

## Debate on 70 Hour Work Week

### Why in news?

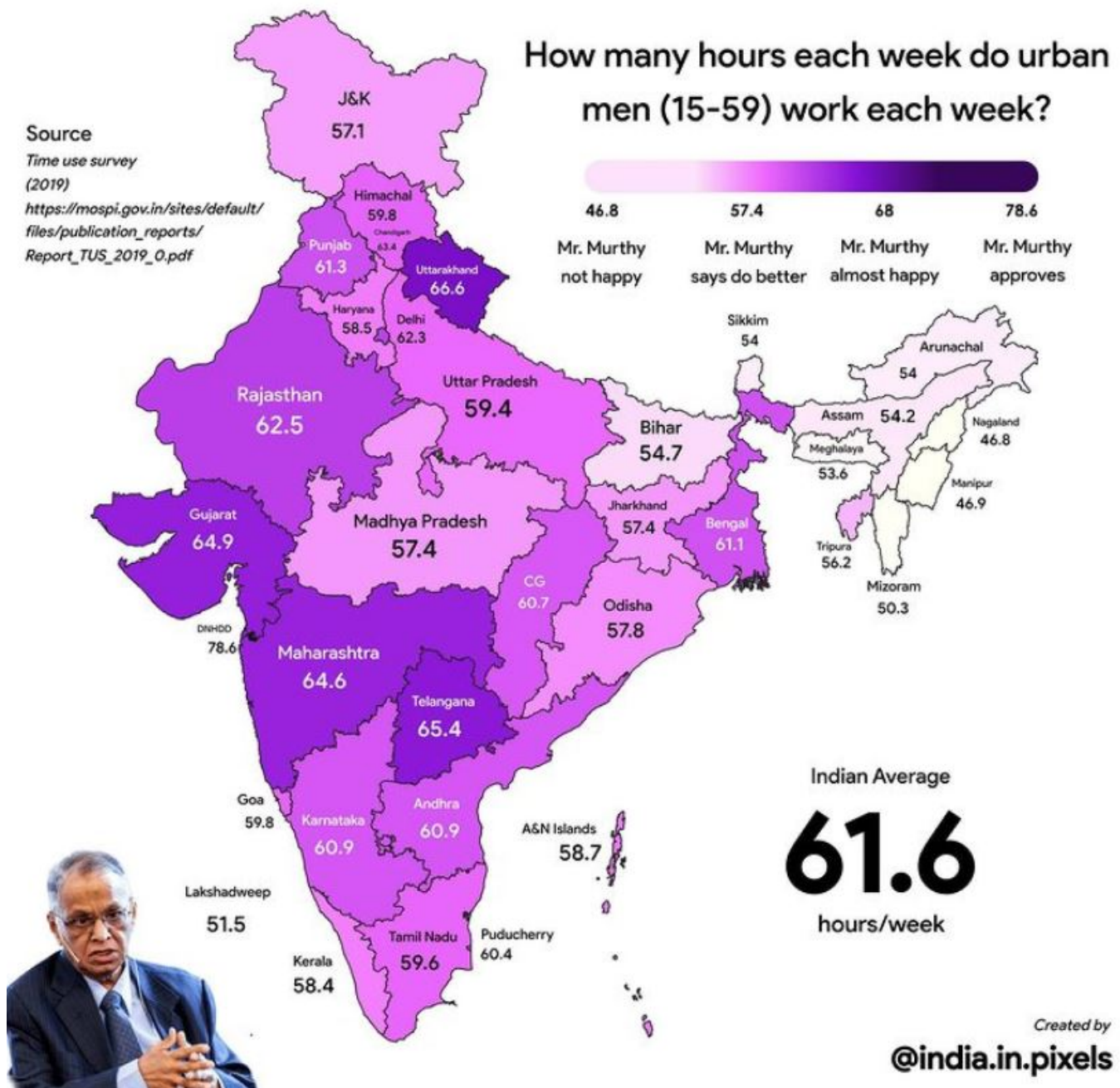
Recently Infosys founder N.R. Narayana Murthy sparked a debate, urging young Indians to work 70 hours per week.

#### Status of Working Hours in India

- As per *Time Use Survey 2019*, urban Indians aged 15-29, work 8.5 hours a day on average, with Uttarakhand ranking first at 9.6 hours a day. Rural Indians work 7.2 hours a day on average.
- **Factories Act 1948**- Every adult (a person who has completed 18 years of age) cannot work for more than 48 hours a week and not more than 9 hours in a day.
- Any employee who works for more than this period is eligible for overtime remuneration prescribed as twice the amount of ordinary wages.
- **Mines Act 1952**- No person in a mine is required to work for more than 10 hours in any day, inclusive of overtime.
- **Minimum Wages Act 1948**- Wages paid for overtime must be double the actual rate for any hour, or part of an hour, of actual work undertaken in excess of the prescribed 9 hours or 48 hours per week.
- **New labour code**- Weekly and daily working hours are capped at 48 hours and 12 hours, respectively.
- **State's Shops and Establishment Act** - Every State in India has its own overtime rules and policy set out in this Act.

### What are the arguments in favour of 70 hour work week?

- **Economic productivity**- A long work week boost economic productivity, leads to employment opportunities and overall economic growth.
- **Worker efficiency**- It will increase the productivity and efficiency of the Indian workforce, which is currently one of the lowest in the world.
- This would meet market demands, generate profit in a competitive global market.
- **Developed country**- It is necessary for India to become a developed country and uplift the living standards of its people.
- **Skill acquisition**- It will enable young Indians to learn new skills, acquire more knowledge, and innovate more solutions for the country's problems.
- **Success stories**- It will help India emulate the success stories of Japan and Germany, which worked hard and long hours to rebuild their nations after the Second World War.



### What are the arguments against the 70 hour work week?

- **One size does not fit all**- 89% of the Indian workforce is engaged in informal employment, compared to just 4.2% in Germany and 8% in Japan.
- Hence comparing these countries with India in labour productivity is not viable.
- **Exploitation**- A prolonged work week can lead to the exploitation of the working class and deprives their rights and benefits.
- **Health impacts** - It can negatively impact *mental and physical health*, resulting in stress, burnout, fatigue, sleep deprivation and other health problems.
- **Work-life balance**- As per ILO, companies that implement work-life balance policies benefit from increased retention of current employees, improved recruitment, lower rates of absenteeism and higher productivity.
- **Counterproductive**- It can reduce quality and efficiency of the work output, increase the chances of errors and accidents, lowers the morale and motivation of the workers.

- **Economic inequality**- Rich benefit from long work hours of working class which may widen the inequality between working class and rich.
- **Productivity**- Productivity is an attribute of skill, not time, and that reducing working hours can improve leisure and quality of life without reducing output value.
- Working more than eight hours a day also leads to *lower hourly output*.
  - **Belgium** has given the workers the right to work four days a week without a salary reduction to create a more dynamic and productive economy.
- **Outdated**- 70 hour work week is outdated as it does not suit the changing needs and preferences of the modern workforce, which values flexibility, autonomy and work-life balance.
- **Lacks funding**- Worker productivity depends on the amount of capital and the quality of institutions that support investment and innovation, hence just increasing working hours will have no impact on productivity.
- **Labour productivity**- India's average annual working hours stayed above 2,000 from 1970 to 2020, while the labour productivity increased marginally from 2 dollars per hour to 9 dollars in the same period.
- Hence the need of the hour is to increase productivity through technology rather increasing working hours.

## References

1. [The Hindu- Understanding worker productivity](#)
2. [The Hindu- What is wrong about 70 hour work week](#)
3. [The Hindu- 70 hour work week idea into perspective](#)

