

Study finds 'significant' spike in number of stay-at-home dads in Canada: 'Men had to step up'

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

In more than one in 10 coupled Canadian families in which one parent stays home, dad is the one doing the laundry, cooking and child care, Statistics Canada reported Wednesday in a snapshot that reveals just how much the face of work and family life has changed in recent decades.

"Within the past five years, I think the biggest and most significant change has been the role of fathers in the household," said Nora Spinks, CEO of the Vanier Institute of the Family, in response to the study, which also found the number of dual-income families with children has nearly doubled since the mid-70s - from 36% in 1976 to 69% in 2014.

In 1976, stay-at-home dads made up 2% of coupled families with at least one child under age 16 and one parent staying home. In 2014, they made up 11%.

A major spike amongst stay-at-home dads was noted in 2010, after the recession hit male-dominated industries far more than female. But while circumstance may have thrown a lot of men into the caregiver role, their relative ranks created a sustained shift in the social perception of stay-at-home dads that has impacted everything from portrayals in advertising to the way grocery stores are designed.

The Stats Can report highlighted regional shifts over time: Saskatchewan and Quebec had the highest proportion of dual-income families in 2014 - 74% and 73% respectively - which is a big jump from 40% in the prairie province in 1976 and 29% in Quebec. The lowest proportion of dual-earner families was in Alberta, with 65% in 2014. Interestingly, Alberta, however, had the greatest number of dual-earner families in 1976, at 43%.

"I think it's a reminder of the speed at which things are actually changing," Spinks said.

The biggest shift - one that has impacted the entire Western world - has been the fact that women have re-entered the workforce at a great pace in the 1980s after having children. That fundamentally shifted the dynamics of the household, she said.

"That changed the dynamics in the community, that changed parenting. That change was massive," she said.

"The flip side of that is that men had to step up while she was at work." Dads are not just taking care of household affairs - things like laundry and groceries - but they're caring for children, disabled siblings, spouses and parents, Spinks added.

"These new dads were the first generation of kids in the '80s and into the '90s that experienced separation and divorce in a big way, but more importantly co-parenting and joint-custody," she said.

At the same time, baby boomers' continued presence in the workforce has meant less inter-generational family support, Spinks said. That generation of people - turning 65 at a rate of 1 every 7 seconds in North America, Spinks said - is still working and can't afford to take time off.

"So somebody has to be there when the midwife goes home and mom and baby come home from the hospital," she said. "Dads are stepping up."

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: fathers ^[4]

spike-number-stay-home-dads-canada-%E2%80%98men

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/07/study-finds-%E2%80%98significant%E2%80%99spike-number-stay-home-dads-canada-%E2%80%98men> [2] <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/study-finds-significant-spike-in-number-of-stay-at-home-dads-men-had-to-step-up/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/fathers>