The data-driven secret to a productive work day

by the WORKFORCE LAB at slack
2 in 5 desk workers say they regularly work after hours

More than 50% say it's because they feel pressured to, not because they choose to

Slack Workforce Index, Wave 11, conducted August 24 - September 15, 2023. Number of completed responses = 10,333
Employees who feel pressured to work after hours report 20% lower productivity throughout the day.

Employees who feel pressured to work after hours experience:

- 2.1x worse work-related stress
- 1.7x lower satisfaction
- 2x worse burnout

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The most common reason people work after hours is “not having enough time in the day”

Compared to those who log a standard work day, this group is more likely to say they have too many competing priorities

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“We’ve long seen a focus on quantity over quality across many aspects of work, from how we spend our time to how we define productivity. Constantly feeling like you need to catch up is hurting employees and businesses. This underscores the importance of building a culture of trust where employees feel safe enough to speak up when they need help prioritizing and have the right balance of time in the work day to get work done.”

Christina Janzer
Senior Vice President of Research and Analytics at Slack and head of Slack’s Workforce Lab
Workers are struggling to balance their time

- 1 in 4 say they spend too much time in meetings
- 1 in 4 say they spend too much time in email
- 1 in 5 don’t have enough time to connect with coworkers

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The further up the management chain you are, the more you struggle with meeting overload.

On average, how many people say they spend too much time attending meetings?

- Individual Contributor: 23%
- Middle Management: 31%
- Senior Management: 30%
- Executive Management: 55%

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Executives are struggling most with email overload

On average, how many people say they spend too much time responding to emails or messages?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Contributor</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Management</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Management</td>
<td>43%</td>
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</tbody>
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Individual contributors and middle managers struggle most with finding ways to connect.

On average, how many people say they don’t spend enough time connecting with co-workers?

- Individual Contributor: 21%
- Middle Management: 20%
- Senior Management: 14%
- Executive Management: 7%

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of all desk workers say
they rarely or never take breaks during the work day

These workers are
more likely to experience burnout

Balance time

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“Why did we all come to believe that we are more productive if we are always on and that we need to burn out in order to succeed? It goes back to the first Industrial Revolution, when we started revering machines. The goal of machines is to minimize downtime. But for the human operating system, downtime is not a bug, it’s a feature. Elite athletes know that recovery is part of peak performance. Downtime is a productivity multiplier.”

Arianna Huffington
Founder and CEO of Thrive Global
Workers who regularly take breaks have 13% higher productivity.

- ↑62% Work-life balance
- ↑43% Ability to manage stress
- ↑43% Overall satisfaction

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The afternoon slump is real.

While 3 out of 4 desk workers report working during the 3-6pm timeframe, **only 1 in 4** consider these hours highly productive.
“This goes to show that productivity isn’t linear. Productivity happens in bursts, on and off throughout a day, not necessarily in prescribed windows of time, and definitely not for eight consecutive hours. The ‘afternoon slump’ shouldn’t be seen as a bad thing; for many workers this could be an ideal time to take that break that will boost their overall productivity for the day.”

Christina Janzer
Senior Vice President of Research and Analytics at Slack and head of Slack’s Workforce Lab
The “Goldilocks Zone” for productivity

On average, desk workers say the ideal amount of focus time is around four hours a day.

More than two hours a day is the tipping point at which a majority of workers say they’re spending “too much time” in meetings.

People who say they spend too much time in meetings are more than twice as likely to feel they don’t have enough time to focus.

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“Focus time, collaboration time, connection, and rest are like the macronutrients of a work day. The right balance gives you the energy you need to work your best. We cannot consider these critical components of our work in silos. To be our most effective, we must create the space for collaborative work and for focused work.”

David Ard
Head of Employee Success at Slack and Salesforce
AI adoption is still in its infancy

Only 1 in 5 desk workers say they have used AI for work

More than 80% say that AI tools aren’t improving their productivity

But leaders are pushing to incorporate AI tools

94% of executives feel at least some degree of urgency to incorporate AI tools into their organization

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Top three activities that employees expect AI tools will provide the most value in the future:

- Meeting notes and recaps
- Writing assistance
- Automation of workflows

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“People at every job level may be shocked to see that more than two hours of meetings a day reduces productivity. It may feel unrealistic to many team leaders to try to hit that target today. But that’s where the newest generation of AI tools could be a lifesaver. An AI assistant that could accurately summarize meeting notes and automate common workflows could be the key that frees up our time and helps us to unlock the balance we need to set ourselves up for success.”

**Christina Janzer**
Senior Vice President of Research and Analytics at Slack and head of Slack’s Workforce Lab