The restrictions in place across Australia from March to help stop the spread of COVID-19 meant people were using their time in different ways. Families were spending a lot more time together and parents were doing more with their children. Remote learning was introduced for many children and across Australia parents had to help their children with their school lessons. Many dads were working at home more or working reduced hours and so were available to spend more time with their kids than usual. Over half (61%) of dads reported spending more time helping with learning and schoolwork.

61% of dads reported spending more time helping their kids with learning and schoolwork.

Some of them even went beyond doing regular schoolwork with their children.

“Teaching them life skills – cooking and cleaning, financial management, caring for the pets etc.
43 years old, one child (10 years old)"

“Teaching my four-year-old daughter to read. Isolation has been a gift to her in that way.
34 years old, two children (4 and 7 years old)”
Dads were also busy with the personal care of children. While over half (55%) continued with their regular care routines, 16% found themselves doing more.

“It is a trying time because we are with two kids under 5 every single day, without any break. My wife is doing an amazing job (she does kindergarten based learning with our 4 year old) and I’m really happy I can be here while continuing to work; I can help change a dirty nappy, or give my wife a break in the afternoon for a rest or a walk while I sit with the 4 year old (1 year old sleeps in the afternoon) and either play or if I’m busy with work sit with her while she watches a movie. 25 years old, two children (1 and 4 years old)

But it wasn’t all work and no play. Dads also had more time to hang out with their kids and take part in family activities. What did dads report they were doing more of for fun?

How dads spent MORE TIME with their kids

- 46% quiet games and arts and crafts with their kids
- 26% active games with their kids
- 21% video games with their kids
- 17% reading to or with their kids
Figure 1: How the pandemic affected how much time parents spent on activities with children

- **Personal care activities helping to bathe, dress, etc.**
  - **Fathers:** 16% more often, 55% equally, 2% less often
  - **Mothers:** 12% more often, 62% equally, 3% less often
- **Playing video games**
  - **Fathers:** 24% more often, 28% equally, 7% less often
  - **Mothers:** 19% more often, 12% equally, 17% less often
- **Reading to or reading with them**
  - **Fathers:** 17% more often, 58% equally, 5% less often
  - **Mothers:** 27% more often, 52% equally, 9% less often
- **Playing active games/‘rough and tumble’ play or sports**
  - **Fathers:** 26% more often, 37% equally, 16% less often
  - **Mothers:** 33% more often, 39% equally, 11% less often
- **Having meaningful conversations**
  - **Fathers:** 34% more often, 69% equally, 2% less often
  - **Mothers:** 44% more often, 49% equally, 5% less often
- **Playing quiet games, art and craft**
  - **Fathers:** 46% more often, 37% equally, 34% less often
  - **Mothers:** 54% more often, 37% equally, 5% less often
- **Helping with learning and lessons including school and homework**
  - **Fathers:** 61% more often, 68% equally, 14% less often
  - **Mothers:** 3% more often, 62% equally, 3% less often

Note: the balance of each bar is the percentage who said this activity was not applicable.

How often this activity was done during the pandemic, compared to before COVID-19
- **More often**
- **Equally**
- **Less often**

Veteran

“Spending time with my family at home has been great – playing silly games with the kids.
41 years old, two children (4 and 9 years old)

“Playing more games with my daughter both inside and out. She has missed the interaction with other kids and I have tried to fill that void.
46 years old, one child (6 years old)

And dads were also there when kids needed to talk, with 34% spending more time having meaningful conversations.

“Keeping engaged with our children has become more of a focus given the uncertainty of everything that is happening. We have found this to be a positive outcome and we intend continuing this from now on.
46 years old, two children (12 and 14 years old)
ABOUT THE SURVEY

Life during COVID-19 was the first survey in the Families in Australia Survey (AIFS’ flagship survey series). The first wave ran from May 1 to June 9 2020, when all states were in various stages of lockdown. There were 7,306 respondents. A second survey wave is planned for October 2020.

Resources and further information

We have gathered a list of resources to support families through the coronavirus crisis. These include government resources, mental health support services, and child and family support services.

Contact

For more information, visit the Families in Australia Survey project page or email fia-survey@aifs.gov.au.

Credits

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