Vocabulary

Work-life balance RTO mandates Boss ware Gender pay gap Glass ceiling Motherhood penalty DEI	Circular economy K-shaped economy Gig economy Sharing economy Unionisation (z: US) Black Friday, Cyber Monday Fast fashion

PART One – WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Document 1

On 'The Pitt,' She Clocked Out on Time. In Real Life, It Started a Debate.

Alisha Harisadani Gupta, The New York Times, May 11, 2026 (abridged)

Twelve episodes into the second season of "The Pitt," there's a short scene — scratch that, a mere minute-long exchange — that has unexpectedly emerged as a point of contention.

Joy Kwon, a third-year medical student trainee with a photographic memory and a scathing eye roll, clocks out at the end of her 12-hour shift.

That's it.

And, given the format of the critically acclaimed HBO medical drama, in which each episode represents one hour of a shift, Kwon doesn't appear again for the last three episodes.

Before she steps away, one of her supervisors, Dr. Frank Langdon, who returns to the emergency room after a stint in rehab for drug addiction, tries to pressure her to stay. But she doubles down, reminding him that she has finished her shift and that she isn't being paid. (Medical students are not paid during their trainings and continue to pay school tuition.) […]

"Maybe all you lunatics need to learn how to set some boundaries," Kwon tells Langdon before walking out the door.

It was yet another moment when the show, which is known for its realistic portrayal of an emergency room, had a finger on the pulse of a long-simmering debate in the medical profession. In this case, how far should doctors and nurses have to push themselves for their jobs?

Online, medical professionals, workers in other industries and fans of the show have chimed in, sharing their own experiences with workplace burnout. Some called Kwon a "queen" for setting a boundary they believed should be common sense, while others saw it as a risky or selfish move that could jeopardize patient care and her career.

Kwon is also younger than many of the doctors, and her decision spoke to wider divides over work-life balance between generations that spilled into public discourse during the pandemic. While their forebears lived for the hustle and grind, some members of Gen Z and young millennials are quiet quitting, "lying flat" (eschewing extra responsibilities at work) or opting for flexibility over raises and promotions.

That is why it made logical sense for a medical student who has not yet been "initiated and normalized into that system" to set that boundary "and exit on that defiant note," R. Scott Gemmill and Danny Hogan, writers of the episode, told The Times in an email.

"Not a med student, but also in a pretty toxic industry (law) where juniors are very overworked without pay," one user said on Reddit. "I cheered." […]

Dr. Heather Farley, an emergency medicine physician and vice president of professional satisfaction at the American Medical Association, said that even though she hadn't yet watched the second season — lingering "post-traumatic stress" from her time working in an emergency room means she can only watch it in doses, she said — she still "heard lots about that scene."

That's because it spotlights systemic issues in medical settings that the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated, she said.

"We reward endurance, we celebrate going above and beyond, we normalize self-sacrifice," Farley said.

While those expectations may be slowly shifting, setting a boundary in those environments can be "a constant uphill battle," she said. A survey of 19,000 physicians around the country that was conducted by the medical association and published last month found that about 42 percent reported at least one symptom of burnout in 2025. That was down from 49 percent in 2023, but "we've got a long way to go," Farley added. […] *(598 words)*

THE FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK

Document 2 -A

The Elusive Promise of the Four-Day Workweek

Joanne Lipman, The New York Times, July 6, 2026 (abridged)

Some of the brightest minds in business believe that artificial intelligence will spell the end of the 40-hour workweek. The financier Steve Cohen has said we will work four days per week soon, while Zoom's chief executive, Eric Yuan, predicts it will be three. Bill Gates foresees a two-day workweek within a decade, and Elon Musk says work will ultimately become optional altogether, akin to a hobby, like "playing sports or a video game."

Don't count on it.

The truth is, any one of these executives could have shortened the workweek years ago, long before A.I.

Studies have proved that a four-day workweek with the same pay is not only possible but superior. A 2015 trial in Iceland was so successful — productivity remained the same or better while employee satisfaction soared — that it has since expanded throughout the country. A 2022 study in Britain involving 61 companies and almost 3,000 employees found that revenue increased while employee stress and burnout plunged. Experiments in New Zealand, Japan, Australia and Brazil have also been home runs.

Americans overwhelmingly favor a four-day workweek, too. Yet it has largely been a non-starter here. In my four-plus decades as a journalist and editor, I've written and assigned multiple articles about workplace trends. Almost every expert prediction on the demise of the five-day workweek has been wrong.

Why? Because we consistently underestimate executives' ferocious attachment to face time. The very leaders rhapsodizing about a shorter workweek in the future are demanding more time, not less, from their employees in the here and now. Mr. Musk requires a "minimum" of 40 hours in the office and has said it takes 80 hours or more a week to have real impact. Nvidia's Jensen Huang, who also foresees a four-day workweek, has said he works seven days. JPMorgan's chief executive, Jamie Dimon, who predicts a workweek of 3.5 days, insists on five full days in the office and is a vociferous critic of remote work.

The forecasters predicting the four-day workweek also overestimate how much time technology will actually save. […] Theoretically, our work hours should have plunged with the advent of digital tools — but instead they exploded, as technology created the ability to publish around the clock.

Full-time employees last year worked an average of 41.9 hours per week, a figure that hasn't changed much since the pre-internet 1990s. […]

A.I. appears to be following the same trajectory, increasing our output rather than decreasing our workload. A recent study of a 200-employee tech firm concluded that "A.I. tools didn't reduce work, they consistently intensified it," leading to "workload creep" as employees began taking on additional responsibilities. Similarly, a 2025 paper found that A.I. use "is associated with longer work hours and less leisure."

Perhaps this time really will be different, and A.I. will significantly reduce the workweek. There may be no choice, if those who believe we are on the verge of an A.I. jobs apocalypse are correct. Already, Cisco, Block, Coinbase, HP, IBM and Salesforce are among the companies that have cited A.I. as a reason for layoffs. Some economists believe we will need to reduce work hours to allow more people to share in the labor and the paychecks. […]

A shorter workweek would also require a significant shift in America's workaholic culture, which views busyness as a status symbol. While Americans say they want a shorter workweek, most employees in a recent survey said they would use the majority of time savings from A.I. to do more work. As it is, more than 40 percent of Americans don't take all of their vacation days, and 88 percent of parents in a recent survey said it was important for their children to have careers they enjoyed, more than quadruple the percentage who said it was important to get married and have kids [...]

Despite the obstacles, there are a few causes for optimism. A few small U.S. companies have adopted a four-day workweek in recent years, including Kickstarter and ThredUp. ThredUp's chief executive said he's seen "tremendous improvements" in employee happiness and creativity and that "retention metrics are through the roof." [...]

Now, the shorter workweek can finally become a reality. There's no need to depend on some magical moment when A.I. suddenly changes the way we work. Companies should stop making vague predictions about a shorter workweek and start making it happen. *(744 words)*

Document 2-B

The Biggest Trial Yet Confirms Four-Day Workweek Makes Employees Happier

Jenna Anhart, www.scientificamerican.com, July 22, 2025

Moving to a four-day work week without losing pay leaves employees happier, healthier and higher-performing, according to the largest study of such an intervention so far, encompassing six countries. The research showed that a six-month trial of working four days a week reduced burnout, increased job satisfaction and improved mental and physical health.

The study's authors had wondered whether a condensed working week would add to employees' stress. "When workers want to deliver the same productivity, they might work very rapidly to get the job done, and their well-being might actually worsen," says lead author Wen Fan, a sociologist at Boston College in Massachusetts. "But that's not what we found." Instead, staff members' stress levels fell.

The study was published July 21 in *Nature Human Behaviour*.

Levels of employee stress and burnout soared during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading many workers to quit their jobs, the authors note. The result was large numbers of unfilled positions in some labour markets.

To see whether shorter weeks might be the antidote for poor morale, researchers launched a study of 2,896 individuals at 141 companies in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Before making the shift to reduced hours, each company that opted into the overhaul was given roughly eight weeks to restructure its workflow to maintain productivity at 80% of previous workforce hours, purging time-wasting activities such as unnecessary meetings. Two weeks before the trial started, each employee answered a series of questions to evaluate their well-being, including, "Does your work frustrate you?" and "How would you rate your mental health?" After six months on the new schedule, they revisited the same questions.

Overall, workers felt more satisfied with their job performance and reported better mental health after six months of a shortened work week than before it.

A common criticism of the four-day work week is that employees can't produce the same output in four days as in five. The study didn't analyse company-wide productivity, but it offers an explanation for how workers can be more efficient over fewer hours. "When people are more well rested, they make fewer mistakes and work more intensely," says Pedro Gomes, an economist at Birkbeck University of London. But Gomes would like to see more analysis of the impacts on productivity.

Fan notes that more than 90% of companies decided to keep the four-day work week after the trial, indicating that they weren't worried about a drop in profits.

The authors also looked at whether the positive impacts of shorter work weeks would wane once the system lost its novelty. They collected data after workers had spent 12 months after the start of the trial and found that well-being stayed high.

But because companies signed up for the trial voluntarily, the results might overestimate the true effect of the four-day work week across a range of companies. And because all outcomes were self-reported, employees might have exaggerated the benefits in the hope of keeping their extra day off. The authors call for randomized studies to test the scheme.

(524 words)

See also

DOCUMENT Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.C · 🎧 · NPR, "These nurse managers were burnt out. Then their hospital gave them a 4-day workweek", June 26, 2024.

↳ https://www.npr.org/2024/06/26/nx-s1-5013956/4-four-day-week-work-life-balance-nurse-managers (5 minutes)

DOCUMENT Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.D · 📽 · ABC (Australia), "The push for a four-day work week", 29 July 2025.

↳ https://youtu.be/asbUpFse20A (7 minutes)

RETURN-TO-OFFICE MANDATES

Document 3- A

Average UK office attendance 'settling' at highest level since before Covid

Julia Kollewe, ***The Guardian,*** 9 March 2026

Workers are heading back to offices across the UK in droves, pushing office occupancy to the highest since before the Covid-19 pandemic, as an expert described the numbers as "no longer in freefall nor in recovery mode but settling".

Investment banks such as Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase have led the push with strict return-to-office mandates despite anger among many employees about being ordered back to the office five days a week. Companies in other sectors have also increased days in the office but many businesses, including law and accounting firms, still allow staff to work remotely two days a week.

Average office attendance in the UK has been above 40% every week since early January, reaching 44.2% in the week to 13 February, according to Remit Consulting's ReTurn report. That was the highest since the Covid outbreak in March 2020, which led to the first nationwide lockdown. Attendance dipped to 42.2% in the week to 20 February because of the half-term holiday, and rose to 44.1% the week after.

Office occupancy varied between the nine cities tracked by the consultancy, hitting 69.2% in Bristol in the week to 27 February, 64.6% in Leeds, 63.8% in Cardiff, 53.7% in Edinburgh, 50.7% in Manchester, 42.3% in Birmingham, 41.5% in London, 39.3% in Newcastle upon Tyne and 31.6% in Glasgow.

Lorna Landells, a partner at Remit and a co-author of the report, said: "Office attendance is no longer in freefall nor in recovery mode; it is settling. Employees are more open to being in the office, but only where it feels purposeful and workable. Flexibility is no longer a perk; it is the baseline."

She said the results of the study showed a shift in focus for occupiers, investors and developers. "The question is no longer whether people will return to the office but what kind of office experience genuinely supports the way people now work. As expectations stabilise, the quality, functionality and clarity of workplace design are set to play an increasingly decisive role in driving attendance," Landells added.

However, there is sizeable resistance to full-time office working. More than 2,000 of JPMorgan Chase's 300,000-plus employees worldwide have signed a petition in the year since the bank's chief executive, Jamie Dimon, issued a five-day office working edict in early 2025.

The petition described the mandate as a "great leap backward" that hurt employees, customers, shareholders and the company's reputation.

It said: "It worsens traffic and pollution while disproportionately pushing out women, caregivers, senior employees, and individuals with disabilities. Many of these are top performers, and many of them only able to join the workforce under hybrid-work rules."

The petition added that this directly contradicted the bank's commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion.

One staff member said: "My team is spread out through two continents and three time zones. JPMC is a global company – why can't that include my home office?"

Another said: "Hybrid is working and employees love the happy medium."

Average office occupancy in Birmingham and Newcastle had been consistently above 40% in recent weeks, while in Leeds and Cardiff it was even higher, above 60%, Remit data shows. In Bristol, it went as high as 75.4% the final week of January.

(550 words)

Document 3 - B

Many remote workers say they'd be likely to leave their job if they could no longer work from home

Short Reads – ***The Pew Research Center*** - January 13, 2025

A growing number of U.S. companies are requiring workers to return to the office, and President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration has signaled it may do the same with federal employees. But many American workers say they'd rather find a new job than give up working from home.

How we did this

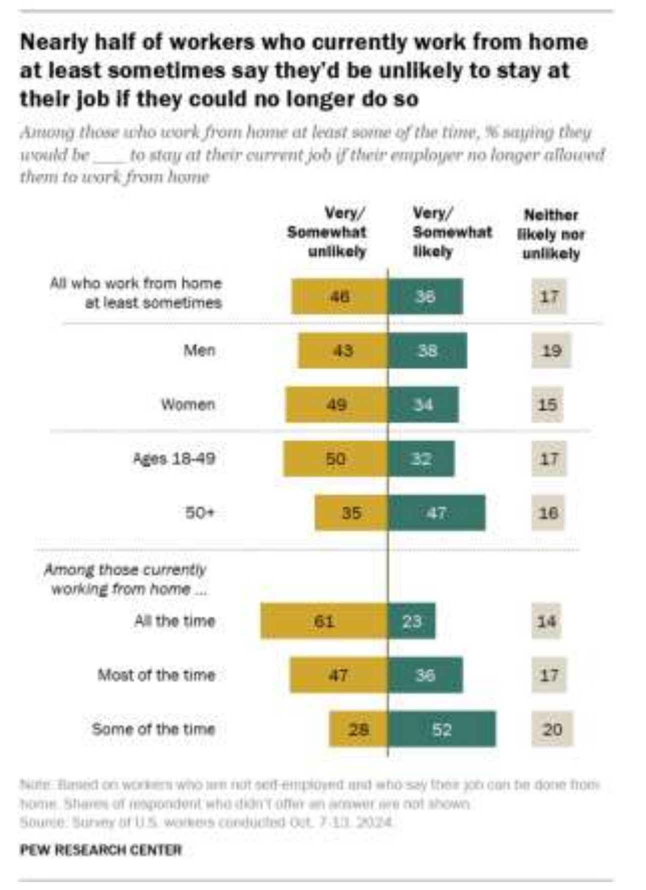
Among employed adults who have a job that can be done from home, 75% are working remotely at least some of the time, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey.

Nearly half of workers in this group (46%) say that if their employer no longer allowed them to work from home, they would be unlikely to stay at their current job. This includes 26% who say they'd be *very* unlikely to stay.

A smaller share (36%) say they'd be likely to stay at their job, with 20% saying they'd be very likely to do so. And 17% say they'd be neither likely nor unlikely to stay at their job. (These shares are based on workers who are not self-employed.)

Some groups of workers are more likely than others to say they might leave their job if their employer no longer allowed them to work from home.

- **Women** are somewhat more likely than men to say this (49% vs. 43%).
- **Workers younger than 50** are more likely than older workers to say this (50% vs. 35%).
- **Workers who currently work from home all the time** are more likely than those who do so most or some of the time to say this (61% vs. 47% and 28%).



These views also differ by workers' level of job satisfaction. Workers who are not highly satisfied with their job are more likely than those who are to say they'd leave their job if they could no longer work from home. About half (52%) of workers who are somewhat, not too or not at all satisfied with their job say this, compared with 41% of workers who are extremely or very satisfied with their job.

More workers now say their employer requires a certain amount of in-office time

Among workers who are not self-employed, a growing share with jobs that can be done from home say they're now required to work from their office, workplace or job site a certain number of days per week or month. Among those who aren't currently working from home all the time, 75% say their employer has put these in-person work requirements in place, up from 63% in early 2023.

Most hybrid workers – those whose schedules involve working from home most or some of the time – don't want to work from home all the time. Among hybrid workers, only 24% say they'd work from home all the time if they could choose. A majority (72%) say they'd choose a hybrid arrangement.

Similarly, 63% of those who rarely or never work from home now say that, if they could choose, they'd work from home most or some of the time. About one-in-five (19%) say they'd choose to work from home all the time, and 17% say they'd opt for rarely or never working from home.

Document 4

Are 'Bossware' Tools Tracking You?

Lora Kelley, The New York Times, March 1, 2026

While many workers worry that artificial intelligence will one day take their jobs, another use of A.I. and technology may already be quietly reshaping and degrading workplace conditions: "bossware."

"Bossware" refers to the technology some managers use to supervise and surveil employees in the workplace. The term was popularized by a 2020 report from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a digital privacy nonprofit, and has since come up in nonprofit reports and news coverage.

"Workplace surveillance has been going on since we've had work," said Karen Levy, a professor at Cornell and the author of "Data Driven: Truckers, Technology, and the New Workplace Surveillance." Managers have always sought to keep an eye on employees to make operations more efficient. But the rise of A.I., she said, has allowed employers to monitor workers in "more predictive or granular ways."

In the world of trucking, for example, A.I.-augmented video tools can trigger real-time alerts if a driver looks fatigued or is looking away from the road. In other fields —including in some white-collar desk jobs — employers are using algorithmic and biometric tools to track habits and output. Some of the tools, including A.I.-driven ones, are packaged with enterprise software suites.

The use of work-surveillance technology took off during the pandemic. As many people started working remotely, more employers began surveilling their teams in new ways: tracking keyboard strokes, taking screenshots and monitoring pauses. By 2022, eight of the 10 biggest private employers in the United States were tracking the productivity metrics of individual workers, The New York Times reported.

Over the past few years, "A.I. has helped to create a greater opportunity for omnipresent surveillance of workers," said Rob Reich, a professor of political science at Stanford and a co-author of "System Error: Where Big Tech Went Wrong and How We Can Reboot." Sophisticated A.I. tools are now available more cheaply, he said, which means they can be applied more broadly. Surveillance tools are now used in factories and in corporate offices; they monitor customer service agents, therapists and even chaplains.

The goal of these tools is to get more out of workers. But some metrics — like how much an employee is typing — may not translate cleanly to how much work someone is actually getting done. And workers, Dr. Reich argues, deserve periods of slack and "moments of downtime outside of the gaze of the surveillance tools that are meant to drive productivity gains." Such respites are good for workplace culture, he said, and they enable better workplace relationships.

Beyond the psychological toll, "bossware" tools that push people to work faster and harder present "serious health and safety risks for workers," including potential physical injury, said Laura Padin, a lawyer and director at the National Employment Law Project, a workers' rights nonprofit. She added that clear guardrails on worker surveillance and laws requiring companies to disclose how they use such technology would be "good policy interventions."

The tools, Dr. Levy said, are unpopular because they impinge on workers' well-being — and, in the case of truckers, her research has found, they don't necessarily improve safety.

"Giving workers more autonomy in the workplace can help with retention and their capacity to do more creative work," Dr. Levy said, adding that getting worker buy-in around which technologies would actually be useful to them could help workplaces achieve a better balance.

Still, Dr. Reich thinks that even well-intentioned monitoring tools should be viewed cautiously because they may help advance a culture of surveillance. "It's obvious that the introduction of 'bossware' further tilts the power imbalance between supervisors and workers in favor of those with already considerably more power," he said.

(617 words)

Document 5

See also

DOCUMENT Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.bis · *The Wall Street Journal*, “Why This Disney-Inspired HQ for 13k Employees Still Has Individual Offices”, June 16, 2025.
↳ https://youtu.be/cw27tlKcO7Q (9 minutes)

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Should employers be responsible for their employees’ wellbeing?

Paragraphe d’entraînement – Pour répondre à cette question, écrire un paragraphe (60-65 mots) défendant un argument, et qui contiendra ces trois phrases:

- Une phrase de présentation de l’argument en 10-15 mots
- Une phrase qui explique votre argument et introduit un exemple l’illustrant avec une structure en AS.
- Une phrase qui exploite l’exemple et le relie expliciment à l’argument commençant par « By+[V-ing]

PART Two- WORKERS’ RIGHTS

Document 6

Labour’s employment rights bill set to become law after Lords battle

Jessica Elgot, ***The Guardian,*** Tue 16 Dec 2025 (abridged)

Labour’s employment rights bill will finally become law after a battle in the House of Lords, paving the way for significant new rights for workers on sick pay, parental leave and zero-hours contracts.
Trade unions hailed a “generational shift” for workers’ rights after Tory peers conceded at the 11th hour on the legislation, which the government had promised to pass by Christmas. Royal assent is expected by Thursday.
The struggle to pass the law, which faced significant opposition from the Conservatives and business groups, meant the government made a number of concessions to secure its passage. (…)

Peter Kyle, the business secretary, said: “This landmark legislation, now soon to be in law, will drag Britain’s outdated employment laws into the 21st century and offer dignity and respect to millions more in the workplace.”
The bill will introduce rights to guaranteed hours and payment for short-notice cancellation of shifts, bar fire-and-rehire practices in most circumstances, grant paternity and parental leave from day one, and strengthen workplace trade union rights.
The day-one right to protection against unfair dismissal has been removed as a concession to business and replaced with a shortened qualifying period of six months, down from two years.
The process of passing the bill – which contains key manifesto pledges – has renewed anger among a significant number of MPs and ministers towards the House of Lords, after repeated obstructions from Conservative and crossbench peers.
The TUC general secretary, Paul Nowak, said: “This is a historic day and early Christmas present for working people across the country, and the trade unions who represent them.
“Unions and workers have long campaigned for these vital rights. Together, we have broken a decades-long economic status quo defined by insecurity, weak rights and poor pay. Finally, working people will enjoy more security, better pay and dignity at work thanks to this bill.
“It’s now vital that workers start feeling the benefits of this legislation in their lives as soon as possible. That means the legislation must be implemented in full, and at speed – with watertight secondary legislation to ensure there are no loopholes for bad bosses to exploit.”
Ben Harrison, director of the Work Foundation at Lancaster University, said women, disabled people, ethnic minorities and young people stood to gain most from changes to unfair dismissal, zero-hours contracts and day-one rights.
He said there were still obstacles ahead as the government devised codes of practice and secondary legislation.
“It’s vital that as government works with employers and unions to shape these, the reforms deliver on the spirit of the bill as originally intended,” Harrison added.
The Conservatives said the bill would fuel already rising unemployment. Andrew Griffith, the shadow business secretary, said: “It will pile costs on to small businesses, freeze hiring, and ultimately leave young people and jobseekers paying the price for Labour’s capitulation to their union paymasters.
“The Conservatives will scrap the most disastrous elements of this bill and get Britain working again.”

Document 7 · 📽 · ABC (Australia), “Australian workers now have the right to disconnect from work”, 26 August 2026.
↳ https://youtu.be/0rVxDzzH0K8 (6 minutes)

Writing Workout · Documents Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.-0

What new rights have workers been granted in the UK and Australia?

Paragraphe d’entraînement – Pour répondre à cette question, écrire un paragraphe (60-65 mots) qui contiendra au moins ces deux types de phrases:

- Une phrase contenant une structure de correlation du type “not only… but also…” ou bien du type “neither… nor…“.
- Une phrase contenant une proposition relative rajoutant un complément d’information sur le sujet ou le complément de cette phrase.

Document 8

Women's progress at work is stalling

The Economist, 5 July 2026 (abridged)

Women have made extraordinary gains in the past few decades across the rich world. They now outnumber men on university campuses in virtually every wealthy country. At work, many have been enthusiastically "leaning in", as Sheryl Sandberg, then Facebook's second-in-command, urged them to do in a book in 2013. Their representation among the highest-paying professions, including medicine and the law, has nearly tripled in America since 1980. At the turn of the century a British patient was twice as likely to see a man. Last year the number of female physicians exceeded those of men for the first time, according to Britain's General Medical Council, a public body.

Recently, however, the most highly qualified cohort of women in human history has often appeared to be leaning out. In 2024 a study by S&P Global, a compiler of indices, found that women's share of executive positions in listed American companies fell for the first time in 2023 after nearly 20 years of uninterrupted growth. In 2025 women secured 38% of new board seats at companies in the S&P 500 index of large American firms, down from 42% the previous year and prolonging a retreat from their peak in 2020.

In its last round of partner promotions, in 2024, Goldman Sachs named a smaller share of female partners than in the previous round, for the first time in more than a decade. A year later the share of new female managing directors at the Wall Street bank fell, too. Last month Marianne Lake, a female frontrunner to succeed Jamie Dimon at JPMorgan Chase, was relegated and another, Jennifer Piepszak, bowed out last year, leaving an unusually pale and male lineup for the top job.

It is not just at the top that the progress of women in work is stalling or even going into reverse. Across 33 members of the OECD, a club of mostly rich countries, the share of employed women in full-time work declined from 78.1% in 2023 to 76.8% a year later—a small dip but also the first one since PWC, a consultancy, started tracking the data 15 years ago. In March 78.5% of American women aged 25-54 were in the labour force, an all-time high. Since then their participation has fallen by almost a percentage point, a much sharper fall than seen among men.

University-educated American women with young families appear to be leading the retreat. Their labour-force participation rate took a turn in 2023 after decades of improvement, and has fallen every year since. Last year marked the sharpest drop in participation by mothers with young children in four decades.

After consistently closing for years, the gender pay gap is opening up again, too. In America it widened in both 2023 and 2024, the first consecutive two-year decline in 60 years. In 2024 it also widened (on PWC's slightly different measure) in other rich countries, including Canada and France. For British women in their 40s, who were starting their careers when Ms Sandberg was telling them to lean in, the gap likewise increased.

It also seems that women's professional aspirations no longer match men's. An annual survey published in December 2025 by McKinsey, a consultancy, and Lean In, a non-profit founded by Ms Sandberg and named after her book, asks respondents to indicate their interest in climbing up the corporate ladder. Between 2019 and 2023 the share of both men and women keen on a promotion rose from seven in ten to eight in ten. By 2025 it had risen to nearly nine in ten for men but remained flat for women. For female entry-level workers it was just 69%. PWC also finds a persistent gap in men's and women's intentions to ask for a bigger job.

One reason for some of these reversals may have to do with the arithmetical aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic. Labour economists caution that disproportionate numbers of low-wage female workers lost their jobs during the lockdowns, artificially narrowing the gender pay gap. Some of the recent widening may reflect those women returning to the labour market. Still, the gap's expansion half a decade after lockdowns ended suggests something else could be at play.

Difficulty finding child care is another potential culprit. Although nurseries have become more affordable in some rich countries lately thanks to subsidies, supply is often constrained. That means frequent long waiting lists and staff shortages. Germany, considered to have affordable child care, still lacks more than 300,000 nursery places for children under three.

At the same time, especially across swathes of Donald Trump's America, diversity, equity and inclusion have become dirty words. The federal government is proudly dismantling DEI policies. So, more subtly, are many companies that do not want to cross the alpha-male-in-chief. A few years ago Mr Dimon, then a champion of progressive causes, would probably not have dreamed of an all-male shortlist of names to succeed him.

Document 9 · 🎧 · NPR, "After years of shrinking, why is the gender pay gap getting wider?", October 20, 2025.
↳ https://www.npr.org/2025/10/20/nx-s1-5575646/after-years-of-shrinking-why-is-the-gender-pay-gap-getting-wider (4 minutes)

PART Three- CONSUMER SOCIETY

Document 10 How crisp packets unwrap the challenges of the circular economy

Jessica Rawnsley, ***The Financial Times***, 17 July 2025 (abridged)

[…]

According to environmental charity WRAP, 6bn packets of the fried potatoes are consumed each year **i**n the UK alone. Stretched end-to-end, that's enough crisp packets to wrap around the planet 25 times. Unlike other packaging materials with standardised recycling systems, such as aluminium, cardboard and glass, most of the multi-layered plastic and foil packets end up in landfill, nature or the ocean, where they have been shown to take six decades or more to decompose.

The afterlife of the crisp packet points to a broader global challenge: how to establish a recycling ecosystem in which every material made can be repurposed or reused.

So-called circular economies require a number of interlinked elements, says Rob Opsomer, executive lead for plastics at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, an NGO that works with industry and governments to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. First eliminating problematic and unnecessary packaging (typically plastics); designing the rest for recyclability; implementing standardised collection and sorting infrastructure; and ensuring demand for the recycled material.

Both industry and government have a critical part to play. "Businesses have demonstrated it's possible to redesign their packaging with different materials," Opsomer says. "Governments are needed for collecting, sorting and recycling infrastructure. The point where the two come together is financing, seen in EPR." Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, which most nations now have iterations of, hold manufacturers accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products, including funding the costs of collection, sorting and reprocessing. […]

Spurred by mounting environmental awareness, technological breakthroughs and government policy, a host of companies have pledged to improve the recyclability of their packaging. PepsiCo has committed to using 50 per cent recycled material by 2030; Coca-Cola to make all primary packaging recyclable by 2025; global packaging company Amcor for 100 per cent of its packaging to be recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. […]

On one side there's metal: highly valuable, durable and easily melted down to reuse for tin cans or the automotive industry – three quarters of the aluminium ever produced is still in use today. On the other side there are flexible plastics and composite materials such as crisp packets: difficult to sort and recycle and often cheaper to manufacture new. […]

Innovations in materials will be an integral part of the solution. In the past few years, hundreds of alternative materials have exploded onto the market: bioplastics made from renewable sources such as corn, wheat and cellulose; mushroom and seaweed-based packaging; cell-based materials forged in petri dishes.

For Ireland-born Londoner Del Currie, it all started with a penchant for crisps. His daughter opened a zero waste store – where you bring your own containers – and "I could get pretty much everything I needed plastic-free". But there was one exception: crisps. "I'm a complete crisp addict," Currie says. "I was always sneaking off to buy crisps and I felt terrible every time I threw the empty packet in the bin, knowing it would go to landfill."

Discovering there was no alternative on the market – and after much trial and error, and time and money spent – in 2022 Spudos was born. The company's "crisp kits" are sold in 500g (16 standard bags) or 1kg (about 30) reusable containers, alongside paper shake bags and a set of flavouring "Spud Dust" sachets. The packaging – a laminate made from Nature Flex (wood cellulose) and Tipa (bioplastic) – is home-compostable. It performs in the same way as petro-based packaging but decomposes in weeks rather than decades and does not require industrial facilities to do so.

Spudos supplies corporate customers such as Google, pubs and restaurants, and sells direct to consumers via its website – some 50,000 customers to date. After securing £50,000 of investment in February on the UK TV programme *Dragons' Den*, in which entrepreneurs compete for backing, Spudos launched at London Zoo in May. While world domination is not on the horizon, "it's a bonkers-sized market", Currie says, so capturing even a couple of per cent of the family-pack market would be momentous. […] *(610 words)*

Document 11

I wanted to buy less stuff. I ended up bonding with my neighbors.

Michael J. Coren, *The New York Times*, April 14, 2026 (abridged)It all started with a drill.

Americans use their electric drills for only 13 minutes each year, according to one widely cited estimate. Yet around half of households own one. As Uber and other "sharing economy" start-ups gathered steam in the 2010s, the drill was the perfect symbol for why the United States was on the verge of a revolution in which strangers or neighbors would rent out their belongings to one another.

The parable of the idle drill, repeated from the New York Times to the TED stage, helped launch a thousand start-ups on the seas of the sharing economy. Ecomodo, Crowd Rent, Share Some Sugar, NeighborGoods, Thingloop, OhSoWe, Yerdle and SnapGoods all promised to make money off your stuff.

All of them have now effectively disappeared. People loved the idea of renting from their neighbors. The reality? Not so much.

The problem that birthed those failed platforms persists: Most of our household items are rarely, if ever, used. Some 80 percent are picked up less than once a month, estimates the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Many of us would be thrilled to see our belongings put to good use by someone we trust, even without payment. […]

The sharing economy was originally defined as the peer-to-peer exchange of goods and services. Yet the vast majority of these technology platforms were focused not on sharing but on buying, selling and renting.

The most successful of these ventures, such as Airbnb, Uber and Lyft, are now hyperefficient, global marketplaces. They compete to maximize profit, undercutting original promises of community trust and equitable wages. "The real sharing economy," Fast Company declared as long ago as 2015, "is dead."

Neighborhood-focused "sharing" apps at least had the potential to be different, promising to pair a real problem — people constantly need one-off items — with the millions of solutions sitting unused in closets and garages. The start-up tar pit wasn't due to a shortage of stuff. But few people wanted to endure the inconvenience of renting.

The most successful platforms share a few common traits: They offer expensive items used on an infrequent but predictable schedule. Marketplaces for renting RVs, boats, swimming pools and high-end equipment such as cameras have thrived. People can lend out their underused assets safely and efficiently (insurance included).

Solving the original drill problem at scale — efficiently lending out blenders, barbecue grills and cordless power tools — is more difficult. There are lots of small, low-value items, used unpredictably among strangers who might have to drive across town to pick up something. Without volume, high prices and ratings — are you really going to 1-star your neighbor? — it's a recipe for failure.

That's what happened to Streetbank, a Britain-based neighborhood sharing platform shuttered in 2024. The idealistic nonprofit, founded in 2010, let people list and share household items, as well as skills such as language teaching, cooking and DIY advice, said co-founder Sam Stephens. At its peak, with 160,000 people on the platform, less than 5 percent of messages were related to borrowing. Almost all the action was around listings for free items.

"We were stunned," said Stephens. "Pretty much only stuff that was offered for free led to interactions."

If Streetbank were started today, he said, he'd make it a group chat for neighbors on a popular messaging app such as WhatsApp. That is, in effect, what's happened on Facebook groups and Buy Nothing groups, as well as email standbys like Freecycle. "I'm amazed if there's any rental company that works," said Stephen.

Document 12 - Creating a Circular Economy for Fashion - Rethink

The Financial Times, 20 January 2020

↳ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y78UVWd5PHE

Document 13

'Mass Blackout' planned for Black Friday and Cyber Monday in protest of Trump administration

Erin Keller, **The Independent**, 13 November 2025

Grassroots campaigners are urging a nationwide boycott of Black Friday and Cyber Monday to protest the Trump administration and economic inequality.

Activist groups Blackout the System, The People's Sick Day, American Opposition, the Money Out of Politics Movement, and The Progressive Network all planned separate boycotts but decided to come together as a coalition to launch the "Mass Blackout," scheduled from November 25 to December 2.

The weeklong economic protest urges people to boycott major corporations and shop at local or independent businesses, preferably using cash instead of card.

Small Business Saturday on November 30 is excluded from the boycott.

People's Union USA founder John Schwarz said in several Instagram posts that participants should remind them that "we are the economy."

Timed to coincide with the kickoff of the busy holiday shopping season, the coalition urges participants to skip travel and dining out and to cancel streaming or digital subscriptions.

"We are living under a political system captured by special interests, where billionaires and corporations write the rules," Isaiah Rucker Jr., founder of Blackout the System, told USA Today in a statement.

"Congress serves donors, not the American people, and democratic norms are being dismantled in front of our eyes, with corporate backing. This campaign is about showing them where the power truly lies, with the people."

Carlos Álvarez-Aranyos, founder of American Opposition, told the outlet that the coalition aims to build public power through boycotts and blackouts as a step toward a general strike.

He described the movement as a fight between the powerful and the working class, not left versus right, citing rising prices and inflation as evidence that "people are being taken advantage of."

Meanwhile, grassroots organizations such as Black Voters Matter, Indivisible, and Until Freedom are spearheading a nationwide boycott campaign called "We Ain't Buying It." The campaign targets major retailers, including Amazon, Target, and Home Depot, that the groups say have backed away from their commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion programs after previously supporting them, particularly in the context of opposing President Donald Trump.

Instead of shopping at these retailers, the campaign encourages consumers to support businesses that have resisted Trump's influence, as well as Black-owned, minority-owned, immigrant-owned, and local small businesses.

"Only left-wing groups with the most severe cases of Trump Derangement Syndrome would think they're heroic for plotting to intentionally hurt small and medium-sized businesses, which could potentially threaten jobs and hurt innocent American employees," White House Spokesman Kush Desai told The Independent when asked about the plans.

American consumers spent $13.3 billion on Cyber Monday in 2024, marking a 7.3 percent increase compared with the previous year, according to Exploding Topics.

During the broader "Cyber Week" period, from Thanksgiving through Cyber Monday, about 197 million Americans participated in holiday shopping.

Buyer activity on Cyber Monday surged dramatically, increasing 512 percent compared with a typical day. Online shopping dominated the week, with online sales surpassing in-store sales on all but one day.

On Cyber Monday itself, there were 64.4 million online shoppers compared with 23.2 million shopping in stores. Smartphones played a significant role in online shopping, accounting for 57 percent of Cyber Monday sales in 2024, up from 55% in 2022.

Discounts were especially notable in certain categories, with electronics seeing the deepest markdowns at 30.1 percent off, followed by toys at 26.1 percent and apparel at 23.2 percent, per the report.

The "Cyber Five" period, spanning Thanksgiving through Cyber Monday, is projected to account for about 17.2 percent of all holiday season sales in 2025.

This holiday season, the average U.S. consumer plans to spend $1,552, a 5 percent decrease from 2024, while gift spending is expected to drop by 11 percent, according to the data.

Document 14 - Camille Dormoy, sociologue : « L'économie circulaire demande de reprendre le temps qu'on nous a appris à ne plus perdre »

Le Monde, 10 août 2026

Les déchets sont souvent regardés comme les traces de notre consommation. On les associe aux achats excessifs, aux mauvais gestes, aux emballages inutiles, aux incivilités ou aux habitudes individuelles. Cette lecture dit une partie de la réalité, mais elle laisse dans l'ombre un phénomène plus profond : une grande partie de nos déchets matérialise notre rapport au temps.

Un plat à emporter, une capsule de café, un emballage individuel, une lingette ou un gobelet à usage unique condensent tous la même promesse : aller plus vite. Ces objets accompagnent une société où les temps jugés improductifs ont progressivement été comprimés, délégués ou rendus invisibles. Une société dans laquelle il devient de plus en plus difficile de perdre du temps. Cuisiner, laver, réparer, entretenir, se déplacer, organiser un repas commun ou faire plusieurs courses dans des commerces différents tendent à être perçus comme des contraintes plutôt que comme des composantes ordinaires de la vie quotidienne.

Peu à peu, une grande partie de nos existences se sont organisées autour de cette exigence de rapidité : se déplacer plus vite, acheter plus vite, accomplir plus vite ses démarches, ses soins, ses loisirs ou ses tâches domestiques. C'est ce mouvement que le philosophe allemand Hartmut Rosa désigne par le terme d'*« accélération sociale »*.

Les objets suivent ce mouvement. Le plat à emporter accompagne l'alimentation prise entre deux activités. Les portions individuelles adaptent le repas à des emplois du temps dispersés et évitent d'avoir à attendre ou à faire coïncider les rythmes de chacun. Le gobelet jetable rend possible le café bu en marchant, dans les transports, sur un quai ou dans la rue. Les capsules de café permettent de ne pas avoir à doser la quantité, installer un filtre, vider le marc ou nettoyer la cafetière. Les lingettes promettent un nettoyage immédiat, sans eau, sans chiffon, sans lavage après usage.

A chaque fois, quelques minutes sont gagnées. L'économie linéaire n'a donc pas seulement multiplié les objets : elle leur a délégué une partie du temps que nous ne voulons ou ne pouvons plus prendre. Ce qui relevait autrefois d'activités ordinaires a été progressivement incorporé dans des biens, des emballages, des équipements et des consommables. Le confort moderne tient ainsi largement à ce déplacement : économiser du temps humain en consommant davantage de matière et d'énergie.

Mais le temps gagné au moment de l'usage ne disparaît pas. Il se déplace vers l'aval, dans tout ce qu'il faut ensuite organiser pour séparer, nettoyer, transformer ou faire disparaître les objets devenus déchets. Ce qui a été simplifié pour l'usager ou le consommateur devient alors une charge reportée sur les filières de traitement. L'une des difficultés de l'économie circulaire est peut-être là. Le débat porte presque toujours sur les filières économiques ou industrielles, les innovations techniques ou les comportements des consommateurs. Il porte beaucoup plus rarement sur le temps, alors que c'est sans doute l'une des ressources les plus déterminantes de cette transition.

Réparer, réemployer, trier et composter prend du temps. Donner, vendre, déposer dans une ressourcerie, rapporter un contenant consigné, entretenir un objet, chercher une pièce détachée, comparer les possibilités de réparation, apprendre à prolonger la durée d'usage. Toutes ces pratiques réintroduisent une succession d'attentions, de gestes, de déplacements, de recherches et de décisions que les objets jetables avaient précisément pour fonction d'éviter.

L'économie circulaire demande donc de reprendre le temps que l'économie linéaire nous avait appris à ne plus perdre. Voilà l'un de ses points aveugles. On demande aux personnes de trier davantage, de réparer davantage, de composter davantage, de moins jeter, de mieux acheter, de mieux conserver, tout en maintenant des organisations sociales fondées sur la vitesse, la disponibilité immédiate et la délégation matérielle du temps domestique. Et cette contradiction explique en partie les limites des politiques publiques centrées sur les comportements.

Depuis des années, les collectivités, les éco-organismes, les associations et les institutions multiplient les campagnes d'information, les guides de tri, les ambassadeurs, les défis « zéro déchet », les ateliers de sensibilisation, les applications, les dispositifs incitatifs (ou *nudges*). Ces actions ont produit des effets. Elles ont amélioré le tri, rendu certains flux plus visibles, installé de nouvelles normes dans les pratiques quotidiennes. Mais elles se heurtent à un plafond dès lors qu'elles demandent aux individus de corriger, seuls, les effets d'une organisation sociale et politique qui les dépasse largement.

On ne transforme pas durablement les pratiques en ajoutant de la consigne à des vies déjà saturées. On ne fait pas du réemploi une norme sociale si les ressourceries sont éloignées, si les objets sont irréparables, si les pièces détachées sont introuvables, si la réparation coûte plus cher que le neuf, si les logements manquent d'espace, si les horaires de travail rendent les démarches impossibles. Les comportements ne flottent pas dans le vide. Ils prennent forme dans des objets, des infrastructures, des prix, des normes, des rythmes de travail, des logements, des marchés, des services publics.

Depuis deux siècles, nos sociétés se sont construites en transférant toujours davantage de temps humain vers des objets, de l'énergie et des infrastructures. L'économie circulaire nous demande aujourd'hui d'effectuer une partie du chemin inverse. C'est probablement là que réside sa difficulté, mais aussi son ambition. Car derrière les déchets, ce n'est pas seulement notre rapport aux objets qui est en jeu. C'est notre rapport au temps.

PART Four – CASHLESS SOCIETY ?

Document 15· · ABC (Australia), "Cashless Society", 22 November 2023.
↳ https://youtu.be/3PlDqR_KRTU (7 minutes)

Document 16

'No cash accepted' signs are bad news for millions of unbanked Americans

Jay L. Zagorsky, ***The Conversation***, 22 January 2024 (abridged)

How many people don't have a bank account? And just how difficult has it become to live without one?

These questions are becoming increasingly important as more businesses refuse to take cash in cities across the U.S. People without bank accounts are shut out from stores and restaurants that refuse to accept cash.

As it happens, a lot of people are still "unbanked": roughly 6 million in the U.S., the latest data shows, which is about the population of Wisconsin. And outside of the U.S., more than a billion people don't have a bank account.

I am a business school professor who researches society's transition from cash to electronic payments. I recently visited Seattle and was amazed by the mixed signals I saw in many storefronts. Numerous shops had one sign proudly proclaiming how welcoming and inclusive they were — next to another sign saying "No cash accepted." This tells people without bank accounts that they aren't welcome.

Why would someone want to avoid using banks? Every two years, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation surveys households about their connections to the banking system and asks people without bank accounts why they don't have one. People can respond with multiple answers. In 2021, the top reason — with over 40% of respondents choosing it — was that they didn't have enough money to meet the minimum balance.

This is consistent with data showing that poorer households are less likely to have bank accounts. About one-quarter of those earning less than $15,000 a year are unbanked, the FDIC found. Among those earning more than $75,000 a year, almost every person surveyed had some type of bank account.

The second- and third-most common answers show that some people are skeptical of banks. Roughly one-third of survey respondents agreed that "Avoiding a bank gives more privacy," while another one-third said they simply "don't trust banks."

Rounding out the top five reasons were costs of dealing with a bank. More than one-quarter of respondents felt bank account fees were too high, and about the same proportion felt fees were too unpredictable.

While many middle-class and wealthy people don't pay directly for their bank accounts, fees can be costly for those who can't maintain a minimum balance. A recent Bankrate survey shows basic monthly service fees range between $5 and $15. Beyond these steady fees, banks earn $4 to $5 each time people withdraw cash from an ATM or need services like getting cashier's checks. Unexpected bills can result in overdraft fees of about $25 each time an account is overdrawn.

The FDIC calls people without a bank account "the unbanked." People with a bank account but who primarily rely on alternative services such as check cashing outlets are called "the underbanked."

The latest FDIC data shows almost 6 million unbanked and 19 million underbanked U.S. households. Given that 2.5 people live in the average household, this means there are over 15 million people living in a home with no connection to banks, and 48 million more in homes with only a tenuous connection to banks.

Combining the two figures means roughly one out of every five people in the U.S. has little or no connection to banks or other financial institutions. That can leave them shut out from stores, restaurants, transportation and medical providers that don't take cash.

The true number of unbanked people is likely higher than the FDIC estimates. The questions on being banked or unbanked are supplemental questions added to a survey given to people at their homes. This means it misses homeless people, transients without a permanent address and undocumented immigrants.

These people are likely unbanked because you need a verified address and a government-issued tax-identification number to get a bank account. Given roughly 2.5 million migrants crossed the U.S.-Mexico border in 2023 alone, there are millions more people in the cash-only economy than the FDIC estimates. […]

Document 17

'A fundamental right': UK high street chains and restaurants challenged over refusal to accept cash

Jon Ungoed-Thomas, ***The Guardian***, 16 March 2025 (abridged)

Major high street chains and restaurants, including Gail's bakery, Itsu and Zizzi, are being challenged by campaigners over their refusal to accept cash after a jump in consumers turning to notes and coins for daily spending.

Following a steady decline in cash payments over the last decade, consumer groups says the cost of living crisis has seen more people turning to the traditional payment method for day-to-day spending. In 2023, 1.5 million adults in the UK were using cash for daily spending, a four-year high.

Ron Delnevo, chair of the Payment Choice Alliance, which campaigns for the long-term future of cash services, said it was "completely unacceptable" that some stores were rejecting cash. The alliance wants new laws similar to those in some other countries requiring organisations and retailers to accept cash.

"The vast majority of the public want cash to be honoured as a payment," he said. "These businesses are letting down the public." Delnevo said a survey conducted by YouGov in June 2023 on behalf of the alliance revealed that 71% of British adults would support a legal requirement for businesses to accept cash.

Gail's, which has more than 150 stores, says going cashless has "environmental benefits" in eliminating the need for cash collection and delivery. Itsu, which promotes "affordable, nutritious food" rolled out cashless payments after a successful trial, and Zizzi says it only accepts card and contactless payments for the "smoothest and fastest" payment experience.

The coffee and bakery chain Pret a Manger has piloted cashless outlets but still accepts cash in most of its 490 shops in the UK. It found the cashless service was faster but decided against a wider roll-out in favour of customer choice.

The Treasury select committee is expected to report shortly on its inquiry into whether there is any need to regulate or mandate the acceptance of cash.[1] An early day motion tabled in parliament last month calls for the government to implement legislation to require all businesses in the UK to accept cash, but ministers have said they have no plans to mandate the acceptance of cash.

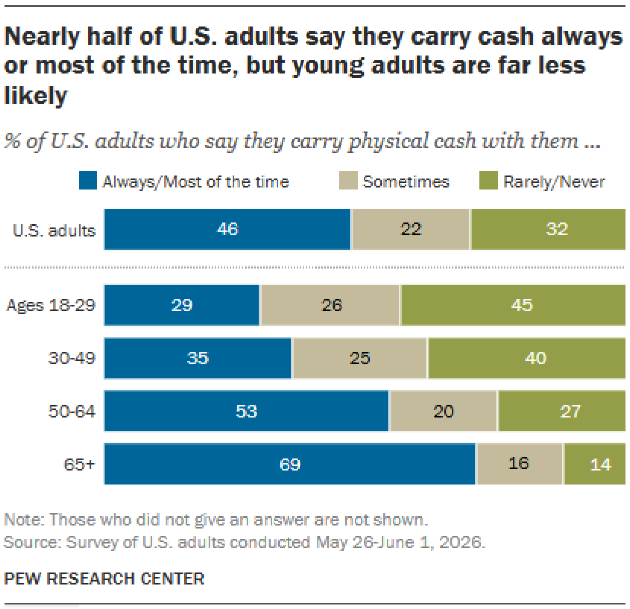
The motion highlights concerns at the "rapidly increasing trend for UK businesses, local authorities and leisure facilities, including those supported by taxpayer funding, to refuse to accept cash for payments". Car parks, train buffets and leisure centres are among the services that have gone cashless.

Kate Osborne, the Labour MP for Jarrow and Gateshead East, who has signed the early day motion, said: "It is a fundamental right that people should be able to use cash as a legal tender. When you are trying to budget, particularly if you are on a low income, cash is a simple way of doing it. I understand that many people are not using cash much of the time, but there should be choice for all.

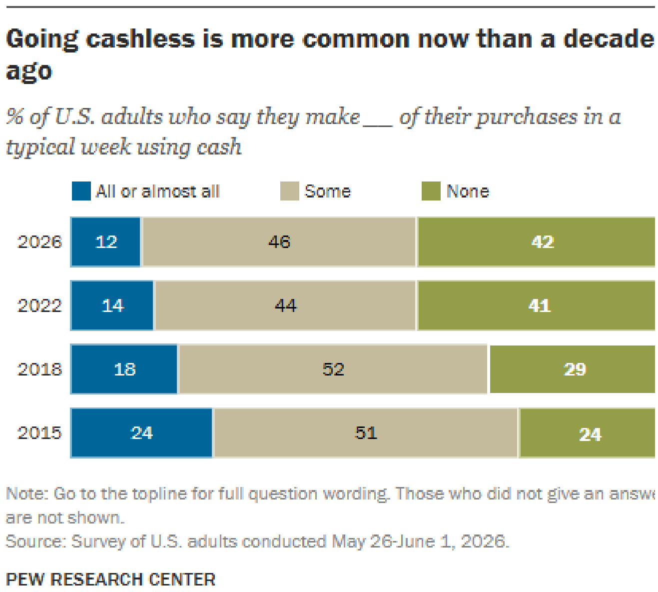
"We are seeing more and more retailers offering card-only payments, and it causes problems in constituencies like mine where we've got a high number of people who are digitally excluded or may choose not to do electronic banking." Osborne said that cash can be more convenient. "I've been on trains before and the system [for the buffet] has gone down and they can't take cash," she said. "You could be on a train for three or four hours, and you can't even buy a cup of tea." […]

[1] The Treasury Committee's recommendation: "There may come a time in the future where it becomes necessary for HM Treasury to mandate cash acceptance if appropriate safeguards have not been implemented for those who need physical cash, and the level of cash acceptance begins to lead to widespread detriment. To ensure that HM Treasury has the information it needs to make this decision, cash acceptance levels in the UK must be monitored to ensure we do not sleepwalk into a loss of cash acceptance for those who need it. HM Treasury must provide the Treasury Committee with annual reporting on cash acceptance levels and provide an analysis of HM Treasury's view of the tolerable level of cash acceptance in society. (Recommendation)" (Treasury Committee, "Acceptance of Cash" report, §122, 30 April 2025)

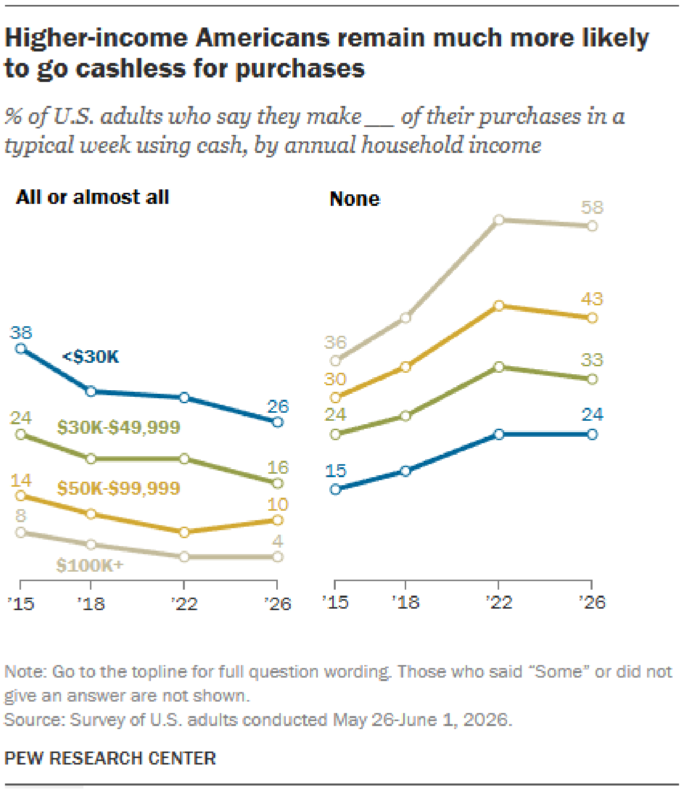
Document 17 A



Document 17 - C



Document 17 B



Writing Workout · Documents Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**7**

En vous inspirant du document 3B, écrivez au moins deux phrases analysant deux des graphiques ci-dessus, dont le document 17C.

Vous activerez les structures de la **comparaison** et de la **probabilité** (*to be likely to do*).

Pour commenter le graphique 17 C vous veillerez à utiliser une fois le preterit et une fois le present perfect.