



# Furniture and recycling

## Fact sheet

### Background

Eurofound's European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS) have been carried out every five years since 1991. Each wave of the survey provides an overview of the state of working conditions throughout Europe and indicates the nature and extent of changes affecting the workforce and the quality of work. The fieldwork for Eurofound's most recent edition of the EWCS was carried out in 2005 in 31 countries, including the 27 EU Member States, plus candidate countries Croatia and Turkey, as well as EFTA countries Norway and Switzerland. In 2005, the sample size was set at 1000 per country (600 for Cyprus, Estonia, Luxemburg, Malta and Slovenia).

Following the 2005 survey, Eurofound asked TNO Work & Employment to perform a secondary statistical analysis of the data from the fourth EWCS 2005 on sector profiles with regard to working conditions in the 27 Member States. For the analysis, NACE Revision 1.1<sup>1</sup> was applied. The findings are set out in 26 fact sheets, each covering one of the 26 sectors in the NACE classification. Each fact sheet presents:

- a profile of the sector's socio-demographic characteristics based on data at NACE at 1 and 2 digit level;
- a profile of working conditions in the sector based on data at NACE at 1 and 2 digit level.

This fact sheet presents a snapshot of working conditions in the manufacture of furniture and recycling sector (Nace Rev. 1.1 D 36 and 37).

### Sector profile

The furniture and recycling sector can be characterised as a male-dominated sector, with 80.2% of male workers compared to the cross-sector average of 55.5%. In addition, 17.9% of workers in this sector report working in one-person companies against the average of 10.4%. It is also worth noting that 32.6% of the workers in the sector fall into the low income category (the average across all sectors being 23.9%).

Differences by other socio-demographic characteristics between this sector and the average for all sectors are not statistically significant and therefore do not merit further analysis here.

<sup>1</sup> This is a revision of the 'General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities', known by the acronym NACE and originally published by Eurostat in 1970. The NACE code was subsequently revised (REV. 1.1) in the 1990s.

## Working conditions and outcomes

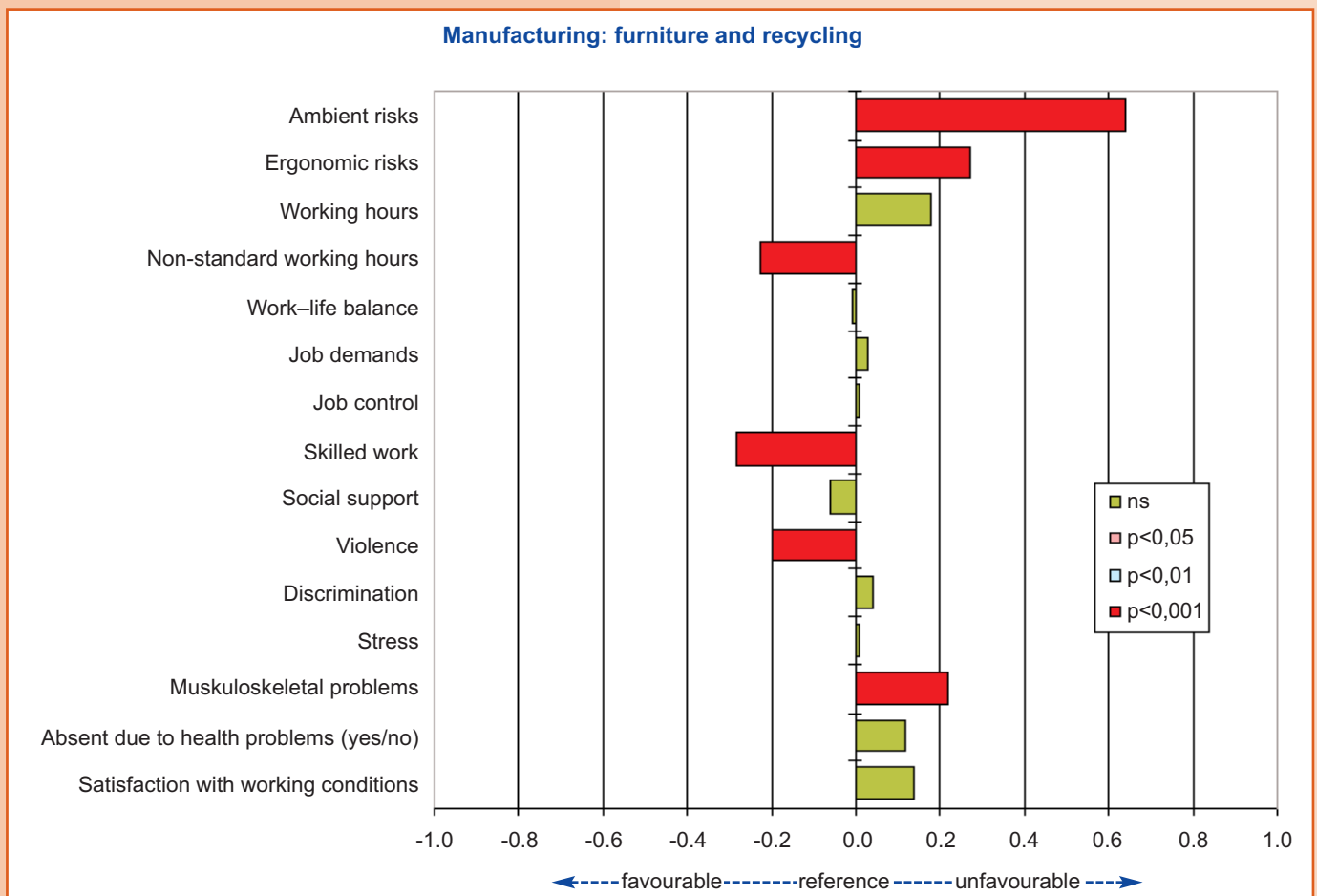
The figure below shows specific dimensions of working conditions with favourable and unfavourable scores in the furniture and recycling sector, taking as a point of reference mean exposure (0.0 score in the chart below).

Looking at the statistically significant differences only, this sector scores unfavourably on exposure to ambient risks (exposure to vibrations, noise, high/low temperatures, breathing in smoke, fumes, powder or dust, breathing in vapours, handling chemical products or substances) and, albeit to a lesser extent, ergonomic risks (tiring or painful positions, carrying or moving heavy loads, standing or walking and repetitive hand or arm movements). In terms

of exposure to psychosocial risks, the sector is characterised by lower than average level of exposure to threats of physical violence and actual acts of violence from colleagues and non-colleagues.

Furthermore, workers in this sector are less exposed to non-standard working hours (night and evening work, Saturday/Sunday work and more than 10 working hours a day) than the average and report a higher level of skilled work (use of quality standards in the work process, solving unforeseen problems, job complexity and learning new things).

In terms of health outcomes, work-related musculoskeletal problems are reported relatively often in this sector.



### How to read the figure

For the profiling of the sector, eleven aspects of working conditions (mainly composite indexes based on several variables) and four outcomes (stress, musculoskeletal disorders, absence due to health problems and job satisfaction) were taken into account.

In the chart above, p < 0.001 represents the highest level of statistical significance, while p < 0.01 and p < 0.05 indicate comparatively lower levels of statistical significance; 'ns' stands for no statistically significant difference. Statistical differences from the average can be either favourable (scores on the left side of the chart) or unfavourable (scores on the right side of the chart) on a specific set of working conditions.

Score values greater than +/- 0.2 indicate a small deviation from mean exposure (0.0) while score values ranging from +/- 0.2 to +/- 0.5 and greater than +/- 0.5 indicate respectively substantial and very substantial deviation from mean exposure.

For example, the chart above shows that values indicating exposure to ambient risks are highly statistically significant (p < 0.001) and greater than + 0.5 in the relative scale meaning that workers in the furniture and recycling sector report a comparatively higher level of exposure than the average.

Gender		
	Men	Women
Manufacturing: furniture and recycling	80.2%▲▲▲	19.8%▼▼▼
All sectors	55.5%	44.5%

Age					
	Average age	Age group			
		≤ 24 years	25-39 years	40-54 years	≥ 55 years
Manufacturing: furniture and recycling	38.9	15.3%	36.7%	36.3%	11.7%
All sectors	40.0	11.8%	36.8%	38.6%	12.7%

Years in company or organisation				
	≥ 2 years	3-5 years	6-15 years	≤16 years
Manufacturing: furniture and recycling	25.8%	24.3%	27.3%	22.6%
All sectors	27.1%	20.9%	29.6%	22.4%

Type of employment		
	Self-employed	Employee
Manufacturing: furniture and recycling	19.8%	80.2%
All sectors	16.7%	83.3%

Employment contract		
	Permanent contract	Non-permanent contract
Manufacturing: furniture and recycling	77.6%	22.4%
All sectors	76.6%	23.4%

Company size					
	One-person company	Micro enterprise (2-9 employees)	Small enterprise (10-49 employees)	Medium enterprise (50-249 employees)	Large enterprise (250+ employees)
Manufacturing: furniture and recycling	17.9%▲▲▲	26.8%	25.6%	16.0%	13.6%
All sectors	10.4%	27.5%	27.7%	19.4%	15.0%

Education level							
	No education	Primary education (ISCED 1)	Lower secondary education (ISCED 2)	Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	Post-secondary including pre-vocational or vocational education	Tertiary education - first level (ISCED 5)	Tertiary education - advanced level (ISCED 6)
Manufacturing: furniture and recycling	0%	5.1%	20.5%	47.7%	10.7%	15.9%	0.10%
All sectors	0.9%	5.3%	16.5%	44.5%	7.3%	23.5%	2.0%

Income level				
	Income bands			
	Lowest	Low	High	Highest
Manufacturing: furniture and recycling	16.8%	32.6%▲▲▲	32.6%	18.0%
All sectors	25.1%	23.9%	26.7%	24.3%

#### How to read the table

The comparison is between the subgroup/sector and the average for all sectors based on the 2005 European Working Conditions Survey sample for the EU27. ▲ (p<0.05), ▲▲ (p<0.01), and ▲▲▲ (p<0.001) indicate differences between the sector profiled and the sample average at different levels of statistical significance. Each mean is tested with parametric tests of difference (t-test) to determine whether such differences are statistically significant. The more triangles, the higher the statistical significance of the figure (i.e. it is more likely to reflect a real difference in the population).

Where estimates are not accompanied by triangles, this indicates that observed differences are not statistically significant.

## Key findings

- In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, the furniture and recycling sector has a high number of male workers and a higher than average proportion of workers working in one-person companies.
- A significant proportion of workers fall into the low income category.
- The furniture and recycling sector has a relatively unfavourable score on exposure to ambient and ergonomic risks. Also, musculoskeletal problems are more often reported in this sector.
- However, level of exposure to physical violence is lower than average and the scores on non-standard working hours and level of skilled work are also favourable.

## Methodology

The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) is carried out every five years by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), a tripartite European agency based in Dublin. The questionnaire is developed by the Eurofound team in close cooperation with an expert questionnaire development group. This group comprises representatives of the European social partners, other EU bodies (European Commission, Eurostat, European Agency for Safety and Health at work), international organisations (OECD, ILO), national statistical institutes, as well as leading European experts in the field. The sample of the EWCS is representative of persons in employment (according to the Eurostat definition this comprises both employees and the self-employed aged 15 years and over) resident in the countries covered for the respective periods. In each country, the EWCS sample followed a multi-stage, stratified and clustered design with a random walk procedure for the selection of the respondents at the last stage. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the respondent's own household.

### Further information

The Fourth *European Working Conditions Survey* report and secondary analysis of survey data are available on the *European Working Conditions Observatory* website:  
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/surveys/ewcs2005/>

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