

Weekend workers

Jennifer Winters

For some people, weekend work is unavoidable. For example, workers in essential health and protective services are often required to work Saturdays and/or Sundays. And in seasonal industries such as farming and fishing, weekend work can be crucial at certain times of the year. As well, many businesses have been expanding their weekend service hours in recent years to meet consumer needs. In November 1991, 1.1 million persons, or 11% of Canada's paid workforce, regularly worked weekends.

Based on data from the November 1991 Survey of Work Arrangements (see [Data source](#)), this note examines the characteristics of "weekend workers." For this purpose, weekend workers are defined as paid employees aged 15 to 64 whose regular work schedules in their main job include Saturdays and/or Sundays. [\(1\)](#)

When do they work?

Weekend work typically includes only one day during the weekend. Among paid workers with regularly scheduled weekend hours, 57% worked Saturdays only and 9% Sundays only. The remaining 34% worked both days.

Where do they work?

Weekend work tends to be a service industry phenomenon. [\(2\)](#) In November 1991, paid workers in service-producing industries were twice as likely as those in the goods-producing sector to work weekends (12% compared with 6%). [\(3\)](#) The high incidence of weekend work in services reflects the prevalence of weekend schedules among workers in trade (18%) and in community, business and personal services (13%) - industries whose regular operating hours generally include Saturdays and, to a lesser extent, Sundays ([Table](#)).



Table Selected characteristics of weekend worker, November 1991

Source: *Survey of Work Arrangements*

Who works weekends?

Weekend work was most common among younger workers. Paid workers aged 15 to 24 accounted for 42% of those who regularly worked Saturdays and 45% of those on Sundays. Nearly 25% of paid workers aged 15 to 24 worked weekends, compared with only 8% of those aged 25 to 64. This pattern was similar for both men and women ([Chart A](#)).

The concentration of weekend work among younger workers likely reflects, at least in part, a preference for weekend schedules among students. As well, older and more experienced workers may be able to avoid regular weekend work because of their seniority.



Chart A Young persons were the most likely to work weekends.

Source: *Survey of Work Arrangements, November 1991*

Sixty percent of all weekend workers reported working full time, that is, 30 or more hours per week. However, the incidence of weekend work among part-timers (24%) was triple that for full-timers (8%) ([Table](#)). This observation is not surprising as part-time employment is prevalent in both trade and community, business and personal service industries.

The rate of unionization for weekend workers (18%) was much lower than that for paid workers who did not work weekends regularly (37%). This difference reflects the high proportion of youths (15 to 24) and the concentration of weekend workers in less unionized industries.

Paid workers in New Brunswick and Ontario were the least likely to work weekends (9%), while those in British Columbia were the most likely to (14%) ([Chart B](#)).



Chart B Weekend work was most prevalent in British Columbia.

Source: *Survey of Work Arrangements, November 1991*

Weekend workers of the future

Recent labour market trends suggest that the face of weekend work may change in the near future. If growth in the service industry continues to outpace that in goods, an increasing number of paid workers may find themselves working weekends. [\(4\)](#) The declining share of youths in the labour force may result in more persons 25 and older working weekends in the future. [\(5\)](#)

Data source

The November 1991 Survey of Work Arrangements (SWA) collected data on the work routines and schedules of paid workers aged 15 to 64. For a more detailed discussion of the survey and its results, see [Akyeampong and Siroonian](#) (1993) or [Siroonian](#) (1993). The data in this note pertain only to paid workers whose regular work schedules in their main job included Saturdays and/or Sundays. Self-employed workers, unpaid family workers, and workers with irregular schedules have been excluded; it is likely that some of them had work schedules that included weekends. Furthermore, the data exclude multiple jobholders who did not regularly work Saturdays or Sundays in their main job but who may have had weekend schedules in their other jobs. Thus, the number of weekend workers is probably underestimated.

Notes

Note 1

A regular schedule is one in which the days worked are the same from week to week.

Note 2

Service-producing industries include transportation, communication and other utilities; wholesale and

retail trade; finance, insurance and real estate; community, business and personal services; and public administration. Goods-producing industries include agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, manufacturing and construction.

Note 3

The only exception to this pattern was agriculture. In November 1991, the incidence of weekend work among paid workers in agriculture (39%) was more than three times that for service workers. This estimate would likely have been even higher if the survey had been conducted during the peak farming season.

Note 4

According to the Labour Force Survey, service-producing industries were responsible for all employment growth between 1981 and 1991. Service employment rose more than 1.6 million, and some 86% of this rise occurred in trade and in community, business or personal services, where weekend work is most prevalent.

Note 5

The total labour force grew by 16% between 1981 and 1991. Over the same period, the proportion of the labour force accounted for by 15 to 24 year-olds fell from 26% to 18%.

References

- Akyeampong, E. B. and J. Siroonian. "[Work arrangements of Canadians - an overview.](#)" *Perspectives on Labour and Income* (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 75-001E) 5, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 8-10.
- Siroonian, J. *Work Arrangements*. Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division, Analytic Report no. 6 (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 71-605). Ottawa, 1993.
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Source

Perspectives on Labour and Income, Summer 1994, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 75-001E). This is the seventh of seven articles in the issue.

 HIGHLIGHTS

 TABLE OF CONTENTS

 SUBJECT INDEX

 AUTHOR INDEX

 FRANÇAIS

 HELP

 HOME



Table		
Selected characteristics of weekend worker, November 1991		
	Weekend workers	Incidence of weekend work
	'000	%
All weekend workers	1,089	11
Industry		
Goods-producing	149	6
Agriculture	43	39
Manufacturing	67	4
Other*	39	6
Service-producing	940	12
Trade	334	18
Community, business and personal services	479	13
Other**	126	6
Occupation		
Managerial and professional	213	6
Clerical	145	7
Sales	187	22
Service	324	23
Primary	48	24
Transport equipment operating	47	13
Other†	124	6
Sex		
Men	600	11
Women	488	10
Age		
15-24 years	450	24
25-34 years	284	9
35-44 years	185	7
45-64 years	170	7
Work Status		

Full-time	657	8
Part-time	431	24
Unionization		
Unionized	198	5
Non-unionized	888	13
Schedule		
Saturday only	624	6
Sunday only	99	1
Both Saturday and Sunday	366	4

Source: Survey of Work Arrangements

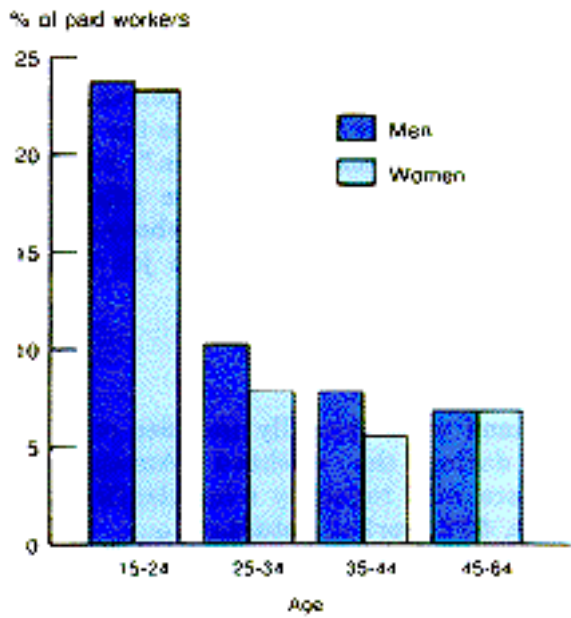
** Forestry, fishing, mining and construction.*

*** Transportation, communication and other utilities; finance, insurance and real estate; and public administration.*

† Processing, machining and fabricating; construction trades; and material handling and other crafts

Chart A

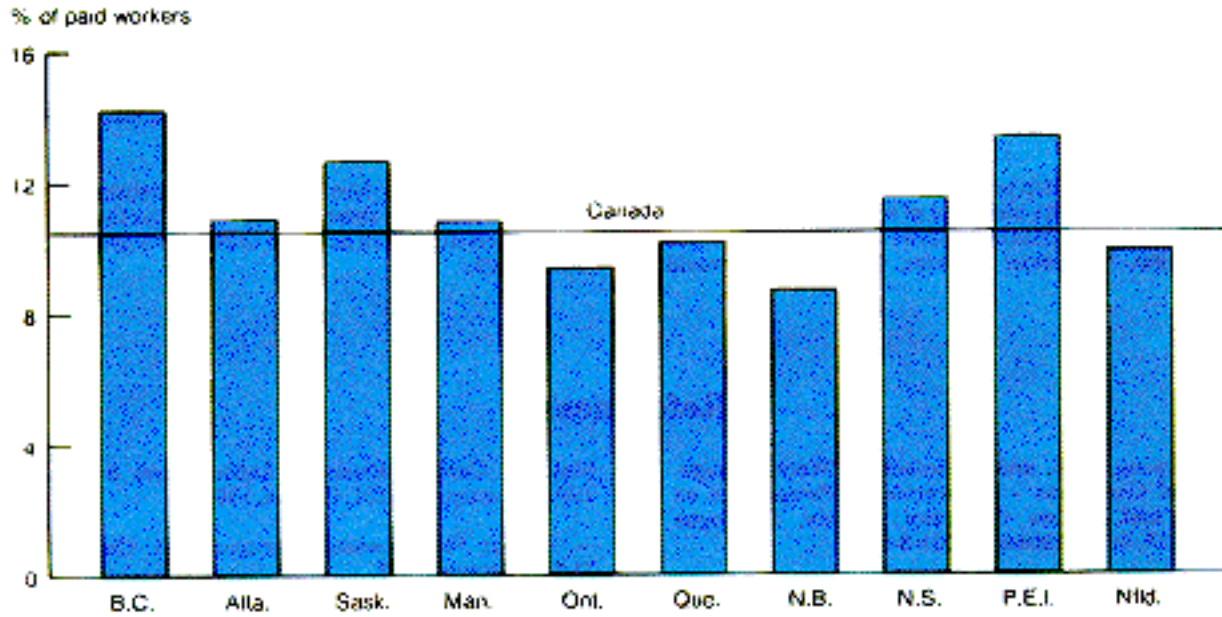
Young persons were the most likely to work weekends.



Source: *Survey of Work Arrangements, November 1991*

Chart B

Weekend work was most prevalent in British Columbia.



Source: Survey of Work Arrangements, November 1991