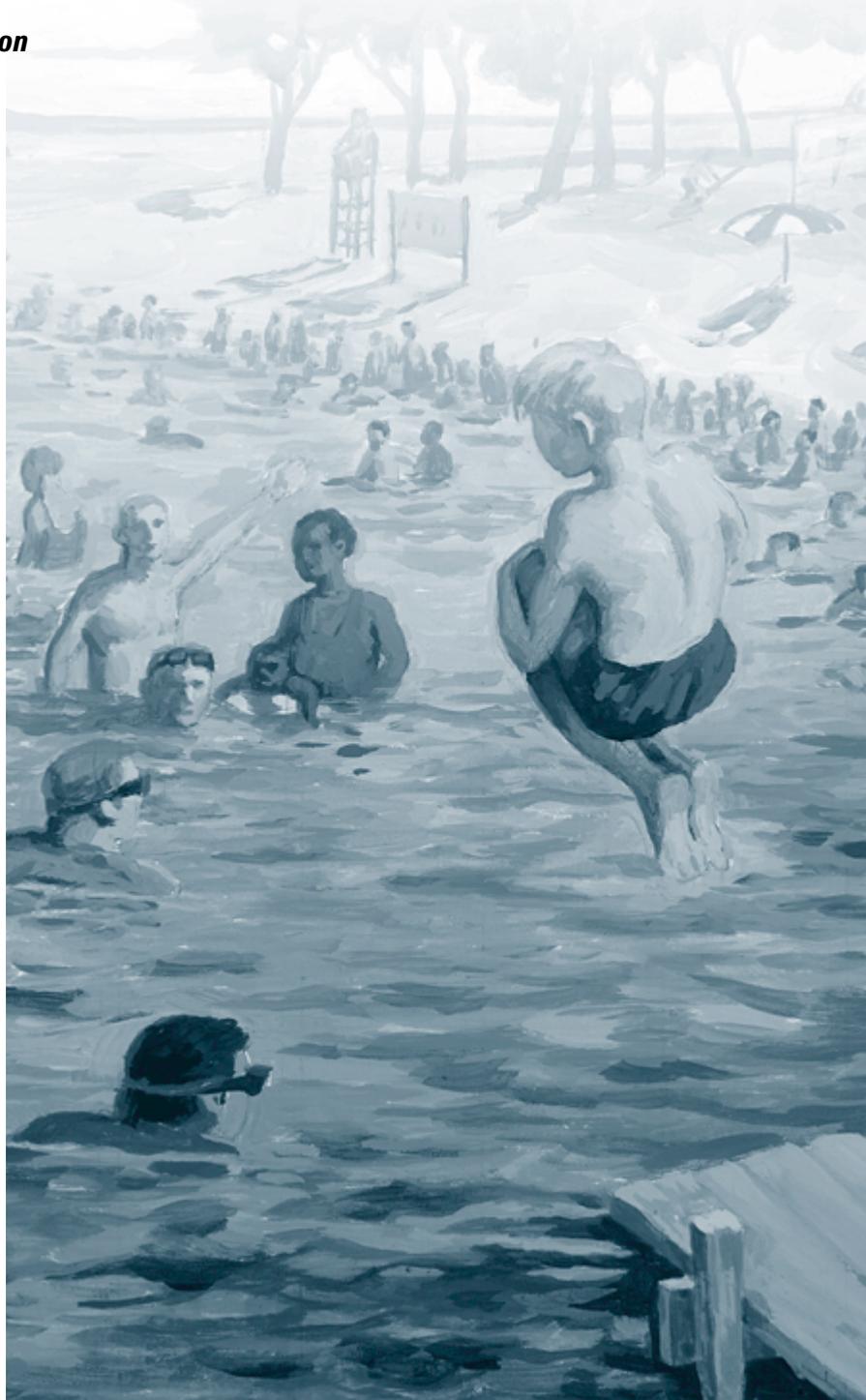


# No time to relax? How full-time workers spend the weekend

by Cynthia Silver and Susan Crompton

**T**he weekend has long been considered sacred by many paid workers. It is supposed to be the golden time when most of us don't have to adhere to the company's schedule or answer our boss's demands. However, changes in the way we live — from more women working full-time to 24-hour just-in-time production schedules and the growth of self-employment — have changed many people's relationship to Saturday and Sunday. It often seems that the work week has invaded the weekend, since chores and errands that are no longer done between Monday and Friday get deferred to Saturday and Sunday. The data confirm this: on the weekend, Canadians who work full-time do a lot of unpaid work, and many do paid work as well.



Data in this article come from the 1998 General Social Survey (GSS) on time use. Respondents were asked to describe their activities in the previous 24 hours, accounting for every minute of the day. The survey collected data from nearly 11,000 respondents aged 15 and over living in private dwellings in the 10 provinces. The study population consists of Canadians aged 25 and over, representing almost 10 million full-time workers and almost 8.2 million adults who were not working for pay.

Five broad types of activities are analyzed here: leisure time, shopping, care for children and other household members, household work, and paid work. Patterns of time use by men and women are not compared because few differences exist. However, rates of participation in these activities do differ between the sexes; generally, men do more paid work and engage in more leisure activities, while women do more household chores and caregiving. (For further information, see "The time of our lives," *Canadian Social Trends* (Winter 2001)).

**Not working for pay/not employed:** the respondent has not done any paid work in the previous 7 days and reported their main activity in the past 12 months as being retired, keeping house, looking for work, being a student, or other (for example, long-term illness).

**Full-time worker:** the respondent worked full-time for pay in the previous 7 days.

**Leisure time:** includes activities such as socializing, going to events, reading, being with friends and watching television.

**Shopping:** in addition to purchasing goods and window shopping, this activity includes arranging for or receiving other types of consumer services such as renting videos, getting a haircut, banking and taking things to be repaired.

**Household/domestic work:** includes such activities as housework, gardening and yard work, home and vehicle maintenance, repair and improvements, pet care, household management, and any related travel.

**Child care and other caregiving:** *child care* includes a wide variety of child-related activities such as watching a child's soccer practice, making Halloween costumes or helping with homework. It only captures "primary" activities, therefore time spent minding children while actively doing something else, such as cooking dinner or watching TV, are not reported as child care. *Other caregiving* includes activities such as driving another household member somewhere or visiting a household member in the hospital. Travel times are included since they are often an integral part of the care work.

**Paid work:** working for pay in a job or business, including time spent commuting to the workplace.

This article explores what Canadian adults aged 25 and over who are employed full-time do over the course of an average day on the weekend, and provides some information about the differences in time use patterns on Saturday compared to Sunday. Weekend time use by adults who are not employed is also briefly discussed.

**The morning: 6:00 a.m. to noon**

The majority of the 10 million Canadian adults who work full-time sleep in

on the weekend. By 9:00 a.m., however, 80% are out of bed and their weekend is underway.<sup>1</sup> For many, the day starts with chores and, between 9:00 a.m. and noon, about one in five spends at least some time doing household work. The proportion of full-time workers engaged in child care and other caregiving is relatively stable throughout the morning. In any given 10-minute period from 7:00 a.m. to noon, between 2% and 3% are providing some care to a child or other household member.<sup>2</sup>

1. 86% are out of bed by 7:30 a.m. on an average weekday.
2. High sampling variability for all caregiving data. Readers should recall that this category captures only primary (direct) care activities. For information about the time that parents spend in the child's presence, as distinct from time dedicated explicitly to child care, see Cynthia Silver, "Being there: The time dual-earner couples spend with their children," *Canadian Social Trends*, Summer 2000.

Shopping begins in earnest at about 9:30 a.m., when most stores open, and peaks between 11:00 a.m. and noon, at 12% to 13%. By the end of the morning, almost 25% of full-time workers have spent at least some time acquiring goods and services.

Since much weekend activity involves the service industry — for example, retail stores and restaurants — it is not surprising that a high percentage of full-time workers are actually at work on the weekend. Nine percent are on the job at 7:00 a.m. At 10:00, 17% are at work, a rate which remains constant until noon. The rate drops moderately at that time, presumably as workers take their lunch break.

In the midst of all these tasks, some people do manage to snatch some leisure time on their weekend morning. The percentage of full-time workers engaged in recreation or relaxation activities rises steadily throughout the weekend morning: from 20% at 8:40 a.m. to just under 27% at noon.

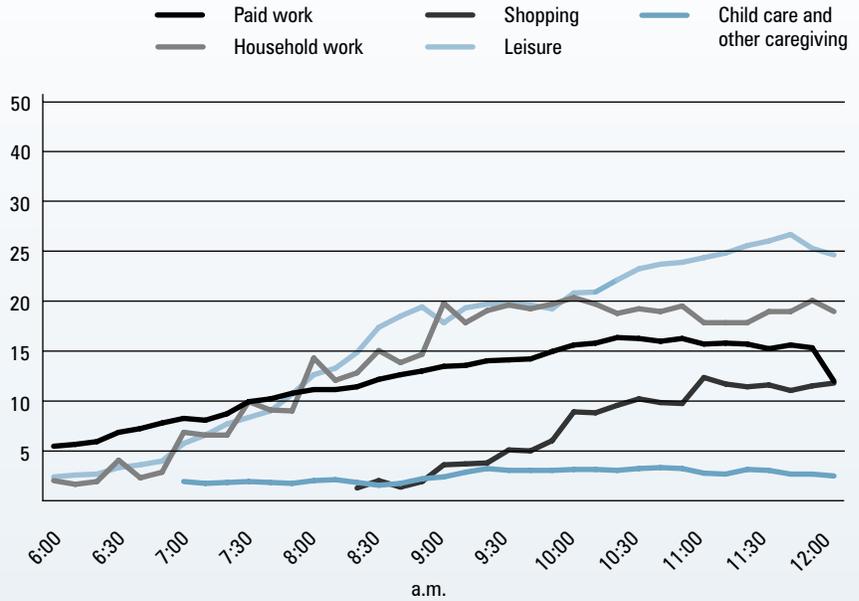
There are some differences in the time use patterns of full-time workers on Sunday as opposed to Saturday morning. Although the day starts at the same time — over three-quarters of them are out of bed by 9:00 a.m. — the pace seems slower as more people enjoy some leisure time. For example, at 9:20 a.m. on Sunday, 25% are doing things like reading the morning newspaper, compared with only 17% on Saturday. About an hour later, at 10:30 in the morning, the rates are 29% and 21% respectively.

Greater leisure on Sunday is due to fewer obligations. First, far fewer full-time workers are at their paid job on Sunday morning: between 11% and 12% at most, compared with 22% to 23% on Saturday. Second, shopping is not as important and the crowds don't arrive as early; on Saturday, 10% of full-time workers are shopping at



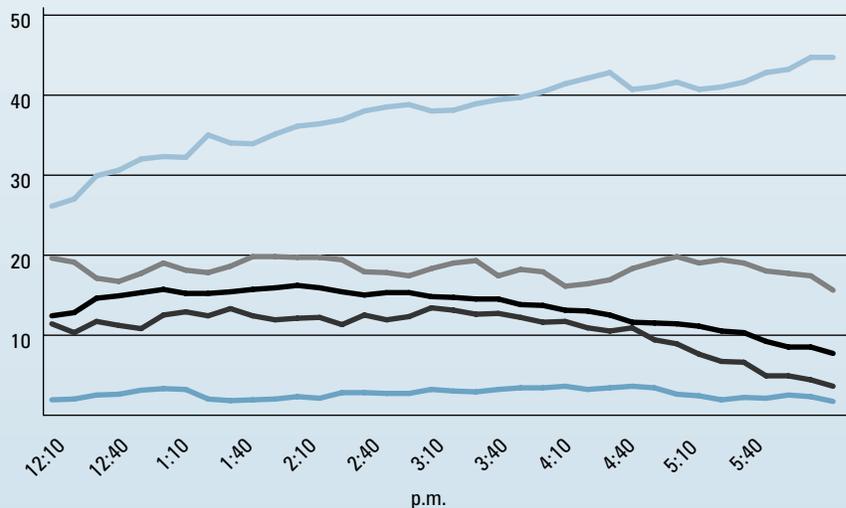
## Full-time workers do housework and shopping in the morning on weekends...

% of full-time workers aged 25 and over



Note: Rates averaged over Saturday and Sunday. High sampling variability for the entire child care and other caregiving series. High sampling variability for household work, and for leisure until 6:50 a.m. and for shopping activities until 9:20 a.m. Break in series indicates sample size too small to produce reliable estimate.

## ... leaving the afternoon for leisure activities



Note: Rates averaged over Saturday and Sunday. High sampling variability for child care and other caregiving for the entire time series and for shopping activities from 5:50 p.m. Break in series indicates sample size too small to produce reliable estimate.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998.

9:50 a.m., but on Sunday, the 10% mark isn't reached until 11:00 a.m. (partly because of Sunday shopping regulations).<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, a slightly higher proportion of people report doing household chores on Sunday morning.

**The afternoon: 12:10 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Shopping and household work continue to make demands during the afternoon on an average weekend day. About 13% of full-time workers are out shopping in any given 10-minute period from noon until 4:00 p.m., at which point the proportion begins to decline. Overall, about 40% of full-time workers are out shopping at some time on a weekend afternoon. Household work, however, still occupies at least some of the afternoon for about

one in five people until just before supertime at 6:00 p.m.

On the other hand, people who have to work on the weekend start to come home after 3:30 p.m.; the percentage at work falls from 15% at 3:30 p.m. to 8% at 6:00 p.m. And many more people are able to devote some time to leisure activities, with the proportion growing steadily from 27% just after noon to 45% at 6:00 p.m.

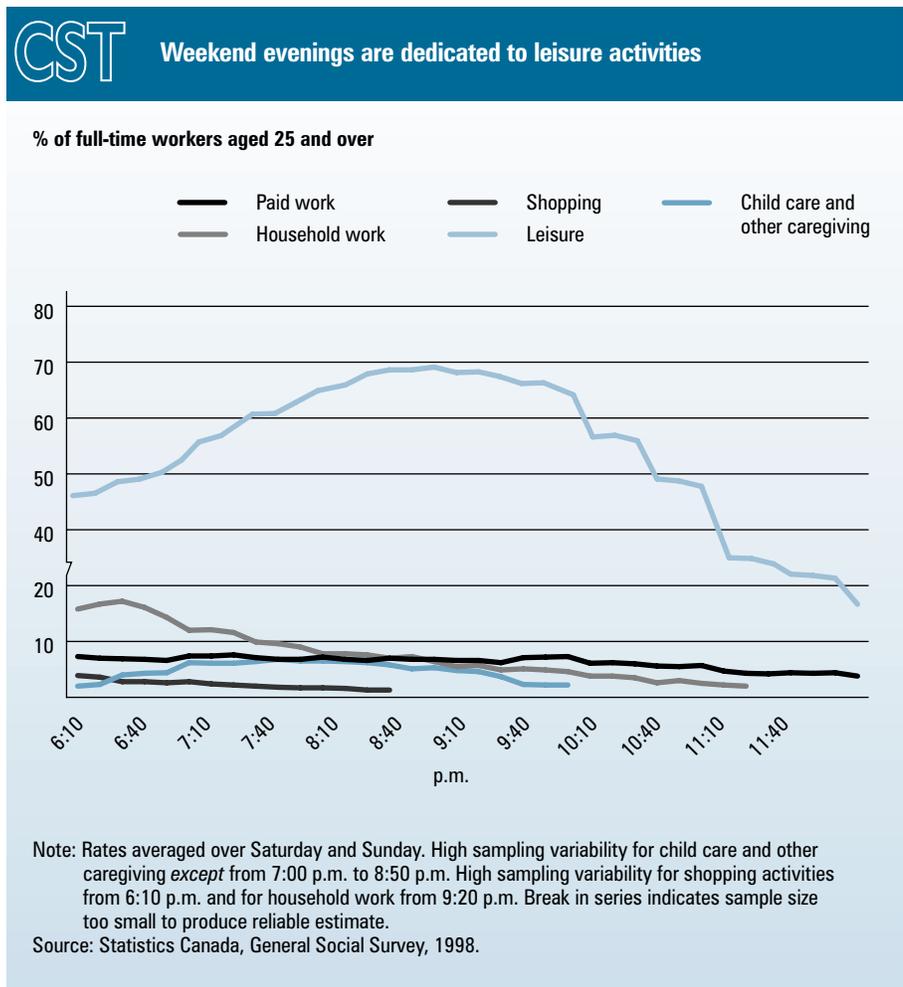
More full-time workers are able to devote time to recreation and relaxation on Sunday than Saturday afternoons. Far more of them report spending at least some of their afternoon on leisure pursuits on Sunday, especially in the early to mid-afternoon — the proportion rises from 42% at 1:20 p.m. to almost 50% at 4:00 p.m. In contrast, the proportion does not reach more than one in

three during the same time period on Saturday. Sunday doesn't attract the numbers of shoppers — a total of 36% of full-time workers go out to the stores, compared with 45% on Saturday afternoon. Nor does Sunday exhibit the peaks of shopping activity: the rate of shopping on Sunday is fairly flat all afternoon between noon and 4:00 p.m., while on a Saturday, traffic builds to a peak of 16% between 3:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. before falling quickly.

**The evening: 6:10 p.m. to midnight**

People who work full-time continue to do some domestic work in their weekend evenings. At 7:30 p.m., 10% are engaged in housework, but afterwards the rate diminishes steadily. On the other hand, child care and other caregiving becomes more concentrated in the early evening than it is over the rest of the day. At any given time from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., between 6% and 7% of full-time workers are providing care, perhaps putting young children to bed or helping with homework. The rate of caregiving remains at 5% from 8:40 p.m. to just after 9:00 p.m. and then drops to virtually negligible levels.<sup>4</sup> From 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., a total of 17% of full-time workers are providing child care and other caregiving to household members.

Throughout the course of the evening, an increasing proportion of full-time workers are having fun. At 6:50 p.m., over 50% are engaged in leisure activities; the rate rises rapidly over the next two hours and reaches a peak of 70% at 8:50 p.m. Beginning at 9:30 p.m., though, the leisure rate



3. Due to the increase in access to Sunday shopping since the 1998 survey, rates may now be higher than those presented here.

4. Data for child care and other caregiving have high sampling variability. Use with caution.

**Morning**

Half of the 8.2 million Canadians aged 25 and over who do not work for pay are up by 8:00 a.m. on a weekend morning. At 9:00 a.m., 26% are doing their household chores. They are more likely than full-time workers to do housework before noon. They are, however, also more likely to be enjoying some leisure time: at any given time between 9:40 a.m. and 11:50 a.m. on a weekend morning, over one-third are engaged in leisure activities.

The not-employed are no less likely to do housework on Sundays than Saturdays, but the pace of life on Sunday morning is a little slower. They do not sleep later but do take time to enjoy a leisurely morning. At any given time from 10:20 a.m. till almost noon, about 4 in 10 are engaged in recreation or relaxation activities.

**Afternoon**

Because adults who do not work for pay seem to prefer doing household tasks in the morning, far fewer are doing domestic chores in the afternoon, especially after 3:00 p.m. In the mid-afternoon between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., over 50% are engaged in leisure pursuits at any given time. The peak period for afternoon shopping — from 1:20 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. — is a little earlier than that for full-time workers. This may be due to attempts to avoid the weekend “shopping gridlock” generated by full-time workers.

Although the rate of household work on Sunday afternoon is no lower than on Saturday, people who are not employed have higher rates of leisure time on Sunday; the majority enjoy some leisure time on both afternoons, but the rates are 5 to 10 percentage points higher on Sunday than Saturday.

**Evening**

Once supper is cleared away, the proportion of not-employed who continue to do weekend housework<sup>2</sup> drops off. The rate reaches less than 8% at 7:30 p.m. and steadily falls until the end of the evening. Caregiving<sup>2</sup> becomes more demanding after supper, with about 5% of the not-employed engaged in caring for other household members at any given time between 7:10 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.<sup>2</sup> As expected, though, the majority give their evenings over to relaxation and recreation. At 6:00 p.m., over half are enjoying leisure time and activities, and the proportion rises quickly to peak at more than 80% at 8:50 p.m. They go to bed at almost the same time as full-time workers: at 11:00 p.m. on a weekend night, over half (58%) are asleep.

1. The not-employed aged 25 and over comprise a heterogeneous group of some 8.2 million people, and include people who are retired (41%), keeping house (24%), looking for work (5%), students (3%), people who were not working for other reasons (7%) and those who did not state their main activity (20%).

2. High sampling variability for these estimates. Use with caution.

drops as people start going to bed. At 11:00 p.m., over half (52%) of full-time workers report being asleep and three-quarters (75%) are sleeping by midnight.

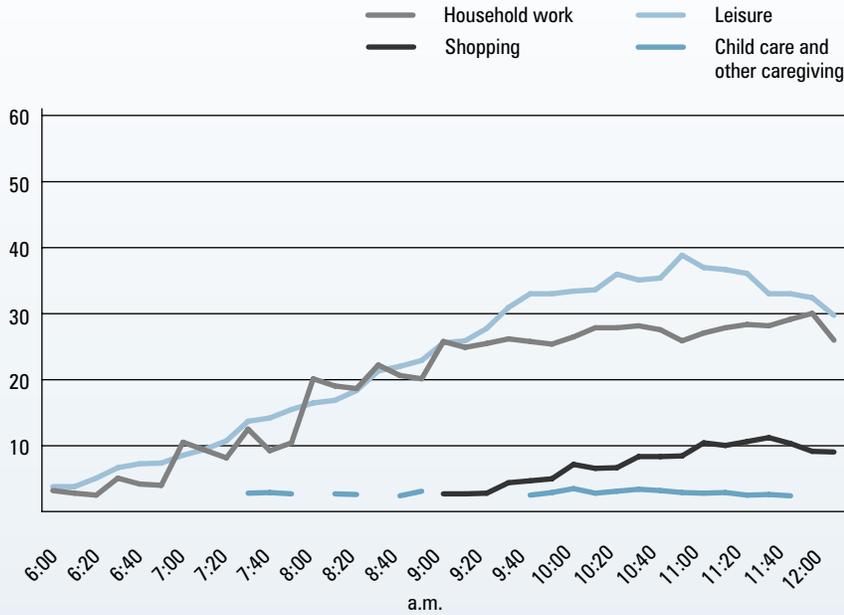
Some people's leisure time, though, is other people's work time, especially if they are employed in the hospitality industry, protective services (e.g. hospitals, fire, police) or do shift work.

About 7% of full-time workers are doing paid work at any given time between 6:10 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Are Sunday nights different from Saturday nights? Not really. However, it takes a bit longer to get domestic chores out of the way on Sunday: at 7:00 p.m., 15% of people who work full-time are still doing household work, compared with only 9% on

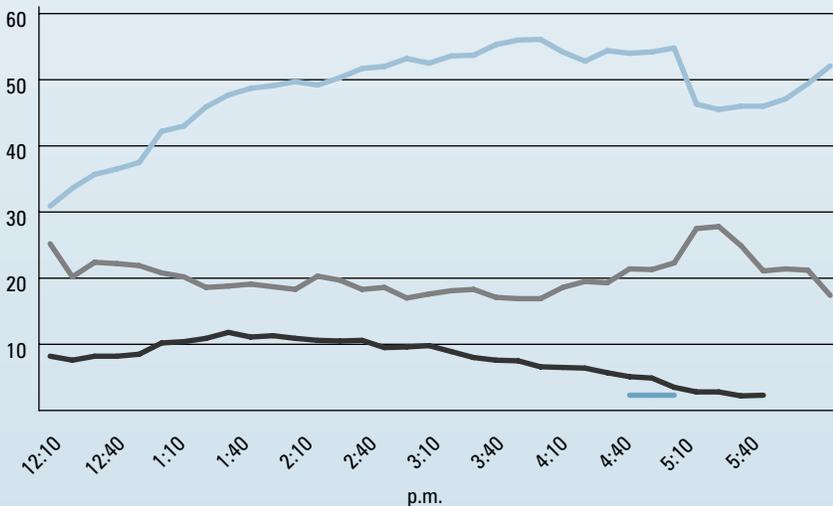
Saturday at the same time. Also, proportionally fewer people report being engaged in leisure activities on a Sunday night, especially after 9:30 p.m., probably because they are going to bed earlier. The majority (61%) of full-time workers are asleep by 11:00 p.m. on Sunday; on Saturday, the majority (54%) do not get to bed until 11:30 p.m.

% of the not-employed population aged 25 and over



Note: Rates averaged over Saturday and Sunday. High sampling variability for entire child care and other caregiving series, for leisure until 7:00 a.m. and for shopping activities until 10:50 a.m. Break in series indicates sample size too small to produce reliable estimate.

... leaving their afternoons free for leisure activities



Note: Rates averaged over Saturday and Sunday. High sampling variability for entire child care and other caregiving series and for shopping activities from 3:30 p.m. Break in series indicates sample size too small to produce reliable estimate.  
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998.

Summary

Time use patterns show that the weekend offers less respite than full-time workers might like from the hurly-burly activity of Monday to Friday. But the less demanding Sundays suggest that, as the baby boomers begin to leave the work force, time use patterns of the general population may shift. Among other things, this change would probably affect store hours, traffic patterns and preferred times for leisure and social activities. Over the next few decades, it may be that Saturday and Sunday will begin to resemble the peaceful, relaxing weekend so many people today would like to have.



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