

Dads often earn more, even if they're not harder workers

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When it comes to earning potential, it pays to be a dad, new UBC research suggests.

The study, published in the journal *Work, Employment and Society*, found that men often receive a wage boost when they become [fathers](#)—even if they're not necessarily working harder. In fact, when their work is scrutinized more closely through performance reviews, for example, the researchers found that the wage boost is often reduced or eliminated.

"Although women typically experience a dip in earnings after becoming mothers, our study confirms the prevalence of the so-called 'daddy bonus'—the wage boost that men enjoy when they become fathers," said lead author Sylvia Fuller, associate professor in the UBC department of sociology. "Our findings suggest that employers are more likely to see fathers as deserving of promotions and higher wages because of an unfair assumption that men are the breadwinners in their families, and are therefore more likely to be hardworking and dependable. Of course, that assumption isn't always true."

For the study, the researchers analyzed data from Statistic Canada's Canadian Workplace and Employee Survey, gathered from 1999 to 2005. The sample included 18,730 men between 24 and 44 years of age in 5,020 workplaces. The researchers focused on wage differences within workplaces and limited their study to white men because including non-white men would require a separate analysis due to the [wage gap](#) that exists between white men and other racial groups.

The researchers found that fathers in professional or managerial occupations enjoy the largest net wage boost within their workplaces of 6.9 per cent, compared to a 3.6 per cent net wage boost for men in other occupations. The wage boost was highest for highly educated men—fathers with a university degree received a 5.3 per cent net wage premium within their workplaces, compared to 1.8 per cent for fathers with less than a high-school diploma.

But when work performance was more closely scrutinized for merit pay, the researchers found that the fatherhood wage boost was reduced or even reversed, in the case of the least educated men. Having a collective bargaining agreement in place also significantly reduced the fatherhood wage premium, as did working in a firm with a human resources department.

"The overall story seems to be that, when there's more scrutiny and oversight of actual performance, the fatherhood advantage diminishes," said Fuller. "This suggests that it's not so much that dads are necessarily working harder, but that employers think they are."

The findings build on an earlier study, published recently in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, by the same researchers. In that study, the researchers found employment in higher-paying firms likely enables less-educated men to become dads, while higher-paying employers may discriminate in favour of highly educated fathers in hiring.

Fuller said the findings should be cause for concern, especially for employers.

"It is discrimination on the basis of family status," she said. "Not everybody can or wants to have kids, but that shouldn't affect wages. It is fundamentally unfair."

More information: Sylvia Fuller et al, Workplace Variation in Fatherhood Wage Premiums: Do Formalization and Performance Pay Matter?, *Work, Employment and Society* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/0950017018764534](https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018764534)

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