

The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline Of Leisure

By Juliet Schor

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This pathbreaking book explains why, contrary to all expectations, Americans are working harder than ever. Juliet Schor presents the astonishing news that over the past twenty years our working hours have increased by the equivalent of one month per year—a dramatic spurt that has hit everybody: men and women, professionals as well as low-paid workers. Why are we—unlike every other industrialized Western nation—repeatedly ”choosing” money over time? And what can we do to get off the treadmill?

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
An important, hard-hitting, well-documented look at the overworking of America, this study finds that Americans now spend more hours working than at any time since WW II. 75,000 first printing; $50,000 ad/promo.
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From Library Journal
This is a book with an important message that unfortunately will probably not be taken seriously. Schor, a Harvard economist, argues from statistics what the rest of us know from experience, that "in the last twenty years the amount of time Americans have spent at their jobs has risen steadily." And the statistics, if accurate, are stunning. Each year our work year increases by one day. We average only 16 hours of leisure a week after jobs and household chores. Working hours are longer than they were 40 years ago. And if present trends continue by the year 2000, we will be spending as much time at our jobs as we did in the 1920s. However, as Schor notes, we are also willing victims of this erosion of leisure as we pursue promotions, bigger salaries, and conspicuous consumption. Her solution? Hold jobs to a set number of hours per week, offer comp time for any overtime, and lower our living standards. Recommended for academic and public libraries.
- Jeffrey R. Herold, Bucyrus P.L., Ohio
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From Kirkus Reviews
News accounts of the last few years have depicted the evolution of the man in the gray flannel suit into the 80-hour-per- week yuppie, and of Superwoman into a bundle of frayed nerves who finds she really can't have it all. Yet according to Schor (Economics/Harvard), her own cogent analysis of our society's ``time poverty'' is the first of its kind. Since 1948, the author reports, productivity for each US worker has more than doubled, yet work-hours have risen so sharply for the average American that, if present trends continue, hours on the job will match the level of the 1920's. In Schor's telling, workers are pulled by centrifugal forces all but mandating longer hours: exploding consumer debt, upgraded household standards, a labor-union movement that abandoned the struggle for shorter hours 50 years ago, and, above all, companies that find it advantageous to make time slaves of workers through fixed annual wages, overtime, and fringe benefits. Like many an economist, Schor apparently has never met a statistic she hasn't liked, even if its relevance is questionable (e.g., her comparing of present-day conditions with those of the preindustrial age). However, she scores telling points in noting that US manufacturing employees work 320 more hours per year than their German or French counterparts, in observing that longer hours are coinciding with high unemployment, and in puncturing the myth that Japanese workers' long hours give them a competitive leg up. Schor's proposals--standard schedules for every salaried job, payment for back time with time rather than money, pro-rationing of fringe benefits for part-time workers, government-mandated three-week paid vacations for all employees--seem worth consideration, if beyond legislative possibility at this point. A trenchant examination of why Americans find themselves in the ``squirrel cage'' of overwork. (Eighteen illustrations and tables--not seen.)
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Agnes Henson:

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Joan Marcial:

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