

BODY & HEALTH

INCESSANT ADOLESCENTS

OUR KIDS ARE BUSIEST

Average teen logs equivalent to 50-hour work week: StatsCan

BY MISTY HARRIS

Think you're busy? Try talking to a teenager — assuming you can catch one between school lessons, part-time job, sporting activities, volunteering, homework and extracurricular commitments.

In a 10-country comparison of time use, Canadian young people ranked first in terms of hours spent on unpaid and paid labour during the school week, reveals a new Statistics Canada snapshot.

Averaged over a full week, including school and non-school days, Canadian teenagers performed 7.1 hours of labour per day in 2005 — a virtual 50-hour workweek comparable to that of their adult counterparts age 20 to 64.

The report, released yesterday counters the stereotype of teenagers as disengaged members of society whose only cares are avoiding responsibility and getting a hot date for graduation.

In reality, Canadian young people log an average 9.2 hours of school lessons, homework, paid

work and housework on weekdays, and an additional 3.5 hours of labour on weekends.

Logan Liboiron, who turns 14 next week, might be the torchbearer for ambitious teens.

In addition to being an honour student, the Edmonton resident takes lessons in Irish dancing, singing and piano, and is taking her bronze medallion in swimming. She also plays soccer and basketball, routinely volunteers for school events, and is responsible for caring for her younger brother after school.

"If I find something that I like, I take it on without really thinking ahead," says Liboiron, who adds that her schedule allows little room for relaxation or watching TV.

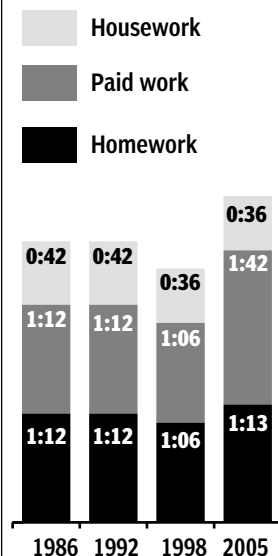
"But I like it because it doesn't give me that much time to be bored — and I really hate being bored. [Being busy] gets my mind off all the things that are kind of suckish about my life."

Fully 16% of Canadian teens consider themselves workaholics, while 39% feel "under constant pressure" to accomplish more than they can handle. Nearly two-thirds (64%) cut back on sleep as a way of buying more time.

Shelby Larsen, an honour student at Victoria School of Performing & Visual Arts in Edmonton, is among the latter group.

"Sometimes it gets pretty crazy," says Larsen, a 15-year-old whose activities include ballet, jazz, band, volleyball and soccer. "But you sort of just run on over-

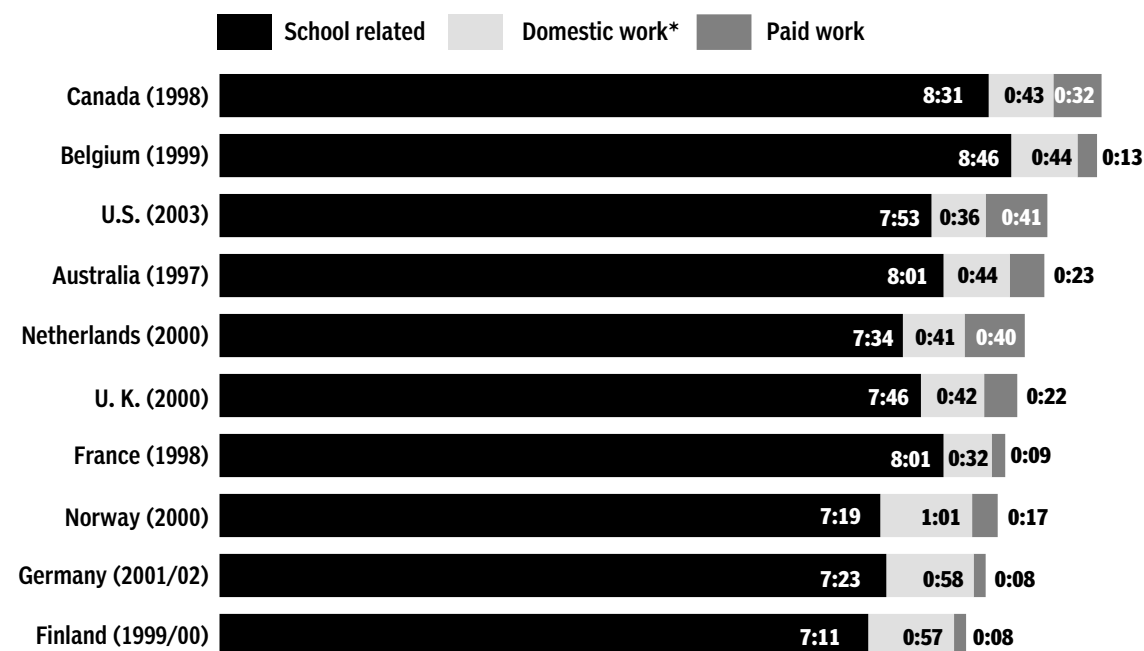
AVERAGE TIME SPENT PER NON-SCHOOL DAY FOR CANADIANS AGED 15 TO 19



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY, NATIONAL STATISTICAL AGENCIES

THE BUSY LIFE OF A TEENAGER

TIME SPENT ON UNPAID AND PAID WORK ON SCHOOL DAYS FOR THOSE AGED 15 TO 19



*Includes family care.

ANDREW BARR / NATIONAL POST

drive and get things done."

In terms of total time spent on unpaid and paid work on school days, Canadian young people clock more hours than their counterparts in Belgium, the U.S., Australia, the Netherlands, the U.K., France, Norway, Germany and Finland.

Less than half (45%) of Canadian teens with high stress report being very happy and/or satisfied with their lives.

"Kids feel they have to be almost super-people in order to win at life," says Dr. Alvin Rosenfeld, co-author of *The Over-Scheduled Child*. "They're trying to make themselves into some combination of Einstein, Mickey Mantle and Mother Teresa."

Family environment is one of the strongest predictors of in-

dustriousness. Statistics Canada reports that young people are significantly more likely to do homework — and more of it — if their parents are both university educated, if they live in a two-parent intact family, and if their parents are foreign-born.

Rosenfeld suggests that "hyperparenting" may be a contributing factor to the free-time deficit.

"There's this idea that it's your job as a parent to be like an activities director on a cruise ship. I think parenting is a higher calling," he says. "The benefit of boredom [for teens], the benefit of alone time, is that you have to look inward. You don't get pre-packaged content for your personality."

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GET READY TO RUN TRAINING PROGRAM

Week 6

An incorrect version of our series on how to train for a 5-km run appeared yesterday. This is the correct sixth instalment in our eight-week program for novice runners.

Workouts to be done on non-consecutive days.

Session 1 Walk one minute at a brisk pace. Run 10 minutes, then walk for one minute (x 3). Walk one minute. Total workout: 35 minutes.

Session 2 Run 10 minutes, then walk for one minute (x 3). Total workout: 33 minutes.

Session 3 Walk four minutes at a brisk pace. Run eight minutes, then walk for one minute (x 3). Walk 4 minutes. Total workout: 35 minutes.

