

# The Daily Round

By Diane Crispell

*A global look at how people spend their time*

*“Time, you old gipsy man,  
Will you not stay,  
Put up your caravan  
Just for one day?”*

The poet Ralph Hodgson penned these lines in 1920. His sentiments reflect those of many ordinary people who might express themselves with the more mundane phrase, “Time flies.”

Yet when RoperASW asked people in 30 countries which they would rather have more of, money or time, money won out by a respectable margin.



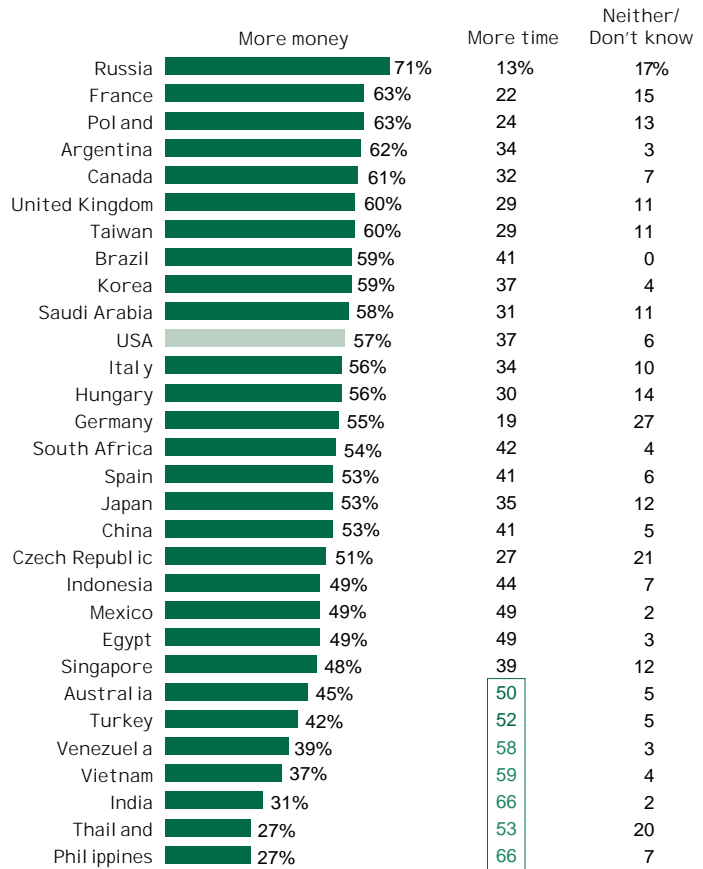
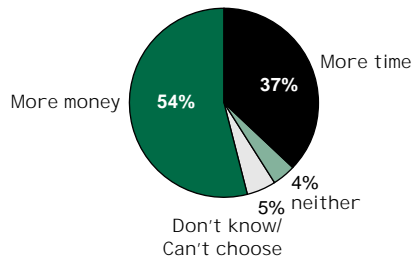
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*Diane Crispell is editor-at-large, RoperASW.*

## Chasing Money... Chasing Time

### Question:

If you could have more of one thing in your life, which would you choose to have, more time or more money?



How do people spend their money? In developed consumer economies where the essentials of life are taken for granted, discretionary spending is often on entertainment—going out to eat, traveling, and other experiences. In other words, money “buys” time because it allows people to spend their time the way they choose.

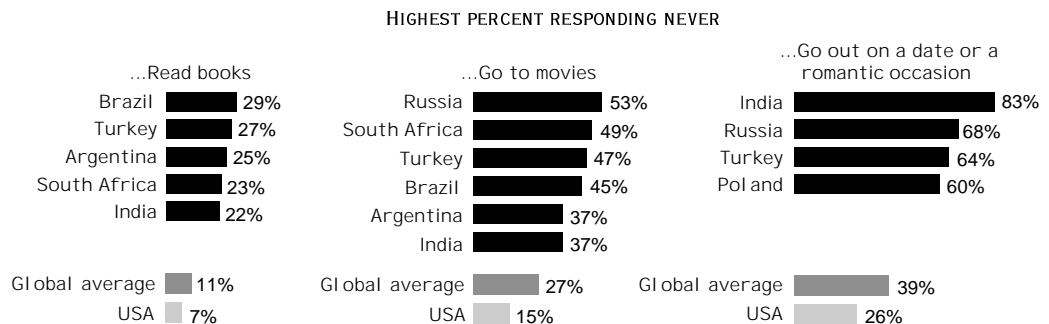
In some cultures, people save time by hiring help. In places such as Venezuela, India, and Saudi Arabia, the tradition of domestic service lives on even for many middle class households.

**Note:** Lower income groups were excluded from the survey samples in countries in Latin America, developing Asia, and Africa.

## Not Much Fun

### Question:

Now, I'm going to read you a list of activities. As I read each one, please tell me how often you do it...

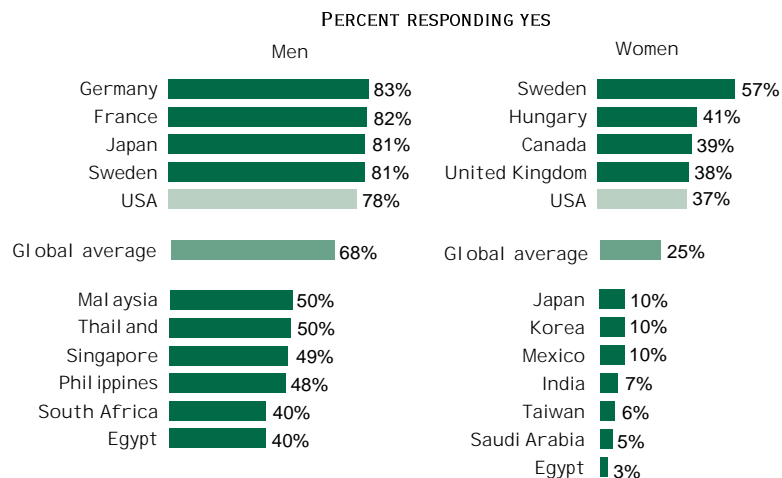


**Note:** “Go to movies” was not answered in Saudi Arabia. “Go out on a date or romantic occasion” was not answered in Saudi Arabia or Egypt.

## Bringing Home the Bacon

### Question:

Are you the main income earner in the household?



The average adult surveyed in Roper's global study who is employed full time reports working 8.6 hours on a typical weekday. Workers in Argentina and Turkey put in the longest days—9.8 hours. The average American works 8.3 hours. Filipinos have the shortest work day, an even 8 hours. Part time is nearly a full day in the Middle Eastern and African countries Roper covers, averaging 7.3 hours.

In addition, people who say they are their household's main income earner put in more time, an average of 8.5 hours a day, compared with 7.3 for those who aren't main earners. All told, nearly half of employed people, 46%, say they are main earners. The share is predictably higher for men, at 68%, and lower for women, at 25%. Employed men are most likely to report being their household's main earner in developed countries, where one might assume women play a more equal role.

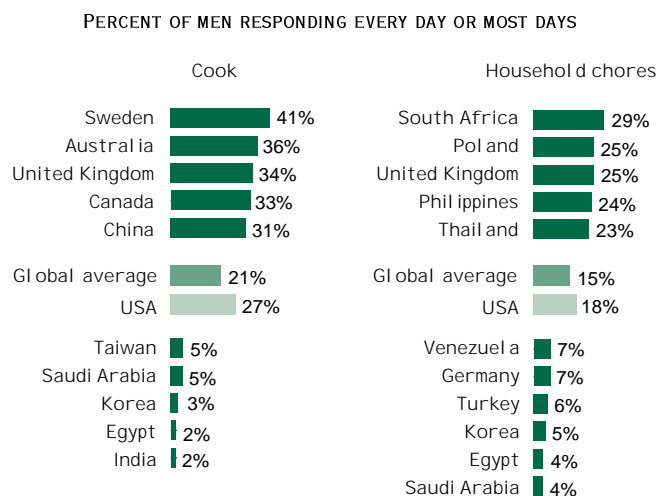
Part-time workers or non-workers whose main "job" is being a student spend nearly the equivalent of a full-time job studying—an average of 6.9 hours per weekday. Among full-time workers who spend any time studying, schoolwork adds 1.7 hours to their day.

Fifty-five percent of respondents worldwide perform household tasks (including cooking, household chores, and food shopping) every day or almost every day. It is no surprise that women more than men, parents more than non-parents, and older more than younger adults are likely to say these tasks consume their time on a daily basis.

## A Man Around the House

### Question:

Now, I going to read you a list of activities. As I read each one, please tell me how often you do it... Do you cook? Do household chores such as cleaning and laundry?



An essential activity that consumes a large chunk of people's time is sleep. The average respondent reports getting 7.4 hours of sleep on a typical weekday. Japanese sleep the least, 6.7 hours, South Africans the most, 7.9 hours. Americans sleep 7.1 hours. There is little difference between employed and non-employed people in the amount of sleep they get.

There is also little difference between those who work and those who don't in the time they spend in transit—an average of 1 hour a day—and on personal grooming—about 40 minutes.

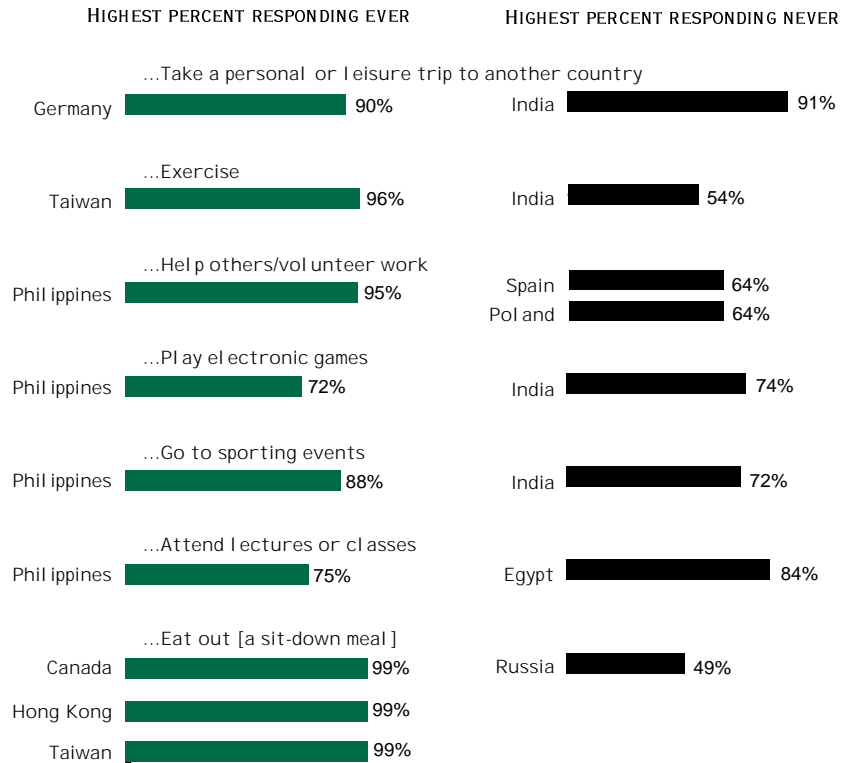
Cultural norms play a part in the extent to which people pursue activities. At least 90% of people in many Asian countries say they exercise. Western Europeans and Japanese are substantially more likely than average to visit pubs and cafes. Some questions about social activities, such as going out on dates, were not answered in Saudi Arabia or Egypt, because these activities are not in line with social norms there.

After a good night's sleep, brushing of hair and teeth, and paid work, schoolwork, and housework, the most common daily activity worldwide is a family meal: 79% of Roper respondents say they eat meals at home with other members of their households every day or almost every day.

## World of Difference

### Question:

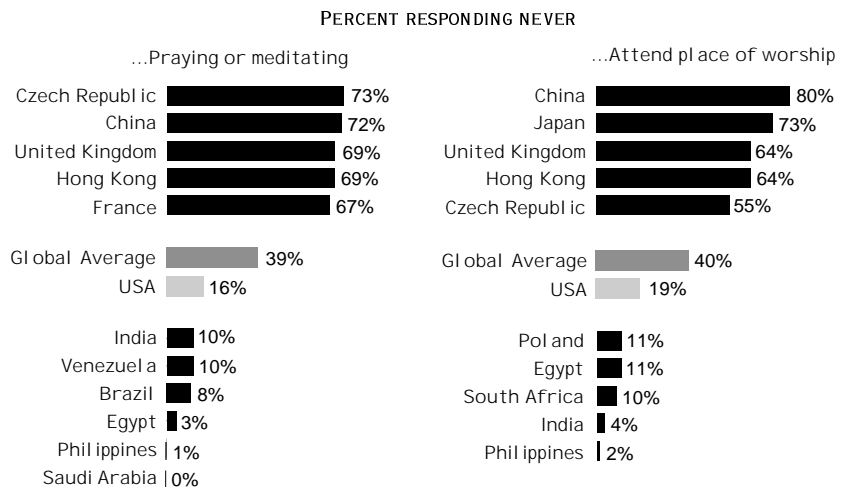
Now I'm going to read you a list of activities. As I read each one, please tell me how often you do it...



## Believe It or Not

### Question:

Now I'm going to read you a list of activities. As I read each one, please tell me how often you do it...



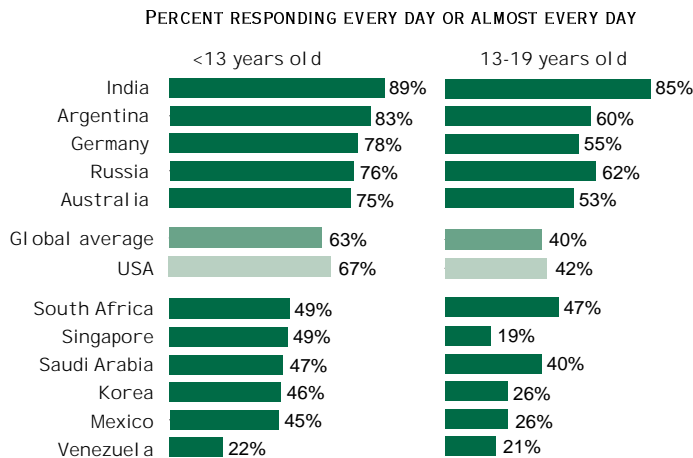
Parents, of course, have one choice of activity to pursue that non-parents don't: interacting with their offspring. Two-thirds of respondents with preteens have fun with their children every day or almost every day. Virtually no one says he or she never has fun with the kids. But the fun starts to fade when they become teenagers; just 40% of parents with children ages 13 to 19 report daily activities with their kids.

The changing relationship with children as they age is most apparent in the Czech Republic and Japan. Fifty-five percent of Czech parents have daily fun with preteen children. That falls to 16% with teenagers. In Japan, the numbers are 53% and 15%, respectively. Indian parents, on the other hand, maintain high levels of involvement with children of any age. At the other extreme, Venezuelan parents seem less involved or enthused from the get-go.

## Child's Play

### Question:

Now, I am going to read you a list of activities. As I read each one, please tell me how often you do it... Have fun with your children.



### Methodological Note

The Roper Reports Worldwide study conducts in-depth, in-person interviews with 1,000 consumers ages 13 to 65 in each of 30 or more countries each year. The sample is nationally representative of the population in North America and Western Europe and the urban population in other regions, and excludes lower-income groups in Latin America, developing Asia, and Africa. The questionnaire is uniform across countries, although slight adaptations are sometimes made to accommodate cultural norms. Surveys for the 2000 study were conducted during the winter of 1999-2000, and for the 2002 study in the winter of 2001-02.

All in all, people who would prefer to have more time seem to spend it about the same way as people who would rather have more money. There are a few telling exceptions, though, largely related to the fact that the group that prefers more time is more likely than average to have a college education. The time-hungry are more likely to read books and use computers; they spend less time with TV. When they do watch TV, they are more motivated than others by learning and are less likely to watch "lighter" fare, such as movies, soap operas, game shows, and talk shows. They are more likely than others to view the internet as a learning tool. They are also more likely to place a high value on knowledge, learning, wisdom, and perseverance, as well as honesty and authenticity. Since higher education is often linked with higher income, people who value time over money have more money than average, freeing them to pursue the "higher-order" substance they crave.

In the end, everyone faces the great equalizer of 24 hours a day. It is, to a large extent, up to individuals to use the days and nights as they will—in profound thought or sensual pleasure, chronic multitasking or unhurried leisure—or all of the above. It may be another early twentieth century poet, Thomas Stephens Collier, who has a handle on the twenty-first century approach to time: "Time has no flight—'tis we who speed along." 🌐