



Work to Live or Live to Work: The Feasibility of the Shortened Workweek in the United States

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Introduction

The Fair Labor Standards Act mandated the forty-hour workweek in 1940. Since, this act has redefined American labor culture. The purpose of enacting this federal law was to provide the American working class time for leisure and to eradicate long working hours. However, today the forty-hour standard is instead viewed as the least amount of hours to work in order to earn more and receive additional benefits. For many Americans, a forty-hour week has become so normalized that a quest for a shorter workweek is not at the forefront of governmental aspirations. That is why this topic remains worthy of exploration even decades after the attainment of a standard shortened workweek. The concept of time as a personal value steered the way for massive reduction in labor hours over the course of two centuries and that concept remains a core component of the debate today. The principle beliefs in support of or in objection to creating a shorter workweek revolve around time and feasibility. What amount of time is needed to be productive at work? What are the benefits of a shortened workweek and would it dismantle the difference between full and part time work? Are Americans potentially willing to give up material gain to have more personal time and how would it all work? This paper aims to examine these questions by exploring the historical relevance of shorter hour efforts in America, providing background on the standards of other nations, and by evaluating the data available regarding the pros and the cons of implementing a shortened workweek. Having a forty-hour workweek as a federal law where there was once no limit on hours worked in the United States

means continued progress towards a shortened workweek is possible. The real question is whether or not it is feasible in today's American infrastructure?

The Story of America's Shortened Workweek

"The length of the work days...has historically been the central issue raised by the American Labor movement during its most dynamic periods of organization (Roediger & Foner, 1989)."

By modern standards, shorter working hours may appear to be a dispassionate issue but it was once a human rights crusade. For many Americans, it took more than a century of determined efforts to gain the right to leisure. Due to the fight for a shortened workweek by millions of Americans, outright progressive efforts for governmental change found groundbreaking steam in the 19th century. Yet it was not until the 20th century that a forty-hour standard became federal law. Since then, the demand for shorter hours in the United States has essentially fallen off the political stage, whereas once it was a hugely important national debate, movement and political issue (Whaples, 2014). Nevertheless, the American working class has long pursued a shorter workday. "In effect, the progress towards a shorter work-day and a shorter work week is a history of the labor movement itself," George Meany, 1956 (Roediger & Foner, 1989). Even the United Nations considers each individual's right to leisure a human rights matter. In the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights it states, "everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours (Preamble, Article 24, 1948)." A contemporary movement to gain a shortened workweek would be an evolved crusade driven

by continued economic and ideological progression in comparison to two centuries ago when it was a fight to gain basic human rights.

Colonial America

Colonial American labor practices revolved around utilizing daylight to work, which often equated into dawn to dusk hours. It is not to say that colonial Americans worked more or less hours than Americans of the 19th or 20th century, it is simply that their type of work was all together different. During the colonial period, a large majority of Americans worked agricultural jobs in a self-employed capacity. In an agricultural setting, work hours were based on work performed for the necessity to produce and was highly affected by seasons (Whaples, 2014). Therefore it was common to work longer hours during the summer months and shorter hours during the winter months. A sun up to sun down work schedule may mean fourteen-hour days during summer months but since work life coexisted with home life, labor and leisure intermingled. The Statute of Artificers of 1562, although meant to impose worker restrictions, allowed three hours for breaks and rest in the warmer months and two and half hours during the colder months. Thus, with breaks for food and rest, most workdays would average out to roughly ten hours (Roediger & Foner, 1989). Additionally, labor in colonial America was done at a more relaxed pace partly due to the home based agricultural setting (Whaples, 2014).

A few efforts were made to limit working hours during the colonial period, such as in 1670 when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed a law mandating ten-hour workdays and by 1725 many American colonies agreed to ban work on Sundays. These random attempts rarely

had mass appeal and were not highly affective. Despite sporadic efforts for hour caps, the colonial period in America maintained a first light to dark workday, particularly Protestant Americans. Protestants felt that prosperity earned by hard work was a sign of God's approval and so they resolutely aimed to work hard each day. Overall, colonial America's work hours were formed around the nature of seasonal agricultural labor and societal beliefs on hard work and so the practice of long working days was not protested (Whaples, 2014). That would change with the onset of an increasingly industrialized United States.

American Revolutionary Period

The atmosphere of the Revolutionary War period was one of progressive, democratic thinking. The thought of 'time' as a personal value was emerging and as a result working during the entirety of daylight hours began to be thought of as unnecessary (Roediger & Foner, 1989). One line of thought at the time emphasized a need for free time away from work to purposefully engage in democracy. In reality, the increased development of merchant capitalism and the onset of the American Industrial Revolution created issues for American laborers. The American Revolutionary War played a role in the industrialization of America because of the need to produce quickly for the war efforts. Merchant capitalism in turn became the beginning of worker exploitation because it created more wageworkers. A greater number of wageworkers produced additional costs for business owners. Therefore, in order to keep wage costs low employers often times found ways to take advantage of employees. The days of breaks for meals and rest began to dissipate while still requiring a sun up to sun down work schedule (Whaples, 2014).

Furthermore, skilled work began to decrease as unskilled work at lower wages and for longer hours created a competition for the type of labor performed. It was becoming harder for

skilled laborers to earn a good wage as the working landscape changed into mass production related work and the employer had all the power to set wages and hours. Long days of difficult labor and low pay created unrest in the American working class and the demand for time outside of their job increased. The first prominent American strike was in May of 1791 when the Philadelphia Carpenters unsuccessfully went on strike for a ten-hour day. The increased practice of worker exploitation to keep employer cost low continued into the 19th century (Roediger & Foner, 1989).

19th Century: A Century of Labor Fights for Labor Rights

“Indeed, there is good reason to believe that working hours in the mid-nineteenth century constitute the most prodigious work effort in the entire history of humankind (Schor, 1957).”

The 19th century is widely known for the Industrial Revolution. The onset of the Industrial Revolution and the lack of federal mandates to regulate working conditions during this economic change defined the entire labor movement of the 19th century. The Industrial Revolution caused a fast shift from primarily rural to an urban environment. As the pace of life increased, manufacturing moved from a home operation to mass production in factories. While much advancement occurred as the result of the Industrial Revolution, a negative affect was dismal employment conditions for the poor, working class (Industrial Revolution, 2014). The Industrial Revolution allowed for low wages, dangerous working conditions, extensive hours, and no real job security. The urbanization and industrialization of America created and brought to light labor issues and hours worked to the forefront of politics (Whaples, 2013). What takes place in the 19th century is unrelenting demand for labor rights. Union efforts, strikes and cries

from the American working class generally met with a lack of government and business support to implement change.

The hard truth is that most individuals needed to work long hours to survive. Generally, workers had “little to no rights” to negotiate for fair working conditions throughout the Industrial Revolution and so Americans began to assume an all day work expectation that lacked breaks or time for leisure (Industrial Revolution, 2014). Work hours increased 11 to 18% from 1800 to 1850. Hours increased because companies wanted to maximize the output of their factories and so kept them running as long and often as possible, not to mention the incredibly low wages that then forced workers to put in long hours to get by. All of this meant that many Americans worked ten to eighteen hours a day, six days a week. For men, women and sometimes children, working a seventy-hour workweek was life and what became a catalyst for the first real ‘shorter hours movement’ as it became an ever-growing topic for the American worker. Even as far back as the early 19th century, debates advocated for less hours in order to protect worker health and to relieve unemployment (Whaples, 2014).

Momentum grew for labor rights in the 19th century with the assistance of labor unions. Unions developed during the 1800s out of the need to protect workers who faced dangerous working conditions and increased hours. Unions both fought for worker’s rights and led the movement to cap hours generally with strikes (Labor Movement, 2014). Workers used strikes under the impression that withholding labor would force the hand of the employer regarding worker demands. However, during the 19th century, the United States Government never sided with a union involved in labor disputes (Dumhoff, 2014). The first call for an eight-hour day was made in the 1830’s, accompanied by numerous strikes and protests in places like New York City and Philadelphia. Between 1833 and 1837, it is reported that 172 labor strikes occurred in the

United States and of those thirty-one were about the number of hours worked. “The most frequent cause of complaint among working people during the Age of Jackson was the lack of leisure,” Helen L. Sumner (Roediger & Foner, 1989). Notwithstanding frequent worker attempts, most businesses did not support reduced hours and there were no federal mandates to implement shorter hour practices. Nonetheless, through the fight a strong belief emerged that individuals should have a day that they “controlled” away from their employers demands. The argument in part became about ‘time’ (Whaples, 2013).

Strikes kept a spark alive on the national stage and by the 1840s the government made attempts to intervene in the labor rights cause. With labor rights and hours worked increasing as a major national topic, in 1840 President Martin Van Buren created an executive order for all Federal employees in manual labor jobs to work a ten-hour day (Roediger & Foner, 1989). Women participated in political efforts as well. In 1845, Sarah Bagley of the New England Female Labor Reform Association petitioned state legislature to get involved in the number of hours worked. Some states did create laws with hour caps for women, including New Hampshire in 1847 and Pennsylvania in 1848. Nonetheless, even as attempts to pass bills and acts in favor of improved working conditions were happening, contracts between employer and employee legally defined the number of hours worked (Whaples, 2014).

The other most widely known event of the 19th century was the American Civil War. In the decades prior to the Civil War, work life continued to increase in pace. Factory settings imposed long hours and as a result cities around the nation continued to strike for shorter hours. The Civil War revitalized the effort. "Out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hours' agitation," Marx (Delaney, 2013). Americans were demanding an eight-hour day and through the 1860s there were many eight-hour

organizations that developed. Worker rights' groups used the same arguments made by abolitionists regarding the cruelty of slavery and the long hours imposed upon slaves, in addition to the belief that it negatively affected the economy. For example, Grand Eight Hours Leagues developed nationwide and called for a united workforce and a standard eight-hour day. In response, eight states adopted eight-hours laws but they were mostly ineffective. Because of the continued unimaginable hours American's worked a day, including young children, aggressive action heightened in the last several decades of the 19th century (Whaples, 2014).

Partly spurred by the 1874 stock market crash, unemployment and small wages created an atmosphere of greater opposition among laborers. By 1886, the issue was a hot button item. At that time the Knights of Labor organization was the largest union with 700,000 members. One of the beliefs of the Knights of Labor was that shorter hours reduced unemployment. Strikes occurred all over the nation and trade unionists adopted shorter working hours as a demand. To continue to push for the reduction in work hours, the Knights of Labor supported a national May Day Strike in their call for the eight-hour day. The May Day slogan is famously known as "Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest and eight hours for what you will." One quarter of a million people participated in the May Day Strike. However, the strike ended in violence three days later in Chicago after tensions between strikers and police erupted resulting in several casualties. In essence, the American working-class was demanding the right to leisure (Whalen, K., 2014). Yet, by 1890 the average manufacturing employee worked sixty-hour weeks (Delaney, 2013). Workers were demanding shorter hours but not seeing the results within their government (Whalen, K., 2014).



20th Century: Efforts Becoming Results

"Time to eat, time to live, time to be happy, time to be a person,"

union worker - 1919 (Delaney, A., 2013).

The new century met a shocked American people when the 1900 census reported that two million children were working in mills, factories and in "the streets" all across the United States. Working American's concerns regarding reasonable working hours remained heightened entering the new century (Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916 2014). The issue was now too big to not take action. Unfortunately, as efforts for reduced hours and federal mandates for child labor laws moved forward, the cause hit an early bump. In 1905 the United States Supreme Court decided in *Lochner v. New York*, that it was unconstitutional for the government to limit the number of hours a laborer worked. They reasoned that allowing the government to limit the hours worked meant a worker did not have a right to contract for employment (*Lochner v. New York* 198 U.S. 45 (1905), 2014). Despite these early roadblocks, labor rights issues fought on. "For more than a hundred years, workers successfully pushed for shorter and shorter hours as productivity kept increasing. In the early 1900s, progress appeared unstoppable. Soon, it seemed, people would hardly have to work at all (Delaney, A., 2013)."

Some states and industries were indeed making efforts. By 1900, 26% of states had maximum hour laws for women, which increased to 58% by 1910. Additionally, specific trades were setting their own standards such as the printing industry, which began using a standard eight-hour day by 1906. In 1912, the Federal Public Workers Act passed. This Act decreed that all United States Government workers now had eight-hour contracted workdays. By this time both the state and federal government were attempting to create some hour limits partly in an effort to meet the demands of angry workers and adamant unions. The year 1912 was also the first year when the Supreme Court decided in favor of labor rights in *Muller vs. Oregon*. This decision upheld a state's regulation of "women's working hours (Whaples, 2014)." Then famously in 1914, Henry Ford of Ford Motor Company mandated an eight-hour day and doubled worker's pay in an effort to reduce turnover. His decision was met with reservation from stakeholders but proved successful. He truly believed that his company's high rate of turnover was more costly. Much like Ford's five-day a week mandate in 1926, this event was widely reported on and considered ahead of its time (American Experience: Henry Ford, 2013). The biggest win for shorter hours up to that point occurred with the passage of the Adamson Act in 1916. With the Adamson Act there was finally a federal law setting an hour cap on an industry. It stated the railroad industry had to implement a forty-eight hour workweek and this symbolized a major labor rights victory, especially for unions since this act was passed after the 'threat of a nationwide strike.'" Although progress was being gained inch by inch, it is reported that business owners felt that shorter hours was a manipulative means to raise wages (Whaples, 2014).

The onset of World War I meant that the need for workers increased and unemployment decreased. In turn this allowed workers a chance to bargain for shorter hours and it was during this time frame that unions had actual bargaining power. By the time the war was ending, the

National War Labor Board supported the eight-hour workday. President Woodrow Wilson even ordered to have the meat packing industry move from sixty-hour workweeks to forty-eight-hours. However, all this did not mean there were not still setbacks (Whalen, 2014). For example, in 1919 blast furnace workers went on strike because they were working eighty-four hours of dangerous labor each week. This strike actually failed (Whaples, 2014) and as the 1920's rolled in, unions lost some of their bargaining power as hours worked began to stabilize (Domhoff, 2013).

The major national and world events of the 20th century truly played a key role in the amount of hours American's were working. World War I resulted in the lowering of unemployment to produce for the cause of the war. The Great Depression that followed the 1929 Stock Market Crash had the opposite effect. The early years of the 1930's were riddled by an economic crisis and nearly one third of the American workforce was unemployed. At its worse, the unemployment rate was twenty-five percent during the Great Depression. President Herbert Hoover felt that lowered hours would assist in resolving the crisis and implemented the Commission for Work Sharing, which is reported to have saved millions of jobs. Rather than cutting wages, he proposed that hours are shortened to spread the work around. It was around this time that the United States Government nearly approved a thirty-hour workweek. The Black-Connery Bill created by Senator Hugo Black actually passed in the Senate but met with unfortunate timing as President Roosevelt had just won the 1932 Presidential election. With the election of Franklin Roosevelt, the Black-Connery Bill failed in the house because of Roosevelt's unease with one component of the bill that mandated no importation of goods from workers who worked more than thirty hours in a week (Whaples, 2014).

Labor issues were a tremendously important political issue in the 1932 Presidential election and with Franklin D. Roosevelt the cause had a champion. In an effort to relieve the economic crisis and widespread joblessness created by the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt unveiled The New Deal program. The New Deal program was a set of domestic initiatives that focused on “Relief, Recovery and Reform.” A cornerstone of the New Deal was the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, known as NIRA. The main aspect of NIRA was that it “suspended antitrust laws to allow for industries to enforce fair trade codes.” This was important because it meant there would be “less competition and greater wages,” which would create employment and reestablish business in order to recover from the Great Depression. It had a huge momentary impact with roughly 2.3 million employers participating. Senator Hugo Black, of the Black-Connery bill, even supported Roosevelt’s NIRA. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court decided 1935 that the U.S. government putting regulations over the poultry industry was an unfounded use of Congress’s power in the *Schechter Poultry Corp v. the United States* case. It consequently declared NIRA unconstitutional. This decision was known as “Black Monday (Grossman, 2014).” It was in response to the Black Monday decision that President Roosevelt made his famous quote, “we have been relegated to the horse-and buggy definition of interstate commerce,” in reference to his conviction that the *Schechter* decision hindered the United States government’s ability to deal with national problems (Hall, 2001).

President Roosevelt made a promise to the American people in his 1936 campaign that he would “find a constitutional way” of protecting workers. Roosevelt won the election by a landslide. Clearly to do so, it would take more than legislation. In order to make any mandate stick, it required an important judicial change of direction. Since Roosevelt was so critical of the Supreme Court and their striking down of NIRA, and other roadblocks for The New Deal

programs, he proposed a court-packing plan where he would add up to six judges to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court responded with an about-turn decision known historically as "White Monday" in 1937. In the *West Coast Hotel Company v. Parrish* case the Supreme Court upheld a set minimum wage, which was a reversal of a previous action. It famously is referred to "a switch in time saved nine." There forward a new legal attitude developed regarding decisions on labor issues, including a cap on hours worked (Grossman, 2014)."

Despite judicial stumbles on the road to improved labor conditions, Roosevelt had an ally in Secretary Frances Perkins. Perkins was asked by Roosevelt to be a proponent for change in pro-labor legislation. When asked to be the Secretary of Labor in 1933, Perkins responded by stating she would only accept if there would be a "floor under wages," a "ceiling over hours" and if child labor was eradicated. After the Supreme Court struck down NIRA, the Roosevelt-Perkins Public Contracts Act of 1936 was laid out specifying an eight-hour day and forty-hour week. Although this act was "diluted when passed," it was a great first step on the way for better pay and working conditions. Perkins specifically worked with a group of lawyers in an effort to find a way to create a labor act that would be upheld in the Supreme Court. All the while, Roosevelt held strong in his shortened workweek commitment. In 1937 Roosevelt tried again with another bill sent to Congress. This bill too needed reworking but eventually became the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (Grossman, 2014).

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938 is the cornerstone achievement the shortened hours movement. Roosevelt's goal "to end starvation wages and intolerable hours," had succeeded. The FLSA set the minimum workweek at forty-four hours, set a minimum wage per hour and finally banned child labor. Children under the age of sixteen had endured dangerous job conditions and unimaginable hours for more than a century before a Federal law

existed to protect them. The Fair Labor Standards Act was amended in 1940 to make the standard workweek forty-hours. Additionally, it mandated overtime pay for hours worked over the standard limit (Grossman, 2014). Americans had fought for fair working conditions and now where once they worked seventy-hour weeks, they were now afforded leisure with the forty-hour workweek. The passing of the Fair Labor Standards Act was the most important achievement for worker protection ever implemented in the United States and it took more than a century of political and governmental efforts to accomplish it.

Shorter Hour Efforts since the FLSA

Generations of American workers toiled away in gruesome working conditions to such a point that it became a massive political issue for decade after decade. The punishing hours and conditions for the working class contributed to the rise of labor unions as an advocate willing to take aggressive efforts for labor rights. Basically, passion for the cause led the fight. However, by the end of the 20th century, there was no major movement for the reduction of work hours. The labor standards put in place from the Fair Labor Standards Act have remained unchanged. Occasional strikes still make national news but lack the luster and passion of previous efforts. For example, in 1962 the New York City Electricians demanded a twenty five-hour workweek (Industrial Workers of the World, 2014) and in 1979 Rep. John Conyers pushed unsuccessfully for a thirty-five hour week (Delaney, 2013). Although a shortened workweek currently lacks national support, there are still organizations and unions that demand shorter hours. The Knights of Labor, a huge proponent of the movement in the 19th century, still exists today. The “new” Knights of Labor aim to bring about the “six-hour day/ twenty-four hour workweek (Knights of Labor, 2014).” The Industrial Workers of the World Union also argues for the need to shorten

the workweek based on the benefits to employee and the economy (Industrial Workers of the World, 2014).

While the determination to propose shorter hours has seen sparks of life since the FLSA, it has long been a diminished issue for the American people. Yet slowly some industries continue to reduce hours and there is still desire for greater leisure time. A 2003 NewDream.org survey reported that fifty-two percent of those surveyed would be willing to “trade one day off a week for an equivalent pay reduction (Golden & Gebreselassie, 2007).” In a 2013 Huffington Post/You.gov poll, eighteen percent of those surveyed stated they would prefer less work and would work less for less pay. That stands to believe that twenty percent of the American population would support a four-day workweek (Delaney, 2013). One aspect of today’s thinking regarding a shortened workweek has to do with economics. Basically as technology advances, allowing for more productive workers, fewer people are needed to get work done. That would mean that “overemployed people” would work less and “underemployed people” could have work to do. Since the effort no longer is about immediate change for decent working conditions, any movement for change now would likely focus on the feasibility of making changes to the American economic infrastructure in order to support a shortened workweek. Though it seems American’s, now legally protected from the working conditions of the 19th century, are less concerned about leisure time the potential of a shortened workweek has relevance in today’s society. Furthermore, any effort towards a shortened workweek is benefited from the understanding that it took sacrifices and efforts from the working class people from years passed to achieve the current standard forty-hour week American’s know today.

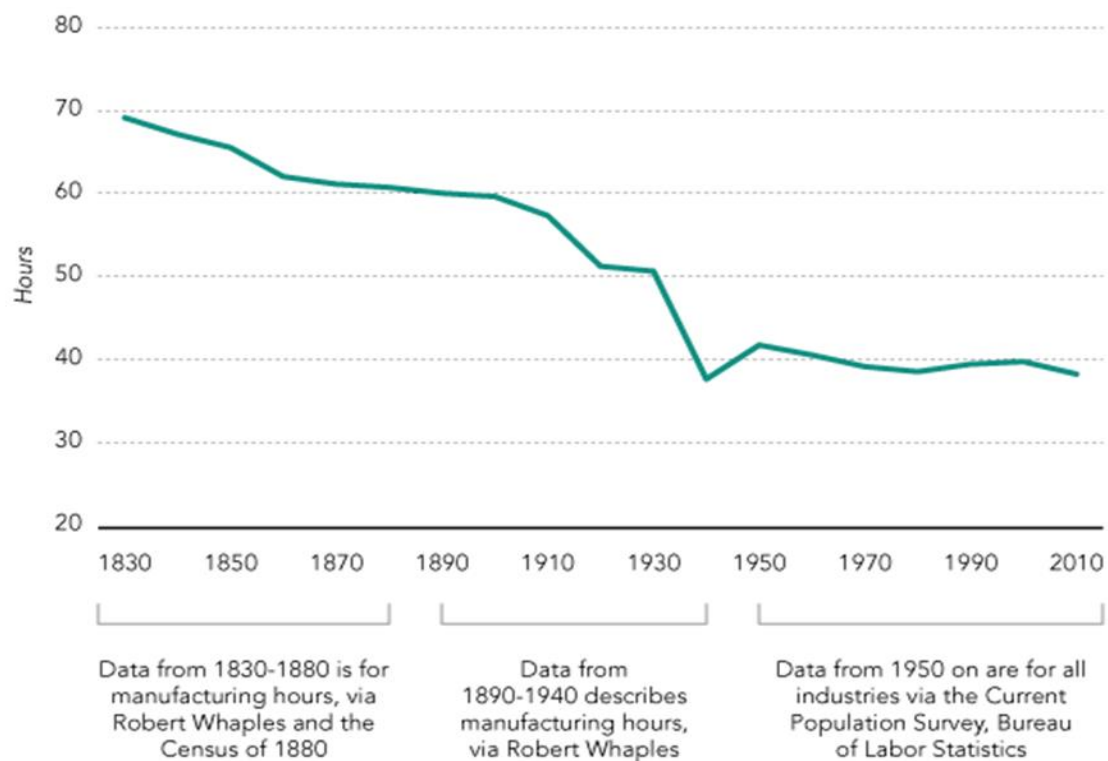
“Since the length of the working day is itself one of the principal repressive factors imposed upon the pleasure principle, the

reduction of the working day...is the first prerequisite for freedom.” Herbert Marcuse, 1955 (Roediger & Foner, 1989).

The graph below depicts the steady reduction of hours worked in manufacturing jobs over the course of a 180-year period (Delaney, A., 2013).

The American Workweek

For a century, the American workweek got shorter and shorter as labor demanded more time off, but the rate of change has slowed dramatically since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the demands have ceased. Hours data prior to 1940 are limited to the manufacturing industry, but what's available shows the pattern.



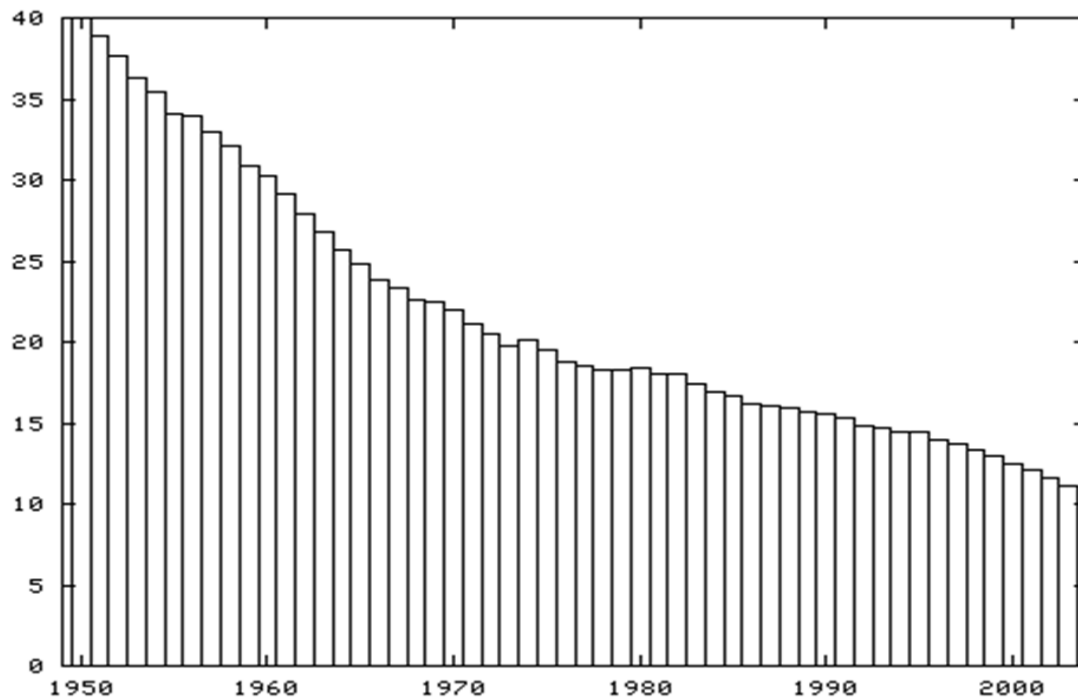
Sources: Robert Whaples, Wake Forest University and the Economic History Association; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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The chart below represents the amount of hours required today to meet the production rate from the 1950. What took 40 hours to do in 1950 only requires 12 hours by modern

standards (Rauch, 2000).



The Success of the European Approach to the Shortened Workweek

Though the United States all but stopped efforts towards a shortened workweek after the Fair Labor Standards Act, many countries in Western Europe have incorporated a workweek even shorter than America's into their culture. Germany, the Netherlands, France and Belgium are all examples of counties where the standard hours worked are less than in the United States. Workers in Germany and Belgium alone work an average of fourteen to sixteen hours less per week than Americans. It is these countries with their economic stability and low unemployment rates that portray the potential success a shortened workweek in the United States (Sauter, Hess, Nelson, 2012).

Germany

In 2011, German workers averaged 25.6 hours per week and about 1,300 hours per year. In conjunction with this set up, Germany had an unemployment rate of 6% in 2011. Also in 2011, the average wage per hour was \$35.33, which held the seventh spot for highest wages in the world (Sauter, Hess, Nelson, 2012). In terms of economic power, the German economy is the largest economy in Europe and the fifth largest in the world (The World Factbook, 2014). Manufacturing makes up the bulk of the economic activity in Germany. For example, Germany is the leading exporter of vehicles, machinery and chemicals (The World Factbook, 2014). Germany can therefore represent a successful manufacturing based workforce that utilizes a shortened workweek.

Two policies have led to the German population working far less hours per week than Americans. The most important policy is that of “Kurzarbeit.” When translated into English Kurzarbeit means “short time.” This policy allows for German companies to cut their worker’s time while the German government pays the workers some of the lost income. This has aided in lowering the unemployment rate because companies are able to keep their entire workforce but still save money by having the German government subsidize worker wages (Ewing, 2010). The other policy that has led to the success of the shortened workweek in Germany is that of “work-time accounts.” Work-time accounts allow German workers to accrue overtime hours when business is booming and to use those hours to get paid time-off when business is slower. This policy helps drive down the average hours worked per week (Ewing, 2010). As a result of these policies a lot of the German workers are not considered full-time in the same sense as in America. In 2011, 22.1% of workers in Germany were part-time and 14.7% were considered temporary (Sauter, Hess, Nelson, 2012). These workers may not work as many hours as Americans, but their part-time or temporary status stands to mean that the government

supplements their lives. Germany has a comprehensive welfare system for its inhabitants and for the German culture, this system allows for a successful use of a shortened workweek (U.S. Library of Congress, 2014).

It has been reported though that many of the large manufacturing companies, including DaimlerChrysler and Siemens, are pushing for their workers to put in a standard forty-hours per week in order to stay competitive with the rest of the world (The Economist, 2004). However, the German unions are pushing back on this possible change. If the German policy of Kurzarbeit ends and the government does not subsidize worker wages, companies may be forced to lay-off a significant number of their workforce and the unemployment rate could skyrocket. The success of the shortened workweek and the unemployment rate are tied very closely to this policy.

Netherlands

The workforce of the Netherlands averaged 25.7 hours per week and 1,336 hours per year in 2011. The unemployment rate during that same time was 4.4%, and the average wage per hour was \$42.67, which was the fourth highest in the world (Sauter, Hess, Nelson, 2012). Within the euro-zone, the Netherlands has the sixth largest economy, which is largely focused on food processing as well as petroleum refining (The World Factbook, 2014).

Much like Germany, the Netherlands also has policies in place that support a shortened workweek. The Working Hours Act (Arbeidstijdenwet) was established in 1995 and provided the Dutch workforce a limitation on the number of hours worked per week. Additionally, it regulated the amount of rest breaks given throughout the day. This act also allowed for flexible working hours, maternity leave and working from home options (Tak, de Veer, van Heijst, Suurd, 2014). Work and Care (arbeid en zorg) also had a huge impact on the number of hours

worked by the Dutch labor force. This policy was established in 1985 and identified the importance of having a personal life as well as a working life. This policy was used in conjunction with Policy Plan Emancipation, or Beleidsplan Emancipatie, which highlighted the need for women to have economic independence. This plan allowed for women to be included in the workforce while at the same time recognizing the need for flexible schedules to take care of the family unit (Tak, de Veer, van Heijst, Suurd, 2014).

Also like Germany, much of the Dutch workforce is considered part-time, which in America could result in no additional benefits. In 2011, 37.2% of the workers were part-time, and this number rose slightly to 37.8% in 2012. In comparison, the amount of part-time workers in the United States was at 12.6% in 2011 and 13.4% in 2012 (OECD Library, 2013). Unlike Germany, the Netherlands has a comprehensive safety net for its citizens and it does not favor specific groups, as it is inclusive to all. The main principle behind these policies is that anyone who can work should work and that everyone should take an equal role in society. In turn, those who cannot work, including the elderly and disabled, should be taken care of. Also, there are dispensations for minorities, low-income families and those who are homeless (Government of the Netherlands). As long as the Dutch citizens have such a comprehensive safety net, it does not have a big impact on the economy when so many work shorter hours and are considered part-time.

France

The French work an average of 26.8 hours a week and 1,392 hours annually. The number of hours worked per year has decreased by 100 hours since 1995 due to the importance the French people place on leisure time (Sauter, Hess, Nelson, 2012). Additionally, the average

wage remains high at \$34.26 per hour, which is the 8th highest in the world. In 2011, the unemployment rate was 9.3%, which is more than the Netherlands and Germany (Sauter, Hess, Nelson, 2012). France's economy is based primarily on tourism with at least 82 million people visit the country each year (The World Factbook, 2014). Their GDP in 2013 was \$2.276 trillion or the 10th highest in the world (The World Factbook, 2014). In comparison, the United States GDP is \$16.72 trillion, which is first in the world (The World Factbook, 2014).

Like Germany and the Netherlands, a percentage of the French workforce is considered part-time or temporary. In 2012, 13.8% of French workers were part-time (OECD Library, 2013). The percentage of French workers considered temporary has increased from 2.8% in 2002 to most recently 9.9% (Gramain, Exertier, Herbillon, 2006). France though has a social safety net for its citizens and most of these policies go through the Sécurité sociale, or the Social Security Agency. This agency has four branches that cover issues including old age, work injuries, disease, family support and health care (Gramain, Exertier, Herbillon, 2006). The French government spends a significant amount of their GDP on these social safety nets. There was a 7.9% increase in government spending on social protections from 1974 to 1985 (19.4% to 27.3%) and a 3.3% increase in spending from 1985 to 2002 (27.3% to 30.6%) (Gramain, Exertier, Herbillon, 2006). Like the Netherlands, these policies allow people to work shorter hours, or work part-time and still remain eligible for benefits.

Belgium

Another Western European country that utilizes a shortened workweek is Belgium. The workers of Belgium averaged of 27.8 hours per week and 1,446 hours per year. The average wage in Belgium was \$38.90 in 2012, which was the fifth highest in the world (Sauter, Hess,

Nelson, 2012). Belgium had unemployment rate of 7.2% in 2011, below the 9.1% rate the United States had during that same timeframe. The percentage of people in Belgium that were considered part-time was 18.8% in 2011 and 18.7% in 2012 (OECD Library, 2013). This level is significantly lower than the Germany, Netherlands and France, but still higher than the 12.6% in 2011 rate in the United States (OECD Library, 2013).

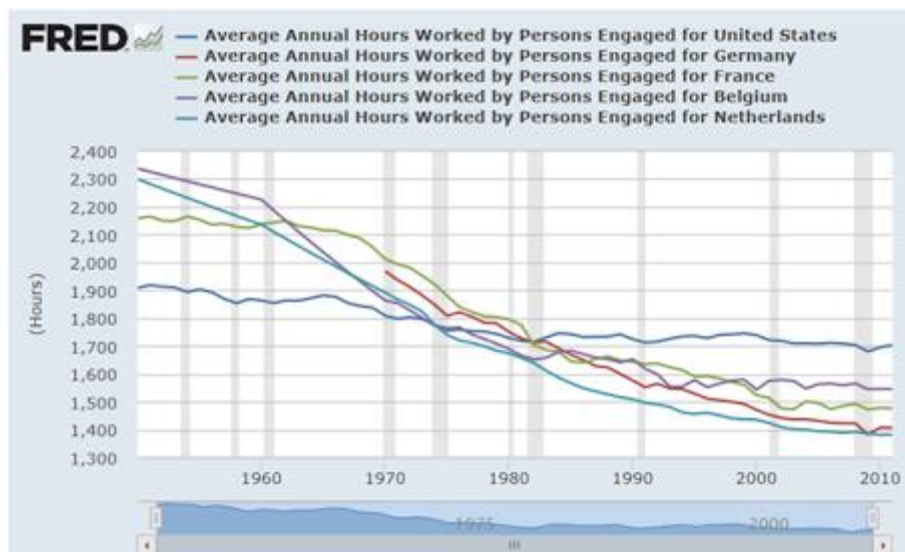
In terms of economics, Belgium is industry based, and uses its central location to increase trade among other European countries. Their GDP in 2013 was \$421 billion, the 33rd largest in the world (The World Factbook, 2014). Following suit, Belgium also has an extensive welfare program. The welfare program includes unemployment insurance, medical benefits, family allowance, retirement and illness pay (Encyclopedia of the Nations). Each region in Belgium also provides assistance to the poor, including low-income housing. However, these programs come at a large cost as the public debt of Belgium is at about 100% of its GDP (The World Factbook, 2014). The main issue facing Belgium and the number of hours worked per week is their debt. (The World Factbook, 2014). Their debt has significant consequences because to cut the deficit the government of Belgium may have to cut the number of social programs provided to its inhabitants. If this occurs, more of the population will have to work longer hours in order to get benefits.

The European Difference

As it now stands there are several reasons as to why these particular European countries follow a shortened workweek in comparison to the United States. For example, in some cases American's work fifty percent more than the German and French workforce because domestic tax rates are lower in the United States. This basically means that it pays more to work more in

America. Other reasons the American labor force works more than countries like France is because European countries are far more unionized than in the United States. After the adoption of the FLSA, the power of labor unions declined in America. Furthermore, American's focus more on status while Europeans place more value on leisure. In many ways status refers to material possessions, which cost money. Studies show that Europeans are thought of as 'happier' than their American counterparts because Europeans find happiness in leisure rather than the pursuit of status. In the American culture, success is valued and success is achieved through hard work (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2014). No matter how success and happiness are ranked or what the tangible reasons are as to why American's work more than Europeans, these countries at least provide an observable shortened workweek infrastructure that has largely been successful for each individual country.

Below is a graph from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis depicting those countries whose workforce puts in the least amount of hours compared to the hours put in by American workers (Economic Research, 2014).



Benefits of a Shortened Workweek

There is a large and growing amount of research available on the subject of the benefits associated with a shortened workweek (Dailey, 2014). Furthermore many top executives have publicly commented on the benefits of a shortened workweek. Google CEO Larry Page stated during a business summit “the idea that everyone needs to work frantically to meet people’s needs is just not true, for example (Peterson, 2014). The research available helps to substantiate the notion that a shortened workweek is at least worthy of exploration in America. Current research on the benefits of working less, looking at the success of other countries with shortened workweeks and at ways companies can incorporate a shortened workweek paints a picture of the feasibility of a shortened workweek in the United States. There are multiple benefits associated with a shortened workweek but this particular section will primarily focus on employee stress reduction as a result of work-life balance, environmental benefits, potential cost savings to employers and probable productivity increases related to a shortened workweek.

Although some drawbacks exist, there is merit behind the benefits of a shortened workweek. From palpable environmental and financial savings to the lowering of stress levels, a shortened workweek can cater to employee and employer needs. Many companies within the United States are just now understanding the benefits of a shortened workweek, whereas Western European nations have used these methods for decades with great success (Schor, 2010). Much like the European countries that have adopted shortened workweeks, a shortened workweek in America could result in reducing unemployment rates, improving the environment, creating a greater distribution of income, improving overall health, and establishing a healthy work-life balance (Center for a New American Dream, 2014). In an October 2014 survey of employees and human resources professionals in the Des Moines metro area, 52.17% of the employees

surveyed indicated that they felt a shortened workweek would give them the appropriate time needed to complete their work tasks (2014MPA260Drake). This demonstrates that support is likely growing for a shortened workweek.

Improved Health

Probably one of the biggest benefits of a shortened workweek is the reduction of stress on the individual. While the United States does have a forty-hour workweek standard, “85.8 percent of males and 66.5 percent of females work more than forty-hours per week” and America lags behind much of the world in terms of paid time off or paid sick time. What this is getting at is Americans are working too much (Pozin, 2014). More work invariably means more stress and therefore a lower quality of life. With a shortened workweek, employees are allowed additional time and additional time can very easily be correlated to reduced stress. Establishing a work-life balance is very beneficial to lowering stress levels. In the United States, many citizens feel overworked. Out of thirty-three developed countries, the United States ranked 11th in the number of hours worked per week and many professionals work over sixty-five-hours per week (Covert, 2014).

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), reducing employee stress levels in working environments can be achieved by establishing a functional work-life balance, creating a support network of colleagues and friends, and maintaining a positive, yet relaxed, point of view. If employers lower hours and institute a shortened workweek, employee stress levels should lower as they would be allowed more time to maintain a work-life balance (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). According to a survey by human resource professionals, fifty-four percent of respondents indicated they invest

more time into work than their personal lifestyle. Contrarily, four percent of survey participants felt they spent more time with their lifestyle than work (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

The Center for a New American Dream conducted a national survey of individuals in 2004 about their choice to obtain more time outside of work. Of Americans who reported a decline of income, eighty-five percent of the respondents were still happy about their lifestyle change (Schor, 2010). In another survey, conducted by human resource professionals, eighty percent of respondents indicated they would use a shortened workweek to spend more time with family members, and over half of the survey participants would spend the time focusing on personal hobbies. By using this approach to raise overall employee happiness, stress levels would be lowered through maintaining a better work-life balance. In life satisfaction, the top four ranked countries are European and are known for focusing on improving work-life balance, whereas America ranks 11th (de Graaf, 2010). Increasing employee happiness and lowering stress levels can improve work-life balance and overall health. In turn, healthy and balanced individuals are more productive (Dailey, 2014).

Another benefit of a shortened workweek appears to be an increased life span due to lowered stress. Western Europeans live longer than Americans (de Graaf, 2010). Many Western Europeans work less hours and their societies as a whole have longer life spans (Schor, 2010). When comparing quality of life indices of countries, such as life expectancy, the overall health of West European nations is better than the United States. From 1980 until 2010, the United States has dropped from eleventh to fiftieth place in average life expectancy. Even though the United States spends about twice as much per capita for health care, Americans are almost twice as likely to suffer from heart disease, diabetes, anxiety, depression, and other diseases (de Graaf,

2010). Moreover, a shortened workweek can help individuals make healthier choices. Studies show people who work longer hours have a habit of making more resource-intensive lifestyle choices (Schor, 2010). For example, people who worked less could obtain more free time to make a meal, instead of grabbing fast food. Nearly fifty percent of respondents in a survey conducted by human resource professionals stated they would choose to exercise with extra time afforded by a shortened workweek. Not only would people spend more time exercising to benefit personal health, they are less likely to choose more convenient choices. This would not only contribute to overall health, but also overall provide environmental benefits (de Graaf, 2010).

In addition to most employees having shortened workweeks, most European countries provide for at least four weeks of paid vacation. Some nations in Africa and Latin America have also passed similar laws (de Graaf, 2010). In contrast, the United States has no vacation laws. Moreover, nearly half of all Americans are given zero vacation days (Center for a New American Dream, 2014). The top OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries provide at least thirty-five days of paid vacation and paid holidays (Center for a New American Dream, 2014). In fact, many European nations currently enjoy six weeks of paid vacation days (Schor, 2010). Shortened workweeks also tends to result in a reduction of absenteeism, decrease job turnover, improved recruiting, decreased administrative and labor costs, and improved employee work/life quality (Golden, 2012).

Environmental Impact

Research suggests that the number of hours worked has a direct impact on the environment. Ecological footprints increase when more hours are worked. Shortened workweeks offer many environmental benefits and many of these benefits are tied to choices based on

convenience. When dining out, individuals use more resources than if they were to cook a meal. People would create less trash by recycling more waste and not buying “throwaway products.” The more convenient choice is easier to make when people feel rushed. Individual behaviors would result in making choices that are less resource-intensive within a shortened workweek (de Graaf, 2010). By reducing working hours to European levels, Americans could “almost automatically reduce their energy/carbon impacts by 20-30 percent.” (de Graaf, 2010). Additionally, people would be given more “time to choose slower and more energy-friendly forms of transport.” With the time gained from a shortened workweek, people could choose to walk or bicycle to places (de Graaf, 2010).

Productivity

Research suggests overworking employees with sixty or more hours per week will be productive for three to four weeks initially, but productivity will eventually decline. Out of the ten most competitive countries, six have prohibited working over forty-eight hours in a week (Covert, 2014). In a survey of human resource professionals in the Central Iowa area, one third of all respondents felt employees spend more than two hours per week on non-work related tasks while at work. This means employers are paying their employees for non-work related tasks. Additionally, fifty-two percent of employees surveyed also agreed that a shortened workweek would be sufficient enough for them to complete the necessary job tasks (2014MPA260Drake). A shortened workweek should lower the amount of non-work related time while being paid to work. Productivity per hour would increase because a larger percentage of time would be focused on work-related tasks (Peterson, 2014). A current Gallup poll found that seventy percent of today’s “American workforce is disengaged on the job, leading to more than \$550 billion in lost productivity annually (Pozin, 2014).”

Generally it appears most productive countries tend to have less working hours (Covert, 2014). German citizens average 1,480 work hours per year, and Greek workers average 2,000 work hours per year. However, the productivity of German workers is almost seventy percent higher (Covert, 2014). Nearly every European nation has used “productivity growth” to reduce hours among workers (Schor, 2010). In a Worldwatch Institute article, Juliet Schor states “Productivity growth is at the core of contemporary market economies. When productivity increases, it is possible to produce a larger quantity of goods and services, or output, with a given level of resources.” When labor productivity grows, workers can produce more goods by working the same amount of hours or produce the same amount of goods by working fewer hours. Many European nations have used productivity growth to reduce total working hours, and many workers report being less stressed and more capable of achieving a fulfilled life (Schor, 2010).

Although some companies do not reduce employee pay with a shortened workweek, other organizations may need to reduce wages or salaries to offset the decrease in productive hours. Recent research suggests that employee happiness poses a greater threat to productivity than continuing to work at the same pay rate (Brutocao & Marshall, 2010). Even if a shortened workweek must also come with a decrease in wages and salaries, employee happiness would still increase because they are allowed more free time. When making a lifestyle change to shorten their workweek at a reduction in pay rate, eighty-five percent of people were happy with their decision. As past recessions have shown, many workers that use a shortened workweek will adapt to their lower income, and most workers ultimately decide to not resume a five-day workweek (Schor, 2010).

The Unemployment Factor

Shortened workweeks allow more people opportunities to work. To reduce unemployment in France, “every seven people working 35 hours allows for another individual to work a 35-hour workweek,” (Chardac, 2011). Much like the arguments in support of a shortened workweek during the Great Depression in America, if three employees are given a thirty-hour workweek in place of a forty-hour workweek, one more employee can work (Grevatt, 2012). United States history shows that President Hoover’s decision to implement work sharing, which is basically the practice of shortening work hours to allow more people to work, helped the U.S. recover from the Great Depression (Whaples, 2013). It has been observed “countries with the largest reduction in work hours had the largest increase in employment rates since the Great Recession (Dailey, 2014).”

It is also argued that unemployment is the result of a lack of demand for ‘goods and services.’ If you have unemployed individuals because there is no demand for a good or service, it makes sense to spread the work out to employ more individuals. Germany is an excellent example of how shorter working hours reduces unemployment. After the last global economic crisis, Germany’s unemployment stayed below the United States, in part due to the government’s encouragement to shorten the workweek instead of companies implementing layoffs. If the United States were to set the average workweek to match that of Germany, it would basically eliminate the unemployment rate in America. Moreover, if companies offer paid time off and other benefits for a shorter workweek, along with likely government subsidies, this creates a long term lasting positive effect on unemployment (Baker, 2012).

Cost Savings

Shortened workweeks would also create cost-savings for employers. Dependence on energy would decrease if a company were open less than 5 days a week, for example. Some cities and states have started changing the approach to the workweek while still working a standard forty-hours and this has even revealed benefits. Beginning in 2008, the state of Utah adopted a shortened four-day workweek for employees, although remained working forty-hours per week. Even with no reduction in working hours, the state reduced energy use by thirteen percent. A year later, they estimated employees saved \$6 million in gasoline expenses. In addition to tangible cost-savings, the state of Utah will also retain employees at a greater rate because eighty-two percent of all state workers want the four-day schedule to continue. El Paso, Texas followed the state of Utah to implement a four-day, ten-hour workweek. Within two months, the city realized substantial savings on custodial services and natural gas at nearly twenty-four percent and fourteen percent, respectively. Electricity use also decreased by 3.2 percent (Brutocao & Marshall, 2010). As a whole, organizational pollution would decline and some could see cost-savings from recycling less waste (Schor, 2010).

To realize these benefits, employers must ensure productivity while reducing working hours. Economies become more sustainable when establishing a good balance of productivity growth and decreased work hours. Improved productivity occurs with shorter hours when concentration on work increases (Schor, 2010). Many companies, such as Treehouse, increase employee efficiency and increase sales by using methods like limiting the use of company email (Covert, 2014). Additionally, organizations also benefit from an increase in employee morale and productivity and a reduction in incidental workplace expenditures, such as custodial costs (Brutocao & Marshall, 2010). Many companies with a shortened workweek enjoy improvement of recruiting and retaining of employees, which also result in cost savings (Covert, 2014).

Treehouse is an online education company and has seen the first-hand success of a shortened workweek. Employees work four days per week for the same average salary as other tech company employees. As a result, the company's revenues have increased and the outlook of employees has been positively impacted (Covert, 2014).

The Center for a New American Dream provides an infographic series on the benefits of the shorter workweek. These graphs are a representation based on the data New American Dream gather regarding the shorter workweek (See Appendices A-B).

Negative Impact of a Shortened Workweek

Currently only thirty-six percent of U.S. companies offer a shortened workweek (Pozin, 2014). In fact, American's work far more than most of the industrialized world (Dailey, 2014). However, any attempts to fairly engage in the potential feasibility for a shortened American workweek requires the consideration of the negative consequences associated with such a huge transition in America's infrastructure. While the decision could have a positive impact on employee morale, improved work-life balance and employee retention, there remains the possibility of adverse effects on output of goods and services, loss of income, and increased stress on administrators.

The Money Issue

In J. Philip Wernette's article, "What About the Four Day Work Week?" he discusses the issue associated with shortening the workweek but not the weekly pay. "Where is the big raise in hourly pay supposed to come from? (Wernette, 1968)." If employees transition from forty-hours to thirty-two hours with the same pay, they are getting a significant raise from their employer. It is necessary for employers to perform a cost/benefits analysis to make an informed decision on if

they can afford this significant pay raise for their employees. The company can weigh these options with potential benefits such as an increase in worker motivation and their likelihood of staying with the company for a much longer duration than with their previous pay. Raising employee pay would most likely reduce their employee rate of turnover and reduce costs in human resources, yet it is possible it will not be enough to cover the significant raise given to employees (Wernette, 1968).

Unless a company offers a shortened workweek at a reduced salary and that employees willingly accept, there is bound to be costs to the company associated with a shortened workweek at the same pay. From research stated in Wernette's article, it boils down to the numbers, as demonstrated in the following example. An employee gets paid nineteen dollars per hour working forty-hours per week and brings home a weekly pay of \$769.00. If that employee were to transition to working thirty-two hours per week with that same weekly take home of \$769, their hourly wage essentially increases to twenty-four dollars per hour. Overall that equates to a twenty-six percent increase in annual pay when, according to the Society for Human Resource Management, the U.S. average base pay increase in salary for 2013 was 4.3% (Society for Human Resource Management, 2013). Depending on the size and economic power of the company, this expense is likely to increase because the company would implement a shorter workweek with multiple employees. That is why it is necessary for a company to look at the whole picture and weigh the cost of a maintained wage with any cost savings related to a shortened workweek.

Another factor companies must consider is if imposing a shortened workweek would require the hiring of additional workers to complete the necessary work. Generally in attempts to lower the unemployment rate, work sharing is instituted. By shortening an employee's

workweek, more employees can be hired to work (Grevatt, 2012). However, companies would also have to consider the additional costs of adding another employee, such as healthcare and paid sick and vacation days. In this scenario, the company does not lose their outputs of goods and services, but rather will have to provide a way to cover the costs of an additional employee benefits. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, an employee's total compensation package costs a private employer an average of \$28.89 per hour. Of that amount, wages account for roughly seventy percent and benefits thirty percent. The costs of all paid leave benefits to a private industry employer including, vacation, holidays, sick and personal leave, averages \$1.98 per hour or almost seven percent of total compensation. Paid vacation accounts for more than half that amount at an average \$1.03 per hour or 3.6 percent of total compensation (White, 2014). Having to pay out more money for employee benefits is a truly a significant cost for employers. Reducing the amount of paid time off an employee receives if that individual is on a shortened workweek could offset this. It is reasonable to think an employer would have some flexibility in setting the amount of paid time off for hours worked.

If every business chose to reduce weekly hours by one-fifth, the total production of goods and services would drop, simply because they are losing out on eight-hours of work every week that could be used to produce more products. If this occurred, the American standard of living could go down, because the real income -the standard of living- of America's workers depends on productivity- the per capita output of goods and services of the American economy. It's possible workers can't produce as many goods and services in a thirty-two hour workweek as they can in a forty-hour workweek (Wernette, 1968).

American Preference

Statistics discussed in Wernette's article also discuss the American preference of obtaining more wealth and the willingness to sacrifice leisure time to get it. Below is a discussion from Wernette that compares the moving trends from 1929 to 1967:

"In 1929, the average work week in manufacturing industries was 50 hours; average gross hourly earnings were \$1.08; average weekly earnings were \$48. In May 1967, the average work week in manufacturing was 40.3 hours; average hourly earnings (including overtime) \$2.80; average weekly earnings was \$112.84. In other words, these workers took less than one tenth of the gains in the form of more leisure, and more than nine tenths in the form of more pay. It seems that Americans are not as interested in buying more leisure as in getting more pay; they are willing to work for the things they want." (Wernette, 1968).

Money is an important value for many Americans. Juliet Schor describes in her book, *The Overspent American*, that by 1991 most American's associated the 'good life' with material possessions. However in 1975, most American's saw the 'good life' as a happy family, for example. It is clear that American's are willing to work more to earn more to obtain more (Schor, 1999). It can be assumed that if a company imposed a shortened workweek at a reduced wage, many individuals would add a part-time job to make up for the lost wages. Since the American working infrastructure functions on a forty-hour workweek as the standard number to be considered full-time, it is that full-time status that is currently sought by workers. Employers added some 3.3 million full-time workers in 2014 but the number of full-time workers in the U.S. is still around 2 million shy of the level before the recession began in 2007. (Wall Street

Journal, 2014). Regarding the need for American's to be at full-time status, the U.S. economy has been in recession, the Wall Street Journal reports:

“The situation of these so-called involuntary part-time workers—those who would prefer to work more than 34 hours a week—has economists puzzling over whether a higher level of part-time employment might be a permanent legacy of the great recession. If so, it could force more workers to choose between underemployment or working multiple jobs to make ends meet, leading to less income growth and weaker discretionary spending (Wall Street Journal, 2014).”

A study to determine hours worked and level of compensation was performed in 1997 by Daniel Hecker and reinforced the idea that although employees express that they would like more time off to spend with family, they continue to choose opportunities to make more money. Hecker notes that there is an obvious correlation between the more hours worked and the more compensation a person will receive. An analysis of long-term trends in hours of work has shown for most full-time employees in major occupational groups, they put in long hours and generally have higher earnings, but also less leisure time (Hecker 1998). The article discusses the reasons why these workers may be compensated more, suggesting that employees are making more sales for more time spent, receiving larger commissions or bonuses for being top sellers, or their boss is simply rewarding the hard work they are putting into their projects because they stay long after the working day is done (Hecker 1998). The table below is retrieved from the Department of Labor's website, showing that workers with longer workweeks often earn more per hour.

Usual weekly and hourly earnings of persons employed full-time, 1997				
Sex and occupational group	35 to 44 hours		45 to 99 hours	
	Weekly earnings	Hourly earnings	Weekly earnings	Hourly earnings
Men				
TOTAL	\$505	\$12.72	\$775	\$15.14
Executives, officials, and managers	747	19.01	1,039	20.21
Professional specialty occupations	824	20.80	982	19.67
Sales occupations	485	12.26	752	14.55
Women				
TOTAL	\$408	\$10.38	\$658	\$13.16
Executives, officials, and managers	571	14.19	789	15.48
Professional specialty occupations	634	16.19	772	15.45
Sales occupations	317	8.27	602	12.18

This chart shows the difference in salary amounts of full-time workers working on average thirty-five to forty-four hours and the ones who are working on average forty-five to ninety-nine hours. In nearly ninety percent of managerial, management-related and sales occupations, weekly earnings of workers with an extended workweek exceeded those of workers with a standard workweek by at least thirty-two percent (U.S. Department of Labor, 1997). If companies were to transition to a shortened workweek and performed a similar analysis, the rate of pay would most likely be much lower, based on what the company's outputs have been decreased to (Hecker 1998).

“ Some people work long hours because they find it personally satisfying because they are anxious to safeguard or increase their social status, or because they want to get away from home.” (21 Hours, 2010).

A Company-by-Company Example

One U.S. company is making the shortened workweek possible and that is Treehouse, which was previously mentioned and described as an online education company. Treehouse

employees only work a four-day week but are at the same full time salary as other tech workers in their industry. The company's founders strongly believe that a shorter workweek leads to more productivity and increased happiness among employees. The founders recognize that moving towards a four-day workweek is hard to quantify because "Thirty-two hours of higher quality work is better than 40 hours of lower quality work (Covert 2014)."

Codecademy is a similar company to Treehouse that provides online coding education materials to over twenty-four million users nationwide. The mission behind Codecademy is to "teach millions of people valuable, directly applicable skills that could easily translate into job offers and salary increases," in the world of technology (Colao, 2014). They aim to create shareable projects and web pages, so students, both young and old, can design their own coding programs for free.

Below is a comparison of the two companies and how they match up in profits, number of employees, and number of users.



Codecademy

Founded: 2011	Founded: 2011
Revenue: \$10 million	Revenue: \$12.5 million (investors/advertisements)
Users: 70,000	Users: 24 million
Average user fee: \$25	Average user fee: Free
# of full time employees: 70 (1 staff/1,000 users)	# of full time employees: 23 (1 staff/1,043,478 users)

Since both companies were started in 2011, it is easy to compare time spent building the company and how much time they have both been able to put into marketing, sales, program materials and basic logistics on a start-up company. It is important to note the differences between the two companies, one of the largest being that Treehouse requires a fee to access their training materials and Codecademy does not. This could be a large factor in the number of users that each company has acquired over the last three years. Codecademy has gained over 3 times the amount of customers as Treehouse with only one third of the employees that Treehouse does. This suggests that the small amount of employees working forty-hours a week at Codecademy

can exponentially produce more content, education, and awareness of coding materials than Treehouse would ever be equipped to handle with seventy employees.

The statistics also show a difference in revenue stream in that Treehouse makes a profit from their fee-for-service structure, while Codecademy acquires revenue from outside investors who see the potential in offering free access to coding programming. Since Treehouse's offerings come at a price, it is essential that they provide the most efficient service possible, which Ryan Carson has acknowledged that less work may get done with one day off. Therefore, managing 70,000 users may be all that they can handle at this point with a thirty-hour workweek, unless they choose to hire more employees as they grow and develop their company nationally (Covert 2014).

Local Survey of Employees and Managers

The survey conducted for this research project and was distributed to employees living in the Des Moines Metro area, offered differing opinions across a variety of fields regarding the feasibility of a shortened workweek. One anonymous respondent stated that:

“A shorter work week would mean that my projects at work would keep getting pushed further and further back. I work for a company that puts great emphasis on customer service and making sure the customers' needs are met in a timely manner. A shorter work week would mean more delays in getting the work done for the customers.”

Another respondent also noted:

“The likelihood of a shortened workweek within American culture is very low in my opinion. While niches of society look at a shortened work week as a positive option for employees to develop family relationships, complete self-care activities, etc. the opportunity costs economically for employers and overall production would outweigh the benefits of such a change.”

A separate survey sent to administrators who work in their company’s human resources department were also asked their opinion of a shortened workweek and thirty percent responded that transitioning to a shortened workweek would increase stress in the workplace. Additionally, thirty-eight percent of administrators polled also agreed that it would be a costly endeavor to begin this transition. One administrator noted:

“With the rising cost of benefits administration it is not bottom-line effective for employers to offer shortened work weeks. It is a wonderful idea to form a work-balance standpoint and would enhance engagement and morale to some degree, but with the ACA requirements, etc, it makes more sense to run leaner and utilize overtime rather than extended headcount to meet competitive objectives.”

This survey, in the very least, shows that one roadblock facing the implementation of a shortened workweek in America will be current opinions of employees. The subject is not a widely thought of concept and so education and examples would be needed to possibly change these type of opinions (2014MPA260Drake).

Work-Life Balance

Current statistics show Americans spend a great deal of time working over all other aspects of life. These other aspects include, but are not limited to; family, socializing, health, community, civic and political engagement, leisure, and spiritual development. Support for shorter hours peaked in the 1930s, when it was hailed by its various proponents as a way to increase productivity, reduce unemployment, drive up wages, strengthen family, make time for domestic duties (unpaid household work), or increase leisure time (Weeks, pg 104). For the purpose of this paper, “work-life balance” is a concept including proper prioritizing between "work" or “achievement” (career and ambition) and "lifestyle" (family, health, socializing, leisure, community, and spiritual development). The concept, “work-life balance,” changes depending on the person. It questions our intrinsic capacity to allocate our time in a way which best meets our individual needs. “Work-life balance” is fundamentally relevant based on the historical culture of the American workforce. As referenced in the slogan of the U.S. labor unions by the end of the 19th century, “eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will (Lehndorff, 840).”

A shortened workweek feasibility survey was conducted for the purposes of this research paper in the fall of 2014. Of the sixty-nine participants we found the 44.93% work outside the home between 37-41 hours each week, 24.64% 42-47 hours, and 20.29% forty-eight or more hours with the remainder working thirty-six hours or less. Of this group 55.07% rated their work-life balance as investing more time with work, 40.58% reported their time is balanced and the remaining 4.35% stated they invest more time in their lifestyle than employment. Participants were asked to select the top three activities they would engage in with a shortened workweek out of the options of spending time with family, volunteering in the community,

advancing education, hobbies, politics, exercising, socializing, and domestic work. The top three activities reported by this survey were spending time with my family (81.16%), hobbies (53.62%), and exercising (50.72%). The percentages exceed 100% since participants were asked to list their top three.

Current Time Use Trends

In 1997, the first pilot study of the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) was conducted (Bureau of Labor Statistics). ATUS is a federally sponsored survey about how individuals, ages 15 and older, and living in the United States, spend their time (Krantz-Kent). The interview is conducted by a computer-assisted telephone to capture a twenty-four hour period. An initial review of the Bureau of Labor Statistics U.S. Department of Labor ATUS, 2013 results show:

- Employed persons worked an average of 7.6 hours on the days they worked.
- On the days they worked, employed men worked fifty-three minutes more than employed women. This difference partly reflects women's greater likelihood of working part time.
- On an average day, eighty-three percent of women and sixty-five percent of men spent some time doing household activities such as housework, cooking, lawn care, or financial and other household management.
- On an average day, nineteen percent of men did housework compared with forty-nine percent of women.
- On an average day, nearly everyone age 15 and over (ninety-five percent) engaged in some sort of leisure activity, such as watching TV, socializing, or exercising.
- Men were more likely than women to participate in sports, exercise, or recreation on any given day.

- Adults living in households with children under age 6 spent an average of 2 hours per day providing primary childcare (talking, playing, reading, etc.) to household children.
- On an average day, among adults living in households with children under age six, women spent one hour providing physical care (such as bathing or feeding a child) to household children, men spent twenty-six minutes providing physical care.

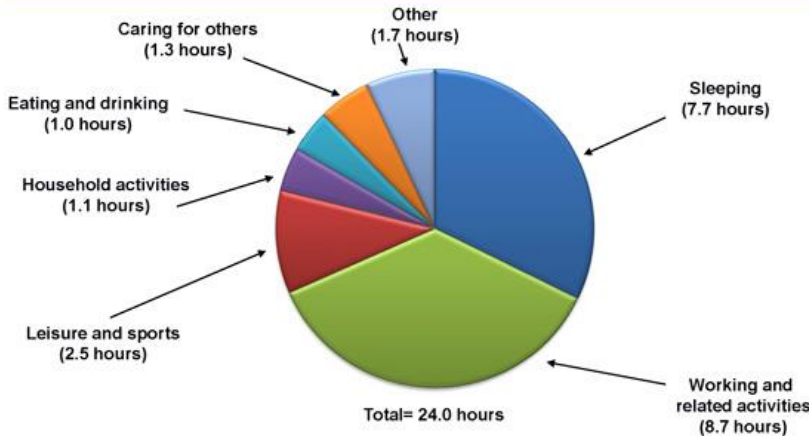
In summary, the above ATUS 2013 results briefly uncover aspects of the working American use of time. What these numbers don't tell is an individual's assessment of their "work-life balance (Bureau of Labor Statistics)."

Further exploration of the ATUS uncovers the American twenty-four hour work day for employed persons ages 25 to 54 with children is comprised of working and related activities (8.7 hours), sleeping (7.7 hours), leisure and sports (2.5 hours), other (1.7 hours), caring for others (1.3 hours), household activities (1.1 hours), eating and drinking (1 hours)(See chart below).

What this data shows is that on an average workday for employed persons ages 25 to 54 with children, sixty-eight percent of a twenty-four hour day is spent working and sleeping. A shorter working week would change the tempo of our lives, reshape habits and conventions, and

profoundly alter the dominant cultures of western society (21 hours, 2010).

Time use on an average work day for employed persons ages 25 to 54 with children



NOTE: Data include employed persons on days they worked, ages 25 to 54, who lived in households with children under 18. Data include non-holiday weekdays and are annual averages for 2013. Data include related travel for each activity.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

Survey Research

In 2000, the French government introduced a maximum working week of thirty-five hours, with the aim of reducing unemployment and gender inequality, and enhancing the work/life balance: “Work less-live more” was the slogan (21 hours, 2010). During this transition period, surveys were done to examine the impact. One study found that when asked in general about the effects of the working-time reduction on their life, roughly three out of five workers in 2000 said their everyday life had improved as a result of the shorter work week, while thirteen percent said it had deteriorated (DARES 2001:2) (Lehndorff, pg852). These results bring up further questions and offer insight to potential considerations and unintended consequences of public policy implementation.

To better understand the limitations with adapting a shortened workweek researchers have started to examine socio-economic, gender specific, citizenship status, and household

structure, which contribute to capturing the societal implications of a shortened workweek. In addition, a trade union survey conducted shortly after the shortened workweek was adopted in France, found that fifty-eight percent of respondents said the reduction in hours had a positive impact on their lives. This was mainly because it improved the work/life balance, especially for women with young children (21 hours, 2010).

Gender Impact

One important feature of developed market economies over the past three decades has been women's increasing labor force participation (Block, Park, and Kang, 2013). When the trend of women joining the labor force is coupled with a traditional gender based expectation of women (providing unpaid housework and as primary childcare) the outcomes emphasized struggle with balancing economic prosperity in a career while managing a household and caring for children. This becomes especially demanding for women with young children who are more dependent on a care provider to meet their daily needs.

With increasing female labor market participation and the proactive support of a family-friendly dual earner model from the state and trade unions, the traditional standard working time in Sweden is being replaced by a new model of flexible work hours over the life course. Men and women usually work full-time but take leaves or work part-time temporarily during certain phases of life. The comprehensive Swedish entitlements for parental, training, or care leaves are regarded as universal civil rights and therefore mandated by the state (Berg, Bosch, and Charest, pg 824). There has been broader policy debate around gender, going beyond women's participation in the labor force to encompass issues such as equal opportunities, gender roles,

women's labor market choices and the relationship between paid employment and family obligations (Block, Park, and Kang, pg 126).

The statutory workweek for full-time workers has become a more important standard for actual working hours of women than of men (Lehndorff, pg 848). Policy proposals, such as reduced hours, compressed workweeks and other alternative work schedules aim to offer middle-class and professional women greater flexibility to choose caregiving at home over waged work outside the home. Poor and low-income women, however, are penalized for making the same choice (Lung, pg 1124). Women who are struggling to survive economically are hardly likely to view compressed work weeks, flexible hours, or alternative work schedules a priority (Lung, pg 1127).

Many low-wage workers view overtime or long hours as a critical means of providing for their families and as an opportunity for climbing out of poverty, even though this entails sacrificing time at home (Lung, pg 1127). If a shortened workweek is to be adapted administrative leaders should consider inclusivity in meeting the needs of all members of the workforce, regardless of socio-economic status. This adaptation of sociality norms would require reconfiguring the entitlement associated with employment status, meaning, universal civil rights and access to a livable wage independent of a full-time employment status.

Unpaid Household Work

When the current standard of full-time work, the eight-hour day and five-day week, was consolidated in 1940, it was presumed that a woman in the home supported the worker, typically imagined to be a man. If it had been otherwise, had the male worker been held responsible for unwaged domestic labor, it is difficult to imagine that he could credibly be expected to work a

minimum of eight hours a day. As Juliet Schor has argued, “this system of hours could never have evolved without gender division of labor and the high rates of full-time, household-based reproductive work among women at that point in history” (Weeks, pg 114). One argument for a shortened workweek is to place value on unpaid household work. If we placed a value on unpaid household work concurrent with a shortened workweek we potentially would have a more comprehensive gauge on the core economy. For instance, if the average time spent on housework and care for children and adults in Britain in 2005 were given a monetary value, based on the national minimum wage (\$7.75 an hour), it would together be worth almost \$405.27 billion, equivalent to twenty-one percent of the British Gross Domestic Product that year (21 hours, 2010).

As a foundation, societally constructed norms around time use and gender expectations take time to evolve and adapt. Profoundly entrenched assumptions about what is “natural” employment and time-use for women and men affect the types of work they do, the hours they spend in paid employment and the value attached to their respective occupations (21 hours, 2010). We currently live within a society which holds a gender based disparity which encompasses an economy that doesn’t value unpaid household work. In addition, a domestic structure placed on sex regarding work in the home, providing unpaid labor at the same time demerits that family member by not receiving benefits. A parent working three to five years outside the income based labor force is potentially without retirement contributions, has contributed less towards their social security, and is dependent on their spouse for their financial wellbeing. This isn’t an issue in household constructs, unless domestic abuse is present. “Financial abuse, while less commonly understood, is one of the most powerful methods of keeping a survivor trapped in an abusive relationship and deeply diminishes her ability to safety

after leaving an abusive relationship (NNEDV, 2014).” Research indicates that financial abuse is experienced in ninety-eight percent of abusive relationships and surveys of survivors reflect concerns regarding their ability to provide financially for themselves and their children as one of the top reasons for staying in or returning to a battering relationship. As with all forms of abuse, it occurs across all socio-economic, educational and racial and ethnic groups (NNEDV, 2014). Additionally, although the problem of “work-family balance” may be widely recognized, the strategy most popular with employers, the flexible work schedule, neither reduces the hours of work nor challenges the assumption that social reproduction should be a private, and largely women’s responsibility (Weeks, pg 122).

Family Life

A 1992 study by the Families and Work Institute found that job-to-home spillover was three times as troubling to respondents as was home-to-job spillover. In 2002, 34% of wage and salaried employees who have high access to flexible work arrangements report “low levels of negative spillover from job to home” (Families and Work Institute, 2002, p. 39). The most common rationale for shorter hours is that it would make more time for family. This approach is particularly powerful because the emphasis on the family resonates comfortably with mainstream political priorities, on both the Left and Right (Weeks, pg 105). Working parents have many constraints on their time as they try to balance paid work, childcare, household activities, shopping, and leisure activities (Dorinda Allard and Janes). Data gathered from the American Time Use Survey from 2003-2006 found that Children with no siblings aged seventeen or younger spent 1.5 hours alone with their mother and .9 hours (fifty-four minutes) alone with their fathers (Allard and Janes, pg 9).

The potential benefit of a shortened workweek for fathers and mothers is more equitable time to engage in activities with their loved ones. Spending much less time in paid work could, of course, leave parents with much more time to spend with their children. In particular, it could help fathers to be more engaged with their children, which would benefit children and mothers as well as fathers (21 hours, pg 20). Among parents aged 25-54 who were married and employed full time, mothers spent more time on work days doing household activities (such as housework, cooking, or lawn care) than did fathers (Allard and Janes, pg 7). Of married fathers aged 25-54 who had children aged twelve or younger, those with a bachelor's degree spent half an hour more providing primary childcare than did those with a high school diploma or less (Allard and Janes, pg 11).

When both parents work up to but did not exceed sixty hours per week combined, these sixty-hour couples report improved well-being and less work/family conflict (Golden, pg 1192). Both mothers and fathers spent more of their total childcare time providing secondary childcare than they did providing primary childcare, regardless of the day of the week (Allard and Janes, pg 12). Secondary childcare is the amount of time that parents have a child in their care while doing activities other than primary childcare (Allard and Janes, pg 3). Primary childcare is focused on meeting the child's direct needs. An example of secondary childcare is taking a child to the grocery store with you or balancing the check book while your child plays in the same room. This model of parent/child interaction might limit a parent's ability to be engaged in their child's development. This is a testament to the quality of time available to parents working within the standard forty-hour workweek and what might be possible with a shortened workweek. As Lallement said, "it is undeniable that the big beneficiary of the working-time

reduction has been the family (Lehndorff, pg 853). (All the graphs available from the 2014MPA260Drake survey can be found in the Appendix).

Application

The history of the shortened workweek demonstrates that state and federal government can answer the will of the people. However, the demand for a shortened workweek requires national attention and significant proof of the benefits to make progress. That being said, to achieve explicit examples of it's benefits, companies across the United States can try various methods to begin the implementation of a shortened workweek, including variations of the forty-hour workweek.

Alternative Work Schedules

There are currently creative work schedules that exist in some American industries, which can be viewed as an adaptation to the standard forty-hour workweek by using a four-day week. Alternative work schedules (AWS) differ from the standard forty-hour workweek comprised of eight hours of work performed in five working days because alternative work schedules are generally seen in the manner of either a compressed schedule or a flexible schedule. Under a compressed schedule an employee continues to work a forty-hour workweek, but do so in fewer days. On the other hand, a flexible schedule functions off the idea that there is a set time frame that employees must be present, but outside of that their schedule can vary but tends to still revolve around forty-hours in a week (Alternative Work Schedules, 2014). While these approaches are outside the norm, they really represent that the world does not function on a set schedule and alternative arrangements from the norm can be successful.

The Four-Day Workweek

Much of the current talk regarding a shortened workweek revolves around shortening the workweek by changing the structure from a five day to a four-day workweek. A CBS Money Watch article asks the question “Why don’t more bosses implement a four-day workweek? Doctors, executives and human resource experts say it would be great for the American workforce.” Across the nation there are industries and companies moving to a shortened four-day workweek. One software company, for example, switches to a four-day workweek for about half the calendar year and sets those hours at thirty-two a week. The CEO, Jason Fried, wrote in a New York Times article that his employees are more productive as a result because “When there’s less time to work, you waste less time. When you have a compressed workweek, you tend to focus on what’s important.” Furthermore, CEO of Inc.com, Jay Love, indicates that market research shows that “your employee retention rate literally soars,” with a four-day workweek (Peterson, 2014).

To move forward with a four-day workweek, companies should begin by gauging if this is an avenue their employees wish to pursue and provide education on the benefits to those employees. Since there are companies who do implement a four-day workweek, there is research that will denote their current success or failure with this arrangement. It is good for a company to have a “clear goal” in mind for what a four-day workweek will accomplish for the company and monitor progress of this goal. That goal could even be to saving money on energy expenses or increasing productivity (Vanden Bos, 2010). If a company wants to still maintain a forty-hour workweek in four days that implies the-hour days. Employees must understand this will create a change in their daily lives. They may enjoy the three days off a week but during those four working days they have less time for other activities. An employer would have to be flexible at times with how these ten hours are scheduled in a day (Vanden Bos,

2010). Additionally, companies need to be committed to this change. Some business owners do not want to miss out on an extra day of business because the rest of the “business world” isn’t stopping (Peterson, 2014). In this case, a company can try a rolling schedule. This could mean some employees work Monday through Thursday while others work Tuesday through Friday (Covert, 2014). The ability for employees to gain work time flexibility hinges on organizational norms and policies (Golden, 2012).

Other Unique Scheduling Options

Under a flexible schedule there are usually five types that an organization can choose. The first type is a maxiflex schedule, which is the most generous of all schedules. This schedule basically rests on the idea that it doesn’t matter when or how long you work as long as the job gets done. The second type of schedule is a variable workweek, which means that a set number of hours must be worked in a single week, but it is at the discretion of the employee, how these hours completed. For instance in a thirty-two hour work week an employee may choose to work four eight hour days, more than ten hours in three days or even six hours over a course of five days. The third type of schedule is a variable day schedule. A variable day schedule establishes a set of core hours in which all employees are present, but outside of those hours employees can choose how to accumulate the rest of their work time. An example may be that a call center may require that all employees must work from noon to 4:00 pm Monday through Thursday, but employees can choose if they want to end their workday at 4:00 pm or start their shift at noon. The fourth type of schedule is a gliding schedule and is similar in that employees can choose their start and end times as long as it encompasses the core hours. In this example employees would have more freedom to choose to start work at 10:00am or end work at 5:00pm. Finally, a

flexi schedule is the same as a gliding schedule except the schedule that employees choose must be consistent (Alternative Work Schedules: Reference Materials, 2014).

Conclusion

The subject of the feasibility of a shortened workweek contains numerous variables and opinions. Currently Americans are engrained with the normality of the forty-hour standard workweek. The Fair Labor Standards Act has established the routine of work and life for more than seventy years and anything this embedded into a society faces many obstacles on the path of change. The infrastructure of the United States is based around a forty-hour workweek in many ways, including in terms of the benefits associated with full-time status, overtime pay, business operations, taxes and overall culture. While there are industries and companies using a shortened workweek today, the majority of companies function on five days at forty-hours.

However, we are reminded that the Fair Labor Standards Act only came into being by the persistent demands for change from the American working class. The efforts of the American people of two centuries past produced the forty-hour workweek, which was considered revolutionary at the time. If change prevailed before it is possible it could again. A growing number of Americans are intrigued by the shortened workweek and research continues to be produced regarding the multitude of benefits associated with working less as well as research on showing how increased productivity can occur in a shorter amount of hours. Yet, many roadblocks stand in the way of advancement for shortening the workweek. The long-term benefits may come at an initial increased cost for employers, for example. If a shortened workweek is ever to triumph, employers must do the research on the benefits and methods to adopt practices associated with a successful transition of a shortened workweek. In looking at

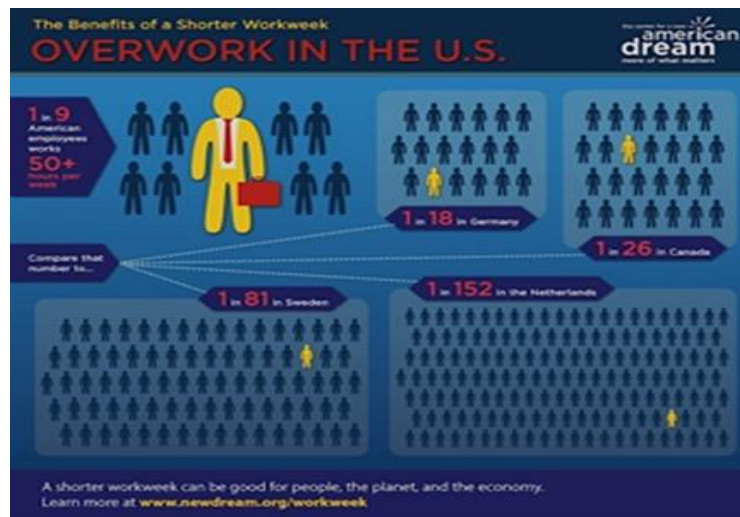
other countries that function on a shortened workweek, it too shows its adoption can be successful. However, these countries have advanced welfare programs to support a shortened workweek. Until America can adopt improved welfare system and have increased participation by companies' nation-wide, it will be incredibly hard to institute a national reduction in the workweek as a federal law.

There is no definitive answer on the feasibility for a shortened workweek. As for immediate feasibility, that is unlikely due the vast undertaking this type of change would require. Instead there remains a possibility that a shortened workweek could exist in America's future. This would require employer and governmental support as well as a bolstered welfare system of course but most importantly it would require the will of the people. Individuals must demonstrate that they want the shortened workweek if employers and the government are to take action. The research and data acquired to produce this research paper did imply a potential and slow moving shift towards accepting the values associated with a shortened workweek. In summation:

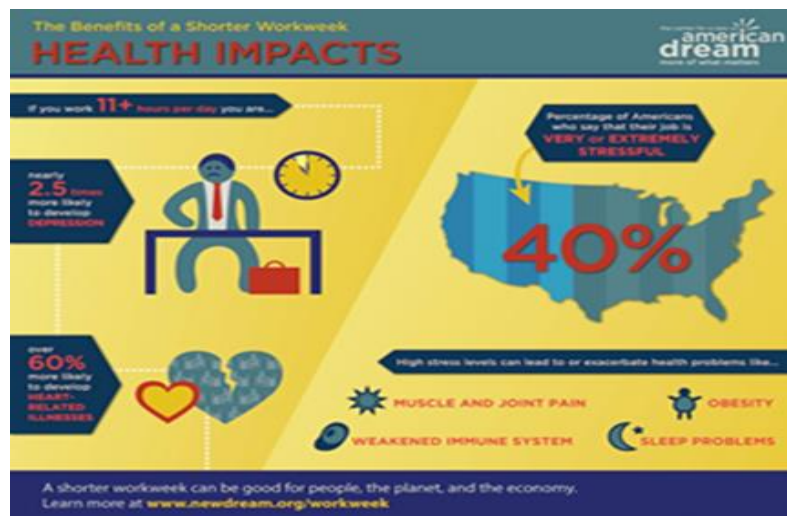
"Change is inevitable. Progress is Optional," Tony Robbins.

Appendix

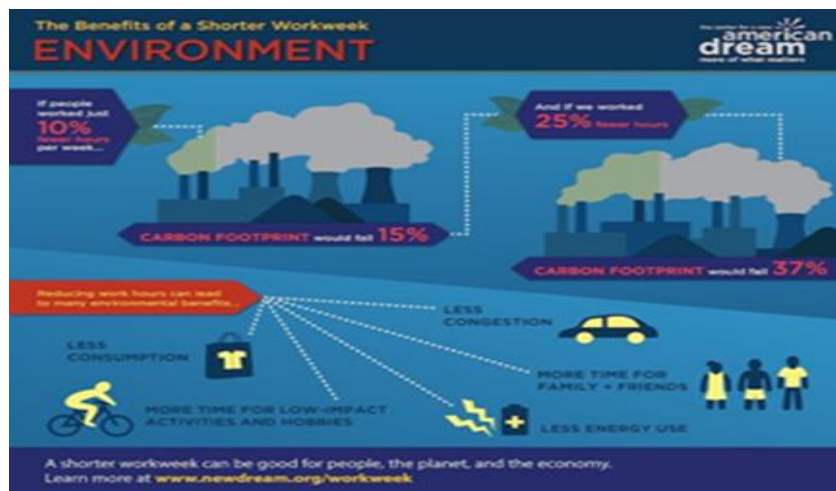
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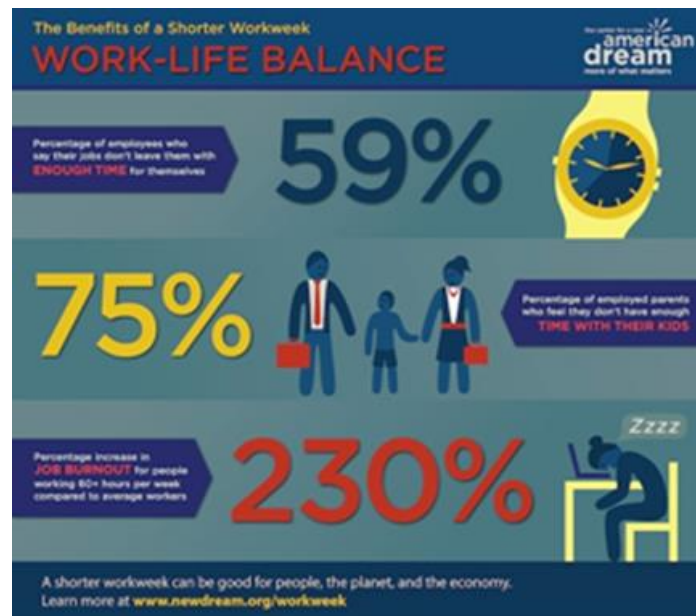
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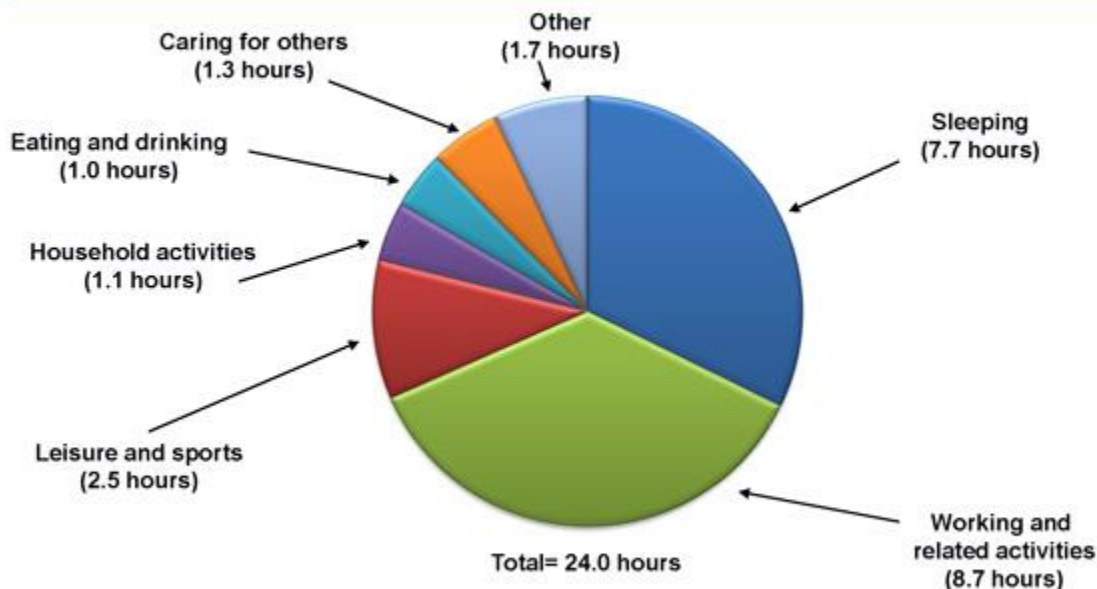
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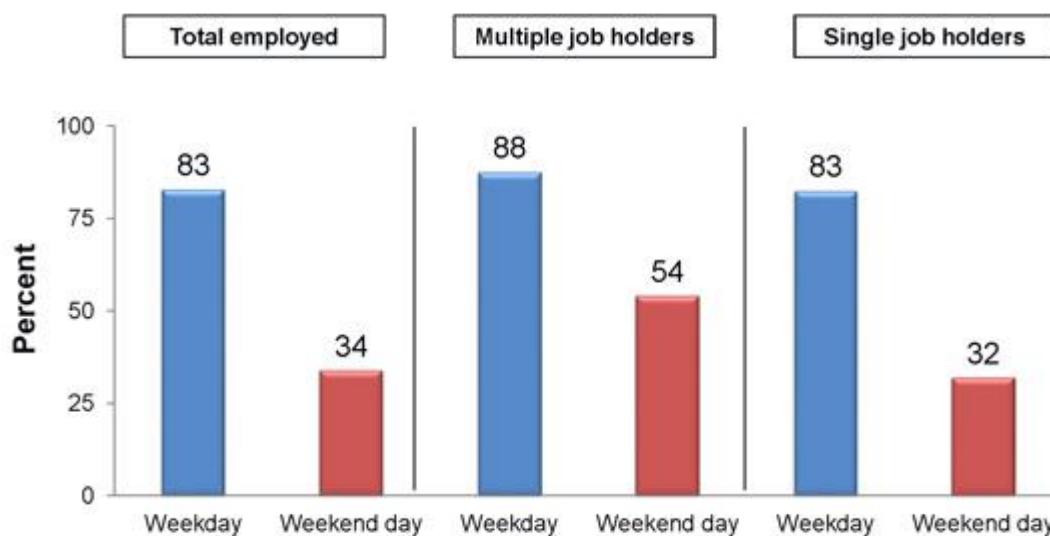
Time use on an average work day for employed persons ages 25 to 54 with children



NOTE: Data include employed persons on days they worked, ages 25 to 54, who lived in households with children under 18. Data include non-holiday weekdays and are annual averages for 2013. Data include related travel for each activity.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

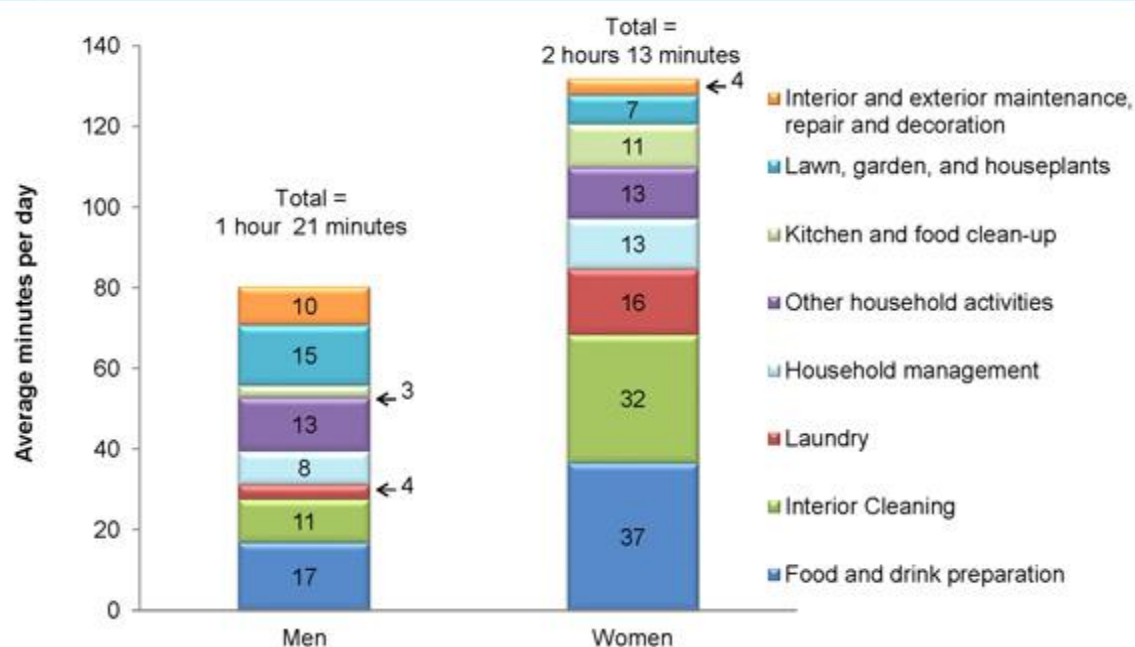
Percent of population who worked on weekdays and weekend days



NOTE: Data include all persons age 15 and over. Weekdays are defined as non-holiday weekdays. Holidays are included with weekend days. Data are annual averages for 2013.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

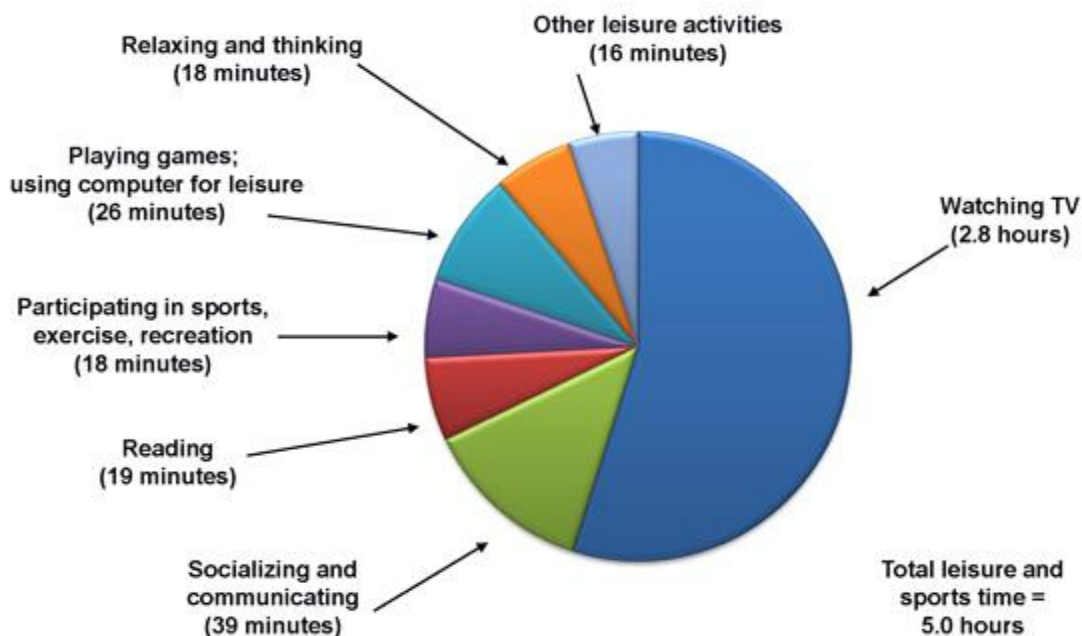
Average minutes per day men and women spent in household activities



NOTE: Data include all noninstitutional persons age 15 and over. Data include all days of the week and are annual averages for 2013. Travel related to these activities is not included in these estimates.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

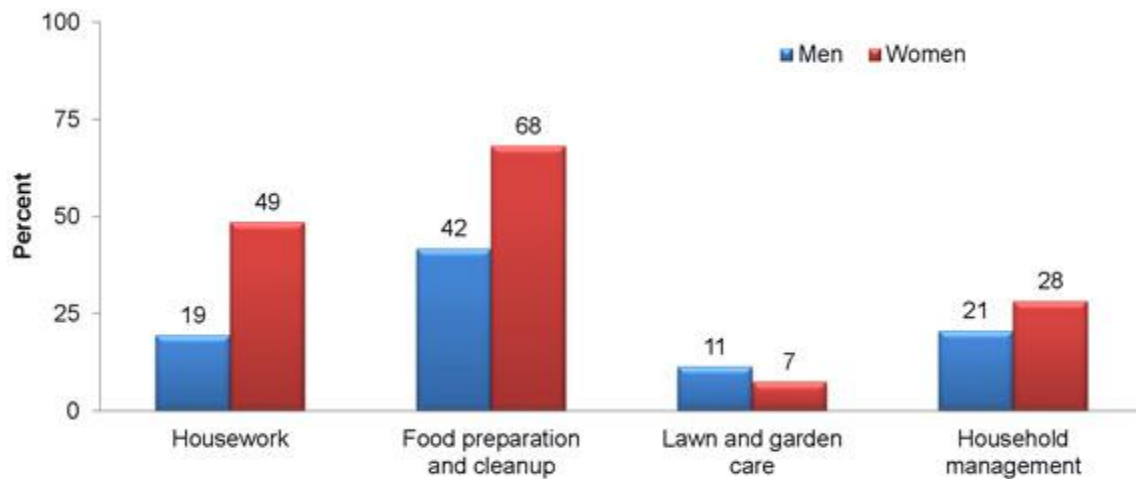
Leisure time on an average day



NOTE: Data include all persons age 15 and over. Data include all days of the week and are annual averages for 2013.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

Percent of population who did household activities on an average day

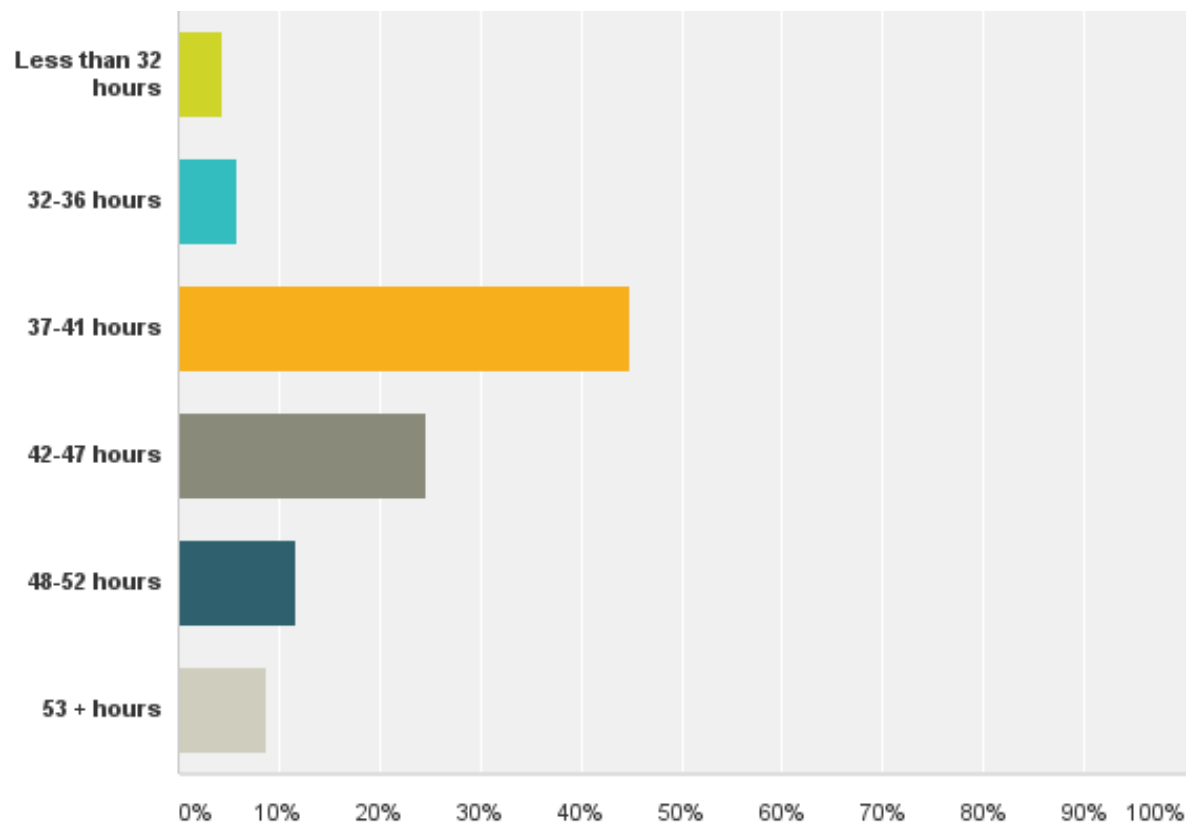


NOTE: Data include all noninstitutionalized persons age 15 and over. Data include all days of the week and are annual averages for 2013. Travel related to these activities is not included in these estimates.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

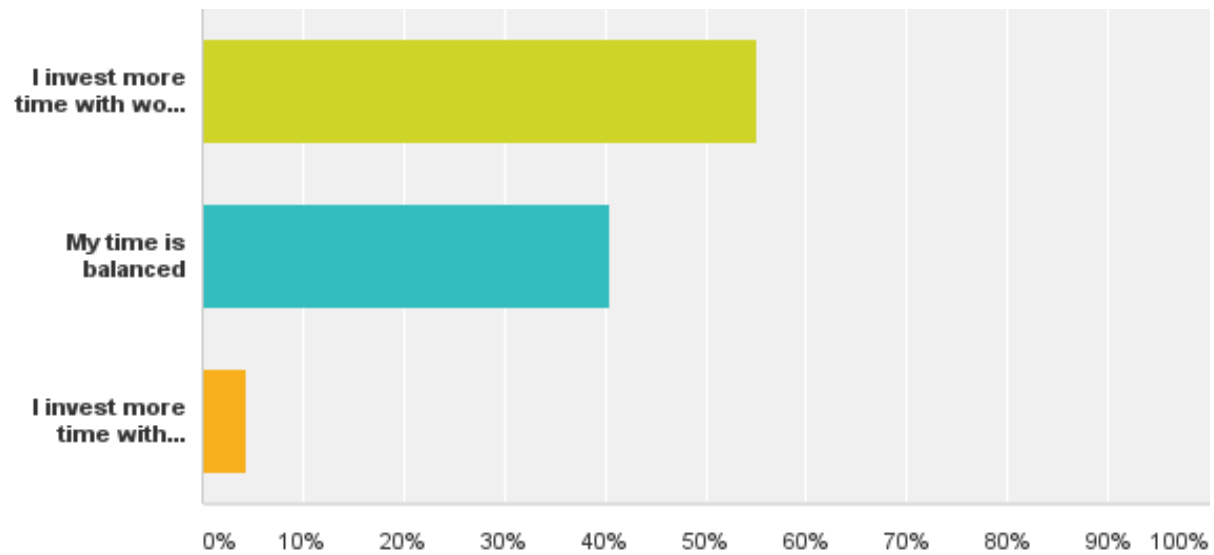
Average weekly hours worked outside the home

MPA260 Drake Graduate Survey



Current work-life balance ratings

MPA260 Drake Graduate Survey



*I invest more time with work than lifestyle

*My time is balanced

*I invest more time with lifestyle than work

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