

How's your daddy?



This year marks 100 years since the first modern-day celebration of Father's Day in North America. Over the years, the faces of mothers have changed dramatically with stay-at-home moms becoming closer to extinction with each generation. But what about fathers? Has their role as a parent and husband changed?

Robert Young represented the classic dad in the '50s sitcom *Father Knows Best*. He would come home from work, read the paper, and wait for his apron-clad wife to serve dinner. His role as a father was largely to dish out advice and

discipline when needed, and on weekends cut the grass and throw a football around with Bud.

We continue to hear stats about mothers doing double duty – working full-time and still doing a majority of the housework. But are dads getting enough credit here?

We asked, in a Mustel Group poll, how the father's role in the family has changed in recent years. The majority, two-thirds, believe their role has changed in a positive way, the main change being greater participation in the care of children. Once banned from the delivery room, fathers now actively participate in every aspect of childcare. As one of our respondents noted, "Younger men do more with their children than our age group did and probably change diapers, too!"

In fact, Statistics Canada reported that fathers' involvement in primary child care has jumped from 57 per cent to 73 per cent over the past 20 years.

And more dads are choosing to stay at home to take care of the kids while mom becomes the primary breadwinner. Even though families with a stay-at-home parent have declined substantially, the proportion with a father in this role has increased from four per cent in 1986 to 11 per cent in 2005.

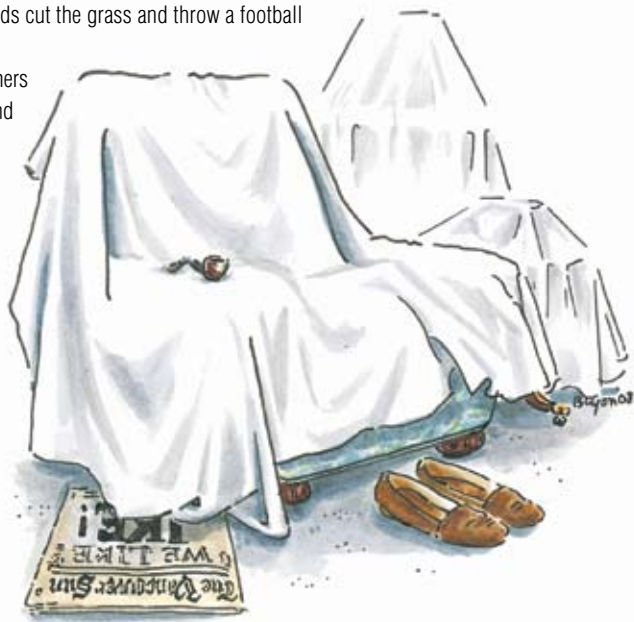
Moreover, with the extension of parental leave in the Employment Insurance Act from 10 to 35 weeks, more than one in 10 fathers are now taking leave to be home with their newborn.

A growing segment of single dads also has caused many men to assume more childcare responsibilities.

In addition to childcare, men are taking on more of the cooking and cleaning, as well. Whilst women are still doing the majority, the gap is narrowing. The participation rate among fathers with housework increased from 54 per cent in 1986 to 71 per cent in 2005, during an era when people are spending less time doing housework thanks to our modern day conveniences such as dishwashers and pre-packaged food. It also has become very trendy for men to cook, as well as take an interest in home decorating.

With both partners now working in the majority of couples (69 per cent today versus only 36 per cent in 1976) a greater sharing of financial responsibilities has led to a greater sharing of parental and household responsibilities. Keep up the good work, fellas. You've come a long way, Daddy! **VLM**

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In recent years, do you think a father's role in the family and rearing of children has changed in a positive way, negative way or not really changed at all?

Positive way	64%
Negative way	15%
Not changed	21%