

72% of working students accumulate over 40 productive hours per week

Students who work while going to school do not substitute one activity for another. Their activities add up and can create a very busy weekly schedule, especially when factoring in other important dimensions of their development such as leisure activities and friendships.

Every student must balance this equation in their own way and that includes all spheres of their life.



Many different factors affect work/school balance

→ **Number of hours worked, and the total time engaged in school, paid, and personal activities**

Numerous studies indicate that **working more than 15 hours per week can have negative effects**, which are likely to be even more harmful above 20 hours.

In reality, however, every young person is unique, and **the number of hours worked should vary based on:**

- Age and sex
- Time of year (exams, assignment deadlines, etc.)
- Level of instruction (high school, vocational, CEGEP, etc.)
- Work-based pressures (e.g., stress, poor workplace relationships, physical constraints)

Remember that to balance work and school, students must reorganize their schedules to reconcile the various activities in their day-to-day lives.



→ Work-based pressures

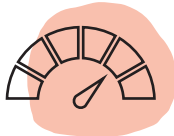
Certain pressures students may experience at work can negatively influence their studies and their health. **A few examples:**



Tense situations with customers or co-workers



Evening or night shifts



A high workload or fast-paced work environment



Working long hours while standing



Heavy responsibilities (e.g., supervising other employees, closing the store at the end of the day)



Working 6 hours/week in difficult conditions can be more harmful than working 15 hours in good conditions.



→ Reasons for having a job

Students who have to work due to financial responsibilities or to pay for their own schooling are more likely to report difficulties balancing work and school than those who work by choice (e.g., to pay for personal expenses).

Even back in 2015, **27.3% of Montreal students worked while going to school to help support their families.** During the current period of inflation, this situation could extend to many more students.

→ The labour shortage

At a time when many employers are enabling easy access to employment by not requiring qualification and offering high salaries, it can be tempting for some young people to take on positions that are harmful to their studies.



For instance, **69% of students enrolled in general adult education report that they would be willing to leave school** if offered a well-paying job.

Certain students are at higher risk of having trouble balancing work and school

Certain situations or characteristics can make students **likelier to work more hours** and thus experience issues with balancing work and school.

- Come from a single-parent family
- Come from a family whose parents lack post-secondary diplomas
- Come from a family in which the parents are unemployed
- Come from a disadvantaged community
- Have an immigrant background
- Be at risk of dropping out
- Be enrolled in postsecondary studies
- Have children in their care

Young people in at-risk situations are more likely to work longer hours and are thus less likely to gain the benefits of working while going to school.

Act respecting the regulation of work by children

Quebec has established provisions governing certain aspects of child labour. Among them, the *Act respecting the regulation of work by children*, in effect since 2023:



Sets the **minimum age for employment at 14 years**.



Limits work done by children aged 14 to 16 (who are obligated to attend school) to **17 hours per week**, including a maximum of 10 hours from Monday to Friday.*

* These restrictions do not apply if educational services are not offered for a period of more than seven consecutive days, such as during summer holidays.

Impacts of working while attending school: beneficial in certain conditions, harmful in others

Though working while going to school can be harmful when certain conditions are not met, it can also be beneficial when the pressures often associated with employment are kept to a minimum.

Benefits

- Better grades and lower risk of dropping out*
- Exposure to the job market and its requirements
- Discovering one's passions and professional occupations
- Acquiring new skills and knowledge
- Developing a sense of accountability and autonomy
- Feeling valued and earning recognition

Drawbacks

- Lateness and absenteeism
- Disengagement with school and dropping out
- Worsening mental health
- Greater fatigue
- Higher consumption of cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, and medications
- Increased risk of workplace accidents

Students who have trouble balancing work with school are 3 times more likely to consider dropping out.

*When working fewer than 15 h/week.

Avenues for promoting a good work/school/life balance

Employers

- ✓ Offer flexible and adapted schedules (e.g., max 20 h/week, reduced schedule during critical times at school).
- ✓ Promote the value of education (e.g., encourage students to continue their studies, acknowledge their school successes).
- ✓ Reduce the pressures associated with jobs offered to students.

Parents or practitioners

- ✓ Inquire about the student's job and number of hours worked.
- ✓ Take an interest in their schooling and get a sense of their engagement at school.
- ✓ Be on the lookout for signs of changes in their personal life and health (e.g., fatigue, absences, lateness at school).

Students

- ✓ Be aware of signs like stress, fatigue, or absences and lateness at school.
- ✓ Set your limits according to your abilities.
- ✓ Ask your employer for school-friendly working conditions or choose a job that offers them.

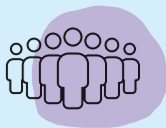
It is also important that the public discourse:

- Values education and graduation
- Exerts as strong a pressure as that of the labour shortage



Some statistics

In Quebec



The **employment rate** among Quebec youth aged 15 to 19 rose from **35.5% in 1976 to 50.6% in 2024**.



Among Canadian provinces, Quebec ranks first for the proportion of students aged 15 to 29 **enrolled in full-time studies and working during the school year**.



The proportion of students aged 15 to 19 who work **15 hours or more** per week grew from **35% in the 1980s to 45% in the 2000s**.



The proportion of working students **increases according to grade level**, growing from **38% in secondary 1 to 69.4% in secondary 5**.

In Montreal*

An estimated **37%** of high school students work while attending school.
 Girls: 39%
 Boys: 34%

84% | Fewer than 11 h/week
 Girls: 87% Boys: 81%

7% | 11 to 15 hours
 Girls: 7% Boys: 8%

9% | 16 hours or more
 Girls: 7% Boys: 11%

Main employment sectors

27% Sales
 17% Sporting activities
 11% Restaurant industry
 10% Food assistance services

* We thank the Direction de santé publique de Montréal for processing the data from the 2016–2017 Québec Health Survey of High School Students concerning work/school balance among Montreal high school students.

Find out more (French only):

www.researeussitemontreal.ca/dossiers-thematiques/conciliation-etudes-travail

(Link also leads to all the sources for the information in this infographic, further courses of action, resources, etc.)

An infographic by



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