

Hourly vs. Salary: Workplace Differences for Bates College Staff

Bates College Department of Psychology

Researcher: Sarah Daehler, Thesis Advisor: Rebecca Fraser-Thill

Empirical Thesis Seminar, Fall 2018

Introduction

- David Graeber's book, *Bullshit Jobs*, describes the idea that some jobs simply don't need to exist, meaning that if the employee in the 'bullshit job' left and was not replaced, the organization would see no effect (Graeber, 2018).
- 37% of people identify with having a 'bullshit job' and these employees are completely miserable (Vendantam, 2018).
- Job necessity:** the necessity of a job; how important is it that this job exists?
- Unscheduled time:** time in the work day during which there are no immediate work-related tasks to be done; time typically spent on a personal phone, chatting with coworkers, etc.
- Hypothesis:** I expect to find that staff members receiving salary pay, reporting high job necessity, and little unscheduled time at work will report greater satisfaction with life, meaning in work, job control, and job satisfaction than staff members receiving hourly pay, reporting low job necessity, and much unscheduled time at work.

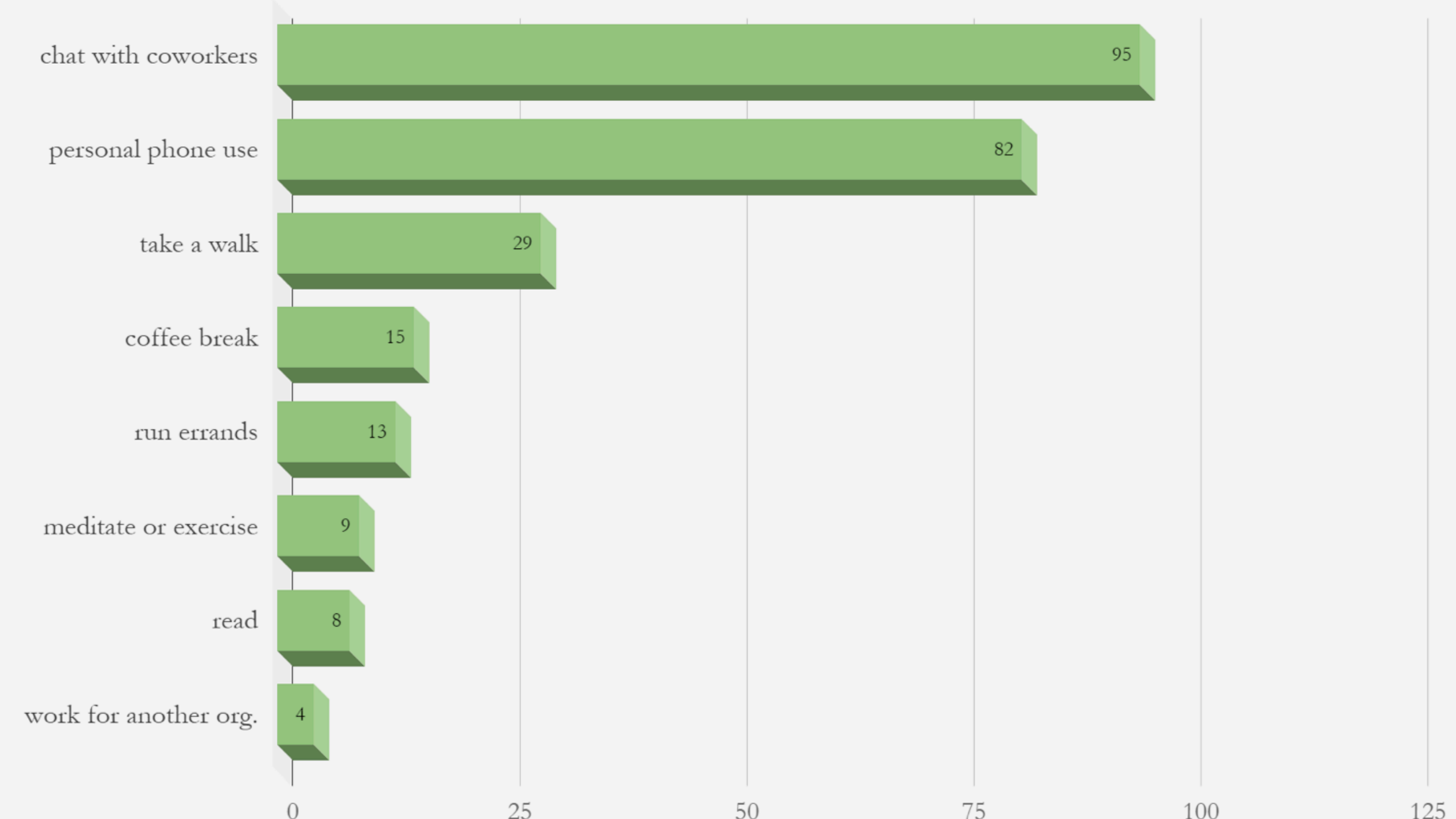
Method

- Online survey sent to all Bates College staff via email; staff in Dining had a paper option
- 173 participants**
 - 117 reported salary pay
 - 54 reported hourly pay
 - 2 did not report
- Scales**
 - SWLS: Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)
 - WAMI: Work and Meaning Inventory (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012)
 - JCS: Job Control Scale (Gonzalez-Mule & Cockburn, 2017)
 - MSQ: Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Davis, England, & Lofquist, 1977)
- Additional Survey Question Topics**
 - type of pay; work hours; pretending to look busy at work; break time; demographics

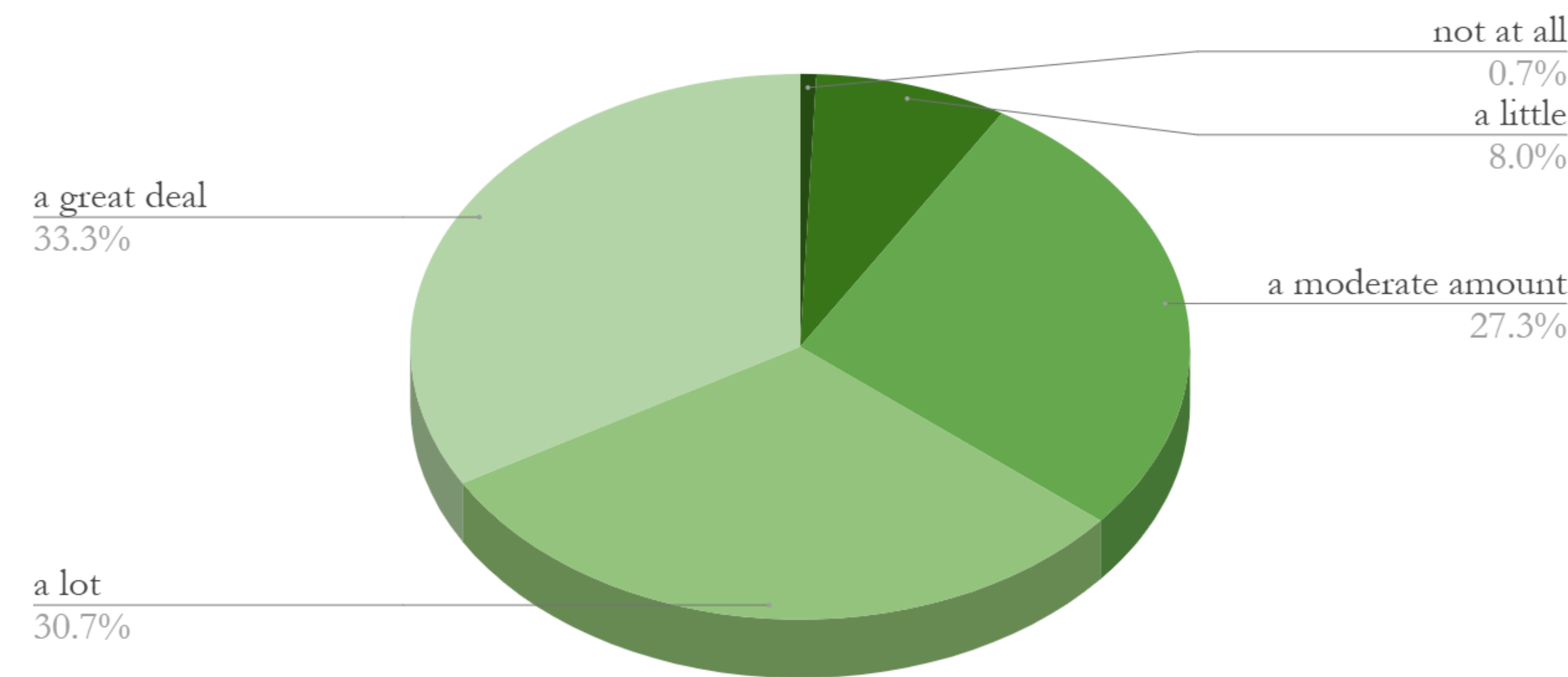
Results

- 2 (Job Necessity: High vs. Low) x 2 (Type of Pay: Hourly vs. Salary) x 2 (Amount of Unscheduled Time: High vs. Low) ANOVA on SWLS, WAMI, JCS, and MSQ scores:
 - Main effect of type of pay on SWLS:** employees receiving salary pay reported greater satisfaction with life ($M = 27.43$, $SE = .66$) than employees receiving hourly pay ($M = 23.14$, $SE = 1.17$), $F(1, 121) = 10.20$, $p = .002$.
 - Main effect of type of pay on WAMI:** employees receiving salary pay reported greater meaning in work ($M = 41.56$, $SE = .73$) than employees receiving hourly pay ($M = 37.35$, $SE = 1.28$), $F(1, 121) = 8.13$, $p = .005$.
 - Main effect of job necessity on WAMI:** employees reporting high job necessity reported greater meaning in work ($M = 41.07$, $SE = 1.29$) than employees reporting low job necessity ($M = 37.85$, $SE = .72$), $F(1, 121) = 4.77$, $p = .03$.
 - Main effect of job necessity on JCS:** employees reporting high job necessity reported greater job control ($M = 3.07$, $SE = .08$) than employees reporting low job necessity ($M = 2.85$, $SE = .05$), $F(1, 121) = 5.22$, $p = .02$.
 - No other main effects nor significant interactions found.

"When you spend time on non-work-related tasks, what do you do?"



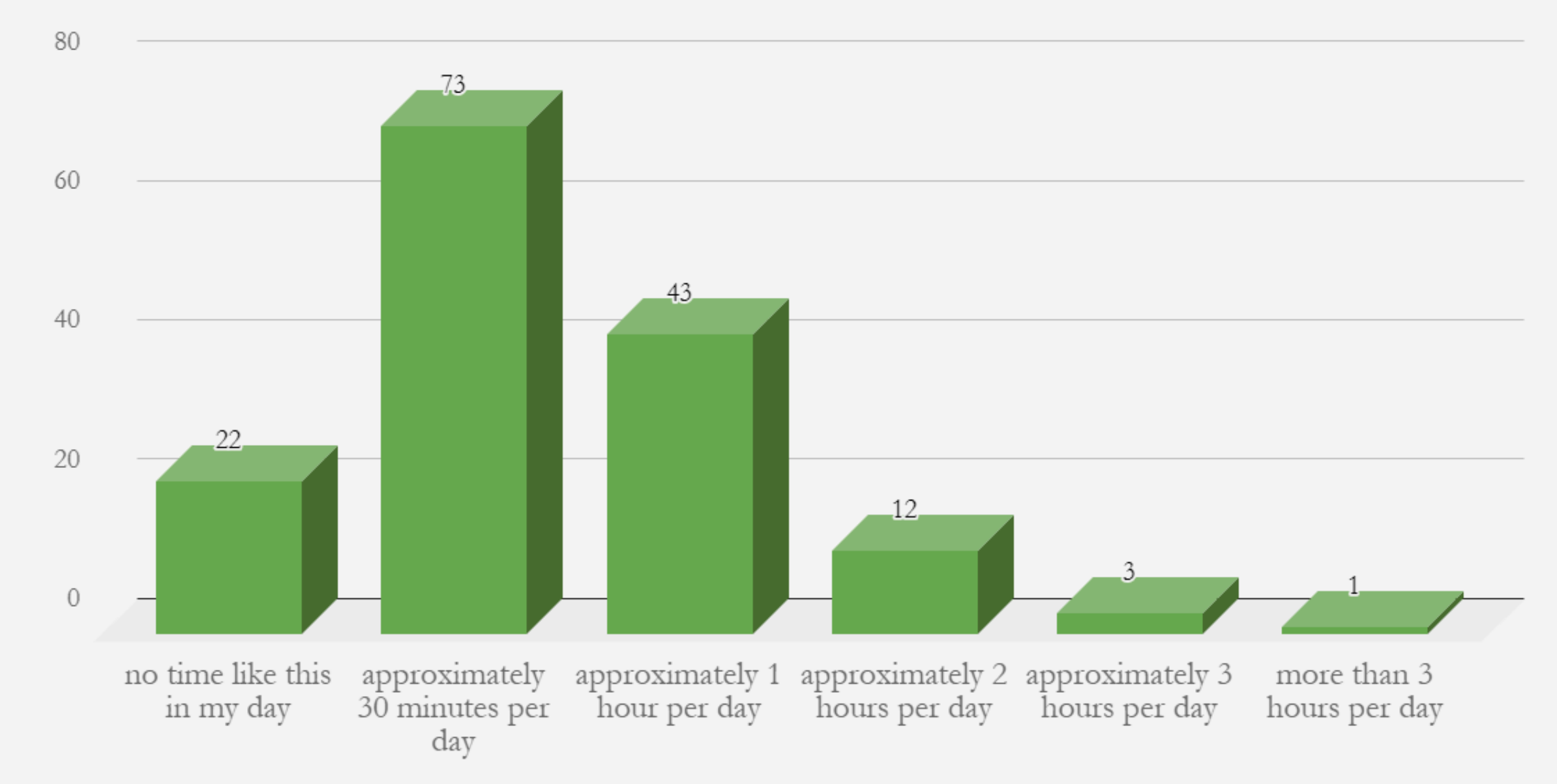
"If you left your job and nobody replaced you, to what extent would that disrupt the everyday functioning of your department?"



Discussion

- “What can I do as a supervisor?”:** Be proactive! Check-in with employees often (without micromanaging) to provide space for feedback. Do they have too many or too few tasks? Are the tasks necessary, varied, and using the unique skills of the individual? Are employees given opportunities to lead or to determine the way they do their work? Are employees receiving respect and recognition for their hard work? These are just a few factors that can contribute to an employee's perception of their job.
- ‘Bullshit jobs’:** This survey did not find 37% of Bates staff reporting a 'bullshit job' as Graeber suggested. Only about 9% of Bates staff reported that there would be little to no disruption if they left without replacement. Interestingly, if you include the people who said there would be a moderate disruption into this percentage, you would have 36%.
- Limitations:** self report; use of non-validated survey questions; primarily salary pay participants; long survey that perhaps only people with a bit of extra time and autonomy in the workplace have time to complete.
- Future questions:**
 - Are employees more tolerable of negative workplace experiences when they need the money? How does financial stability impact a workplace experience? Is there an influence of spousal income? Would the same survey with faculty members at Bates produce the similar results?

"On average, while at work, how many hours per day do you spend on non-work-related tasks?"



References

- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71-75.
- Gonzalez-Mule, E. & Cockburn, B. (2017). Worked to Death: The Relationships of Job Demands and Job Control with Mortality. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(1), 73-112.
- Graeber, D. (2018). *Bullshit jobs*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Steger, M. F., Dik, B. J., & Duffy, R. D. (2012). Measuring Meaningful Work: The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 20(3), 322-337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072711436160>
- Vendantam, S. (Interviewer), (2018). Hidden Brain, NPR. BS Jobs: How Meaningless Work Wears Us Down.
- Weiss, D. J., Davis, R. V., England, G. W., & Lofquist, L. H. (1967). Manual for the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Work Adjustment Project Industrial Relations Center.