



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **New report reveals how Aussie families are adjusting during COVID-19**

More than half of Aussie households are changing working arrangements during the coronavirus pandemic, but the division of childcare and household work has barely shifted, according to research released today by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS).

*Life during COVID-19* surveyed more than 7,000 Australians over May-June to understand how the nation was adjusting to unprecedented lockdown restrictions and social distancing measures.

The most significant changes reported by households were to employment, with 60% of respondents now 'always working from home', compared to just 7% pre-COVID-19.

For families with children, new working arrangements also meant major changes to childcare, with 64% of respondents now solely relying on parent-only care, compared to 30% before the pandemic.

AIFS Director Anne Hollonds said although fundamental changes to working patterns had caused one of the biggest shake-ups to our everyday lives in living memory, they had not transformed the way mothers and fathers shared child-care and housework responsibilities.

"Families, but in particular mothers, are caught in a juggling act between work and kids. Seven in ten parents reported they were either 'actively' or 'passively' caring for children while they worked, but women are still five times more likely to take on the primary caring role," said Hollonds.

Before COVID-19, in 43% of families the female partner was doing the majority of the housework, compared to a similar 41% during the pandemic. 46% of households reported an even split pre-COVID-19, compared to 48% during.

"Even though we're all spending so much more time at home, entrenched gender patterns are still evident – with women still taking on more of the household duties than men," said Hollonds.

On questions relating to the economic impact of the pandemic, younger participants reported being the hardest hit, with 30% of under-30s reporting a decrease in income, 21% reporting job loss and 21% reporting changes to their living arrangements during COVID-19.

"People aged 18 to 29 were three times more likely to have asked for financial support from friends or family during COVID-19, and almost four times more likely to ask for help from government or NGOs. Subsequently, we also saw 21 per cent of 50 to 59 year-olds reporting the kids had moved back in," Hollonds said.

As for what Australians were missing most, Hollonds said social connection topped the list.

"Friends, family and going out for dinner were among the most common things participants reported missing during isolation."

Findings released today are drawn from the first analyses of survey data. Future reports will expand on the findings, and will be used to inform service providers and the government on how best to support Australian families as they recover from this pandemic.

The *Life during COVID-19* survey is the first in an ongoing series, *Families in Australia*, which will track how families are changing over time.

Read the findings from the [Families in Australia Survey: Life during COVID-19 Report No 1 Early Findings](#)

**ENDS**



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AIFS conducts original research to increase understanding of Australian families and the issues that affect them, see [aifs.gov.au](http://aifs.gov.au)

### KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

#### Working from home

- The proportion of people 'always' working from home rose from 7% to 60% during COVID-19.
- 40% of parents who worked from home reported always or often 'actively' caring for children while working. Of the remainder:
  - 28% reported always or often 'passively' caring for children
  - 21% reported sometimes 'actively' or 'passively' caring for children
  - 11% said someone else looked after the children.

#### Childcare and housework

- 52% of parents used approved childcare before COVID-19, compared to 26% during.
- 32% of parents used grandparent or other informal care before COVID-19, and 9% during.
- 8% of parents used nannies or babysitters before COVID-19, and 5% during.
- 3 in 10 grandparents said they provided care at least weekly prior to the pandemic, with most saying they stopped providing care entirely during COVID-19.

#### COVID-19 had minimal impact on **the way mothers and fathers shared childcare responsibilities:**

- 54% said mothers 'always or usually' looked after the children before COVID-19, compared to 52% during.
- 38% said childcare was shared equally between mother and father before COVID-19, compared to 37% during.
- 8% said fathers 'always or usually' looked after the children during COVID-19, compared to 11% during.

#### COVID-19 had minimal impact on **who did the housework:**

- 43% said the female partner 'always or usually' does the housework before COVID-19, compared to 41% during.
- 46% housework was 'shared equally' before COVID-19, compared to 48% during.
- 9% said the male partner 'always or usually' does the housework, both before and during COVID-19.

#### Employment and income

- Just under 10% of participants were stood down, lost their job or were made redundant, however this increased to 21% of under-30s.
- 65% reported no real change to income, however 25% reported a decrease in income and 8% an increase. Among under-30s, 30% reported a decrease in income and 15% an increase.
- 21% of under-30s reported changes to living conditions.
- 7% reported asking for help from family and friends, and 4% from government or NGOs. Among under-30s, 21% reported asking for help from family and friends, and 15% from government or NGOs.