

## PewResearchCenter Publications

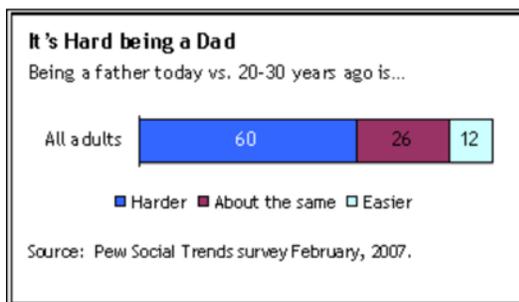
# Being Dad May Be Tougher These Days, but Working Moms are among Their Biggest Fans

by Kim Parker, Senior Researcher, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press  
June 13, 2007



No one can argue with the fact that today's fathers are more "hands on" with their kids than fathers were a generation or two ago. With so many dual income families, fathers often have to share the workload of childrearing and household chores. So how are fathers faring in this brave new world of changing diets and driving carpools? The verdict is mixed on how well today's dads measure up -- about half of the public says they're doing a worse job when compared to fathers a generation ago; the other half says they're doing as well or even better.

A broad consensus holds that it is harder to be a father now than it was 20 or 30 years ago, and on this point men and women agree. Fully 59% of men and 62% of women say today's dads have a tougher time of it. Only 12% of the public says it's easier to be a dad today, while roughly a quarter say it's about the same as it was a generation ago. People generally feel the same about motherhood. Seven-in-ten adults say it's [harder to be a mom today than it was in the past](#), and only 11% see it as easier.



Interestingly enough, when it comes to evaluating today's fathers, dads' harshest critics turn out not to be women, but men. For example, on the question of how good a job fathers are doing raising their kids, women actually have a more benevolent view. A majority (56%) of women say today's dads are doing a good job or a better job raising their kids compared with fathers a generation ago, while four-in-ten say they are doing a worse job. Men, however, take a more critical view: Only 41% of men say today's dads match or better the performance of the dads of the 1970s and '80s, compared with a majority (55%) say today's dads are doing a worse job.

**How Well Are Dads Doing Their Job?**  
Women See More Progress

Today's dads vs. dads 20-30 years ago:	Total %	Men %	Women %
Better job	21	15	27
Worse job	47	55	40
About the same	28	26	29
Don't know	4	4	4
	100	100	100

Source: Pew Social Trends survey February, 2007

Notable among the biggest fans of today's dads is a group of women who may well be the best qualified to evaluate them: working moms. They're married

these men after all, and they function at the epicenter of the busy households where modern dads must pitch in at every turn.

Fully 72% of married moms who work at least part-time and are raising young children say dads are now doing as good a job or better than their counterparts did a generation ago; only 26% say they're falling short.

### Mom's Still the Family Lynchpin

Dads may be working harder at home and getting more involved in their kids' lives these days, but we won't know for another 20 to 30 years, when today's children are fully grown, whether their fathers have succeeded in knocking their mothers off the top of the family pedestal. Surveys of adult children show that mom, not dad, is the parent that they feel closest to and the person they turn to for advice. In a 2005 Pew Research Center survey, 61% of adults with both parents still living said they have the most contact with their mother. Only 18% said they have the most contact with their father.

<b>Adult Children Feel Closer to Mom</b>	
<i>With which parents do you have the most contact?*</i>	
Mom	61
Dad	18
Both same (vol.)	21
	100
<i>Relationship with mom:</i>	
Close	87
Distant	11
Neither/Don't know	2
	100
<i>Relationship with dad:</i>	
Close	74
Distant	22
Neither/Don't know	4
	100
*Based on adult children with both parents living. Source: Pew Social Trends survey October, 2005	

In that same survey, respondents were more than twice as likely to say they would turn to their mom in times of crisis (17%) as opposed to their dad (6%) while 87% said they are close to their mother, fewer (74%) said the same about their relationship with their father. In this regard, dads rank below the feline pet: On average, dog and cat owners [feel closer to their pets](#) than adult children feel to their fathers.

Still, this may be okay with dads, simply because their relationship with their kids is less central to their own happiness than it is for moms. Many wives are surprised to know that when asked about the most important aspect of their personal happiness and fulfillment, men are more likely to point to their relationship with their wife than their relationship with their kids. Just the opposite is true for women. They place more value on their relationship with their kids than they do on their relationship with their husband.