

Time Budgets. How Do We Spend Our Time?

Research Digest # 3 (20) • 2023



The world-class Human Capital Multidisciplinary Research Center was established in November 2020 under the National Project “Science” as a consortium of four leading institutions in this field of science: NRU HSE, RANEPA, MGIMO MFA of Russia and Russian Academy of Sciences N.N. Mikloukho-Maklay Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology.

The creation of the Center has become Russia’s most ambitious undertaking in the field of social sciences and humanities in recent decades. The Center’s key tasks include not only performing world-class research, but also establishing cooperation with leading international organizations, launching educational programs, setting up state-of-the-art research infrastructure, transfer of the knowledge gained into governance and education.

The Center implements 78 research projects. The research program covers key aspects of human capital that feature prominently in the global agenda:



Social Sciences and Humanities Aspects of Human Capital



Neurocognitive Mechanisms of Social Behavior



Demography and Active Ageing



Natural and Climatic Factors Affecting Sustainable Development



Employment, Social Activity and Development of Key Skills and Competences



Human Capital and Security in the Global Context



Human in the Era of Technological Transformations

This digest was produced by the NRU HSE Center for Time Budgets Studies under the research project Time Budgets Structure Analysis in the Context of Assessing the Well-being of the Population

Human Capital Multidisciplinary Research Center Research Digest Project supervised by Olga Voron. Written by Maria Nagernyak, Natalya Mikhailova, Sergei Ter-Akopov, Natalya Voronina. Edited by Anastasia Andrianova. Translated by Andrei Salnikov.

Introduction

To study changes in people's daily lives, researchers often rely on time allocation data (in other words, data on the structure of time budgets) because they:

- (1) **simultaneously cover all areas of activity** (paid work and household chores, care of children and other family members, leisure time, social and community life, etc.) – whatever you do, you need time for it;
- (2) are universal in the sense that **all people** anywhere in the world and in any historical period have time **limited to 24 hours a day**;
- (3) **sensitive** to social, economic, and other kinds of **changes**.

In international practice, indicators of how people use their time are widely used as **part of comprehensive assessments of quality of life and well-being**. Thus, they are present in the OECD Better Life Index , Canadian Index of Wellbeing and New Zealand Well-Being Budget. The measures used are assessments of satisfaction with the work-life balance; the amount of time spent in paid and unpaid work; the availability and amount of time devoted to leisure or self-care, etc.

As far as Russia is concerned, there is a certain lack of new knowledge in contemporary social science about how people allocate their time. At the same time, there is a lot of speculation in the media that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our everyday life and forced us to face a “new reality”. However, there are few scientifically based views on the specifics of this “new reality”.

The authors of the Research Digest ventured in this direction, and the following pages will help to see **how Russians use their time** based on fresh data for 2021 and 2022.

Methodology

The study is based on data from the online sample survey “Everyday Practices of the Population: Consumer Choices and Time Budgets” conducted by the National Research University Higher School of Economics in 2021 and 2022.¹ The general population for the survey comprised Russian residents aged 18 years and older with access to the Internet.

The survey sample size in 2021 was 5,000 people over 18 years of age with Internet access and 4,299 in 2022. The sample was a quota sample, the quota distribution corresponded to the distribution of the Internet audience in Russia.

The survey asked respondents, among other things, how much time on average on weekdays and weekends they spent on different types of activities: sleeping; self-care; paid work; voluntary unpaid work; study; independent professional education; reading and watching news and posts on the Internet, social networks; watching TV; watching movies or series online; household and family activities; caring for children and grandchildren / activities with children and grandchildren / caring for adults in need of help; sports, gymnastics, fitness; seeing doctors, self-treatment; transportation; free time.

Time budget and how it is measured

Time budget is the balance of time spent on activities of a certain category of population during a period of time².

Several techniques for measuring time budgets are known in the social sciences³:

- **Direct questions approach:** the respondent is asked questions such as “How many hours per day on average did you spend working last week?”
- **Observation and anthropological records approach:** special observers record all of the respondent’s activities during the day;
- **Random sampling approach:** respondents self-record their activities at 10-30 random moments throughout the day;
- **Detailed daily diary approach:** respondents self-record all their activities and their time for a full day in a special diary⁴.

In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics methods were used to trace the allocation of time to different activities in different slices, as well as pairwise correlation techniques to identify statistical differences.

¹ The first round took place from mid-June to July 2021 against the backdrop of the pandemic. The second round took place from October to November 2022 in a new geopolitical environment.

² Time Budget of the Urban Population / Ed. By B.Kolpakov and V.Patrushev; Institute of Economics and Organization of Industrial Production. Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Central Statistical Office under the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR. – Moscow: Statistika, 1971.

³ Land, K. C., Michalos, A. C., & Sirgy, M. J. (Eds.). (2011). Handbook of social indicators and quality of life research. Springer Science & Business Media.

⁴ Cornwell, B., Gershuny, J., & Sullivan, O. (2019). The social structure of time: Emerging trends and new directions. Annual Review of Sociology, 45, 301-320.

Findings

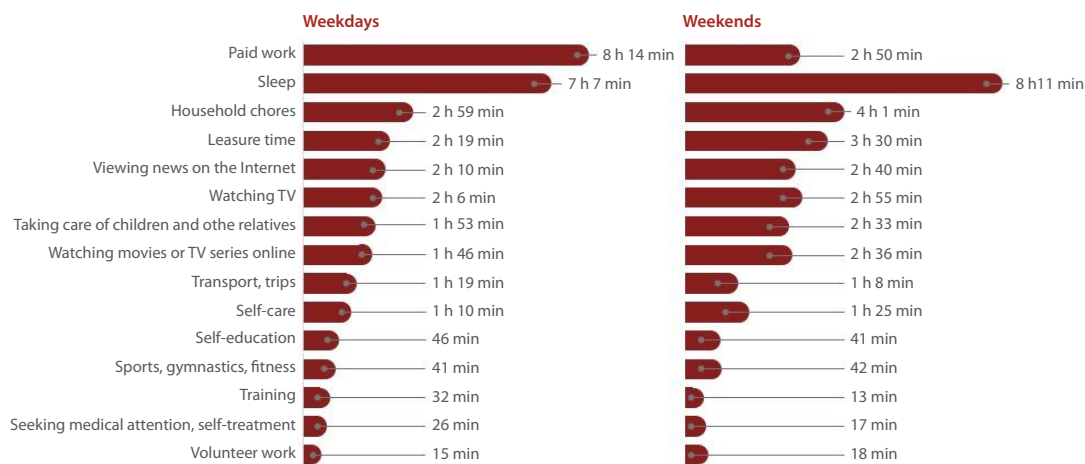
Time Budgets Structure

First of all, let us record the general structure of time use by Russians: what types of activities and how much time they spend on weekdays and weekends.

In 2022, on weekdays, Russian adults spent the most time on paid work (8 hours 14 minutes on average), sleeping (7 hours 7 minutes on average), household and family activities (2 hours 59 minutes on average), reading and viewing messages and news on the Internet (2 hours 10 minutes on average) and watching TV (2 hours 6 minutes on average). Free time devoted to leisure and favorite activities averaged 2 hours 19 minutes on weekdays.

On weekends, Russian adults, besides sleeping, spent the most time on household and family chores (an average of 4 hours), watching TV (an average of 2 hours 55 minutes) and reading messages and news on the Internet (an average of 2 hours 40 minutes), as well as paid work (an average of 2 hours 50 minutes). Free time devoted to leisure and favorite activities averaged 3 hours and 30 minutes on weekdays, and the average time for sleep increases to 8 hours and 11 minutes (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Russians' time budget structure in 2022



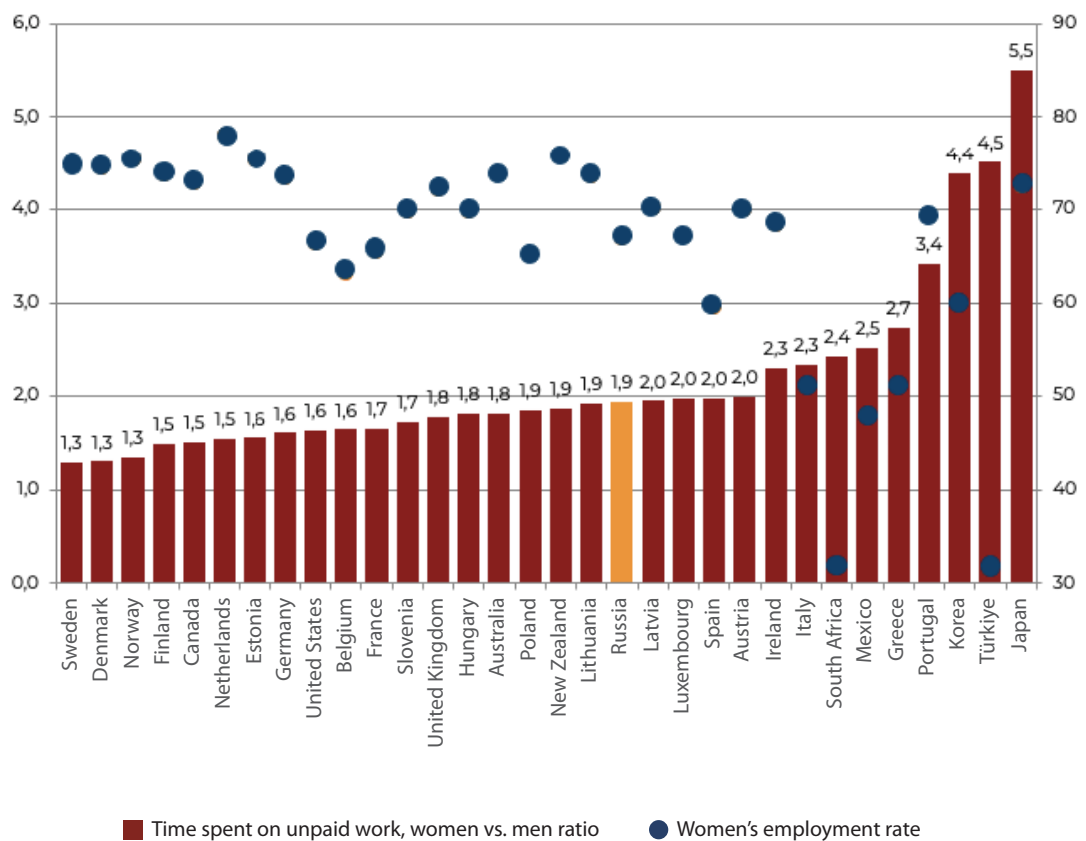
Source: "Everyday Practices of the Population: Consumer Choices and Time Budgets", NRU HSE.

Men vs. Women Differences

As in many other countries, there are differences in the way men and women allocate their time in Russia, with gender differences being more common than in most other socio-demographic groups. We observe particularly deep gender gaps in families with children in the areas of domestic chores, child care and upbringing, and leisure activities.

On average, compared to men, women spend about twice as much time on activities with children, care of children and other family members. This puts Russia roughly in line with the average for OECD countries, where this value ranges from 1.3 to 5.5 times (Figure 2). The unpaid domestic chores for women are on average about 6 hours a day (for men it is 2 hours and 15 minutes less), which refers us to the term “second shift”, which was widely introduced into scientific circulation thanks to Professor A. Hochschild back in 1989.¹ She used this term to emphasize the high workload for women in unpaid household work.

Figure 2
Women’s employment rates and the difference in time spent by women and men in unpaid work across countries



Source: OECD, Rosstat.

For the sake of fairness, it should be mentioned that men on average spend more time on paid work than women (by 40 minutes per day), but this difference does not fully compensate for the difference in unpaid work. Moreover, gender differences are also observed in the opportunities to use time for adequate rest: women spend 1.2 times less time on it compared to men, regardless of the day.

¹ Hochschild A., Machung A. Working parents and the revolution at home //New York: Viking. – 1989.

Work-life balance

6 hours a day - that's how much time on average Russian women spend on unpaid domestic chores and childcare

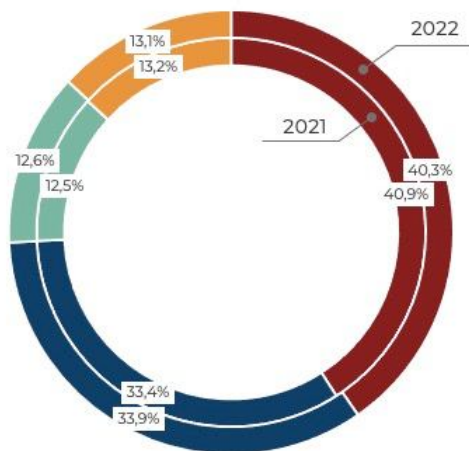
Improving the work-life balance is becoming a priority in the development of social and labor market policies both globally and in Russia¹.

A survey conducted in Russia showed differences between the desired and actual situation in combining work with other activities. In 2022, 80% of workers said that an important characteristic of work is that it leaves time for other activities. In practice, the main job meets this characteristic only in 42% of cases.

The majority of the working population in Russia does not clearly distinguish between working and non-working hours and has a practice of working outside working hours: about 60% of working Russians to some extent face a mix of working and non-working hours (Figure 3). The blurring of the boundaries between working and non-working hours is due, among other things, to the expansion of remote work formats during and after the pandemic.

Figure 3

Subjective assessment of working vs. non-working hours split in 2021 and 2022



60% of Russian have the boundaries between working and personal time blurred

- Working and non-working hours are clearly separated, I almost never work outside working hours
- Working and non-working hours are formally separated, but I from time to time work outside working hours
- Working and non-working hours are formally separated, but I often work outside working hours
- For me there is no separation between working and non-working hours

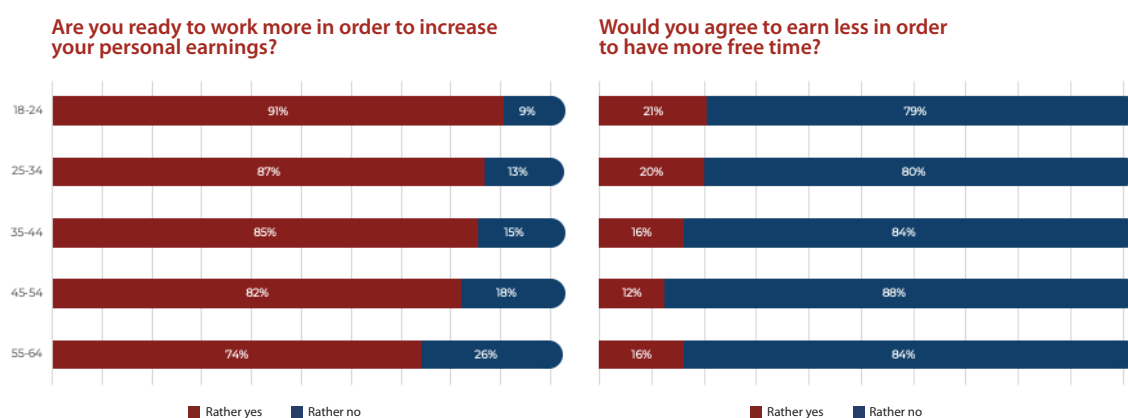
Source: "Everyday Practices of the Population: Consumer Choices and Time Budgets", NRU HSE.

¹ L.Ovcharova, O.Sinyavskaya, S.Biryukova, E.Gorina, M.Nagernyak & A.Pishnyak (2022). Social Protection in Russia: развилки будущего. Вопросы Экономики, (8), 5-31.

Выбор работающих россиян: больше заработка или больше досуга?

The majority of working Russians (77%) are ready to work more in order to receive a higher salary, and are not ready (73%) to earn less in order to have more free time. This readiness does not depend on the level of income. This is true both for the pandemic context in 2021 and the new geopolitical environment in 2022. At the same time, the older Russians are, the less they are willing to work more to increase their personal income (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Subjective assessment of the willingness to work more to increase personal income, by age groups

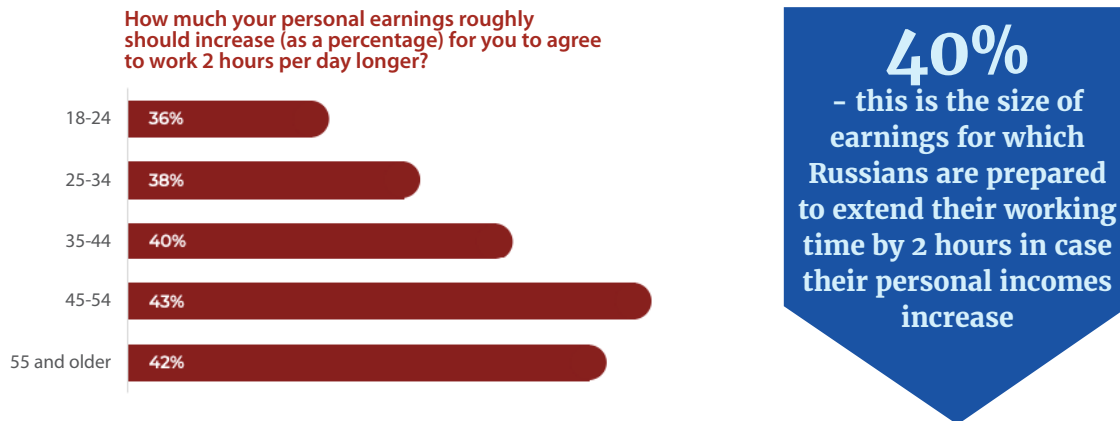


Source: "Everyday Practices of the Population: Consumer Choices and Time Budgets", NRU HSE.

While on average Russians are hypothetically ready to extend their working hours by 2 hours if their personal earnings increase by 40%, for the sake of 2 additional hours of free time per day Russians are ready to sacrifice on average only 9% of their earnings. Interestingly, the size of the hypothesized increase in earnings for an additional two hours of work increases significantly with age, except for the oldest age group (Figure 4).

73%
of working Russians
are not ready to earn
less in order to have
more free time

Figure 5
**Subjective assessment of additional income for 2 additional hours
of work per day, by age group**



Source: "Everyday Practices of the Population: Consumer Choices and Time Budgets", NRU HSE.

Conclusion

Researchers often rely on time distribution data to study changes in people's daily lives. In international practice, these data are also widely used as part of comprehensive assessments of quality of life and well-being.

According to the general structure of time budgets, the Russian population spends the most time on paid work, sleep, household and family activities. Despite the widespread myth, watching TV is still a popular leisure activity among Russians, taking an average of 2 hours a day on weekdays and 3 hours on weekends.

As in many countries, there are differences in the way men and women allocate their time in Russia. The greatest gender gap is observed in the sphere of domestic chores and childcare: women in Russia spend twice as much time on these activities compared to men. This is in line with the average for OECD countries.

Improving work-life balance is becoming a priority for social policy development. In this regard some 60 per cent of working people in Russia to some extent note that the boundaries between working and non-working hours are blurred. However, the majority of working Russians (77%) are ready to work more in order to receive a higher salary, and are not prepared (73%) to earn less in order to have more free time.

Thus, the time budget technique has great research potential and is important in terms of obtaining scientifically sound evidence about people's daily lives both domestically and for cross-country comparisons.

Reference

1. Organization of Industrial Production. Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Central Statistical Office under the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR. – Moscow: Statistika, 1971.
2. L.Ovcharova, O.Sinyavskaya, S.Biryukova, E.Gorina, M.Nagernyak & A.Pishnyak (2022). Social Protection in Russia: развилки будущего. *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, (8), 5-31.
3. Cornwell, B., Gershuny, J., & Sullivan, O. (2019). The social structure of time: Emerging trends and new directions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45, 301-320.
4. Land, K. C., Michalos, A. C., & Sirgy, M. J. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook of social indicators and quality of life research*. Springer Science & Business Media.
5. Hochschild A., Machung A. *Working parents and the revolution at home* //New York: Viking. – 1989.