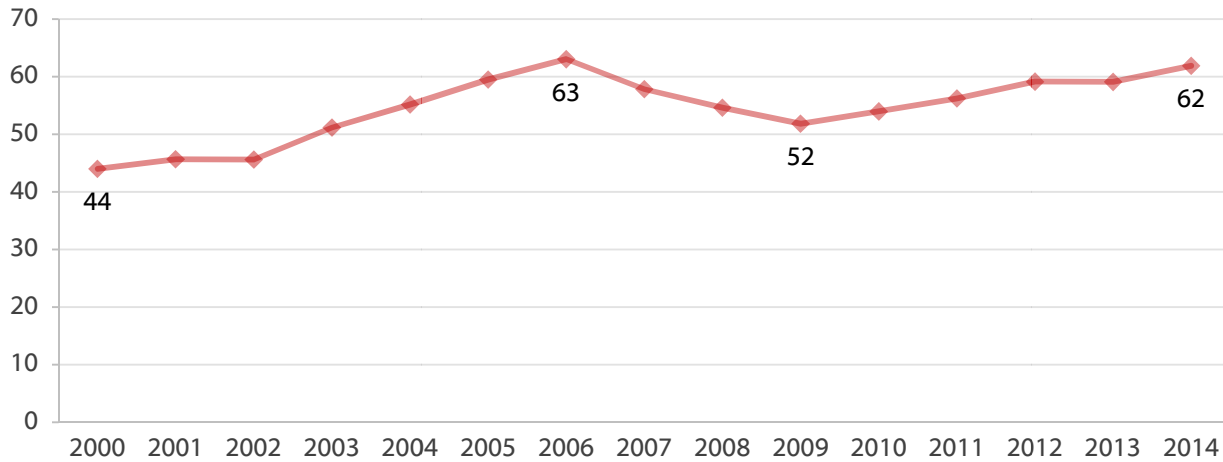


# Paying for A Bachelor's Degree Through Work Alone Would Require 62 Hours per Week at Minimum Wage

**Hours of Minimum Wage Work per Week Needed to Pay for an Average Texas Public University Undergraduate Education (2000 to 2014)**



In earlier decades, many students financed an undergraduate education by taking a full course load while working enough hours to cover living and educational expenses, perhaps with the aid of savings from a full-time summer job. From 1966 to 1981, a time in which the minimum wage increased fairly regularly, an industrious undergraduate could have paid for a year of education at a public university — including tuition, food, and housing — by working about 24 hours per week at a minimum wage job.

In the early 1980s, as the cost of education began to climb and the minimum wage increased less frequently, the number of work hours needed to pay for an education began to rise. By 1989, students earning the then-minimum wage of \$3.35 per hour had to work 39 hours per week to cover the national average undergraduate budget. The hours needed to pay for an undergraduate education continued to inch upward in the 1990s, then rose again sharply at the turn of the century. The national average has since climbed to all-time high of 67 hours per week as of 2014.

The cost of attendance tends to be lower in Texas, which means slightly fewer hours of work per week would be needed to pay for college. In 2014-2015, an in-state, residential undergraduate would have had to work 62\*\* hours every week of the year to pay for two semesters at a Texas public university. The current upward trend began in 2010, when the period of annual minimum wage increases (2006-2009) came to an end.

\*Using Postsecondary Education Opportunity methodology, the Award Year (AY) 2013–2014 average in-state student budget at a U.S. public university is estimated at \$23,769. In 2014, the minimum wage was \$7.25 per hour, with 6.2 percent taken out for Social Security. At a net of \$6.80 per hour, a full-time student with no other financial aid or assets would have to work 3,495 hours per year, or 67 hours per week, to put him or herself through school.

\*\*The average student budget, weighted for enrollment, for an in-state, residential student at a Texas public four-year university in AY 2014–2015 was \$21,883. At a net of \$6.80 per hour, a full-time Texas student with no other financial aid or assets would have to work 3,218 hours per year, or 62 hours per week, to put him or herself through school.

Sources: Minimum wage: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, "History of Federal Minimum Wage Rates" (<http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/chart.htm>); U.S. Data: Postsecondary Education Opportunity, "I worked my way through college. You should too," 2008 update to *Research Newsletter*, Issue Number 125 (November 2002) ([www.postsecondary.org](http://www.postsecondary.org)); Texas Data: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Data (<http://www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>).

