

Stay-at-home dads in the UK

How many are there?

From time to time the media shows interest in stay-at-home fathers, considering them rare enough to be unusual and interesting, but also wanting to show that their numbers are increasing.

In fact, the official data tells a more complicated story.

Latest figures (for summer 2024)¹ found that in the UK there were 112,000 men living with dependent children², who were 'economically inactive and looking after the family home' in 2024.

This category is the closest thing we have to a measure of the number of **full-time stay-at-home fathers**. And we can confirm that these dads are, indeed, quite rare. They represent just 1.7% of all men living with dependent children (again, a good but imperfect³ category that approximates to a definition of 'father').

Using the equivalent category, we find that there were 1.1 million 'stay-at-home' mothers in 2024 – which represented 13.9% of all women living with dependent children.

In numerical terms, there were 1,000 fewer stay-at-home fathers in 2024 than there were in 2019 (see table 1 below): a fall of 0.1%. Over the same period, the number of stay-at-home mothers fell by 197,000: a fall of 2.9%.

¹ Source: Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey, [Working and workless households in the UK: July to September 2024](#). Table S.

² Dependent children are those aged under 16, and those aged 16-18 who have never married and are in full-time education

³ It's imperfect because it excludes fathers who may have dependent children, but don't appear in the statistics as living with them...usually because the children live more of the time with their mother.

Table 1. Men and women living with dependent children: economically inactive and looking after family/home

	Men: number who are in this category	% of all men living with dependent children who are in this category	Women: number who are in this category	% of all women living with dependent children who are in this category	Men as a % of this overall category of parents
2019	113,000	1.8	1,318,000	16.8	8.6
2022	127,000	2.0	1,177,000	14.8	10.8
2024	112,000	1.7	1,121,000	13.9	10.0
Change (2019- 2024)	-1,000	-0.1	-197,000	-2.9	+1.4

Source: ONS. Figures are for Q2 ([2019](#) and [2022](#)) and Q3 ([2024](#))

What does research⁴ tell us about these dads?

[Jones et al \(2021a\)](#) explored how stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs) think and feel about transitioning back into paid employment. Findings from a thematic analysis on interviews with 21 SAHFs in the UK revealed that many of the SAHFs expected to return to work. However, most of the fathers suggested that this would be part-time, or self-employment, which would allow them to remain highly involved in caregiving, representing their commitment to moving away from the traditional gender roles that are largely evident in parenting. Some fathers expressed a desire to return to the paid workforce whilst others showed apprehension, indicating tensions over negotiating work and care.

[Jones et al \(2021b\)](#) compared UK families with primary caregiver fathers⁵, primary caregiver mothers and dual-earner couples and found no differences in parental psychological well-being, parenting and child

⁴ The following findings are drawn from the Fatherhood Institute’s library of research about UK fathers and fatherhood. We have also included findings from a selection of well-known international sources.

⁵ These fathers were not all stay-at-home fathers; some were in part-time, flexible employment.

adjustment between family types. Primary caregiver fathers were well-adjusted to their parenting role and showed no differences in quality of parenting to primary caregiver mothers.

In the U.S., stay-at-home fathers have been found to report high levels of confidence in their parenting ([Rochlen, McKelley, et al., 2008](#)), and to express a high sense of satisfaction with their role as the primary caregiver ([Rochlen, Suizzo et al., 2008](#)).

Qualitative studies of Canadian (Doucet, 2018) and Australian (Stevens, 2015) stay-at-home fathers suggest that 'househusbands' without paid employment may be treated as inferior. Stay-at-home fathers may be viewed as having been pushed into full-time parenting through economic necessity rather than choice; and face denigration both as failed employees and substandard caregivers (Stevens, 2015).

References

- Doucet, A. (2018). *Do Men Mother?*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Jones, C., Wells, J., Imrie, S., & Golombok, S. (2021a). [Transitions Into and Out of Work: Stay-at-Home Fathers' Thoughts and Feelings: A Brief Report](#). *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 29(3), 373-383
- Jones, C., Foley, S., & Golombok, S. (2021b). [Parenting and child adjustment in families with primary caregiver fathers](#). *Journal of Family Psychology*
- Rochlen, A. B., McKelley, R. A., Suizzo, M.-A., & Scaringi, V. (2008). [Predictors of relationship satisfaction, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction among stay-at-home fathers](#). *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 9(1), 17-28
- Rochlen, A. B., Suizzo, M.-A., McKelley, R. A., & Scaringi, V. (2008). ["I'm just providing for my family": A qualitative study of stay-at-home fathers](#). *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 9(4), 193-206
- Stevens, E. (2015). 'Understanding discursive barriers to involved fatherhood: The case of Australian stay-at-home fathers'. *Journal of Family Studies*, 21, 22-37.

Resources

Fatherhood Institute media contributions

- The Independent: [Stay-at-home dads are being left out of the parenting conversation](#) (Jan 2025)
- The Guardian: [More men want to be stay-at-home dads and better fathers – why won't politicians help them?](#) (Jan 2023)
- The Guardian: [Number of stay-at-home dads in UK up by a third since before pandemic](#) (Dec 2022)
- Daily Express: [Big rise in dads who stay home after pandemic, figures show](#) (Dec 2022)
- The Times: [Third more dads stay at home to care for children](#) (Dec 2022)
- Daily Telegraph: [Number of stay-at-home dads rises following pandemic](#) (Dec 2022)
- MailOnline: [Rise of the stay-at-home dad: number of men looking after their kids at home is up by a third since pre-pandemic, UK stats show](#) (Dec 2022)

Related Fatherhood Institute research

- [Closing the Gap: UK working fathers' and mothers' use of time 2014-22](#) (2022)
- [Lockdown Fathers – the untold story: fatherhood during the first Covid-19 lockdown in the UK](#) (2021)

For a visual representation of the information contained in this factsheet, see our Insta posts [here](#) (Jan 2025) and [here](#) (Feb 2023)