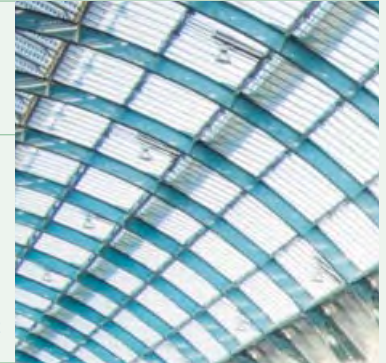




Motor vehicles sector: Working conditions and job quality

'Work plays a significant role in people's lives, in the functioning of companies and in society at large. But what is work? How can we describe it? Is it changing, and if so, is it for better or for worse? Is it fulfilling the numerous and at times conflicting expectations we have of it? How can we take steps to improve work for the well-being of all?'

Eurofound, *Fifth European Working Conditions Survey: Overview report, 2012*



This report gives an overview of working conditions, job quality, workers' health and job sustainability in the motor vehicles sector (NACE 45).¹ It is based mostly on the fifth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), which gathers data on working conditions and the quality of work across 34 European countries. Additional information on the structural characteristics of the sector is derived from Eurostat data. The sector includes all activities related to the wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles. The fifth EWCS contains responses from 786 workers in this sector. The report compares aspects of work in the sector with the EU28 as a whole.

Structural characteristics

In 2010, 4,024,800 people worked in the sales and repair of motor vehicles sector, representing 1.9% of the European workforce (1.9% in 2008 and 1.8% in 2012) (Eurostat, 2013). Employment in the sector decreased by 3.2% between 2008 and 2010, and by a further 1.4% between 2010 and 2012. Countries where the motor vehicles sector is relatively large are Latvia (2.1%), Cyprus (2.3%), Portugal (2.5%) and Lithuania (2.8%). The sector has relatively little prominence in Sweden (1.6%), Romania (1.6%), Czech Republic (1.5%) and the Netherlands (1.4%) (Eurostat, 2013).

A higher than average proportion of workers in the motor vehicles sector work in micro-workplaces (1–9

employees, 59%), compared to 42% in the EU28. Consequently, the percentage of workers in small and medium-sized workplaces (SMEs, 10–249 employees, 40%) and large workplaces (250+ employees, 2%) is lower than in the EU28 (46% and 12% respectively)². The sector is male-dominated: only 15% of the sector's workforce are women and the remaining 85% men. Workers aged under 25 (14%) and between 25 and 39 (40%) are overrepresented in the motor vehicles sector in comparison with the EU28, where they make up 9% and 36% of the workforce respectively. Conversely, workers aged 40 to 49 and 50 and older are slightly underrepresented. In the sector, self-employment is relatively common, with 8% being self-employed with employees and 9% self-employed without employees, compared to 4%

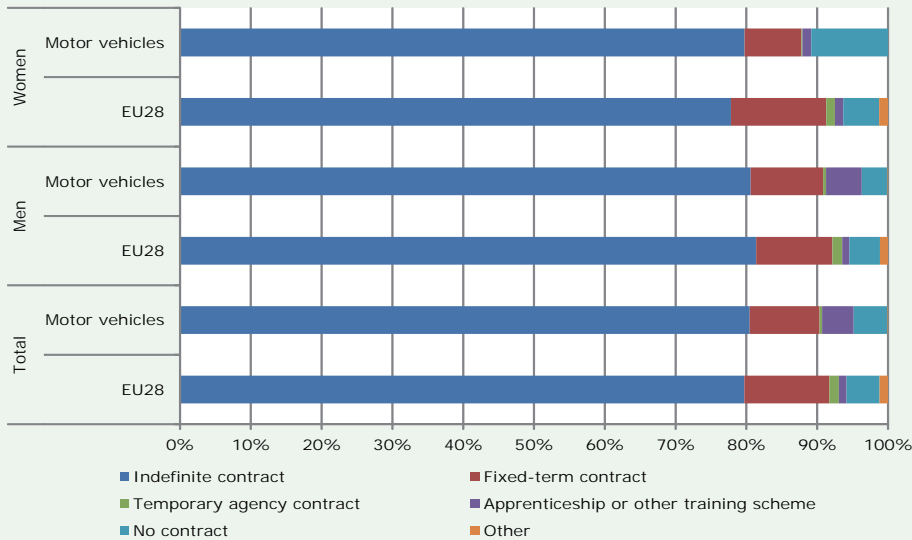
Motor vehicles in a nutshell

- 11% of women in the sector report working without a formal contract
- Workers in the sector tend to work more hours than the average worker in the EU28
- Employee representation is less common in the sector than in the EU28 as a whole
- Levels of exposure to physical risks for men in manual occupations are moderately higher than in the EU28 as a whole
- Levels of absenteeism are considerably above the EU28 average

¹ Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne (statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community).

² Due to the small number of workers in the motor vehicles sector working in large workplaces (250+ employees) included in our sample, estimates for this category are not reported.

Figure 1: Employment status, by gender



and 11% respectively in the EU28. Figure 1 shows that, among employees, indefinite contracts are as common in the motor vehicles sector as in the EU28 as a whole. Apprenticeships and other training schemes are much more common in the sector – but only among men – while 11% of women in the sector report working without a formal contract, over two times the EU28 average of 5%.

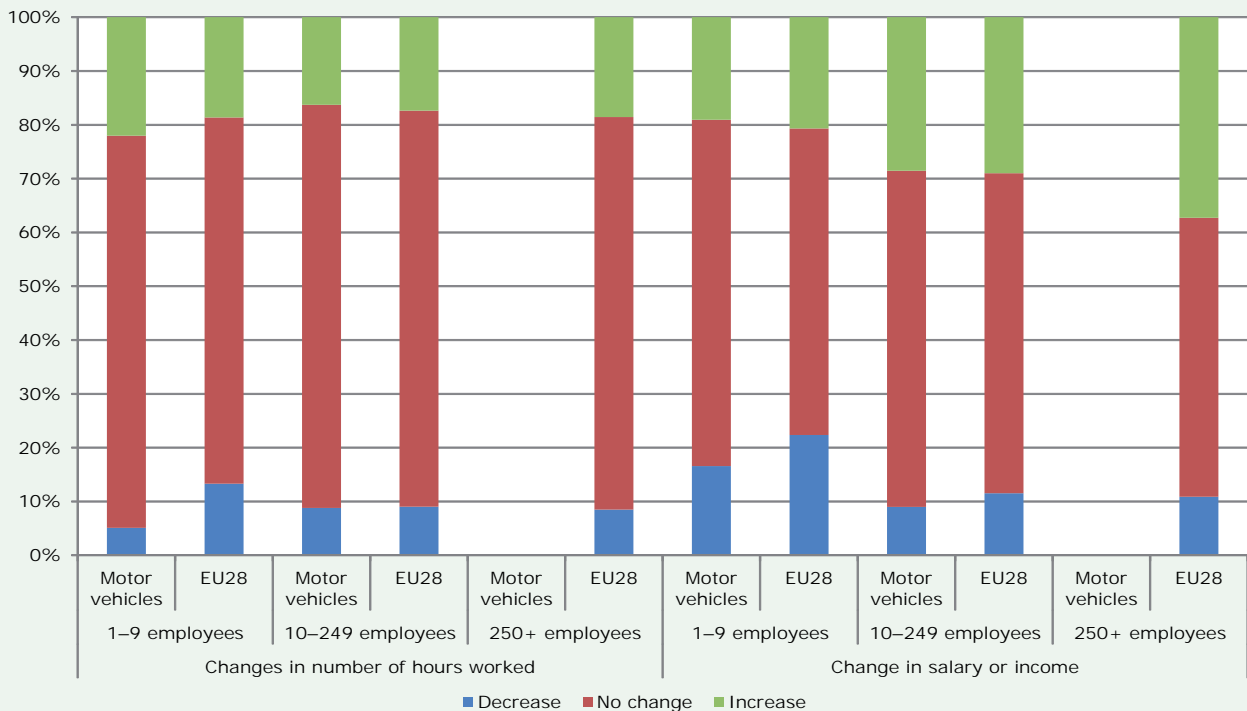
Among both men (7%) and women (34%), part-time work is slightly less prevalent in the motor vehicles sector than in the EU28, where the percentage of men and women working 34 hours or less is 12% and 38% respectively.

Working conditions

Changes since the crisis

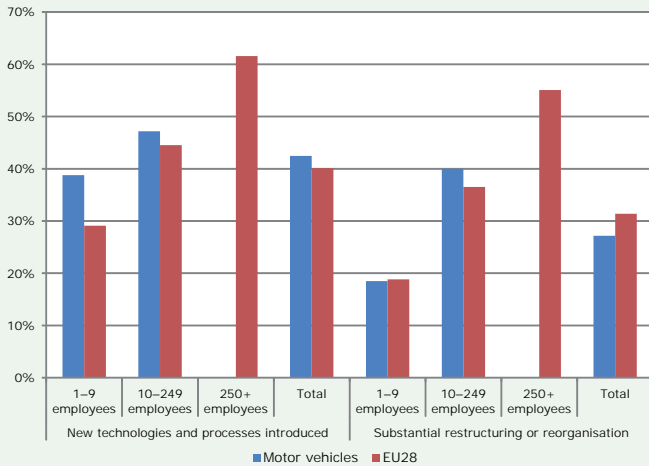
Figure 2 shows that the motor vehicles sector differs slightly from EU28 averages in reported changes in hours worked. In the sector as a whole, the share of workers reporting a decrease in hours worked (7%) is lower than in the EU28 (11%), while reported increases in hours worked (20%) are slightly more common than in the EU28 (18%). In micro-workplaces, the proportion of workers in the sector whose hours decreased was below the EU28 average (5% compared to 13%), while there was no difference for SMEs. It is interesting to note that the proportion of workers reporting an increase in hours in micro-workplaces (22%) was also higher than in micro-workplaces in the EU28 (19%), and slightly lower for SMEs in the sector.

Figure 2: Percentage of employees reporting changes in number of hours worked and salary or income in past year, by workplace size



The proportion of workers in the motor vehicles sector reporting no changes in salary in the year prior to the survey (64%) was higher than in the EU28 (58%), while both decreases and increases in salary (reported respectively by 14% and 23% of workers) were less common than in the EU28 (16% and 27%). The same pattern holds for both micro-workplaces and SMEs. As in the EU28, workers in micro-workplaces were most affected by reductions in their salary.

Figure 3: Restructuring and introduction of new technologies in past three years, by workplace size



Workers in the motor vehicles sector in general were slightly more affected by the introduction of new technologies and processes (Figure 3) than workers in the EU28, across all workplace sizes, while the occurrence of restructuring and reorganisation was slightly less common than in the EU28. The sector

follows the same pattern as the EU28, where the share of workers reporting the introduction of new production processes or technologies is higher for SMEs than for micro-workplaces.

Working time and work-life balance

Workers in the motor vehicles sector on average work 40 hours per week, above the EU28 average of 38 hours (Figure 4). As in the EU28, men in the sector tend to work more hours on average than women. For both men and women and across all workplace sizes, average working hours in the sector are marginally higher than in the EU28.

Figure 4: Average working hours, by gender and workplace size

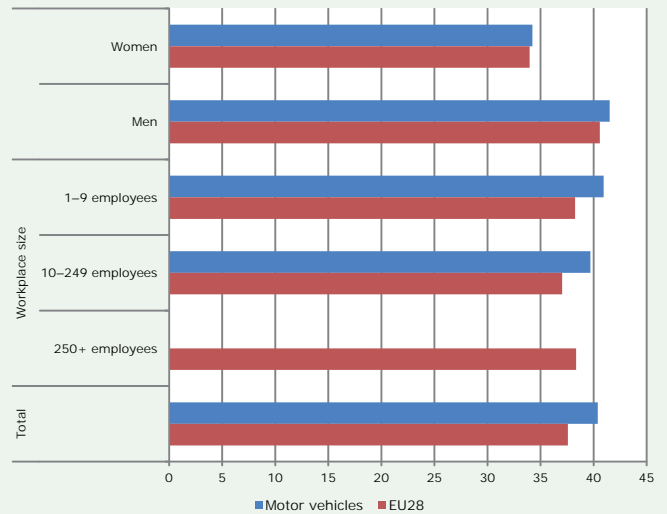
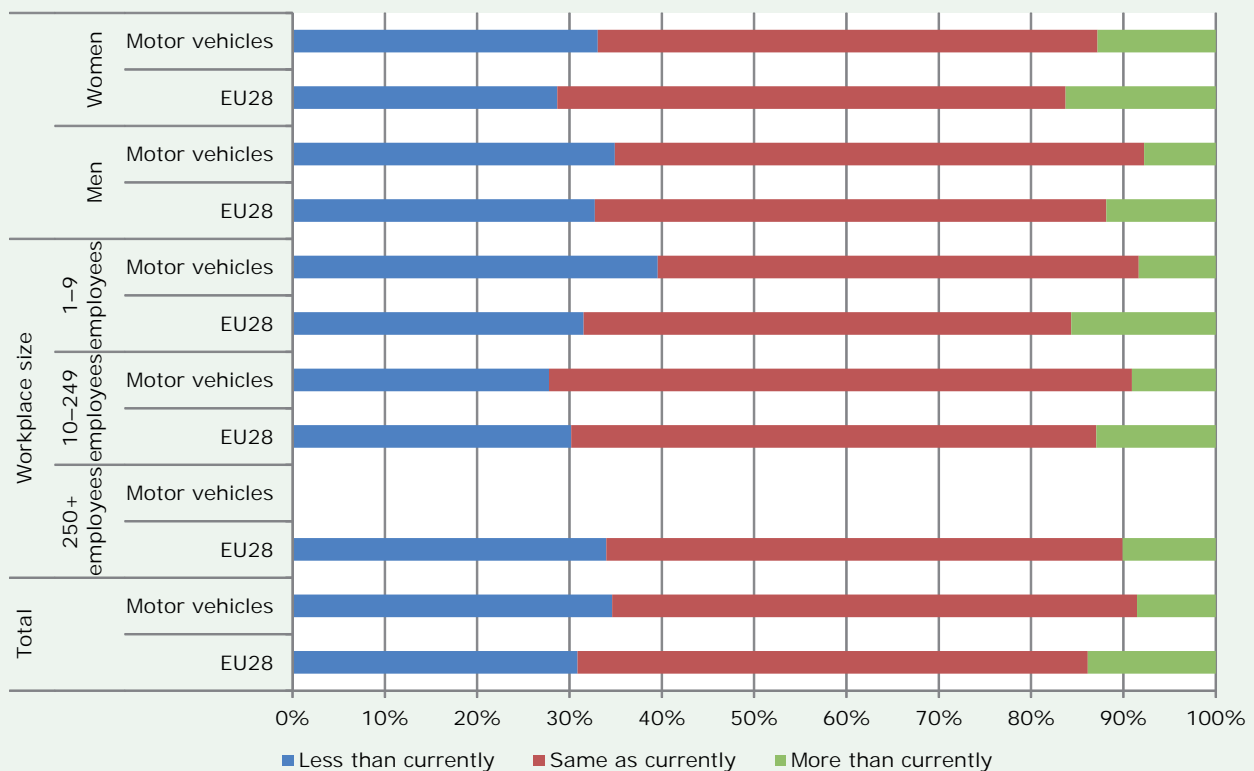


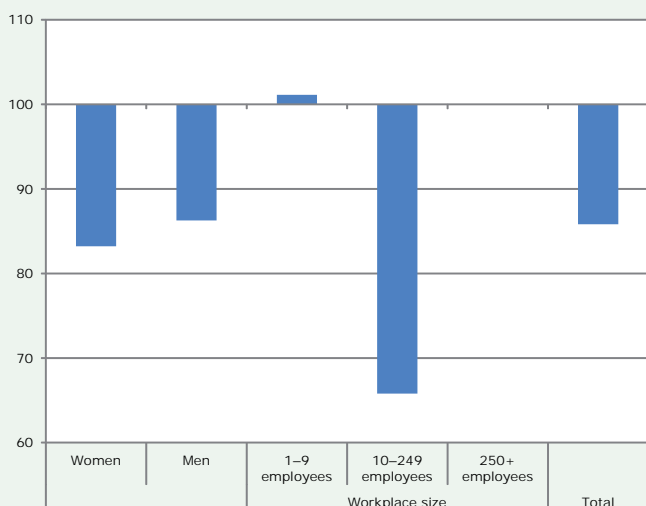
Figure 5: Working time preference, by gender and workplace size



A higher than average share of workers reports they would prefer to work fewer hours than currently (35% compared to 30% in the EU28), and a lower proportion expresses a preference for working more hours (9% compared to 14% in the EU28 as a whole). The pattern is the same for both men and women in the sector, but the largest difference between the sector and the EU28 is found in micro-workplaces, where 40% of the workforce says they would prefer to work fewer hours, compared to 32% in the EU28.

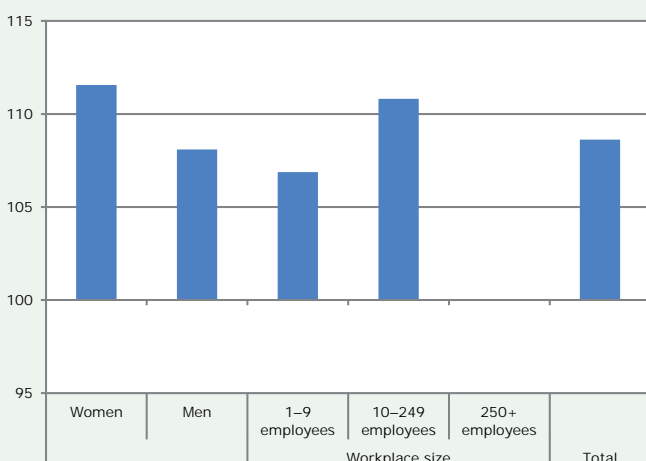
Figure 6 shows that working atypical hours (weekends, evenings and/or nights) is less prevalent in the motor vehicles sector than in the EU28 as a whole, particularly for workers in SMEs. Workers in micro-workplaces are equally likely to work atypical hours as workers in the EU28 as a whole.

Figure 6: Index of working atypical hours (EU28=100), by gender and workplace size



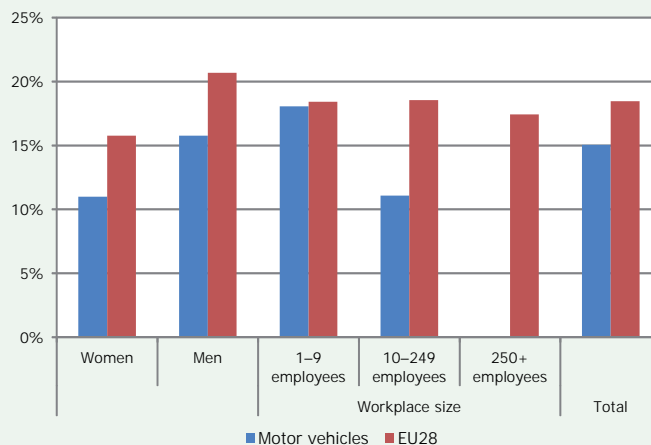
On average, workers in the motor vehicles sector report higher levels of working time regularity (working the same number of hours each day and the same number of days each week) than workers in the EU28 (Figure 7). Within the sector, working times tend to be slightly more regular for women than for men, and also more regular for workers in SMEs than in micro-workplaces.

Figure 7: Index of regularity of working time (EU28=100), by gender and workplace size



Workers in the motor vehicle sector seem to enjoy a slightly better work-life balance (the fit between working hours and family or social commitments) than average (Figure 8). Only 15% of workers report a poor work-life balance, compared to 19% in the EU28 as a whole. The difference between the sector and the EU28 appears particularly pronounced for workers in SMEs workplaces, only 11% of whom report a poor work-life balance compared to 19% in the EU28, while there is no difference in levels of reported poor work-life balance between micro-workplaces in the sector and the EU28.

Figure 8: Poor work-life balance, by gender and workplace size



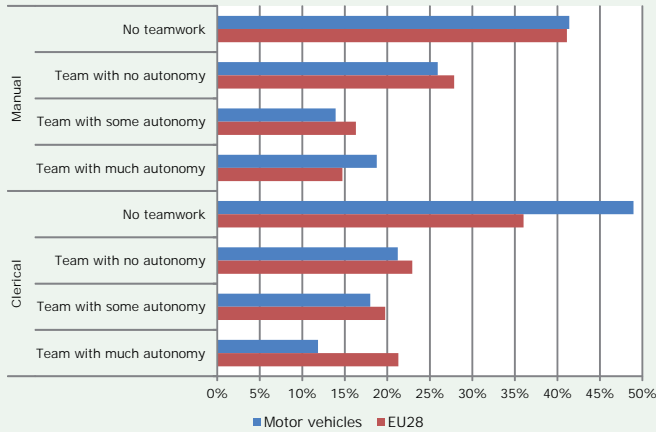
Work organisation

Teamwork

Teamwork has been proposed as an alternative to work organisation models based on high levels of labour division. As teamwork reflects a variety of practices, it can also assume a variety of forms. Different types of teamwork can be identified using the EWCS by looking at the level of autonomy within the teams.

The prevalence of teamwork among workers in the motor vehicles sector varies between workers in manual and clerical occupations. Teamwork is as prevalent among manual workers in the sector as it is in the EU28, and 'teamwork with much autonomy' is actually more common in the sector (19%) than in the EU28 (15%). On the other hand, teamwork is less common than in the EU28 for clerical workers in the sector; 'team with no autonomy' is the most common form of teamwork among clerical workers, but all forms of teamwork are less common than among clerical workers in the EU28 as a whole.

Figure 9: Teamwork and team autonomy, by occupational category



Task rotation

Task rotation is also an important feature of work organisation. Depending on how it is implemented, task rotation may require different skills from the worker ('multiskilling') or may not ('fixed task rotation') and is either controlled by management or by the workers themselves (autonomous). Task rotation has been shown to be beneficial for workers' well-being, and autonomous multiskilling systems in particular are associated with higher worker motivation as well as better company performance.

Task rotation appears to be more common in the motor vehicles sector than in the EU28 as a whole since the proportion of workers who report not being in a task rotation system is lower than in the EU28 across workplace sizes. Management-controlled

multiskilling is the most common form of task rotation in all workplace sizes in the sector, and is more common in both micro- and SMEs in the sector than in equivalent sized workplaces in the EU28. Other forms of task rotation are, however, equally or less common.

Female bosses

The motor vehicles sector is male-dominated, with 85% of the workforce being men. The proportion of workers who report having a female boss (7%) is below the proportion of women in the sector and below the EU28 average (28%). Men in the motor vehicles sector report a particularly low proportion of female bosses (4%). The proportion of female workers in the sector having a female boss (24%), however, exceeds the proportion of women working in the sector (15%).

Skills and training

The motor vehicles sector as a whole is characterised by an above-average proportion of workers who report being 'under-skilled' for their current duties (17%) in comparison to the EU28 as a whole (13%), and this pattern holds for all age groups within the sector. Conversely, the proportion of workers in the sector as a whole who declare being 'over-skilled' (29%) is slightly below the EU28 average (32%). Within the sector, workers under 25 are most likely to report being 'under-skilled' (18%), but it is among workers aged between 35 and 49 that the incidence of skills mismatch appears to be more pronounced: 16% report being 'under-skilled' in comparison to 12% in the EU28, and 35% consider themselves 'over-

Figure 10: Prevalence of task rotation, by workplace size

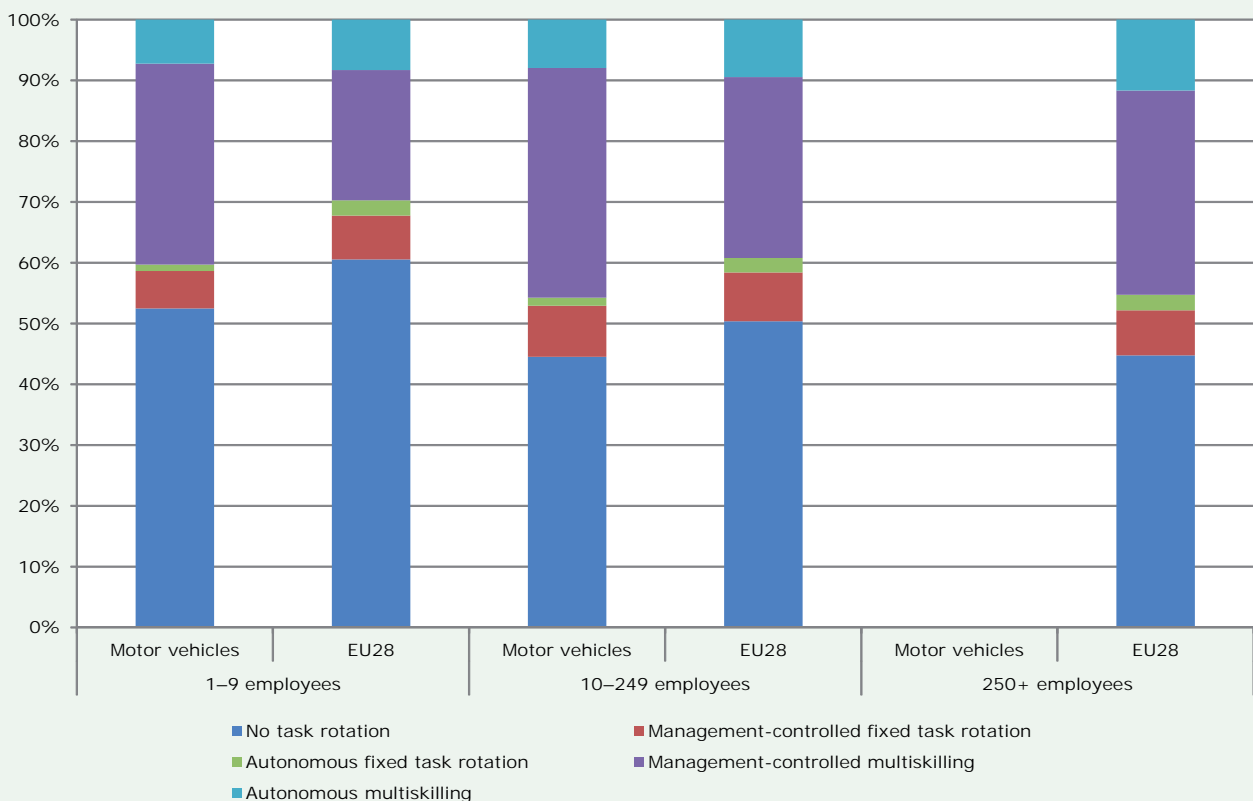
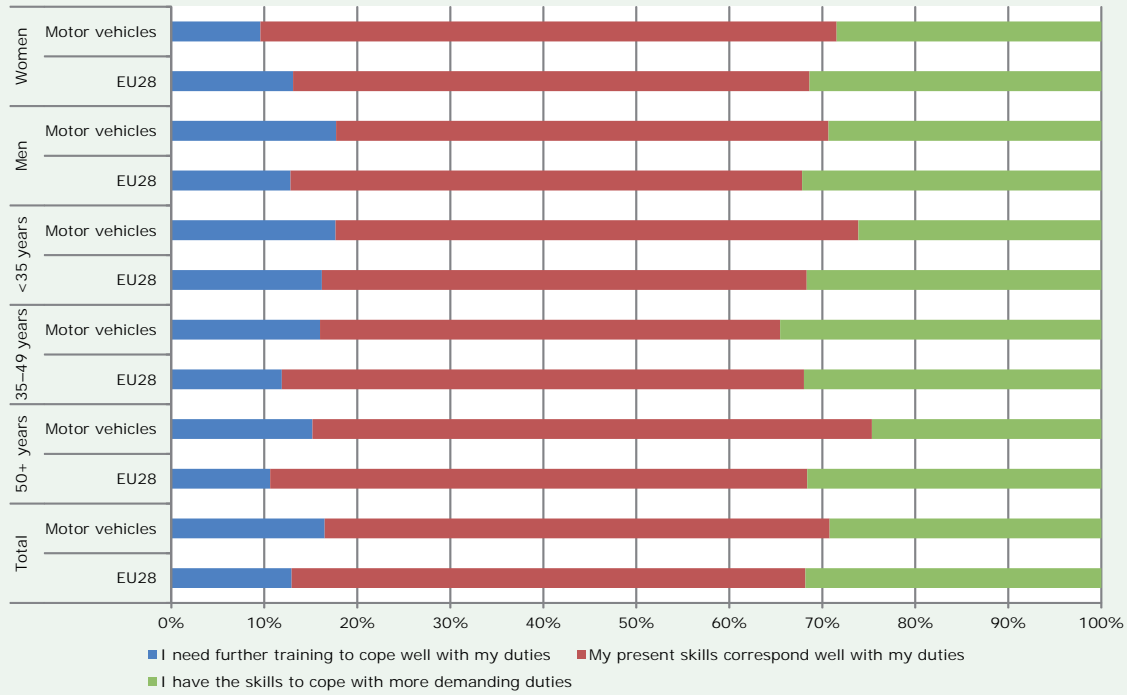


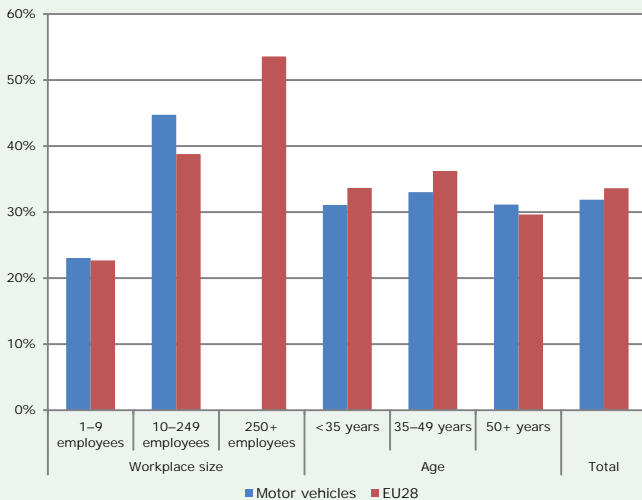
Figure 11: Match between skills and tasks, by age and gender



skilled' compared to 32% in the EU28. The proportion of workers in this age group who consider their skills to be in line with their current duties is 50%.

The percentage of workers in the motor vehicles sector who report they have received training is slightly lower than in the EU28 (Figure 12). Exceptions to this are workers in SMEs and workers aged 50 and older, a higher proportion of whom report that they have received training than their counterparts in the EU28. There are no clear differences between age groups regarding the incidence of training and, as in the EU28, it appears clear that employer-paid training is more prevalent among SMEs than in micro-workplaces.

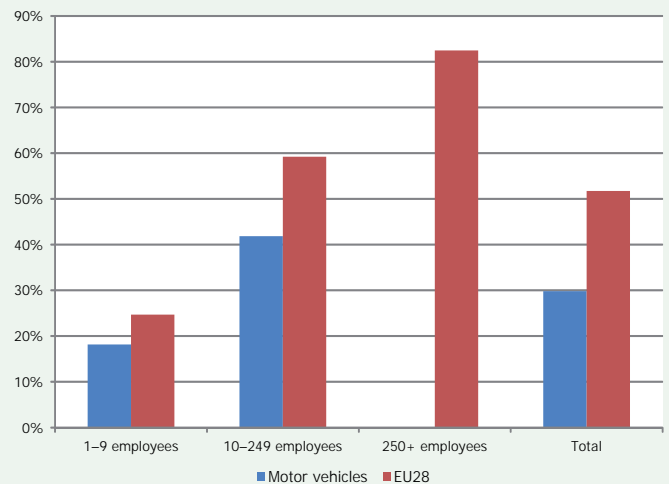
Figure 12: Employer-paid training, by workplace size and age



Employee representation

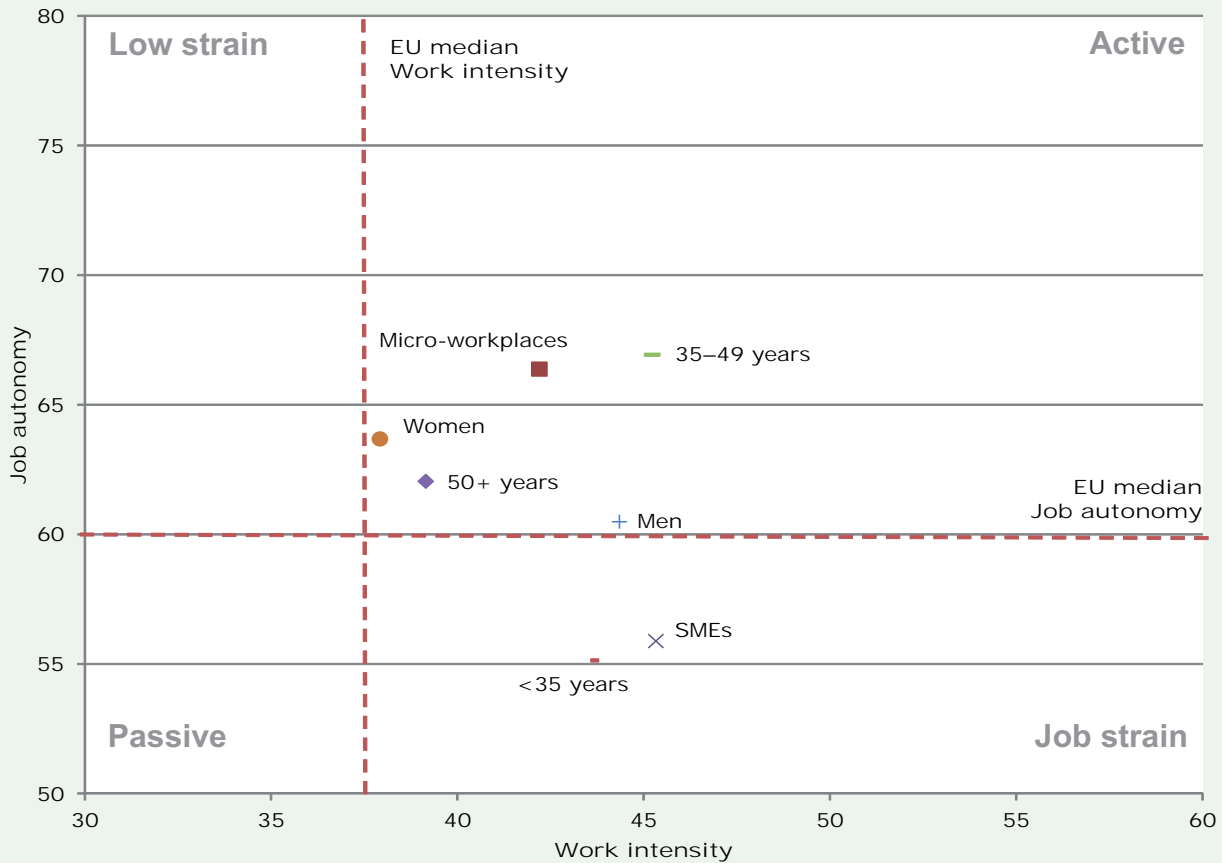
The EWCS contains fairly limited information on formal employee representation. It asks whether an employee representative is present at the workplace and whether workers have raised an issue with an employee representative in the past year. Figure 13 shows the combined results of these questions (an employee representative has been considered to be 'available' if they are present at the workplace or when an issue was raised).

Figure 13: Availability of an employee representative at the workplace, by workplace size



In 2010, only 30% of employees in the motor vehicles sector reported that an employee representative was available at their workplace, compared to 52% of workers in the EU28. Employee representation is higher among SMEs than in micro-workplaces, but it is below the EU28 average for both micro-workplaces and SMEs.

Figure 14: Distribution of groups of workers by average levels of job autonomy and work intensity



Psycho-social and physical environment

Job autonomy and work intensity

The psychosocial and physical environment impacts heavily on workers’ well-being. According to the job demand and control model of the American sociologist Karasek (1979), workers are more likely to suffer from work-related stress when they are faced with a high level of demand while being limited in the control they have over the way in which they carry out their job.

Figure 14 shows the likelihood of workers in the motor vehicles sector suffering from work-related stress. Groups of workers are plotted along two axes: job autonomy and work intensity.

In the motor vehicles sector, the averages for all men, women, workers in micro-workplaces, workers aged 35 to 49 and 50 and older lie in the top-right quadrant: the category of ‘active’ jobs. ‘Active’ jobs tend to have relatively high levels of work intensity but also relatively high levels of job autonomy. Although their jobs can be very demanding, workers in this category are likely to have sufficient control over the way in which they do their job as well as the ability to develop coping strategies through active learning, and are challenged into developing their potential to the full.

The averages for workers under 35 and for workers in SMEs fall within the bottom-right quadrant, which

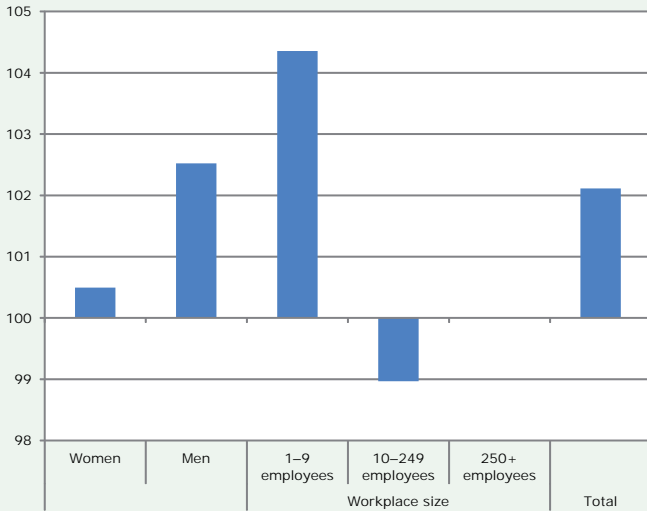
indicates the most problematic category, that of ‘job strain’. Jobs in this category have relatively high levels of intensity and relatively low levels of autonomy. ‘Job strain’ affects workers negatively by increasing the risk of accumulating high levels of unresolved strain, which can cause unhealthy stress levels and consequently a range of stress-related illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and mental health problems.

Both the bottom- and top-left quadrants are empty in Figure 14, indicating that no groups of workers in the motor vehicles sector fall, on average, within these categories. Jobs in the bottom-left quadrant indicate ‘passive’ jobs, characterised by relatively low levels of intensity and relatively low levels of autonomy. These jobs are not sufficiently challenging and while workers are not at risk of work-related stress, they are potentially subject to frustration and low motivation. The top-left quadrant indicates ‘low strain’ jobs, characterised by relatively low levels of work intensity and relatively high levels of job autonomy. Workers in this category are usually at a low risk of stress, and are not as likely to suffer from frustration and loss of motivation as those in passive jobs. However, their jobs may not challenge them to realise their full potential. The fact that both these categories are empty for the sector clearly shows that the average levels of work intensity for all workers are above the EU28 median.

Social environment

A good social environment is characterised by the existence of social support and the absence of abuse at work. Social support can help workers deal with high levels of work intensity. The social environment in workplaces in the motor vehicles does not differ much from the EU28 as a whole (Figure 15). It is somewhat higher for workers in micro-workplaces than for workers in SMEs.

Figure 15: Index of good social environment (EU28 = 100), by gender and workplace size



Physical risks

Levels of exposure to all three types of physical risks (ambient, biological and chemical and posture and movement-related risks) in the sector as a whole are above EU28 averages, although there are differences between genders and occupations. Indeed, while levels of risk exposure are above average for men in

manual occupations, they are close to or below average for both men and women workers in clerical occupations. Scores for women workers in manual occupations are not reported due to the small number of cases in this category.

Only 7% of workers in the motor vehicles sector as a whole report they were not very well or not all well informed about workplace risks, compared to 10% in the EU28 (Figure 17). The same pattern holds for both workers in micro-workplaces and SMEs in the sector.

Figure 17: Not very well or not at all well informed about health and safety risks at work, by workplace size

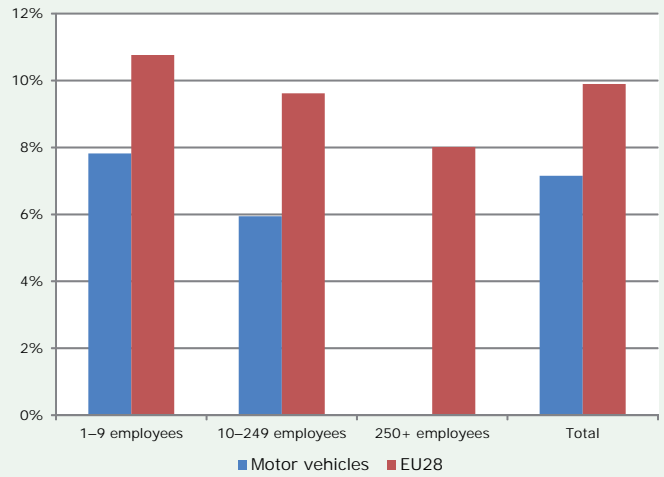


Figure 16: Indices of exposure to physical risks (EU28 = 100), by gender and occupation

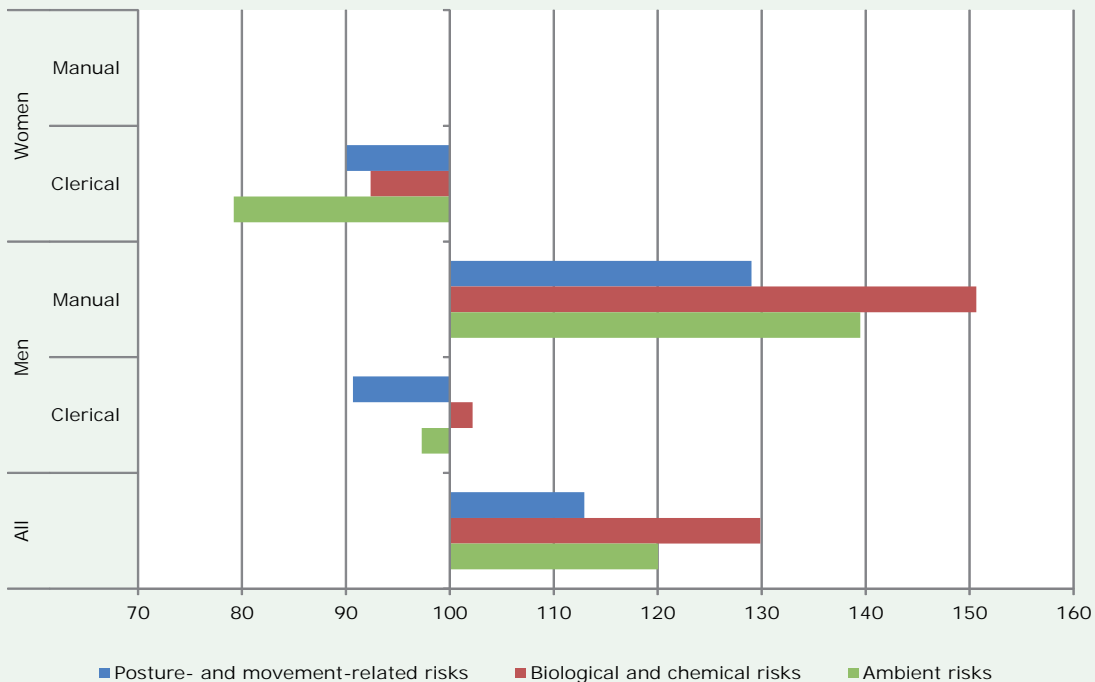
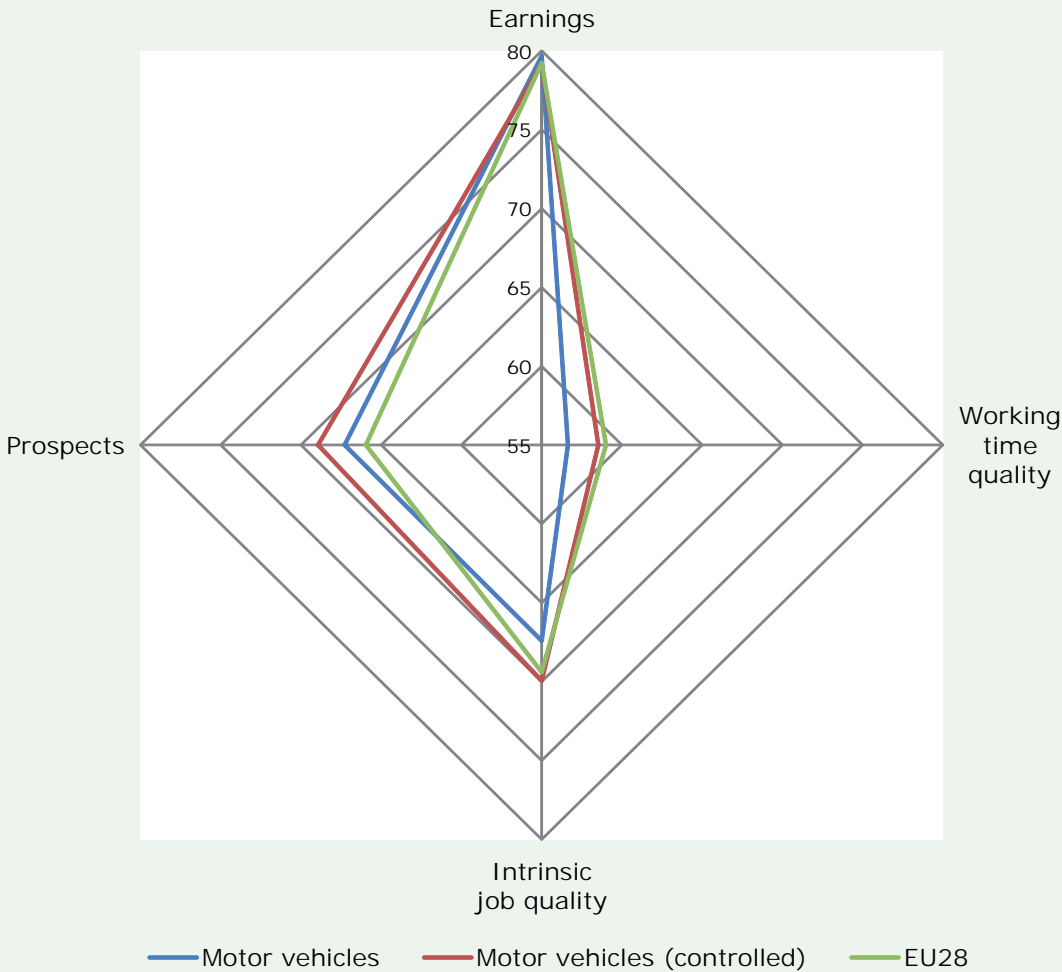


Figure 18: Job quality in the motor vehicles sector compared with the EU28



Note: Scores on all four indicators range from 0 to 100

Job quality

In the report *Trends in job quality in Europe*, the authors constructed four indices of job quality: earnings, prospects, intrinsic job quality and working time quality. The indices are built using job characteristics that are unambiguously associated with workers’ well-being.

Figure 18 summarises job quality in the motor vehicles sector. It shows the average score for the sector on each of the indicators, with and without controlling for the structural characteristics of the sector’s workers (age, gender, workplace size, education level and country), and for the EU28. All four indicators range between 0 and 100.

The graph shows a rather mixed picture of job quality in the motor vehicles sector. Workers in motor vehicles have higher scores for prospects than the EU28 and average earnings, but lower than average levels of working time quality and intrinsic job quality. When controlling for background characteristics, the difference between the EU28 and the sector regarding working time quality and intrinsic job quality no longer appear statistically significant. Workers in the motor vehicles sector, however, score more favourably for the prospects indicator than workers with similar educational and demographic characteristics in other

sectors, as the average scores for prospects in the sector actually increase when controlling for background variables.

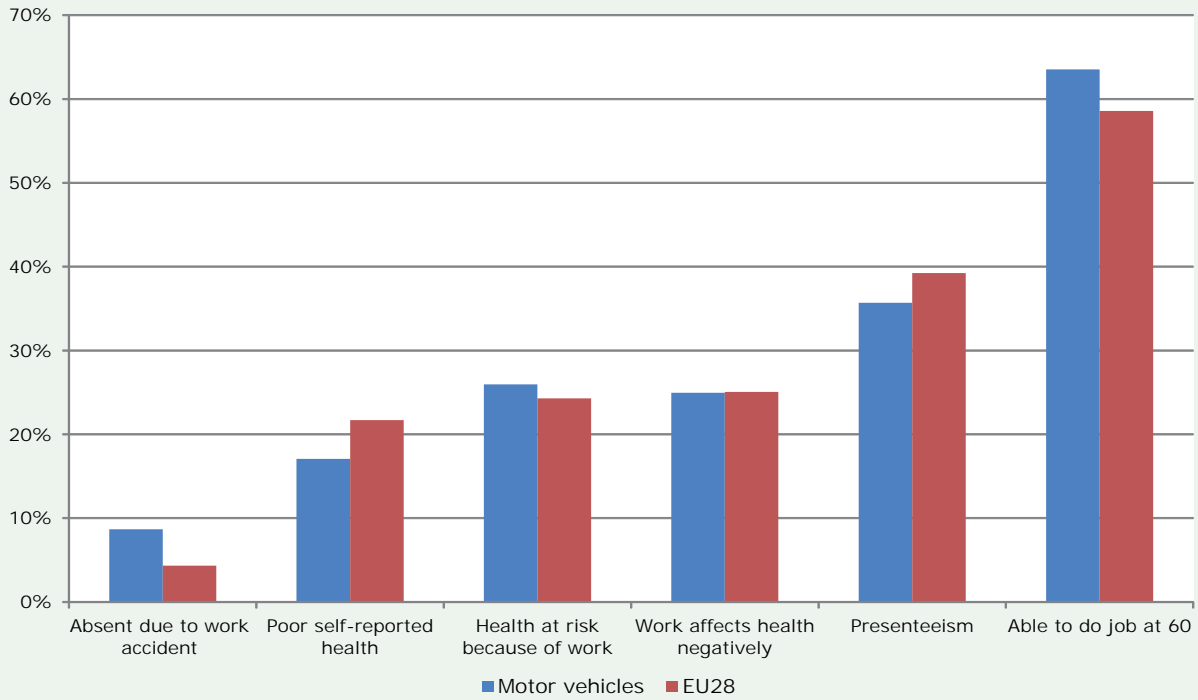
Health and sustainability of work

Working conditions can impact both positively and negatively on the health of workers and on the sustainability of their jobs.

Figure 19 shows a mixed picture for the motor vehicles sector in terms of health and sustainability outcomes in comparison to the EU28. The sector is characterised by a higher incidence of absenteeism due to work accidents and a higher proportion of workers stating that their health is at risk because of work. At the same time, the share of workers with poor self-reported health and the incidence of presenteeism (working when sick) is lower than in the EU28. A higher proportion say they think they will be able to do their job when 60 than the EU28 average. There is no difference between the motor vehicles sector and the EU28 in the proportion of workers who say that work affects their health negatively.

When controlling for the structural characteristics of the workforce (such as gender, age, level of educational attainment, establishment size and country distribution), the difference between the sector and the EU28 for poor self-reported health,

Figure 19: Health and sustainability of work



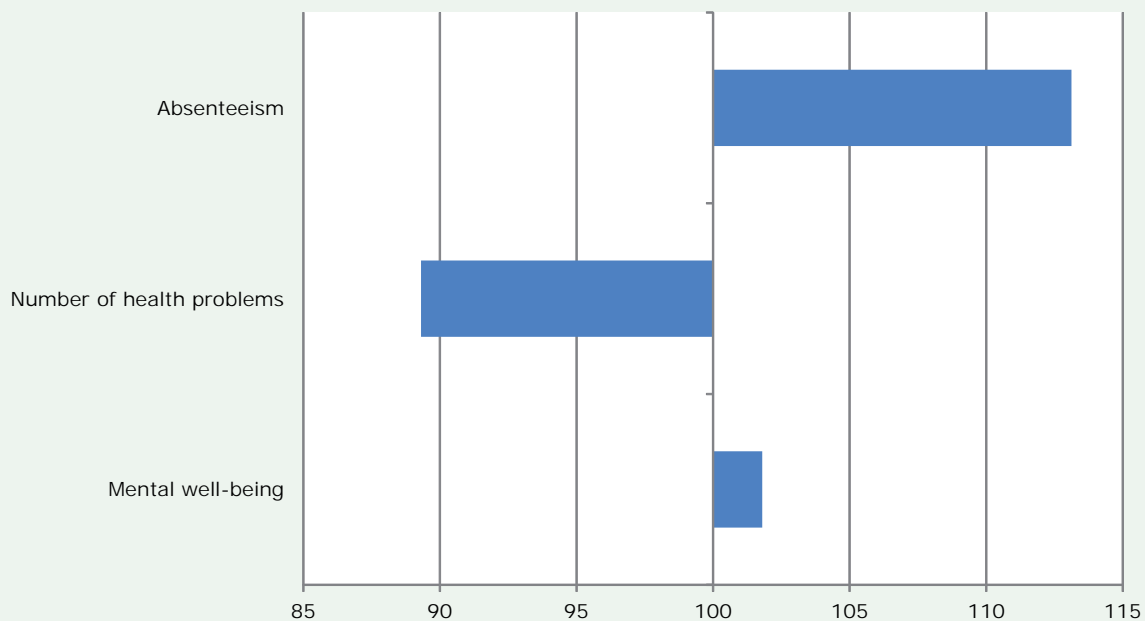
health at risk because of work, negative effect of work on health and presenteeism appear not to be statistically significant. However, workers in the sector are significantly more likely than their counterparts in other sectors to have been absent from work due to a work accident. On the upside, they are also significantly more likely to consider themselves able to do their job at 60.

Figure 20 shows a mixed picture of the motor vehicles sector, with average mental well-being scores slightly higher than the EU28 average and a lower than average incidence of health problems, but with levels of absenteeism considerably above the EU28 average. However, the difference between the sector

and the EU28 for higher levels of absenteeism is the only one that appears to be statistically significant when controlling for the background characteristics of the workforce. The reported positive health outcomes appear to be largely explained by the relatively young age of the sector's workforce.

It is important to keep in mind that the impact of work on health is a very gradual process that can take a long time and cannot be fully captured in a cross-sectional survey. The results in this section are likely to underestimate the often negative health effects that physically and psychologically strenuous working conditions can have.

Figure 20: Indices of health symptoms, mental well-being and absenteeism (EU28 = 100)



References

Eurofound (2012), *Trends in job quality in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurostat (2013), EU Labour Force Survey database, available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database

Karasek, R. A, Jr (1979), 'Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 24, pp. 285–308.

European Working Conditions Survey

Eurofound developed its European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) in 1990 in order to provide high-quality information on living and working conditions in Europe. Five waves of the survey have been carried out to date, enabling long-term trends to be observed and analysed.

The EWCS interviews both employees and self-employed people on key issues related to their work and employment. Fieldwork for the fifth EWCS took place from January to June 2010, with almost 44,000 workers interviewed in their homes in 34 countries – EU28, Norway, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo. The 5th EWCS was implemented by Gallup Europe, who worked within a strong quality assurance framework to ensure the highest possible standards in all data collection and editing processes.

The questionnaire covered issues such as precarious employment, leadership styles and worker participation as well as the general job context, working time, work organisation, pay, work-related health risks, cognitive and psychosocial factors, work-life balance and access to training. A number of questions were included to capture the impact of the economic downturn on working conditions.

For more information on the EWCS, see <http://eurofound.europa.eu/european-working-conditions-surveys-ewcs>

Sectoral analysis

The report *Working conditions and job quality: Comparing sectors in Europe* and the series of 33 sectoral information sheets aim to capture the diversity prevalent across sectors in Europe in terms of working conditions and job quality. The report pinpoints trends across sectors in areas such as working time and work-life balance, work organisation, skills and training, employee representation and the psychosocial and physical environment. It identifies sectors that score particularly well or particularly poorly in terms of job quality and sheds light on differences between sectors in terms of health and well-being.

For more information, see <http://eurofound.europa.eu/comparing-working-conditions-across-sectors-in-europe>

Further information

Gijs van Houten, Research Officer
gvh@eurofound.europa.eu

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18, Ireland
Telephone: (+35 1) 204 32 00
Email: information@eurofound.europa.eu
Website: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/>

