

Life in Congress:

The Member Perspective

*A Joint Research Report by the Congressional Management Foundation
and the Society for Human Resource Management*



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About the Congressional Management Foundation

Founded in 1977, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to helping Congress and its Members meet the evolving needs and expectations of an engaged and informed 21st century citizenry. CMF's work focuses on improving congressional operations and enhancing citizen engagement through research, publications, training, and management services. For more information, visit <http://CongressFoundation.org>.

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About SHRM

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 250,000 members in over 140 countries, the Society serves the needs of HR professionals and advances the interests of the HR profession. Founded in 1948, SHRM has more than 575 affiliated chapters within the United States and subsidiary offices in China and India. Visit SHRM Online at www.shrm.org.

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About this Research Project

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) created the “Life in Congress” series to achieve two goals. First, we sought to provide congressional leaders and managers with insights into Congress as a workplace, documenting the workplace attitudes and practices of Members and staffers to identify ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution. Second, we sought to provide citizens with a window into this unique workforce that plays a central role in developing public policy in America. Through greater knowledge of the challenges and motivations of legislators and their aides, citizens might have a greater appreciation and understanding of our democratic processes.

To those ends CMF and SHRM conducted two surveys beginning in August 2011. The first survey was of more than 1,400 congressional staff; the second was of 25 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives. The data were compiled and analyzed and will result in three reports: “Life in Congress: Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate” (October 2012); “Life in Congress: The Member Perspective” (March 2013); and “Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff” (forthcoming 2013).

Introduction

In 1994, not long before he was about to make history as the first Speaker of the House of Representatives in 130 years to be ousted in a re-election bid in his home congressional district, Speaker Tom Foley watched a focus group of constituents. The facilitator asked his voters in eastern Washington about the life of a congressman. An ironworker described what he thought dinner would be like at a congressman's house: a limousine would take him to a mansion in Georgetown and he would be served a sumptuous meal ... eating foods the constituent would not recognize and using utensils the average person would not know how to use.¹

Foley was stunned. The gap between his constituents' understanding and the reality of his daily routine was shocking. He was probably remembering the tuna sandwich he wolfed down for lunch earlier in the day, snuck in between the 13 meetings and 14-hour day he—and most Members of Congress—experienced daily.

Americans possess a limited, and somewhat distorted, view of what it's like to be a Member of Congress. Most news stories feature the negative motivations of legislators and most portrayals of Members of Congress by the entertainment industry further reinforce the stereotype that they are lazy, self-interested, and corrupt. Members themselves add to the criticism by lauding their own virtues while decrying their colleagues and Congress as an institution. Reality is somewhat different. For most Members of Congress, the job is not luxurious or carefree—rather, it's more like the CEO of a small start-up company, or the hectic world of an emergency room physician.

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 This report, “Life in Congress: The Member Perspective,” is the **first research** to focus on the Members' viewpoint of their **daily activities, challenges, and motivations**.

¹ Katharine Graham, *Katharine Graham's Washington*, (Vintage: 2003).

This report, “Life in Congress: The Member Perspective,” is the first research to focus on the Members’ viewpoint of their daily activities, challenges, and motivations. The results largely corroborate the Congressional Management Foundation’s (CMF) previous research and experience in interacting with legislators and their staff during our 35-year history.² Members work long hours (70 hours a week when Congress is in session), endure unequalled public scrutiny and criticism, and sacrifice family time to fulfill work responsibilities.

This report details the work-life of Members of Congress, down to the percentage of time spent weekly on their major activities. It also touches on the priorities and attitudes of legislators—the parts of their job most important to them, and aspects of their job with which they are satisfied and not satisfied. It is based on questionnaires of 25 Members of the House of Representatives in 2011. Admittedly, the sample size is low compared to an institution of 441 Members. However, the authors augmented this data with other field research, follow-up questions to current legislators and staff, and the cumulative perspective of our staff and consultants. We are confident this report represents an accurate picture of a Member’s perspective of life in Congress.

If this were a common workforce, the findings would be helpful to employers and employees to identify areas to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and morale. But this is not a common workforce. The “employees” are the Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, engaging in tasks that affect the lives of thousands of constituents and making decisions that affect millions of people. Therefore, this report doesn’t merely provide a guide to enhancing the effectiveness of a “workforce,” it offers a unique window into the inner workings of the institution and the thinking of Members of Congress. By doing so, the authors hope to also help create a better understanding in the American public of the motivations, responsibilities, and value of the work performed by Members of Congress.

² The Congressional Management Foundation has had a unique and close relationship with Congress for 35 years, conducting surveys and working with hundreds of Members and staff annually in management retreats and training programs. Few researchers and political scientists have had this kind of access to Congress, with some notable exceptions including “Washington Leaders Wary of Public Opinion: Public Appetite for Government Misjudged,” by the Pew Center for the People & the Press (1998).

Summary of Key Findings

While there is no shortage of media coverage on the politics of Congress, it is somewhat overlooked as a workplace. This “Life in Congress” project provides a behind-the-scenes look at this unique workforce with the goals of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution and enhancing the public’s understanding of America’s premier democratic institution.

For this report, our research focused specifically on the work-life of Members of the U.S. House of Representatives. This data, based on questionnaires of 25 Members of Congress (and corroborated by other research and work conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation), shows them as: hard-working; focusing the bulk of their time on public policy and constituent services; finding great satisfaction in their work; and accepting the personal sacrifices they make for their jobs.

Members work long hours, regardless of whether the House chamber is in session or not.

The schedule of a Member of Congress can vary greatly depending on the fluctuating congressional schedule and on current events. Members spend an above average amount of time working, similar to other highly demanding jobs such as airline pilots, firefighters, and physicians. They also share many characteristics of workers with “extreme” jobs, such as CEOs of major corporations.

- When asked about their hours in a typical seven-day week, Members report that they work on average 70 hours per week while the House of Representatives is in session, and 59 hours per week when their chamber is out of session.
- When the House is out of session and not voting, or when the House has scheduled “district/constituent work periods” (otherwise known as “recess”), the majority of Members return to their districts. In this study, 78% of Members report spending more than 40 weekends each year in their district.

Members focus most of their time on legislative/policy work and on constituent services—not political activities.

Despite the perception that Members spend a great deal of time on “politics,” legislators report that most of their work is focused on official activities—primarily public policy and legislation in Washington, D.C., and services for constituents in their districts.

- When in Washington, D.C., Members reported spending their time as follows:
 - 35% on “Legislative/Policy Work”
 - 17% on “Constituent Services Work”
 - 17% on “Political/Campaign Work”
 - 9% on “Press/Media Relations”
 - 9% with “Family/Friends”
 - 7% on “Administrative/Managerial Work”
 - 6% on “Personal Time”
- When in their congressional districts, Members reported spending their time as follows:
 - 32% on “Constituent Services Work”
 - 18% on “Political/Campaign Work”
 - 14% on “Press/Media Relations”
 - 12% on “Legislative/Policy Work”
 - 9% with “Family/Friends”
 - 8% on “Personal Time”
 - 7% on “Administrative/Managerial Work”

Members describe themselves as highly committed to their work and find great satisfaction in their jobs.

Members appear to be energized, not necessarily stifled, by their long hours and are motivated by their contributions to society. They also reported being very pleased with their staff’s performance.

- Members rated “Staying in touch with constituents” as being the job aspect most critical to their effectiveness, with 95% rating it as very important. Overall, 85% of Members were satisfied with this aspect of their jobs.
- Additionally, a majority of Members rated the following aspects highly in importance and in satisfaction:
 - “Feeling that you are performing an important public service” (84% very important, 89% satisfied);

- “Feeling invested in the work you are doing” (84% very important, 89% satisfied); and
- “Understanding how your job contributes to society as a whole” (75% very important, 90% satisfied).
- When asked to respond to, “My work gives me a sense of personal accomplishment,” 95% of Members agreed or strongly agreed.
- When asked about the work of their staff, a clear majority responded positively, and not a single Member disagreed or strongly disagreed:
 - “My staff clearly understands and is motivated by what I am trying to accomplish,” 95% agreed or strongly agreed.
 - “My staff is good at keeping focused on my goals and priorities,” 89% agreed or strongly agreed.
 - “My staff provides sufficient support to help me effectively do my job,” 89% agreed or strongly agreed.

Members are generally accepting of the personal sacrifices they make for their jobs.

While Members are not satisfied with the amount of time they spend on personal activities, they do not report being particularly *dissatisfied* either. This data suggests that Members (and to some degree their families) are accepting of the significant personal trade-offs they make for their work.

- Regardless of whether they are in Washington, D.C., or in their congressional districts, House Members spend the majority (83%-85%) of their time working. Members spend only 15%-17% of their time on their personal lives (with friends or families and on personal activities).
- Nearly 9 out of 10 (86%) Members feel they spend too little time with family and friends and too little time on other personal activities. However, a majority of Members (83%) also report that their families are supportive of their congressional work.
- While 68% of Members cited “Spending time with family” as very important, only 16% were satisfied with this aspect—giving it the lowest satisfaction rating among all 25 job aspects studied. Thirty-two percent of Members were dissatisfied with this aspect, while more than half (53%) answered “neutral” to this question.

Methodology

These data are based on a survey of Members of the U.S. House of Representatives on their opinions related to their work in Congress, especially their work-life fit. Of the 441 Members of the House, 194 were randomly selected to participate. The survey received 25 responses, yielding a response rate of 13% for the sample, and 6% for the House chamber. (The number of responses (indicated by “n”) varies from figure to figure because some respondents did not answer every question.) Although the sample size is small, it appears to reflect accurately the demographics of the House of Representatives in the 112th Congress (see Figure 1). More specifically:

- Of our survey respondents, 52% were Democrats and 48% were Republicans (at the time of the survey, 45% of the House were Democrats and 55% were Republicans).
- On average, survey respondents were 58 years old and serving their fifth term in Congress (at the time of the survey, House Members were, on average, 57 years old and serving in their fifth term).
- Of our survey respondents, 16% were female and 84% were male (at the time of the survey, 17% of House Members were female while 83% were male).

Additional demographics on the survey respondents can be found on page 44. The survey was in the field August 4 through October 31, 2011.

It is important to note that, because of the small sample size, the results presented are only truly representative of the survey respondents. With small sample sizes, the response of one participant can affect the overall results considerably, particularly when only small percentage differences exist. For this reason, readers should recognize that while the data are reflective of House Members in the 112th Congress, they should exercise caution when generalizing results to the broader House of Representatives.

Although the response rate for this questionnaire is much lower than those in other CMF surveys, we are confident in this research and findings. First, as shown above, our sample accurately reflects the demographics of the House of Representatives. While we cannot statistically validate these opinions, collectively the Members who participated in this research tend to epitomize the typical House Member. Second, CMF's firsthand experience in working with the Congress for more than 35 years corroborates the results published in this report. Through interactions such as planning retreats with Members and their staff, as well as recent discussions and focus groups with Chiefs of Staff for this project, we find this data to be reliable. Whenever possible, we have offered commentary to illustrate the broader congressional context for our findings.

Our team also knew from our previous interactions with Members and their staff that conducting any survey research with Members of Congress would be difficult given the multiple, competing demands on their time. (And, as this research shows, surveying any workforce that works 60-70 hours a week presents some challenges.) However, it is precisely because of their inherently demanding role that we felt it was important to report on this data. One of the goals of this project is to document what it takes for Members to fulfill their public service responsibility. Despite the small sample, this research achieves that goal by providing a behind-the-scenes look at how Members view their jobs and their lives.

Figure 1 | Selected Demographics of Member Sample

	Survey Sample	U.S. House of Representatives
Response rate	13% (25 of 194)	6% (25 of 441)
Party	52% Democrat 48% Republican	45% Democrat 55% Republican
Average Age	58 years old	57 years old
Average Tenure	9 years (5th Term)	10 years (5th Term)
Gender	84% male 16% female	83% male 17% female

Note: Survey was in the field from August 4-October 31, 2011.

Source: "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Life as a House Member: Survey Results

Most Americans do not understand the job responsibilities of a Member of Congress and what these Members do daily. Although Member schedules can vary greatly from week to week, even day to day, it's important that the public understands their work schedules and major activities.

For this report, we first wanted to look at House Members' time. How many hours do they work when the House of Representatives is in or out of session? What activities/work do Representatives engage in when in Washington, D.C.? How do their activities differ in their congressional districts? How would they like to allocate their time? Having a greater understanding of a Representative's duties, motivations, challenges, and time-demands will provide greater insight into Representatives' views of their work in Congress, as well as what aspects of their job are most important to them and how satisfied they are with those aspects.

“Being separated from my family so often is **difficult, hard, tough.**”

–2nd Term House Member

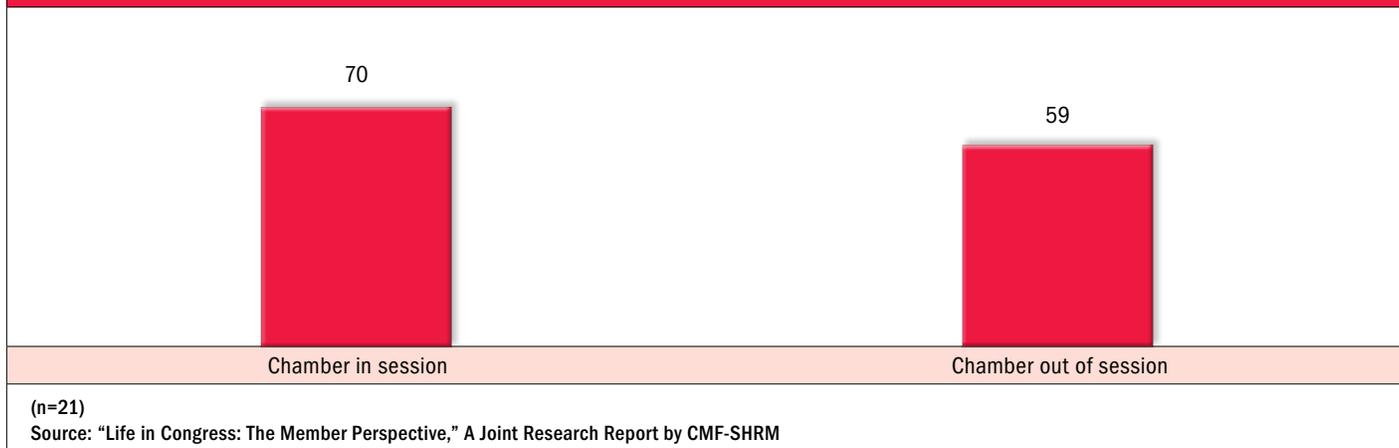
Work Schedules

Work Hours in Washington, D.C., and in the District

The schedule of a Member of Congress can vary greatly depending on the fluctuating congressional schedule and on current events. House Members were asked to think in general terms about their hours for a typical seven-day week, because for most Members, their official schedule extends through the weekend, when they regularly attend events in their congressional districts and meet with constituents.

When asked about their hours in a typical seven-day week, Members report that they work on average 70 hours per week while the House is in session, and 59 hours per week when their chamber is out of session (see Figure 2). This data corresponds to a 1998 survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, which found that 70% of Senators and Representatives report working 70 or more hours per week³, as well as CMF's observation and work with Members of Congress.

³ Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “Washington Leaders Wary of Public Opinion: Public Appetite for Government Misjudged,” 1998, <http://www.people-press.org/1998/04/17/washington-leaders-wary-of-public-opinion/>.

Figure 2 | Average Hours Per Week Worked by Members

When Members are in their Washington, D.C., offices their schedules are longer because of the demands of the chamber and requests by constituent groups for in-person meetings. Typically, a Member's time in D.C. is comprised of floor votes, committee hearings and mark-ups (voting on amendments to legislation at the committee level), caucus/conference meetings with colleagues, meetings with staff, individual appointments with constituent groups and lobbyists, and communications activities (press conferences, media interviews, social media, reviewing communications from constituents). (See page 22 for an example of a typical day in the Washington, D.C., office.)

Often, Members are juggling several committee activities and various meetings occurring simultaneously during the day. Sometimes the House schedule requires late nights or weekend votes. Most of these D.C. activities are "must do's," although with whom the Member meets and how long these meetings last are usually determined by the congressional office. When in D.C., a common day for the Member begins at 6 or 7 a.m., and finishes at 8 p.m. or later—followed by work-related reading at home to prepare for the next day.

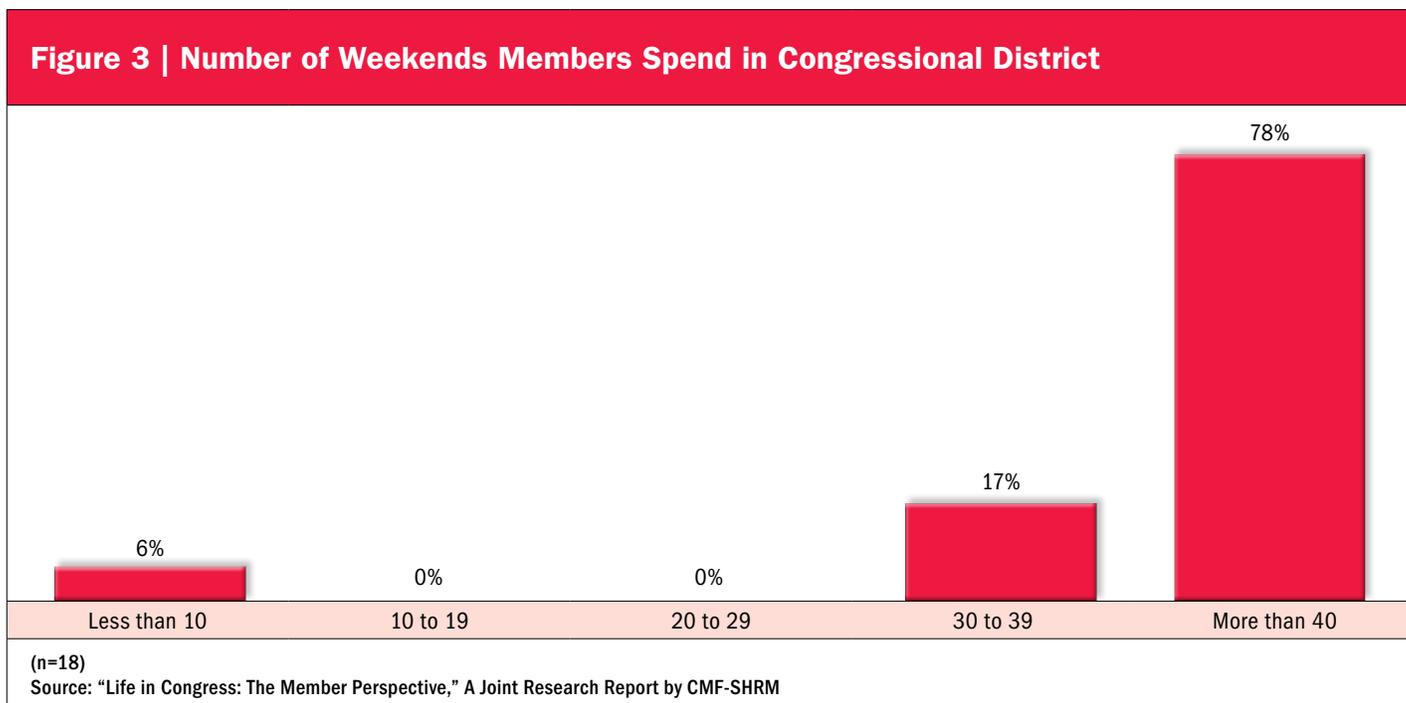
When the House of Representatives is out of session and not voting, or when the House has scheduled "district/constituent work periods" (sometimes called "recess periods"), past CMF research⁴ has shown that most House Members return to their districts to fulfill their representative duties by meeting with constituents and learning how federal policies are affecting

⁴ CMF has surveyed House and Senate senior managers on this question for our guidebooks on managing district/state operations. Our research showed that 61% to 65% of House District Directors reported that their Member went home to the district more than 40 weekends per year. Sources: Congressional Management Foundation, *Frontline Management*, (1998), and *Keeping It Local*, (2010).

them at the local level. As shown in Figure 3, 78% of Members in this study report spending more than 40 weekends each year in their district.

While the district schedule is sometimes almost as busy as the D.C. schedule, legislators and their staff have more control over the Member’s schedule in the district and can be more proactive. District schedules may be filled with some or all of the following: site visits to local businesses, schools, senior centers, or nonprofit organizations; town hall meetings; field hearings and roundtables on pending issues; community or open office hours for constituents to raise concerns; press events; task force or advisory board meetings with local experts; and individual appointments with constituents. Depending on how far the district is from Washington, D.C., and the geographic size of the district, the Member’s work schedule back home can also involve a significant amount of traveling. (More information on the impact of travel is on the next page.)

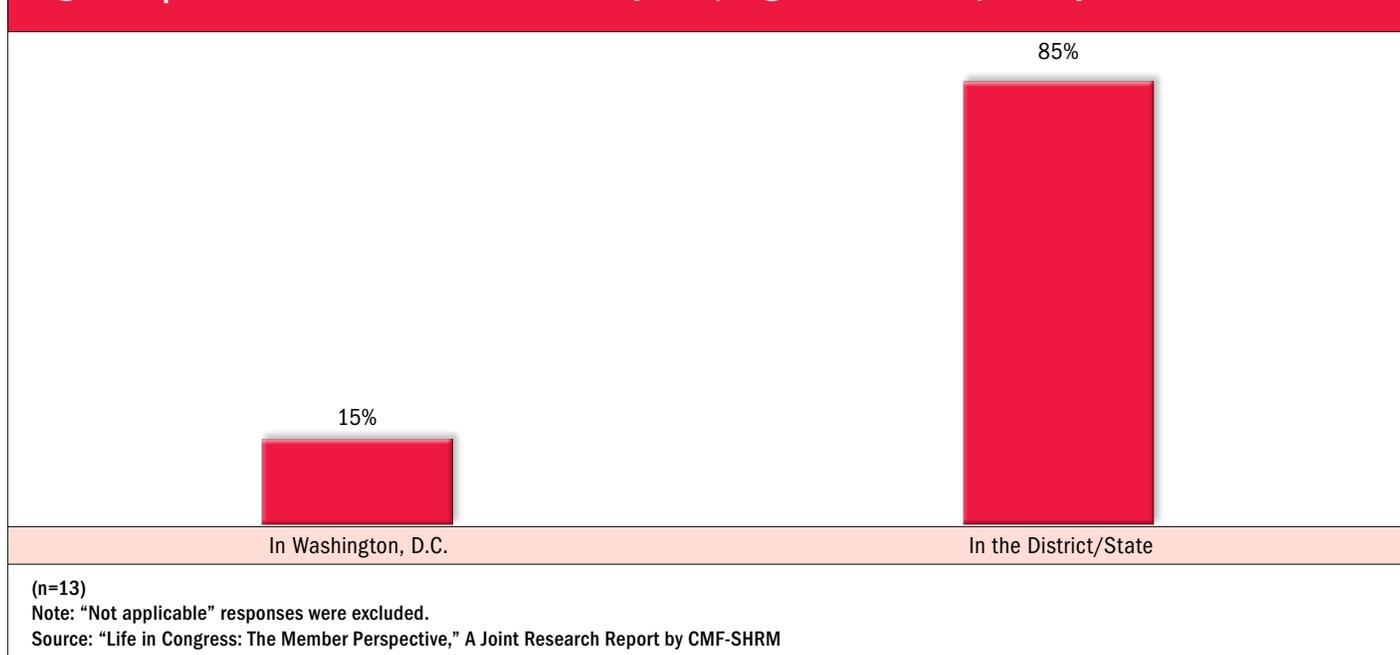
Another factor that might make Members’ Washington, D.C., schedules longer than those in the district is the location of their families. According to our study, as well as past research done by CMF, most House Members no longer move their families to Washington, D.C., preferring instead to keep their main residence in their home district. As shown in Figure 4, 85% of Members report that their spouses/significant others/families live in the district or state. For these Members this means they do not have personal life commitments forcing them to leave the D.C. office at a specific time (e.g., picking up kids from school, catching a train, having dinner with their families, etc.). They can work late in their Washington offices or on related



activities—but it also means they do not have in-person contact with their family during these weeks.

It is important to note that for many House Members, the demands of traveling to and from their district also factor into how much time a Member spends with his or her family. While the Members from the mid-Atlantic region can commute home daily and sleep in their own beds each night, this is not an option for most Members. Travel time is especially lengthy for those Members representing the West Coast, those representing the non-contiguous states and territories, as well as those without major transportation hubs in their district. For some of these Members, traveling door-to-door can take 12, 16—even as much as 24 hours. This not only reduces time spent with family, it can also impact the amount of time spent with constituents in the district, and make traveling home each weekend difficult or impractical.

Figure 4 | Main Residence of Member's Spouse/Significant Other/Family



Work Hours Compared to Others

As the 1998 Pew Research Center study shows, working these long hours is nothing new for Members of Congress—it is part of their job.⁵ While there's no perfect comparison to other professions, we researched how these work hours and schedules compared to employees and managers outside of Congress.

⁵ Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "Washington Leaders Wary of Public Opinion: Public Appetite for Government Misjudged," 1998, <http://www.people-press.org/1998/04/17/washington-leaders-wary-of-public-opinion/>.

While Representatives' work hours are typically longer than the average American's⁶, they are similar to other highly demanding jobs. For example, airline pilots⁷, firefighters⁸, and physicians⁹ regularly work more than 50 hours a week. These professions may not seem to have much in common with Members of Congress, but all of these employees are subject to variable schedules and serve a great number of people through their work.

Perhaps a more applicable comparison, rather than to specific professions, would be to the broader population of employees considered "workaholics." According to a study on "Extreme Jobs" published in the *Harvard Business Review* that examined high-earning, private-sector employees across multiple industries, 62% worked more than 50 hours each week, and 35% worked more than 60 hours a week.¹⁰ Additionally, the study identified a subset of employees holding "extreme jobs." In addition to working long hours, employees in these jobs had to exhibit at least 5 of 10 specific characteristics. Several of these job traits apply to Members of Congress as well, including:

- unpredictable flow of work;
- fast-paced work under tight deadlines;
- work-related events outside regular work hours;
- availability to clients 24/7;
- large amount of travel; and
- physical presence at workplace at least ten hours a day.

The study also identified several trends as leading to an increase in extreme jobs. Some of these trends also apply to Congress, such as:

- improved technology that makes Members (and their staff) accessible 24/7;
- enjoying the respect and admiration earned through their work; and
- thriving on the intellectual challenge of the work itself.

⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Current Employment Statistics (CES) program, <http://www.bls.gov/ces/home.htm>; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *OECD Economic Outlook*, 2012.

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition*, Airline and Commercial Pilots, <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/transportation-and-material-moving/airline-and-commercial-pilots.htm>

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition*, Firefighters, <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/protective-service/firefighters.htm>

⁹ Journal of the American Medical Association, "Trends in the Work Hours of Physicians in the United States," 2010, <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=185433>; Time Magazine, "Is your doctor burned out?," August 28, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/23/health/time-doctor-burnout/index.html>

¹⁰ Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Carolyn Buck Luce, "Extreme Jobs: The Dangerous Allure of the 70-Hour Workweek," *Harvard Business Review*, 2006.

Do Members of Congress have “Extreme” Jobs?

Sylvia Ann Hewlett is an economist and the founding president of the Center for Talent Innovation (formerly Center for Work-Life Policy). She also directs the Gender and Policy Program at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University. **Carolyn Buck Luce** is the Global Life Sciences Sector Leader at Ernst & Young LLP. She chairs the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force and is an adjunct professor at Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. Previously, Ms. Buck Luce spent 17 years in lending, investment banking, and government service.

In December 2006, **Dr. Hewlett and Ms. Buck Luce** published “Extreme Jobs: The Dangerous Allure of the 70-Hour Workweek” in the Harvard Business Review. The article discusses the results of two surveys, 14 focus groups, and 35 interviews with high-earning professionals in and outside the U.S. Their findings—the defining characteristics of and rise in “extreme” jobs, the motivations of these workers, and the downsides to these positions—highlighted many of the same issues faced by congressional members and staff. Following are key excerpts as they relate to Congress.

CHARACTERISTICS OF “EXTREME” JOBS

Our definition, which grew out of extended focus group discussions, takes into account not just hours (and, of course, pay) but also the pressures that make these positions particularly stressful. We identified 10 common characteristics of extreme jobs and classified a respondent as an extreme jobholder if he or she is confronted by at least five of them, on top of working 60 hours or more per week. These characteristics are:

- Unpredictable flow of work
- Fast-paced work under tight deadlines
- Inordinate scope of responsibility that amounts to more than one job
- Work-related events outside regular work hours
- Availability to clients 24/7
- Responsibility for profit and loss
- Responsibility for mentoring and recruiting

- Large amount of travel
- Large number of direct reports
- Physical presence at workplace at least ten hours a day

Our surveys of high-earning professionals have revealed the four characteristics thought to create the most intensity and pressure: unpredictability (cited by 91% of respondents), fast pace with tight deadlines (86%), work-related events outside business hours (66%), and 24/7 client demands (61%).

WHAT DRIVES PEOPLE IN EXTREME JOBS

Every extreme worker has his or her own reasons for putting in the effort. Many people love the intellectual challenge and the thrill of achieving something big. Others are turned on by the oversize compensation packages, brilliant colleagues, and recognition and respect that come with the territory. When we asked our survey respondents what motivated them, most cited a number of factors.

At a macro level, powerful intersecting trends have driven the proliferation of extreme jobs, such as: competitive pressures; the “extreme” ethos; communication technologies; workplace as social center; more knowledge-based work; and globalization. We believe that these are the key trends underlying the rise in extreme work. There may be others. The point, however, is that they represent a mix of positive and negative pressures.

RISE OF TECHNOLOGY, “KNOWLEDGE-BASED WORK,” AND EXTREME JOBS

Modern communication devices have prompted a shift in expectations and behavior. We see it all around us: people glued to their cell phones or BlackBerrys, no matter the day, time, or occasion. Communication technology seems to have both liberated and shackled extreme professionals. In our U.S. survey, 67% of people with extreme jobs said that being available for clients 24/7 is a critical part of being successful. This kind of availability,

not possible before the advent of BlackBerrys and cell phones, is a curse as well as a blessing. Of the U.S. survey respondents, 72% said that technology helps them do their jobs well, 59% said that it lengthens their working day, and 64% noted its encroachment on family time.

“Knowledge work” is increasingly important, and corporations are now full of people employing their brains more than their brawn. Knowledge-based enterprises also tend to attract employees who are on a par intellectually. The exchange of ideas and knowledge that now characterizes most workplaces is without doubt a source of stimulation. It is probably not wrong to assume that more knowledge work means that people simply like their jobs more.

WHY PEOPLE IN EXTREME JOBS MOST LIKELY LOVE THEIR JOBS

Given this increasingly extreme work model, one might imagine that our study has uncovered a great many burned out and bitter professionals. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The overwhelming majority of extreme jobholders in our U.S. sample (66%) say they love their jobs. Far from seeing themselves as workaholics in need of rescuing, extreme workers wear their commitments like badges of honor. There is very little sense of victimization. Almost two-thirds (64%) of extreme workers admit that the pressure and the pace are self-inflicted—a function of a type A personality. By and large, extreme professionals don’t feel exploited; they feel exalted.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF EXTREME JOBS

Extreme jobs may be deeply alluring, but they are certainly not cost free. Our data show that the extreme-work model is wreaking havoc on private lives and taking a toll on health and well-being. Asked about the effects of their extreme jobs on their health and relationships, most respondents readily noted the downsides. More than 69% believe they would be healthier if they worked less

extremely. More than two-thirds don’t get enough sleep; half don’t get enough exercise; and a significant number overeat, consume too much alcohol, or rely on medications to relieve insomnia or anxiety. 58% think their work gets in the way of strong relationships with their children; and 46% think it gets in the way of good relationships with their spouses. Focus group conversations were sprinkled with half-joking references to four in bed these days: oneself, one’s partner, and two BlackBerrys.

Reprinted with permission of *Harvard Business Review*. From “Extreme Jobs: The Dangerous Allure of the 70-Hour Workweek” by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Carolyn Buck Luce, December 2006. Copyright © 2006 by the Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation; all rights reserved.

As difficult as the congressional calendar can be, most Members and staff thrive on the pace, complexity, and relevance of their jobs. Like these “extreme” workers, Members appear to be energized, not necessarily stifled, by their long hours and are motivated by being part of something greater than themselves. However, Members may also share the same pitfalls as these extreme jobholders due to their lengthy workweeks: the difficulty in sustaining the work hours; the ever-increasing personal life trade-offs; and the greater likelihood of burnout.

How House Members Spend Their Time

Despite the different priorities for the Washington, D.C., schedule and for the district schedule (as outlined in the previous section), a Member’s time in each location can typically be broken down into the following broad categories: legislative/policy; constituent services; political/campaign activities; press/media relations; administrative/managerial; time with family and friends; and personal time. Sample activities for each of these broad categories are included in Figure 5.

For this study, House Members were asked to estimate the percentage of time they *actually* spent on these broad categories while in each location (D.C. and district)¹¹. (Members also responded to how they would like to change the amount of time they spend on these activities in Figure 8.)

Less than one-fifth of Members’ time is dedicated to political/campaign work regardless of whether they are in D.C. (17%) or their home district (18%).

Figure 5 | Sample Activities that Comprise Broad Categories of Members’ Time

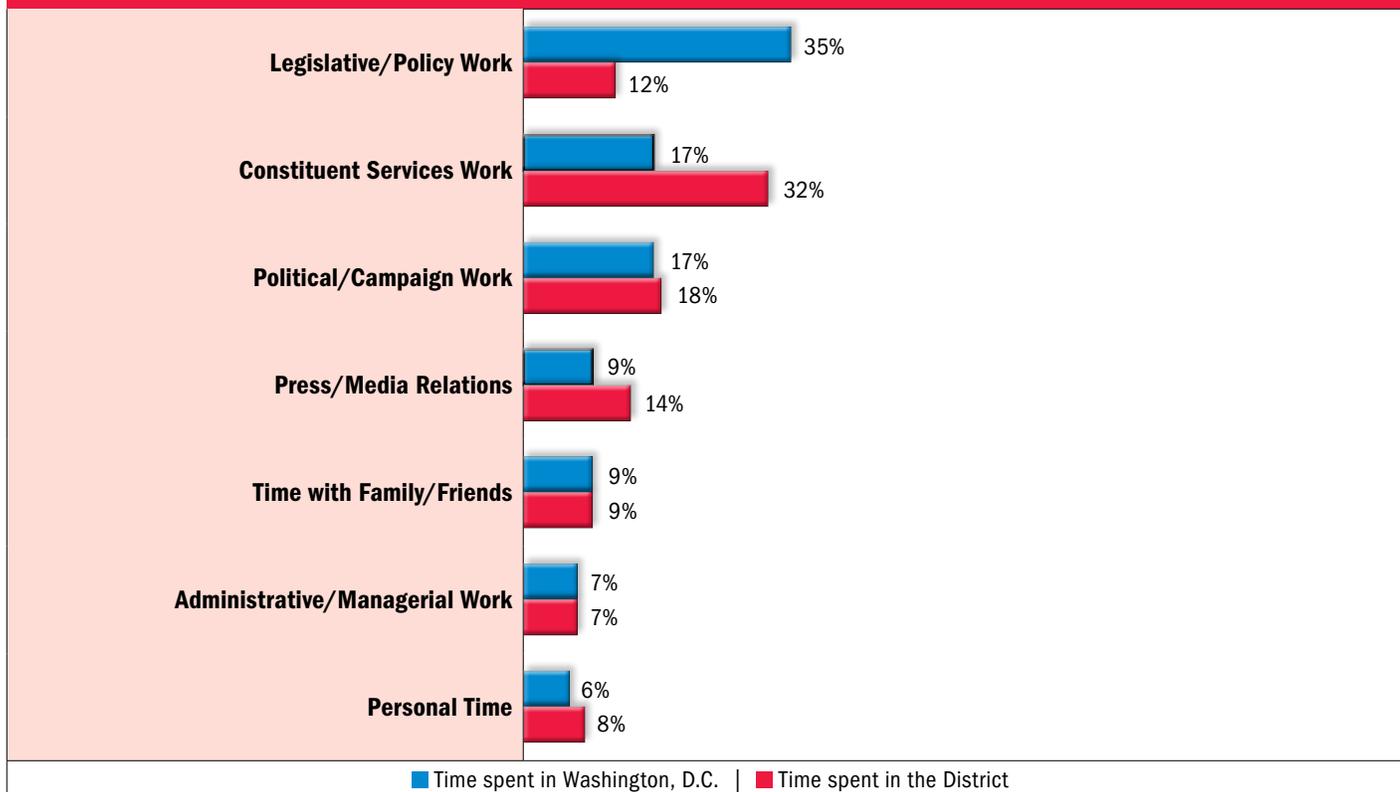
Category	Sample Activities
Legislative/Policy Work	developing, drafting and promoting legislation; studying public policy; preparing for and attending committee hearings & meetings; meeting with D.C. staff; speaking with other Members about legislative initiatives
Constituent Services Work	reviewing/discussing constituent mail & requests; meeting with constituents; getting involved in casework; preparing for and attending events in the district; meeting with district staff; traveling around the district
Political/Campaign Work	fundraising; attending campaign events
Press/Media Relations	working with the mainstream news media; working with new media, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter
Administrative/Managerial Work	managing staff; performing administrative tasks such as approving office expenditures, reviewing office budget, reviewing the schedule
Time with Family/Friends	spending time with family; socializing with friends; socializing with Members
Personal Time	hobbies/personal interests; spiritual/religious time; exercising/physical activity

Source: “Life in Congress: The Member Perspective,” A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

¹¹ For each location, survey question asked Members to break down their time by categories so that time in Washington, D.C. totaled 100% and time in district totaled 100%.

Regardless of their location, Members spend far more time on their work activities than they do on their personal lives (see Figure 6):

Figure 6 | Member Time Spent on Major Activities in Washington, D.C., and in the District



(n=21)
 Source: "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

- When in Washington, D.C., Members spend 85% of their time working. In contrast, Members spend only 15% of their time on their personal lives (9% with their friends or families and 6% on personal activities).
- Even while in the home district, where families for most of the Members live (not having relocated to D.C.), Members spend 83% of their time working. The percentage of time Members spend on their personal lives in the district rises only to 17%.

Not surprisingly, when in their Washington, D.C., offices Members spend the bulk of their time on legislative and policy work, and when in their congressional districts, spend the largest amount of time on constituent services. With regards to their overall activities:

- Members report spending more than one-third (35%) of their time on legislative/policy work while they are in their Washington, D.C., offices and 12% when in their district.

- Members spend approximately one-third (32%) of their time on constituent services work while in their district compared to 17% when in Washington, D.C.
- Less than one-fifth of Members' time is dedicated to political/campaign work regardless of whether they are in D.C. (17%) or their home district (18%).
- Regardless of their location, Members report spending only 9% of their time with family or friends.
- Similarly, the time Members spend on personal activities, such as hobbies, exercise, or spiritual and religious time, remains relatively unchanged regardless of their location. Members reported spending 6% of their time in Washington, D.C., and 8% of their time in the district on personal activities.

The finding that may surprise some observers is that Members are spending less than 20% of their time in an average week on political and campaign activities (which includes fundraising and attending campaign events in Washington, D.C., and in the district). While a significant amount of media, money, and resources appears focused on politics and elections, barely one in five House general election races is considered competitive, even in a “hot” election cycle. The vast majority of Members are deemed to be in safe districts or are focused on a primary election (requiring significantly less fundraising/political time than a general election).

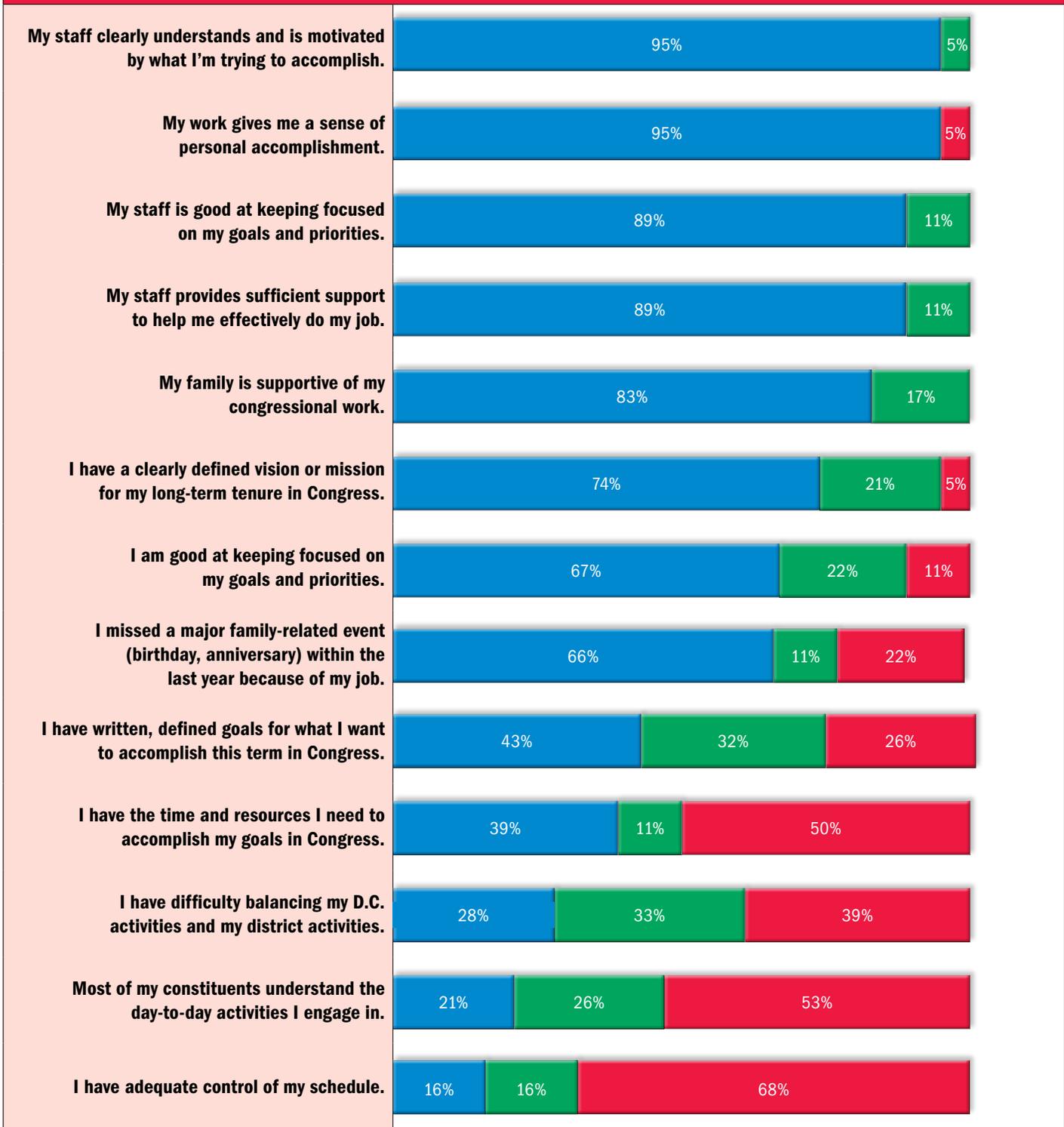
How House Members View Their Work in Congress

In our study, House Members were asked for their level of agreement with numerous statements relating to their work environment, schedule, staff, and personal life (see Figure 7). Their opinions were sought on these topics to help identify areas that Members felt contributed to, and areas that detracted from, their work in Congress.

House Members describe themselves as highly committed to their work and very focused on high levels of achievement. For example:

- When asked to respond to the statement, “My work gives me a sense of personal accomplishment,” 95% of Members agreed or strongly agreed.
- When asked to respond to, “I have a clearly defined vision or mission for my long-term tenure in Congress,” 74% agreed or strongly agreed.
- When asked to respond to, “I am good at keeping focused on my goals and priorities,” 67% agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 7 | Member Opinions About Their Work in Congress



■ Strongly Agree or Agree | ■ Neutral | ■ Strongly Disagree or Disagree

(n=18-19)

Note: "Does not apply" responses were excluded.

Source: "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Members were also pleased with their staff's performance and role in advancing the Member's work. When asked their level of agreement with the following statements about their staff, a clear majority responded positively, and not a single Member disagreed or strongly disagreed:

- When asked to respond to, "My staff clearly understands and is motivated by what I am trying to accomplish," 95% of Members agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.
- When asked to respond to, "My staff is good at keeping focused on my goals and priorities," 89% agreed or strongly agreed.
- When asked to respond to, "My staff provides sufficient support to help me effectively do my job," 89% agreed or strongly agreed.

Additionally, 83% of Members reported that their families were supportive of their congressional work. These data, along with the statements above, suggest that for the most part, Members are generally fulfilled by their work.

In contrast to the positive statements, areas where Members expressed negative opinions of their work included:

- When asked to respond to, "I have adequate control of my schedule," a majority of Members (68%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Only 16% agreed or strongly agreed.
- When asked to respond to, "Most of my constituents understand the day-to-day activities I engage in," approximately half (53%) of Members disagreed or strongly disagreed. Only 21% agreed or strongly agreed.
- When asked to respond to, "I have the time and resources I need to accomplish my goals in Congress," half (50%) of Members disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- When asked to respond to, "I missed a major family-related event (birthday, anniversary) within the last year because of my job," two-thirds (66%) of Members agreed or strongly agreed.

.....
 "My commitment to educational equity and excellence is what **keeps me coming back** to Congress. As a former educator, **I can't quit** until I'm able to deliver that for each and every child."
 –6th Term House Member

SAMPLE HOUSE MEMBER SCHEDULE—MARCH 6, 2012

FOLLOWING IS A SAMPLE SCHEDULE FROM ONE DAY IN A HOUSE MEMBER'S WASHINGTON, D.C., OFFICE.
ONLY IDENTIFYING DETAILS HAVE BEEN ALTERED.

9:00 AM–9:30 AM	NATIONAL WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN'S ASSOCIATION Speak to attendees of 2012 Leadership Conference.
10:00 AM–12:00 PM	AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS HEARING Marketing Regulatory Programs.
10:30 AM–12:00 PM	BIPARTISAN CLASSIFIED NATIONAL SECURITY BRIEFING Briefing on Iran.
12:00 PM–1:00 PM	CAUCUS/CONFERENCE MEETING WITH DEMOCRATIC/REPUBLICAN COLLEAGUES Jobs, the economy and gas prices.
12:45 PM–1:15 PM	EDIE SMITH, LOCAL COUNTY WIC (WOMEN, INFANT, CHILDREN) PROGRAM MANAGER Update of WIC issues and funding for FY13.
1:15 PM–1:45 PM	REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE AMERICAN ISRAEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (AIPAC) Discuss the U.S.-Israel relationship including aid to Israel, Iran's nuclear quest, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.
1:30 PM–2:00 PM	KEVIN JONES, LOCAL COUNTY SUPERVISOR Discuss H.R. 3460, the National Parks Lands Bill.
2:00 PM–2:30 PM	BOB ELLIS, SOLUTIONS FOR PROGRESS NONPROFIT Discuss fingerprinting for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in our state.
2:30 PM–3:00 PM	U.S. ARMY/LOCAL OFFICIALS Discuss land transfer issues.
3:00 PM–4:00 PM	FUNDRAISING CALL TIME—PARTY HQ
3:00 PM–3:30 PM	FYI: ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, REGIONAL DISTRICT Discuss current projects.
3:30 PM–4:00 PM	ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION Discuss farming and conservation programs.
4:30 PM–5:00 PM	VANESSA GARCIA, LOCAL SUPERVISOR Discuss health issues as well as local county's legislative priorities.
5:00 PM–6:00 PM	LOCAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES/SUPERVISORS Discuss flood control efforts, the local gang intervention program, and the National Monument designation.
6:30 PM–9:30 PM	FYI: AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR CAPITAL FORMATION DINNER DISCUSSION "The 2012 Election: Impact on the U.S. Deficit & Economic, Tax, Regulatory and Energy Policy."

How House Members Feel About How They Spend Their Time

Once Members had considered how much time they were spending on activities in D.C. and in the home district, they were asked about how they *felt* about their time spent on these activities. Did House Members feel they were personally spending too much time, too little time, or the right amount of time on legislative/policy work, constituent services, political/campaign activities, press/media relations, administrative/managerial work, family/friends, and personal activities?

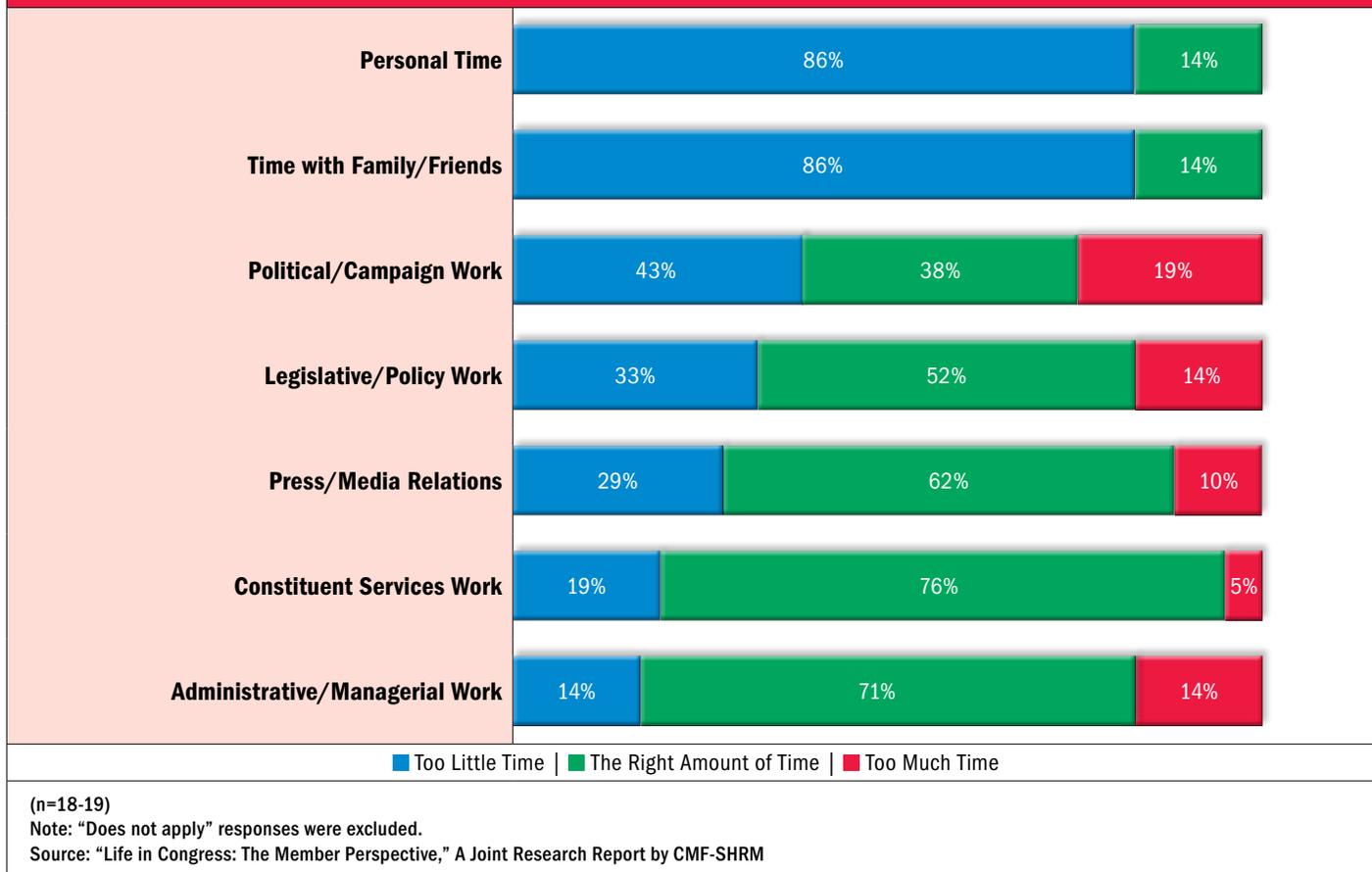
Overall, the majority of Members feel that they are spending the “right amount of time” on their official duties and “too little time” on their personal lives. Member opinions split about their time spent on political and campaign duties. Specifically, the key findings from this question include (see Figure 8):

- More than three-quarters (76%) of Members believe they are spending the right amount of time on constituent services. Almost one-fifth (19%) believe they spend too little time in this area.
- A large majority (71%) of Members believe they are spending the right amount of time on their administrative/managerial work, with an equal number of Members believing they spend too little time (14%) and too much time (14%) on these tasks.
- When considering time spent on press/media relations, 62% of Members feel it’s the right amount, while 29% feel they spend too little time.
- Slightly more than half (52%) believe they are spending the right amount of time on legislative/policy work. However, one-third (33%) believe that they spend too little time in this area.
- An overwhelming majority (86%) of Members feel they spend too little time with family/friends and too little time on other personal activities. Just 14% felt they were spending the right amount of time on these activities, and no Members reported that they felt they were spending too much time with family, friends, or on personal activities.
- More than two-fifths (43%) of Members believe they spend too little time on political/campaign work, while 38% believe they spend the right amount of time on these activities, and 19% believe they spend too much time.

While Members want to spend more time with family and friends and more time on personal pursuits, it seems that they are generally unwilling to cut back on their work hours to increase the time they have available for non-work activities. When asked to rate which areas they spend “too much time” on, no work-related task received more than 19% support.

While Members **want to spend more time with family and friends** and more time on personal pursuits, it seems that they are generally **unwilling to cut back on their work hours** to increase the time they have available for non-work activities.

Figure 8 | How Members Feel About They Spend Their Time



Job Aspects that Are Most Important to House Members

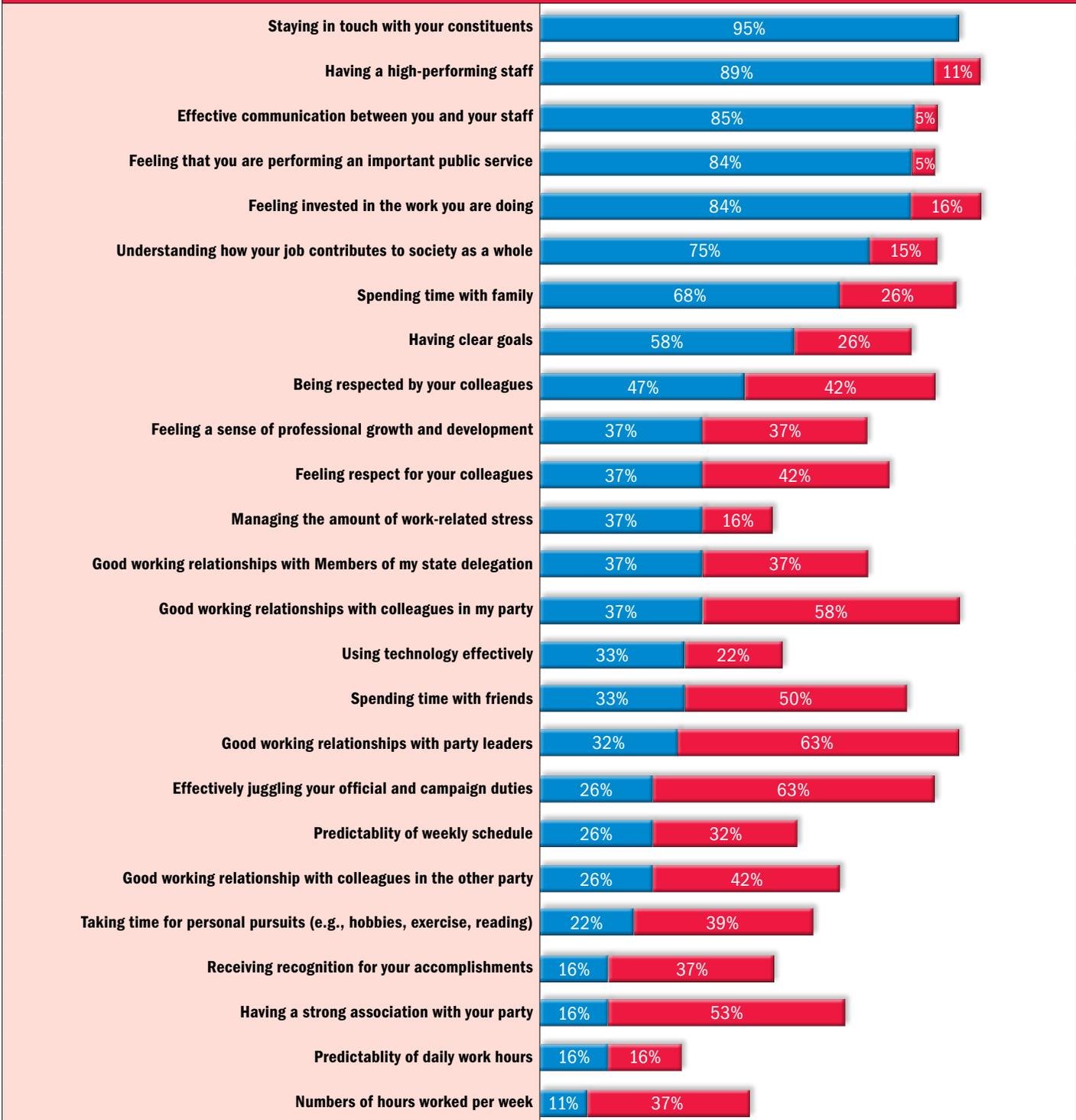
To identify which aspects of their job were most critical to their job satisfaction, House Members were asked to rate how important 25 factors were to their effectiveness as a Representative.

Not surprisingly, given how Members allocate their time between their work duties and their personal activities, Members view their work as the most important aspect of their lives (see Figure 9). Of the aspects they were asked to rate, more than half of the Members rated the following eight aspects as "very important." Only one of the eight aspects ("Spending time with family") related to their personal life. In ranked order, these aspects are:

1. "Staying in touch with your constituents" (95%);
2. "Having a high-performing staff" (89%);
3. "Effective communication between you and your staff" (85%);
4. "Feeling that you are performing an important public service" (84%) and "Feeling invested in the work you are doing" (84%) (tie);

"Our government doesn't work without **constituent conversations and feedback**. Knowing the issues important to constituents, and knowing what they think Washington needs to do, is the **only way I can succeed** in my job."
 —5th Term House Member

Figure 9 | Importance of Aspects to Members' Job Satisfaction



Very Important | Somewhat Important

(n = 18-20)

Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important" and "somewhat important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 5 = "very important." "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.

Source: "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

- 6. “Understanding how your job contributes to society as a whole” (75%);
- 7. “Spending time with family” (68%); and
- 8. “Having clear goals” (58%).

In contrast to the importance of work-related aspects, areas that dealt with personal time or quality of life are not valued nearly as highly and ranked toward the bottom of the list:

- “Spending time with friends” (33%);
- “Taking time for personal pursuits” (22%);
- “Predictability of daily work hours” (16%); and
- “Number of hours worked per week” (11%).

Job Aspects that Are Most Satisfying to House Members

After rating how important the various aspects were to their job satisfaction, House Members rated their actual level of satisfaction with each of those 25 aspects. First identifying the most important aspects, and then subsequently determining how satisfied Members are with those aspects, helps us to assess how fulfilled Members are with their jobs overall.

Members reported being satisfied with seven of their self-identified top eight most important aspects—i.e., those aspects that more than half of the Members rated as “very important” to their effectiveness. All seven aspects scored the highest rankings in overall satisfaction and all seven are work-related (see Figure 10):

- “Having a high-performing staff” (100% satisfied);
- “Effective communication between you and your staff” (90% satisfied);
- “Understanding how your job contributes to society as a whole” (90% satisfied);
- “Having clear goals” (90% satisfied);
- “Feeling invested in the work you are doing” (89% satisfied);
- “Feeling that you are performing an important public service” (89% satisfied); and
- “Staying in touch with your constituents” (85% satisfied).

In contrast, the eighth aspect Members rated as very important—“Spending time with family”—did not score as highly in satisfaction:

- While 68% of respondents rated this aspect as very important to them, only 5% were “very satisfied” and 11% “somewhat satisfied” with this aspect. The resulting 16% overall satisfaction rating is the lowest among all 25 aspects studied.

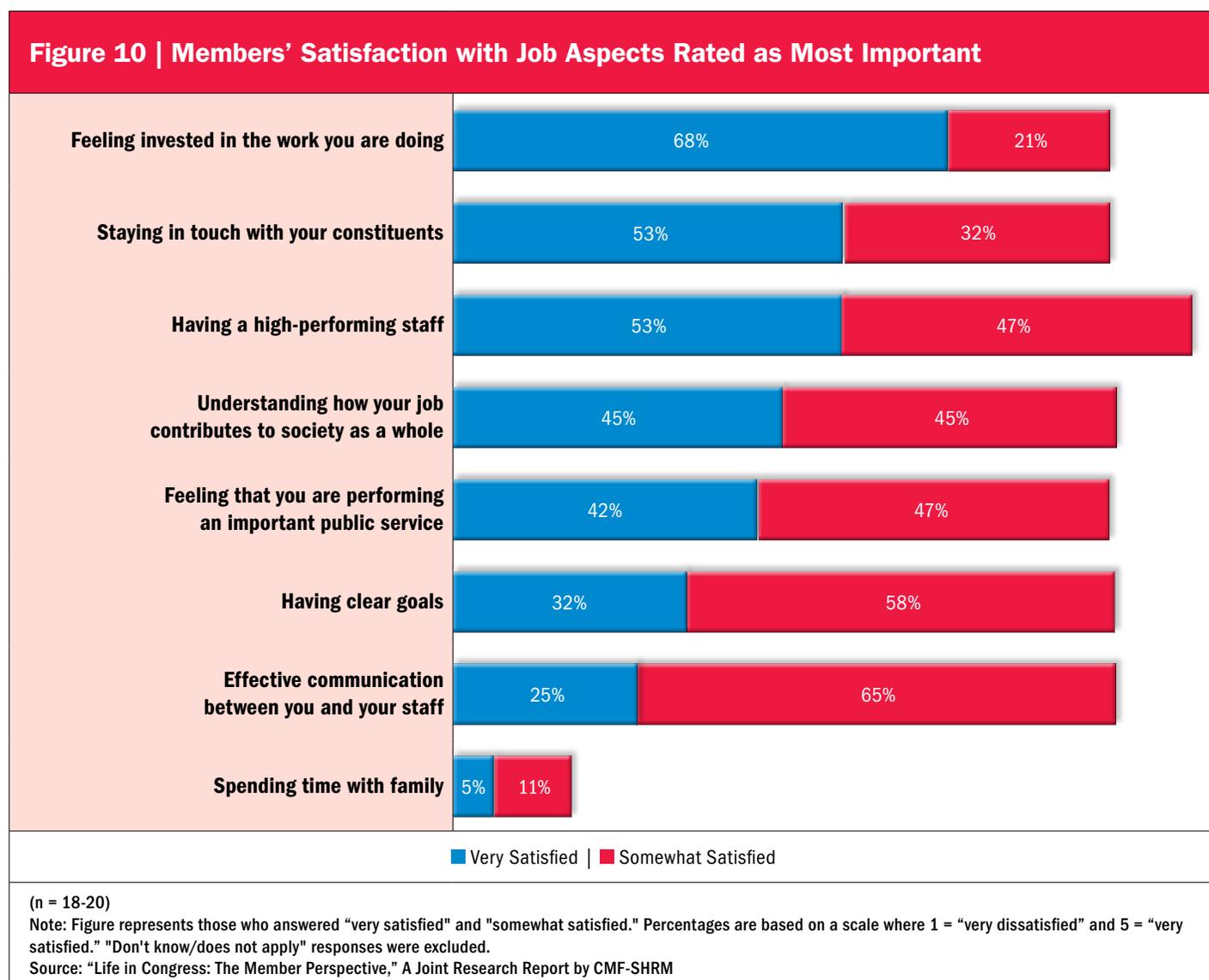
“Having an **intelligent, creative and conscientious staff** to address matters ranging from constituent concerns or needs to policy issues is critical if a Member intends to be **maximally effective** on behalf of the district.”

—8th Term House Member

- Interestingly, while “spending time with family” received the lowest score in overall satisfaction, it did not receive the highest dissatisfaction score. Half of the Members (53%) answered “neutral” to this question, meaning they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

These data, along with the earlier finding that 83% of Members report that their families are supportive of their congressional work, suggests that Members (and to some degree their families) are accepting of the significant personal trade-offs they make for their work.

Generally, having high ratings of satisfaction on 7 of the 8 aspects that are most important to them indicates that Members are likely to be satisfied with their jobs.



Member Assessment of the Quality of Life Aspects of Their Jobs

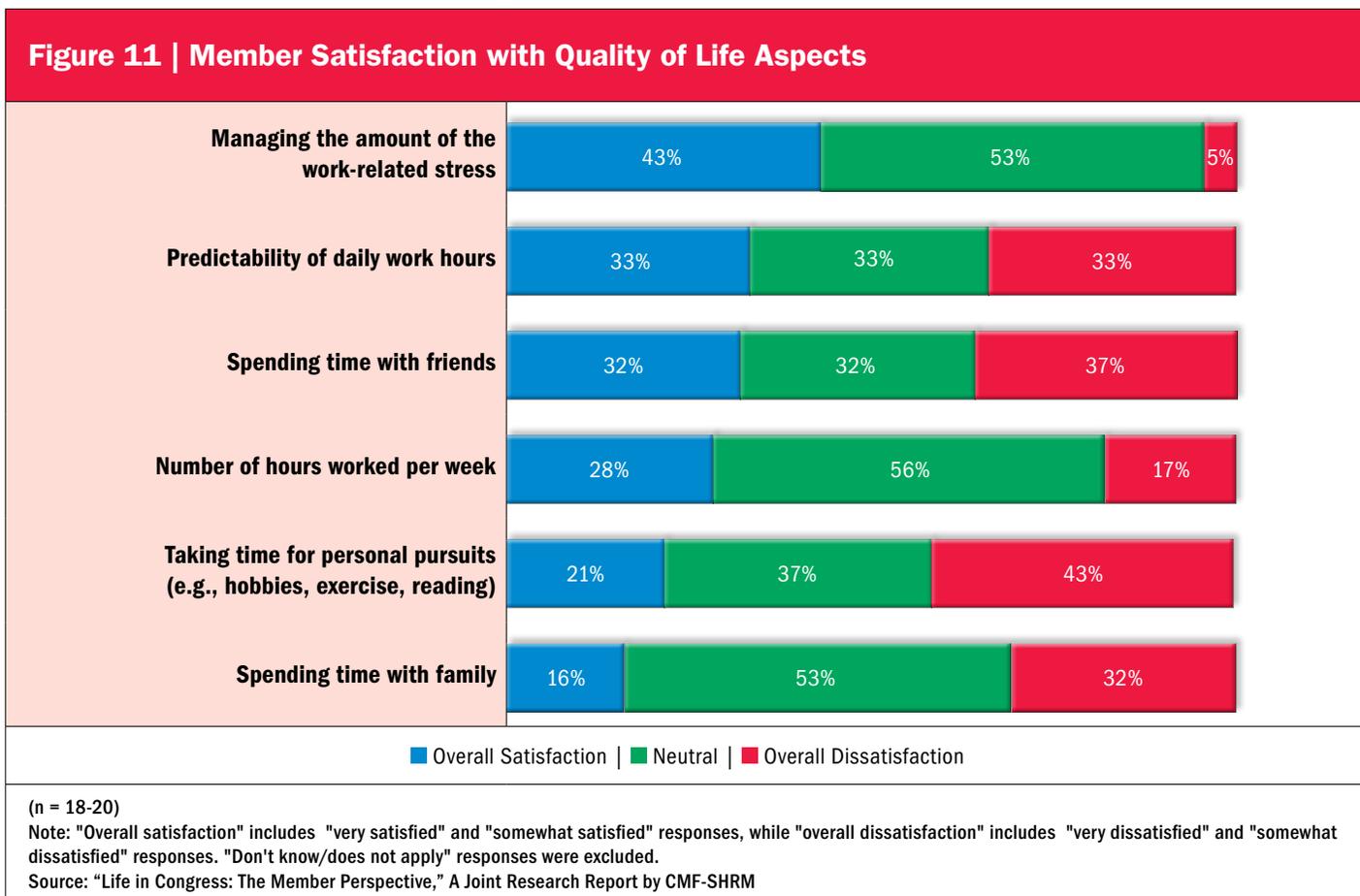
As noted in the previous section, Members are most satisfied with those aspects of their lives that are work related. In this section, we delve deeper into key quality of life aspects of Members' lives. The Members' responses are not entirely consistent. While Members are not satisfied with the amount of time they spend on personal activities, they also do not report to be particularly *dissatisfied* with the personal aspects of their lives.

For the six aspects relating to their quality of life, many Members expressed neutral opinions—they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with these aspects. As suggested above, Members seem to accept these trade-offs and their limited personal time as a function of their job. It might also explain why Members appear to be unwilling to make the changes that would provide them more time devoted to their personal lives.

As shown in Figure 11, key findings from this question include:

- Less than half (43%) of Members are satisfied with how they are "managing the amount of work-related stress" in their jobs. However, only 5% are dissatisfied with their stress management while more than half (53%) answered "neutral" to this question.
- Despite working 59-70 hours per week on average (depending on whether the House is in session), more than half (56%) of Members were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their weekly hours. Only 17% are dissatisfied and 28% are satisfied with "the number of hours worked per week."
- Considering the predictability of daily work hours, Members are equally satisfied, dissatisfied, and neutral for this aspect at 33% each.
- Similarly, Member opinions are split when considering their "time spent with friends": 32% are satisfied, 37% are dissatisfied, and 32% expressed no opinion.
- Among these aspects, Members are least satisfied (16%) with the amount of time they spend with their families. Almost one-third (32%) report being dissatisfied and more than half (53%) are "neutral" on the question.

Members seem to accept these trade-offs and their limited personal time as a function of their job.



House Schedule in the 112th Congress

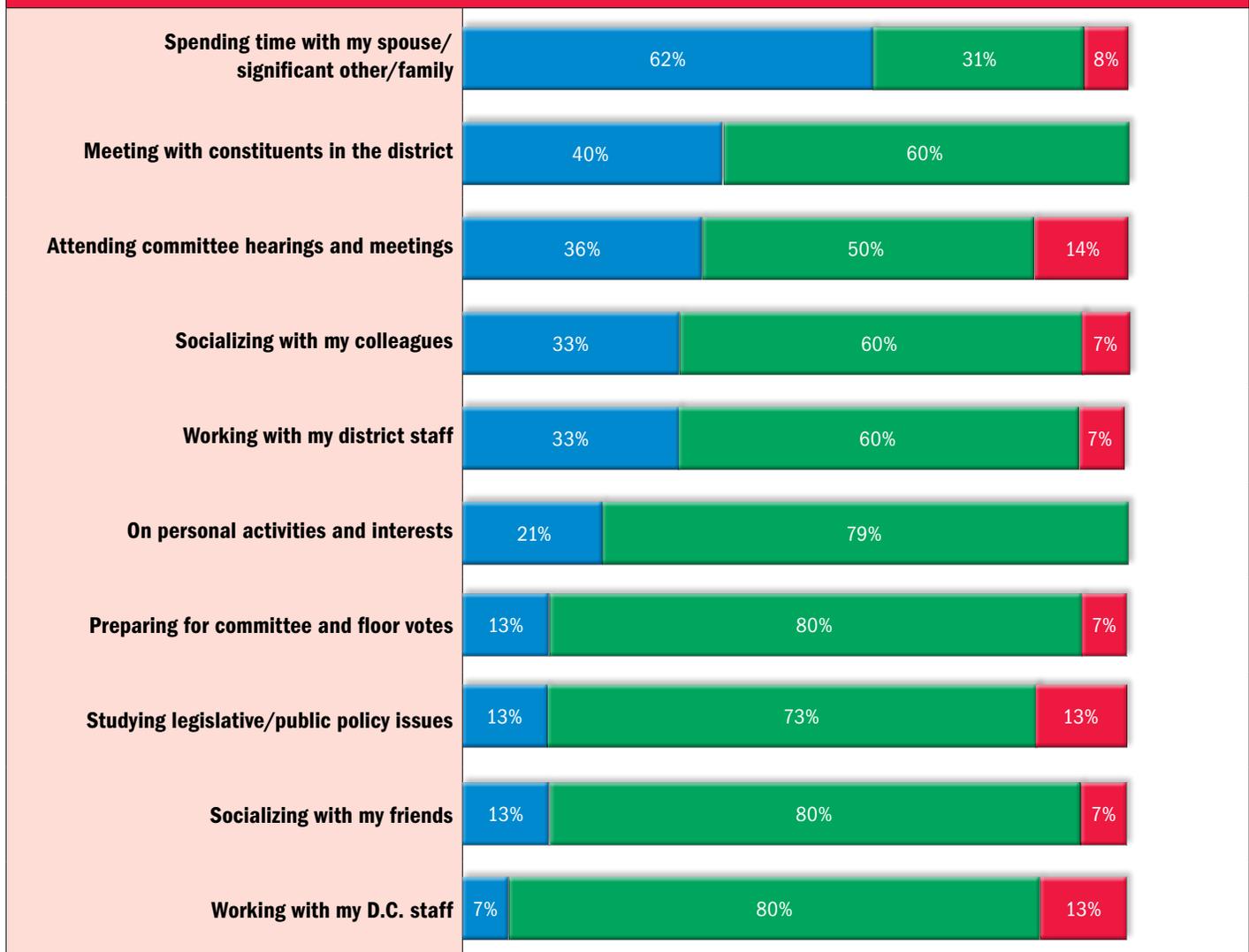
In 2011, at the beginning of the 112th Congress, the Republican leadership changed the House calendar. Based on input from Members themselves, House congressional leaders increased the number of “district/constituent work periods” (also referred to as “recesses”), and altered the voting schedule to make the first and last votes of the week more consistent. The goals were to increase the predictability of the House schedule, provide legislators with more time to engage with constituents in their district, and have more focused floor and committee activity in Washington, D.C.¹² Given this shift in the House calendar, we wanted to know what effects, if any, this new calendar had on Member schedules, their work in Congress, and their work-life fit.

¹² House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, *Dear Colleague* letter to all House Members, December 8, 2010, http://majorityleader.gov/Calendar/EC_LETTER.pdf

As shown in Figure 12, House Members reported that when comparing their schedule in the 112th Congress to previous Congresses, a majority felt they are spending the same amount of time on 8 of the 10 major activities that comprise the bulk of their schedule. However, for some of the Members, the changes in the schedule appear to have created more time for certain activities:

- 62% of the House Members reported spending more time with their spouse/significant other/family. This is the only major activity that a majority of Members reported spending more time on in the 112th

Figure 12 | How the House Schedule in 112th Congress Has Changed the Amount of Time Members Spend on Major Activities



(n = 13-15)
 Note: "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
 Source: "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Congress, as opposed to spending less time or the same amount of time the previous year.

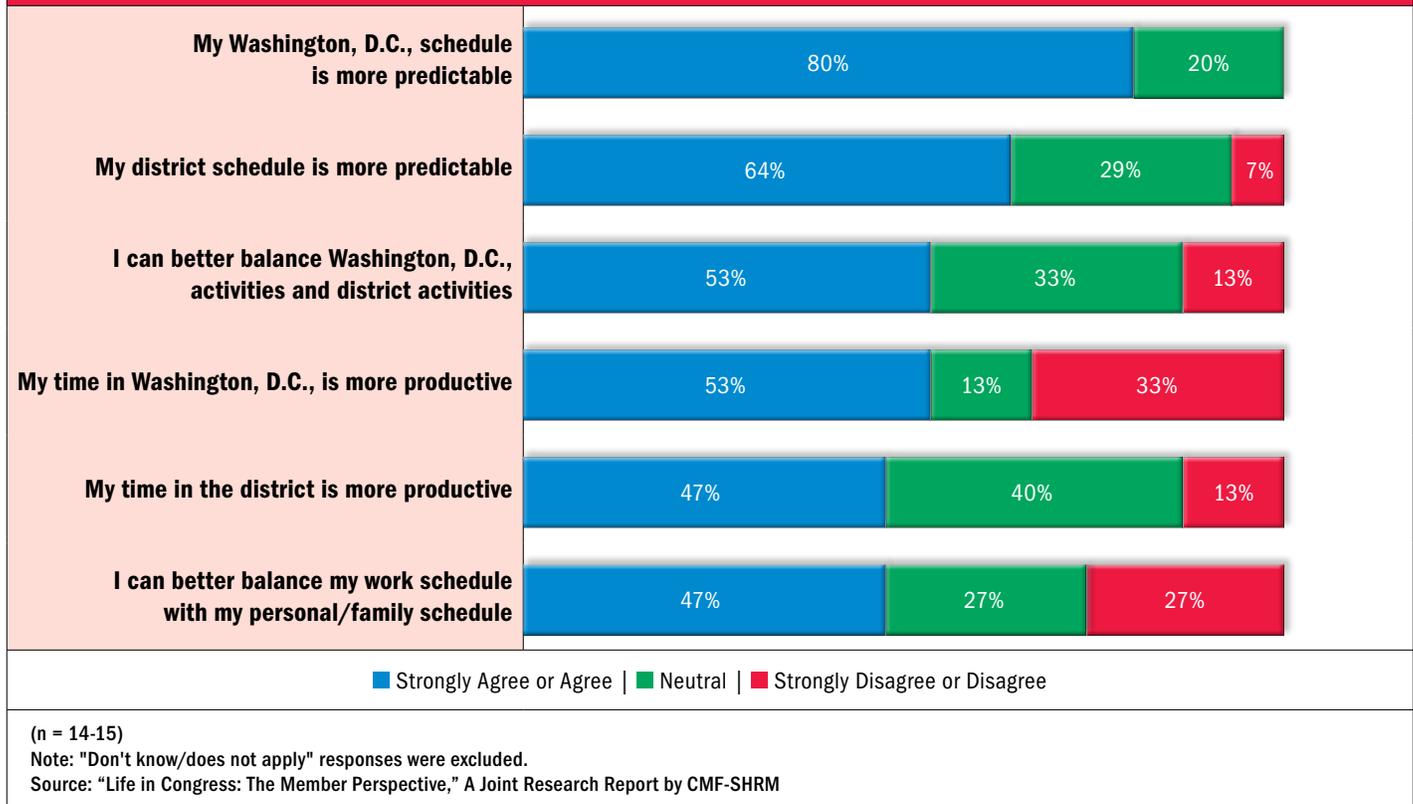
- In terms of their district schedule, 40% of the Members report that they spend more time meeting with constituents in the district and 33% believe they spend more time working with their district staff.
- More than one-third of the Members (36%) believe they spend more time attending committee hearings and meetings.
- One in three Members (33%) also believe that they spend more time socializing with their colleagues in the 112th Congress.
- Only one in every five (21%) Members believe that they spend more time on personal activities and interests in the 112th Congress than in previous Congresses.

House Members were also asked their level of agreement with several statements relating to their D.C. and district schedules in the 112th Congress.

While some Members did not express an opinion on how their schedules have changed (see Figure 13), of those that did offer an opinion:

- A significant majority (80%) feel that their Washington, D.C., schedule was more *predictable* in the 112th Congress, and 64% feel their district schedules were more predictable compared to recent Congresses.
- However, Member views were mixed on whether their D.C. schedule was more *productive*. More than half (53%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while one-third (33%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 13 | Member Views on How House Schedule in 112th Congress Has Affected Their Time in Washington, D.C., and in the District



Expert Q&A

Patricia Kempthorne, Founder/President/CEO, Twiga Foundation, Inc.

Patricia Kempthorne has spent decades advocating for family, children, and workplace issues. She is founder of The Twiga Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting family consciousness in the home, the workplace, and the community. Mrs. Kempthorne is married to Dirk Kempthorne, a former mayor, senator, governor, and cabinet secretary, and has a unique perspective on the challenges facing public officials and their families.

At what point does job satisfaction trump overwork and the challenges faced by someone elected to serve as a Member of the United States Congress?

As our founders stated, “we pledge our lives, fortune and sacred honor” in service to the United States of America. Reality is that as a Member of Congress you don’t just have a job you have a “calling” and everyone will be calling. You have made assurances to your constituents, your party, and your family that you will not forget who got you there, who you represent, and how much their support means. It is a 24/7/365 position. The long hours are not long enough but you do the best you can and you are the only one who can set the parameters for how you will juggle your elected position, family and personal needs. It certainly isn’t easy and some are better at it than others. These challenges are not that much different than a CEO, business owner, sales executive, farmer, or any dedicated employee. To be successful you must work hard, accept long hours, and tackle situations that you didn’t create and are not able to control. The difference is a Member of Congress will be judged publicly in the media on all activities 365 days a year and held to an unheard of standard of excellence and accountability. You do it because you believe in the tenets of the republic, it is an honor to serve, and you have the opportunity to make a difference for your family, your community, and your country.

Members of Congress seem unable or unwilling to cut back on their work hours. What are the drawbacks on sustaining this lifestyle? What can be done to seek a better work-life fit for public officials?

From the beginning of life as a public servant, it is imperative to develop a system of communication to clarify expectations and boundaries of the job with your staff and family. Some families choose to stay in the district and some move to Washington, D.C., to be together more. Either way, the Member will be juggling time commitments and schedules, often across time zones and definitely with constituents and colleagues. It is the very nature of the job to overwork. Yet, as in the airplane oxygen mask adage, you must put your own mask on first before helping others. Staffing with a scheduling philosophy that includes downtime to renew and refresh both personally and with friends and family is not as simple as it sounds, but is absolutely necessary to keep up with the hectic lifestyle of a Member of Congress. A dedicated staff and supportive family are part of the team that helps a Member sustain a healthy and effective work-life fit. Truly, some people are just better at orchestrating their life's work into a fit that sustains a healthy work-life than others. According to author and consultant Cali Williams Yost, founder of Work+Life Fit, Inc., only about 10%-15% of the population can be categorized as "naturals" at work-life fit. In her new book, *Tweak It: Make What Matters to You Happen Every Day*, she shares what naturals do to make it work. The key point here is that for the majority of people it is a learned behavior and it is an individual responsibility. Most elected officials and their family members learn quickly that no one is going to ask you to slow down and take a day off. Public service is very hard on families, and most learn to sacrifice time together but accept doing so knowing that public service is a fulfilling avocation and an honor.

From your perspective, how did your spouse's job affect the family?

Our children were quite young when my husband was elected to his first public office. We anticipated that at 4 and 6 years of age they would not be particularly impacted by their father's job and that the advantage may be that if his public service continued it would be natural for them to see their dad in the public arena. For the next 24 years we had the opportunity to participate in the political process at community, state, and national levels. Our children are now in their 30s and over the years we learned many things about just how impacted they were. In many ways we are making up for lost time spending more time together as adults and we are all enjoying our lives out of the public eye. For most of their lives they shared their father with everyone else. Though they did this proudly, sometimes they simply wanted it to go away.

Once at our annual state fair, they were pre-teens and we were walking down the fairway. There were many handshakes and well-wishers and

people wanting to talk. Our daughter finally stomped her foot and asked her dad to deny he was the mayor and just talk to her. Though it was a positive experience overall, she was tired of sharing. When he was in the Senate a few years later, I saw his car pull into the school parking lot to join me for our son's football game. It just as quickly pulled out and he called and said that a vote was just been called and he had to head back to D.C. That was the right thing to do. It was necessary but it was frustrating because your heart and your head are not in sync. As a family and as individuals we had to work at finding our comfort levels with his public service. It is important for elected officials to clarify expectations with their staff to ensure that family and health are first. That is, first to the best of everyone's ability to navigate the responsibilities and expectations for a seamless public work-life experience. Hindsight has brought much appreciation for the individuals that supported our public service whether they be staff members, constituents, or friends. Of course, I think my husband's life-work was and is a gift to all of us and to those he served.

What specific strategies can Members use to improve their work-life fit?

As in most things, communication is essential, and continually being aware of the need to improve it must be an ongoing part of the strategy. Things change both in the job and in the family during a Member's tenure. The good news is that technology has made communication and access easier in the last decade. One can literally be in two places—or more—at once. Find the technology that works best for all. Use and upgrade technology whenever possible to maximize information accessibility to the family, staff, and constituents. Members are going to set the pace and priorities for their offices. However, they will be very dependent upon the management team to implement and maintain those priorities. Though it seems like there would be a natural communication with the spouse or family members, it does not always happen. The Member cannot be expected to be the one to pass on needed information. Setting up a line of communication with those significant others through the staff will alleviate problems and go a long way in supporting the Member's work-life fit. Helping the Member's family to feel as if they are informed and included softens the impact of the amount of time the Member is away from them. Ultimately, the Member must decide how, when and where the work is done. But to sustain the fast-paced environment of a congressional office, many offices have created effective and flexible environments to ensure staff coverage, timely constituent response, and retention. There is not a one-size-fits-all method to this, but using flexibility to manage in a consistently overworked environment can help maintain a healthier and happier workplace. While the nature of the job is being available 24/7 for the people you represent, it is possible to create an effective and flexible management style that is sustainable for the Member, the family and the staff. Each office and office holder is unique. Work together to find the practices and policies that sustain an effective work-life fit.

Implications for Future Research

Throughout this report we have attempted to reflect accurately how Members of Congress feel about their daily activities, challenges, and motivations. And in some measure, this has prompted the researchers to surmise what implications these findings might have on Members of Congress themselves and on our democratic institutions. As is often the case with a novel research project, these findings raise several questions about how Members fulfill their public service responsibilities. Possible questions to explore include:

- A solid history of research exists on the negative effects of stress and long work hours for professions such as firefighters, airline pilots, and physicians. Do high levels of stress and work hours lead to similar outcomes for Members of Congress and affect the functionality of Congress?
- Are Members' long work hours and personal trade-offs sustainable? Or are they leading to increased job burnout and more Members leaving Congress—reducing the professionalism, effectiveness, and institutional memory of the Congress?
- Does the Members' focus on the district (traveling home weekly, understanding constituents' interests, accomplishing goals), and de-emphasis on building relationships with fellow lawmakers contribute to reduced comity and effectiveness within the institution?
- If Members are correct in their assumption that constituents do not understand their daily work (21% of Members agreed with that statement), how does that affect the legislator–constituent relationship?
- Do the demands and pressures of the job force Members to focus so intently on their work to the neglect of their families and their personal lives or personal well-being? How do spouses and families feel about Members' work in Congress and the trade-offs made in their personal lives?

Answers to these questions could lead to improvements to the legislative branch and enhancements to legislators and staff work. It also could advance communications, understanding, and the relationship between citizens and elected officials.

Conclusion

This report paints a picture of life as a Member of Congress somewhat different than the one usually portrayed to the public. Members are hard workers who average 59-70 hours a week for their jobs. They spend most of their time on official duties, such as legislative and constituent work, and less time on “political” activities, such as fundraising. And, Members seem to be energized by their work, reporting that they are devoted to public service and are motivated by their contributions to society.

While few Members of Congress expressed satisfaction with the amount of time they spend with their families, most accepted their prioritization of work over personal life and the extraordinary long hours in their work week. As noted in this and other research, this kind of persistent behavior and attitude in a workforce can have negative consequences. In a normal job setting, this could lead to underperformance or job burnout. In Congress, this also could lead to inefficient legislative processes, poorer constituent services, and ineffective public policy-making.

This is why it’s important to open a window into America’s premier democratic institution and raise awareness on Congress as a workplace. We hope this research gives the public a broader understanding of Congress, and offers congressional leaders, Members, staff, and supporting institutions some insight into how to enhance operations. Internally, a discussion of Congress as a workplace could lead to additional reforms focused on improving the effectiveness of individual legislators and the institution. Externally, a discussion of Congress as a workplace could lead to greater public insight of our democratic processes, possibly strengthening trust in government.

If we view our public servants as objects, faceless and nameless creatures, it is much easier to deride their work and motivations. But if we view our legislators the way we’d view a co-worker—someone with whom we may not always agree, but nonetheless respect their sacrifice and effort—then perhaps public appreciation of and satisfaction with our democratic institutions could be enhanced. This is not to suggest that examining workplace issues in Congress is somehow a panacea for what ails our democracy. Yet, if greater knowledge of “civics” is widely accepted as a cure for a dysfunctional democratic dialogue and process, then constituent understanding of Congress as a workplace is one small part of that cure.

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Appendix

Figure 14 | Member Opinions About Their Work in Congress

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Overall Disagreement	Overall Agreement
My work gives me a sense of personal accomplishment.	0%	5%	0%	37%	58%	5%	95%
My staff clearly understands and is motivated by what I'm trying to accomplish.	0%	0%	5%	58%	37%	0%	95%
My staff provides sufficient support to help me effectively do my job.	0%	0%	11%	68%	21%	0%	89%
My staff is good at keeping focused on my goals and priorities.	0%	0%	11%	61%	28%	0%	89%
My family is supportive of my congressional work.	0%	0%	17%	44%	39%	0%	83%
I have a clearly defined vision or mission for my long-term tenure in Congress.	0%	5%	21%	32%	42%	5%	74%
I am good at keeping focused on my goals and priorities.	0%	11%	22%	50%	17%	11%	67%
I missed a major family-related event (birthday, anniversary) within the last year because of my job.	11%	11%	11%	33%	33%	22%	66%
I have written, defined goals for what I want to accomplish this term in Congress.	0%	26%	32%	11%	32%	26%	43%
I have the time and resources I need to accomplish my goals in Congress.	11%	39%	11%	33%	6%	50%	39%
I have difficulty balancing my D.C. activities and my district activities.	11%	28%	33%	22%	6%	39%	28%
Most of my constituents understand the day-to-day activities I engage in.	32%	21%	26%	21%	0%	53%	21%
I have adequate control of my schedule.	21%	47%	16%	11%	5%	68%	16%

(n = 18-19)

Note: Data are sorted by the "overall agreement" column and excludes "does not apply" responses.

Source: "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 15 | Importance of Job Aspects to Members

	Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Overall Unimportance	Overall Importance
Staying in touch with your constituents	0%	0%	5%	0%	95%	0%	95%
Having a high-performing staff	0%	0%	0%	11%	89%	0%	100%
Effective communication between you and your staff	0%	0%	10%	5%	85%	0%	90%
Feeling invested in the work you are doing	0%	0%	0%	16%	84%	0%	100%
Feeling that you are performing an important public service	0%	0%	11%	5%	84%	0%	89%
Understanding how your job contributes to society as a whole	0%	5%	5%	15%	75%	5%	90%
Spending time with family	0%	0%	5%	26%	68%	0%	94%
Having clear goals	0%	11%	5%	26%	58%	11%	84%
Being respected by your colleagues	0%	0%	11%	42%	47%	0%	89%
Good working relationships with colleagues in my party	0%	0%	5%	58%	37%	0%	95%
Good working relationships with Members of my state delegation	0%	11%	16%	37%	37%	11%	74%
Managing the amount of work-related stress	0%	16%	32%	16%	37%	16%	53%
Feeling respect for your colleagues	0%	0%	21%	42%	37%	0%	79%
Feeling a sense of professional growth and development	0%	11%	16%	37%	37%	11%	74%
Spending time with friends	0%	0%	17%	50%	33%	0%	83%
Using technology effectively	11%	17%	17%	22%	33%	28%	55%
Good working relationships with party leaders	0%	0%	5%	63%	32%	0%	95%
Good working relationships with colleagues in the other party	0%	16%	16%	42%	26%	16%	68%
Predictability of weekly schedule	5%	5%	32%	32%	26%	10%	58%
Effectively juggling your official and campaign duties	5%	0%	5%	63%	26%	5%	89%
Taking time for personal pursuits (e.g., hobbies, exercise, reading)	11%	0%	28%	39%	22%	11%	61%
Predictability of daily work hours	11%	5%	53%	16%	16%	16%	32%
Having a strong association with your party	5%	0%	26%	53%	16%	5%	69%
Receiving recognition for your accomplishments	5%	16%	26%	37%	16%	21%	53%
Number of hours worked per week	5%	0%	47%	37%	11%	5%	48%

(n = 18-20)

Note: Data are sorted in descending order by the "very important" column and excludes "don't know/does not apply" responses.

Source: "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 16 | Member Satisfaction with Job Aspects

	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Overall Dissatisfaction	Overall Satisfaction
Having a high-performing staff*	0%	0%	0%	47%	53%	0%	100%
Effective communication between you and your staff*	0%	0%	10%	65%	25%	0%	90%
Understanding how your job contributes to society as a whole*	0%	5%	5%	45%	45%	5%	90%
Having clear goals*	0%	0%	11%	58%	32%	0%	90%
Feeling invested in the work you are doing*	0%	11%	0%	21%	68%	11%	89%
Feeling that you are performing an important public service*	0%	5%	5%	47%	42%	5%	89%
Staying in touch with your constituents*	0%	0%	16%	32%	53%	0%	85%
Good working relationships with colleagues in my party	0%	5%	11%	53%	32%	5%	85%
Being respected by your colleagues	0%	5%	16%	53%	26%	5%	79%
Good working relationships with party leaders	5%	5%	16%	42%	32%	10%	74%
Having a strong association with your party	0%	11%	21%	47%	21%	11%	68%
Feeling respect for your colleagues	0%	5%	32%	37%	26%	5%	63%
Good working relationships with Members of my state delegation	6%	6%	33%	39%	17%	12%	56%
Feeling a sense of professional growth and development	0%	16%	32%	37%	16%	16%	53%
Receiving recognition for your accomplishments	0%	0%	47%	47%	5%	0%	52%
Managing the amount of work-related stress	0%	5%	53%	32%	11%	5%	43%
Using technology effectively	0%	11%	47%	32%	11%	11%	43%
Effectively juggling your official and campaign duties	0%	37%	21%	37%	5%	37%	42%
Predictability of daily work hours	0%	33%	33%	22%	11%	33%	33%
Predictability of weekly schedule	0%	22%	44%	22%	11%	22%	33%
Good working relationships with colleagues in the other party	21%	16%	32%	16%	16%	37%	32%
Spending time with friends	11%	26%	32%	32%	0%	37%	32%
Number of hours worked per week	0%	17%	56%	17%	11%	17%	28%
Taking time for personal pursuits	11%	32%	37%	5%	16%	43%	21%
Spending time with family*	11%	21%	53%	11%	5%	32%	16%

(n = 18-20)

Note: Data are sorted in descending order by the “overall satisfaction” column and excludes “don’t know/does not apply” responses. Asterisk (*) denotes those aspects rated as “very important” by more than half of House Members in our sample.

Source: “Life in Congress: The Member Perspective,” A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 17 | Member's Level of Importance and Satisfaction with Different Aspects of Their Job

	Very Important	Very Satisfied	Difference (Gap)
Staying in touch with your constituents (1)	95%	53%	42%
Having a high-performing staff (2)	89%	53%	36%
Effective communication between you and your staff (3)	85%	25%	60%
Feeling that you are performing an important public service (4 - tie)	84%	42%	42%
Feeling invested in the work you are doing (4 - tie)	84%	68%	16%
Understanding how your job contributes to society as a whole (6)	75%	45%	30%
Spending time with family (7)	68%	5%	63%
Having clear goals (8)	58%	32%	26%
Being respected by your colleagues (9)	47%	26%	21%
Good working relationships with Members of my state delegation (10 - tie)	37%	17%	20%
Good working relationships with colleagues in my party (10 - tie)	37%	32%	5%
Managing the amount of work-related stress (10 - tie)	37%	11%	26%
Feeling a sense of professional growth and development (10 - tie)	37%	16%	21%
Feeling respect for your colleagues (10 - tie)	37%	26%	11%
Spending time with friends (15 - tie)	33%	0%	33%
Using technology effectively (15 - tie)	33%	11%	22%
Good working relationships with party leaders (17)	32%	32%	0%
Effectively juggling your official and campaign duties (18 - tie)	26%	5%	21%
Predictability of weekly schedule (18 - tie)	26%	11%	15%
Good working relationships with colleagues in the other party (18 - tie)	26%	16%	10%
Taking time for personal pursuits (e.g., hobbies, exercise, reading) (21)	22%	16%	6%
Receiving recognition for your accomplishments (22 - tie)	16%	5%	11%
Predictability of daily work hours (22 - tie)	16%	11%	5%
Having a strong association with your party (22 - tie)	16%	21%	-5%
Number of hours worked per week (25)	11%	11%	0%

(n = 18-20)

Note: Data are sorted in descending order by the "very important" column. The numbers in parentheses behind each job aspect indicate its position/ranking. Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" or "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "very important" or "very satisfied." "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.

Source: "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 18 | Member Opinions on How House Schedule in 112th Congress Has Affected Their Washington, D.C., and District Activities

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Overall Disagreement	Overall Agreement
My Washington, D.C., schedule is more predictable.	0%	0%	20%	20%	60%	0%	80%
My district schedule is more predictable.	0%	7%	29%	29%	36%	7%	64%
My time in Washington, D.C., is more productive.	20%	13%	13%	40%	13%	33%	53%
My time in the district is more productive.	0%	13%	40%	20%	27%	13%	47%
I can better balance Washington, D.C., activities and district activities.	0%	13%	33%	40%	13%	13%	53%
I can better balance my work schedule with my personal/family schedule.	0%	27%	27%	33%	13%	27%	47%

(n = 14-15)
 Note: Data are sorted in descending order by the “overall agreement” column and excludes “don’t know/does not apply” responses.
 Source: “Life in Congress: The Member Perspective,” A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

About the Research

Sample Size

Members of Congress | 194 members of the U.S. House of Representatives were randomly selected to participate in this survey. A total of 25 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 13% for the sample, and 6% for the House chamber. The survey was in the field August 4–October 31, 2011.

Notations

Analysis: With small sample sizes, the response of one participant can affect the overall results considerably; this should be noted when making interpretations of the data, particularly when interpreting small percentage differences.

Figures: Unless otherwise noted in a specific figure, the following are applicable to data depicted in throughout this report.

- Percentages for a question may not total 100% due to rounding.
- Percentages for a question may not total 100% if some answers are excluded.

Generalization of Results: As with any research, readers should exercise caution when generalizing results and take individual circumstances and experiences into consideration when making decisions based on these data. While we are confident in this research, it is prudent to understand that the results presented in this survey report are only truly representative of the survey respondents.

Number of Respondents: The number of respondents (indicated by “n” in figures) varies from figure to figure because some respondents did not answer all of the questions. Individuals may not have responded to a question on the survey because the question or some of its parts were not applicable or because the requested data were unavailable. This also accounts for the varying number of responses within each figure.

About the Respondents

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

Age	
Millennials (born 1981 and after)	0%
Generation X (born 1965-1980)	4%
Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964)	80%
Veterans (born before 1945)	16%
(n = 25)	

Current Term	
1st	20%
2nd	12%
3rd	16%
4th	8%
5th	8%
6th	8%
7th	12%
8th	4%
9th	0%
10th	8%
11th	4%
(n = 25)	

Political Party	
Republican	48%
Democrat	52%
(n = 25)	

Gender

Male	84%
Female	16%
(n = 25)	

Marital Status

Married, living with spouse	72%
Single, never married	12%
Divorced	12%
Widowed	4%
Separated	0%
Domestic partnership	0%
(n = 25)	

Caregiving Responsibilities

None	44%
Childcare responsibilities for child (children)	28%
Eldercare responsibilities for individual(s)	22%
Childcare and eldercare responsibilities	0%
Other care giving responsibilities	6%
(n = 18)	

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