

The Harris Poll

THE HARRIS POLL 1993 #48

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WORKING HOURS INCREASE SOMEWHAT WHILE LEISURE TIME SHOWS NO CHANGE

by Humphrey Taylor

The number of hours people spend working -- which includes employment, homemaking and studying -- is now higher than at any time since the Harris Poll first started measuring it 20 years ago. Currently adult Americans of all ages spend just over 50 hours per week on the job, keeping house or studying. In 1989, Americans worked just under 49 hours, and in 1984, they worked just over 47 hours. While the number of working hours has increased, the number of hours available for leisure activities has remained unchanged at just under 19 hours per week. These are findings of a nationwide Harris poll of 1,200 adults surveyed by telephone between Aug 13 and 17.

While there has been no overall change in the amount of leisure time available, there have been some changes among different demographic groups:

- People in the West have more leisure time than they used to have (reflecting decline of the California economy), while people in the East and the South have less leisure time.
- People over 65 report a sharp drop in their leisure time, down from 26 hours in 1989 to under 20 hours in 1990.

One intriguing finding of the survey is that the amount of leisure time available to people stopped falling sometime between 1987 and 1989 and is now somewhat higher than it was in 1987 and 1984. Whether this reflects changes in the economic cycle or other factors is unclear. This happened even though the amount of time spent working continued to increase.

Humphrey Taylor is the President and C.E.O. of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

TABLE 1

WORK HOURS PER WEEK

Q. First, we would like to know approximately how many hours a week you spend at your job or occupation, and that includes keeping house or going to school as well as working for pay or profit. How many hours would you estimate you spend at work, housekeeping or studies, including any travel time to and from the job or school?

<u>Work</u>	<u>Median Number of Hours</u>
1993	50.0
1989	48.7
1987	46.8
1984	47.3
1980	46.9
1975	43.1
1973	40.6

TABLE 2

HOURS AVAILABLE FOR LEISURE PER WEEK

Q. And about how many hours each week do you estimate you have available to relax, watch TV, take part in sports or hobbies, go swimming or skiing, go to the movies, theater, concerts, or other forms of entertainment, get together with friends, and so forth?

<u>Leisure</u>	<u>Median Number of Hours</u>
1993	19.0
1989	18.8
1987	16.6
1984	18.1
1980	19.2
1975	24.3
1973	26.2

TABLE 3

TREND IN LEISURE HOURS

Q. And about how many hours each week do you estimate you have available to relax, watch TV, take part in sports or hobbies, go swimming or skiing, go to the movies, theater, concerts, or other forms of entertainment, get together with friends, and so forth?

	<u>Median Leisure Hours</u>			
	<u>1993</u> #	<u>1989</u> #	<u>1987</u> #	<u>1984</u> #
<u>Nationwide</u>	18.8	18.8	16.6	18.1
<u>Region</u>				
East	15.4	19.4	17.0	17.5
Midwest	19.3	19.5	15.9	18.7
South	15.3	18.4	15.9	18.3
West	19.6	17.8	18.0	18.0
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	18.3	17.5	17.3	19.1
30-49	15.0	16.5	14.6	16.0
50-64	19.5	21.7	15.9	17.4
65 and over	19.7	26.2	22.7	25.4
<u>Income</u>				
\$15,000 or less	18.3	18.6	17.2	17.7
\$15,001-\$25,000	19.0	18.1	16.2	18.0
\$25,001-\$35,000	15.5	18.3	16.1	16.9
\$35,001-\$50,000	18.5	19.2	17.0	20.0
\$50,001 and over	19.3	19.5	16.7	18.5

METHODOLOGY

This Harris Poll was conducted by telephone within the United States between Aug 13 and 17, 1993, among a nationwide cross section of 1,200 adults. Figures for age, sex, race education and number of adults in the household were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

In theory, with a sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (non-response), question wording and question order, interviewer bias, weighting by demographic control data and screening (e.g., for likely voters). It is difficult or impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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Contact Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., Information Services, 630 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10111, (212) 698-9697, for complete demographic details for the questions in this release.

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