

## **85 Percent of Fathers Say They Would Do Anything to Be Very Involved In Caring for Their New Child, but Are Still Taking on Far Less than Mothers, Finds *State of the World's Fathers Report***

*Global report produced by gender equality organization Promundo, co-coordinator of MenCare: A Global Fatherhood Campaign, calls for accelerated action to close the care gap*

*"I believe there shouldn't be a distinction between which chores men can do and what women can do. For example, I can do the washing, cooking, and fetching of water and men can do same." –Woman, Ghana*

June 5, 2019 – Vancouver, Canada: 50 minutes a day. That's the amount of additional time men would need to contribute every day to caring for children and households to make a leap toward achieving gender equality in unpaid care, reveals the third-ever *State of the World's Fathers* report, released today by Promundo, with Unilever Dove Men+Care at the Women Deliver 2019 Conference, in advance of Father's Day in many countries around the world.

**New research across seven countries (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Netherlands, UK, and US) finds that 85 percent\* of fathers say that they would be willing to do *anything* to be very involved in the early weeks and months of caring for their newly born or adopted child.** So, what's holding them back? The report identifies three major barriers: (1) the lack of adequate, paid paternity leave, and low take-up of leave when it is available; (2) restrictive gender norms that position care as women's responsibility, alongside the perception of women as more competent caregivers than men; and (3) a lack of economic security and government support for all parents and caregivers.

The *State of the World's Fathers* report is produced by Promundo, co-coordinator of MenCare: A Global Fatherhood Campaign, which is active in over 50 countries. It reveals new research findings, conducted with Unilever, Dove Men+Care in seven countries and Plan International Canada in four countries – drawing from interviews and surveys of nearly 12,000 individuals. It also includes cross-country data analysis from more than 30 countries, and it provides recommendations to close the unpaid care gap in support of achieving gender equality.

**No country in the world has achieved equality in unpaid care work – or pay equality – between men and women. The progress is incredibly slow.** Across 23 middle- and high-income countries, the unpaid care gap has closed by just seven minutes over the past several decades. Globally, women spend significantly more time than men – sometimes up to ten times as much – on unpaid care, volunteer, and domestic work (and spend more time on unpaid and paid work combined). **Analysis of time use data finds that if men took on at least 50 minutes more care per day (and women did 50 minutes less), we would tip the scale toward equality.**

One proven policy solution to support the redistribution of unpaid care work – equal, paid, nontransferable leave for all parents, including fathers – has yet to see universal uptake: **Less than half (48 percent) of the world's countries offer paid paternity leave, but when available, it is often less than three weeks – or sometimes only a few days.**

Women want men to take paternity leave, and say it would improve their own health. Across the seven middle- and high-income countries surveyed, over 65 percent of women say mothers would have better physical health, and over 72 percent say they would have better mental health if fathers took at least two weeks paternity leave, reveals the report.

Even when paternity leave exists, *State of the World's Fathers* finds that too few fathers take leave after the birth or adoption of a child. Less than half of fathers – across the same countries surveyed – took as much time as their country's policy allowed. As many as 35 percent of fathers in Japan and 40 percent of fathers in Canada report taking *no time off at all* after the birth or adoption of their most recent child.

**Restrictive gender stereotypes are part of the problem.** The report finds that significant proportions of men and women – from Promundo and partner-led surveys across every region in the world – agree that “changing diapers, giving baths to children, and feeding children should be the mother’s responsibility.” In 23 of 32 countries where these data are available, the majority of men agree that “a man should have the final word about decisions in his home”; in 15 countries, at least 70 percent of men agree. In certain lower income countries and contexts, social stigma incurred by going against norms can be a deterrent: fathers in Bangladesh, Ghana, Haiti, and Nigeria reported they had experienced ridicule or been taunted by other men and community members when they started taking on more chores and work around the house.

There is also a perceived competence gap on parenting, and men rely more heavily on their female partners than vice versa: across Canada, Japan, Netherlands and UK, approximately twice as many fathers say they “rely on [their] spouse for knowledge and information on parenting” as compared to mothers. Fathers from Argentina to Brazil, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States believe that they are less competent at caregiving than their female partners.

Financial stress and insecurity also influence men’s caregiving: up to 76 percent of mothers (UK) and 59 percent of fathers (Canada) from the seven middle- and high-income countries surveyed rate financial barriers as the main reason for not taking more parental leave. Context matters: economic insecurity, active conflict or war, and political instability present tremendous challenges for caregiving.

Governments and employers have a role in creating laws and policies that support all parents, caregivers, and families, in all their diversity, to thrive: from affordable childcare to living wages, social support to affordable education, and equal, fully paid, non-transferable parental leave. They also have a responsibility to set this crucial standard on care work, and to ensure that it is valued and shared equally. The report finds that certain countries like Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and El Salvador have set positive examples when it comes to supporting men’s caregiving and gender equality across norms and policies.

**Reaching equality in unpaid care and domestic work is an urgent matter of gender justice and women’s rights.** It is also a key factor in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Having involved, caring fathers is good for gender equality and for women’s health. It can be linked with better relationships and a reduction in rates of men’s violence against women. It is good for children’s health and well-being, too. When fathers take on an equal share of the care work, it will accelerate progress for this generation and for the next, helping their children to support gender equality and break stereotypes.

“We must accelerate national commitments to support all children, parents, and families to thrive, and to achieve men’s uptake of half of the daily care of children and of our homes. Full stop,” says Gary Barker, President & CEO, Promundo. “Anything less continues to perpetuate the inequalities that women and girls face every day.”

**The global report calls for countries, employers, and civil society to commit to accelerate action and support men’s increased participation in unpaid care work.** By taking such action, the MenCare Commitment\*\* aims to facilitate an enabling environment where men take on 50 percent of the unpaid care work by 2030. It also supports fathers to put their intentions to care into action by – at a minimum – taking on an additional 50 minutes a day. The MenCare Commitment is coordinated by Promundo, on behalf of MenCare: A Global Fatherhood Campaign. It is being driven with support from Women Deliver as part of the global advocacy organization’s ongoing efforts to champion gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women.

“There are significant inequalities in caregiving and women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care. As advocates, Women Deliver welcomes new evidence as a powerful tool for driving action and change,” said Susan Papp, Managing Director of Policy and Advocacy at Women Deliver. “The *State of the World’s Fathers* report arms us with the information we need to push for a more gender equal world.”

Policy-makers and politicians, health workers and teachers, employers and media influencers, advocates and activists must all step up to end the inequality in unpaid care work. Only then can we build a more equal world.

\* Note: *The multi-country average reflects calculations that give equal weight to each respondent in each subcategory (i.e. men, women, fathers, mothers), regardless of country.*

\*\* *For more information, visit [www.men-care.org/MenCareCommitment](http://www.men-care.org/MenCareCommitment)*

- END -

Read the full report: [www.StateoftheWorldsFathers.org](http://www.StateoftheWorldsFathers.org)

Join the conversation online: #WorldsFathers

Alexa Hassink, Director of Communications, Promundo  
Email: [a.hassink@promundoglobal.org](mailto:a.hassink@promundoglobal.org) / Mobile: +1 302-229-8241

Notes to Editors:

**About MenCare:** MenCare is a global campaign led by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice to promote men's and boys' involvement as equitable, nonviolent caregivers. With activities in more than 50 countries, MenCare partners carry out joint advocacy initiatives, research, and programming to engage men in positive parenting, in equitable caregiving, in violence prevention, and in maternal, newborn, and child health. For more information about the campaign and its partners, visit the MenCare website: [men-care.org](http://men-care.org)

**About State of the World's Fathers:** Produced by Promundo, *State of the World's Fathers 2019* is the third *State of the World's Fathers* report, following previous editions published in 2015 and 2017. It joins a growing set of related country- and region-specific reports on equality in unpaid care work around the world. All editions are available at: [sowf.men-care.org](http://sowf.men-care.org). The 2019 report will be available at: [www.stateoftheworldsfathers.org](http://www.stateoftheworldsfathers.org) on June 5, 2019.

**About Promundo:** Promundo is a global leader in promoting gender equality and preventing violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls. Founded over 20 years ago, Promundo believes that working with men and boys to transform harmful gender norms and unequal power dynamics is a critical part of the solution to achieve gender equality. Promundo conduct rigorous research, develop evidence-based programs, and leads high-level advocacy initiatives. With partners in over 50 countries, Promundo's work has reached nearly 10 million people through programs and training, campaigns, and community engagement; and over 2 billion potential viewers through media mentions, and has led to changes in attitudes and behaviors related to violence, health, care work, and more. For more information, visit: [www.promundoglobal.org](http://www.promundoglobal.org).

**About the Editorial Advisory Board:** The *State of the World's Fathers* Report has an Editorial Advisory Board including: MenCare Steering Committee members Sonke Gender Justice, MenEngage Alliance, Oxfam GB, Save the Children Sweden; and Plan International Sweden; as well as Plan International Canada; Plan International; Rutgers; Unilever, Dove Men+Care.

**About the Data in this Report**

*State of the World's Fathers 2019* includes new data analyses from four sources, detailed below.

**1. The Helping Dads Care Research Project (2017–2019)**

In partnership with Unilever Dove Men+Care, Promundo conducted the Helping Dads Care Research Project, which provides new cross-sectional survey data involving men and women (aged 25 to 45) on what factors encourage men's use of parental leave in seven countries. *State of the World's Fathers 2019* is the first and only multi-country publication featuring these new data to date.

**Table 1. Sample sizes across countries for the Helping Dads Care Research Project**

	Fathers (n)	Mothers (n)	Men without children (n)	Women without children (n)	Did not respond on parent status	Total sample (n)

					(n)	
<i>United States</i>	371	398	187	225	0	1,181
<i>Brazil</i>	790	380	346	172	21	1,709
<i>Japan</i>	557	465	454	278	53	1,807
<i>United Kingdom</i>	828	296	216	300	12	1,652
<i>Argentina</i>	714	392	305	182	60	1,653
<i>Canada</i>	853	289	185	284	23	1,634
<i>Netherlands</i>	723	305	271	365	34	1,698

## 2. Plan International Canada: SHOW Fathers' Study

Plan International Canada conducted a study in its multi-country, Global Affairs Canada-funded program Strengthening Health Outcomes for Women and Children (SHOW) in Bangladesh, Haiti, Nigeria, and Ghana in January and February 2019. The study examined attitudes and perceptions on the distribution of roles and responsibilities between women and men regarding household work and caregiving activities; behavior changes of male participants in the SHOW Fathers' Clubs; and perceptions and effects of behavior changes. The study collected qualitative data through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with women partners and adolescent children (boys and girls), with Fathers' Club participants, and with male community leaders. In total, 154 consultations were conducted with 482 participants (284 female and 198 male). Complementary case studies were collected with a focus on women and adolescent children and their experience of change related to their partner and father's caregiving and participation in care work.

## 3. International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is one of the most comprehensive studies ever on men's and women's practices and attitudes as they relate to gender norms, attitudes toward gender-equality policies, household dynamics (including caregiving and men's involvement as fathers), intimate partner violence, health, economic stress, and more. Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women created IMAGES, and IMAGES studies had been carried out in more than 27 countries around the world as of 2019. Studies inspired by IMAGES, including the Partners for Prevention United Nations Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence, have been conducted in at least another 14 countries.<sup>1</sup> Since 2009, household surveys were administered to some 50,000 men and women (combined) as part of IMAGES. *State of the World's Fathers 2019* presents new multi-country analysis of IMAGES findings from more than two-dozen country studies.

## 4. OECD SIGI Index

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a new composite measure of gender equality based on the OECD's Gender, Institutions, and Development Database. It complements and improves existing measures in several ways. While conventional indicators of gender equality capture inequality outcomes, the SIGI focuses on the root causes behind these inequalities. The SIGI introduces 12 innovative indicators on social institutions, which are grouped into five categories: family code, physical integrity, son preference, civil liberties, and ownership rights. Each of the SIGI indicators is coded between 0, meaning no or very low inequality, and 1, indicating very high inequality. For more information, visit [www.genderindex.org](http://www.genderindex.org)

---

*Funding for this report was generously provided by Unilever, Dove Men+Care, the Oak Foundation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Plan International Canada and the Government of Canada, the Overseas Development Institute (ALIGN project), and the Government of Iceland. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of any of its affiliated organizations, Editorial Advisory Board members, funders, contributors, or expert reviewers.*