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[In 2006, 147 Japanese Died of Overwork](#)

The karoshi

Japanese people are famous for their long office hours and this marks their physical and mental health, and this comes with a heavy toll, as each year registers a new record of people dying from overwork. "Some 355 workers fell severely ill or died from overwork in the year to March, the highest figure on record and 7.6 % up from the previous year," stated the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labor. 147 died, most of them of strokes or heart attacks. This phenomenon is so spread in Japan after the World War II, during the economic miracle experienced by the country, that it even has a name: "karoshi." The government has campaigned against this by promoting telecommuting and encouraging employees to take leave when they care for babies or elderly parents. But new employees miss the security that could make them resist pressure to overwork and take an extra part-time job. "The growing number of part-timers has also increased the workload and pressure on young full-time employees", said Mikio Mizuno, a lawyer engaged for long in fighting to stop karoshi. "Those in their 20s and 30s, who still have some physical strength, tend to push themselves beyond the limit. They can suddenly come down with an irregular pulse or a heart attack. As for what triggered it, you can't think of anything else but overwork", Mizuno said. The labor ministry rejected about half of the record 938 worker claims for 2006 asking for compensation for illness or death linked to overwork. 141 out of 355 cases of approved compensation belonged to employees in their 50s. The number of those in their 30s rose by 31 % from 2005. "We saw that the trend of people in their 20s and 30s being most prone to mental diseases was particularly strong in the past year," said labor ministry official Takashi Amano. "The working environment still remained severe for workers. In many cases, workers faced so many demands while receiving limited support, putting strenuous pressure on them mentally", he said. 819 cases of employees with mental illness were caused by overwork, but just 205 were given compensation. In 176 cases, these workers killed themselves or attempted to commit suicide, and 66 out of these cases received compensation. 40 % of the 819 were in their 30s, and those in their 20s represented 18.5 %. The groups that are most prone to death or disease from overwork were those from the transport industry, with 27 % of all the applicants.