

Is a 35-hour workweek the future of our society?

With the coronavirus pandemic creating havoc across the globe, the 35-hour workweek has been challenged as more and more people are forced to work remotely. What once was touted as the only way to live your life, the idea of the 35-hour workweek is becoming obsolete. As societal norms are being questioned, people desire work-life balance brought on by changes in technology and the view of men and women's roles in society.

When the pandemic hit last year in March, people were scrambling to change their home into an office, so they could carry on business as usual. This not only meshed their private life with their professional life, but it also made people even more aware of the gradual changes that are happening with men and women's roles.

One criticism of the 35-hour workweek is the inflexibility it brings to our lives. For example, if I have elderly parents I need to take care of, I can care for them at home or take them to the hospital when necessary. As teleworking is becoming more commonplace, I have the flexibility to work anywhere and anytime I want. With a 35-hour workweek, I must adhere to the strict rules set by my company which include being physically onsite 5-days a week, reluctantly commuting on a crowded train, and dealing with annoying customers or co-workers.

Another drawback of the 35-hour workweek is the imbalance in men's and women's roles in society. In a highly developed nation such as Japan, women are expected to take on the traditional role of caring for the family and not work, whereas, men are to become the breadwinners of the family. As people were forced to telework, men not only gained a deeper appreciation of the heavy burdens women bear at home but also volunteered to take an active part in their family's lives. This may mean helping with housework or communicating more with their children.

To sum up, I believe the 35-hour work is becoming a thing of the past as technological advances and societal roles continue to evolve. I hope to see 4-hour workweeks or even people working just half a year in the future. We only have one life to live, so I would like to spend more time on my own hobbies and interests. Let's live to work not work to live.

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