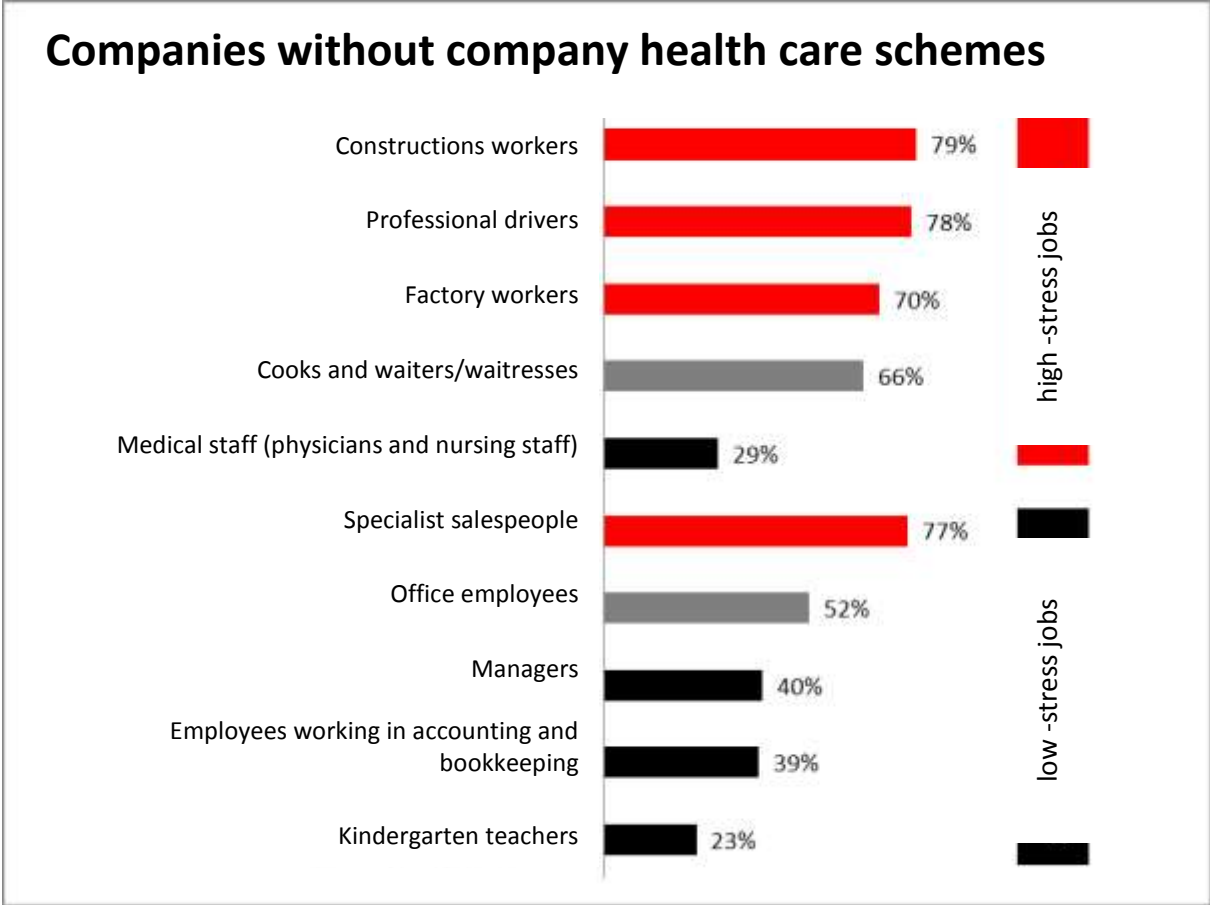
What is interesting and maybe even surprising is the fact that employees working in jobs involving high physical stress also suffer from high mental stress. 76 percent of the professional drivers and factory workers as well as 72 percent of the construction workers and 71 percent of the medical staff said they were affected by at least one mental impairment. Compared to that only 57 percent of kindergarten teachers and office employees feel mentally stressed, while 67 percent of managers stated that they suffered from mental strain.



Major development potential when it comes to company health care

There are strikingly few health promotion measures in the high-stress occupations: more than two thirds of the cooks, professional drivers, factory workers and construction workers don't have any health promotion measures at all in their companies. For only a fraction of employees there are several offers - with the exception of medical staff. How things can be done differently is demonstrated in jobs where employees are more likely to remain healthy. In many offices schemes are offered to support their employees.

It is amazing that three quarters of the kindergartens provide their employees with such services. Salespeople are not so lucky. Only one quarter of them are offered such opportunities.



More than 20 percent of the employees working as managers, accountants or kindergarten teachers can make use of more than three health promoting measures. At the same time, some findings have shown that few measures will suffice to bring about improved health conditions for employees.

### Demands raised by the Upper Austrian Chamber of Labour

- Companies should take conventional employee protection more seriously and evaluate mental stress. The results should be the basis for effective measures substantially reducing pressure on the employees.
- At present, only 300 labour regulations inspectors are on duty throughout Austria. According to the Court of Audit, more than 2000 would be needed to ensure that the companies can be inspected once a year. Labour regulations inspection needs more competences and resources.

- There should be a reward/penalty scheme fining companies that do not remedy working conditions making people ill, and recompensing those who act in an exemplary way.
- To reduce times absent because of muscular, skeletal and mental illness a lot more prevention is required in the companies.

## The Austrian Employee Health Monitor

The Austrian Employee Health Monitor was developed in the years 2006 and 2007 on the basis of extensive field studies in cooperation with the occupational health service company "Arbeitsmedizinischer Dienst Linz". It is representative for all wage earners in Austria. All data of the Employee Health Monitor can be linked with the data of the Austrian Work Climate Index. The Austrian Employee Health Monitor is published once a year.

It is a comprehensive survey of the subjective condition of employees regarding their health. The data established include typical impairments and psychosomatic symptoms (cardiovascular problems, sleep disorders, concentration disorders, indigestion, headaches, ailments of the musculoskeletal system, etc.) as well as mental impairments (irritability, depressiveness, inability to unwind, loss of motivation, resignation, etc.), but also positive indicators of health (self-development, self-efficacy, well-being, capability, finding a meaning in life, etc.).

The Austrian Employee Health Monitor is based on face-to-face interviews within the scope of a multi-topic survey performed by IFES, the institute for empirical social research. The sample comprises 4000 interviews each year (1000 interviews each quarter). The population consists of wage earners in Austria from 15 years of age. The samples are obtained by way of multi-stage stratified random sampling.