

**Title:** WORKING-TIME MISMATCH AND MENTAL HEALTH

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**Abstract**

Nationally representative panel survey data for Germany (from the SOEP) and Australia (from the HILDA Survey) are used to test the twin hypotheses that psychological health (as measured by the Mental Component Summary Score from the SF-12), is affected by working-time arrangements, and that it is the degree of mismatch between usual and preferred working time hours, rather than the number of hours usually worked, which is most critical. The key feature of the analysis is the use of comparable representative longitudinal data (covering the period 2002 to 2012) for two very different populations where very different regulatory arrangements prevail.

Results from the estimation of both fixed-effects models and dynamic models with correlated random effects indicate that overemployment (working more hours than preferred) is associated with adverse mental health outcomes for workers in both Germany and Australia, and it is mismatch rather than the numbers of hours worked each week that is critical. Indeed, these negative associations between overemployment and mental health were not just limited to persons working very long weeks, but were also found among persons working what are traditionally regarded as standard work weeks. Somewhat unexpectedly, the negative association with overemployment was much larger (about twice as large) in Germany than in Australia. Underemployment, on the other hand, is less important. Indeed, among German workers we were unable to find any strong evidence that working fewer hours than desired exhibited any association with mental health scores. In contrast, among Australian workers significant negative effects were found, among both men and women, once underemployment was specified as a continuous variable. Indeed, in Australia an hour of underemployment was found to have about the same harmful effect on mental health as an hour of overemployment.