

## Prolong the daily grind & shorten the week? Most pick a longer four day work week over five shorter days

*Men and women of across all generations prefer move away from five eight-hour days*

**June 22, 2018** – In 1930, it seemed like a forgone future. Influential economist John Maynard Keynes seemed certain when he wrote in his *Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren* that a 15-hour work week was almost inevitable in Western societies within 100 years.

Today, however, Canadians would settle for far less.

Indeed, a new study from the Angus Reid Institutes finds that while a three-day work seemed like a real possibility to a significant portion of the population fifty years ago, that dream has all but vanished in 2018.

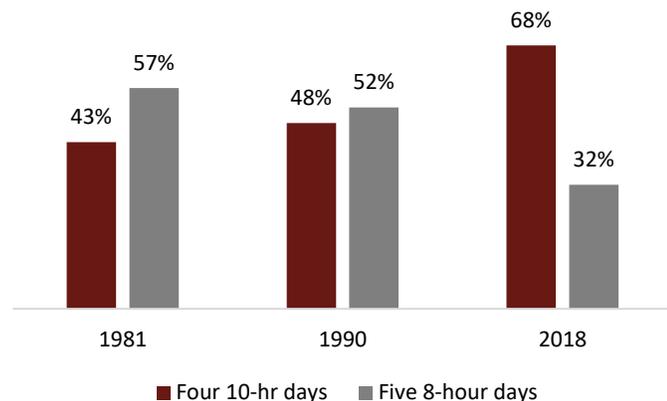
That doesn't mean Canadians don't want to work toward it however. Close to half of Canadians (47%) say that moving to a 30-hour work week from 40 hours is a good idea. Notably, the size of the group saying the opposite – that this is a bad idea - is less than half of what it was in the 1950's and 60's, down to just three-in-ten (31%).

Further, if they have to continue to work a standard 40 hour week, seven-in-ten (68%) now say they would prefer to condense it into four 10-hour shifts rather than five eight-hour segments. This represents a 25-point rise in the number of Canadians who said so in 1981.

### More Key Findings:

- The number of Canadians who expect a three-day work week in the next 20 years has dropped significantly to just 13 per cent. In 1985 Gallup Canada found that 50 per cent said they believed this would happen and in 1969, 48 per cent said the same.
- All age groups are open to the idea of reducing the work week by one day while still working 40 hours. Seven-in-ten from each generation say this is something they would support
- Differences in opinion on a reduced work week, to 30 hours from 40, are notably correlated more closely with political affiliation more than age or gender. Majorities of NDP (51%) and Liberal (55%) supporters support the idea, while just one-in-three Conservatives (35%) say the same

### Which would you prefer: a 40-hour week consisting of four 10-hour days or a 40-hour week consisting of five 8-hour days?



### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 29 – April 3, 2018, among a representative randomized sample of 1,524 Canadian adults who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release

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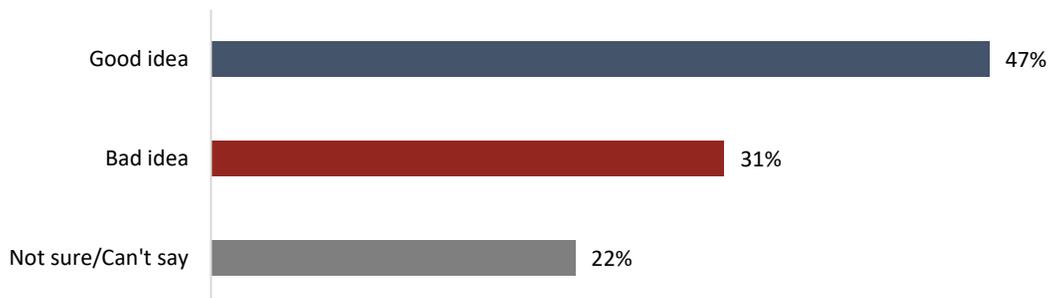
**Half of Canadians prefer a 30-hour work week**

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the establishment of a 40-hour work week was seen as a progressive change for workers rights. This limit was formalized in legislation in the United States in 1938 as a part of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and Canadian unions [helped to push](#) for these same standards in Canada during the decades that followed. The average work week had settled at 35 to 40 hours in Canada [by the mid-1960's](#).

While this progress has helped to balance work and leisure, it appears that many would be satisfied if the standard week was reduced even further as the quarter-mark of the 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches. Some researchers have suggested that this move would help to increase worker productivity, as a more-rested and less-stressed workforce may be able apply greater focus while on the job. Amazon [announced](#) that it would pilot a 30-hour project in 2016.

While there are certainly impediments to implementing a new, reduced standard for working hours, half of Canadians (47%) still say a 30-hour work week is a good idea. Three-in-ten disagree (31%) and 22 per cent are unsure.

**It has been suggested by some that we establish a standard 30-hour work week to spread work among more people. Do you think this is a good idea, or do you think we should have a longer working week?**



Detractors say that this compressed work schedule [may not work for everyone](#). Some say that a three-day weekend means less will get done in the workplace, leading to losses for businesses and ultimately employees. [Opponents also say](#) many people cannot afford to be paid less, if that is a condition of reduced work. This was the case with Amazon, where employees taking part in the four-day work week were paid 75 per cent of their salaries.

To compensate for this, many economists theorize that a guaranteed income would need to be [implemented in concert](#) with changes to offset potential income losses. For more on that topic, click the link below.

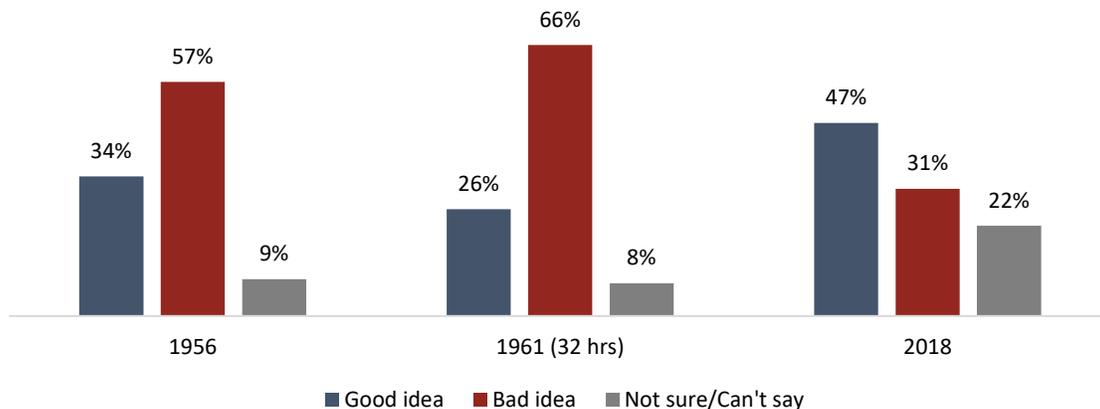
**[Related: Basic Income? Canadians weigh in on what funding they would support](#)**

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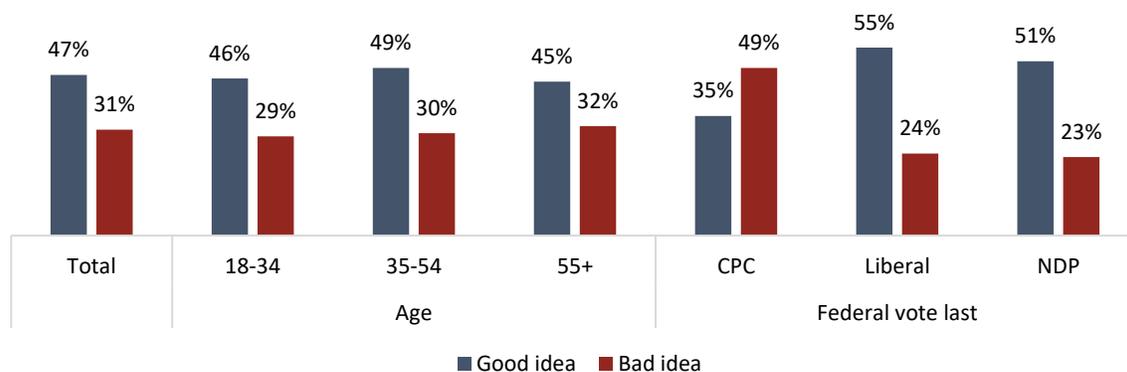
In 1956, respondents were asked the same question. At the time, almost twice as many Canadians (57%) said it was a bad idea to consider a 30-hour week. Similarly, two-thirds (66%) opposed a 32-hour week when asked in 1961.

**It has been suggested by some that we establish a standard 30-hour work week to spread work among more people. Do you think this is a good idea, or do you think we should have a longer working week?**



Among each generation, between 45 and 49 per cent of respondents now say a 30-hour work week is a “good idea”. The largest factor in differences of opinion is political affiliation. Here, past Conservative voters are twice as likely as past Liberals and New Democrats to say this is a bad suggestion:

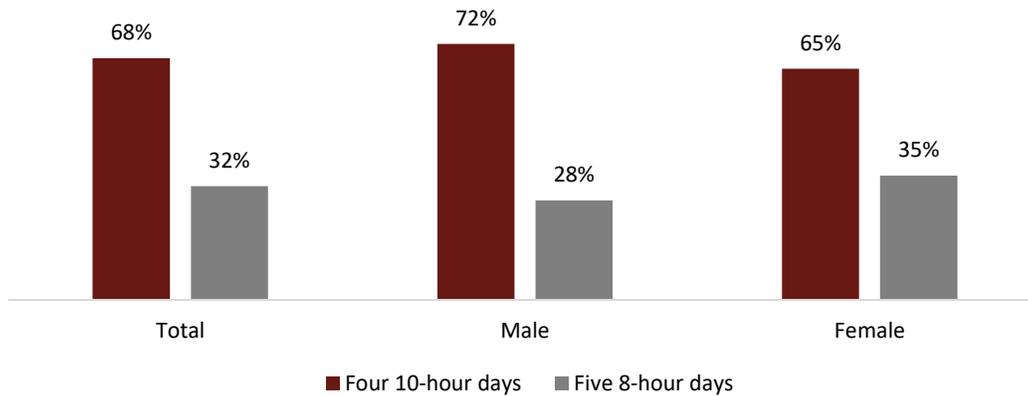
**It has been suggested by some that we establish a standard 30-hour work week to spread work among more people. Do you think this is a good idea, or do you think we should have a longer working week?**



**If they can't have fewer hours, a majority would settle for four longer days**

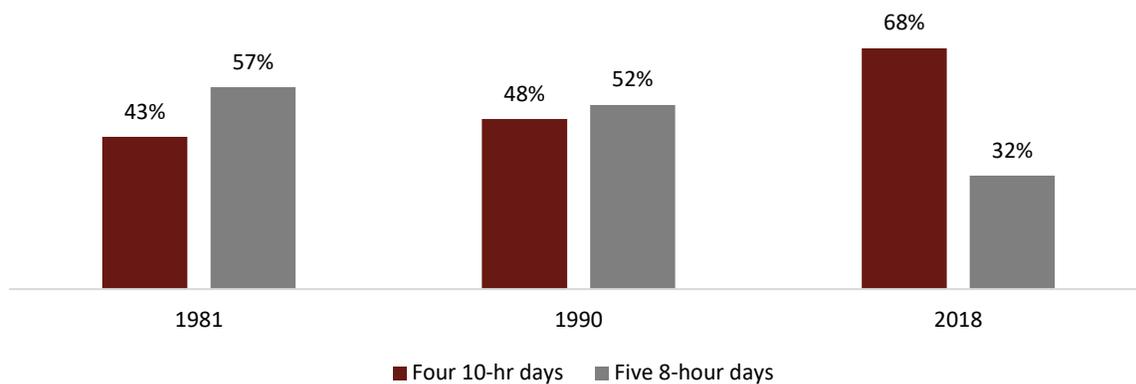
Another option discussed is maintaining the 40-hour standard, but compressing those hours into four days rather than five. This appears to be a popular option with Canadians. Seven-in-ten (68%) say that they would prefer four 10-hour days, rather than five eight-hour ones. Men are slightly more in favour of the idea than women:

**Supposing the 40-hour work week does not change, which would you, yourself prefer - a 40-hour week consisting of four 10-hour days or a 40-hour week consisting of five 8-hour days?**



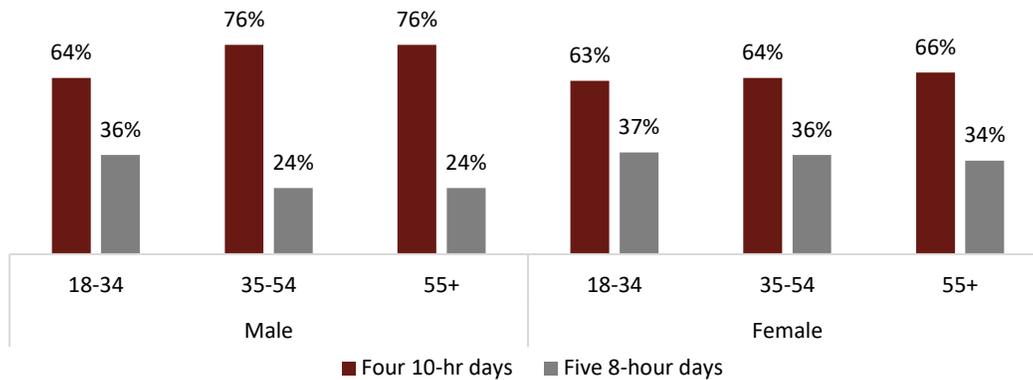
The desire for that extra day off has been growing. Asked at the beginning of the 1980s by Gallup Canada, just four-in-ten Canadians (43%) said that they preferred a change while six-in-ten (57%) were happy with the five-day status quo. At the beginning of the 90's the camps were split equally:

**Which would you, yourself prefer - a 40-hour week consisting of four 10-hour days or a 40-hour week consisting of five 8-hour days?**



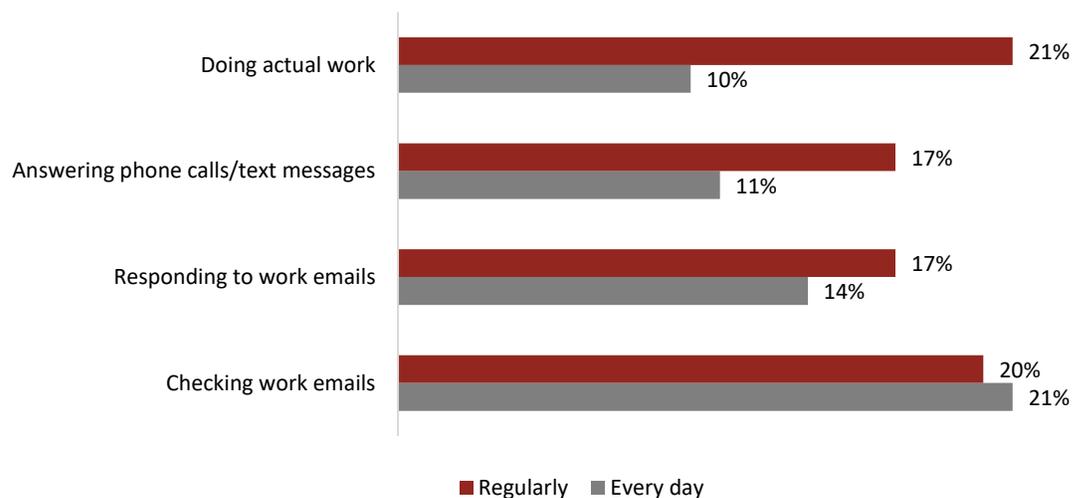
While there is broad support across the population for this proposal, the highest levels of support are among men over the age of 35:

**Which would you, yourself prefer - a 40-hour week consisting of four 10-hour days or a 40-hour week consisting of five 8-hour days?**



Would an extra day off really guarantee more free time? It may not be as safe a bet as one might think. As the Angus Reid Institute found in a 2015 study, increasing technological capacity has corresponded with more time spent working, or at the very least, connected to work through mobile devices, while away from the workplace. While some Canadians would surely make the most of their extra day, another group may remain 'on' even while they're off:

**How often, if at all, are you doing each of the following activities outside of regular office hours? Data from 2015 ARI study**

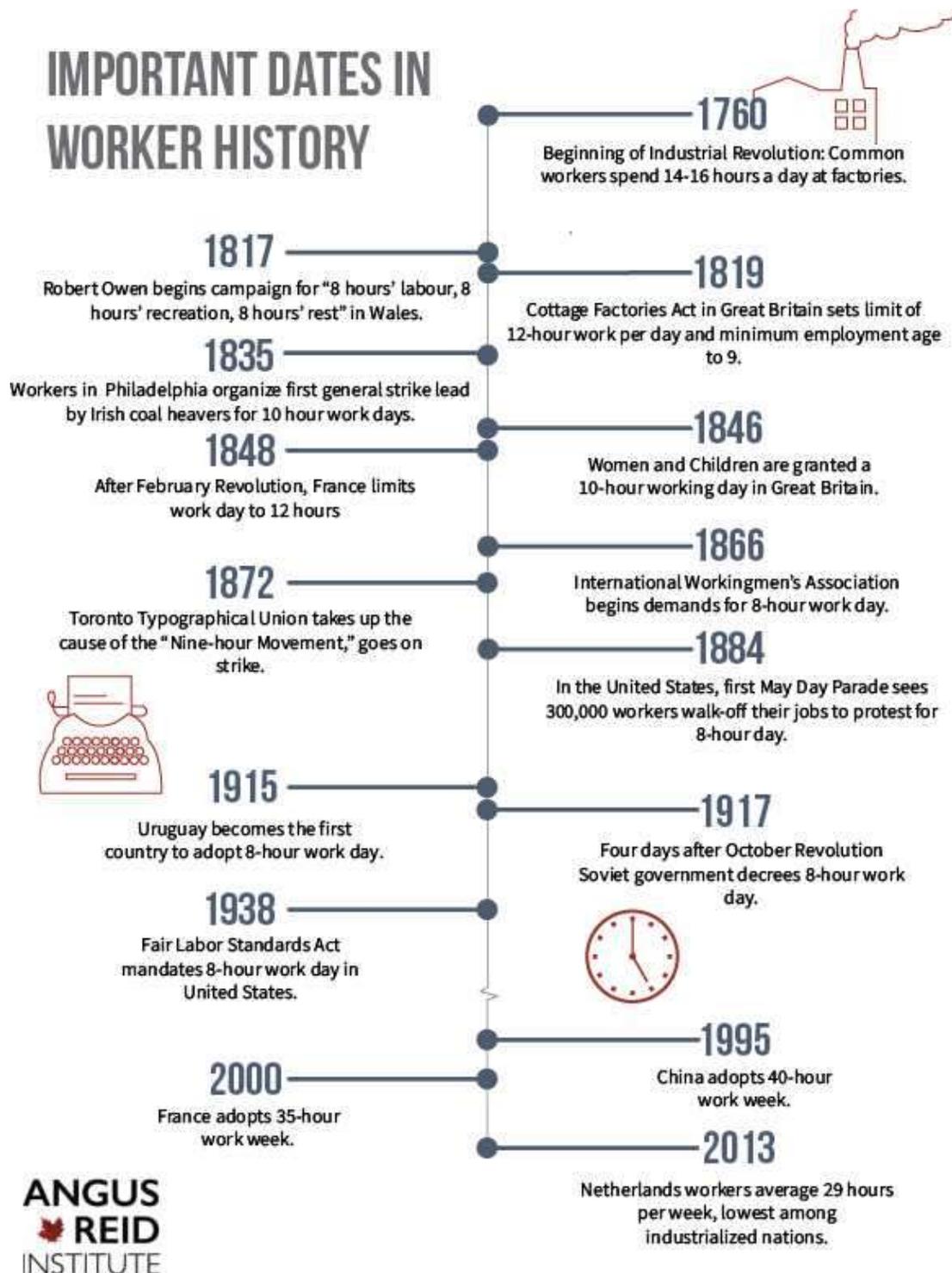


**A three-day work week by 2038? Not likely**

Economists [have long suggested](#) that increasing technological advances and automation will reduce the required number of hours for the typical work day. In fact, a [recent report](#) from McKinsey Global Institute proposed that more than 800 million jobs will be replaced or affected globally by 2030, which would certainly affect the number of hours necessary to accomplish the same tasks. The theory is that as

human labour is less needed, more time can be spent on leisure activities. This, combined with more than 200 years of labour activism, has already led to fewer hours worked in industrialized nations.

Some of those key dates are summarized in the graphic below:



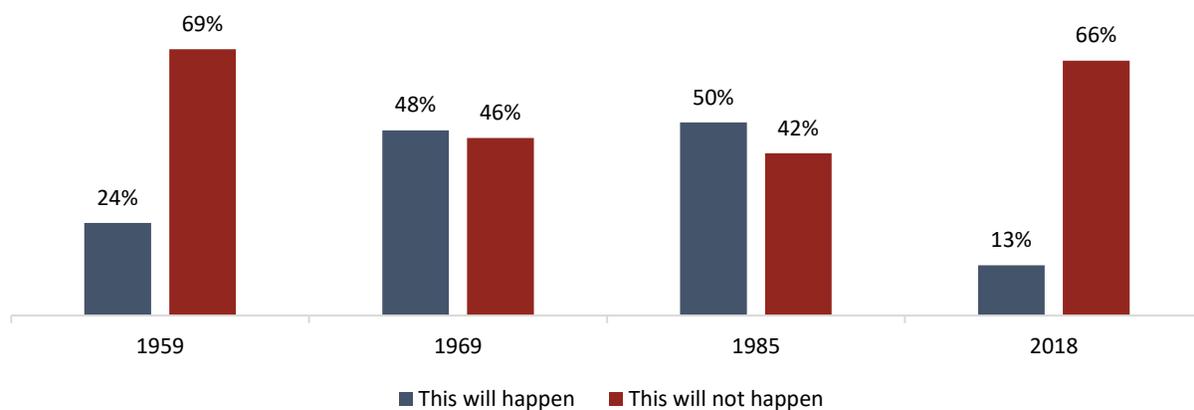
In 1959, Canadians were asked by Gallup to look forward 20 years and consider whether or not they thought that a three-day work week was something that would happen by 1979. At the time, about one-quarter (24%) said that this was in their crystal ball, while seven-in-ten disagreed (69%).

Not far removed from the Second World War and the Great Depression, perhaps the thought that work would be reduced was looked upon with less anticipation than might be expected. Work meant growth and better quality of life. That had changed by 1969. By then, half of Canadians (48%) said that by 1989 they expected to be working a three-day week. Respondents were asked this just three months after Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, and perhaps Canadians were feeling good about where technology was taking them.

The same response levels were found in 1985. Fifty per cent of respondents said that by 2005 they would be working a three-day week. However, asked in 2018 by the Institute, the affirmative response to this question has almost disappeared. Only 13 per cent of Canadians say that they expect this to happen. This is particularly interesting due to ongoing discussions of automation and the potential affects this may render.

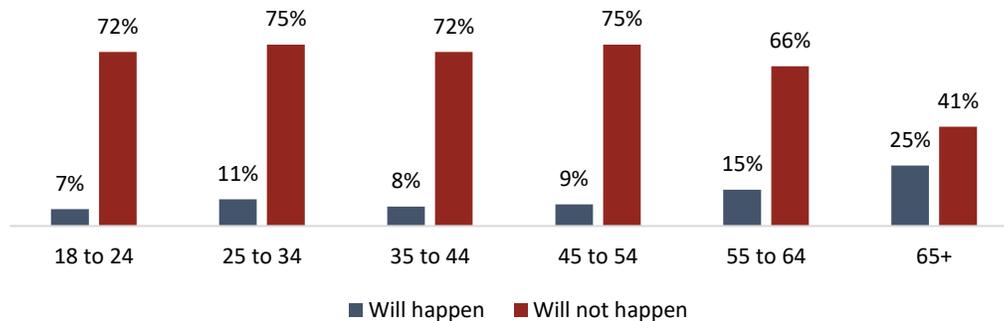
**Related: Technology replacing workers: is the worst over? Or yet to come?**

**Twenty years from now, do you think the following things will have happened...  
"We will be working a three-day week"**



While a majority of most age groups say that this shorter work week will not happen, those ages 65 and older are more hopeful. One-quarter of retirement age Canadians (25%) say a three-day work week is on the way, three times higher than the number of 18-24-year-olds who agree:

**"We will be working a three-day week in 2038"**



It appears, then, that despite growing recognition of impending job losses – not to mention the high number of Canadians who say that technology will eliminate more jobs than it creates going forward – two-thirds of residents do not expect to be working less.

There are myriad challenges for government and private businesses in order to maintain a similar average level of societal affluence with reduced human labour. Redistribution and basic income programs are politically challenging and would likely be a part of a reduced work environment. Some say there's enough money to go around. Indeed, Canadians are richer than ever, but modern societies are increasingly unequal in the distribution of their unprecedented wealth.

For now, it appears Canadians are expecting to continue on with the status quo.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

***For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).***