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# BETTERWORK



WELL-BEING  
AND HEALTH  
AT WORK

N° 24 NEWS FROM THE  
QUALITY OF WORK INDEX



THE DESIRE TO REDUCE  
WORKING HOURS  
HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY  
IN LUXEMBOURG IN RECENT YEARS

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This newsletter shows how the desire for a reduction in working hours has developed in Luxembourg in recent years. This trend is revealed via a discrepancy between weekly working time desired and work times actually contracted.

This shows that the proportion of employees who would like to work less has increased significantly between 2018 and 2022, overall from 32.8% to 51.1% of employees. In particular, the proportion of those who would like to work less has increased significantly among male

employees, among employees in the youngest age category, among craft and related trades workers, and among persons working in the construction industry.

On average, there is a 3.5 hour difference between desired and contractual weekly working hours. In addition to gender and the scope of employment, it also depends on income whether employees show discrepancies between desired and contractual weekly working hours.

## 1. The desire for reduced working hours

The topic of reduced working time is currently back on the political agenda in Luxembourg (e.g. Gaulier, 2022; Holzer, 2023; Meng, 2023; Montebrusco, 2023; Wagner, 2023; see also Sischka & Steffgen, 2022). For workers, the following benefits to be derived from fewer working hours are under discussion: fewer accidents at work, improved work-life balance (Piasna & De Spiegelaere, 2021), reduction of stress and burnout (Pullinger, 2014), increased quality of life and satisfaction (Shao, 2022). Corresponding benefits for employers are also highlighted: Increased productivity and greater attractiveness of organisations/countries that apply reduced working time programmes. It is also assumed that benefits will extend to society as a whole: Lower unemployment due to better distribution of work across all members of society (Cárdenas & Villanueva, 2021), increased gender equity (Piasna & De Spiegelaere, 2021), environmental benefits (Antal et al., 2021); Lukács & Antal, 2023). Proponents also see a reduction in work as an aspect towards a more humane society.

The call for shorter working hours is primarily justified by the increase in economic output. In 1930, John Maynard Keynes predicted that the working week would amount to only 15 hours (Maurer & Sischka, 2015) one hundred years after his time (i.e. in 2030). In point of fact, Western industrialised nations have repeatedly experienced various forms of reduced working time over the last 150 years. Both the number of working hours per week has been significantly reduced, and the number of working days per week has also dropped (from six to five) (De Spiegelaere & Piasna, 2017). However,

it should be noted that this trend has changed, as working hours have hardly or not at all changed in many European countries over the last decades, whereas in some countries have even experienced a renewed increase in working hours. In contrast, working hours are still very unevenly dispersed in different occupational groups.

This newsletter – an update to last year's newsletter (Sischka & Steffgen, 2022) – follows on from this debate on working time reduction and analyses the working time preferences of employees in Luxembourg. It first examines how different groups of employees in Luxembourg differ in terms of how many hours they would choose to work weekly. Afterwards, we analyse how the discrepancy between target weekly working time and contractual weekly working time (henceforth simply "working time") has developed over time. Subsequently, we will examine which groups of employees experience greater differences between working time and working hours stipulated in contracts. To wrap up, we will analyse which factors play a role in the desire to reduce working time.

Here, data from the Quality of Work Survey (QoW; waves 2018-2022; Sischka & Steffgen, 2023; Steffgen et al., 2020) – an annual representative survey of workers from Luxembourg – is used (for details see box: Method). The results of the QoW surveys in 2020 and 2021 must be interpreted against the background of the COVID 19 pandemic, which has had a massive impact on the world of work (Beine et al., 2020; Béland et al., 2020; Eurofound, 2020; Sischka & Steffgen, 2021).

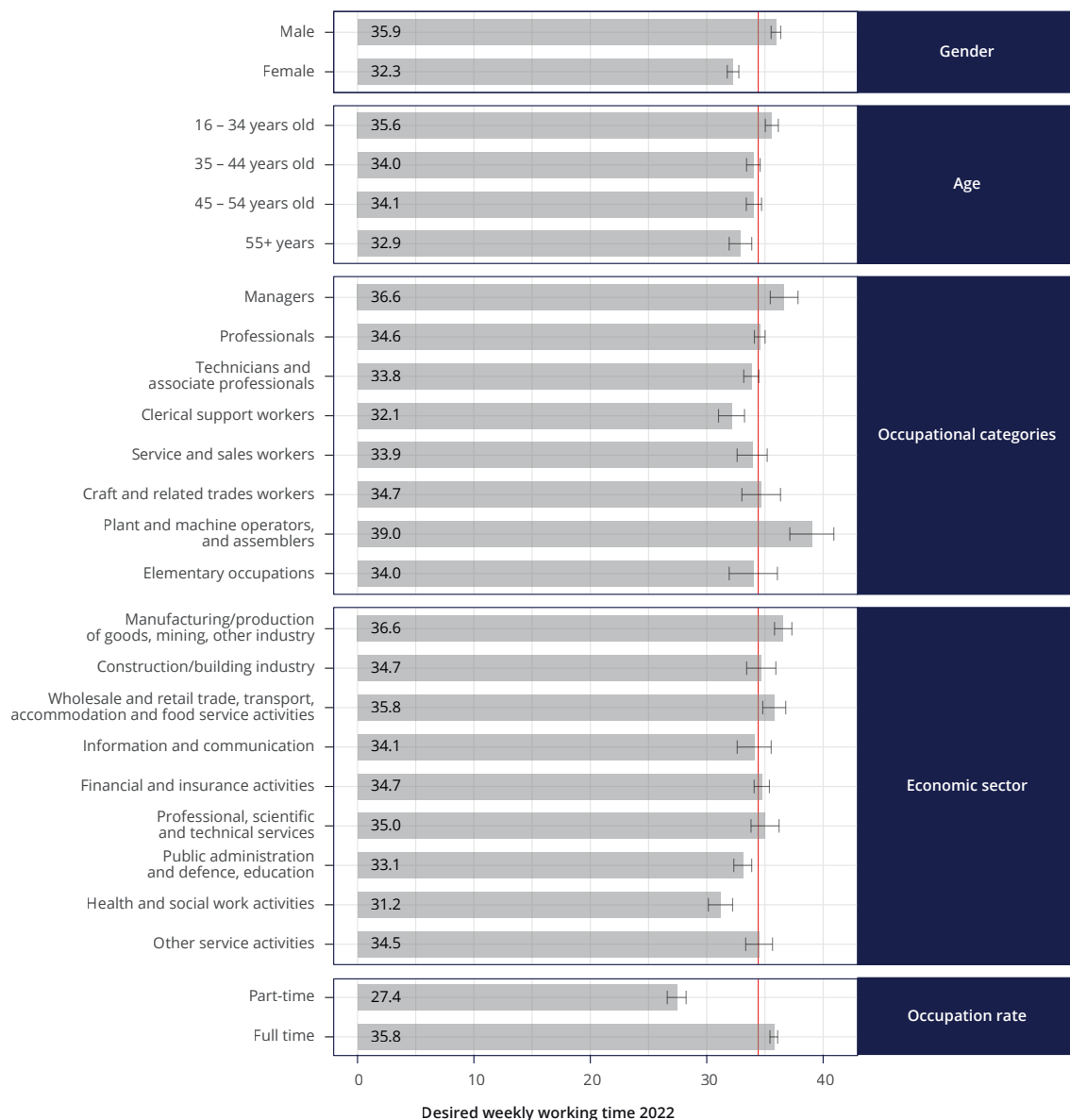
*In this newsletter, only the masculine generic is used for the purpose of clarifying the text. It refers to any gender identity and thus includes both female and male persons, transgender persons as well as persons who do not feel they belong to either gender or persons who feel they belong to both genders.*

## 2. Weekly desired work schedules

**Figure 1** shows the weekly desired working hours (for 2022) for all employees, broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics. On average, employees overall would prefer weekly working time of 34.4 hours. Female employees are looking for less working time than male employees. When broken down by age, the oldest group of employees has the

lowest desired working time. By occupational group, office workers indicate preferring the lowest desired working time, plant and machine operators, and assemblers want the highest. Broken down by economic sector, employees working in the health and social care sector in particular state the lowest desired working time.

**Figure 1: Preferred weekly working hours (in hours) broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics (for the year 2022)**



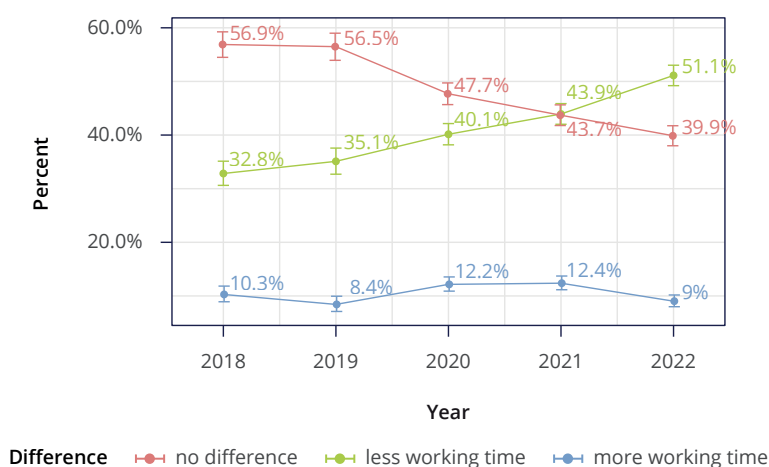
Note: Data from QoW 2022; Mean values with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean value for all employees.

### 3. Development of the discrepancy between desired and contractual working time

**Figure 2** shows the development of the proportion of employees who experience discrepancies between their desired and contractual working hours from 2018 to 2022. It shows that the proportion of employees who would like to work less than their current contractually agreed weekly working hours has

risen steadily since 2018. The proportion of employees who would like to work more than their current contracted weekly working hours has hardly changed over time, but decreased slightly between 2021 and 2022.

**Figure 2: Changes in the discrepancy between desired and contractual working time**



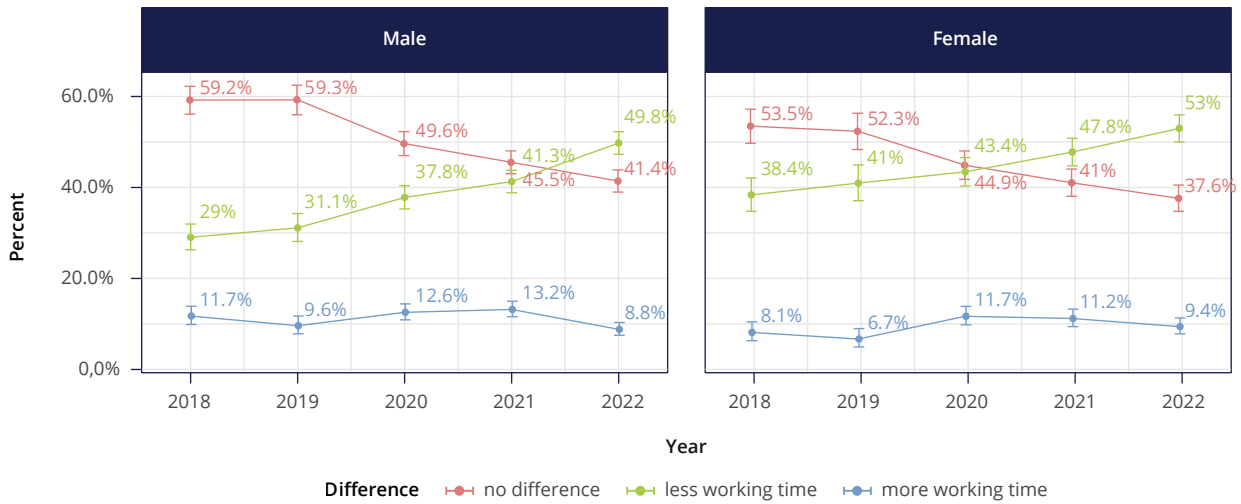
Note: Data from QoW 2018-2022; percentages with 95% confidence interval.

### 4. Changes in the discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours by gender

**Figure 3** shows changes in the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working hours, broken down by gender. The proportion of both male and female employees who would like to work less per week has increased constantly over time. There is hardly any difference between male and female employees who would like to work less with regard to the average difference between

desired and contractual working hours (male: 8.5 fewer hours; female: 8.3 fewer hours). Employees who would like to work more would like to work an average of 8.5 hours more, while female employees who would like to work more would like to increase their contractual working hours by an average of 10.5 hours.

**Figure 3: Changes in the discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours by gender**



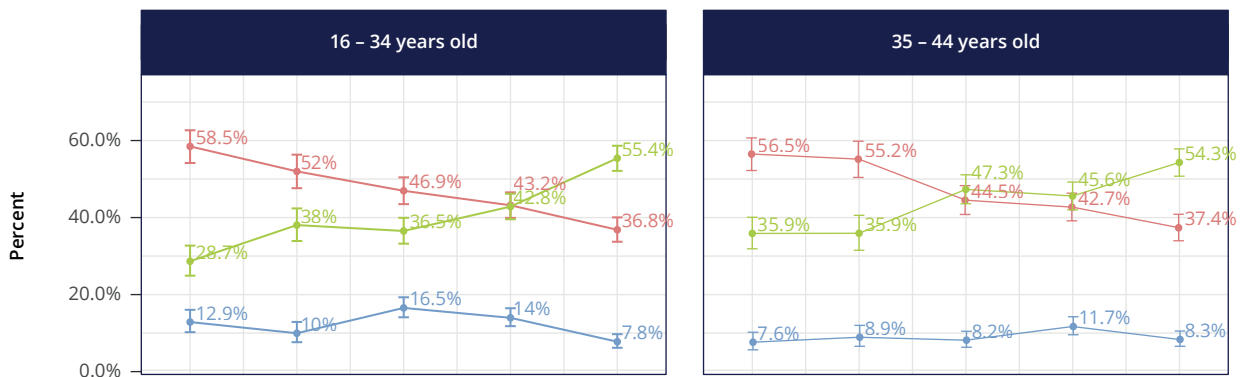
Note: Data from QoW 2018-2022; percentages with 95% confidence interval.

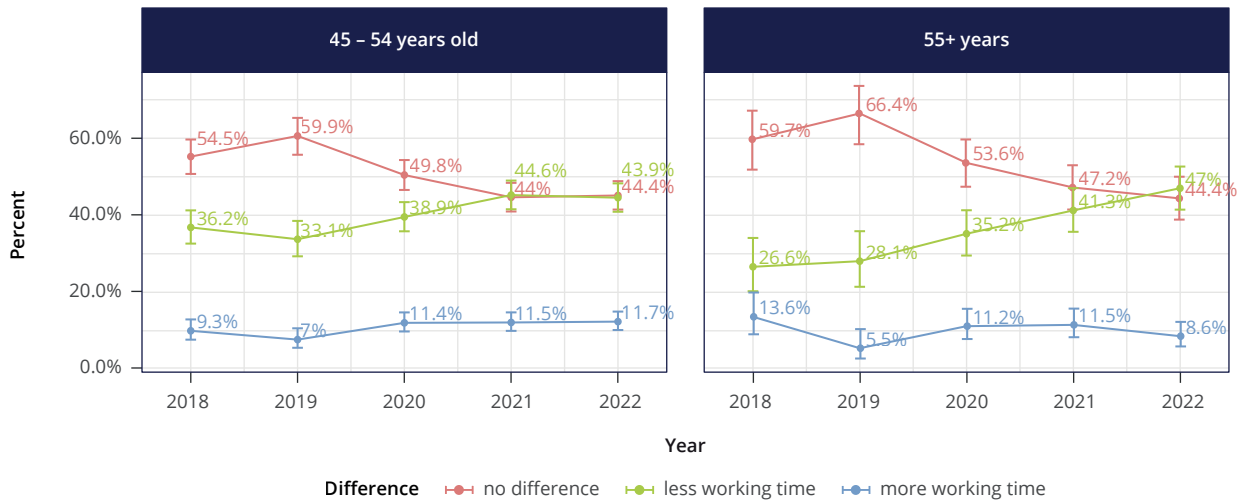
## 5. Trends in the discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours by age group

Figure 4 shows the changes in the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working hours, differentiated by age. Between 2018 and 2022, the proportion of those who would like to work less increases in all age groups, while the proportion of those whose desired working hours match their contractual working hours

decreases in all age groups. However, the age groups who would like to work less differ in terms of the average difference between desired and contractual working hours: of those who would like to work less, the oldest age group would like to see the greatest reduction in working hours (-10.6 hours compared to the youngest group: -7.6).

**Figure 4: Trends in the discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours by age group**





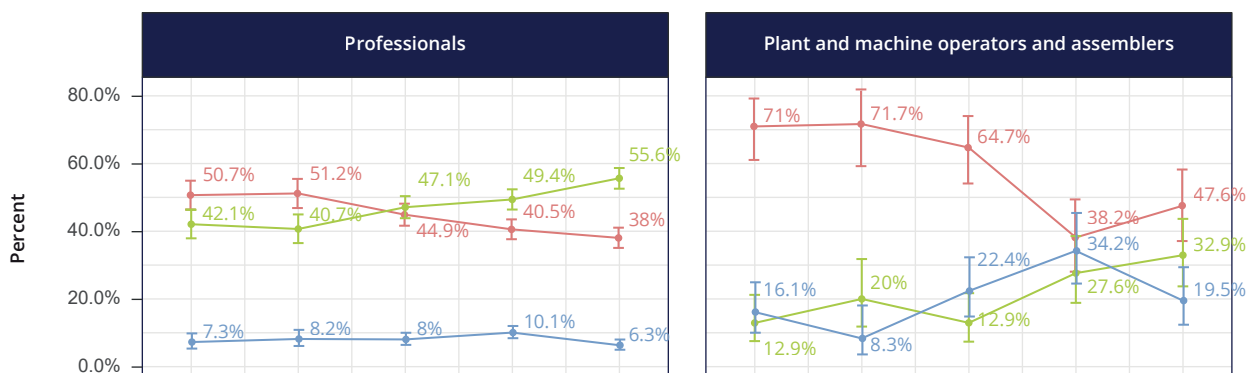
Note: Data from QoW 2018-2022; percentages with 95% confidence interval.

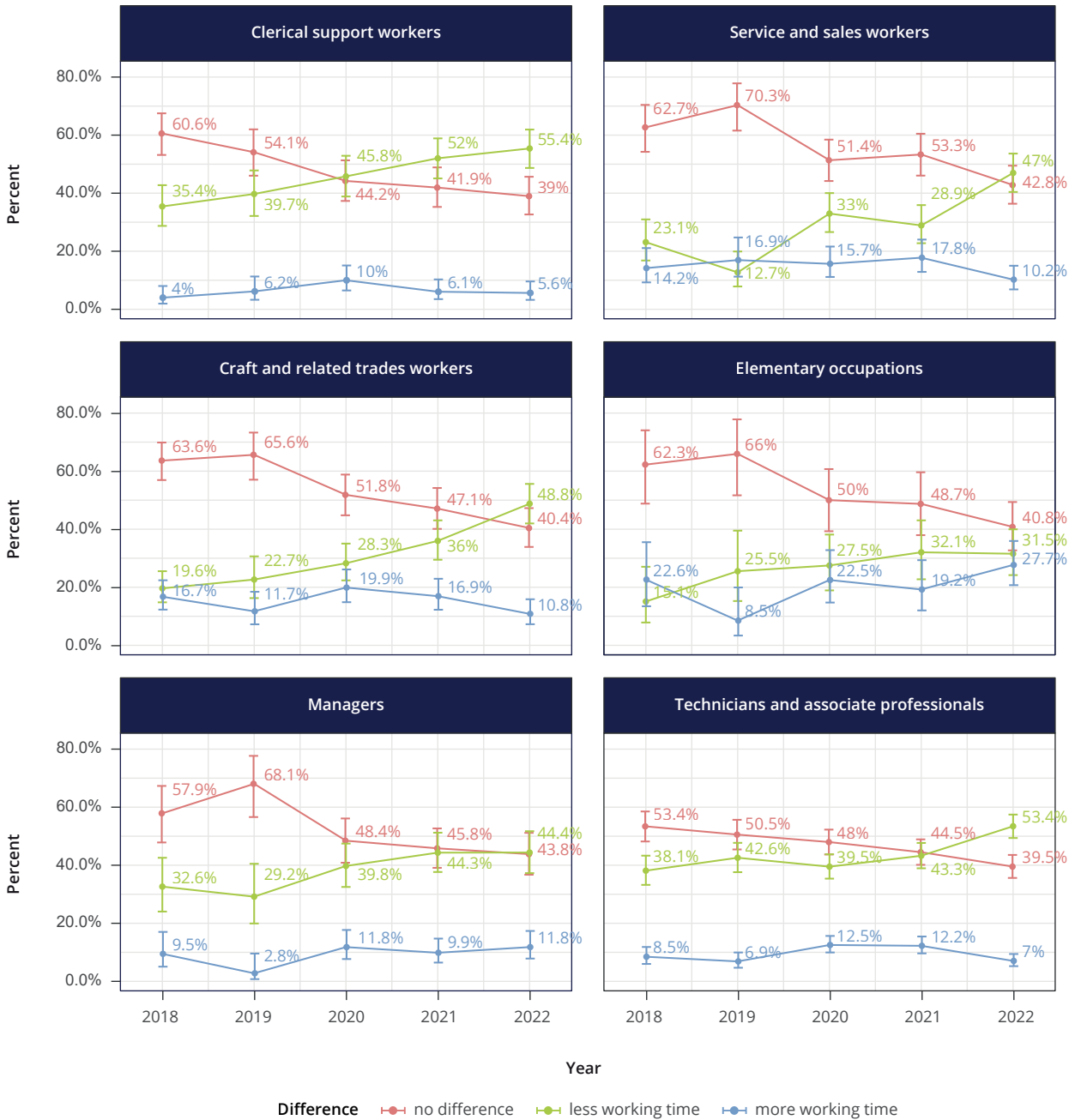
## 6. Changes in the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working hours by occupational group

Figure 5 shows how the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working hours has increased, broken down by ISCO occupational group. Between 2018 and 2022, the proportion of those who would like to work less per week increases for all occupational groups. Among those employees who would like to work less, the average difference between desired and contractual working hours is highest among craft and related trades workers and lowest among professionals (craft and related trades workers: -12.1 hours; professionals: -7.7 hours). Among those workers who would like to work more, the average difference between desired and contractual working hours is highest for workers in elementary occupations and lowest for craft and related trades workers (workers in elementary occupations: 14.2 hours; craft and related trades workers: 6.9 hours).

ers and lowest among professionals (craft and related trades workers: -12.1 hours; professionals: -7.7 hours). Among those workers who would like to work more, the average difference between desired and contractual working hours is highest for workers in elementary occupations and lowest for craft and related trades workers (workers in elementary occupations: 14.2 hours; craft and related trades workers: 6.9 hours).

Figure 5: Changes in the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working hours by occupational group





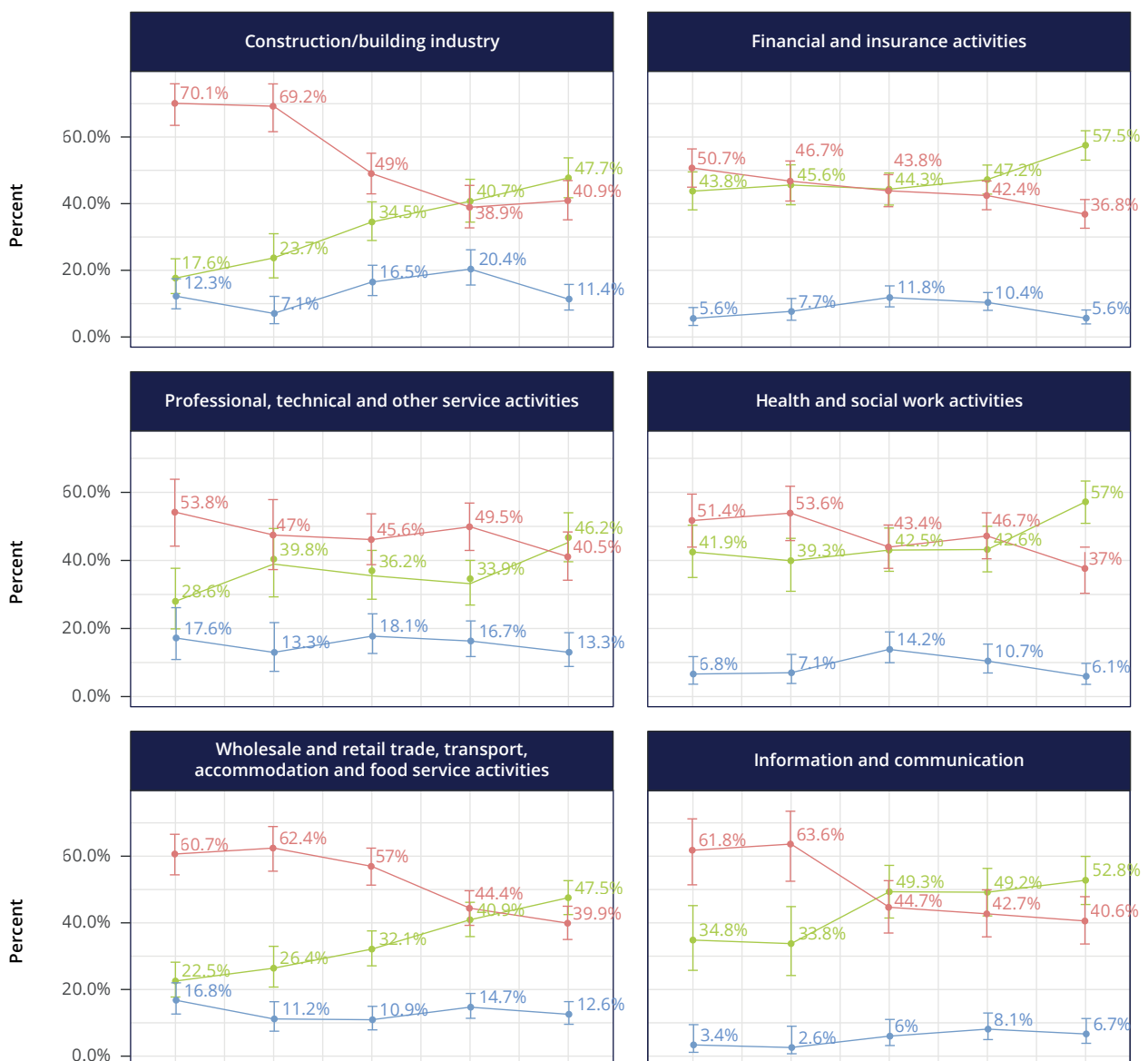
Note: Data from QoW 2018-2022; percentages with 95% confidence interval. Data for agriculture and fisheries, as well as for armed forces were omitted due to low case numbers.

## 7. Development of the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working time by economic sector

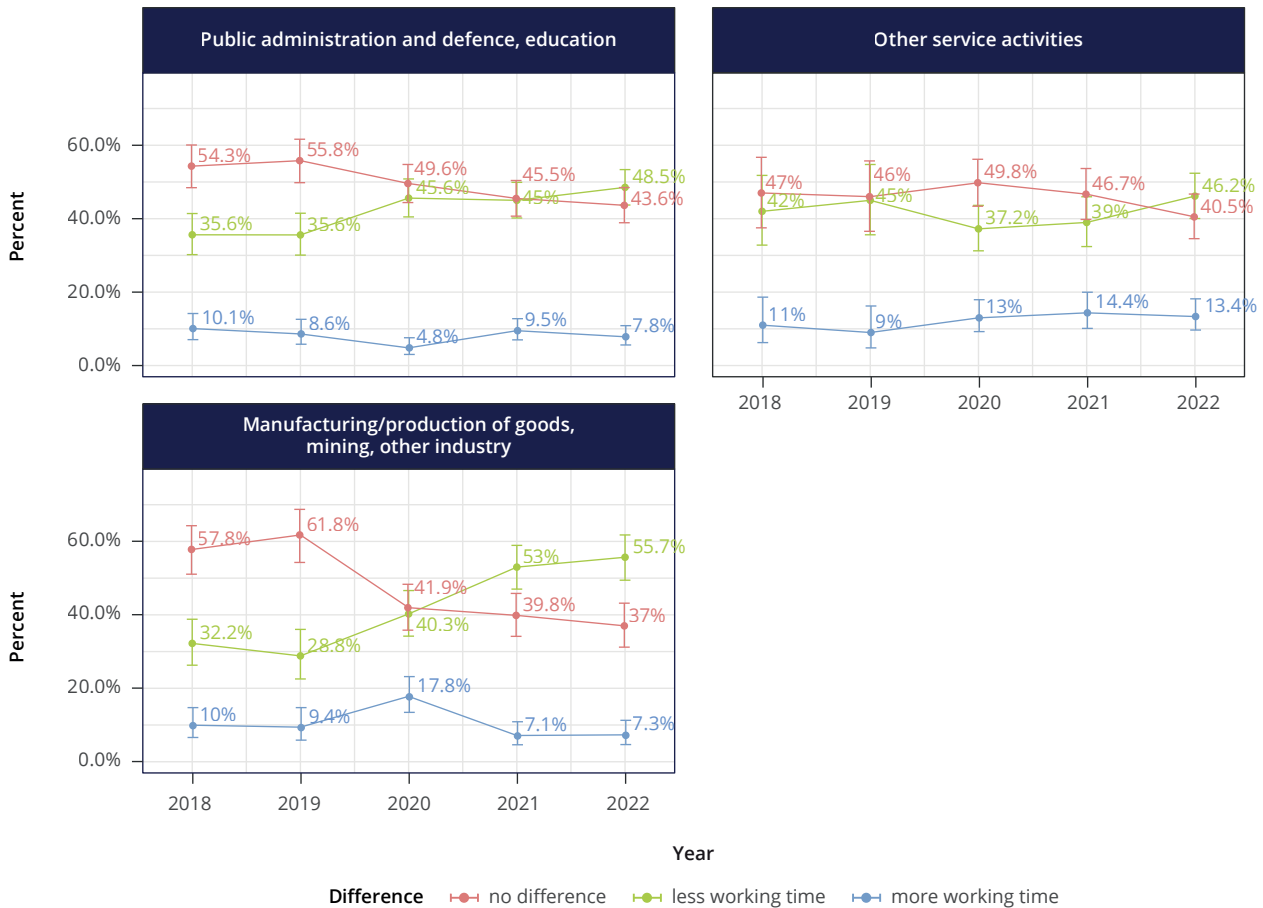
Figure 6 shows changes in the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working hours, broken down by economic sector. Between 2018 and 2022, the proportion of those who would like to work fewer

hours per week increased in all sectors of the economy. In particular, the share of those who would like to work less has increased significantly in the construction industry (up by 30.1 percentage points).

Figure 6: Development of the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working time by economic sector







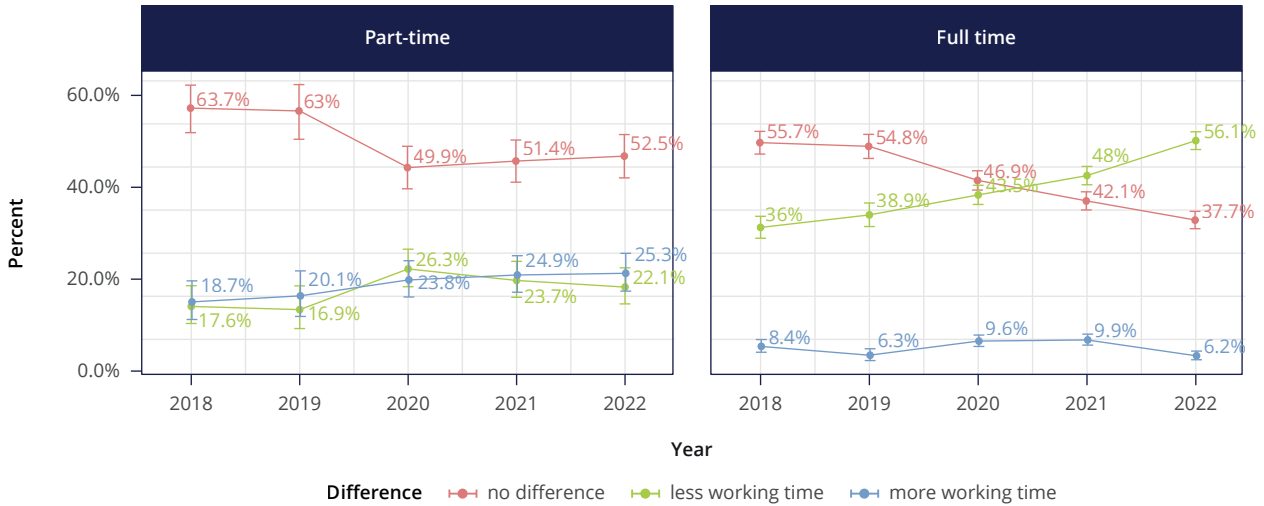
Note: Data from QoW 2018-2022; percentages with 95% confidence interval. Data for agriculture/forestry, fisheries and real estate and housing were omitted due to low case numbers.

## 8. Change in the discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours by occupation rate

Figure 7 shows the change in the proportion of employees with discrepancies between desired and contractual working hours broken down by the extent of employment. Among full-time employees, the proportion of those who would like to work less is constantly higher and also increases more strongly compared to part-time employees. Part-time employees who would like to work less consistently indicate

a lower desired number of working hours per week over time (between 23 and 25 hours per week over the years), compared to full-time employees (between 31 and 32 hours per week over the years). Full-time workers tend to exhibit a greater difference between desired working hours and contractual working hours.

Figure 7: Change in the discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours by occupation rate



Note: Data from QoW 2018-2022; percentages with 95% confidence interval.

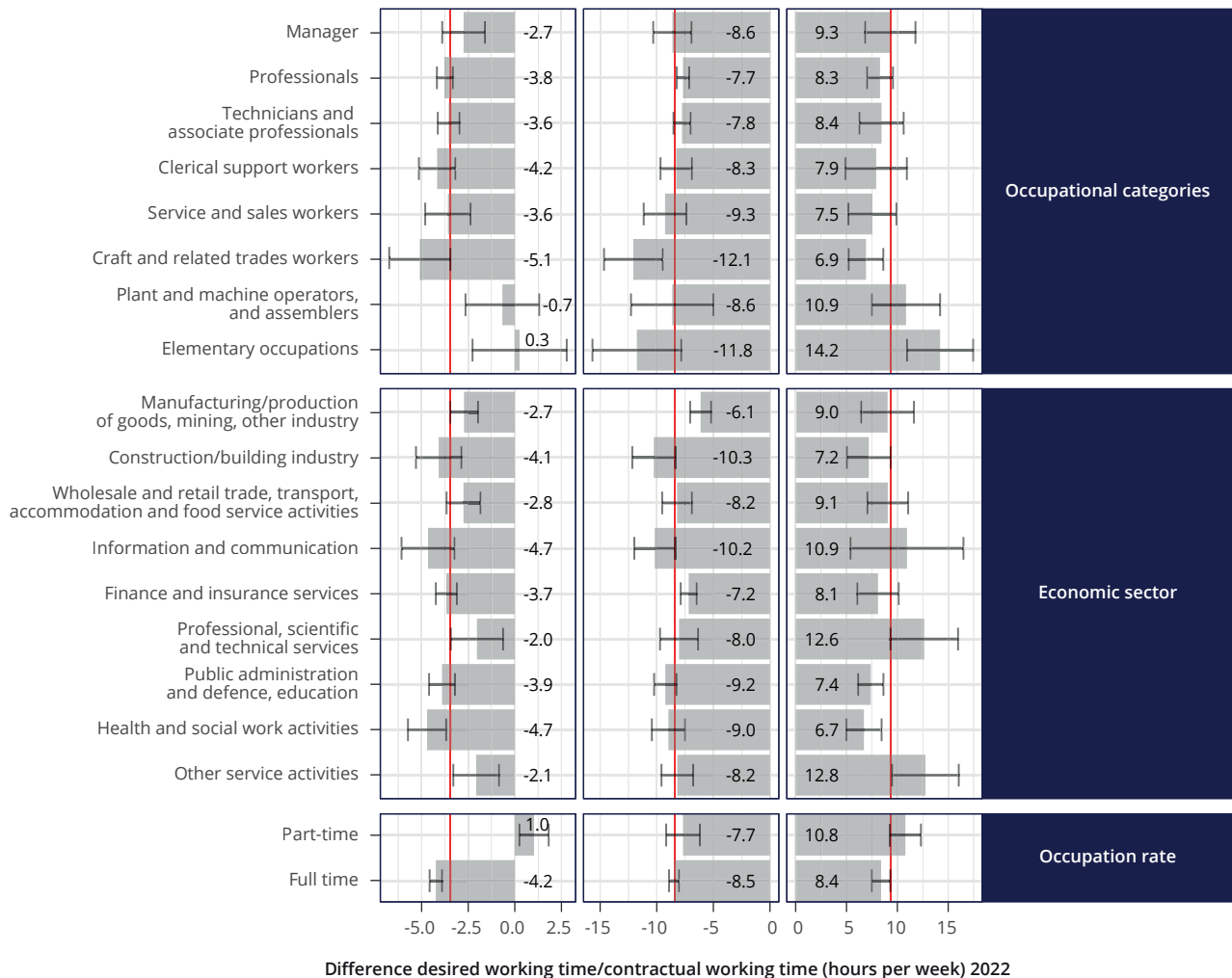
## 9. Difference between desired and contractual working time

Figure 8 shows the difference between desired and contractual working time (2022) broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics. The average difference for all employees is 3.5 hours fewer. People who want to work less would like to work on average about 8.4 hours fewer per week than what they are contractually obliged to. Employees who would like to work more would work on average about 9.3 hours more than their current contractual working hours.

Broken down by occupational group, craft and related trades workers in particular exhibit a large difference between desired and contractual working hours. Broken down by economic sector, employees working in the construction industry, in the information and communication sector and in the health and social services sector in particular report a large difference between desired and contractual working hours.

Figure 8: Difference between preferred and contractual working hours per week (in hours) broken down by demographic and occupational characteristics for 2022





Note: Data from QoW 2022; mean values with 95% confidence interval. The red line represents the mean value for all employees.

## 10. What is the reason for this desire for more/less working time?

**Table 1** shows the results of a multinomial logistic regression model with belonging to one of the three groups (no discrepancy, work less, work more) as the variable to be explained. After controlling for all other variables in the regression model, gender is positively associated with discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours: Female workers are more likely to be in the "work less" group and less likely to be in the "work more" group, compared to male workers. Age, as well as the presence of a partner or children, after controlling for all other variables, is not significantly associated with discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours. In contrast, the extent of employment is an important predictor

of the existence of a discrepancy between desired and contractual working hours. Full-time employees are significantly more likely to be in the "work less" group and significantly less likely to be in the "work more" group than part-time employees. Workers with a supervisor position are more likely to be in the "working more" group rather than the "working less" group compared to workers without a supervisor position. Compared to the lowest income group, for the other income groups the probability of being in the "work less" group increases, while the probability of being in the "work more" group decreases.

**Table 1 : Multinomial regression model**

	No discrepancy vs. work less		No discrepancy vs. work more		Work less vs. work more	
	Coef. (ET)	OR	Coef. (ET)	OR	Coef. (ET)	OR
Intercept	-1.16*** (0.33)	0.31	0.11 (0.49)	1.11	1.27** (0.49)	3.56
Gender (ref.: Male)	0.51*** (0.12)	1.66	-0.58** (0.19)	0.56	-1.09*** (0.19)	0.34
Age	-0.01 (0.00)	0.99	0.00 (0.01)	1.00	0.01 (0.01)	1.01
Partner (ref.: No partner)	0.24+ (0.13)	1.27	0.03 (0.23)	1.03	-0.21 (0.23)	0.81
Children (ref.: No children)	-0.02 (0.11)	0.98	-0.04 (0.21)	0.96	-0.02 (0.21)	0.98
Volume of employment (ref.: Part-time)	1.49*** (0.17)	4.42	-1.39*** (0.21)	0.25	-2.87*** (0.24)	0.06
Supervisor (ref: No supervisor)	-0.16 (0.12)	0.85	0.33 (0.21)	1.39	0.49* (0.21)	1.64
<b>Monthly net income (ref.: Up to €3,000)</b>						
€3,000 - €3,999	0.12 (0.14)	1.13	-0.58** (0.22)	0.56	-0.70** (0.23)	0.50
€4,000 - €4,999	0.32* (0.16)	1.38	-0.83** (0.31)	0.44	-1.15*** (0.32)	0.32
€5,000 - €5,999	0.05 (0.18)	1.05	-0.92* (0.38)	0.40	-0.97* (0.38)	0.38
€6,000€ and more	0.25 (0.17)	1.28	-0.36 (0.28)	0.70	-0.61* (0.28)	0.54

Note: QoW 2022 data; +  $p < .1$  \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; Coefficient: regression coefficient; SE: Standard Error; OR: Odds Ratio. Treatment of missing values: Listwise deletion;  $n = 2,493$ .

## 11. Conclusion

In particular, female workers, older workers, clerical support workers and workers in the health and social care sector indicate on average a lower desired working time.

Furthermore, in relation to their contractual working time, the proportion of employees wishing to work less has risen sharply between 2018 and 2022 (from 32.8% to 51.1%). However, these changes differ from group to group of workers. The proportion of those who would like to work less has increased significantly, especially among male employees, employees in the youngest age category, craft and related trades workers, and employees in the construction industry.

For all employees, there is an average difference between desired and contractual weekly working hours of a negative 3.5 hours. Above all, craft and related trades workers and workers in the health and social services sectors show a significant difference between desired and contractual working hours.

In addition to gender and scope of employment, income also plays an important role in whether employees are satisfied with their working hours or whether they would like to work less or more.

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## Method

For the "Quality of Work Index" study on the work situation and quality of employees in Luxembourg, approximately 1,500-2,500 interviews (CATI; CAWI) have been conducted annually since 2013 by Infas (since 2014) on behalf of the Luxembourg Chambre des Salariés and the University of Luxembourg (Table 2). The findings presented in this report refer to the surveys since 2018 (Sischka & Steffgen, 2023).

**Table 2 Methodological background for the QoW survey**

<b>Aim of the survey</b>	Investigating the work situation and quality of workers in Luxembourg
<b>Conception, implementation, analysis</b>	University of Luxembourg: Department of Behavioural and Cognitive Sciences, Luxembourg Chambre des Salariés, since 2014 Infas Institut, previously TNS-ILRES
<b>Type of survey</b>	Telephone interview (CATI) or online survey (CAWI; since 2018) in Luxembourgish, German, French, Portuguese or English
<b>Sample size</b>	2018: 1,689; 2019: 1,495; 2020: 2,364; 2021: 2,594; 2022: 2,696
<b>Contractual weekly working time</b>	How many hours are there in your contractual working week?
<b>Desired working time</b>	If you were free to decide how many hours you wanted to work: How many hours per week would you currently prefer to work? Please consider that you need to earn your living.

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