

From Time Management to Motivation Management:

Introducing a Simple Self-Monitoring System to Generate Insight, Sustain Motivation, and Increase Productivity

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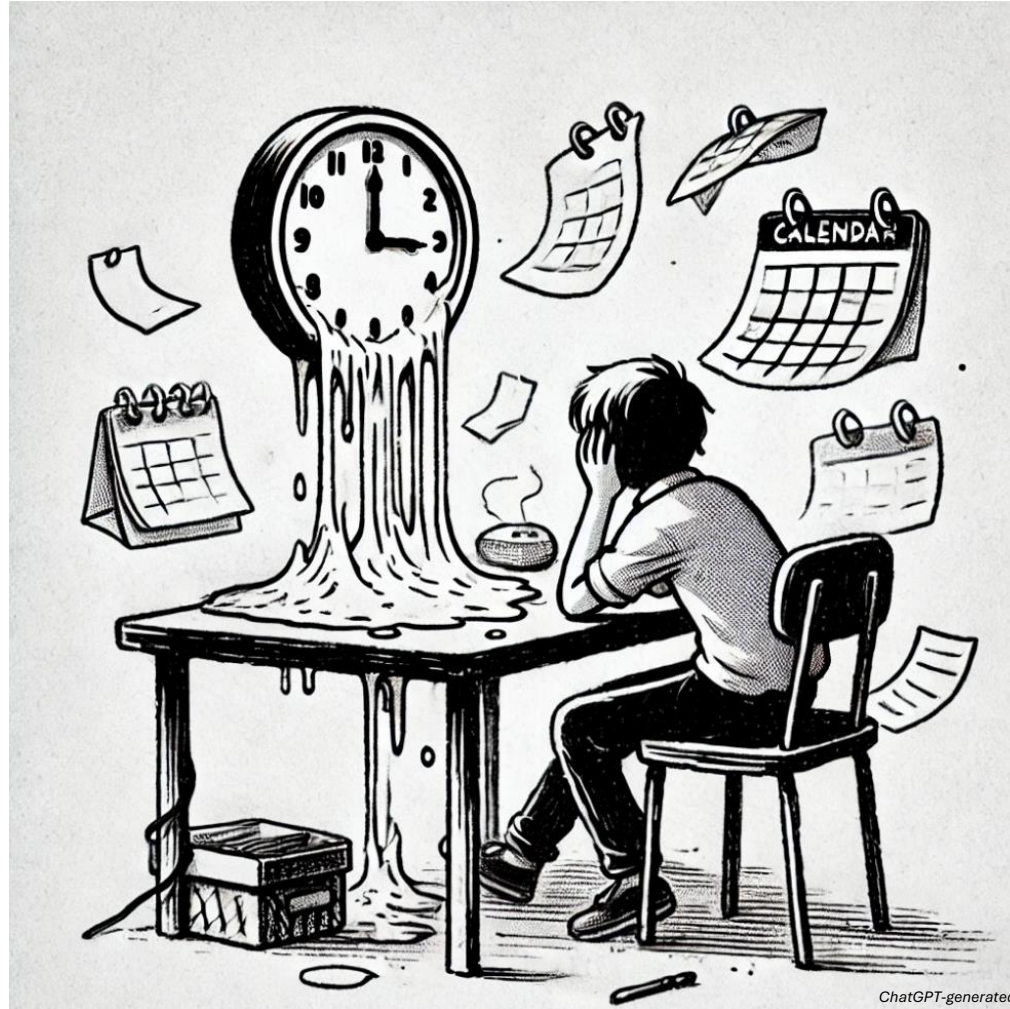
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Where did my time go today?!



ChatGPT-generated

The Importance of Self-Monitoring

- A meta-analysis of 138 studies and 19,951 participants concluded that “progress monitoring has a robust effect on goal attainment and constitutes a key component of effective self-regulation” (Harkin et al., 2016)
- Encourages goal-setting, which requires goal-clarification
- Helps keep goals in mind and encourages focus
- Generates insight which can be used to make adjustments
- Seeing your progress is motivating!

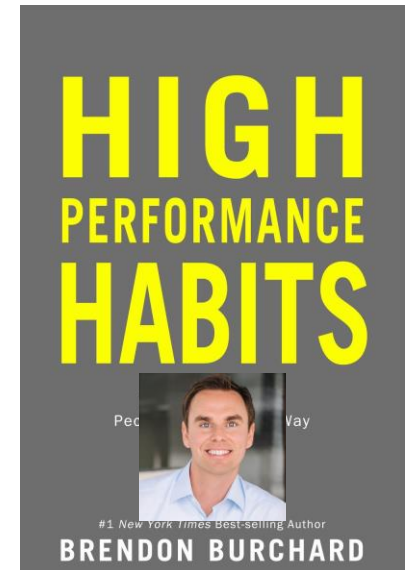
Burchard's high performance habit #1

Seek Clarity

High performers consistently seek to clarify, asking questions or reflecting more deeply about what they *want*, what they must *do*, and *how* they must do it.

Clarity is efficient and reduces friction and misunderstandings.

Remember: “*Clarity makes it easy*”.

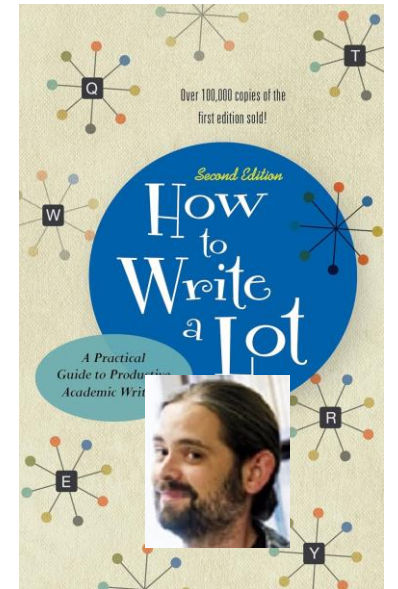


Seek Clarity to Write a Lot

“Without clear goals, people’s actions are diffuse and undirected (Lewin, 1935). To write a lot, you need to clarify your writing goals.

“Clear thinking becomes clear writing,” said Zinsser (2001, p.9).”

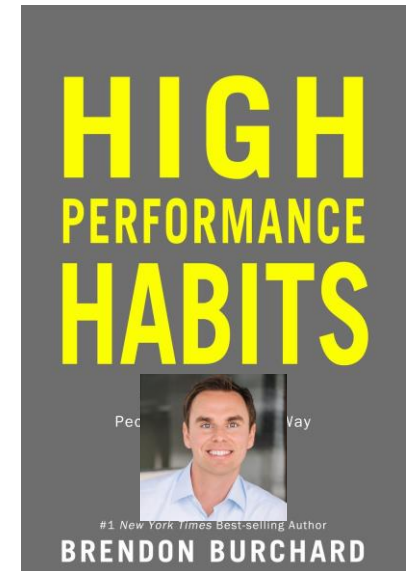
— Silvia, 2007, pp. 18-19, 79



Burchard's high performance habit #4

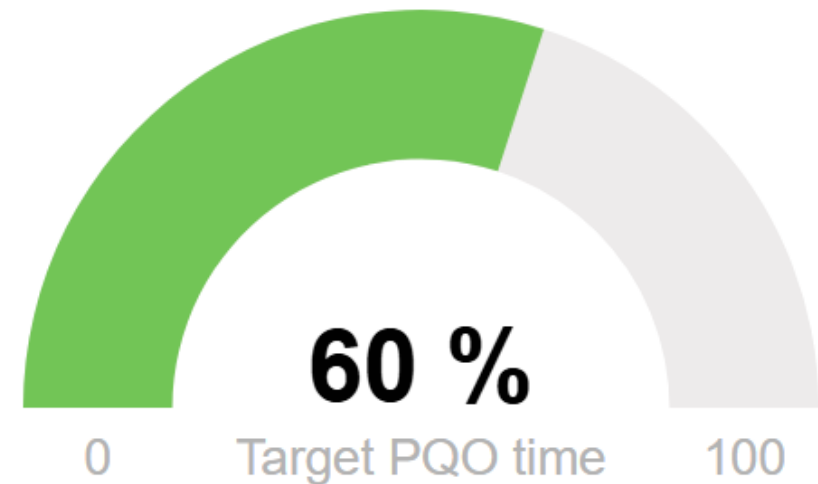
Increase productivity through prioritizing
Prolific Quality Output (PQO)

- Consistent, high-quality *outputs* that are highly *socially valued* by your peers
- Burchard recommends setting a goal of 60% of all work hours toward PQO



PQO: Prolific Quality Output

- Writing papers
- Writing scholarship or grant applications
- Preparing conference posters or talks
- Job applications(!)
- (If student: papers or presentations for classes, thesis, etc.)
- Analysing and reporting data



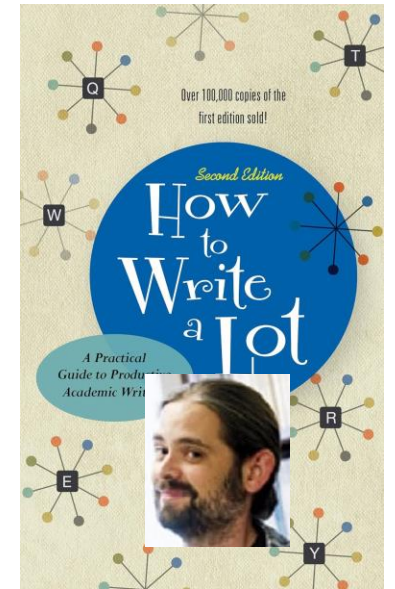
Silvia's specious barrier to writing #2

“I need to do some more analyses [before writing]”

“*Do whatever you need to do during your allotted writing time. Need to crunch some more statistics? Do it during your scheduled time.*

Any action that is instrumental in completing a writing project counts as writing. When writing journal articles, for example, I often spend a few consecutive writing periods working on the analyses.”

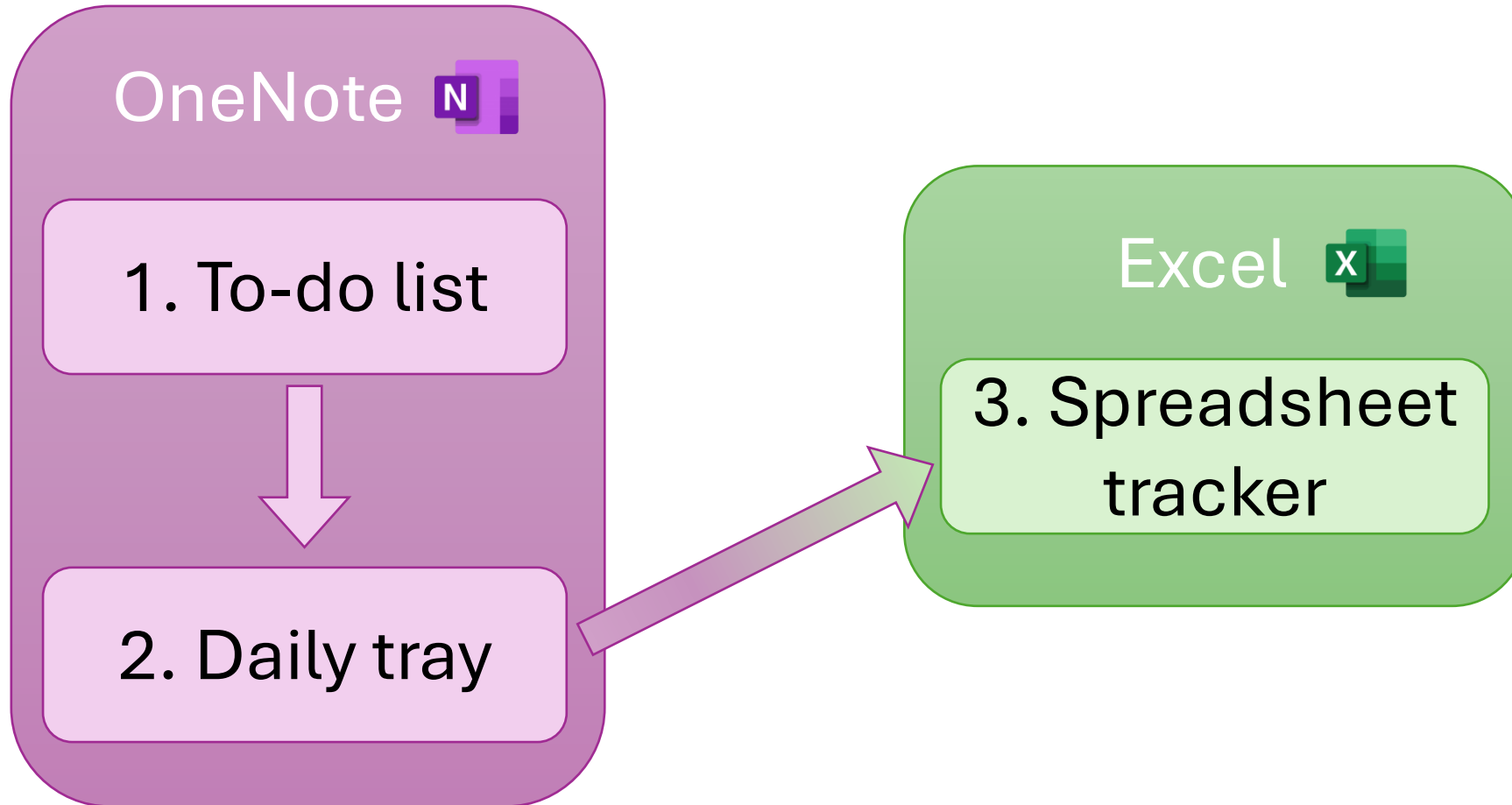
— Silvia, 2007, pp. 18-19



NOT PQO! (everything else...)

- **Emails**
- **Meetings**
- **Attending classes or talks**
- **Reading papers**
- **Peer reviewing papers**
- **Developing R packages**
- Training and workshops
- Networking
- Website development
- Volunteering
- Attending scientific conferences
- Interviews (medias, etc.)
- Tutoring
- Teaching
- Revising peers' work, applications
- Writing blogs and social media posts
- General admin
- Participant recruitment
- Getting research ethics approval
- Admin for research
- Managing calendar
- Managing to-do list
- Managing research assistants
- Training research assistants
- Organizing notes and ideas
- Literature reading
- Taking exams
- Studying for exams
- Work discussions with colleagues
- Counting work hours
- ...

A three-part system



(top of file for Spring 2025 semester)

The Hierarchical To-Do List

- Job application
 - Write materials
 - Draft motivation letter
 - Draft research statement
 - Draft teaching statement
 - Draft DEI statement
 - Admin
 - Contact referees for letters
 - Update CV
 - Pick three top publications
- Varela paper
 - Analyses

Bullet-point project
management: the
Hierarchical To-Do List

Breaking down
goals into
smaller units
improves
clarity!
(Silvia 2007)

2025-02-21

9h-12h (3), 13h-18h (8)

PQO: 13h-18h (5)

- ☒ Lab meeting (10h30)
- ☒ Job application
 - ☒ Draft teaching statement
 - ☐ Draft DEI statement

2025-02-20

11h-13h (2), 14h-17h (5)

PQO: 11h-13h (2), 14h-16h (4)

- ☒ Yoga (9h30)
- ☒ Job application
 - ☒ Draft motivation letter
 - ☒ Draft research statement
- ☒ Emails & Slack catchup
- ☒ Happy hour (17h30)

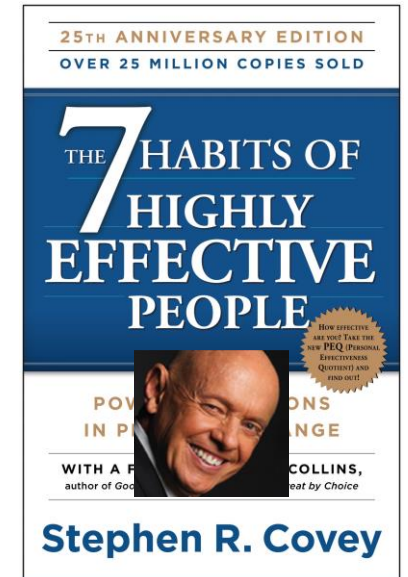
Your cognitive
workspace:
The Daily Tray

This is where
you set your
goals for the
day (or week)

Covey's habit of highly effective people #3

Put first things first!

- PQO / writing time should be prioritized first on this moving to-do list
- Many prolific writers book their mornings for writing for this purpose
- That's also where energy / motivation management becomes very important
- Do the hard stuff first so you can do the easy stuff later when you are tired



The Daily Tray: Your cognitive workspace

“*The mind is for having ideas, not holding them.*”

- Prepare your **next immediate actions** in advance
 - Improves clarity!
 - Don't waste energy thinking about what to do next
 - Reduces task switching costs and Zeigarnik effect
 - Offload your mind, trust your system!
- Use **action verbs!**
 - Encourages concrete, physical actions
 - Improves clarity & tightens the intention-behavior gap!

Getting Things Done
the art of stress-free
productivity

from the New York Times bestselling author

David Allen

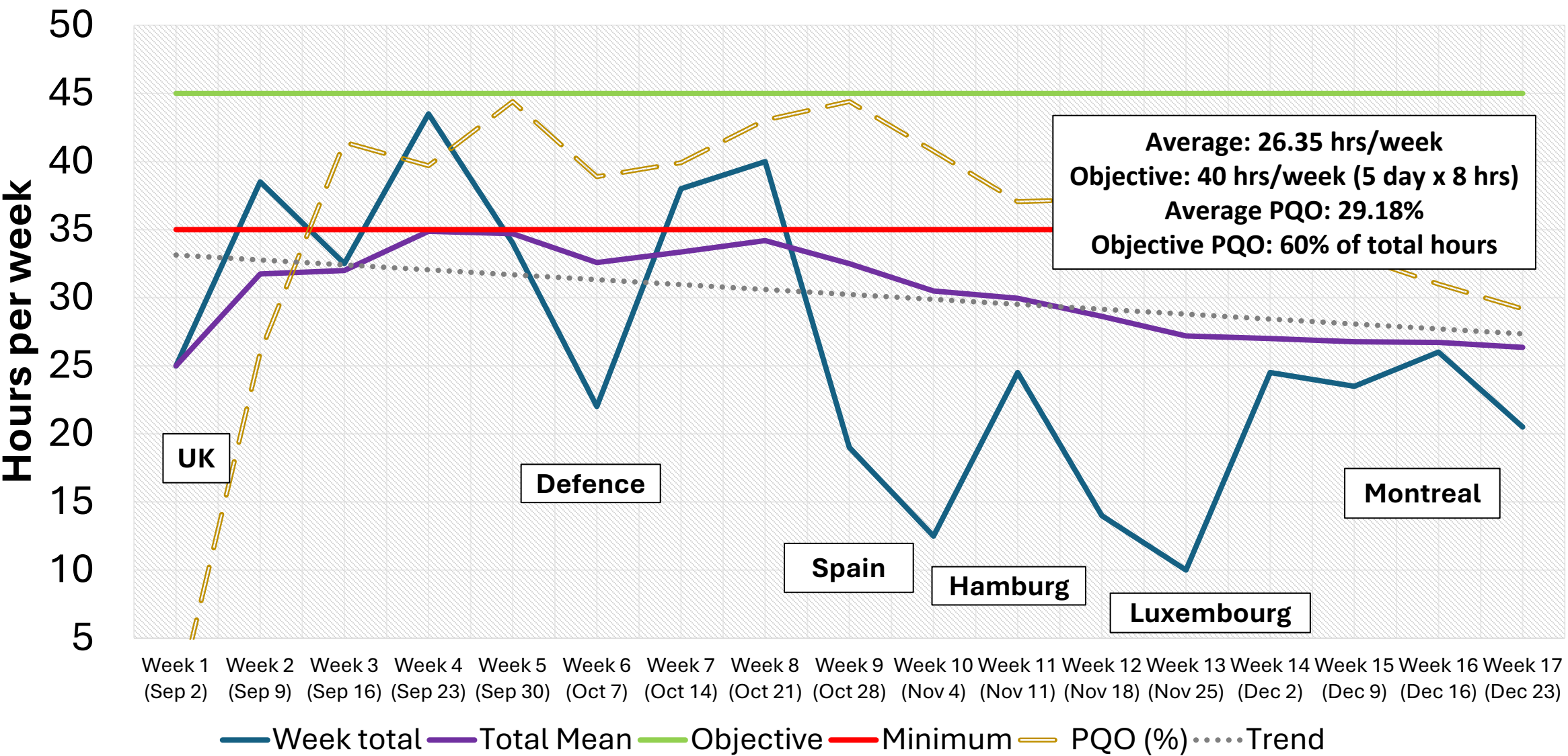


— Allen, 2015, pp. 277

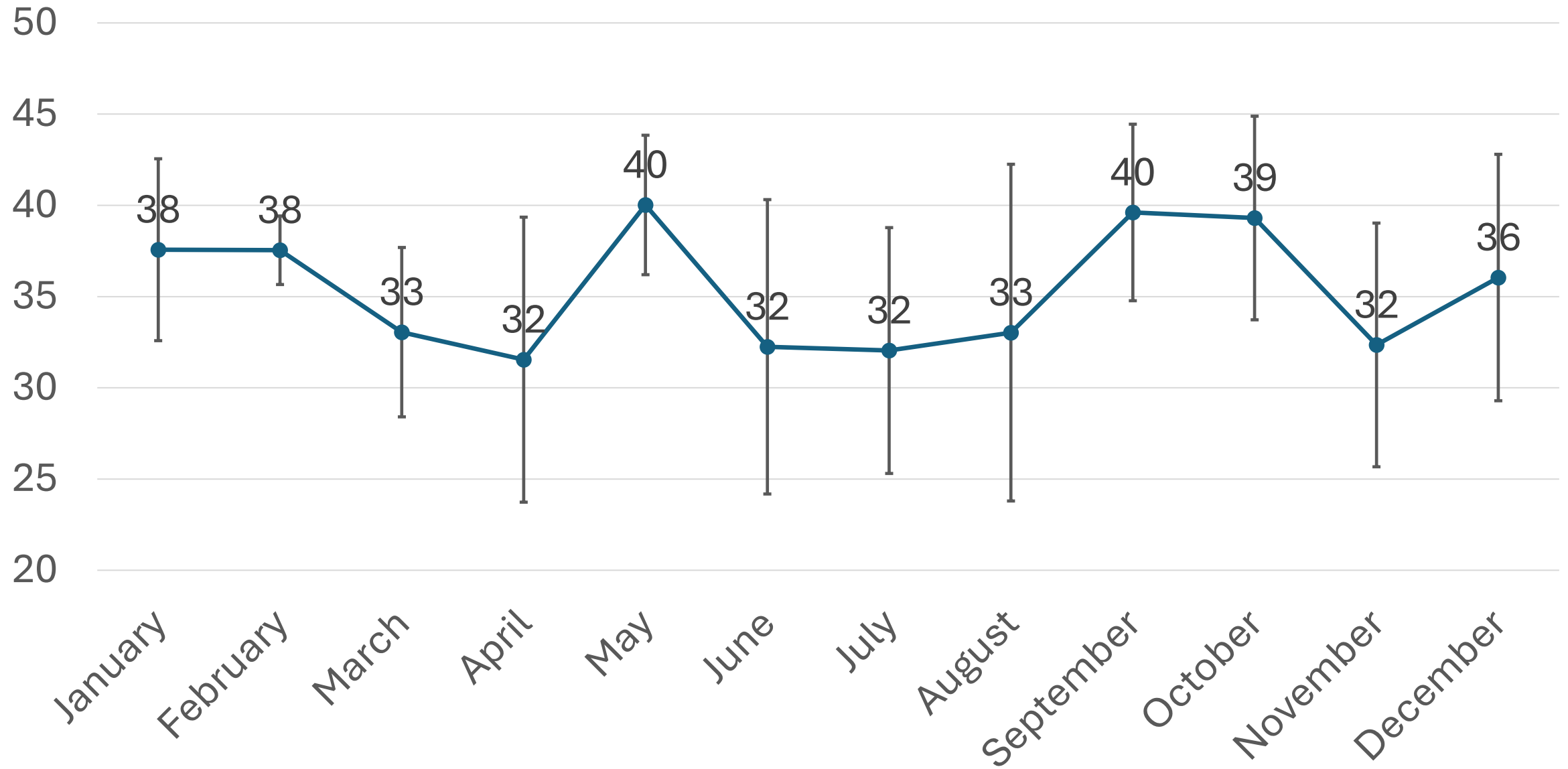
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Date (Fall 2024)	Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesd	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
2	September 2, 2024	Week 1 (Sep 2)	5.5	0	3.5	0	5	3	8
3	September 9, 2024	Week 2 (Sep 9)	7	3.5	8.5	5.5	5	5.5	3.5
4	September 16, 2024	Week 3 (Sep 16)	8.5	4.5	7	5.5	6	0.5	0.5
5	September 23, 2024	Week 4 (Sep 23)	6	7	6.5	6.5	10.5	6	1
6	September 30, 2024	Week 5 (Sep 30)	3.5	7.5	6	4.5	6.5	1.5	4.5
7	October 7, 2024	Week 6 (Oct 7)	4.5	0.5	3	4	7.5	0.5	2
8	October 14, 2024	Week 7 (Oct 14)	7	8	1	8	3	8	3
9	October 21, 2024	Week 8 (Oct 21)	4.5	4.5	4.5	3	11.5	8	4
10	October 28, 2024	Week 9 (Oct 28)	4.5	8.5	0	0	2.5	0	3.5
11	November 4, 2024	Week 10 (Nov 4)	6.5	1	1	1	3	0	0
12	November 11, 2024	Week 11 (Nov 11)	8	4.5	5	4	2	1	0
13	November 18, 2024	Week 12 (Nov 18)	8	3	1.5	0	0	0	1.5
14	November 25, 2024	Week 13 (Nov 25)	7.5	0	0	0.5	0	2	0
15	December 2, 2024	Week 14 (Dec 2)	3	7.5	0	4.5	9.5	0	0
16	December 9, 2024	Week 15 (Dec 9)	8.5	0	6.5	6.5	2	0	0
17	December 16, 2024	Week 16 (Dec 16)	6	2.5	5.5	4	8	0	0
18	December 23, 2024	Week 17 (Dec 23)	2	0	4	5	9.5	0	0

C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesd	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Week total	Total Mean	Week PQO	PQO %	Total PQO %
5.5	0	3.5	0	5	3	8	25	25.00	0.00	0%	0.00
7	3.5	8.5	5.5	5	5.5	3.5	38.5	31.75	20.00	52%	25.97
8.5	4.5	7	5.5	6	0.5	0.5	32.5	32.00	23.50	72%	41.42
6	7	6.5	6.5	10.5	6	1	43.5	34.88	15.00	34%	39.68
3.5	7.5	6	4.5	6.5	1.5	4.5	34	34.70	21.50	63%	44.39
4.5	0.5	3	4	7.5	0.5	2	22	32.58	2.50	11%	38.89
7	8	1	8	3	8	3	38	33.36	17.50	46%	39.91
4.5	4.5	4.5	3	11.5	8	4	40	34.19	26.00	65%	43.05
4.5	8.5	0	0	2.5	0	3.5	19	32.50	10.50	55%	44.41
6.5	1	1	1	3	0	0	12.5	30.50	1.00	8%	40.77
8	4.5	5	4	2	1	0	24.5	29.95	0.00	0%	37.06
8	3	1.5	0	0	0	1.5	14	28.63	5.50	39%	37.24
7.5	0	0	0.5	0	2	0	10	27.19	4.50	45%	37.84
3	7.5	0	4.5	9.5	0	0	24.5	27.00	1.00	4%	35.43
8.5	0	6.5	6.5	2	0	0	23.5	26.77	0.00	0%	33.07
6	2.5	5.5	4	8	0	0	26	26.72	0.00	0%	31.00
2	0	4	5	9.5	0	0	20.5	26.35	0.00	0%	29.18

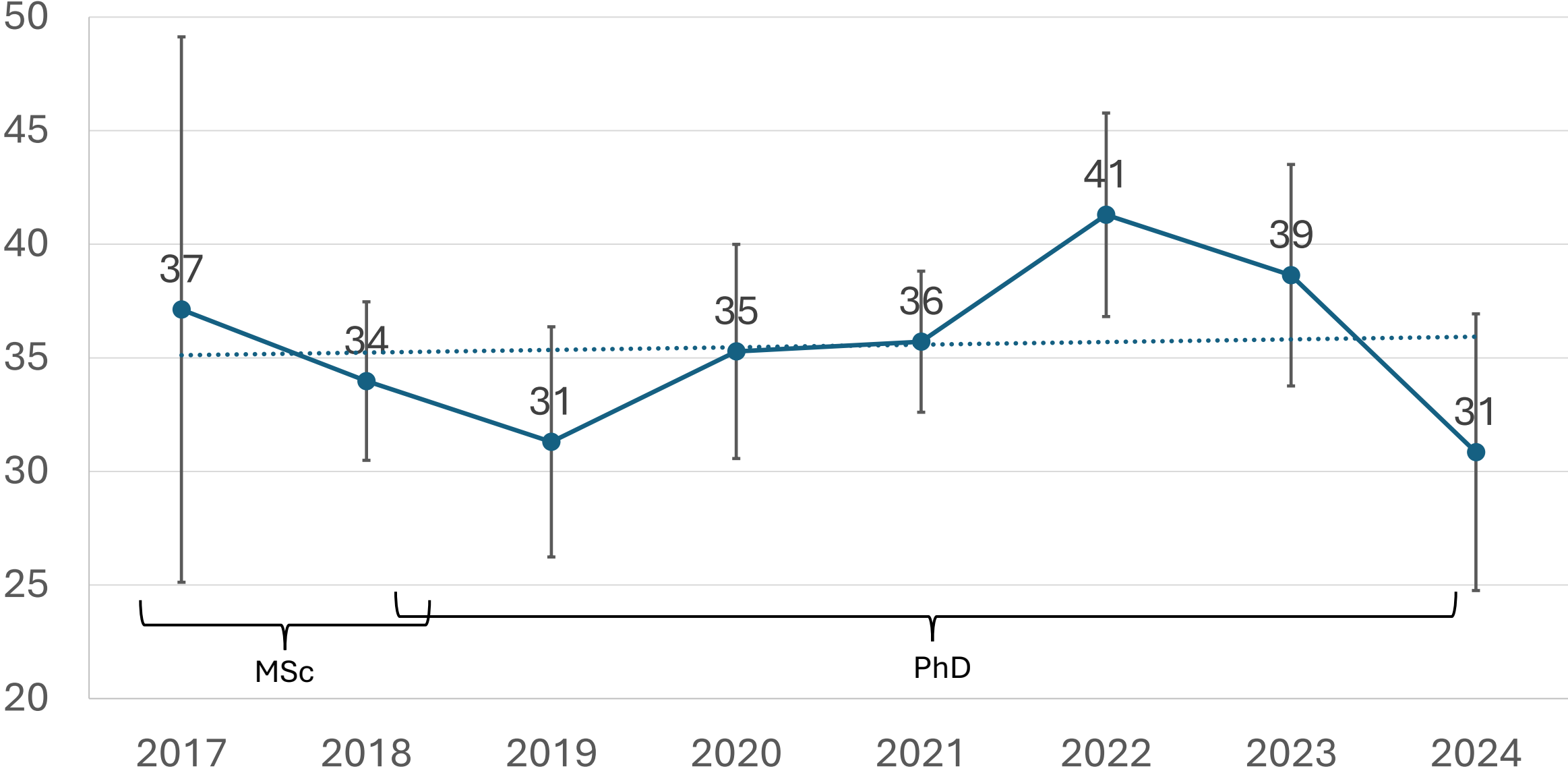
Number of hours worked per week (FALL 2024)



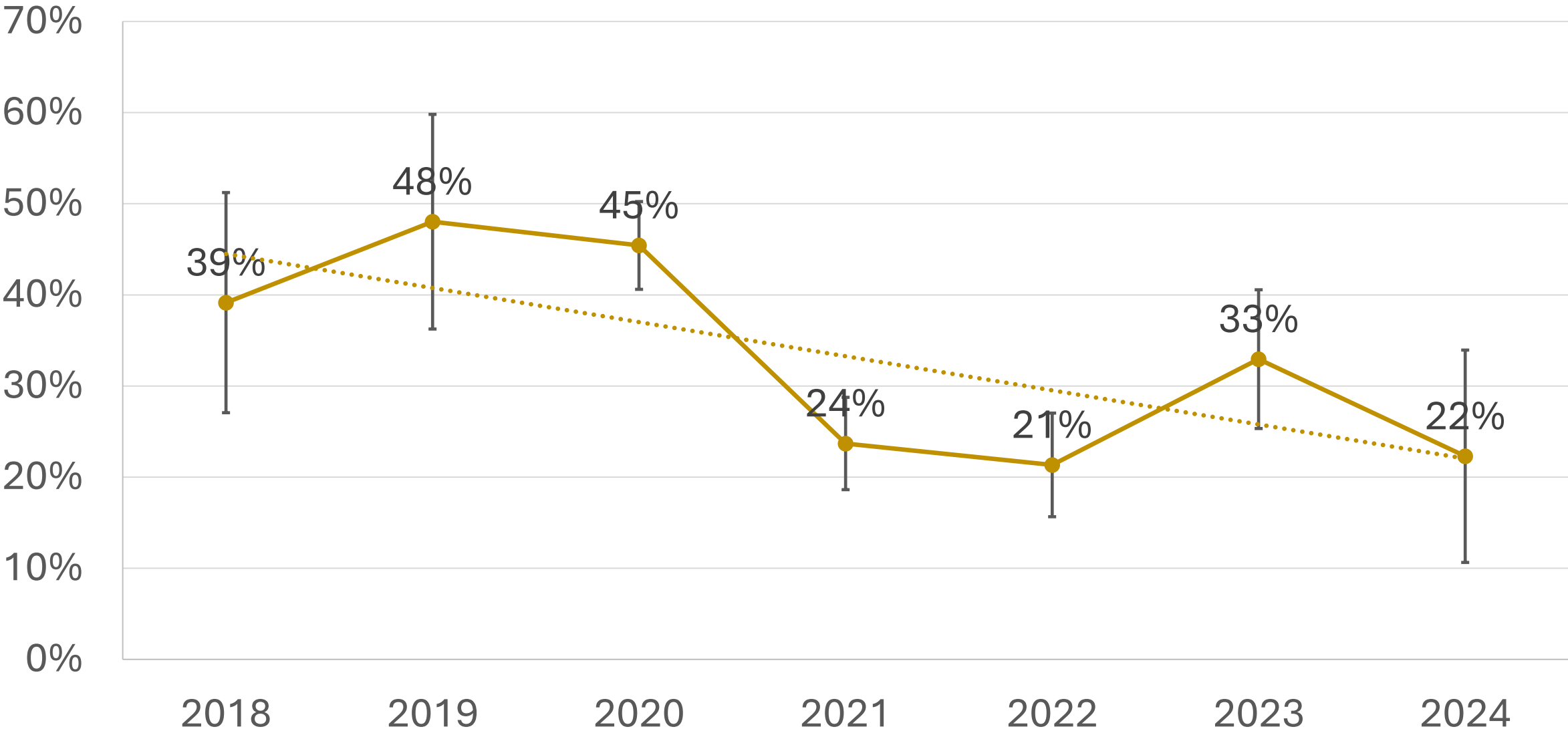
Weekly hours worked per month (across 7 years; 2017-2024)



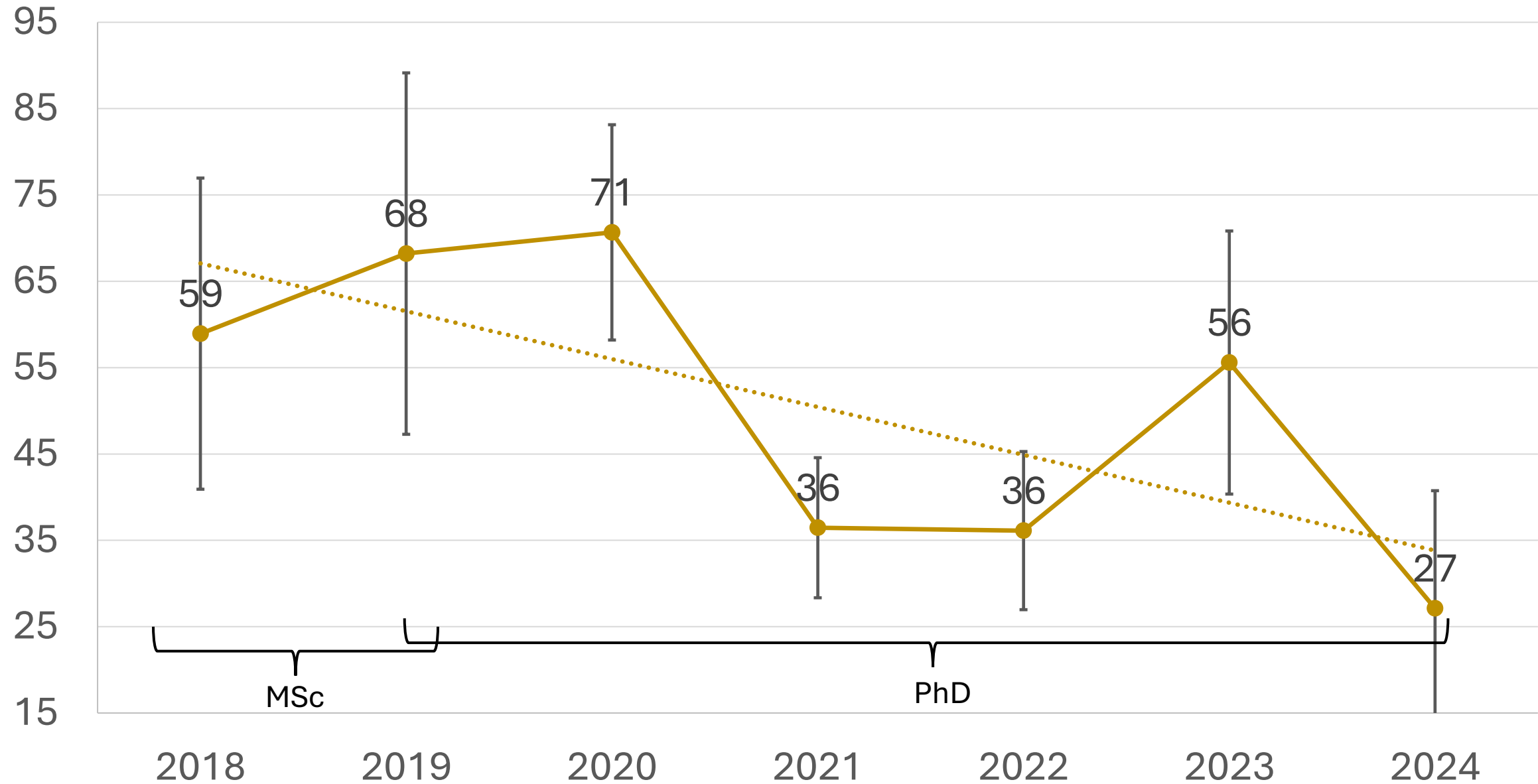
Weekly hours worked per year (across 7 years; 2017-2024)



Weekly PQO % per year (across 7 years; 2018-2024)



Monthly PQO hours worked per year (across 7 years; 2017-2024)



What if you forget to track your hours?

Fear not!

Open your browser history (Ctrl + H) to check from what time to what time you worked.

You can usually tell from which sites you visited, especially if you make a lot of searches as you write and work.

Your tracking will never be perfect—that's OK

- The goal is simply to have an approximation
- Doesn't need to be exact
- Most important is that it is *sustainable to you*
- Do rely on heuristics if that makes it easier to you
- I use a rule of +/- 30 minutes precision when tracking, with some flexibility to keep the exercise sustainable

Find a note-taking tool that works for you

SIMPLICITY IS KEY!

I personally like OneNote because...

- It's simple, with few distractions
- It's already the app I use on my phone and computers everyday for all my needs. No need for an extra app or login to the web.
- It syncs across all my devices
- It can neatly organize by notebooks, sections, and pages
- It's free!

Conclusion

“Clarity makes it easy”

Set goals to clarify what you’re trying to do...

Track goals to clarify what you’re actually doing.

Questions

Excel template download:

https://remi-theriault.com/work-tracker_advanced.xlsx

