

# Why long workhours harm health and gender equality: Insights from Australia and Germany.

**Lyndall Strazdins**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Australian National University*

In 2021 the World Health Organization ranked long hours as one of the most important work-related global health hazards. Yet, despite decades of evidence on their health harms, workhour limits are routinely violated in many countries and long hours remain a tacit ‘rule’ for good jobs, good pay and success. Long workhours are incompatible with care and domestic work, and because of this they pose a problem for gender equality and women’s earnings and opportunities. In this presentation I explore how expectations to work long hours reward workers not just for their skills and merit, but for ‘extra’ time. We then model how this creates different health harms for men and women, using representative, longitudinal data from Australia and Germany (103,015 – 109,886 observations, HILDA and SOEP surveys). We modelled a reciprocal system of wages, hours and health to deal with endogeneity and reverse causality, which very few studies do. We also included estimates of hours in care and domestic work to then estimate health ‘ceilings’ or points where weekly workhours incur health costs. The 3SLS estimates revealed that women’s health is compromised considerably more than men’s by long hours because of the extra work they do in the home. Our estimates indicate men, on average, can work 10 to 14 hours longer than women without a health cost because of the unequal sharing of care and domestic work. We then layered men’s and women’s health ceilings by weekly wages and hours to illustrate how, irrespective of experience or education, for women to earn equally and hold high paying jobs, they currently face an unequal health cost. These health costs are an important element to the ‘glass ceiling’ and I close by discussing recent research on why attempts to change long hours is often resisted by workplaces and policy makers.

**Keywords :** Gender inequality, psychosocial hazards, working hours, work organization