



COVID-19 Lockdown Bringing BC Fathers Closer to Their Kids

Fathers Want More Time with Family Post-COVID, Not return to "Old Normal"

Vancouver — Two new consecutive studies reveal a silver lining amid the COVID gloom: Many BC fathers feel closer to their kids during the COVID-19 pandemic and want to create a new normal going forward. The studies were released today as part of [Canadian Men's Health Week](#).

The first study, conducted in May on behalf of the [Canadian Men's Health Foundation](#) (CMHF) by Intensions Consulting, asked 301 BC fathers about the impact of the COVID lockdown on their role as fathers.

"Even though families have faced stressors and challenges with COVID-19, we recognize that fathers have been granted a golden opportunity to take time to slow down and connect with their children," said Health Minister Adrian Dix. "Many parents work full time and commute, and when that is taken away, they have more opportunities for togetherness, like a game of catch or going for a hike. Men's health is impacted by their living situations, and getting a little more physical activity with their kids is a little thing that makes a big difference. We can learn from this pandemic in more ways than we think."

During lockdown, 40% of the respondents felt COVID-19 has had a positive impact on their role as a father, 52% are more aware of their importance as a father, and 60% felt closer to their children. 49% have decided to be more engaged as a father in the future.

According to the [study](#), almost two thirds of fathers have been providing companionship to their children more often during lockdown, and almost half plan to continue doing so as restrictions are lifted. Likewise, 57% have been providing guidance to their children more often, with 47% planning to continue doing that as well.

"I've been off work since March and it's been stressful, but the upside is I've been able to spend a lot more time with my daughters," said Dal Watson of Burnaby, B.C. "I'm a professional chef and I've been spending time in the kitchen at home teaching my kids how to cook. We're also sitting down as a family and eating together, which was something that couldn't happen very often when I was working. I'm grateful for the extra time I have with my family."

Nick Black, Managing Partner at Intensions Consulting, said fathers' increased engagement can take many forms. One tangible way the study sees dads engaging is that 62% are eating more meals with their children. "Sharing meals can provide an important opportunity for family connection," says Black. "There is considerable evidence that eating meals together can have a positive impact on kids mental health, nutritional choices, school performance, and can even reduce the incidence of drug and alcohol use."

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As a follow up to the online survey, [The Men's Initiative](#) (TMI) at UBC conducted virtual focus groups with fathers. Many fathers described a hectic family dynamic prior to COVID with busy lives focused on long work days with commuting, eating on the run, children's schedules — including sports, extracurricular and social activities, and the family members experiencing lives lived in parallel with each other.

As the pandemic evolves, fathers also expressed concern that they will experience a tension between shifting back to the "old normal," and a desire to create a new normal going forward. "We know the active and positive presence of fathers in their children's lives has a positive effect on those children's mental and physical wellbeing and reduces the frequency of their negative behaviors," noted Dr. David Kuhl, a UBC Professor of Medicine and a co-founder of TMI.

Dr. Larry Goldenberg, the Founding Chair of CMHF said, "If the COVID-19 lockdown accelerates the movement of dads to be more engaged with their children, that could be a lasting benefit from a tragic public health crisis. It is clear, however, that men realize it will be a challenge to continue spending quality time with their families once the daily stresses of commuting and working long hours are reintroduced to their lives."

Wayne Hartrick, the President of CMHF says the study suggests fathers may be getting a better work / life balance during the COVID-19 outbreak. "There is no doubt COVID-19 is creating more stress for many," said Hartrick, "Our [DontChangeMuch.ca](#) website has Dad Tips to help fathers find a better balance."

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About the Studies:

The first study was conducted online between May 8 and May 12, 2020 on behalf of the not-for-profit CMHF by Intensions Consulting. It asked 301 BC fathers about the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on their family lives.

For a copy of the detailed data tabulations, [download the PDF here](#).

The second study was conducted online between May 25 and May 29, 2020 by The Men's Initiative at the University of British Columbia. It invited fathers from across Canada to participate in sixty-minute focus groups to discuss their experiences of fatherhood during COVID-19. Forty-five fathers from across Canada who had children under the age of nineteen living with them participated in the focus groups.

About the Canadian Men's Health Foundation:

CMHF is a national, not-for-profit organization with a mission to inspire Canadian men and their families to live healthier. The statistics around men's health in Canada are alarming, with 70% of men's health problems preventable by making lifestyle changes.

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