

The pace of our lives. Objective and subjective dimensions of time use



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Time pressure is on the rise



- Research polls show that people in most industrial countries report high levels of time pressure and that feelings of being “rushed” are on the rise.
- According to Bond et al., in 1977, 40% of Americans stated that they “never have enough time” to get things done. By 1997, this figure had risen to 60%.
- In the 2015 GSS time use survey, 64 per cent of Canadians reported feeling rushed every day or several times a week.

What causes time pressure?



- Are the increases of subjectively felt “time crunch” due to longer hours of paid and unpaid work, or should their explanation be sought in other factors, such as the sped-up rhythms of modern life? The answers to these questions vary.
- Juliet Schor (1991) argued that the causes of time pressure lie in longer hours of work, greater women’s employment and ‘insidious cycle’ of consumption.
- For Robinson & Godbey (1997), Goodin et al. (2004), time pressure is mostly psychological and of peoples’ own making.

Research questions



- First, I will attempt to answer the question whether subjective sense of time pressure is grounded in the objective time use.
- Second, I will examine well-being implications of two distinct subjective dimensions of time use: (a) perceived time pressure and (b) feelings of how fast the time is running.
- Analyses reported in my presentation will be based on data collected as part of the 2005, 2010 and 2015 Canadian time use surveys (GSS) and data collected at the University of Waterloo as part of the 1987 and 2003 Experience Sampling Surveys (ESM).

Rushed life-styles from a historical perspective



- Roman philosopher Seneca (4 BC- 65 AD) wrote:
- Some people are "out of breath for no purpose" or "busy about nothing." Their life amounts to running around, sprawling about houses, theatres, and marketplaces. These restless people are not made restless by their labour, but by their minds.

Another quotation from the past



- Famous French mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) wrote:
- “When I have occasionally set myself to consider the different distractions of men, the pains and perils to which they expose themselves, I have discovered that all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber.”

A quotation from the 19th century



- French sociologist and politician Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), travelling in the United States wrote:
- “There is something surprising in the strange unrest of so many happy men in America, who are “restless in the midst of abundance.”

Recent “time crunch” evidence from Canadian time use surveys



Per cent of respondents who felt rushed:

GSS	1992	2005	2015
Every day or several times a week	63.6	63.7	64.1
More rushed than 5 years ago	47.3	45.2	

Are long hours of paid work and heavy workloads at the root of time pressure?

GSS 2005	Standardized β	
	Feeling rushed	Time pressure
Total sample		
Paid work (diary; min per day)	.09	.11
Total workload (paid work, family care, shop)	.17	.19
Free time (diary; min per day)	-.16	-.17
Employed parents, 20-65, kid ≤ 14		
Paid work (diary; min per day)	.10	.10
Total workload (paid work, family care, shop)	.15	.18
Free time (diary; min per day)	-.14	-.15

Standardized β was calculated using weekly time use and experiential scores; it is controlled for employment status, age, gender, education and household income. Time pressure is a composite index of 13 items; $\alpha = .74$

Paid work, free time, and time pressure: Evidence from the 2003 ESM survey



	Perceived time pressure	
	Pearson “r”	Standardized β
Paid work	.26	.26
Free time	-.27	-.28

Standardized β was calculated using weekly time use and experiential scores; it is controlled for employment status, age, gender, education and household income.

Well-being connotations of working hours and time pressure: 2005, 2010, 2015 GSS

Standardized β	Satisfied with life	Satisfied with work-family balance	Satisfied with time use	Feel stressed
Paid work	-.05	-.09	-.06	.07
Total workload	-.05	-.10	-.10	.10
How rushed	-.15	-.20	-.20	.35
Time pressure 2005	-.32	-.36	-.39	.51
Time pressure 2010	-.43	-.43		.51
Time pressure 2015	-.45	-.45		.50

Standardized β is controlled for employment status, age, gender, education and personal income

Well-being connotations of paid work and time pressure: ESM 2003

Pearson “r”	E S M 2 0 0 3 parents	
	Affect	Stress
Paid work	-.06	.12
How pressed for time	-.20	.33

Affect = composite of feeling happy, good, cheerful; $\alpha = .84$; Stress = reporting stressed at the time of the beep (1-5)

Another subjective dimension of time use: the passage of time



- Rising levels of time pressure and their well-being effects have attracted researchers' interests: Rifkin (1987), Bertman (1998), Gleick (1999).
- There is, however, another subjective dimensions of time, which generated interest in the past, but is given relatively little attention by researchers today.
- This is the subjective feeling of how fast or slow the time is running and how this affects us emotionally.

Does fast flying time make us happier?



- Popular wisdom tells us that when time flows slowly we feel bored and when it flies fast we feel happy (Fraisse, 1963).
- But Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, wrote: “There is not only an activity of motion, but also an activity of immobility, and truer pleasure can be found in rest than in motion.”

Questions that one can ask



- Do we enjoy or are we irritated by time that runs fast?

Can or do we enjoy time that runs slowly?

What are the swb connotations of time crunch and time passage?

E S M 2 0 0 3				
Standardized β	Parents		Teens	
	Time pressure	Time passage	Time pressure	Time passage
Pressed for time	1	.36	1	.14
Affect	-.20	.16	-.16	.17
Anxiety	.33	ns	.25	-.12
Interested in	-.09	.21	-.09	.35
Wish doing else	.31	-.05	.22	-.23

Affect = composite of feeling good, happy, cheerful; anxiety is a composite of feeling worried, upset and tense; α in both instances = .84 for parents and .83 for teens. Controlled for age, gender and (parents) and gender and age (teens).

When does time running fast or slow make us happy or unhappy?

ESM 2003	P a r e n t s		T e e n s		
	Fast & happy	Time passed fast	Affect	Time passed fast	Affect
Study, education		6.07	5.39	4.51	4.92
Hobbies		5.93	5.70	4.57	5.33
Gardening		5.75	5.75		
Volunteering		5.63	5.55	4.21	5.66
Physically active leisure, sports		5.49	5.55	5.94	5.77
Slow & happy					
Reading books		3.96	5.51	4.03	5.37
Socializing with friends		5.02	5.67	4.66	5.67
Meals at home		5.06	5.44	4.46	5.42
Fast & unhappy					
Looking for something		5.73	4.27	5.48	5.01
Surfing the web		5.44	5.19	4.77	5.40
Slow & unhappy					
Playing computer and video games		2.53	4.82	5.20	5.40
Waiting		3.44	5.05	2.62	4.91
Housecleaning		4.93	5.19	4.17	5.17
Banking, financing		5.04	4.98		
Total/mean		5.27	5.25	4.29	5.26

Why does the emotional effect of time passage differ from that of time crunch?



Pearson “r”	ESM 1987 employed adults		ESM 2003 parents		ESM 2003 teens	
	Passage of time	Time crunch	Passage of time	Time crunch	Passage of time	Time crunch
I was in control of the situation	.14	-.12	.07	-.07	.24	-ns
I was free to choose the activity	-.15	-.38	-.10	-.36	.26	-.16
I was interested in the activity	.20	-.14	.20	-.08	.35	-.09