

**Dads head for home
Kids win as fathers choose to nurture
Lisa Cornish and Jamie First**

Family comes first for a growing number of Australian dads as they put their kids ahead of work.

Experts believe changing attitudes towards the roles of men and improved support from workplaces have spurred the trend -- with kids the big winners.

"Traditionally, the relationship of father and child has been strained because of long working hours," Diana Sayer, from Relationships Australia, said.

"But fathers now realise they don't need to be the sole breadwinner and want to be involved in nurturing the family."

ABS figures reveal a 45 per cent jump during the past 10 years in fathers of young children (under 15) who are employed part-time.

Although far greater in number, those working full-time increased by only 15 per cent.

Dario Bulfone is a part-time working dad.

Father to Johnny, 5, and Sylvia, 3, he works as a CG artist and retoucher, but said he simply fell into the stay-at-home dad role.

"It just kind of happened. My wife and I decided we could structure it in such a way that I could look after them, do the pick-ups and drop-offs and keep running my business," Mr Bulfone, who lives in Brunswick, said.

"It means some late nights and phone calls with kids in the background, but most of my clients are understanding."

Mr Bulfone, whose weekly activities with his children include a trip to the park, a bike ride and a game of backyard cricket, said while he did a lot of "time-juggling", he wouldn't change anything.

"It's great to be a part of the action, rather than racing home from an office and hoping to get a glimpse of the kids at the end of the day," he said.

Tass Mousaferiadis, from beyondblue's men's program, said better employment policies catering to the needs of families had been a critical factor.

"Men are now requesting and demanding flexibility to participate in their children's lives," he said.

"Employers are doing better to be supportive of families. Healthy and happy employees mean better productivity in the workplace."

Mums, too, are benefiting from the shifting of attitudes, which has brought a 105 per cent increase in workforce participation of women since 2002. Ms Sayer said: "Men and women both now have a shared responsibility for raising their family and earning an income."

She has seen relationships between couples and their children improving because both mums and dads were less stressed. "Kids benefit from having either parent home," she said. "It provides them with more stability."

"While kids may want the latest toys and technology, they really do value quality time with parents and their family.

"These are the lasting memories that matter."

HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED

FULL-TIME WORKING DADS

Dec 2002: 1,501,800

Dec 2012: 1,736,300

Up: 15.61%

PART-TIME WORKING DADS

Dec 2002: 95,100

Dec 2012: 138,300

Up: 45.43%

FULL-TIME WORKING MUMS

Dec 2002: 420,800

Dec 2012: 527,500

Up: 25.36%

PART-TIME WORKING MUMS

Dec 2002: 631,900

Dec 2012: 766,900

Up: 21.36%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics