

Caregiving dads treated disrespectfully at work, new study finds

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If policy-makers want to do something about falling birth rates, they may want to take a look at improving how people are treated at work when they step outside of traditional family roles at home.

New studies show that middle-class men who take on non-traditional [caregiving](#) roles are treated worse at work than men who stick closer to traditional [gender norms](#) in the family. Women without children and mothers with non-traditional caregiving arrangements are treated worst of all.

"Their hours are no different than other employees', but their co-workers appear to be picking up on their non-traditional caregiving roles and are treating them disrespectfully," says Prof. Jennifer Berdahl of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, who co-authored the study with Sue Moon from the [Long Island University Post](#).

Results were based on two separate field studies, each using mail-in surveys. The first was targeted at unionized workers in female-dominated occupations and the other was targeted at public service workers in a male-dominated workforce.

Overall, the studies found consequences for any employee who violated [traditional gender roles](#) when it came to having a family. The least harassed in the office? Fathers and mothers who followed more traditional gender norms; that is, men who did less caregiving and domestic tasks at home and women who did more.

The results suggest that how well a worker performs their gender role in the home has more bearing on how they are treated at work than how well that worker performs their job. As a result, men and women are likely to feel pressure at work to conform to traditional roles at home. "They may choose not to have children if these traditional roles are not feasible for them, or get in the way of family or [career goals](#)," according to Prof. Berdahl.

Prof. Berdahl points out that workplace treatment is different from pay and promotions. "Both male and female employees suffer lower pay and fewer promotions after taking time off [work](#) to care for [family](#), to extents that cannot be explained by possible skill loss, hours, performance, or ambition."

"What we really need is a more flexible workplace and policies that protect employees who choose to use that flexibility or not, regardless of their gender," says Prof. Berdahl.

The study is to be published in the *Journal of Social Issues*.

Provided by University of Toronto

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