

# Why Summer Makes Us Lazy

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## *The New Yorker:*

In his meticulous diaries, written from 1846 to 1882, the Harvard librarian John Langdon Sibley complains often about the withering summer heat: “The heat wilts & enervates me & makes me sick,” he wrote in 1852. Sibley lived before the age of air-conditioning, but recent research suggests that his observation is still accurate: summer really does tend to be a time of reduced productivity. Our brains do, figuratively, wilt.

One of the key issues is motivation: when the weather is unpleasant, no one wants to go outside, but when the sun is shining, the air is warm, and the sky is blue, leisure calls. A 2008 study using data from the American Time Use Survey found that, on rainy days, men spent, on average, thirty more minutes at work than they did on comparatively sunny days. In 2012, a group of researchers from Harvard University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill conducted a field study of Japanese bank workers and found a similar pattern: bad weather made workers more productive, as measured by the time it took them to complete assigned tasks in a loan-application process.

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But each season has its share of attractive days—and a skier’s mind would likely have many opportunities to wander in the dead of winter. There’s evidence, however, that in summer, our thinking itself may simply become lazier. In 1994, Gerald Clore, a pioneer in researching how ambient mood-altering phenomena affect cognition and judgment, found that pleasant weather can often lead to a disconcerting lapse in thoughtfulness.

Read the whole story: [\*The New Yorker\*](#)