Infographic: Which Countries Work the Longest Hours?

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Most people consider forty hours an average work week, but how realistic is that. In a digital age, itâ€™s easy to check emails while youâ€™re off the clock or schedule phone meetings with people across the world in the early hours of the morning or late hours of the night. To determine if the forty hour work week was considered the norm around the world, GetVoIP put together a graphic of average full-time work weeks in forty-four regions.

Which region works the least?
Of any region, Northern Europe had the shortest work weeks by far. Of the top seven countries for shortest hours worked, six of them were Northern European. Denmark and the Netherlands had the least hour worked overall at 38.3 and 39.1 hours respectively.

Are hours worked related to productivity?
GetVoIPâ€™s visual shows average full-time hours worked per country without accounting for how productive each country is. However, in their analysis they did look at some of the most productive countries in terms of GDP per hours worked. The most productive countries included Norway, Luxembourg, and Belgium, which fall at 3, 15, and 16 for least hours worked. From this we can conclude just because you work many hours doesnâ€™t mean you work productive hours.

When does productivity decrease?
Productivity actually decreases when you work too much. In 2014, John Pencavel of Stanford University conducted a study to see when working longer hours becomes counterproductive. He found that after fifty hours peopleâ€™s productivity significantly decreases and continues to decrease as people work more hours. In fact, output at seventy hours is barely greater than output at fifty-five hours.

Yet, some people continue to work hours that are way above the averages displayed in the graphic. This may be due to the industry they work in or even their culture. For example, though the average work week in Japan was reportedly 44.5 hours, studies have shown that over 22% of Japanese workers work more than 49 hours per week because they donâ€™t want to show disloyalty to their companies.

How much do you work?
So does how much you work align with the average hours worked in your country? If not, why? Are you putting in extra hours, and are those hours productive? Itâ€™s no coincidence that countries who are most productive do not work excessive hours. Thereâ€™s a lesson in working smart rather than working a lot.