



Defining Happiness

{Earth's Systems and Resources

Summary

Students individually decide what types of things positively contribute to their quality of life. They compare their ideas about quality of life to national statistics related to how Americans spend their time, and determine how Americans could restructure their time to improve quality of life. Students also evaluate their own progress toward “the good life” and how their personal consumption habits impact their progress.

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify factors that improve quality of life
- Evaluate how time use and personal choices impact quality of life

Quality of Life

What does Quality of Life mean?

What is Happiness?

How does Quality of Life and Happiness relate?

Pick 5 that are essential to the Quality of Life

democratic government

good physical and mental health

healthy natural environment

spending time with family and friends

monetary wealth

having a nice home

volunteering or helping others

participating in local or national politics

spirituality/religion

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being famous

living in a clean and safe neighborhood

time for watching television

time for hobbies and recreation

travel and vacation time

participating in community events

education

being able to buy nice things

a rewarding job

saving money for retirement

peace and security

Think About it

- Which choices received the most votes?
- What do those choices say about students' values?
- How do you think these choices compare to the average U.S. youth? (80% of youth ages 12-24 say that having lots of close friends is important.)
- Would your choices look different if you were 30 years older?
- Do you spend your time and energy according to the things you think will improve quality of life?

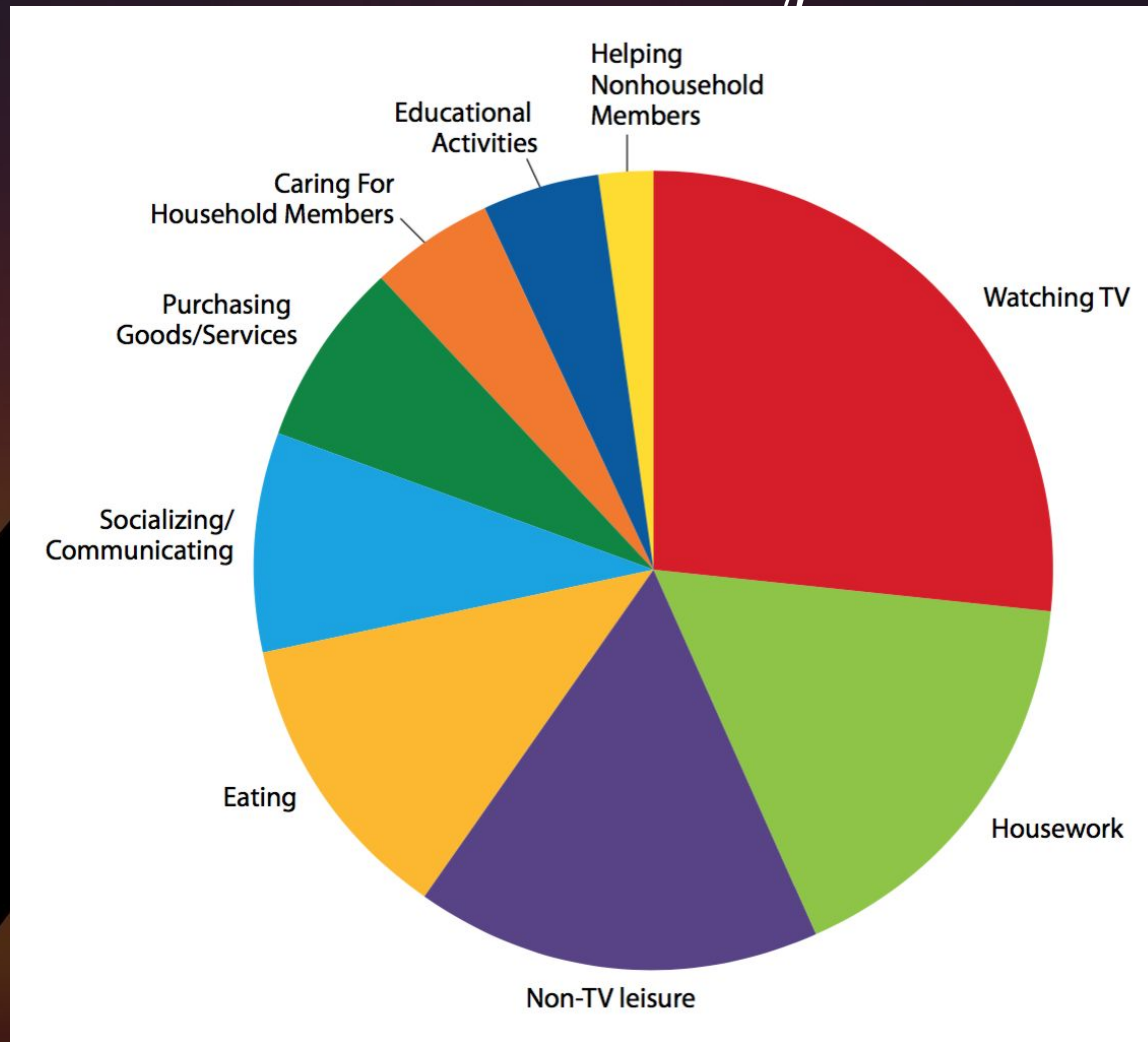
In your Table Teams

- Determine how a person could divide 8 hours of daily “free time” to reflect the class’s quality of life goals.
- Draw a pie chart to indicate roughly how those 8 hours should be divided, keeping in mind the class’s top five values. (8 hours of “free time” is based on a 24-hour day with 8 hours of sleep and 8 hours of work/school time.)

Classes' Combined Pie Chart

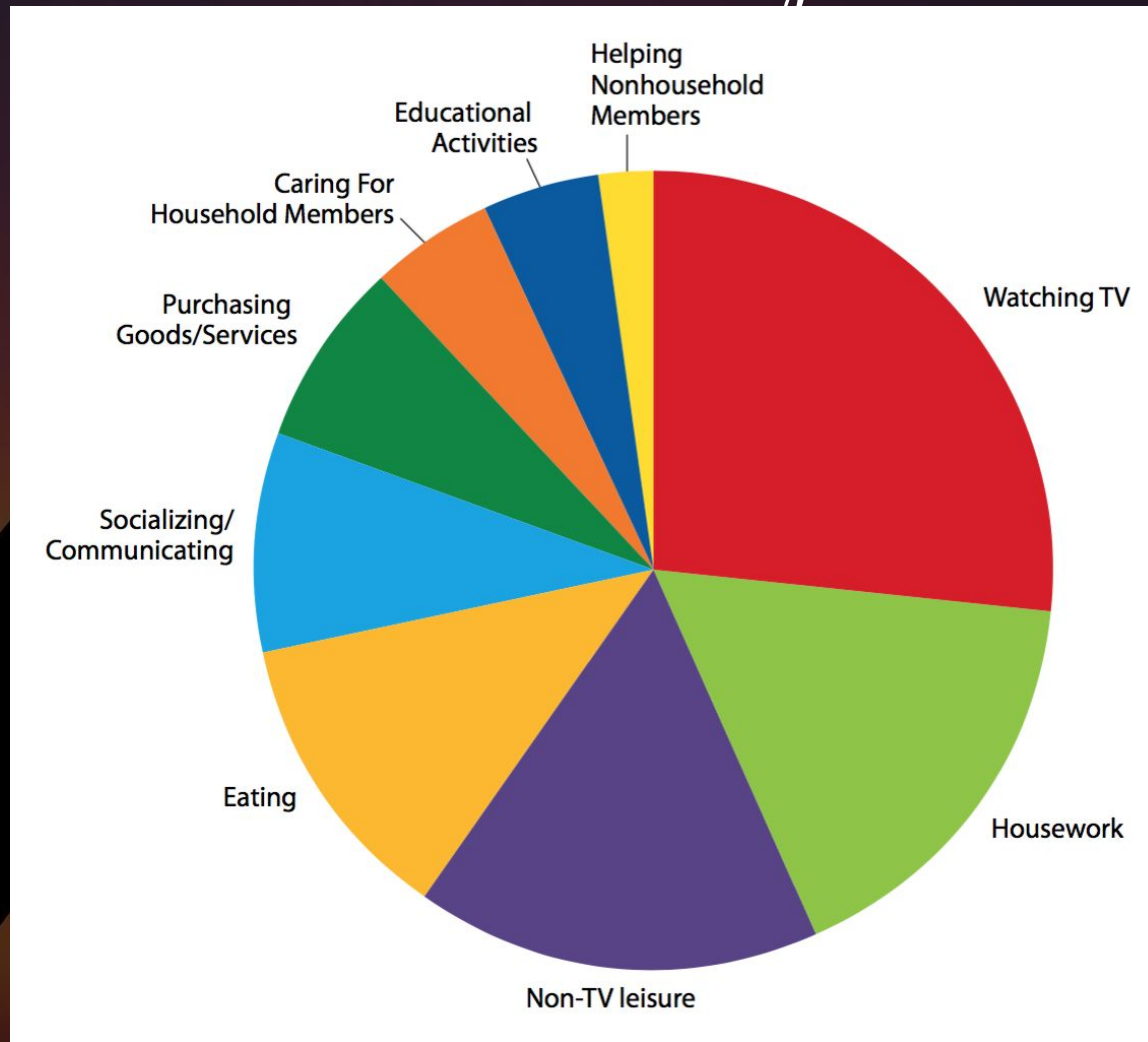


How Americans spend Time



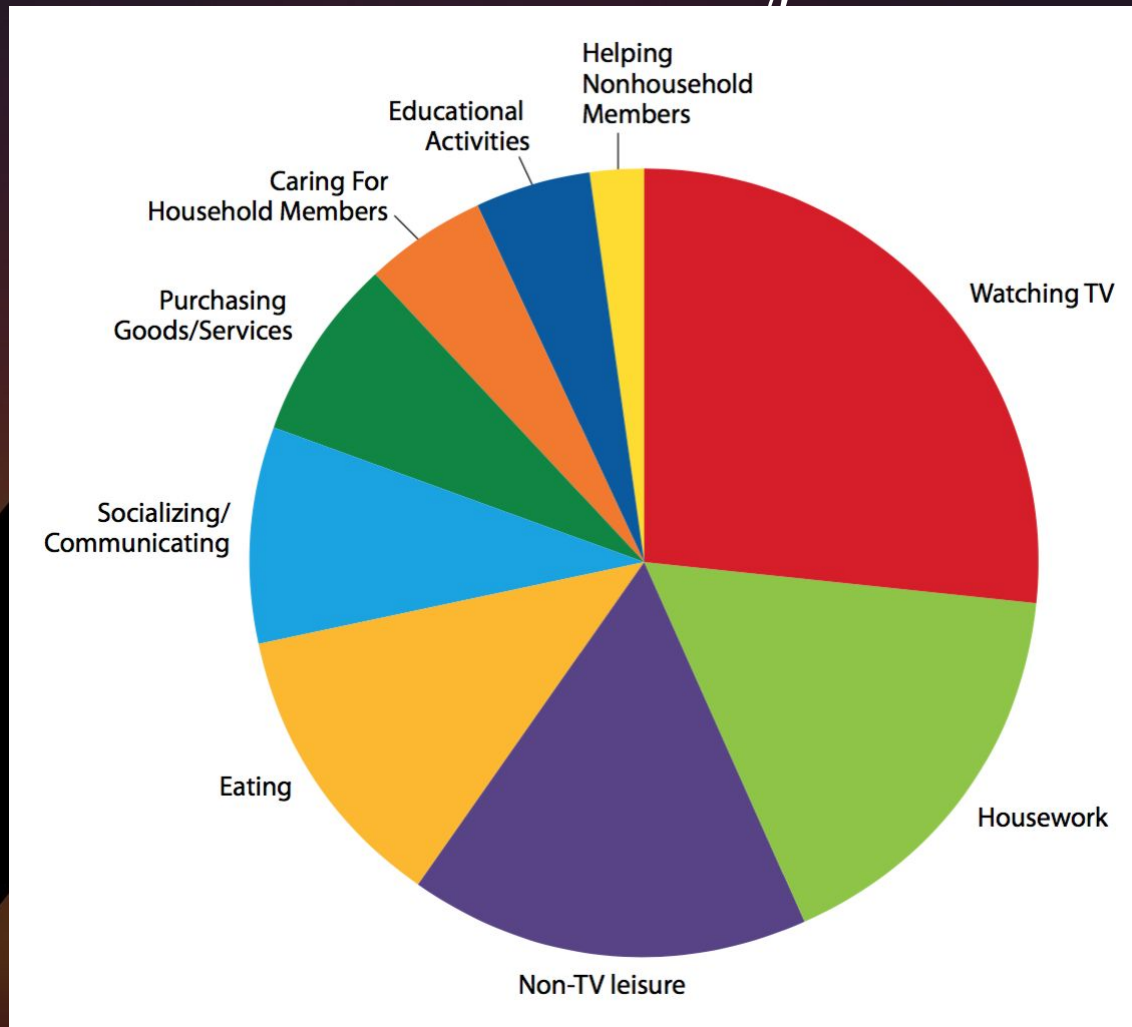
How does your group's pie chart compare to the graph, How Americans Spend Their Time?

How Americans spend Time



According to the graph, what is the main activity Americans do outside of work and sleep? (watch TV) Does this surprise you?

How Americans spend Time



How does American time use compare to your ideas about quality of life? Do you think the ways in which we spend our time contribute positively to our quality of life?

Talk about it

1. Do you actively try to achieve the five things you said are most essential to your quality of life? (Note: You may want to point out that some “down time” can be beneficial. Many of the goals are long-term in nature, meaning you might not spend time on them every day.)
2. Why might some people not be able to spend time or money on things that would improve their well-being?
3. How do your consumption patterns relate to the five things you said were most important for a good quality of life? How could you consume differently to better meet your quality of life goals?

Talk about it

4. In 2004, the United States accounted for less than 5% of the world's population and 33% of global consumption. The rise in consumption has not led to a rise in happiness among U.S. consumers. Only one-third of people in the U.S. report being "very happy," the same fraction as in 1957, when they had half the wealth. If people make more money and own more stuff, why do you think they are not happier? Why might people buy more and more "stuff" if it doesn't make them happier?
5. In what ways does consumption contribute positively to quality of life?

Talk about it

6. In what ways does consumption negatively impact quality of life?
7. How might consumption contribute to a better quality of life for some people while reducing the quality of life for others?
8. People whose basic needs are not met may not even consider the quality of life categories discussed in this activity. What are things each of us can do to help provide all people with the opportunity to live “the good life”?