

Canadians work fewer hours each year: Statscan



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For decades, work has always come first for Dr. Kiron Mallick. After running a family practice in Treherne, Manitoba for 30 years, he has opened up a successful walk-in clinic in Winnipeg.

But Mallick, like a growing number of Canadian boomers, is looking to slow things down.



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"I'm very family-oriented. I have five grandchildren who I look forward to spending lots of time with," says Mallick, who looks at least a decade younger than his 68 years.

Now, he's taking Wednesdays off. And by next year, he'll subtract another few days from his work week in order to spend more time with growing family; and to start enjoying, bit by bit, the fruits of his labour.

According to a new study by Statistics Canada, Mallick is part of a growing trend of workers aged 45 and over who are clocking in fewer and fewer hours at the workplace.

Between 2000 and 2003, the average annual number of hours worked gradually declined by 70 hours -- the equivalent of two weeks a year, or 1.4 hours a week for every worker -- as estimated by the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

"The decline was surprising since employment continued to be uncommonly strong despite slower economic growth than in the late 1990s," reads the study, titled *Wither the workweek?* Employment rose, in fact, by 8.1 per cent between 2000 and 2004, while the number of hours worked increased by only 4.3 per cent. The study calls the differential "unprecedented."

Toronto-based business consultant Bill Stevens says he's not surprised by the study's findings.

"What I see is a very strong and popularizing trend to do what executives are calling 'work less but work smarter,'" Stevens tells CTV.ca. "It's a bit of a cliché, but it's actually really being utilized and spoken about a lot."

Stevens is president of the Toronto-based Fulcrum Group, which specializes in strategic planning and consulting executives.

He says he's seeing a big shift in the baby boomers' consciousness that's expressing itself in the trend.

"Boomers are saying, 'I've made it to be able to buy a million dollar home; and I want to be in it. I have my pool installed; I want to be there.' It's a quality of life choice."

With more workers making this shift, economics professor and demographics expert David Foot says it's becoming a "real challenge" for companies to come up with new ways to deal with the growing trend.

"We need to have a lot more phased retirement policies where you can work three days a week for 60 per cent salary, or whatever," Foot tells CTV in Halifax. "Because with more workers in their fifties, this is what you're going to see."

And it seems it's not just baby boomers who are eschewing the regular nine-to-five work week. The study also finds that an increasing number of people, from all age groups, are seeking part-time work.

Stevens says while boomers have traditionally sought lifelong, stable careers, "younger generations tend to view that situation as a bit bankrupt; and therefore don't see much meaning in investing all your time in one job."

"Young people tend to feel there's more freedom to take on contract work, or project work," he adds. "Or someone might choose to really work intensely for six months and then take three off. It's a very viable choice now."

Foot adds that as boomers shed more work hours, job opportunities are opening up for their children.

"That way we keep the boomers in, with their experience, and keep the kids in with their technology skills. And we'll get a much more dynamic workforce."

That type of ideal working situation is one that Dr. Mallick is aiming for. His son is also a doctor, and "in a year or two he'll take over the walk-in clinic," Mallick says.

"And that will open up some more time for myself. To golf, garden, and to watch TV."

With a report from CTV's Jill Macyson in Winnipeg