



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Understanding the ‘New Man of the House’ in At-Home Dad Network Survey

DENVER, Colo. (Sept. 17, 2014) - The [National At-Home Dad Network](#) partnered with [Farm Rich](#) and researchers at Chapman University to form a study to help better understand the growing population of stay-at-home dads. Preliminary results will be released at the upcoming [19th Annual At-Home Dads Convention](#) in Denver, Colo. on September 19-20.

Researchers at Chapman were interested in learning about consumer decision-making of these stay-at-home dads in response to marketing messages, while the National At-Home Dad Network sought to better understand characteristics of primary parenting, stay-at-home fathers, and how they viewed themselves in light of this non-traditional family role.

“A big part of our mission,” explained Al Watts, President of the National At-Home Dad Network, “is to help society understand why dads are increasingly taking on the role of primary caregiver,

how dads navigate that role and how all of this affects families. The responses we received showed that all of this is a lot less complicated than most people believe.”

The survey was conducted online, and had 451 entries. Only 69 of these entries provided complete enough data to be used for analysis. One of the limits of this triple partnership was the survey’s length in order to address all three goals. This limited the ability to gain a higher completion rate. While this limits the generalizations we can make from the survey results, it does suggest a significant number of men responded to the requests for opinions. This suggests that, with a more focused study, there may be a fairly large, untapped source of men in the stay-at-home dad role who can provide more information about their role in contemporary families. This is necessary because, while stay-at-home dads are a growing group (**nearly doubling from 1.1 million in 1989 to 2 million in 2012 according to [Pew Research](#)**), there is very little research available to provide an understanding of this “new man of the house.”

The 69 participants who provided complete responses were primarily 30-39 years old (52%) or in their 40s (45%). About 1% were in their 20s and 1% above 50. They are a highly educated group, as a whole. 7% have attained a High School Diploma or GED, 25% have some college or a two-year degree, and 39% have a 4 year college degree. An additional 5% had a graduate or professional degree of some kind (i.e., M.A., Ph.D., J.D, M.D.). Most are White/Caucasian (90%), and 3% were Hispanic and 3% were of Asian descent. 4% reported as “Other” than White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native American.

Most were married (94%) while 3% reported being separated from their spouse, or living with their spouse without a marriage arrangement. About one third have one child (36%) and 42% have

two children. 13% of the respondents have 3 children, and another 9% have 4 or more children in their family. These children are primarily young, with 60% being preschool or younger. Over one third (36%) are in elementary grades (K-4), and 13% have children in middle school grades. Two percent of the children are in high school and another 2% are in college or graduate school. This is fairly consistent with data collected the last 3 years at the National At-Home Dad Network's Annual Convention where around one-fourth of the dads have one child, nearly half have two children and one third have three or more children. The average of 72 dads who attended the last three conventions also primarily had children who were young with 51% being preschool or younger and 39% being in elementary school.

The stay-at-home dads from the study have been the at-home primary care giver for their children for an average of 4.7 years, with the range being 1 year to 12 years. Interestingly, 41% have been a stay-at-father for 5 years or more. This suggests that the role of stay at home fathers has been around for a while, and for many men, it is a long term commitment.

When asked to describe what "Staying home" meant to them, the main themes in the responses indicated that the job was the result of a value decision they made with their spouse, and that it was both rewarding and a privilege combined with being stressful and difficult. One respondent explained it as "A choice my wife and I made to give our children as much potential as possible."

Many simply stated it was "how they saw themselves," like many others in a professional role (i.e., I am a doctor, or minister, teacher or sales person). Of course, many also indicated that it can be a lonely or thankless job. Overall this collection of responses seems to mirror what women who have been viewed as the traditional stay-at-home parent most often report as well. It is a mixed bag of good and bad: an exciting opportunity that is rewarding, yet filled with moments of isolation and a lack of understanding from those who

don't do it. Or, as one dad put it "a continuum ranging from pure bliss to pure hell."

When asked about their views on careers, the range of responses indicated that professional careers were also a mixed bag. Some indicated a career was what was expected of men, but not what they saw as important for themselves ("Nice, but actually being involved in raising my children is more important," wrote one respondent). Others saw it as a future goal that also offered financial security. Another strong theme related to the values mentioned when defining what it meant to stay at home. Many men reported that a career wasn't necessary for personal fulfillment or to feel important, and that they viewed it as less valuable than staying home to provide primary care for their children. One respondent quipped that having a career is "An unfortunate but easily cured affliction." Another simply stated a career is "Something that some people need to feel complete, not me."

When asked to describe how their parenting strengths and weaknesses differed from their wife/partner, there was a strong indication by some that such comparisons were frivolous: "I am who I am not because I am a male," wrote one. Or "We each have our strengths and are equal partners in parenting our child," explained another. The vast majority reported some sense of working together to play to each other's strengths, not unlike how many traditional working husbands and at-home wives have viewed the arrangement over the years. For example, some report being more stressed by career demands than their wife, and alternatively, less stressed by child-rearing demands. The sense was that the person better suited to be with children primarily throughout the day was the one that filled that role. Some described general parenting style differences (i.e., more patience, better prepared to discipline) like one who wrote "She by nature gets easily stressed out while I am easy going and have a longer fuse." All of this points to a fairly systematic and planned approach to determining who stays home and why. Sometimes, it appears,

that the answer to the question is the Father, for a variety of reasons, all of which follow the value (and financial ability) to have one parent at home for most of the day. As one respondent explained simply, “I am better suited to the role and she is more fulfilled in her career.”

When describing parenting strengths, it is interesting to note that some of the men still responded with fairly traditional gender-typed responses. For example, a common theme was the men reported being more physical and engaging with kids in their play and development, while the wife is described as more nurturing and organized. However, in contrast, a large number of men described the strengths as specific to each partner as an individual. For example, many said their strength as a parent was that they were more patient and engaging with the kids, while others said it was their wife that was more patient and engaging when she was with the kids. Some reported they were the more nurturing partner, while others gave credit to their wife in this area. Likewise, some said they were the better multi-tasker (such as one dad who described he was capable of “taping up a ripped picture while tying a shoe and helping someone onto the potty while the dryer is buzzing and the sink is filling with soapy water”) while others described this quality as more of a strength for their wife.

Overall however, the greatest theme that emerged from these responses was that these men saw themselves as partnering with their spouse or significant other to share the job of raising children. By virtue of values that they share as a couple, one person needed to be the one to stay home. Based on an analysis of career, child-rearing strengths, and individual personalities, for these families, it is the dad who is best able to serve the family by staying home with the children.

The National At-Home Dad Network is a 501c3 non-profit organization committed to providing support, education and advocacy for fathers who are the primary caregivers of their children. Learn more at www.athomedad.org.