

The family work week^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Article in pdf^[2]

Excerpts from the article: The paid work week has recently shown a steady decrease in Canada and in most other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Usalca 2008). While a drop in the average time spent at the job may suggest more personal time at the individual level, disposable family time is contingent on the combined paid work schedules of family members. In fact, overall family work hours have increased because the number of contributors has increased. In 2008, dual earners accounted for three-quarters of all couples with dependent children—up from just over one-third in 1976. Although individual paid hours are well documented, less is known about employment hours and earnings within families. More families with two earners means less time available for unpaid work and leisure activities. One potential concern might be that parents are spending less time with their children. However, this may not necessarily be true since people make choices about how to spend their time. Indeed, research has shown that, at the expense of other activities, both mothers and fathers in dual-earner families have increased the time they spend on child care (Bianchi 2000 and Marshall 2006). A second concern is the pressure and stress parents experience when attempting to manage work and family responsibilities. The issue of juggling paid and unpaid work has helped spur the creation of many workplace programs and policies such as dependent care initiatives, work–life stress management, workplace flexibility, and leave and benefits (HRSDC 2007). Understanding the labour market dynamics within families helps with the ongoing development of such practices. The third major area of interest is family role specialization. Research has shown that although couples are increasingly sharing economic and domestic responsibilities within families, a gender division of labour is still evident (Marshall 2006). Within many dual-earner couples, women continue to spend relatively more time on domestic work and men more time on economic work. The increase in dual-earners has slowed, so perhaps the evolution of breadwinning patterns within couples has as well.

Tags: mother's labour force participation^[3]
work/life balance^[4]

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