



Mineral



Question of the Week

November 26, 2025

Question

How many hours must an employee work to be considered full time?

ANSWER

Generally, employers are free to decide how many hours an employee needs to work to qualify as “full time.”

Many employers choose to make 40 hours per week their standard for full-time employment, but 35 and 32 hours per week are fairly common as well. Full-time and part-time are simply qualifications you can use to designate who will receive certain benefits that you offer voluntarily. Even then, you don’t have to strictly adhere to providing all voluntary benefits for “full-time” employees. For instance, you could define full time as 32 hours per week and make that the qualification for *most* voluntary benefits while still requiring that employees work 40 hours per week to qualify for tuition reimbursement or a sabbatical.

Be aware that your *internal* designation doesn’t have any impact on the applicability of employment laws. For instance, the fact that you designated someone as part time doesn’t mean they wouldn’t be entitled to unemployment insurance, state-mandated sick leave (where required), or protections under antidiscrimination laws. Some laws, like the Affordable Care Act, include a definition for full-time employment, and those thresholds will apply in the context of those laws.

This Q&A does not constitute legal advice and does not address state or local law.

