

# Time spent with family during a typical workday, 1986 to 2005

by Martin Turcotte

Over the last two decades, the idea that a healthy balance between work and family is a legitimate as well as desirable goal took hold and became an important value for many workers. A survey conducted in 2003 found that, according to Canadian workers, the main indicator of a successful career was achieving a work-life balance, which ranked far ahead of salary, job challenges and level of responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

Government policy makers also increasingly recognize the importance of work-life balance. Thus, according to Human Resources and Social Development Canada, "work-life balance has emerged as a critical public policy issue in Canada".<sup>2</sup>

For their part, some employers, in order to attract and retain good employees, offer their workers more latitude in choosing their hours of work, and the option of working from home or taking leave for family reasons.<sup>3</sup> In some workplaces, the desire to spend more time with family is no longer looked on as a weakness. The many anecdotes of employees who turn down promotions or prestigious positions for fear of having less time to spend with family attest to this.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these workplace changes and the establishment of work-life balance policies, many workers feel they have less and less time to devote to their loved ones.<sup>5</sup> Is this merely an impression, or are workers really spending less time than before

with family members? And is the length of the workday, that is, the number of hours worked, really *the* main factor influencing the amount of time workers spend with family members?

This study looks at the time workers spend with family members during a typical workday. Using data from four different cycles of the General Social Survey (GSS) on Time Use, it documents the evolution of the average time spent with family during the workday between 1986 and 2005. In particular, it accounts for factors that can contribute to an understanding of these changes.

Among those factors, the length of the workday is certainly a determining one. In general, the more time spent in paid employment on a given day, the less time there is remaining to devote to family. However, other factors may considerably influence time spent with family members; for example, time spent on family meals, watching television, on social activities, and so on. This study pays particular attention to these various factors which, while they have not been examined as often in previous studies, have nonetheless contributed to the changes in time spent with family over the last 20 years.

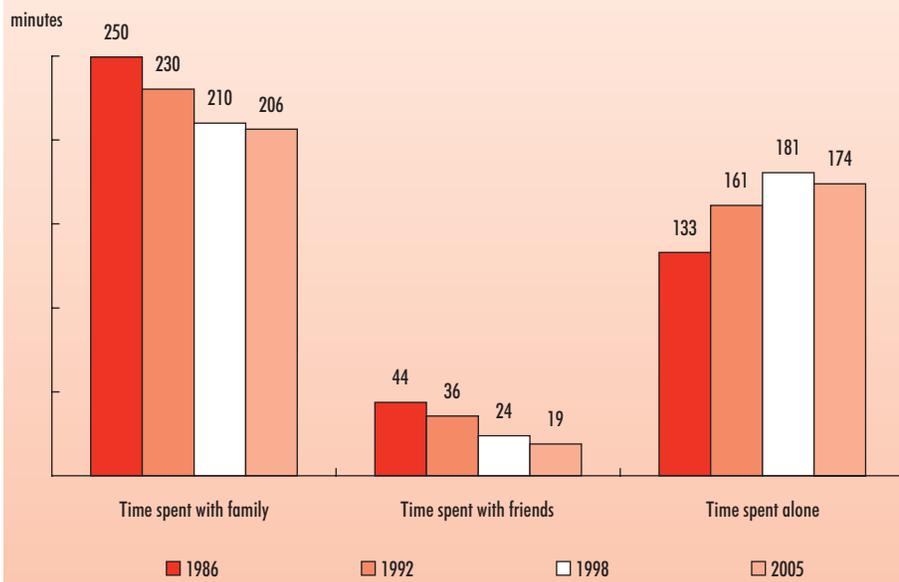
## Workers are spending less time with family than they did 20 years ago

In 1986, workers spent, on average, 4.2 hours, or 250 minutes, engaged

in various activities with their spouse, their children or other family members. The nature of these activities varied, and could have included helping the children with their homework, watching television with their spouse and having dinner as a family. Nearly 20 years later, by 2005, this average number of hours had dropped to 3.4 hours, or 206 minutes, an average decline of about 45 minutes (Chart 1).

Seen from another angle, namely, workers who spend a lot of time with their family (six or more hours) and those who spend little time (one hour or less), the findings are the same. Workers are spending less and less time with family during the workday. In 1986, 23% of workers spent 6 hours or more with family members, while this was true of just 14% of workers in 2005. And the proportion of workers who spent one hour or less with their family increased, from 9% in 1986 to 14% in 2005.

A number of studies have shown that in contemporary urban societies, friends increasingly make up part of people's social networks, sometimes at the expense of family members.<sup>6</sup> This might lead one to think that today's workers are "replacing" some of the time their predecessors spent with family members with time spent with friends. This, however, is not the case. In fact, the average time workers spent with their friends decreased by more than half between 1986 and 2005, from about



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

44 minutes on a typical workday to about 19 minutes.

If workers are not spending their time outside working hours with family members or friends, with whom are they spending it?

**Time spent alone has been continually increasing for the last 20 years**

According to the data from four different cycles of the GSS on time use, the answer to this question is simple: workers are spending more time by themselves! In fact, in 1986, workers engaged in solitary activities on average 133 minutes, or 2.2 hours per day (excluding time spent alone during working hours). By 2005, this time had increased by just over 40 minutes to 174 minutes, or 2.9 hours.

These trends are consistent with those observed in a previous study about the time Canadians spend alone in an average day.<sup>7</sup> That study, which looked at the entire population

aged 15 and older, showed an increase in time spent alone on the order of 34% between 1986 and 1998 (from 4.4 hours to 5.9 hours).

Spending time alone is not necessarily a bad thing. Some people actually appreciate having time for themselves, whether for reflection, to listen to music they enjoy, or to spend time on their favourite hobby. Some authors even go so far as to extol solitude in books devoted entirely to the subject.<sup>8</sup> In addition, researchers and philosophers of different stripes champion (or have done in the past) the idea that time spent alone, provided it is desired, can have substantial benefits in terms of creativity, spiritual quest, freedom of action and thought, and overall well-being.<sup>9</sup> A number of Canadian workers would probably agree with some of these observations. Despite the fact that time spent alone had increased since 1986, about 33% of them reported in 2005 that they would like to spend *more* time alone.

This being said, obviously the more time one spends alone, the less time one can spend with other family members or with friends.<sup>10</sup>

**Average family time is declining for nearly all subgroups of workers**

A number of studies on time spent with family from a work-life perspective look at the impact on family life of various methods of work organization, including the number of hours worked, whether or not flexible hours of work are possible, and organizational culture.<sup>11</sup> They also look at the relationships between the characteristics of parents (their level of education, their gender, and so on), those of families (father and mother’s employment status, number and age of children, and so on) and time spent with the children or spouse. For example, a number of researchers have studied the link between the hours worked by mothers and fathers and the time they spend with their children.<sup>12</sup> Others have assessed the influence of the parents’ level of education on the time they spend with their children, in various national contexts.<sup>13</sup>

This study also examines the links between time spent with family, on the one hand, and, on the other, hours worked, worker characteristics and family characteristics. But it also analyzes additional factors to which previous studies have devoted little or no attention, such as the nature, duration and context of the various activities in which workers participate in their personal life outside working hours. For example, it looks at the connection between time spent at family meals and the total time spent with family members — be it the spouse, the children or other members of the household or family.

Table A.1 presents statistics on the average time spent with family members, grouped according to these three broad categories of factors: time spent at work, the characteristics of workers and families; the duration of

## **CST** What you should know about this study

This study looks at the situation of workers who live with a spouse or child. It does not include workers who live alone or with other individuals, for whom time spent with family may mean something different.

The workers are individuals whose main activity, in the 7 days preceding the day of the interview for the General Social Survey (GSS) on time use, were working at a job. Only those respondents who had worked at least 3 hours during the reference day, not including commuting time, are included in the analysis. The purpose is to avoid confusing those workers who were on leave, who were far more likely to spend long hours with family members, with those who had worked during the reference day. In addition, because the study is interested in the connection between hours worked and time spent with family, it was important to consider only those workers who, on the day for which they were asked to provide details of all their activities, had worked a minimum amount of time.

The analysis included only the number of minutes that were spent with family members, friends or alone outside working hours. A number of workers spend time alone at work, and this time is not to be confused with the time available outside working hours.

Time spent with family means the total time during which the workers, while engaged in various activities (other than their work or personal care, including sleep), were in the presence of their spouse, child or other family members. For purposes of comparison among the four GSS cycles, unpaid work done for a family business or farm was not considered work time. Also, because the information gathered differed slightly over the four cycles of the GSS on time use, it was impossible to compare the data for certain more specific categories (such as changes in the time respondents spent with their children generally, including the youngest, the oldest and those living or not living at home).

The results shown in the table incorporated into the text are taken from an ordinary least squares regression. This statistical analysis simultaneously takes into account the various factors that influence time spent with family. Thus, the results show the association of a given variable, such as family status, independent of the influence of any other factors considered in the analysis (time spent at work, watching television, and so on).

The decomposition analysis uses the Oaxaca-Blinder approach. Thus, two additional regression analyses were done: one for 1986, and one for 2005. As the attempt was to determine how the situation would have evolved between 1986 and 2005 had the characteristics of the 2005 workers been identical to those of the 1986 workers, time spent with family was weighted using the 2005 regression coefficients. Using the reverse procedure, i.e., the 1986 regression coefficients to weight the changes in time spent with family, the study's qualitative findings remained the same. It is worth noting that in both models used for the decomposition analysis, time spent involved in various activities, such as paid work, was treated as a continuum (and not in categories, as in the models shown in the text). The purpose here was to simplify the interpretation of the results. A decomposition analysis was done with the duration variables classified into categories, but the main qualitative findings of the study remained the same.

In this study, the different factors associated with time spent with family were quantified. Unfortunately, it was impossible to determine whether the average "quality time" spent with family members followed a similar trend. In this study, we can only report that the average time workers spent with family, whether considered quality time or not, declined between 1986 and 2005.

the activities in which workers engage; and the nature of those activities.

### **Decrease in time spent with family involves several categories of workers**

As Table A.1 shows, the number of hours of paid work is among the

factors most strongly correlated with time spent with family. Not surprisingly, as the workday increases, time spent with family decreases. In 2005, for example, people who had spent 11 hours or more of their day in paid employment had spent 1.8 hours on average with members

of their family. In contrast, people who had worked between 8 and 9 hours had spent 3.7 hours with family members.

Looking at family characteristics, workers living with one child under age 5 spent the most time with family, while lone parents living with

a youth or young adult spent the least amount of time participating in family activities. Age, area of residence, time spent at meals, personal care (including sleep), watching television, reading and so on are also factors associated with time spent with family. Other characteristics, however, such as level of education and gender, seem to be less strongly associated.

Table A.1 also shows that time spent with family members decreased between 1986 and 2005 for most subgroups of workers. For example, while women spent an average 248 minutes with their family members in 1986, this average was just 209 minutes in 2005. For men, the average time spent with family members decreased by 45 minutes, from 250 minutes in 1986 to 205 minutes in 2005. The decrease in time spent with family was observed for all regions, for all levels of education and for nearly all age groups.

How can all these results be separated out and the significance of all these associations determined? But most of all, why is it that workers with such dissimilar characteristics tend to spend less time with family members?

### **Why has family time decreased?**

One probable explanation for the decrease in the average time that workers spend with their family members is that the characteristics of workers, and the time they devote to other activities such as work, changed significantly between 1986 and 2005. Specifically, it is possible that certain types of workers who tend to spend less time with their family members (such as those age 45 or older), made up a larger proportion of all workers in 2005. If so, this would lower the average time spent with family by workers taken as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

Looking at the statistics presented in Table A.2, this hypothesis seems plausible. For example, it can be seen that the proportion of workers age 45 or older, a subgroup that tends to

spend slightly less time with family than others, increased from 30% in 1986 to 44% in 2005. In contrast, the proportion of workers between ages 30 and 34, one of the age groups that spends the highest average amount of time with family, decreased from 17% to 12% of workers.

Table A.3 also shows that on average, workers devoted more time to paid employment in 2005 than in 1986 (536 minutes versus 506 minutes during a typical workday). This is also a significant change, which suggests that a number of workers have increasingly less time available to spend with family.

While interesting and relevant, the data contained in Tables A.1, A.2 and A.3 give no indication as to which of these many factors had the greatest influence on the decrease in family time between 1986 and 2005. In an attempt to identify this, a statistical analysis was done to take into account both the various factors influencing the time spent with family and the various changes in worker profiles between 1986 and 2005.

### **Increase in hours worked during a typical workday is the main reason for the decrease in time spent with family**

Table 1 shows that, compared to 1986, workers spent an average 39 minutes less with family members in 1998 and 43 minutes less in 2005 (Model 1). This first statistical model does not take into account any of the factors associated with family time. Models 2 and 3 illustrate how this difference decreases when more and more factors are considered simultaneously. In Model 4, the differences between years are no longer of any statistical significance. This last result supports the hypothesis that the changes in worker characteristics and the time workers devote to various activities explain the decrease in time spent with family between 1986 and 2005. Of these characteristics, which had the most influence?

It is not surprising that the amount of time spent at work is the factor

that correlates most strongly with time spent with family: as work hours rise, family time falls. For example, holding all factors included in Model 4 constant, the estimated time spent with family was 52 minutes less for workers who devoted 9 to 10 hours to their paid employment versus those who devoted 7 to 8 hours.

The average time devoted to paid employment during the typical workday increased considerably between 1986 and 2005 and the proportion of workers who devoted many hours to their paid activities also increased (for example, while 17% of workers had devoted 10 hours or more to their work in 1986, 25% did so in 2005).

This increase in the average length of the workday has major implications for the overall trends in average time spent with family. According to another decomposition analysis (detailed results not shown), the increase in the average number of hours spent at work during the typical workday is the factor that contributed most to the decline in time spent with family between 1986 and 2005, accounting for about 39% of the decrease in family time. This proportion was higher than for all other factors considered in this study.

It should be noted that these results provide no information about time spent with family during workers' leave days. Further analyses would need to be done to verify whether different trends are emerging for those days.<sup>15</sup>

### **As time spent watching television increases, so does time spent with family**

While watching television is often perceived as an individual activity, it is nevertheless quite often done as a family or a couple. And it is an activity that accounts for much of workers' free time. In 2005, after paid employment and personal care (including sleep), watching television (including movies, videos and DVDs) was the activity to which workers

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<b>Predicted length of time spent with family by the reference person</b>	250 min	247 min	246 min	226 min
<b>Year</b>				
1986	reference	reference	reference	reference
1992	- 19 min	- 23 min	- 16 min	n.s.
1998	- 39 min	- 40 min	- 24 min	n.s.
2005	- 43 min	- 41 min	- 16 min	n.s.
<b>Age</b>				
15 to 24	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
25 to 29	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
30 to 34	...	reference	reference	reference
35 to 39	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
40 to 44	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
45 and older	...	n.s.	n.s.	-10
<b>Sex</b>				
Women	...	reference	reference	reference
Men	...	- 11 min	n.s.	n.s.
<b>Region</b>				
Atlantic Canada	...	+ 15 min	n.s.	n.s.
Quebec	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Ontario	...	reference	reference	reference
Prairies	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
British Columbia	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<b>Family structure</b>				
Spouse, no children	...	reference	reference	reference
Spouse, at least one child aged 0 to 4	...	+ 55 min	+ 53 min	+ 42 min
Spouse, no children under 5, at least one child aged 5 to 12	...	+ 35 min	+ 32 min	+ 26 min
Spouse, no children under 13, at least one child aged 13 to 24	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Lone parent with at least one child aged 0 to 4	...	+ 61 min	+ 50 min	+ 59 min
Lone parent with no children under 5, at least one child aged 5 to 12	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Lone parent with no children under 13, at least one child aged 13 to 24	...	- 76 min	- 69 min	- 40 min
<b>Highest level of schooling</b>				
Elementary school	...	reference	reference	reference
Secondary diploma	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
College or trade school diploma or certificate	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
University degree	...	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<b>Time spent on work and work-related activities</b>				
3 to 5 hours	...	...	+ 122 min	+ 121 min
5 to 6 hours	...	...	+ 66 min	+ 68 min

... not applicable

n.s.: Not statistically different than the reference group at  $p < 0.01$ .

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
6 to 7 hours	...	...	+ 33 min	+ 33 min
7 to 8 hours	...	...	reference	reference
8 to 9 hours	...	...	- 18 min	- 19 min
9 to 10 hours	...	...	- 48 min	- 52 min
10 to 11 hours	...	...	- 76 min	- 84 min
11 hours or more	...	...	- 151 min	-151 min
<b>Time spent on personal care including sleep</b>				
Less than 7 hours	...	...	+ 53 min	+ 63 min
7 to 8 hours	...	...	+ 21 min	+ 27 min
8 to 9 hours	...	...	reference	reference
9 to 10 hours	...	...	- 32 min	- 30 min
10 to 11 hours	...	...	- 60 min	- 61 min
11 hours or more	...	...	- 114 min	- 109 min
<b>Time for meals at home, snacks, coffee</b>				
Did not eat at home	...	...	reference	reference
1 to 24 minutes	...	...	n.s.	+ 23 min
25 to 44 minutes	...	...	n.s.	+ 24 min
45 to 64 minutes	...	...	+ 16 min	+ 37 min
65 minutes or more	...	...	+ 32 min	+ 58 min
<b>Trips by car or public transport</b>				
No trips either by car or public transport	...	...	reference	reference
1 to 60 minutes	...	...	n.s.	n.s.
61 to 120 minutes	...	...	n.s.	- 14 min
121 minutes or more	...	...	- 22 min	- 25 min
<b>Trips by foot</b>				
No trips by foot	...	...	reference	reference
1 to 30 minutes	...	...	-12 min	- 11 min
31 minutes or more	...	...	n.s.	n.s.
<b>Social activities outside the home</b>				
No social activities	...	...	reference	reference
1 to 90 minutes	...	...	+ 13 min	+ 16 min
91 minutes or more	...	...	+ 60 min	+ 60 min
<b>Read books, magazines, newspapers</b>				
No reading	...	...	reference	reference
1 to 60 minutes	...	...	- 16 min	- 11 min
61 minutes or more	...	...	- 42 min	- 34 min
<b>Television, including watching videos or DVDs</b>				
No television	...	...	reference	reference
1 to 60 minutes	...	...	+ 8 min	+ 44 min
61 to 120 minutes	...	...	+ 19 min	+ 58 min
121 to 180 minutes	...	...	+ 29 min	+ 69 min
181 minutes or more	...	...	+ 55 min	+ 99 min
<b>Prevalence of certain activities</b>				
<b>Watched television alone during the day</b>				
No	...	...	...	reference
Yes	...	...	...	- 114 min
<b>Had a meal, snack or coffee alone</b>				
No	...	...	...	reference
Yes	...	...	...	- 55 min
<b>Adjusted R-Square</b>	0,01	0,05	0,33	0,47

devoted the most time during the average workday (79 minutes).

The results of the statistical analysis show that as time spent watching television on a given day increased, so did the time spent with family. For example, compared to a worker who had watched no television, a worker who had spent one to two hours in front of a television set had also spent an average of 58 minutes more with family members (holding constant all other factors associated with family time, i.e., equivalent workday duration, equivalent time spent on personal care, identical family status and so on). While people do not necessarily interact directly with others when watching television, they are nevertheless likely to be in others' company, which is less often the case when they are not watching television.

That being said, it is also possible that more and more workers are watching TV alone. The number of households with two or more sets increased from about 28% in 1987 to 63% in 2005. In addition, the percentage of households with three or more television sets has jumped in recent years, from 18% in 1997 to 27% in 2004. The fact that workers watched television alone, if only briefly during the day, completely changes the notion of a positive link between TV and time spent with family. In fact, workers who had watched television alone during a given day spent, on average, 113 minutes less with their family members than those who had not watched alone, holding constant all other factors considered in the analysis.

Workers' television viewing habits are not at all insignificant, since they had a major impact on the decrease in time spent with family between 1986 and 2005. The fact that increasingly more workers had watched television alone at some point in the day (27% in 2006 versus just 17% in 1986) accounts for nearly one quarter (24%) of the decline in time spent with

family. And the fact that on average, workers spent less time watching television (a drop of about 15 minutes between 1986 and 2005) accounted for about 9% of the decrease in the time they spent with family.

### **More people are spending mealtime alone**

Mealtime, and especially suppertime, is the favourite time of day for family members to interact and talk about their day — and also sometimes argue! Between 1986 and 2005, two trends in workers' habits regarding meals, snacks and breaks negatively affected time spent with family. First of all, the average time spent at meals outside work hours decreased, from 60 minutes in 1986 to 45 minutes in 2005. But above all, workers were far more likely to have at least one meal, snack or coffee alone (only 17% in 1986, versus 27% in 2005). After time spent at work and time spent watching television, it is changes in workers' meal habits to which one should turn for a better understanding of the decrease in time spent with family. The fact that workers tend increasingly to eat alone accounted for 18% of the decline in the average time spent with family between 1986 and 2005. The fact that the average time devoted to meals decreased appreciably accounted for about 11% of the decline.

The correlation with time spent on personal care (including sleep) does not require much explanation. As with workday duration, the more time people spend washing, dressing or sleeping, the less time they have for activities with family members. What is most interesting is that time spent on personal care ranks fourth in importance, along with time spent on meals, among the factors that contributed to the decline in time spent with family. In other words, if the average time spent by workers on family activities declined between 1986 and 2005, this was owing in part to the fact that workers were spending more time sleeping, dressing and so on.

The last change to have a notable effect on the decrease in time spent with family between 1986 and 2005 is the declining prevalence and time spent by workers on social activities outside the home. In 1986, workers spent, on average, 23 minutes on social activities outside their home (going to a restaurant with one or more people, visiting people in their homes, and so on); this average dropped by more than half, to just 11 minutes in 2005. Obviously, taking part in social activities outside the home does not automatically mean spending more time with family members — people may, for example, spend this time socializing with friends or acquaintances. However, for people living in families, as was the case for the workers in this study, some of these outings included the spouse or children. Social activities are therefore an ideal opportunity to spend time as a family. The fact that the average time devoted to social activities outside the home decreased between 1986 and 2005 accounted for 7% of the decline in time spent with family.

### **Workers living with young children are spending more time with family**

Among the other factors associated with the average time spent with family, but that contributed less to the decrease observed between 1986 and 2005, we might first mention family structure. As Model 4 shows, holding all other factors constant, the estimated time spent with family by workers with a child under age 5 is significantly greater than that spent by workers living with a spouse but no children. Parents living without a spouse, but with a young child (i.e., lone-parent workers), spent the most time with one or more family members — about one hour more than workers living with a spouse only. In contrast, workers living with only a youth or young adult spent the least estimated time with family of all categories. There is little surprise in this, since they have no spouse with whom to

share their activities outside work, and their children probably have their own activities that they want to pursue alone or with friends.

These results for workers as a whole obscure the fact that women living with a partner are more affected than men, in terms of time spent with family, by the presence of young children in the household. In fact, when children, especially young children, are present, women spend significantly more time with family than men do. Further analysis showed that female workers living with a spouse and a child under 5 spent an average 47 minutes more with the members of their family than did men with similar family structure (holding the other factors constant). The same analysis showed that women living with a spouse and at least one child between age 5 and 12 (but no preschoolers) spent an average 23 minutes more with family than did men with an identical family structure.

A recent study shows that men and women have increasingly been sharing unpaid housework equally, including caring for children.<sup>16</sup> However, the same study shows that women have continued to devote appreciably more time than men to caring for the children by, for example, reading to them, taking them to the park, helping them with homework or driving them to various activities. These enduring distinctions probably explain to a large extent why women living with a partner and a child spend more time than men with one or more family members on a typical workday.

There was, however, no statistically significant difference between male and female lone-parent workers in terms of time spent with their family members. But it should be said that the majority of these lone-parent workers are women (about three-quarters in this study).

Time spent on trips, whether by car or on public transit, also correlates to a slight reduction in time spent

with family. However, because some of this travel involves taking children to and from activities, the statistical correlation is relatively weak compared to other factors. Canadian workers spent, on average, more time travelling to and from work in 2005 than in 1992.<sup>17</sup> The analysis shows that this is not, however, one of the main contributors to the decrease in time spent with family.

The same is true of reading activities. Reading is generally a solitary activity, but can also be done in the presence of a child or spouse, when such are present in the household. Nevertheless, workers who spent more time in their day reading also spent a little less time with their spouse or children.

Finally, the findings showed that, when all other factors are held constant, gender, age, level of schooling and area of residence are not associated with a statistically significant decrease or increase in time spent with family. This is

## **GST** What about the differences between men and women?

Table A.1 shows that, on average, male workers spend nearly as much time as female workers with family members during the typical workday. This lack of difference is confirmed, moreover, in several subgroups of the worker population.

In fact, aside from the difference between men and women based on the structure of their household (especially the presence of children, who had a greater influence on the time women spent with family), further analyses did not reveal differences between male and female workers based on age, area of residence or level of schooling. For example, holding the other factors constant, men between age 30 and 34 spent neither more nor less time with family members than did women in the same age group.

The same thing is confirmed regarding the association between workday duration and time spent with family; holding all the factors included in Model 4 constant, and making comparisons based on sex, a woman who had worked 9 hours, for example, spent the same average amount of

time with family as a man who had worked the same number of hours.

The only exception is women who had worked between 3 and 5 hours compared to men who had worked the same number of hours. We know that it is in this subgroup that the estimated time spent with family members increases most (Model 4 estimates that this group of workers spent about 2 hours more with family than the group of workers whose workday ranged from 7 to 8 hours). Further analysis comparing the workers according to gender revealed that women who had worked between 3 and 5 hours during the day spent an estimated 34 minutes less with family members than did their male counterparts (holding the other factors constant). It is, however, difficult to explain why this is so.

In short, aside from the presence of children in the homes of workers living with a partner, the impact of virtually all variables that were shown to correlate with time spent with family was the same for both men and women.

because the other factors mentioned earlier, such as length of the workday, family structure or television viewing, whether alone or not, had much more of an influence on time spent with family. Thus, for a workday of equivalent duration, for example, whether a worker was older or younger had no bearing on the likelihood of their spending more or less time with family.

### Summary

Since 1986, the average time workers spent in activities with members of their family on a typical workday has declined appreciably, from about 4 hours and 10 minutes per day in 1986 to about 3 hours and 25 minutes in 2005. This decline has been observed in the majority of subgroups of the worker population, including men and women, workers living with a spouse only and those living with young children, workers with a college degree and those who have not completed high school. In short, the decrease in the time spent with family members was widespread.

This study identified a number of factors associated with the decrease in time spent with family between 1986 and 2005. The fact that the average time devoted to paid employment during the typical workday has increased appreciably since 1986 is the main factor that explains why people are spending less time with family. The other factors that had an impact on time spent with family over this period are, in order of relative importance: the fact that workers tend increasingly to watch television alone, eat alone, and spend less time on meals, television and social activities outside the home.

Other factors were correlated to time spent with family. The presence of a child in the family, especially a young child, was associated with a considerable increase in the number of minutes spent with family members during the typical workday. This was

especially true of female workers in this type of household. Also, time spent travelling by car and reading took away from time spent with family.

GST

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10. Periods of time spent alone are not necessarily devoid of social interaction. Workers, when alone, may in fact be talking on the telephone or using computer technology such as e-mail or internet chat to communicate with their loved ones. Time spent at these activities, which involve social interaction despite the fact that the people are alone, is nevertheless marginal for the vast majority of workers. In 2005, workers spent, on average, less than 2 minutes per day talking on the telephone during the workday (but outside working hours). As for time spent e-mailing or internet chatting with others, the average was only about 4 minutes. In short, most of the time workers spend alone outside their hours of work entails no social interaction with family members.
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14. In contrast, it is possible that workers who were more likely to spend a lot of time with family, for example, those living in a family with young children, were proportionally less represented in the population (which would lower the overall average time spent with family). Sayer, Gauthier and Furstenberg Jr. 2004.
15. It should also be pointed out that it is impossible to know whether the total time spent by workers in a full week decreased to that degree between 1986 and 2005. Unfortunately, there are no data to describe and document such trends on a weekly basis.
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**Table A.1 Average time spent by workers with their families during a typical workday in 1986 and 2005, by selected characteristics**

	Average time spent with the family			Average time spent with the family			
	1986	2005	Change between 1986 and 2005	1986	2005	Change between 1986 and 2005	
	minutes			minutes			
All workers	250	206	-44				
<b>Age</b>							
15 to 24	243	207	n.s.				
25 to 29	247	208	-39				
30 to 34	264	220	-44				
35 to 39	246	223	-23				
40 to 44	243	212	-31				
45 and over	249	194	-54				
<b>Sex</b>							
Women	248	209	-39				
Men	250	205	-45				
<b>Region</b>							
Atlantic Canada	258	220	-38				
Quebec	237	209	-28				
Ontario	254	205	-50				
Prairies	255	207	-48				
British Columbia	250	201	-49				
<b>Family structure</b>							
Spouse, no children	231	191	-40				
Spouse, at least one child aged 0 to 4	274	244	-30				
Spouse, no children under 5, at least one child aged 5 to 12	271	227	-44				
Spouse, no children under 13, at least one child aged 13 to 24	247	198	-49				
Lone parent with at least one child aged 0 to 4	346	251	-95				
Lone parent with no children under 5, at least one child aged 5 to 12	243	196	n.s.				
Lone parent with no children under 13, at least one child aged 13 to 24	150	132	n.s.				
<b>Highest level of schooling</b>							
Elementary school	252	210	-42				
Secondary diploma	254	203	-50				
College or trade school diploma or certificate	243	205	-38				
University degree	241	211	-30				
<b>Time spent on work and work-related activities</b>							
3 to 5 hours	379	345	n.s.				
5 to 6 hours	341	307	n.s.				
6 to 7 hours	279	270	n.s.				
7 to 8 hours	270	236	34				
8 to 9 hours	260	219	41				
9 to 10 hours	220	202	18				
10 to 11 hours	206	164	42				
11 hours or more	118	107	n.s.				
				<b>Time spent on personal care including sleep</b>			
				Less than 7 hours	303	244	-58
				7 to 8 hours	257	216	-40
				8 to 9 hours	250	213	-37
				9 to 10 hours	228	185	-43
				10 to 11 hours	208	179	n.s.
				11 hours or more	189	143	n.s.
				<b>Time for meals at home, snacks, coffee</b>			
				Did not eat at home	169	200	n.s.
				1 to 24 minutes	233	183	-51
				25 to 44 minutes	227	196	-31
				45 to 64 minutes	245	211	-35
				65 minutes or more	285	233	-53
				<b>Trips by car or public transport</b>			
				No trips either by car or public transport	242	201	-42
				1 to 60 minutes	248	196	-52
				61 to 120 minutes	246	216	-30
				121 minutes or more	273	221	-52
				<b>Trips by foot</b>			
				No trips by foot	248	205	-43
				1 to 30 minutes	247	221	n.s.
				31 minutes or more	277	208	-70
				<b>Social activities outside the home</b>			
				No social activities	239	199	-40
				1 to 90 minutes	270	234	n.s.
				91 minutes or more	338	324	n.s.
				<b>Read books, magazines, newspapers</b>			
				No reading	253	208	-45
				1 to 60 minutes	242	205	-37
				61 minutes or more	236	174	-61
				<b>Television, including watching videos or DVDs</b>			
				No television	218	184	-34
				1 to 60 minutes	236	193	-43
				61 to 120 minutes	241	216	-25
				121 to 180 minutes	260	228	-32
				181 minutes or more	323	256	-67
				<b>Prevalence of certain activities</b>			
				<b>Watched television alone during the day</b>			
				No	268	231	-37
				Yes	158	137	-21
				<b>Had a meal, snack or coffee alone</b>			
				No	264	235	-29
				Yes	213	166	-47

n.s.: Not statistically different in 1986 than in 2005 at  $p < 0.01$ .  
 Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986 and 2005.

**Table A.2 Change in the profile of workers living in a family, 1986 to 2005**

	1986	1992	1998	2005		1986	1992	1998	2005
	%					%			
<b>Age</b>					<b>Family structure (continued)</b>				
15 to 24	6	5	3	3	Spouse, no children under 5, at least one child aged 5 to 12	13	22	22	20
25 to 29	14	12	9	8	Spouse, no children under 13, at least one child aged 13 to 24	22	20	20	22
30 to 34	17	15	15	12	Lone parent with at least one child aged 0 to 4	1	1	1	1
35 to 39	18	18	18	15	Lone parent with no children under 5, at least one child aged 5 to 12	1	2	2	3
40 to 44	15	18	19	18	Lone parent with no children under 13, at least one child aged 13 to 24	3	2	4	4
45 and over	30	32	36	44	<b>Highest level of schooling</b>				
<b>Sex</b>					Elementary school	34	19	15	9
Women	35	40	42	41	Secondary diploma	35	35	34	31
Men	65	60	58	59	College or trade school diploma or certificate	16	26	27	30
<b>Region</b>					University degree	15	20	24	30
Atlantic Canada	7	8	7	7	<b>Prevalence of certain activities</b>				
Québec	27	24	23	23	Watched television alone during the day	17	25	30	27
Ontario	37	38	40	39	Had a meal, snack or coffee alone at home	28	41	45	42
Prairies	18	19	17	17					
British Columbia	10	11	11	13					
<b>Family structure</b>									
Spouse, no children	30	31	33	34					
Spouse, at least one child aged 0 to 4	21	21	17	16					

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1992, 1998 and 2005.

**Table A.3 Changes in time workers devoted to certain activities, 1986 to 2005**

	1986	1992	1998	2005		1986	1992	1998	2005
	minutes					minutes			
Time spent on work and work-related activities	506	523	528	536	Trips by foot	5	5	5	3
Time spent on personal care including sleep	491	484	488	500	Social activities outside the home	23	16	14	11
Time for meals at home, snacks, coffee	60	52	44	45	Read books, magazines, newspapers	18	17	15	10
Trips by car or public transport	66	68	72	73	Television, including watching videos or DVDs	95	89	84	79

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1992, 1998 and 2005.