

# Diverse post-divorce parenting arrangements on the increase

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Credit: Pip Wilson, <http://bit.ly/XSIhfE>.

(Phys.org)—A new study mapping when children spend time with their father after divorce, has revealed a shift away from children only spending time with their father every second weekend.

The study, based on a random sample of 408 separated parents registered with the Australian Child Support Agency, found that despite the complexity of some parenting arrangements, children generally moved between homes two or four times each fortnight.

Led by Dr Bruce Smyth of the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences the study found that modern parenting schedules post-divorce show a greater sharing of parental responsibilities and richer paternal involvement than previously evident.

This was also the case for children in 50/50 shared-time arrangements, with the most common pattern being week-about arrangements starting each Monday.

"This is an important new finding because there have been concerns that children in 50/50 arrangements often move between mum's and dad's house in 'ping-pong' type arrangements," Dr Smyth said.

"But the new data suggests that arrangements involving frequent moves between homes are not the norm. Fewer transitions help to limit children's exposure to parental hostility at handovers and offers greater [predictability](#) for children, especially young children.

"All parenting arrangements involve trade-offs, single long blocks of time with each parent require fewer transitions for children, but involve longer absences from one parent. By contrast, more fragmented schedules require more transitions for children but help to minimise the time away from each parent.

"We are finding that separated parents are putting in place much more varied, creative and lateral arrangements to spend time with their children than was previously the case.

"Many children like to see both parents, and to know where they will be on a particular night, and what they will be doing. There are lots of possibilities for sharing the care of children. Each child and family is unique and what works well for one family may be a poor fit for another family.

"In an ideal world, children's activities and needs would always be the anchor points in any parenting schedule. But in the push and shove of modern family dynamics, especially post separation, competing interests mean difficult choices and trade-offs need to be made by parents in

balancing the needs of their [children](#), against their own needs and circumstances.

"Most parenting arrangements can work well where parents get along, there's some flexibility, and the arrangements are child-responsive."

The study's findings will appear in the December edition of the *Journal of Family Studies*, which is a special issue focusing on fathering in Australia.

Provided by Australian National University

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