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## Quality of Employment in Canada

# Distribution of weekly working hours, 1976 to 2022

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# Distribution of weekly working hours, 1976 to 2022

The number of Canadians who work part-time (less than 30 hours per week) or full-time (30 hours per week or more) offers basic information on the pattern of usual work hours within the labour market. These broad categories can be complemented by data on detailed work hour bands, which provide more insights on the types of schedules found within the labour market, particularly for persons working very short or very long hours.

In 1976, nearly half (48.1%) of workers in Canada usually worked from 40 to less than 45 hours per week. After declining to 38.5% in 1994, this proportion has remained relatively stable since. In 2022, working from 40 to less than 45 hours remained the most common schedule and about 4 in 10 workers (41.0%) had weekly work hours in this range. Other notable changes since the mid-1990s include a decline in the proportion of workers working more than 45 hours per week, and an increase in the share who work from 35 to less than 40 hours per week.

The distribution of weekly working hours provides information on hours worked in all jobs, by standardized hour bands. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Expert Group on Quality of Employment recommends using bands of 4 or 5 hours. However, to facilitate interpretation in the Canadian context, a more limited number of bands are considered as part of the indicator: (1) Less than 15 hours, (2) from 15 to less than 30 hours, (3) from 30 to less than 35 hours, (4) from 35 to less than 40 hours, (5) from 40 to less than 45 hours, (6) from 45 to less than 50 hours and (7) 50 hours or more.

This breakdown by more detailed hour bands offers information on the work-life balance of Canadians. Working a short number of hours may be an indication of underemployment or a choice to devote time to other activities and responsibilities. Conversely, those working an extended number of hours may experience difficulties balancing work and family life, leading to lower overall well-being.

All analyses are based on annual averages from the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

## Historical trends, 1976 to 2022

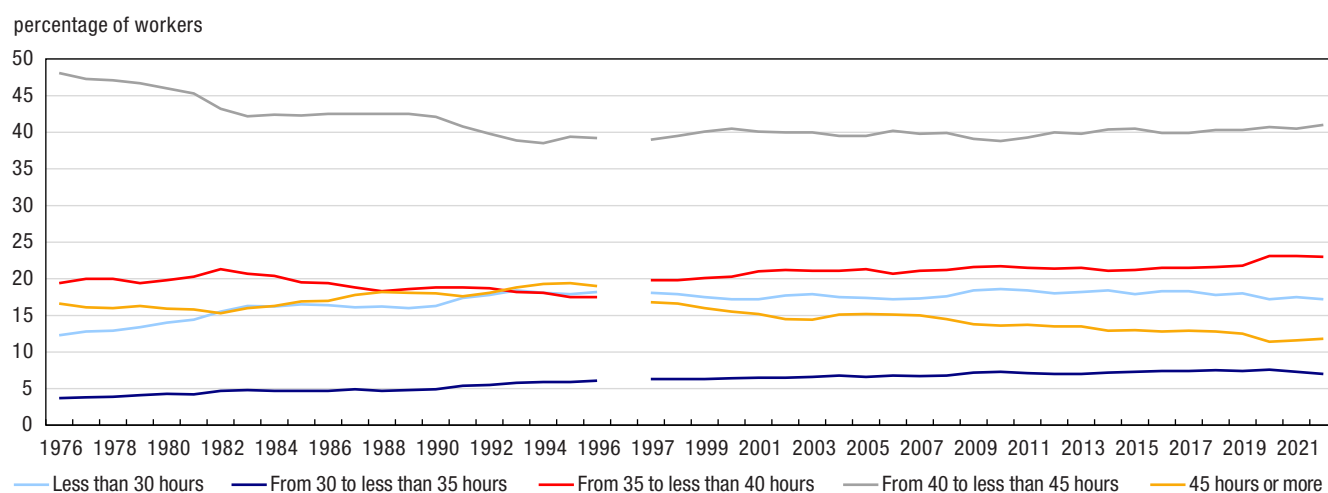
While data collected prior to 1997 are not directly comparable with data collected from 1997 onwards, the two time periods can be examined separately. To facilitate interpretation, broader categories for part-time hours (less than 30 hours per week) and longer hours (45 hours or more per week) are used to describe historical trends.

From 1976 to 1996, the most notable change in the usual work hours of Canadians was a decline in the share of workers working from 40 to less than 45 hours per week in all jobs, which fell from 48.1% in 1976 to 38.5% in 1994, before increasing slightly to 39.2% in 1996. In contrast, the proportion of workers who worked part-time increased from 1976 to 1996, rising from 12.3% to 18.2%. Both proportions have remained relatively stable over the following 25 years.

Other notable trends over the 1997-to-2022 period include an increase in the proportion of workers who usually worked from 35 to less than 40 hours, which increased from 19.8% to 23.0%. As shown by the [long working hours indicator](#), the share of workers working long hours also declined over this period.

**Chart 1**

**Distribution of usual weekly work hours (%) in all jobs, workers aged 15 and older, 1976 to 2022**



**Notes:** Break in series in 1997 due to change in the LFS questionnaire. For more information see "Information for interpretation". "All jobs" refers to the main job, and the second job if applicable. Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation.

While the proportion of women working part-time has declined from 27.8% in 1997 to 23.2% in 2022, the percentage of men working less than 30 hours per week rose 1.8 percentage points to 11.8% during the same period.

The change in part-time work over time may be related, at least in part, to the share of the employed population who are students. Given their higher rate of part-time employment, an increase in the number of students would boost the share of workers who work shorter hours. Among women aged 15 to 64 who were not students, the decline in part-time employment has been more pronounced, and the proportion of female workers working part-time declined by 6.8 percentage points to 16.7% from 1997 to 2022. Among men who were non-students, the percentage of workers working less than 30 hours per week increased 0.6 percentage points to 6.4%.

## A recent snapshot

In 2022, work hours of 40 to less than 45 hours per week (41.0%) remained the most common work schedule, followed by hours of 35 to less than 40 hours (23.0%). The third most common type of schedule was 15 to less than 30 hours per week (11.7%). Schedules of less than 15 hours (5.6%) and of 45 to less than 50 hours (3.4%) were least common.

The share of workers who usually work less than 15 hours per week and from 15 to less than 30 hours was highest among youth aged 15 to 24, accounting for 19.1% and 28.4% of employment in this age group respectively. Many youth are in full-time education and are therefore more likely to work part-time. However, in 2022, employed youth who were not students were also more likely to work less than 15 hours per week (5.2%) and from 15 to less than 30 hours per week (17.9%) than their counterparts in the 25 to 54 age group (1.9% and 6.7%).

In 2022, work hours of 35 to less than 40 hours per week were most common among core-aged women (32.3%) and women aged 55 and older (26.7%). Core-aged men were the group most likely to work from 40 to 45 hours per week (54.1%), followed by men aged 55 and older (44.2%) and core-aged women (35.7%). These differences show that even within the broad category of full-time employment, a higher proportion of women worked shorter hours compared with men.

## Distribution of weekly working hours, 1976 to 2022

Work hours tend to be more polarized among self-employed workers, who are more likely than employees to work more than 50, as well as less than 15 hours per week. Looking only at workers' main job, a third (33.4%) of workers who were self-employed usually worked from 35 to less than 45 hours per week compared with over two-thirds (70.4%) among employees. Further, self-employed workers (24.4%) were over six times more likely to work 50 hours or more per week than employees (3.7%) and nearly twice as likely to work less than 15 hours per week (10.1% compared with 5.2%).

**Table 1**

### Distribution of usual weekly work hours (%) in all jobs by age group and sex, employed persons aged 15 years and older, 2022

	Less than 15	15 to less than 30	30 to less than 35	35 to less than 40	40 to less than 45	45 to less than 50	More than 50
	percent						
All ages	5.6	11.7	7.0	23.0	41.0	3.4	8.4
Men	4.0	7.8	4.9	18.1	49.4	4.2	11.6
Women	7.3	15.9	9.3	28.4	31.7	2.4	4.9
15 to 24	19.1	28.4	8.1	11.9	27.0	2.1	3.5
Men	15.8	24.3	7.0	10.6	35.0	2.7	4.6
Women	22.4	32.6	9.2	13.1	18.8	1.6	2.3
25 to 54	2.2	7.4	6.5	25.9	45.2	3.7	9.0
Men	1.1	3.7	4.1	20.1	54.1	4.6	12.4
Women	3.4	11.3	9.2	32.3	35.7	2.7	5.4
55 and over	7.3	14.3	7.9	21.0	36.8	3.1	9.6
Men	5.5	10.2	6.2	16.4	44.2	4.1	13.4
Women	9.4	19.3	10.0	26.7	27.7	2.0	4.9

**Notes:** "All jobs" refers to the main job, and the second job if applicable.

Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation.

### Information on the indicator

#### Description or definition

The **distribution of weekly working hours** indicator is the number of employed persons whose usual work hours in all jobs fall in the following standardized bands: (1) less than 15 hours, (2) from 15 to less than 30 hours, (3) from 30 to less than 35 hours, (4) from 35 to less than 40 hours, (5) from 40 to less than 45 hours, (6) from 45 to less than 50 hours and (7) more than 50 hours per week, expressed as a percentage of all employed persons.

The breakdowns by class of worker are restricted to hours worked in the main job.

#### Source

Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1976 to 2022.

#### Information for interpretation

For more information on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) methodology and population coverage, please consult the [Guide to the Labour Force Survey, 2020](#).

The LFS estimates are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling variability. The analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

Prior to January 1997, usual hours were the number of hours usually worked by the respondent in a typical week, regardless of whether they were paid. Beginning January 1997, usual hours for employees refers to their normal paid or contract hours, not counting any overtime. However, the definition of usual hours remains unchanged for the self-employed and unpaid family workers. In January 1997, the LFS questionnaire was changed to allow responses up to 168 hours per week. Prior to 1997, the upper limit was set at 99 hours.

In addition, the calculation of usual hours worked for those who changed jobs during the reference week was modified. Prior to 1997, total usual hours consisted of the sum of usual hours worked at the main and second job (if applicable). After 1997, total usual hours worked for job changers refers to usual hours at the new or main job.

#### Other related information

Additional Statistics Canada data are available on the following subject:

[Hours of work and work arrangements](#)