

## Long hours Culture

Japanese workers work longer hours than workers in many other countries around the world. A typical employee in a Japanese company works around 9 hours every day, compared with about 8 hours in the US and 7 in many European Union countries.

*What do Japanese workers do?*

*How many hours do they work compared to workers in the US and Europe?*

Japanese workers get about 20 days' holiday each year but a typical employee only uses about 9 days of holiday, which is less than 50%. Workers in other Far Eastern countries use all or almost all of their holiday. So, Japanese workers work longer hours and take less holiday than employees in many other countries in the Far East region. There is even a word in the Japanese language – karoshi – which means working so hard that you kill yourself.

*How many days holiday does a typical Japanese worker get?*

*How many days does a typical worker take for holidays?*

*Is this the same in other Far Eastern countries?*

*What is the Japanese word for someone who works so hard that they kill themselves?*

But now, the Japanese government is asking companies to let their employees leave work at 3pm on the last Friday of every month. The government hopes that employees will use the extra free time to spend money in shops and restaurants and help the economy.

*What does the Japanese government want companies to do?*

*What does the government hope people will do on Friday afternoons?*

*Why do they want them to do this?*

Some big Japanese companies like the government's new idea and say that their employees can leave work at 3pm on one Friday each month if they want to. However, almost half of Japanese companies say they do not have any plans to change their working hours.

*Has the plan received universal approval from businesses?*

*What have some companies offered as an alternative?*

Many Japanese workers, especially new employees, often go home late from work, even when they have nothing to do. This is because it is a tradition in Japan for junior employees never to leave work before their boss. Working long hours is also a sign that you are a good worker and that you are loyal to your company.

*What do many new employees do?*

*Why do these junior employees do this?*

*Apart from this tradition, what is another reason that workers work such long hours?*