

## The new face of slave labour

**Every day millions of professionals work for free - notching up hundreds of hours of unpaid overtime. It's not written into contracts, often it's not even spoken of. It's just part of the 21st Century workplace.**

- 1 - Are you putting in a day's work for free today? It may sound like a ridiculous notion. After all, it's only slaves or the most altruistic of people who work for nothing, isn't it?

- 5 - But according to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) millions of Britons work so much unpaid overtime they are, on average, providing their employers with free work for the equivalent of nearly eight weeks of the year.

You could say those affected - predominantly the increasing number of white-collar workers in the UK - are providing their services voluntarily every day from 1 January to 25 February. That overtime is worth £23bn to employers, says the TUC's analysis of the Labour Force Survey.

- 10 - Why do people tolerate the long hours culture, and why have new laws done little to eradicate it? It's "no surprise", says TUC working time policy officer Paul Sellers, that around seven out of 10 of those doing the most unpaid overtime - up to 7.9 hours per week - are from the managerial and "professional" sectors, which have long been gripped by a long hours culture.

- 15 - But there are surprises in the figures: Around 55,000 plant and machine operatives are doing more than five hours of free overtime per week, and it's "not uncommon" for supermarket checkout staff - particularly in smaller stores - to work four or five hours extra.

- 20 - The reasons and motivations for going that extra mile are hugely varied, ranging from overt pressure from bosses, to sheer dedication from employees.

In a TUC survey a couple of years ago, around 15% of people said they worked overtime because they loved their job.

"There's no problem with that if they are not under pressure. Some people like their work so much they want to do more of it, even if it's not paid," adds Mr Sellers.

- 25 - The "culture of presenteeism" - the unspoken message that people should be seen to be staying late in order to "get on" - is more damaging, he says, but the most common reason for doing unpaid overtime is sheer workload.

- 30 - Occupational psychologist Sherridan Hughes, who owns career counselling service Careermax, says many people who come to them for advice from big banks and law firms are fed up of impossible workloads and long hours.

"People should not be doing unpaid overtime, of course, but there is often an unspoken pressure to be last in the office.

"In some of the best paid professions people can have no life at all, but then they are very well rewarded financially [...]"

Story from BBC NEWS:

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