

Time Use, 2008: Total People

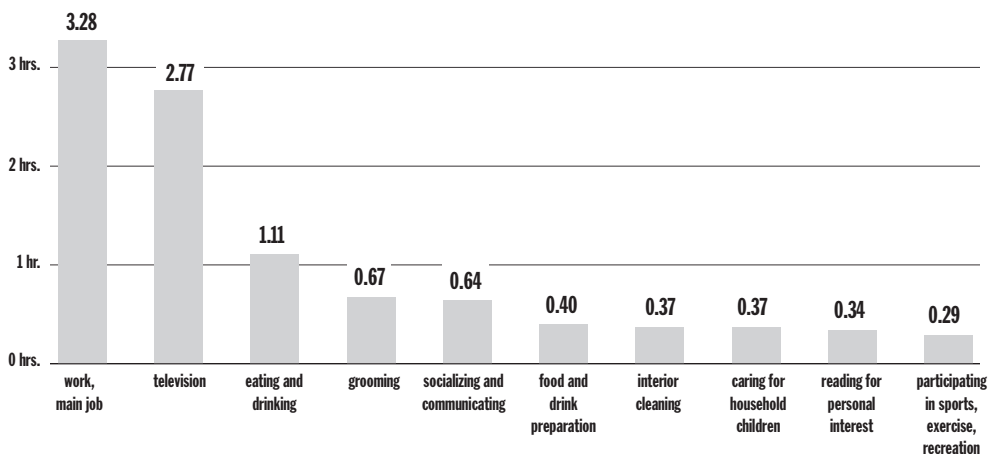
The average person spends more time sleeping than doing any other activity, an average of 8.60 hours a day. After sleep, work is the number-one most time-consuming activity, with the average person spending 3.28 hours per day working at a main job. (This figure appears low because it includes weekdays and weekends, working-age people and retirees.) Not surprisingly, the percentage of people who work and the amount of time spent on the job peaks in middle age. Men aged 45 to 54 who work spend as much time working as they do sleeping on an average day.

Television is the third most time-consuming activity for the average American, who spends 2.77 hours per day watching television as a primary activity. The amount of time people devote to television rises with age, starting at just 2.16 hours per day among 15-to-19-year-olds and rising to 4.19 hours a day among people aged 75 or older.

Three household chores appear in the top ten list of time-consuming activities—cooking, house-cleaning, and caring for children. Interestingly, the amount of time people spend cooking and cleaning peaks in the oldest age group—among people aged 75 or older—rather than in the crowded-nest ages of 25 to 54. Caring for household children ranks eighth on the list of time consuming activities (excluding sleep), and rises as high as fourth place among 25-to-44-year-olds. It falls off the top-ten list entirely in the 45-to-54 age group as children grow up and leave home.

Work and television are the top priorities of Americans

(average hours per day spent by people aged 15 or older doing primary activities, for the 10 activities on which the average person spends the most time, excluding sleep, 2008)



Although computers and the Internet are changing the way people communicate, computer use does not even begin to crack the top-ten list of time-consuming activities. Leisure computer use ranks 20th in time use (excluding sleep). The average American devotes much more time to reading for personal interest, putting reading in ninth place on the time-use list. Reading becomes an increasingly important priority with advancing age. Whether this continues to be true as younger, computer-oriented generations age remains to be seen.

Men's and women's time use differs considerably in every age group in stereotypical ways. Women spend much more time than men caring for children, doing the laundry, cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping. Men spend more time than women tending the lawn, doing home maintenance, and caring for vehicles. Women spend more time reading than men. Men spend more time involved in leisure computer use than women. Women are much more likely than men to talk to family members on the phone during an average day.

Table 1.1 Time Use by Total People Aged 15 or Older, 2008

(number and percent of total people aged 15 or older participating in primary activities on an average day, hours spent doing activity by the average person aged 15 or older and by those aged 15 or older who participated in the activity, 2008; numbers of participants in thousands)

	total people aged 15 or older participating		time spent doing activity (hours)	
	number	percent	average person aged 15 or older	participants aged 15 or older
TOTAL, ALL ACTIVITIES	238,007	100.0%	24.00	24.00
Personal care	237,922	100.0	9.38	9.38
Sleeping	237,789	99.9	8.60	8.61
Sleeplessness	12,390	5.2	0.06	0.85
Grooming	188,788	79.3	0.67	0.85
Health-related self-care	15,121	6.4	0.09	1.38
Household activities	179,767	75.5	1.77	2.34
Housework	84,381	35.5	0.58	1.64
Interior cleaning	58,281	24.5	0.37	1.50
Laundry	38,467	16.2	0.17	1.06
Storing interior household items, including food	11,877	5.0	0.02	0.35
Food and drink preparation, presentation, and clean-up	124,475	52.3	0.52	1.00
Food and drink preparation	117,317	49.3	0.40	0.82
Kitchen and food clean-up	49,622	20.8	0.12	0.56
Interior maintenance, repair, and decoration	7,200	3.0	0.07	2.22
Interior arrangement, decoration, and repairs	4,685	2.0	0.05	2.76
Exterior maintenance, repair, and decoration	6,535	2.7	0.06	2.04
Lawn, garden, and houseplants	22,346	9.4	0.19	2.00
Animals and pets (not veterinary care)	34,523	14.5	0.09	0.63
Walking, exercising, and playing with pets	13,726	5.8	0.04	0.76
Vehicles	6,408	2.7	0.04	1.48
Household management	69,041	29.0	0.21	0.72
Financial management	9,637	4.0	0.03	0.83
Household and personal organization and planning	33,452	14.1	0.09	0.65
Household and personal mail and messages (except email)	16,310	6.9	0.02	0.32
Household and personal email	22,456	9.4	0.06	0.63
Caring for and helping household members	62,109	26.1	0.45	1.73
Caring for and helping household children	52,120	21.9	0.37	1.69
Physical care for household children	37,309	15.7	0.17	1.07
Reading to or with household children	6,231	2.6	0.01	0.48
Playing with household children (except sports)	12,915	5.4	0.09	1.61
Talking with, listening to household children	7,230	3.0	0.02	0.57
Looking after household children as a primary activity	5,405	2.3	0.03	1.12
Picking up or dropping off household children	21,947	9.2	0.02	0.20
Activities related to household children's education	9,092	3.8	0.04	0.93
Helping household children with homework	8,194	3.4	0.03	0.83
Helping household adults	8,625	3.6	0.01	0.34
Caring for and helping people in other households	31,600	13.3	0.16	1.23
Caring for and helping children in other households	13,236	5.6	0.09	1.54

Table 2.2 Time Use by Men Aged 15 to 19, 2008

(number and percent of men aged 15 to 19 participating in primary activities on an average day, hours spent doing activity by the average 15-to-19-year-old man and by 15-to-19-year-old men who participated in the activity, 2008; numbers of participants in thousands)

	men aged 15 to 19 participating		time spent doing activity (hours)	
	number	percent	average man aged 15 to 19	male participants aged 15 to 19
TOTAL, ALL ACTIVITIES	10,800	100.0%	24.00	24.00
Personal care	10,800	100.0	10.28	10.28
Sleeping	10,800	100.0	9.64	9.64
Sleeplessness	439	4.1	0.03	—
Grooming	8,878	82.2	0.62	0.75
Health-related self-care	244	2.3	0.01	—
Household activities	5,464	50.6	0.60	1.19
Housework	1,704	15.8	0.17	1.09
Interior cleaning	1,371	12.7	0.14	—
Laundry	433	4.0	0.03	—
Storing interior household items, including food	60	0.6	0.00	—
Food and drink preparation, presentation, and clean-up	2,095	19.4	0.10	0.50
Food and drink preparation	1,776	16.4	0.07	0.44
Kitchen and food clean-up	571	5.3	0.02	—
Interior maintenance, repair, and decoration	186	1.7	0.01	—
Interior arrangement, decoration, and repairs	53	0.5	0.01	—
Exterior maintenance, repair, and decoration	163	1.5	0.01	—
Lawn, garden, and houseplants	359	3.3	0.05	—
Animals and pets (not veterinary care)	920	8.5	0.05	—
Walking, exercising, and playing with pets	382	3.5	0.02	—
Vehicles	485	4.5	0.09	—
Household management	2,571	23.8	0.12	0.48
Financial management	56	0.5	0.00	—
Household and personal organization and planning	1,874	17.4	0.06	0.36
Household and personal mail and messages (except email)	46	0.4	0.00	—
Household and personal email	715	6.6	0.05	—
Caring for and helping household members	1,098	10.2	0.05	—
Caring for and helping household children	746	6.9	0.03	—
Physical care for household children	56	0.5	0.00	—
Reading to or with household children	—	—	—	—
Playing with household children (except sports)	151	1.4	0.01	—
Talking with, listening to household children	89	0.8	0.01	—
Looking after household children as a primary activity	97	0.9	0.00	—
Picking up or dropping off household children	373	3.5	0.00	—
Activities related to household children's education	63	0.6	0.00	—
Helping household children with homework	63	0.6	0.00	—
Helping household adults	267	2.5	0.01	—
Caring for and helping people in other households	1,460	13.5	0.09	0.64
Caring for and helping children in other households	761	7.0	0.05	—

	men aged 15 to 19 participating		time spent doing activity (hours)	
	number	percent	average man aged 15 to 19	male participants aged 15 to 19
Helping adults in other households	777	7.2%	0.04	—
Picking up or dropping off adults in other households	479	4.4	0.01	—
Work and work-related activities	2,274	21.1	1.16	5.51
Work, main job	1,862	17.2	1.05	6.11
Work, other job(s)	30	0.3	0.01	—
Education	5,040	46.7	2.96	6.35
Taking class	4,280	39.6	2.39	6.03
Taking class for degree, certification, or licensure	4,216	39.0	2.37	6.08
Research, homework	3,020	28.0	0.48	1.73
Consumer purchases (store, telephone, Internet)	3,182	29.5	0.19	0.63
Grocery shopping	608	5.6	0.03	—
Purchasing gas	350	3.2	0.01	—
Purchasing food (except groceries)	1,536	14.2	0.02	0.13
Shopping, except groceries, food, and gas	1,675	15.5	0.13	0.84
Professional and personal care services	302	2.8	0.02	—
Financial services and banking	106	1.0	0.00	—
Banking	85	0.8	0.00	—
Medical and care services	152	1.4	0.02	—
Using health and care services outside the home	152	1.4	0.01	—
Household services	177	1.6	0.01	—
Eating and drinking	10,334	95.7	0.94	0.98
Socializing, relaxing, and leisure	10,414	96.4	4.83	5.01
Socializing and communicating	5,555	51.4	0.87	1.70
Attending or hosting social events	306	2.8	0.08	—
Relaxing and leisure	9,879	91.5	3.72	4.06
Relaxing, thinking	1,487	13.8	0.12	—
Television	8,086	74.9	2.23	2.98
Listening to the radio	253	2.3	0.03	—
Listening to or playing music (not radio)	1,427	13.2	0.13	—
Playing games (including computer)	3,168	29.3	0.76	2.57
Computer use for leisure (except games)	2,276	21.1	0.27	1.26
Reading for personal interest	1,236	11.4	0.16	—
Arts and entertainment (except sports)	710	6.6	0.16	—
Sports, exercise, and recreation	4,565	42.3	1.09	2.59
Participating in sports, exercise, or recreation	4,306	39.9	1.00	—
Using cardiovascular equipment	33	0.3	0.00	—
Walking	193	1.8	0.01	—
Working out, unspecified	295	2.7	0.02	—
Religious and spiritual activities	481	4.5	0.08	—
Attending religious services	177	1.6	0.04	—
Participation in religious practices	225	2.1	0.04	—

Table 4.7 Indexed Time Use of People Aged 25 to 34 by Sex, 2008

(average hours spent by people aged 25 to 34 doing primary activities on an average day by sex, and index of women's time to men's, 2008)

	average hours, aged 25 to 34		index of women to men
	men	women	
TOTAL, ALL ACTIVITIES	24.00	24.00	100
Personal care	9.14	9.43	103
Sleeping	8.48	8.57	101
Sleeplessness	0.04	0.03	75
Grooming	0.56	0.76	136
Health-related self-care	0.09	0.04	44
Household activities	1.06	1.93	182
Housework	0.28	0.83	296
Interior cleaning	0.21	0.56	267
Laundry	0.07	0.25	357
Storing interior household items, including food	0.04	0.02	50
Food and drink preparation, presentation, and clean-up	0.32	0.74	231
Food and drink preparation	0.26	0.56	215
Kitchen and food clean-up	0.06	0.17	283
Interior maintenance, repair, and decoration	0.04	0.02	50
Interior arrangement, decoration, and repairs	0.03	0.02	67
Exterior maintenance, repair, and decoration	0.03	0.02	67
Lawn, garden, and houseplants	0.12	0.05	42
Animals and pets (not veterinary care)	0.05	0.09	180
Walking, exercising, and playing with pets	0.03	0.05	167
Vehicles	0.06	0.01	17
Household management	0.13	0.16	123
Financial management	0.01	0.02	200
Household and personal organization and planning	0.06	0.07	117
Household and personal mail and messages (except email)	0.01	0.01	100
Household and personal email	0.04	0.07	175
Caring for and helping household members	0.56	1.31	234
Caring for and helping household children	0.52	1.17	225
Physical care for household children	0.19	0.63	332
Reading to or with household children	0.02	0.04	200
Playing with household children (except sports)	0.23	0.27	117
Talking with, listening to household children	0.01	0.03	300
Looking after household children as a primary activity	0.04	0.06	150
Picking up or dropping off household children	0.01	0.06	600
Activities related to household children's education	0.02	0.09	450
Helping household children with homework	0.02	0.07	350
Helping household adults	0.02	0.01	50
Caring for and helping people in other households	0.07	0.11	157
Caring for and helping children in other households	0.02	0.05	250

	average hours, aged 25 to 34		index of women to men
	men	women	
Helping adults in other households	0.04	0.03	75
Picking up or dropping off adults in other households	0.01	0.01	100
Work and work-related activities	5.47	3.66	67
Work, main job	5.23	3.47	66
Work, other job(s)	0.09	0.12	133
Education	0.30	0.27	90
Taking class	0.10	0.10	100
Taking class for degree, certification, or licensure	0.09	0.08	89
Research, homework	0.20	0.17	85
Consumer purchases (store, telephone, Internet)	0.30	0.44	147
Grocery shopping	0.07	0.12	171
Purchasing gas	0.01	0.01	100
Purchasing food (except groceries)	0.02	0.03	150
Shopping, except groceries, food, and gas	0.19	0.28	147
Professional and personal care services	0.03	0.09	300
Financial services and banking	0.01	0.01	100
Banking	0.00	0.00	—
Medical and care services	0.01	0.05	500
Using health and care services outside the home	0.01	0.04	400
Household services	0.01	0.02	200
Eating and drinking	1.06	1.01	95
Socializing, relaxing, and leisure	3.93	3.72	95
Socializing and communicating	0.61	0.70	115
Attending or hosting social events	0.07	0.14	200
Relaxing and leisure	3.13	2.81	90
Relaxing, thinking	0.22	0.16	73
Television	2.34	2.16	92
Listening to the radio	0.01	0.00	0
Listening to or playing music (not radio)	0.02	0.02	100
Playing games (including computer)	0.28	0.10	36
Computer use for leisure (except games)	0.18	0.18	100
Reading for personal interest	0.07	0.16	229
Arts and entertainment (except sports)	0.11	0.06	55
Sports, exercise, and recreation	0.35	0.20	57
Participating in sports, exercise, or recreation	0.32	0.18	56
Using cardiovascular equipment	0.01	0.03	300
Walking	0.03	0.02	67
Working out, unspecified	0.03	0.03	100
Religious and spiritual activities	0.08	0.12	150
Attending religious services	0.05	0.09	180
Participation in religious practices	0.02	0.01	50

Table 5.19 Ranking: Average Hours per Day Spent Doing Primary Activities by Male Participants Aged 35 to 44, 2008

(hours per day spent by male participants aged 35 to 44 doing primary activities, ranked by time spent doing activity, 2008)

	average hours per day spent by male participants aged 35 to 44
Total, all activities	24.00
1. Sleeping	8.33
2. Work, main job	7.99
3. Television	3.01
4. Lawn, garden, and houseplants	2.38
5. Playing games (including computer)	2.21
6. Participating in sports, exercise, or recreation	2.11
7. Volunteer activities	2.07
8. Attending religious services	1.97
9. Socializing and communicating	1.62
10. Computer use for leisure (except games)	1.52
11. Interior cleaning	1.41
12. Caring for and helping household children	1.39
13. Eating and drinking	1.19
14. Shopping, except groceries, food, and gas	1.09
15. Reading for personal interest	1.06
16. Helping adults in other households	1.05
17. Laundry	0.98
18. Relaxing, thinking	0.93
19. Travel related to helping adults in other households	0.89
20. Travel related to work	0.84
21. Food and drink preparation	0.72
22. Telephone calls	0.69
23. Grooming	0.68
24. Grocery shopping	0.68
25. Travel related to socializing and communicating	0.65
26. Animals and pets (not veterinary care)	0.63
27. Travel related to sports, exercise, and recreation	0.58
28. Household and personal organization and planning	0.56
29. Household and personal email	0.56
30. Travel related to shopping (except groceries, food, and gas)	0.53
31. Travel related to caring for and helping household children	0.50
32. Kitchen and food clean-up	0.45
33. Travel related to household activities	0.45
34. Travel related to grocery shopping	0.44
35. Travel related to eating and drinking	0.44
36. Travel related to relaxing and leisure	0.44
37. Travel related to religious and spiritual activities	0.44
38. Travel related to purchasing food (except groceries)	0.31
39. Purchasing food (except groceries)	0.17

Note: Primary activities are those respondents identified as their main activity. Other activities done simultaneously, such as eating while watching TV, are not included. The primary activities shown are those for which data by age are available.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublished tables from the 2008 American Time Use Survey, Internet site <http://www.bls.gov/tus/home.htm>; calculations by New Strategist

Table 7.18 Ranking: Average Hours per Day Spent Doing Primary Activities by Total Participants Aged 55 to 64, 2008

(hours per day spent by participants aged 55 to 64 doing primary activities, ranked by time spent doing activity, 2008)

	average hours per day spent by participants aged 55 to 64
Total, all activities	24.00
1. Sleeping	8.28
2. Work, main job	7.39
3. Television	3.89
4. Caring for and helping children in other households	2.51
5. Interior maintenance, repair, and decoration	2.50
6. Lawn, garden, and houseplants	2.29
7. Volunteer activities	2.28
8. Exterior maintenance, repair, and decoration	2.14
9. Playing games (including computer)	1.73
10. Socializing and communicating	1.66
11. Medical and care services	1.64
12. Attending religious services	1.62
13. Reading for personal interest	1.51
14. Participating in sports, exercise, or recreation	1.42
15. Interior cleaning	1.36
16. Computer use for leisure (except games)	1.35
17. Relaxing, thinking	1.27
18. Eating and drinking	1.25
19. Caring for and helping household children	1.20
20. Shopping, except groceries, food, and gas	1.14
21. Health-related self-care	1.13
22. Helping adults in other households	1.10
23. Laundry	1.04
24. Participation in religious practices	1.02
25. Household and personal organization and planning	0.91
26. Grooming	0.87
27. Food and drink preparation	0.81
28. Financial management	0.81
29. Grocery shopping	0.76
30. Travel related to work	0.74
31. Travel related to helping adults in other households	0.72
32. Telephone calls	0.68
33. Animals and pets (not veterinary care)	0.66
34. Travel related to shopping (except groceries, food, and gas)	0.63
35. Household and personal email	0.61
36. Kitchen and food clean-up	0.58
37. Travel related to purchasing gas	0.58
38. Travel related to eating and drinking	0.53
39. Travel related to socializing and communicating	0.53

	average hours per day spent by participants aged 55 to 64
40. Travel related to volunteer activities	0.53
41. Travel related to caring for and helping children in other households	0.49
42. Storing interior household items, including food	0.46
43. Travel related to relaxing and leisure	0.42
44. Travel related to religious and spiritual activities	0.42
45. Travel related to grocery shopping	0.38
46. Travel related to household activities	0.38
47. Travel related to sports, exercise, and recreation	0.38
48. Travel related to purchasing food (except groceries)	0.36
49. Household and personal mail and messages (except email)	0.31
50. Purchasing food (except groceries)	0.18
51. Purchasing gas	0.18

Note: Primary activities are those respondents identified as their main activity. Other activities done simultaneously, such as eating while watching TV, are not included. The primary activities shown are those for which data by age are available.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublished tables from the 2008 American Time Use Survey; Internet site <http://www.bls.gov/tus/home.htm>; calculations by New Strategist