

## News and Information Services

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Jobs not always good for teen-agers,  
U-M researchers find, especially when  
teens work long hours.

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ANN ARBOR---Part-time work during high school may have more costs than benefits, a University of Michigan study shows.

The study, based on nationally representative samples of more than 70,000 high school seniors, links number of hours worked to a range of undesirable behaviors and outcomes, including poor school performance, drug use, aggression, fighting with parents, and failing to engage in healthy behaviors such as eating a good breakfast and getting enough exercise and a good night's sleep. The study is published in the current issue of *Developmental Psychology*.

Researchers at the U-M Institute for Social Research (ISR) emphasize that while most after-school jobs should no longer be considered "good for teen-agers," working long hours is not necessarily the most fundamental cause of the many problems working students experience.

"Prior educational successes, failures and adjustments have a lot to do with adolescents' willingness to commit long hours to employment while still enrolled in school," note ISR researchers Jerald G. Bachman and John E.

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Schulenberg. "While the number of hours teen-agers spend on the job may make some contribution to poor school performance, it's more likely that students with a history of poor school performance are willing to spend long hours at part-time jobs. Therefore, previous educational difficulties, rather than long hours on the job, are likely to contribute to the undesirable outcomes."

Among the key findings are:

--Nearly one-third of U.S. high school seniors report working more than 20 hours a week, with 15 percent of males and 9 percent of females working 31 hours a week or more.

--Student use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and amphetamines are all strongly related to number of hours worked. The more hours worked, the greater the likelihood of use.

--Among male students, those not working had the lowest prevalence of trouble with the police, a finding that undermines the popular belief that working will keep students out of trouble.

--Students who spend more hours on the job not only have less time for sleep, they also are more likely to shortchange their health by failing to eat breakfast and exercise vigorously. Seniors who worked 10 hours or less per week were no worse off than those with no jobs, however. Those who worked five hours or less per week actually reported slightly more sleep time and more exercise than those who didn't work at all.

According to Bachman and Schulenberg, the new data call into question the wisdom of encouraging students to work

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extensively while going to school, and suggest that those students who do not choose to work long hours are generally better off than those who do.

In a related study, to be presented Friday (March 26) in New Orleans at the meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Schulenberg and Bachman further refined the costs and benefits of part-time work to teen-agers.

"Long hours on the job are not so bad for some adolescents in some types of jobs," Schulenberg says. "To some extent, the negative impact of hours worked on teen-agers' health and well-being is mitigated by the nature of the job. If the job makes good use of the student's special skills, is connected to the student's expected career, or is part of the educational experience on an informal basis or through a formal work/study program, then the negative impact of working long hours is reduced substantially.

"Perhaps another way to reduce negative impacts of adolescent part-time work would be to lower the emphasis on teen-age consumerism," says Bachman. "As it presently stands, most earnings are spent on cars, clothing and entertainment, rather than being saved for college or other long-term goals. This is a kind of premature affluence which is not good preparation for the tougher financial times which may lie ahead in young adulthood."

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(JBachman;JSchulenberg;ISR) (R1-3;ISR;Ed1-3;D1,2;  
B1A,2A;Lab1,2) (TC/1-8) (100sp) [teenjob]