



Canadian Fathers

Updated June 5, 2013

Moms and dads make unique contributions to raising children. Once called the “forgotten contributors to child development,”¹ fathers have been the subject of a growing body of parenting research.

- There are 8.6 million fathers in Canada. 3.8 million of these fathers have at least one child 18 years old or younger. This includes biological, adoptive and stepfathers.²
- The average age of a Canadian father in 2006 was 41.6 years old.³
- In 2006, 18 % of fathers lived in a common-law union, with less than half of fathers in Quebec reporting being married.⁴
- Male headed lone-parent families accounted for 3.5% of all census families in 2011, up from 2.9% in 2001.⁵
- In 2006, approximately 8 in 10 fathers lived full time with their children. Approximately 11% of dads had at least one child living part-time with them and about 5% of fathers did not have any of their children living with them.⁶
- Men spent on average 345 minutes per day with their families in 2005. Time with family increased to 379 minutes per day by 2010.⁷
- The increased involvement of fathers in activities with their children, such as eating meals together, going on outings, and helping with homework, are associated with fewer behaviour problems, increased levels of sociability, and higher levels of school performance among children and adolescents.⁸
- Studies show that greater father involvement is correlated with lower levels of behavioural problems among adolescents, both in terms of aggression and antisocial behaviour and negative feelings such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.⁹
- One study found that rates of teenage pregnancy were seven to eight times higher among girls whose fathers were absent early in their childhoods and two to three times higher among those who suffered father-absence later in their childhood, even after researchers controlled for family background.¹⁰
- More than 70% of Canadian teens report experiencing high levels of enjoyment from their relationship with their dad.¹¹
- 84% of Canadian teen boys and 87% of Canadian teen girls report that their dad is a strong influence in their life.¹²

Endnotes

¹ Lewis, C. & Lamb, M.E. (2003). Fathers' influences on children's development: The evidence from two-parent families. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 18(2): 211-228.

² Statistics Canada (2013) Father's Day...by the numbers 2013. Retrieved from http://www42.statcan.gc.ca/smr08/2013/smr08_175_2013-eng.htm

³ Beaupré P., Dryburgh, H., Wendt, M. (2010, June 8) Making Fathers "Count", Canadian Social Trends, Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Retrieved July 18, 2011 from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2010002/article/11165-eng.pdf>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Statistics Canada (2012) Portrait of families and living arrangements in Canada. 2011 Census of Population families, households and marital status. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011001-eng.pdf>

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Statistics Canada (2013) Father's Day...by the numbers 2013. Retrieved from http://www42.statcan.gc.ca/smr08/2013/smr08_175_2013-eng.htm

⁸ Le Menestrel, S. (1999, May 1). What do fathers contribute to children's well-being? *Child Trends Research Brief*. Retrieved July 18, 2011 from <http://www.childtrends.org/Files/dadchild.pdf>

⁹ Carlson, M.J. (2006, February). Family structure, father involvement, and adolescent behavioral outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(1): 137-154.

¹⁰ Ellis et al. (2003). Does father absence place daughters at special risk for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy? *Child Development* 74(3): 801-821.

¹¹ Bibby, R.W. (2009) *The Emerging Millennials*. Lethbridge: Project Canada Books.

¹² *Ibid.*