

[Common Error No. 56](#) [1]

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56. "Maximum working hours are needed to protect workers' health and fitness."

It surprises many to learn that health and fitness go with wealth; the more money you have, the more you are likely to be fit and well. By limiting working hours we are denying people in the lower economic strata the chance to improve their lot by working more.

In the lower economic bands people are paid by the hour and earn more by working more. It is not as true of many middle class jobs, where people can be required to work late without consequential increases in salary. A working hours limit is not what it seems, either. It rarely puts a limit on the actual hours worked; more commonly it requires that all hours worked beyond a set level shall be paid at overtime rates. This, in turn, can make employers less ready to offer those extra hours, since they can cost too much.

The result of a maximum working hours limit is to restrict the income that people can earn, which matters most to those lower down the economic scale. Of course, most people will choose to achieve a sensible work/life balance, allowing appropriate time for rest, leisure activities, and family life. It should be their choice where possible, however, because they know their own circumstances and priorities more than outsiders can. Employers, too, have an interest in ensuring that the hours worked do not undermine the safety and efficiency of their employees.

A working hours limit increases the costs of business and the price of its goods and services. It can mean that extra staff are required, which involves the extra administrative costs and benefits required for each extra employee. And it can require a trade off between extra job opportunities and lower productivity, resulting in less successful and even less viable businesses.

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