A SNAPSHOT OF
MEN, WORK AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN CANADA
The Vanier Institute of the Family is a national, independent, charitable organization dedicated to understanding the diversity and complexity of families and the reality of family life in Canada. The Institute offers access to a range of publications, research initiatives, presentations and social media content to enhance the national understanding of how families interact with, have an impact on and are affected by social, economic, environmental and cultural forces.

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Over the past half-century, fatherhood in Canada has evolved dramatically as men across the country adapt and react to social, economic, cultural and environmental contexts. Throughout this period, men have had diverse employment experiences as they manage their multiple roles inside and outside the family home. These experiences have been impacted by a variety of factors, including (but not limited to) cultural norms and expectations, family status, disability and a variety of demographic characteristics, as well as women’s increased involvement in the paid labour force.

While many fathers in previous generations acted exclusively as “traditional” breadwinning father figures, modern fathers are increasingly likely to embrace caring roles and assume more household management responsibilities. In doing so, dads across Canada are renegotiating and reshaping the relationship between fatherhood and work.

**Men across Canada have diverse work experiences**

The labour force participation rate of men aged 25 to 54 in Canada was 91% in 2016 – a rate that had declined steadily from 95% in 1976. The employment rate of this group in 2016 was 85%.

In 2012, men aged 25 to 54 living with a disability had lower employment rates than those who weren’t living with a disability:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Living with a disability</th>
<th>Not living with a disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 25–34</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 35–44</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45–54</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The share of men who are self-employed has decreased over the past several decades. In 2016, 63% of self-employed people in Canada were men, down from 74% in 1976 (the rate has been stable since 1999).

The share of men aged 25 to 54 who work part-time has increased over the past several decades. In 2016, 25% of part-time workers in Canada were men, up from 15% in 1986.

The employment rate of immigrant men aged 25 to 54 in 2011 was 83%, similar to their Canadian-born counterparts (86%). Rates were lower for those who had been in Canada for 5 years or less (76%).

Men aged 25 to 54 with children aged 5 and under are spending less time on paid work than in previous decades, falling from 44 hours per week in 1976 to 41.6 hours in 2015.

Men are less likely than in previous generations to fulfill a “breadwinner” role exclusively. In 2014, 79% of single-earner couple families with at least one child under 16 included a breadwinning father, down from 96% in 1976.

In 2014, 12.1% of men in Canada aged 18 to 64 lived with low income. This rate has remained fairly stable over the last 20 years, fluctuating between a low of 10.7% (1994) and a high of 12.8% (2009).

Dads across Canada are renegotiating and reshaping the relationship between fatherhood and work.
Canada is home to 8.6 million fathers, nearly half of whom (3.8 million) have a child under 18 living with them.11

**74%**

Men in Canada surveyed in 2015 cited family (74%) and financial stability (71%) as the two main factors responsible for personal well-being and healthy relationships.12

Over the past 25 years, the share of men in Canada aged 15 and older who are married has declined, while there has been an increase in the share of those who are single, living in common-law relationships, those who are separated/divorced (and not living common-law) and those who are widowed.13, 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Common-law</th>
<th>Separated/Divorced</th>
<th>Widowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not living common-law

The number of surveyed children who say they find it easy to talk to their dads increased over the past two decades.

In 1993–1994, 56% of 11-year-old girls and 72% of boys said they found it easy to talk to their father about “things that really bother them,” a rate that increased to 66% and 75%, respectively, by 2013–2014.23, 24, 25

One-quarter of separated or divorced parents report either that the father’s residence is their child’s primary residence (15%) or that time is divided equally (9%).26

More than 1 in 5 lone-parent families in Canada (21%) were headed by men in 2011.27

The share of children aged 24 and under in lone-parent families who live with their dad grew from 17% in 1991 to 20% by 2011.28

While this marks an increase over these two decades, the rate was higher in the first half of the 20th century (e.g. 40% in 1901, 28% in 1941) due to the relatively high maternal mortality at that time. This rate has hovered between 17% and 22% since the early 1960s.29

Three-quarters (75%) of surveyed Canadian dads say they’re more involved with their children than their fathers had been with them.22

1 in 5 same-sex couples with children in 2011 were male couples.30
In 2015, more than three-quarters (76%) of surveyed men in Canada reported engaging in unpaid household work (e.g. meal preparation, laundry, cleaning, child care), up from 51% in 1986. Among these men, the average amount of time devoted to these tasks per day increased from 120 minutes in 1986 to 145 minutes in 2015 (+21%).

The gap in the household work participation rate between men and women decreased from 42 percentage points in 1986 to 17 percentage points in 2015. Nearly half (45%) of surveyed fathers in North America say they’re the “primary grocery shopper” in their household.

In 2015, nearly 6 in 10 surveyed men (59%) reported that they participated in meal preparation that day, up from 29% in 1986. The gap in meal preparation rates between men and women decreased from 57 percentage points in 1986 to 22 percentage points in 2015.

In 2015, nearly 4 in 10 surveyed men (39%) said they would prefer to be a stay-at-home parent. Nearly half (49%) of surveyed Millennial dads in North America say they’re mainly responsible for planning playdates and other activities with their children outside the home.

Fathers of children under the age of 5 reported missing an average 1.2 days of paid employment in 1987 due to personal or family responsibilities, a rate that increased to 2.2 by 2016. More than one-quarter of men are caregivers. In 2012, 26% of all surveyed men in Canada provided care to a family member or friend with a long-term health condition, disability or aging-related need. Men accounted for nearly half (46%) of all caregivers that year.

One in seven of all employed caregivers in Canada report that they reduced their paid work hours to provide caregiving, with caregiving men cutting back their hours by an average 9 hours per week.
Fathers increasingly taking time off to care for children

More fathers are taking time off to care for their newborn children. Three in 10 (30%) of all recent fathers across Canada reported in 2015 that they took (or intended to take) parental leave, up from only 3% in 2000.44, 45

Much of the increase in the national rate, however, is due to the large increase in fathers taking leave in Quebec, where more generous benefits have been available through the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) since 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quebec</th>
<th>Rest of Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The share of Quebec dads who reported that they claimed or intended to claim parental leave increased from 28% in 2005 to 86% in 2015.46

Outside Quebec, the share of recent dads who claimed or intended to claim parental leave increased from 11% to 12% over the same period.47

A 2015 study found a “large and persistent impact” on gender dynamics in the three-year period following Quebec fathers’ use of paternity leave through QPIP. Fathers who took leave were found to be more likely to do housework (and spend 23% more time doing this work), while mothers were more likely to engage in paid work. Under QPIP, Quebec dads also spent an average half-hour more per day at the family home than those outside of Quebec.48

In 2015, 41% of surveyed fathers in Quebec reported having participated in housework that day, far higher than those from other areas in Canada.49

Quebec dads also spent an average half-hour more per day at the family home than those outside of Quebec.

Workplace flexibility can facilitate work–life balance

Nearly 8 in 10 fathers with children under 18 (78%) report being satisfied with their work–life balance. This rate is slightly lower for fathers who have children under age 5 (75%) or those who are also caregivers (73%), and those who work 50+ hours per week (69%).50

More than 8 in 10 (81%) full-time working fathers with children under age 18 who have a flexible schedule reported in 2012 being satisfied with their work–life balance, compared with 76% for those without a flexible schedule.51

Among caregiving men who have access to flexible work arrangements (e.g. flexible schedules, telework), nearly half (45%) say they feel they cannot utilize flex options without it having a negative impact on their careers.52

Half (49%) of surveyed fathers in Canada say they would consider making a job change if a potential employer offered more family-friendly options than their current employer.53
Learn more about men, work and family care in Canada:

- Fifty Years of Men, Work and Family in Canada
- Modern Fathers Reshaping the Work-Family Relationship
- Supporting Dads: Paternity Leave and Benefits in Canada
- Family Caregiving in Canada: A Fact of Life and a Human Right
- Dads Play a Greater Role at Home: Family Life Benefits
- Families and Work in Canada
- Caring Enough to Flex, Flexing Enough to Care
- Modern Caregiving in Canada
- Modern Fatherhood: Paternal Involvement and Family Relationships

4 According to Statistics Canada, the term “aboriginal identity” refers to “whether the person reported being an aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or being a Registered or Treaty Indian (registered under the Indian Act of Canada), and/or being a member of a First Nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the Constitution Act, 1982, section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Métis and Néêts peopless of Canada.”
7 Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey Estimates (LFS), by Sex and Detailed Age Group (CANSIM Table 282-0002).
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21 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
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This series brings together research and data from a variety of sources, providing readers with brief statistical analyses of families and family experiences in Canada. Beyond “just the facts,” Statistical Snapshots publications explore modern families and the social, economic, cultural and environmental contexts that shape family life in a simple and visually engaging format. This publication is designed for educators, students, journalists, social service professionals and anyone interested in understanding modern families and family experiences in Canada.

A Snapshot of Grandparents in Canada
Canada’s grandparents are a diverse and evolving group, many of whom contribute greatly to family functioning and well-being in their roles as mentors, nurturers, caregivers, child care providers, historians, spiritual guides and “holders of the family narrative.” This edition of the Vanier Institute’s Statistical Snapshots series provides statistical analyses of grandparents in Canada and their evolving social and economic contexts.

A Snapshot of Workplace Mental Health in Canada
Mental health conditions can have a significant impact on individuals, but they can also “trickle up” to have a detrimental effect on families, workplaces, communities, the economy and society at large. This edition of the Vanier Institute’s Statistical Snapshots series explores mental health, families and work – three key parts of our lives that intersect and interact in complex ways that affect our well-being.

A Snapshot of Military and Veteran Families in Canada
Canada’s military and Veteran families are diverse, resilient and strong, and they are a great source of pride for the country. They engage with – and play important roles in – their workplaces, communities and the country at large. This edition of the Vanier Institute’s Statistical Snapshots series provides information and insights about military and Veteran families in Canada.

A Snapshot of Family Caregiving and Work in Canada
At some point in our lives, there is a high likelihood that each of us will provide care to someone we know – and receive care ourselves. Family members are typically the first to step up to provide, manage and sometimes pay for this care. This edition of the Vanier Institute’s Statistical Snapshots series highlights some of the family realities and trends that shape the “landscape of care” across the country.

A Snapshot of Women, Work and Family in Canada
Over many generations, women in Canada have had diverse employment experiences that continue to evolve and change. This publication is a companion piece to the Vanier Institute’s Fifty Years of Women, Work and Family in Canada timeline, providing visually engaging data about the diverse work and family experiences of women across Canada.

A Snapshot of Population Aging and Intergenerational Relationships in Canada
Canada’s population is aging rapidly, with a higher share of seniors than ever before. Using new statistics from the 2016 Census, this edition of the Vanier Institute’s Statistical Snapshots series explores the evolving demographic landscape across the country through a family lens.