



When Homework Moves Into Family Life

How homework expectations shape time, stress, and parental routines

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Research in Brief

This mixed-methods study examined how homework expectations are translated from school into family routines in three secondary schools in England. Stage 1 included 193 respondents, including 82 adolescents in Years 7–11, and gathered information about homework, leisure, responsibilities, perceived stress, and free time. Stage 2 involved 20 follow-up interviews with 10 parents and 10 adolescents.

Adolescents reported a median of 4.5 hours of homework per week during term time, with 23% reporting more than seven hours. Homework hours were negatively associated with leisure satisfaction and positively associated with perceived stress. Overall, 61% of adolescents said homework often or very often interfered with leisure activities, while 54% reported having less time for rest than they wanted. Those in the highest homework-time group were more likely to report high stress and lower control over their free time.

The interviews showed how parents sometimes enforced homework because they felt responsible for meeting school expectations. Adolescents who described their parents as stricter reported lower perceived autonomy and were less likely to describe their leisure as self-directed. The authors interpret these patterns through the concept of “responsibilisation”—the movement of accountability from school into family life. The study is context-specific and does not establish that homework itself causes stress. Its value for teachers is in prompting closer attention to workload, timing, leisure, and the way homework expectations affect home–school relationships.

✓ Try Tomorrow

- Map the approximate weekly homework load across subjects rather than considering each assignment separately.
- Ask students whether homework is crowding out sleep, rest, exercise, family time, or self-directed interests.
- Coordinate deadlines across subjects so that several reasonable assignments do not become an unreasonable combined load.

★ One Key Takeaway

The impact of homework depends not only on what is assigned, but also on how much of students’ discretionary time it occupies.

Keywords

homework, stress, parental involvement, accountability, adolescent autonomy, family routines

Source Article

Blaszko, A., & Kushnir, I. (2026). “Home as a site of educational governance: how caregivers’ enforcement of homework reflects the devolution of school accountability.” *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2026.2707921