

Teachers' work patterns: when, where, and how much do U.S. teachers work?

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Teachers' work patterns differ from those of many other professionals. In addition to teaching, they grade assignments, develop lesson plans, and perform other tasks in which they have some flexibility in determining when and where they work. Teachers' work schedules, too, are unique in that they often are tied to a traditional school year, with an extended break in the summer. This visual essay uses data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) to examine how much teachers work, where they work, when they work, and how their work patterns compare with those of other professionals.

In the ATUS, interviewers collect data in a time diary format, in which survey participants provide information about activities that they engaged in "yesterday." Because of the way in which the data are collected, it is possible to identify and quantify the work that teachers do at home, at a workplace, and at other locations and to examine the data by day of the week and time of day. Data are available for nearly every day of 2003–06, which is the reference period for this analysis.

In the presentation that follows, "teachers" refers

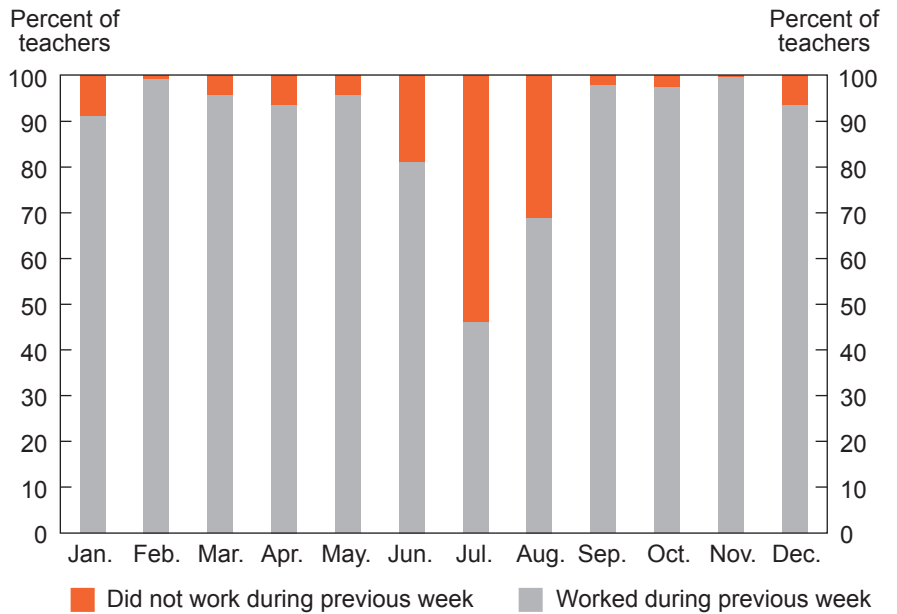
to persons whose main job is teaching preschool-to-high school students. Persons in the "other professionals" occupations also are classified by their main job. With the exception of chart 1, all estimates presented are restricted to persons who were employed during the week prior to their interview and who did some work during that period. Thus, a teacher who was on summer or semester break during the week of the survey is not included in this analysis. Unless otherwise specified, data pertain to persons who work full time; that is, they usually work 35 hours or more per week. Estimates of work hours refer to persons' main job only. The time use of persons who were doing more than one activity simultaneously is classified according to their primary activity. The data are averages for the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 15 and older, unless otherwise specified. For more information about the ATUS, see <http://www.bls.gov/tus>.

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- Persons who were employed, but were absent from work, may have been on vacation, ill, experiencing slack working conditions, dealing with childcare problems, on maternity or paternity leave, or absent for other reasons.
- Persons employed as teachers were less likely to work in June, July, and August than during other months of the year. These months coincide with times when schools typically are closed or have special summer schedules.
- Because of the wide variability in when teachers work during the year, this visual essay focuses on persons who were employed and did at least some work in the 7 days prior to their interview.

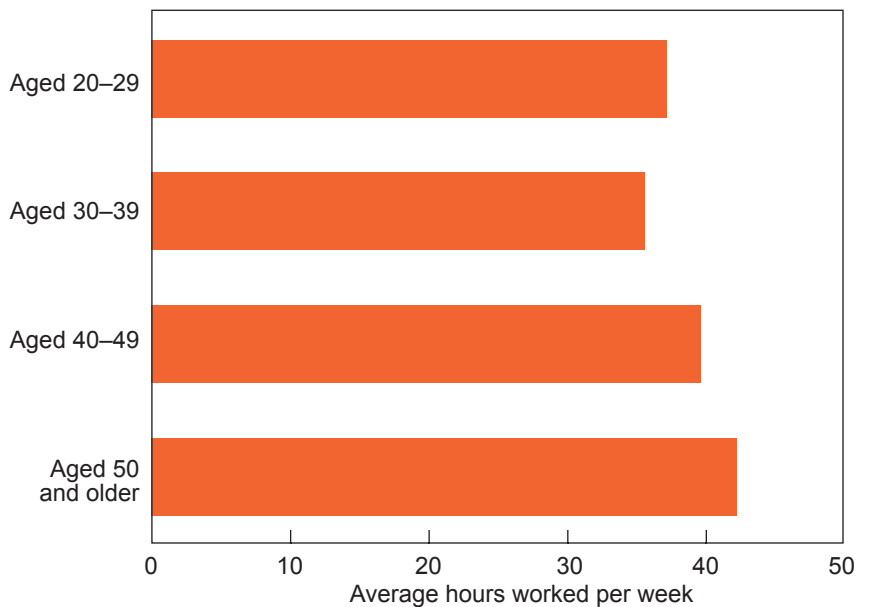
1. Teachers were less likely to work during the summer months than at other times of the year, 2003–06



NOTE: This chart shows responses to a question asking about work during the week prior to the interview day. Because of this, the data are not strictly for the months shown. For example, respondents interviewed about how they spent July 3 were asked whether they did any work during the 7 days from June 27 to July 3; in the chart, their responses appear in July (the month during which they were interviewed).

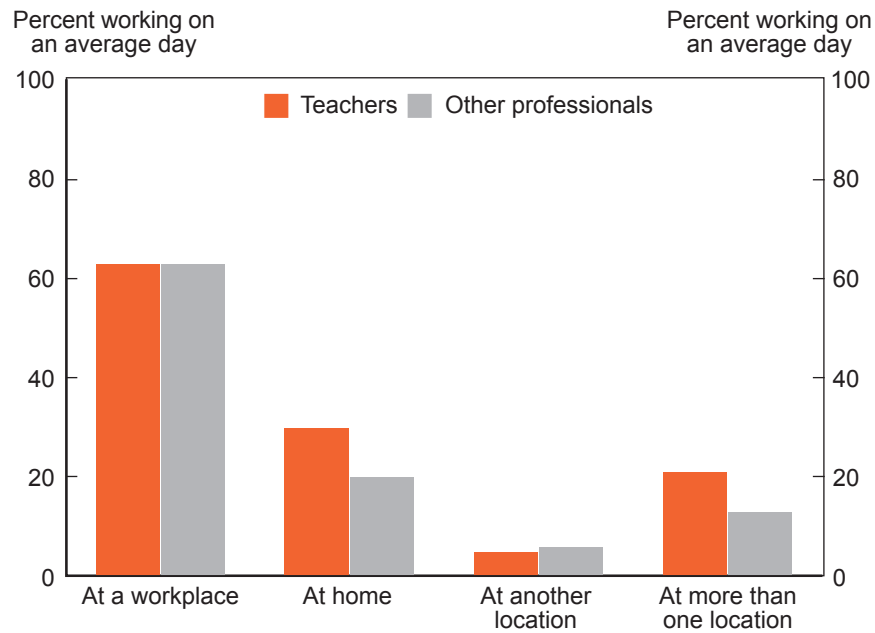
- Teachers aged 50 and older who were employed full time worked more hours per week than teachers who were younger. Teachers aged 50 and older worked significantly more than teachers in their thirties (6.7 hours more per week) and twenties (5.1 hours more per week).
- Teachers in their thirties worked less than teachers in their forties and fifties, but there is no statistically significant difference between the number of weekly hours of teachers in their thirties and that of teachers in their twenties.

2. Older teachers worked more hours than younger teachers, 2003–06



NOTE: The calculations of hours worked are based on data collected about how survey respondents spent “yesterday.” Thus, average weekly work hours are an extrapolation based on the activity for 1 day.

3. Teachers were more likely than other professionals to do some work at home, 2003–06

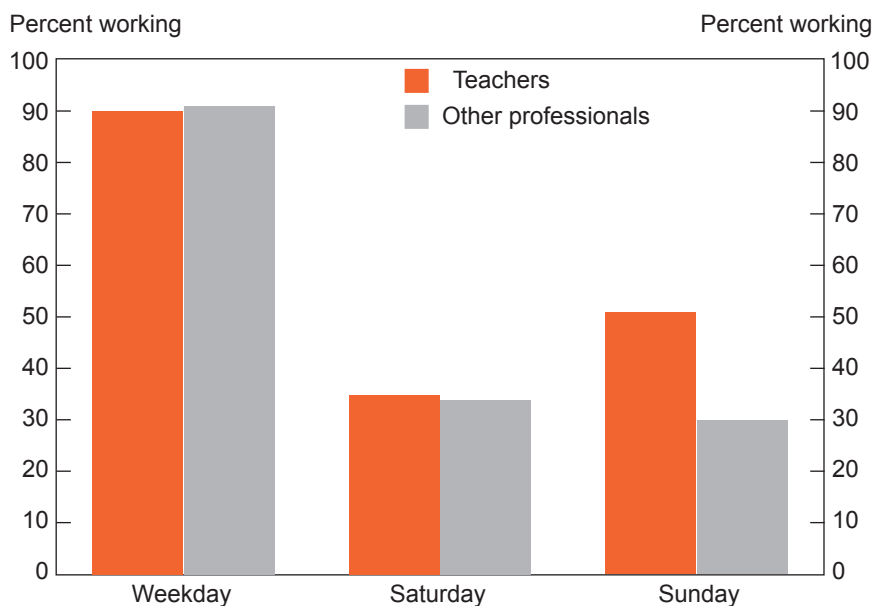


NOTE: People often spend their time differently on weekdays and weekend days. “Average day” refers to how people spend this time as an average across all 7 days of the week. “Other professionals” includes health care professionals, business and financial operations professionals, architects and engineers, community and social services professionals, managers, and others. Location categories are not mutually exclusive.

- Thirty percent of teachers worked at home on an average day, compared with 20 percent of other full-time professionals. Teachers and other professionals were equally likely to work at their workplace on an average day.
- On an average day, teachers were more likely to work at more than one location—such as at their workplace and at home—than were other full-time professionals.
- All professionals, including teachers, were more likely to work at their workplace on an average weekday than on an average weekend day. Eighty-six percent of teachers and 82 percent of other professionals worked at their workplace on an average weekday, compared with 5 percent of teachers and 15 percent of other professionals who worked at their workplace on an average weekend day.

- Teachers were more likely to work on a Sunday than were other full-time professionals. Fifty-one percent of teachers worked on an average Sunday, compared with 30 percent of other full-time professionals.
- Teachers and other full-time professionals were about equally likely to work on a Saturday (about one-third of each group) and equally likely to work on a weekday (about 90 percent of each group).

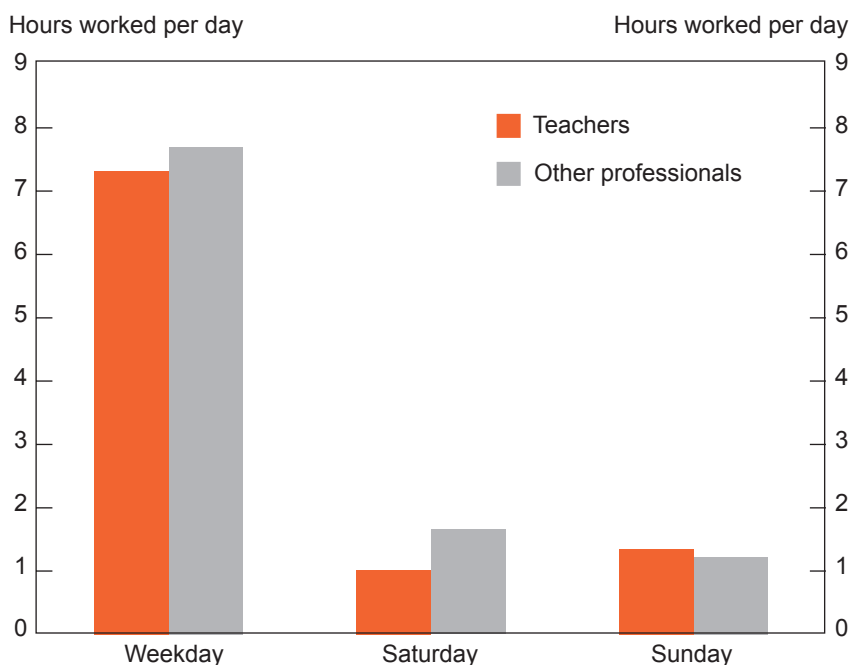
4. Teachers were more likely to work on a Sunday than were other professionals, 2003–06



NOTE: "Other professionals" includes health care professionals, business and financial operations professionals, architects and engineers, community and social services professionals, managers, and others.

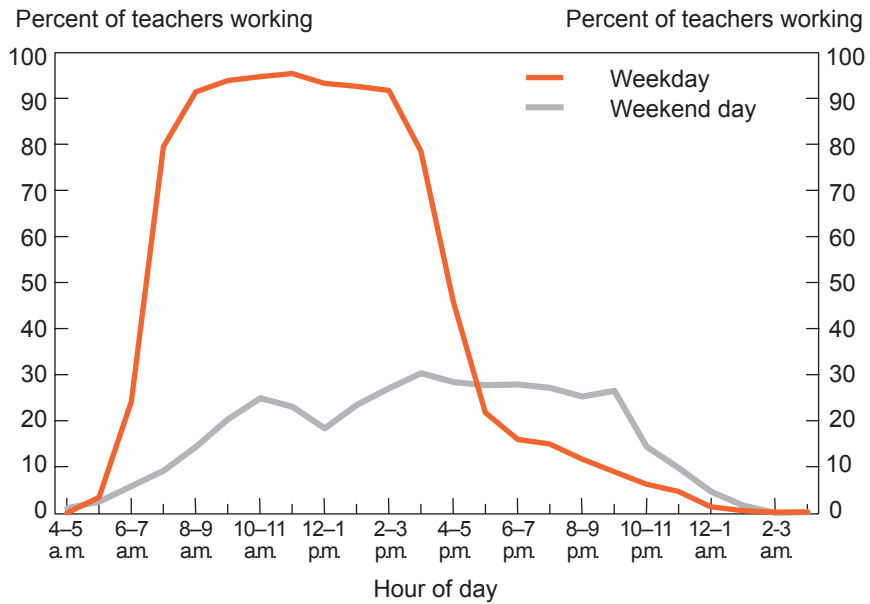
- Teachers employed full time worked 24 fewer minutes per weekday and 42 fewer minutes per Saturday than other full-time professionals. On Sundays, teachers and other professionals worked, on average, about the same amount of time. These estimates are averages for all teachers and other professionals who did some work in the week prior to their interview.

5. Teachers worked fewer minutes on weekdays and Saturdays than did other professionals, 2003–06



NOTE: "Other professionals" includes health care professionals, business and financial operations professionals, architects and engineers, community and social services professionals, managers, and others.

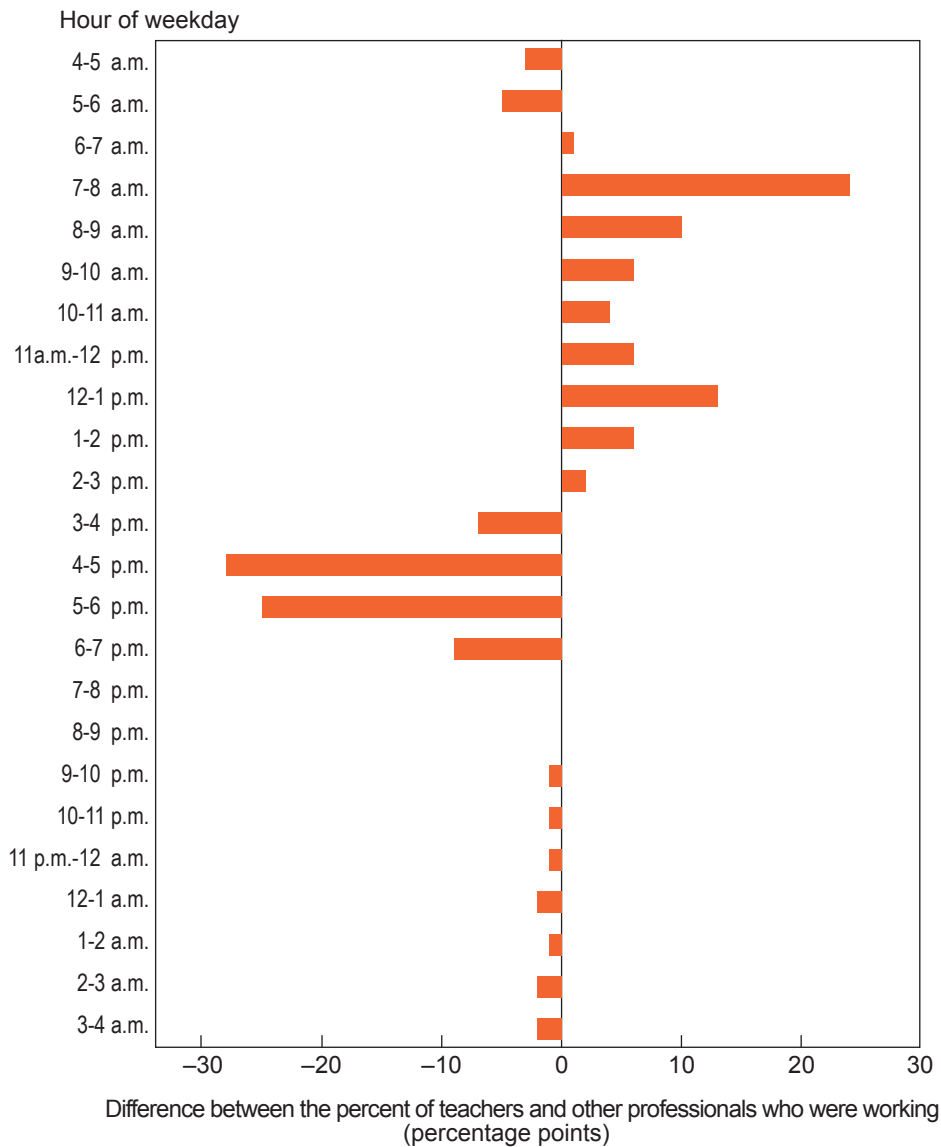
6. Teachers' work timetables differed by day of the week, 2003–06



NOTE: Data are for teachers on days when they did at least some work.

- The time of day when teachers worked differed considerably on weekdays and weekend days. Reflecting the hours when school typically is in session, on an average weekday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., more than 90 percent of teachers who did at least some work that day were working. Between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m., after a typical schoolday has ended, half as many (46 percent) teachers worked.
- On an average weekend day, the share working at any given hour was less variable than on an average weekday. At any hour during the 8-hour stretch between 2 p.m. and 10 p.m., 25 percent to 30 percent of teachers who did at least some work that day were working.

7. Teachers were more likely than other professionals to work during the morning hours, 2003–06

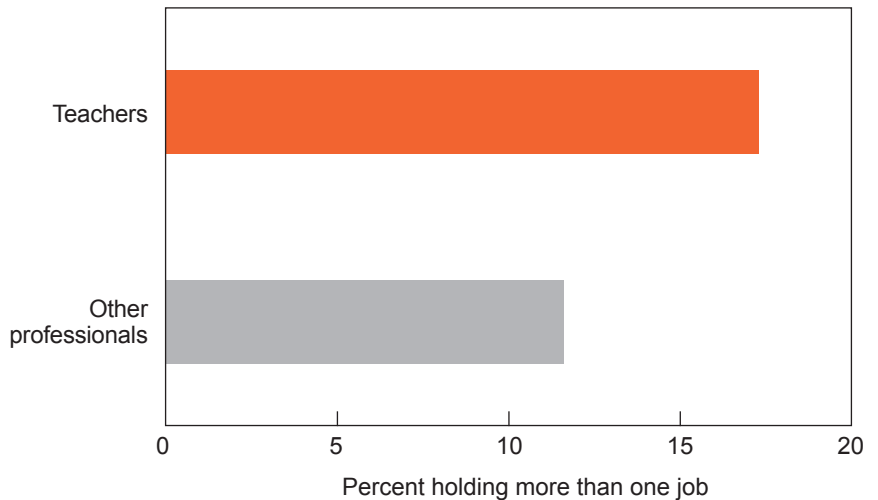


NOTE: Data are for persons on weekdays who did at least some work. "Other professionals" includes health care professionals, business and financial operations professionals, architects and engineers, community and social services professionals, managers, and others.

- On weekdays that they worked, teachers were more likely to work between 7 a.m. and 2 p.m. than were other full-time professionals. The greatest difference occurred early in the day, between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m., when 79 percent of teachers did at least some work, compared with 55 percent of other full-time professionals.
- On weekdays that they worked, teachers were less likely to work in the late afternoon than were other full-time professionals. The greatest differences in the percentage of teachers and other professionals working occurred between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

- Teachers were more likely than other full-time professionals to hold more than one job simultaneously. Seventeen percent of teachers and 12 percent of other professionals were multiple jobholders.

8. Teachers were more likely than other professionals to be multiple jobholders, 2003–06



NOTE: Persons are classified according to their main job at the time of the interview. Thus, a person who teaches during the school year and works in another professional occupation during the summer break would be classified in the “teacher” category if interviewed during the school year and in the “other professional” category if interviewed during the break. “Other professionals” includes health care professionals, business and financial operations professionals, architects and engineers, community and social services professionals, managers, and others.

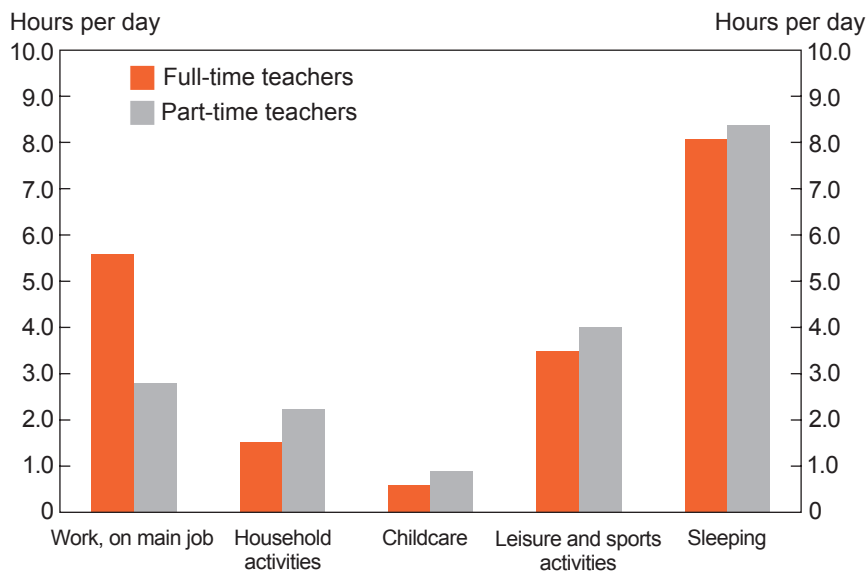
- On average for all days of the week, teachers worked 18 fewer minutes per day, and did household activities—such as housework, cooking, lawn care, or financial and other household management—12 more minutes per day, than all other full-time professionals.
- Teachers and other professionals spent about the same amount of time providing childcare, engaging in leisure and sports activities, and sleeping.

9. Teachers spent less time working, more time doing household activities, than did other professionals, 2003–06



NOTE: People often spend their time differently on weekdays and weekend days. “Average day” refers to how people spend this time as an average across all 7 days of the week. Activity categories that are not shown include Eating and drinking; Purchasing goods and services; Organizational, civic, and religious activities; Telephone calls, mail, and e-mail; Traveling; and others. “Other professionals” includes health care professionals, business and financial operations professionals, architects and engineers, community and social services professionals, managers, and others.

10. Full-time teachers worked twice as many hours as part-time teachers, 2003–06



NOTE: People often spend their time differently on weekdays and weekend days. “Average day” refers to how people spend this time as an average across all 7 days of the week. Activity categories that are not shown include Eating and drinking; Purchasing goods and services; Organizational, civic, and religious activities; Telephone calls, mail, and e-mail; Traveling; and others. “Other professionals” includes health care professionals, business and financial operations professionals, architects and engineers, community and social services professionals, managers, and others.

- Full-time teachers worked nearly 3 more hours per day than part-time teachers. On average for all days of the week, full-time teachers worked 5.6 hours per day and part-time teachers worked 2.8 hours per day.
- Part-time teachers (those who usually work fewer than 35 hours per week) spent more time doing household activities (42 minutes), engaging in leisure and sports activities (30 minutes), and providing childcare (18 minutes)—to children other than their students—on an average day than did full-time teachers.