








Average salaries

Here is some information about average salaries in Britain from 1970 to 2006.

Year	Average salaries	Percentage increase
1970	1,801	349%
1979	6,281	
1980	7,585	213%
1989	16,122	
1990	17,689	150%
1999	26,492	
2000	27,683	127%
2006	35,019	

Questions

- By how much did salaries increase between 1970 and 1979? 
 1980 and 1989?  1990 and 1999? 
 2000 and 2006? 
- In which decade did salaries increase by the most money? 
- In what decade did salaries increase by the greatest percentage? 
- In what decade did salaries increase by the smallest percentage? 

Average salaries

Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheet.

Using the worksheet

There are many ways to look at these numbers and to think about what they mean. For example, between 1970 and 1980, average salaries went up by £4,480; between 1980 and 1989 salaries went up by £8,537. However, between 1970 and 1979, salaries went up by 349%; while between 1980 and 1989 salaries went up only 213%. That is, while the salaries went up by more money in the 1980s, that money was a smaller proportion of the total salary. So, while wages may seem to have gone up more in the 1980s, they actually went up more in the 1970s. This is because of high inflation in the 1970s – the money was worth less so people needed more of it to buy the same amount of goods and services. In the 1970s, it was not unusual for people to receive salary raises four or more times a year, whereas today raises are usually given once or maybe twice a year. Students will have a hard time understanding inflation, but they will be able to understand that although the numbers make it look like salaries went up more in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, the percentages mean that salaries actually went up more in the 1970s. You can then point out that this is because the prices of everything went up a great deal in the 1970s. So although salaries went up, people were not really better off.

If you have not already studied percentages with the students, or if they have a hard time understanding percentages, you may like to work out the percentages on the board, and then discuss their meaning. Or, you could have students use the first two columns of the graph only, ignoring the percentages, and only answer the first two questions. More able students could then work on the second two questions.

Younger students

If the students have not already studied percentages, you may wish to have them use only the first two columns of the graph and answer the first two questions. You can then have them work out that in the 1970s, salaries more than tripled (simply have them divide the two numbers) while in the 1980s salaries only doubled.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Read a graph.
- Understand that salaries increased a great deal in the 1970s.
- Think about reasons why salaries increased so much in the 1970s.

Older students

If the students have already studied how to determine percentages, you can review the method and then have the students work out the percentages on their own. Or, you may like to answer questions 3 and 4 as a class exercise.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Understand percentages.
- Understand that salaries increased a great deal in the 1970s.
- Think about reasons why salaries increased so much in the 1970s.

Answers

1. **£4,480, £8,537, £8,803, £7,336**
2. **2000s.**
3. **1970s.**
4. **2000s.**