

# Work Hours

The story of rising income for working families is, at bottom, a story about rising annual work hours – particularly among women. *The State of Working America 2004/2005* takes a detailed look at the trends in work hours since 1979 and the impact of the recession on hours and income from 2000-2002. The data presented here focus especially on two-parent families with children in the prime child-rearing years, ages 25-54.

1979-2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ For wives in families with two parents between 25 and 54 and with children, annual work hours rose sharply from 1979 to 2000, with percentage increases ranging from 30.8% in the top income quintile to 69.5% in the second lowest.</li> <li>❖ The extra hours worked by wives in 2000, compared to 1979, translates into additional full-time workweeks as follows: 8 weeks in the bottom quintile, 12.9 weeks in the second, 12.5 weeks in the third, 9.2 in the fourth, and 8.3 in the fifth.</li> </ul>
2000-2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The recession and jobless recovery had a significant impact on these families, reducing work hours (and income in most cases) for husbands and wives in all income quintiles by percentages ranging from 1.1% (top quintile wives) to 9.9% (bottom quintile wives).</li> <li>❖ In total family hours – husbands’ and wives’ hours combined – the reduction in hours from 2000-2002 was as follows: -6.7% for the bottom quintile; -2.9%, second quintile; -1.8%, third; -2.3%, fourth; and -1.7% for the top income quintile.</li> </ul>
Family Work Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ In 2002, even after a decline from 2000-2002, the average number of hours worked annually by all families was 11% higher than in 1975, when this data first became available.</li> </ul>
Working Mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Wives’ work contributed significantly to income growth in all quintiles between 1979 and 2000. In the lowest quintile, instead of growing by 7.5%, income would have fallen by 13.9% without the wife’s income. For the middle fifth of earners, the 24.0% increase would have been only 5.1% without the wives’ work.</li> <li>❖ For prime-age (25-54) working wives with children, annual earnings grew strongly across all income quintiles from 1979-2000, from a low of 71.4% in the fourth quintile to a high of 86.6% in the second quintile.</li> </ul>

- ❖ For the wives in the bottom three quintiles, the biggest factor in their earnings growth from 1979-2000 was their increasing annual work hours. For those in the top two quintiles, their income growth was predominantly a result of higher wages.
- ❖ The downturn and jobless recovery brought higher unemployment and less opportunity for additional work hours. For working wives in the bottom 40% of families, this meant significant loss of earnings from 2000-2002: -8.5% in the bottom fifth and -5.4% in the second fifth. Earnings fell, as well, for women in the fourth quintile (-2.8%). Women in the middle fifth stayed essentially even (0.4% growth) by offsetting their reduction in annual hours with higher wages. Women in the top quintile did best, with a 1.4% earnings growth, the smallest reduction in annual hours (-1.1%) and wages that grew.

Annual Hours  
Worked by  
Husbands  
and Wives,  
25-54, With  
Children

	1979	1989	2000	2002	1979- 1989	1989- 2000	1979- 2000	2000- 2002
<b>Husbands</b>								
Bottom fifth	1,722	1,722	1,827	1,732	0.0 %	6.1%	6.1%	-5.2%
Second fifth	2,069	2,137	2,117	2,070	3.3	-0.9	2.3	-2.2
Middle fifth	2,150	2,198	2,212	2,181	2.2	0.7	2.9	-1.4
Fourth fifth	2,194	2,257	2,291	2,241	2.9	1.5	4.4	-2.2
Top fifth	2,314	2,387	2,379	2,332	3.2	-0.3	2.8	-2.0
<b>Wives</b>								
Bottom fifth	523	712	842	758	36.2%	18.3%	61.1%	-9.9%
Second fifth	741	1,042	1,256	1,206	40.7	20.4	69.5	-3.9
Middle fifth	919	1,236	1,420	1,385	34.5	14.8	54.5	-2.5
Fourth fifth	1,109	1,363	1,475	1,439	22.9	8.3	33.1	-2.5
Top fifth	1,071	1,310	1,401	1,385	22.4	6.9	30.8	-1.1
<b>Combined</b>								
Bottom fifth	2,245	2,434	2,669	2,490	8.4%	9.7%	18.9%	-6.7%
Second fifth	2,810	3,179	3,372	3,276	13.2	6.1	20.0	-2.9
Middle fifth	3,069	3,434	3,632	3,566	11.9	5.8	18.4	-1.8
Fourth fifth	3,303	3,620	3,766	3,680	9.6	4.0	14.0	-2.3
Top fifth	3,384	3,697	3,780	3,717	9.2	2.2	11.7	-1.7

*Addendum: Wives' extra work hours, 1979-2000*

	Added wives' hours	Expressed as full-time weeks.
Bottom fifth	319	8.0
Second fifth	515	12.9
Middle fifth	501	12.5
Fourth fifth	367	9.2
Top fifth	330	8.3

Source: Authors' analysis of March CPS data.

Request  
Your Review  
Copy

- ❖ Call Nancy Coleman, Karen Conner, or Stephaan Harris at 202-775-8810
- ❖ Email your request to [news@epinet.org](mailto:news@epinet.org)