

Graphic detail | Saturday afternoon fever

Sunday brunch is the new Friday night

Post-lockdowns, in-person spending has shifted from weekdays to weekends

Jun 28th 2023

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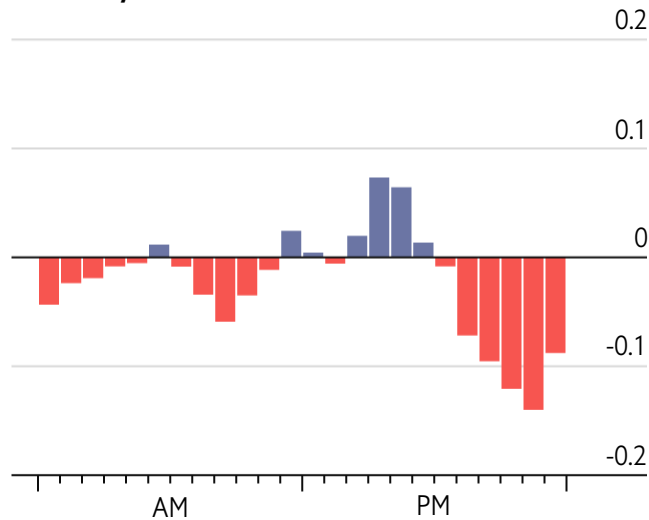
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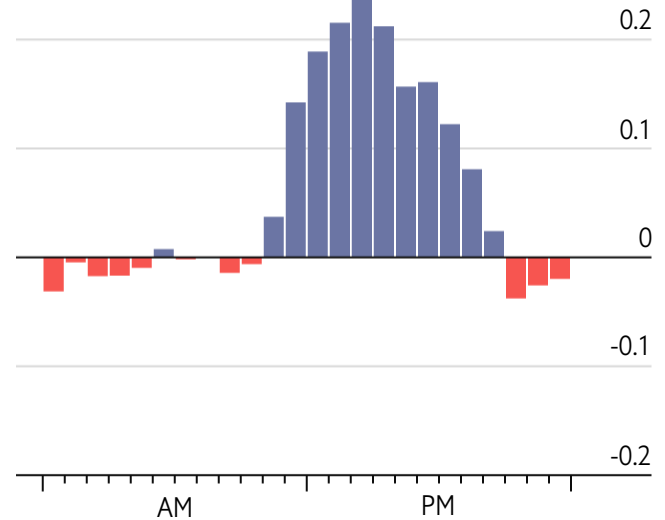
Change in share of in-person spending, Nov 2019-Nov 2022, % points

Hourly average, 22 cities

Weekdays



Weekends



C OVID-19 TRANSFORMED white-collar labour. Years after the end of lockdowns, work-from-home days have become standard. Much has been made of the resulting effect on where people spend time (less in city centres, more in residential areas). But less is known about how this shift has changed people's schedules.

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In theory, remote labour should make weekdays more like weekends. Work-from-home days and weekends are both free of commuting, and it is easier to

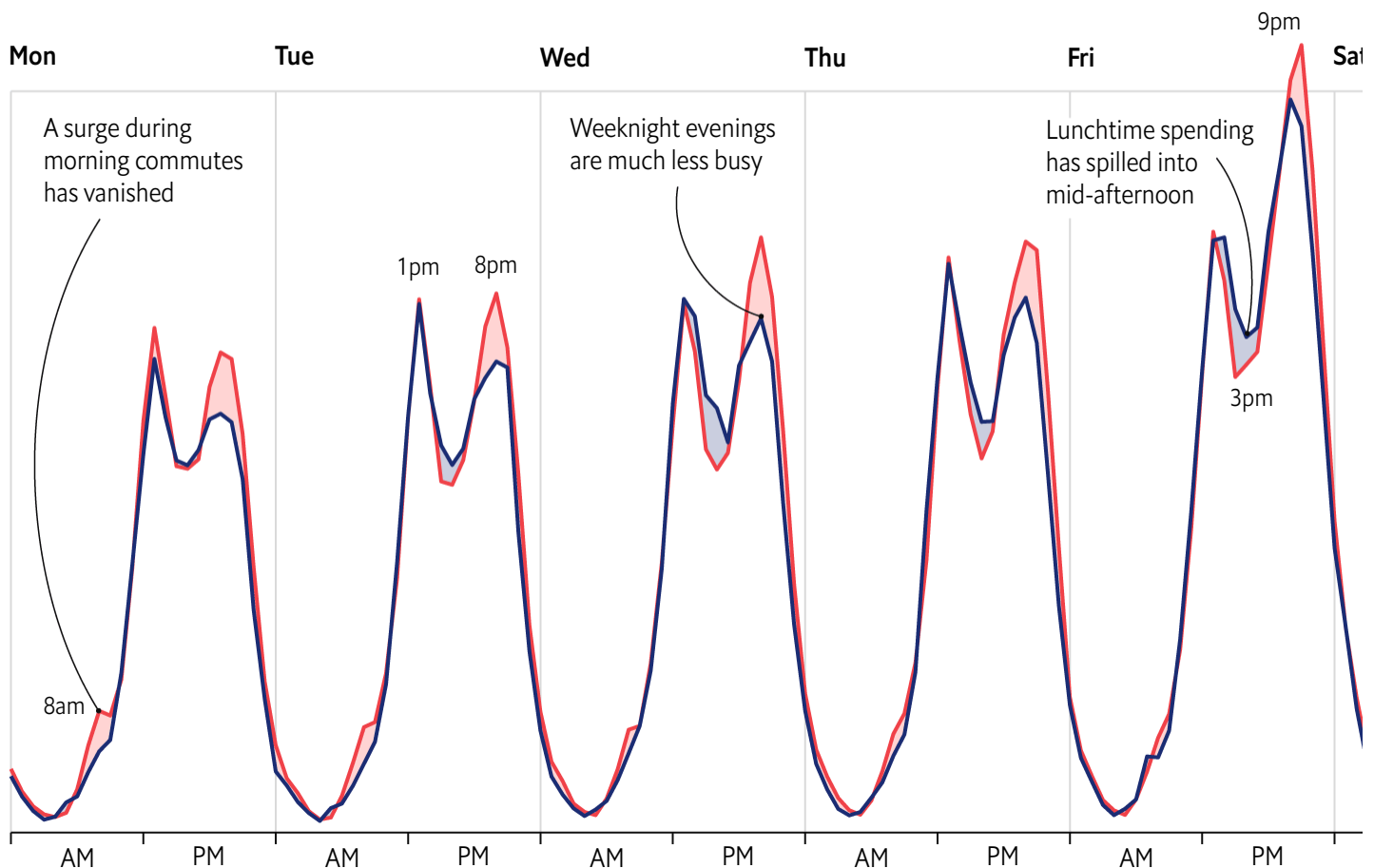
fit errands or meet-ups between video calls than to abscond from the office. Yet credit-card data show that it has had the opposite effect: weekends' outsized share of in-person spending has grown even further.

At our request, Visa, the world's biggest card-payment network, shared hourly data on spending on entertainment, food and drink, retail goods and transport, but excluding online transactions. The numbers covered 22 cities on six continents in November 2019 and November 2022. They tracked shifts in the timing of purchases, but not changes in total spending levels.

Share of week's in-person spending, %

GDP-weighted average of 22 cities

— Before lockdowns — After lockdowns
Nov 2019 Nov 2022



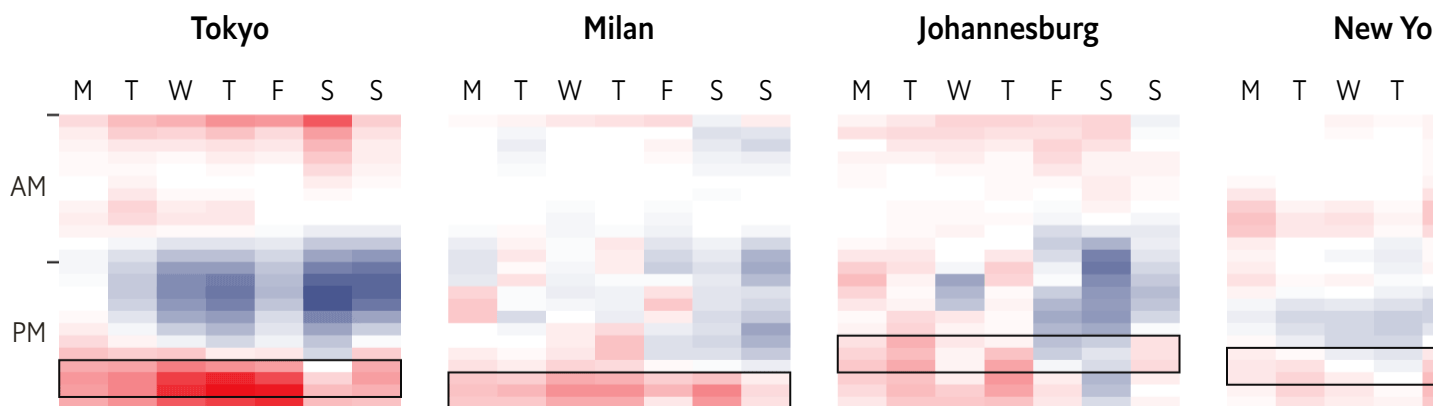
Before covid, card use fit a familiar pattern. Spending surged twice a day, first for lunch and then at dinner. It also rose slowly from Monday to Saturday, peaking on Friday evening. Weighting the 22 cities by GDP, Friday between

9pm and 10pm accounted for 1.6% of weekly spending, 2.7 times the hourly average of 0.6%.

By 2022, habits had changed. Weekday lunches remained robust, but the share of spending on weekdays from 6pm to 12am fell by 2.7 percentage points. The biggest dips were on Thursday and Friday between 9pm and 11pm, which together lost 0.7 percentage points. Weekends' spending share rose correspondingly, with most of the increase during daylight. Saturday and Sunday lunches gained 1.2 percentage points.

Change in share of in-person spending, Nov 2019-Nov 2022

Three-hour moving average



Two factors probably explain this shift. Thinly attended offices mean fewer people going out after work, and many restaurants, bars and clubs shut for good during lockdowns. If remote labourers are laptop-bound during the workday and have fewer places to go at night, that leaves weekend days to absorb their spending.

Both trends are bad for businesses built around pre-covid lifestyles. Average transactions are smaller during daytime than at night, reducing revenue per customer, and capacity constraints limit how much of the income lost on weekdays can be made up at weekends. They also bode ill for cities' social fabric. Many areas benefit from residents consuming services closer to home. But limiting evening activity to weekends makes for lots of eerie quiet. ■

Chart sources: Visa; Resource Watch; European Commission; The Economist

Smart sources: USA, Research Watch, European Commission, The Economist

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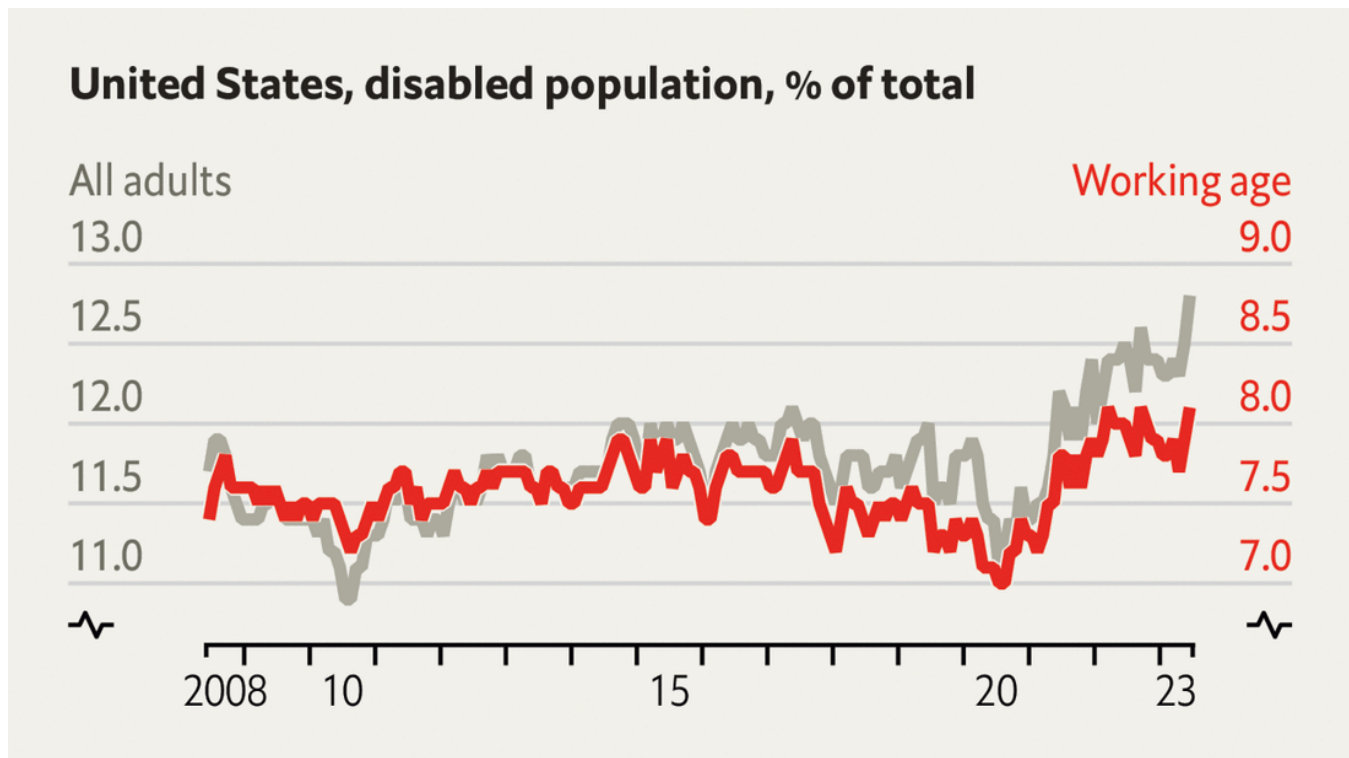
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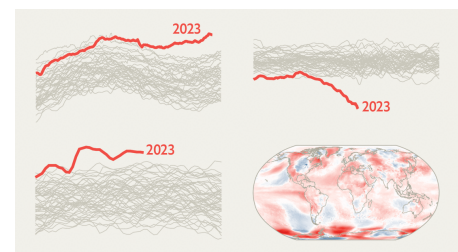


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