



FDA Working Hours survey 2017: The findings

Background

The FDA is the union for senior managers and professionals in public service, representing more than 18,000 members.

Membership includes senior civil servants, Government policy advisors, prosecutors, diplomats, tax professionals, economists, solicitors and other professionals working across the Government.

- The **FDA Working Hours Survey 2017** was conducted over a four-week period from March to April 2017.
- A total of **1,433 members responded**, a rise of almost 30% on last year - a figure which demonstrates the strength of feeling on this issue.
- Respondents work in **more than 50 different employers across the civil service**, encompassing all the main Government departments, devolved administrations and a range of Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

Key findings

Many civil servants are already working well beyond their contracted hours

- 91% of respondents work **longer than they are contracted to work every week**.
- 41% work **more than six hours extra every week**.
- More than a quarter of respondents (29%) are already working **at least nine hours unpaid each week** - meaning they are effectively working more than an extra day for free every week.
- 8% work **at least an additional 15 hours every week**.

They are struggling to take their annual leave because of excessive workloads

- More than two-thirds (67%) of respondents said they had **worked while on sick or annual leave in the last 12 months**.
- Half of those surveyed said they were **unable to take their full annual leave entitlement last year**.
- Of those who said they were **unable to take their full annual leave entitlement**, by far the most commonly cited reason was their **individual workload (57%)**. This was followed by those who felt unable to take leave because of their **team's workload (33%)**.

Members' comments

"Brexit has increased workloads and reduced staff. I feel exhausted on more weeks now than before."

"I'm not certain that this culture will change while the Government insists on making more and more 'efficiency' savings, expecting people to do more with less. People are already stretched to the limit."

"Most of us are willing to work the odd longer week, it is when it is persistent that it becomes a problem. There is no conversation about dropping some of the work or increasing civil service capacity. I certainly am not willing to be the fall guy for that gap - I don't think it is reasonable to expect people to do this."

"Cutting admin grades has led to a huge admin burden on middle and senior staff. Things will get worse as Government cuts continue."

Employers are still not doing enough to deal with the civil service's culture of long hours working

- Just over two-thirds (67%) of those surveyed said the working of excessive hours is a problem in their department or agency.
- Yet only 17% of members say their department or agency has taken steps to reduce excess hours.
- More than half (57%) of all respondents who work excess hours keep a record of them - but only 21% say their employer keeps a record of this extra work.

Members' comments

"It's just expected that people will work any hours. There is a systemic expectation in the civil service that everyone is on call and will work all the hours available."

"If I didn't work additional hours I could not get everything done. But even then I find myself doing things at the last minute as there is never time to plan."

"Working excessive hours is largely ignored by senior management, mainly because they are also working long days so it is becoming the norm. I sometimes feel that it isn't worth taking time off because the amount you have to catch up on puts additional pressure on an already busy job."

"Expectations of Ministers and the number policy initiatives continue to rise despite the dramatic reduction in resources and budgets. This is not being managed properly. More attention needs to be paid to duty of care of staff."

"I enjoy my job and am willing to work the hours. But at the same time there isn't really a choice any more. I was struck that when I tried to work conditioned hours in a previous role, it quickly became about me not prioritising work rather than recognition - as is the reality - that there was more work than one person can do in conditioned hours."

Excess hours and workloads are taking a toll on staff

- Three-quarters of respondents said working excess hours had **affected their wellbeing**.
- While the vast majority of respondents said their organisation **offered flexible working arrangements (95%)**, more than a third (39%) said they **felt unable to use them**.
- The most commonly given reason for not using flexible working was the view (cited by 28%) that it would **“only lead to more work out of contracted hours, in order to keep on top of my workload volume”**.

Members' comments

“Although I work flexibly, all this does is allow me to work longer. My Department does not seem to care how many extra hours we work, but does crack down if we aren't doing enough.”

“Whitehall is increasing its range of activity with a diminishing workforce. Digital hasn't delivered yet, but departments are behaving as though it has. We are doing more with less, and we're achieving that with long hours.”

“Senior management seem unwilling to challenge the demands put on staff by Ministers, and although there is discussion about what we should no longer do in effort to prioritise and work within the realities of a reduced workforce, nothing seems to change.”

“The constant cutting down of headcount while increasing expectations on what staff should deliver is creating a perfect storm which will continue to drive serious stress and anxiety amongst staff and undermine efficiency.”