Social Loafing: An Organizational Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL LOAFING

The act of a person performing worse in a group setting than they would alone is known as social loafing. When working in groups, there is a tendency for less individual effort to be put in than when working alone. This is known as social loafing (Williams & Karau, 1991). It simply means that the sum of two plus two is less than four. In addition, social, psychological, and economic research has questioned the advantages of group work, arguing that it may under some conditions encourage less effort—a "social loafing effect"—in spite of the ideological allure of workplace democracy. As a result, academics are concerned about the complex link between work ethics and group discipline.

It is crucial to distinguish between social loafing and common coordination issues between groups. There are several potential causes for social loafing, but generally speaking, individualistic persons experience greater issues with the same. Reduced performance should be avoided by lessening one's ego's influence and other internal causes that may eventually cause it.

CAUSAL FACTORS OF SOCIAL LOAFING

Studies on social loafing are increasingly being undertaken in domains other than management, despite the fact that the term "social loafing" was initially used by psychologists and advocated in management theories. This is evidence that social loafing's effects have been studied by an increasing number of researchers who are interested in the subject.

The following sentences outline many aspects of social loafing and explain why people frequently put in less effort on group projects than on individual tasks.

Group size & social loafing

In 1913, German researcher Ringelmann made one of the earliest accounts of social loafing cited in Ingham, Levinger, Graves & Peckham1974). The inverse relationship between the size of the team and the amount of effort put forth is known as the Ringelmann Effect. Ringelmann talked about an experiment where prisoners powered a flour mill. As additional men were added, he claimed, each guy started to rely on his neighbor to provide the necessary effort. Some inmates grew accustomed to having their hands follow the crank, while others even allowed the crank to tug their hands. According to Kravitz & Martin(1986), Ringelmann attributed this to a motivational loss. Many theories explain why social loafing occurs , below are several explanations of social loafing causes.

Self-interest & social loafing

Olson introduced the idea of self-interest in 1965 and noted that any group trying collective action will have incentives for free riders, akin to social loafing. If the group is attempting to deliver public goods, they will benefit from other people's labour for free. A non-rival, non-excludable good is referred to as a public good. This implies that no one can be successfully barred from using the good because the amount of the good used by one person does not affect the amount of the good that is accessible for consumption by others. The common good is similar to a group project that calls for individual effort from each member. Collective action is not always the same as pursuing a single aim or group of goals.

Social impact theory and social loafing

Latane & Darley (1970) first proposed the term "bystander effect" to explain how people respond to urgent situations differently depended on present others. The bystander effect is a psychological phenomenon in which someone is less likely to intervene in an emergency situation when other people are present and able to help than when he/she is alone. There is a noticeable difference when there is just oneself present vs circumstances where several people are involved. One reduces altruism when there are others present. The fundamental reason why this effect frequently occurs is that the presence of a bystander might spread blame. That is, none of the parties concerned are aware of who needs to act. Every bystander effect is charged with the duty to assist.

Self-attention and social loafing

In order to explain the social loafing effect, Mullen (1983) suggested the self-attention perspective. Working on a group activity lowers self-awareness, which causes people to neglect important performance norms and practise less self-regulation, according to Mullen's (1983) assertion regarding self-attention. Identity of performers appears to be a key component in the manifestation of social loafing effects. The social loafing effect is avoided when performers are directly connected to their performance. Another study by

Mullen Johnson and Drake demonstrates that production will rise in a real organisational setting as the other total ratio of the subordinates rises.

Task characteristics and social loafing

There has been some research on objective conditions where the task qualities are the main focus. In Shen's study from 1992, he discussed the connection between task variability, job qualities, and social loafing and noted that the lower social loafing is, the higher the task variability is. Furthermore, Hackman (1987) suggested that decreasing the social loafing effect in groups by giving them interesting tasks. In fact, he said that when group members are engaged in inspiring task, laziness decreases.

Dispensability of effort and social loafing

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Cultural orientations and social loafing

Hofstede's measurements. Hofstede (1990) defined national culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" because culture is such a broad concept. Culture is based on shared symbol systems that reflect concepts about values, conventions, and beliefs. The term "beliefs" refers to a person's fundamental knowledge of the world or of what is true or wrong. Value is what a group of people categorizes as good and bad or what they consider to be significant. Norms are guidelines for acceptable conduct that define what individuals should expect from one another and from themselves. In other words, people from the same culture will have comparable preferences ingrained in their behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Williams, Harkins, and Latane introduced a new variable to their cheering experiment to examine if participants would be less likely to slack off if they believed their individual effort could be measured (Williams, Harkins, & Latane, 1981). Microphones were linked to each participant to convey to them that their individual efforts would be evaluated. The findings imply that the conviction that their individual efforts are monitored does deter social laziness.

Harkins and Petty (1982) sought to ascertain whether increasing work difficulty or interest would lessen social laziness. According to their research, when people are assigned a challenging task, they work equally as diligently as they would alone. Additionally, social loafing is diminished when someone is assigned a work that they are competent at or about which they know a lot.

In an effort to develop and improve on the work by Latane et al., Zaccaro (1984) investigated the effect of task attractiveness in social loafing (1979). They discovered that social loafing may be prevented by group engagement, work commitment, and identifiability. They contend that the application of the demands to produce is focused by group cohesion (ex. high stresses and recognisable individual effort). This intricate group process reduces social laziness.

In 1987, they tested using a social criterion, and in 1988, they tested using an impartial criterion (Harkins & Szymanski, 1988). The results of the social standard experiment showed that while engaging in an activity that maximised their potential, such as brainstorming, both a person or a pair of individuals did not require any additional motivation to refrain from loafing. First-time participation in the exercise raised the question of whether participants' motivation would wane after proving to themselves that they could finish it successfully (Szymanski & Harkins, 1987).

Job visibility and intrinsic task involvement are connected negatively with social loafing in salesmen, according to George (1992). Based on her research, George recommends improving intrinsic employee involvement, maybe through job enrichment (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) and accountability, for tasks that are inherently low visibility.

The majority of earlier research concentrated on what causes social loafing, while Ferrante, Green, and Forster (2006) investigated what group leaders could do to lessen social loafing. Organizational justice and procedural justice were two social loafing elements that were evaluated by the researchers. The effectiveness of teams with motivated leaders (i.e., less social loafing) was compared to the effectiveness of teams without a formal leader. They came to the conclusion that teams with formal, compensated leaders outperformed those without formal leaders in terms of performance and laziness (Ferrante, Green, & Forster, 2006).

Stark, Shaw, and Duffy investigated in 2007 whether or not a person's preference for teamworkand George, 1995). They put out the hypothesis that social laziness is inversely correlated with a person's inclination for group work. Additionally, they proposed that the negative association between preferences for group work will be larger when a person's winning orientation, defined as "a desire for favourable social comparisons and positive relative positions" (Stark, Shaw, & Duffy, 2007, p. 717) is low.

OBJECTIVES

• To research the myriad elements that contribute to social loafing.

• To investigate the connection between the nature of an organisation and societal laziness.

• To make recommendations on how to stop social loafing.

HYPOTHESIS (Ho)

1. There is no relationship between group size and social loafing.
2. There is no relationship between organization type and social loafing.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The issue of social loafing's causes must be identified because it has theoretical as well as practical implications. Numerous academics have devoted their time to researching and debating the pertinent elements at the theoretical level.

At the practical level, Latane, et al. (1979) have proposed that social loafing is a type of social disease having "negative consequences for individuals and societies". As "teamwork" becomes more popular and describe in various fields today, many researchers have developed theories of particular causes of social loafing and figured out considerable variables to understand social loafing. However most of studies were based on experiments.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The researcher discovered that the social loafing effect does in fact exist in our society, based on past study as well as personal experience. Therefore, this researcher used quantitative research methods by distributing a questionnaire and using descriptive statistics in order to verify the hypothesis put forth.

PARTICIPANTS

100 people from diverse groups and organizations—of various sizes—will participate in the study.

INSTRUMENTS

In order to analyse how the inclination to loaf relates to the several objectives-stated dimensions, questionnaires have been developed to quantify it.

DATA ANALYSIS

The following is the graphical and diagrammatical data of the same interpretations are given bellow each question respectively.

Q1 How often do you sacrifice self-interest for your group?

The question was asked to everyone in the sample formulated for the purpose of research. The results of the same have been diagrammatically expressed and are as follows:

| N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		1.55
Std. Deviation		1.60
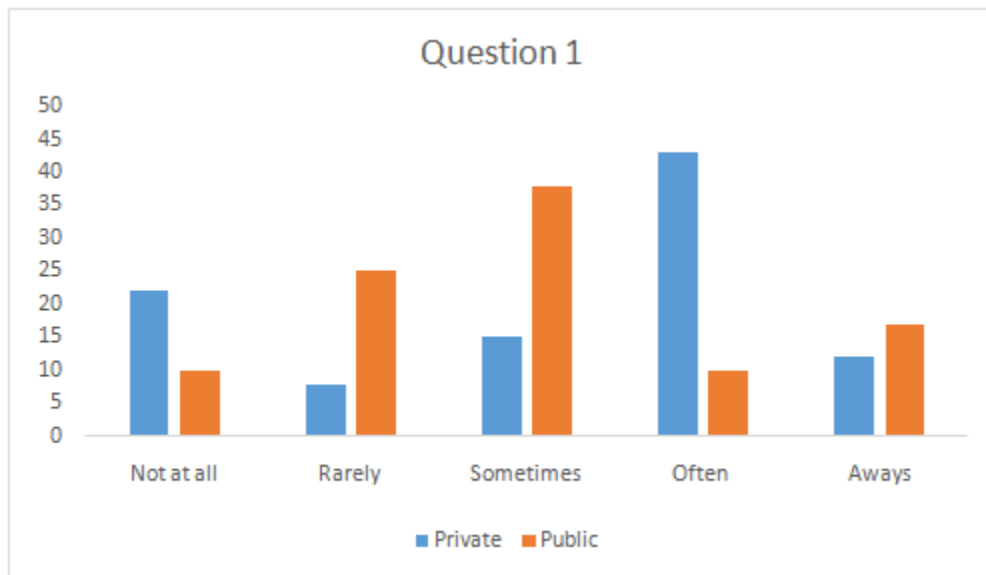
From the collected sample it is clear that most of the private sector employees believed in the act of sacrificing self interest for the good of the group.

This implies that the tendency to loaf is more for employees of private organizations in comparisons to employees of public organizations.

Q2. How often do you do what your fellow group members prefer?

| N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		3.542
Std. Deviation		1.64
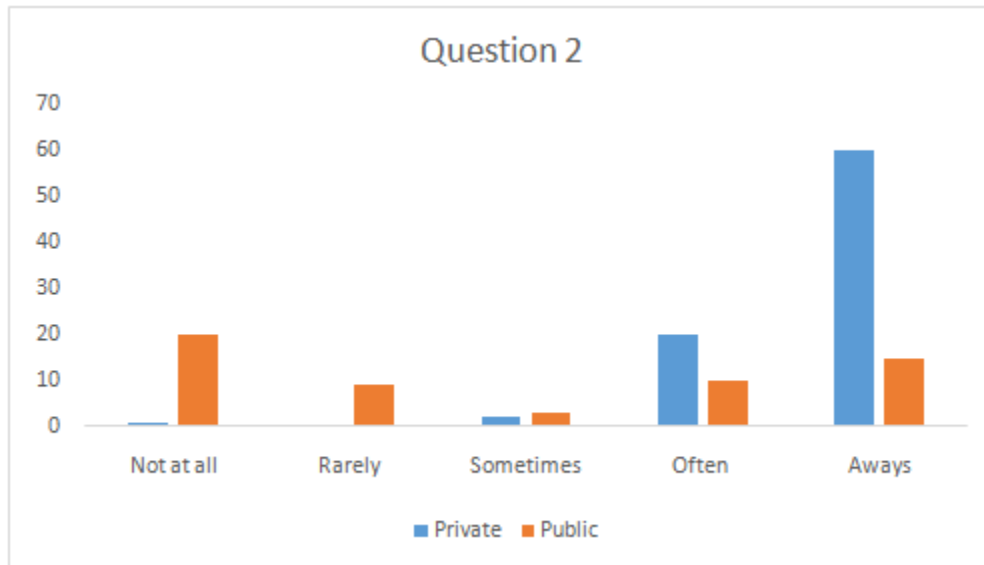
Question 2

In this question the private sector workers agreed to the fact that they were inclined to do what their group members preferred therefore increasing their loafing in groups during that situation respectively.

This also implies that the tendency to loaf is more for employees of private organizations in comparisons to employees of public organizations.

**Q3. How often do you stick with your group through difficulties?**

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		2.57
Std. Deviation		0.69

Question 3
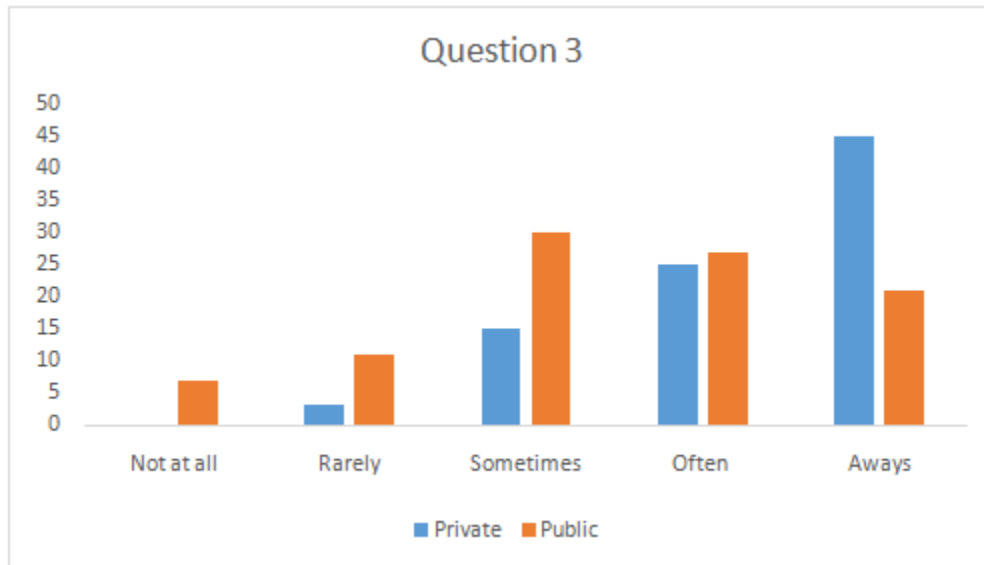
In this category mixed response was observed by the respondents at the same time maximum agreed that they would not stick to their groups when going through difficulties this showed the fact that most people would stay in groups as long as they were getting its benefits without realizing the fact that there true potential was not getting realized by the same respectively,

4. How often do you maintain harmony in your group?

| N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		4.2
Std. Deviation		1.60

Question 4
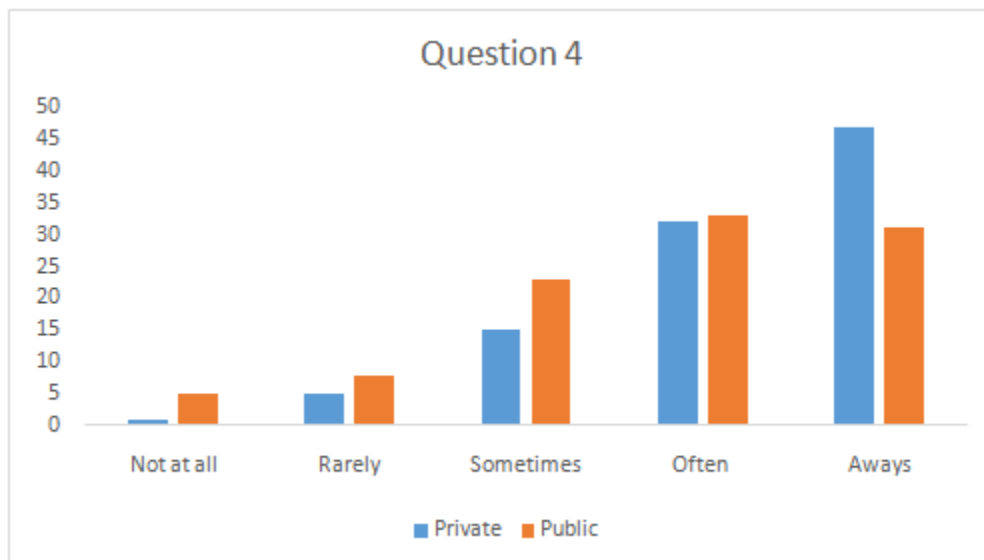
The respondents from private sector in this category are more inclined towards having harmony in the group this tells that even though their productivity was declining, there seemed to be harmony in the group respectively.

This implies that the tendency to loaf is more for employees of private organizations in comparisons to employees of public organizations.

**5. How often do you care about your own benefits?**

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		3.55
Std. Deviation		1.75
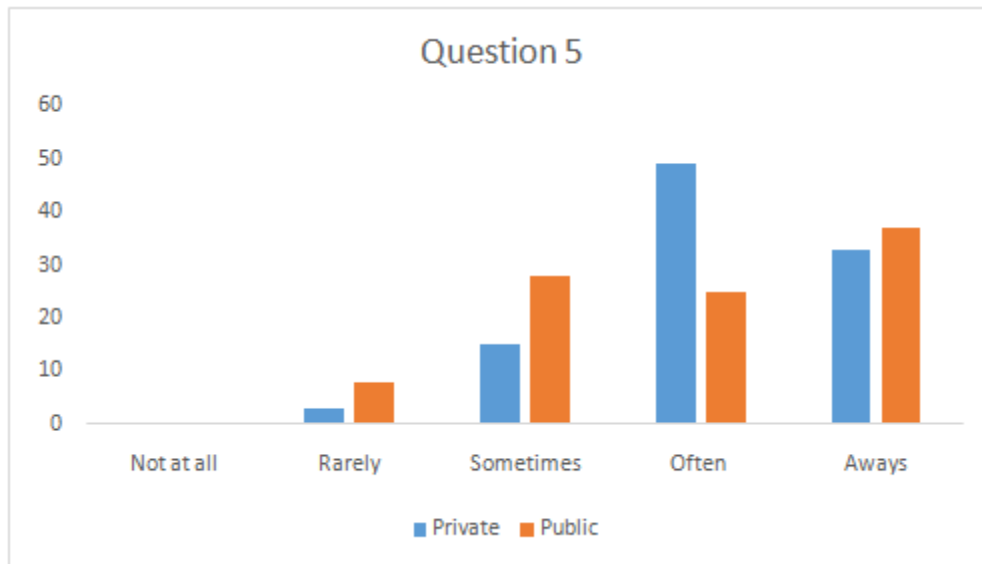
Through this question it is clearly indicated that people form groups and remain in them only because they care about their own benefits rather than growth of the entire group as a whole respectively. The response was mixed in this case from both the categories.

6. How often do you ignore the meeting time?

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		2.58
Std. Deviation		2.1
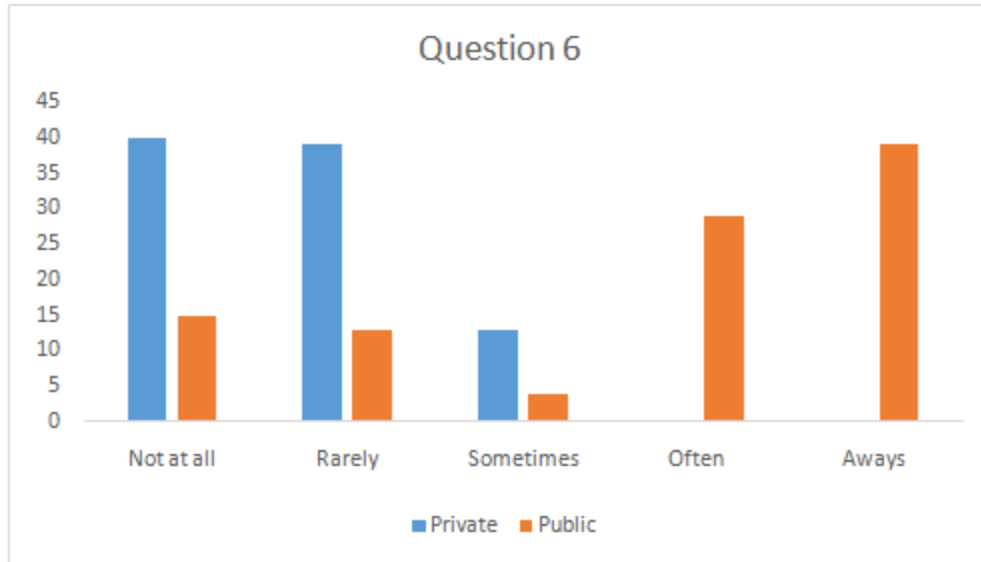
Question 6

Mixed responses are observed with more inclination of people towards not being present at the meeting time some would be there no matter what but the effects on productivity still remain questionable respectively.

Q7. How often do you remain willing to help your group members, even though you are dissatisfied with their performance?

N		Valid	100
		Missing	0
	Mean		3.37
	Std. Deviation		1.64

Question 7
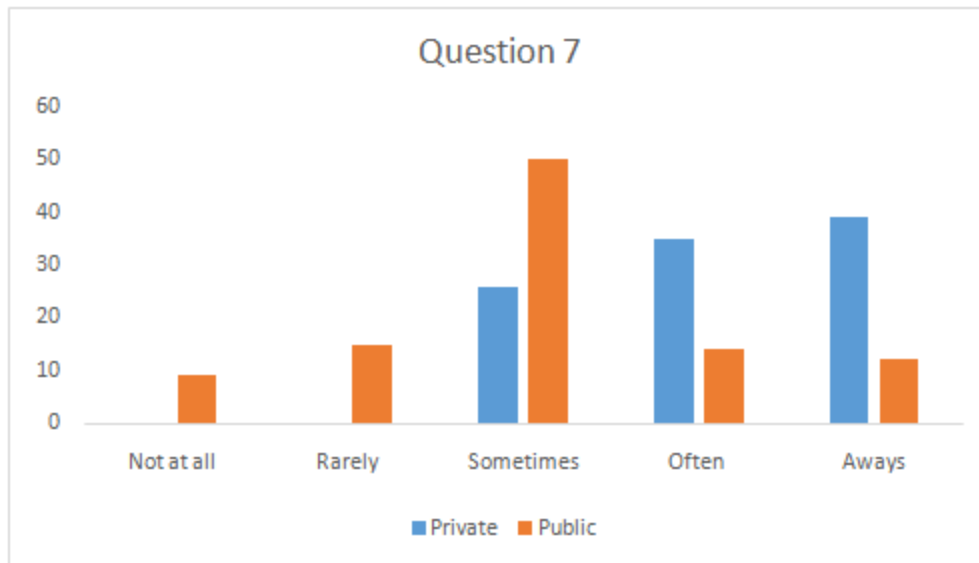
There is more inclination of people in the private sector to help others even when they are not satisfied with the group member's performance. A major cause of the same could be the fact that they are encountered by similar patterns of behavior. This also implies that the tendency to loaf is more for employees of private organizations in comparisons to employees of public organizations.

8. How often do you ignore arguments within your group even, when you are strongly disagree with other members?

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		3.72
Std. Deviation		1.12

Question 8
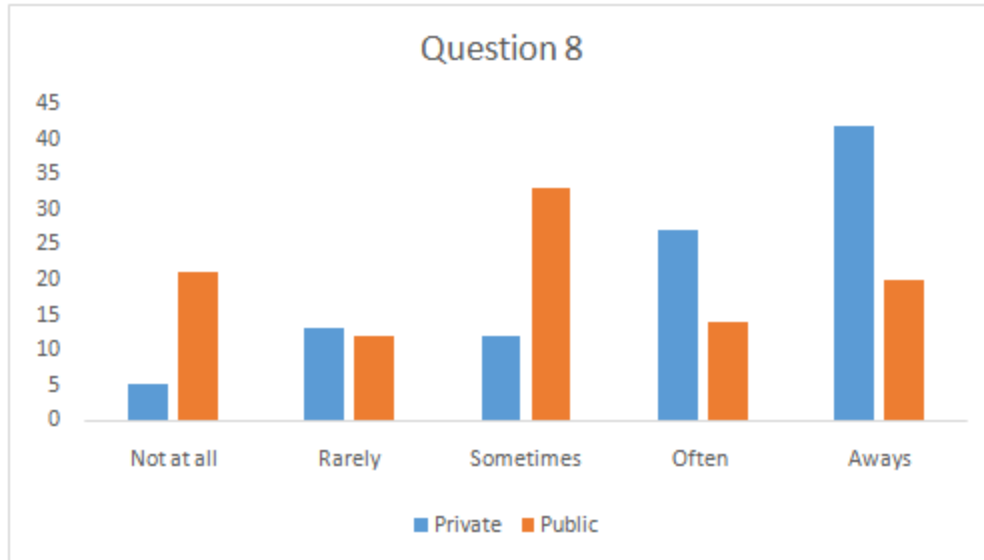
This indicates that people don't want to argue about the performance of others. The cause of this could be fear of expulsion from groups and other factors eg- office and college respondents would agree that they stick together and avoid arguments because they would in future need each others assistance in one way or the other . This aiming implies that the tendency to loaf is more for employees of private organizations in comparisons to employees of public organizations.

9. **When you think you are more capable than other group members, how often do you voluntarily pick difficult parts and leave easier ones to other members?**

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		3.95
Std. Deviation		0.84
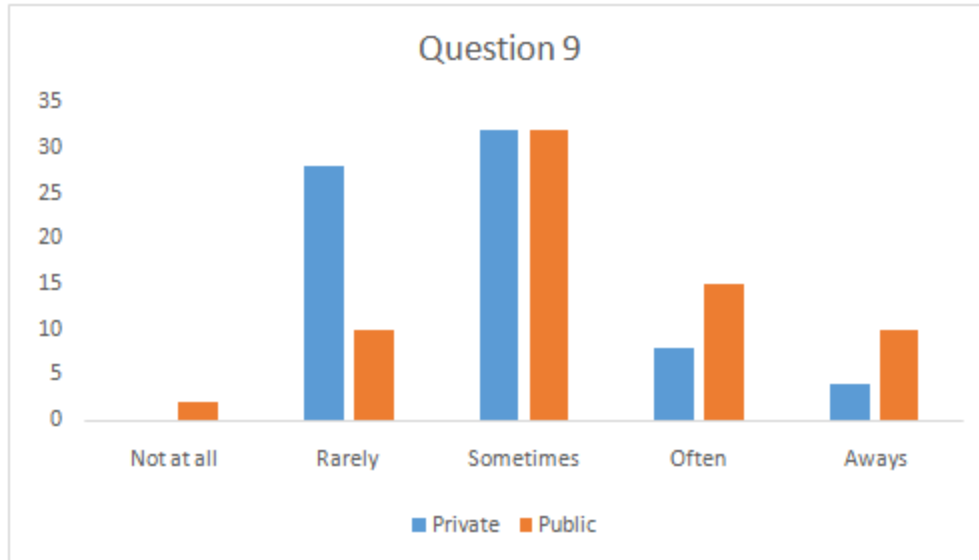
The above data clearly indicates the fact that people do not think of group performance as a whole and would easily forego the task of others as they aren't being judged for the performance of a group member . The response was mixed, not indicating any specific group to loaf more.

Conclusion:

It is clear from the above data analysis that barring two questions, on most of the cases, the tendency to loaf is more prominent in private sector than in public sector.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO OVERCOME LOAFING

- Consider carefully how many people you'll need to complete the assignment. Because it is simpler for individuals to feel unnecessary or inadequate and because it is simpler for them to "hide" in a larger group, the risk of social loafing rises as group size grows (particularly if the group includes 10 or more people).

- Out loudly spell out each team member's responsibilities. Social loafing is more prevalent when the entire group is given a task. For instance, you may state the objective "By Monday, each of us will be accountable for finding five articles on the theme of stress" rather than "By Monday, let's locate several articles on the topic of stress." Individuals are more responsible for their actions when they have clear goals.

- Clearly spell out each person's responsibilities in front of the group. The likelihood of social loafing increases when the entire group is given a task. For instance, you could say, "By Monday, let's locate a few articles on the subject of stress," as opposed to, "By Monday, each of us will be responsible for finding five articles on the subject of stress." People are more responsible for their actions when they have clear goals to work toward.

- Create a mechanism for assessing each member's contribution and make it known to the entire group. Every member might provide feedback to every other member at a midterm feedback session. Individuals' sense of responsibility would grow as a result. You could even want to talk about the idea of social loafing to deter it.

- Assemble a cohesive team. Group members are more likely to participate equally when they have close relationships with one another and a stake in the group's success.

- Give people very interesting and rewarding activities to do. Create engaging, distinctive, and diverse activities that will significantly affect the participants, the organisation, or the surrounding environment. For instance, one group member may be in charge of developing a new incentive-pay scheme that allows staff members to donate a portion of their bonus to their preferred charities.

- Ensure that people sense their necessity. Members will feel disheartened and are less likely to contribute in the future if the group disregards their efforts because they don't fulfil the group's performance requirements. Be certain that each person feels wanted and included in the group.

- Individualistic folks should refrain from attending casual gatherings. People could be more focused on the task and contribute to that, but the structure of formal groupings would make interaction vital.

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