



D4: The Four Key Dads You Need to Know Now

Fatherhood is a moving target, with today's dads redefining what it means to be the man of the house

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Read This: If your brand is turning its attention to dads' growing influence on household spending.

Business Issue

Although brands have long recognized the importance of winning Mom over, Dad's influence on family purchase decisions is evolving alongside important cultural shifts in gender roles. By understanding four emerging segments of American dads, brands can better engage their target audience without resorting to clichés.

Where We're Headed

Through a behavioral segmentation, CEB Iconoculture research uncovers four distinct patterns in American fatherhood. Our work will explore the habits, routines and sentiments of these four dads:

- **Provider Dad:** This old-school father demonstrates his familial love by being the primary breadwinner and tackling traditionally male household tasks.
- **Socializer Dad:** Never one to stay still, this activity-focused father revels in physical and social interactions with friends and family.
- **Achiever Dad:** Affluent and educated, this active dad maintains a dual focus on success in his career and success in his role as a parent.
- **Blender Dad:** Focused on managing household and kids, this domestic-minded dad is the most likely to be parenting solo or in a blended family.

Images, clockwise, from top left: mrsdkrebs, Flickr.com; Liana_Kyle, Flickr.com; CJ Sorg, Flickr.com; Urban Hippie Love, Flickr.com

“The parenting dynamic in this country is in flux, roles are changing, and what’s expected and encouraged of men today is not the same as when my father screwed me up.”

Theodore Ross, writer and cultural analyst, TheAtlantic.com, 25 March 2013

Why Dads, Why Now?

Marketing to dads is not a new venture for America’s brands. It is well-trodden ground, with a long history of successes, failures, hits and misses. Dad has always been our first port of call for selling lawnmowers, shop vacs and really big televisions. Although many of these familiar purchases remain on Dad’s list of household decisions, they represent a tiny fraction of household spend, and they don’t reflect the evolving roles of fathers as active partners in parenting, shopping and managing the modern household.

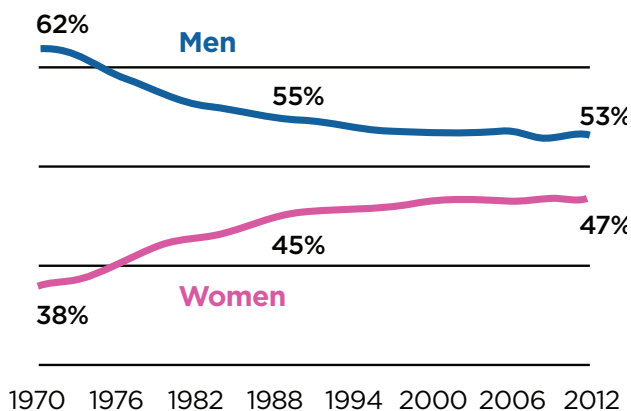
A long list of cultural and social changes beckons a new approach to dad marketing. The most obvious catalyst for Dad’s changing role is the well-documented evolution of motherhood across the workplace, the household and American culture. As women’s roles, particularly mothers’ roles, have changed, fathers have quietly begun taking on very different roles at home, partly to counterbalance the greater professional obligations of their partners, and partly to maintain equilibrium in households with less clearly defined roles and a greater spectrum of shared responsibility. If Mom is working 70-hour weeks, Dad is going to have to do some laundry.

A few recent statistics from the Pew Research Center illustrate the broader changes under way in American households. As women approach parity in the US labor force, and mothers increase hours worked outside the home, fathers are taking on greater household responsibility. The majority of unpaid household “work” still rests with Mom, but there is no question that Dad’s role at home is changing.

Women and Men Approach Labor Force Parity

Fewer men are working outside the home, and more women are.

Share of labor force

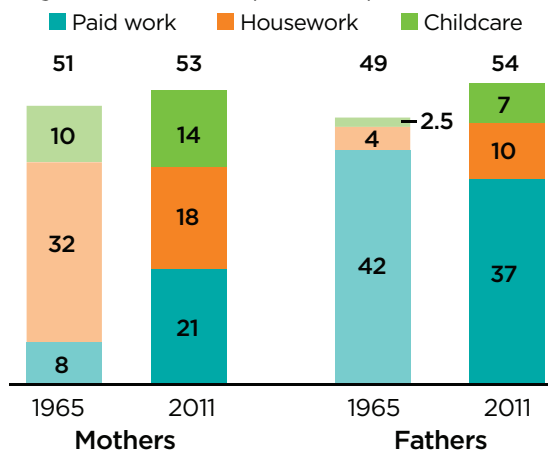


Source: PewSocialTrends.org, 14 March 2013

Share of Working Hours: Moms and dads, 1965-2011

Although imbalances remain, household roles are converging.

Average number of hours per week spent on...

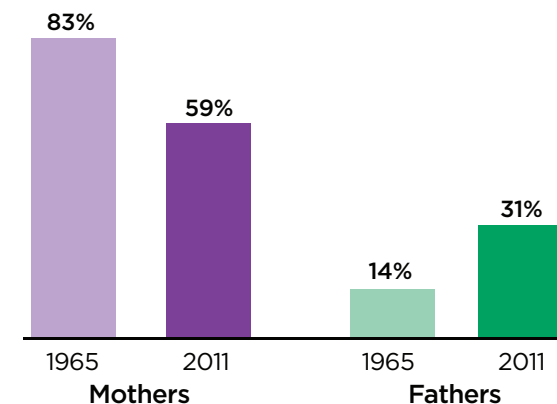


Source: PewSocialTrends.org, 14 March 2013

Share of Unpaid Work, 1965-2011

Workload within the home is converging in response to changing roles outside the home.

% of housework and childcare of total work time



Source: PewSocialTrends.org, 14 March 2013

And dads aren't simply reacting to the cultural and professional elevation of women — they're largely embracing their new responsibilities and expectations. The dads we polled in IconoCommunities appear to be seizing on this new set of expectations, expressing confidence and enthusiasm for their evolved roles.

Reactions from IconoCommunities Dads: What kind of dad are you?

“I'd like to think I'm a good one. I watch out for, protect, teach and have fun with my kid.”

“Very dedicated and devoted dad to my children's development and success.”

“I am a dad who is very interested in my children, what they are learning in school, what they enjoy doing, their friends, and a dad who enjoys spending time with his children.”

“Always there for them. Love to be with my children as much as possible.”

“The guy the kids turn to when they need help.”

Fathers and IconoCommunities participants, 2013

As brands begin to recognize the importance of dads in households, parenting and purchase decisions — and dedicate more attention to dads as a target audience — they will quickly begin to understand that fathers and fatherhood are very complex. Though the general undercurrent of American culture is trending toward greater sharing of household tasks and more active parenting roles for dads, the split of those responsibilities and the extent to which dads are part of those trends differ dramatically from household to household. Dads and their routines are diverse. This realization has led to the creation of the D4 segmentation as a starting point for understanding patterns across parenting styles and household dynamics, a tool that brands can use to fuel their understanding of dads and better home in on their specific target.



What about Mom? The D4 research follows CEB Iconoculture's work on five emerging mom archetypes. For an in-depth look at the different socioeconomic realities of modern motherhood, check out [M5: The Five Moms You Need to Know Now](#).

About Our Approach





Our research began with two foundational questions: How do approaches to fatherhood differ, and how do these approaches manifest themselves in different household routines? As a starting point for answering these questions, we looked at dads' behavior.

We considered a wide range of behaviors that are in some way applicable to parenting — anything from traveling for fun with their kids to time spent doing household chores. A factor analysis determined four underlying patterns across these behaviors. By bucketing all of our dad respondents according to these patterns, we identified four discrete segments of dads (the D4). With the four segments in hand, we uncovered the relationships between the segments and their values, demographics, attitudes and economic realities.

Behavioral segmentation offers a compelling advantage over other methods for segmenting dads: It focuses on the routines and household dynamics that are currently in flux in America. **It's important to note that each of the four dad segments encompasses almost every demographic and cultural category: age, income, ethnicity, education and many more.** We've hit the highlights of the demographic peaks and valleys in “The man himself” sections that follow.

Meet the Four Dads

With diversity of dads as a given and a behavior-driven set of segments as our goal, our data delivered four distinct dad segments:

Provider Dad	Achiever Dad	Blender Dad	Socializer Dad
			
<p>Provider Dad demonstrates his fatherly commitment by being a breadwinner and by taking on traditionally male household-management roles.</p>	<p>Affluent and educated, this active dad maintains a dual focus on success in his career and success in his role as a parent.</p>	<p>Blender Dad is focused on managing household and kids. He's a Blender because, of the dads of D4, he's the most likely to be parenting solo or in a blended family.</p>	<p>Socializer Dad is activity-focused, hanging with family and hanging with friends. He's the most socially and physically active of the D4 dads.</p>
<p>Key values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simplicity • belief • hope • independence 	<p>Key values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creativity • self-actualization • environmentalism • balance 	<p>Key values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comfort • youth • fun • passion 	<p>Key values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health • experience • control • ambition

Images, from left to right: mrsdkrebs, Flickr.com; Liana_Kyle, Flickr.com; Urban Hippie Love, Flickr.com; CJ Sorg, Flickr.com

Provider Dad



Provider Dad is the embodiment of the traditional American dad. He's identified by his commitment to the physical maintenance of his home and his role as a provider. He focuses on the traditionally male household tasks and generally leaves the rest to his partner.

How we identify him: Frequent home improvement projects, gardening and yard work, and involvement in DIY home repairs and renovations.

The man himself:

- Oldest of the dads: 78% Xer or older, 43% Boomer
- Largely employed: 81% employed full-time, 7% unemployed
- Moderately affluent: 46% \$60,000+ HHI, 17% \$100,000+ HHI
- Moderately connected: 66% regular smartphone users, 35% regular tablet users

Reaching Provider Dad: Provider Dad prides himself on the traditional values that define him, and he isn't interested in being portrayed as something he's not. He's unlikely to see himself in the lampooned father figures he sees in the media. He's also unlikely to identify with ultra-modern or gender-agnostic parent portrayals. He believes there's great value in his contributions to his home and his family, and he's comfortable in his traditional role.

Key Values*	His Household	In His Own Words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simplicity • belief • hope • independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage: 80% coupled, 71% married, and 10% single, never married • Kids: 57% of Provider Dads have teenagers in the house • Work: In 35% of partnered Provider households, only Dad works • Chores: 23% of Provider Dads spend 10 or more hours per week cooking, cleaning and doing chores 	<p>"I don't get to see my kids and family as often as I would like, but I like to think that I give them the attention that they need when I am at home."</p> <p>IconoCommunities participant Joshua, a Provider Dad</p>

*Each "His Values" section lists the consumer values that differentiate a particular D4 Dad from the other dads in the segmentation.

Achiever Dad



Achiever Dad is affluent and educated, maintaining a dual focus on success in his career and success in his role as a parent. Finding time and striking a balance between work and family are his top priorities. Work and home haven't slowed him down — he's the most likely to be out and about with his kids, making the most of his scarce time by exploring the neighborhood, the city and the world.

How we identify him: Frequent visits to a museum, art exhibits or lectures; frequent outdoor activities such as camping, fishing, hiking or hunting; a high number of trips taken with his children.

The man himself:

- Youngest of the dads: 40% Millennial, 48% Xers
- Highly employed: 75% employed full-time, 6% unemployed, 4% homemaker
- Most affluent: 56% \$60,000+ HHI; 28% \$100,000+ HHI
- Most connected: 80% regular smartphone users, 41% regular tablet users

Reaching Achiever Dad: Achiever Dad is dedicated to making time for his kids and using that time to show them the world. Brands that play to values like discovery and creativity are well positioned to reach Achiever Dad. 53% of Achiever Dads have a working spouse in their household, so acknowledging that he's part of a team and that both spouses likely want the same things for their kids and careers is also a winning strategy for connecting with Achiever Dad.

Key Values*	His Household	In His Own Words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creativity • self-actualization • environmentalism • balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage: Largest proportion married — 89% coupled, 77% married and only 2% single, never married • Kids: Younger than the other dads' — 48% have kids age 0 to 6 in the house; 50% have kids age 7 to 12 • Work: Most dual-income households — in 35% of partnered achiever households, both Mom and Dad work full-time • Chores: Only 16% of Achiever Dads spend 10 or more hours per week cooking, cleaning and doing chores 	<p>“We have a tradition in our house we call boys’ day... it’s a chance for my sons and I to all get out of the house, explore and give my wife a break. I don’t get much time with my kids during the week, so it’s a chance for me to reconnect, and a chance for my wife to do her own thing for a few hours.”</p> <p>IconoCommunities participant Tim, an Achiever Dad</p>

*Each “His Values” section lists the consumer values that differentiate a particular D4 Dad from the other dads in the segmentation.

Blender Dad



Urban Hippie Love, Flickr.com image

Blender Dad is home- and family-centric, focused on managing his household and kids. He’s a Blender because, of the D4, he’s the most likely to be parenting solo or in a blended family. Both by choice and necessity, he’s highly involved in the day-to-day routines of his children.

How we identify him: Frequent time spent with family; more time spent shopping for groceries, cooking, cleaning or doing household chores; more hours per week spent watching TV.

The man himself:

- Xer-dominant: 49% Xers, 71% Xer or older
- Least educated: 25% college+
- Hardest hit by unemployment: 63% employed full-time, 17% unemployed
- Least affluent: 42% under \$40,000 HHI, but also 36% \$60,000+ HHI
- Individual income: 32% earn \$50,000+; 7% earn \$100,000+
- Lower-than-average connectivity: 56% regular smartphone users, 24% regular tablet users

Reaching Blender Dad: Blender Dad is managing a lot: home, work, family (or families), chores, shopping, you name it. Understanding that a day in his life isn’t always predictable and peaceful is a good start to connecting with him. Given everything he is juggling, brands that help lend simplicity and sanity to his busy life are likely to resonate.

Key Values*	His Household	In His Own Words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comfort • youth • fun • passion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage: Largest proportion remarried: 77% coupled, 61% married (of those, 23% are on their second marriage or more), 15% single and never married • Kids: Younger: 46% have kids age 0 to 6 in the house; 44% have kids age 7 to 12 • Work: In only 22% of partnered Blender households do both Mom and Dad work full-time; 35% single-income households • Chores: Spends most time cooking, cleaning and doing chores — 36% spend 10 or more hours per week 	<p>“I am a dad who is very interested in my children — what they are learning in school, what they enjoy doing, their friends — and a dad who enjoys spending time with his children.”</p> <p>IconoCommunities participant Walt, a Blender Dad</p>

*Each “His Values” section lists the consumer values that differentiate a particular D4 Dad from the other dads in the segmentation.

Socializer Dad



CJ Sorg, Flickr.com image

Socializer Dad is activity-focused, hanging with family and hanging with friends. He sets the family’s social calendar and makes sure that work and play remain in balance. He’s the most socially and physically active of the D4 dads.

How we identify him: Frequent home entertaining; frequent participation in athletic and sporting activities; agreement that his home is a place to enjoy life and gather with friends and family.

The man himself:

- Most even age split: 38% Millennials, 32% Xers, 30% Boomers
- Highly employed: 71% employed full-time, only 7% unemployed
- Wide economic spread: 29% under \$40,000+ HHI; but also 34% \$60,000+ HHI
- Digitally connected: 75% regular smartphone users, 35% regular tablet users

Reaching Socializer Dad: Socializer Dad is the most balanced of the D4, finding time for family, work and play. He hasn’t let responsibility consume his social life or his passions. In Socializer Dad’s view, keeping the family active, involved and happy is a key piece of his role in the household. Brands that help families have fun are wise to start with Socializer Dad as their target. Brands that lack the fun factor can win him over by playing to classic “work hard, play hard” sentiments.

Key Values*	His Household	In His Own Words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health • experience • control • ambition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage: Largest proportion single: 65% married, 19% single and never married • Kids: School-age: 56% have kids age 7 to 12; 43% have kids age 0 to 6 • Work: Second-highest dual-income households (48%): In 30% of partnered Socializer households, both Mom and Dad work full-time • Chores: 11% spend 10 or more hours per week cooking, cleaning and doing chores — fewer than any other D4 dad. 	<p>“I am probably a pushover. I don’t let my kids get away with anything, but I also try to give them as much as possible.”</p> <p>IconoCommunities participant Jeff, a Socializer Dad</p>

*Each “His Values” section lists the consumer values that differentiate a particular D4 Dad from the other dads in the segmentation.

Send in the Clowns: Putting D4 segmentation into practice

Dad marketing has arrived, but it has not been perfected. With so few brands specifically targeting dads, and even fewer doing it well, it's unsurprising that well-executed dad marketing was genuinely applauded by all four of the D4 dads (and less admirable attempts were generally disparaged by all four). After testing a series of campaigns with D4 dads from our Communities, two clear patterns emerged:

- The advertisements that weren't well received by any of the D4 had a common theme: They lampooned dads versus acknowledging them. The most common misstep we saw was treating Dad as household clown — an approach that may get a laugh, but generally alienates dads, and ignores the bigger opportunity to engage them (see [Oscar Mayer's Deli Selects campaign](#)).
- In contrast, the handful of campaigns that are beginning to target dads as competent, involved coparents were very positively received. They don't avoid humor, or the notion that household imbalances still exist, but they manage to be authentic in a way that doesn't run to clichés (see [Hyundai's "Don't Tell Mom"](#) for one of our recent favorites; the spot showcases Dad's sense of fun and adventure without portraying him as a clown).

Beyond these overarching must-haves, there is a greater opportunity for brands to win resonance by reaching out to individual D4 dads — marketing to their unique routines and realities. Unfortunately, very few brands are marketing to dads with any specificity, and even fewer are trying to reach specific personas within the world of dads. Without a critical mass of marketing examples to draw from, we picked four brands in one space — automotive — that have each built campaigns that portray dads in a way that is likely to be resonant with individual D4 archetypes.

Positioning Examples

Speaking to individual D4 segments: Four advertisements from the automotive industry showcase the attitudes and realities of the D4 dads.



Provider Dad — [Subaru's "Father-Daughter"](#):

Demonstrating that fathers care more about their kids than anything else is never a bad starting point. While Dads demonstrate diverse values, playing to the traditional role as household protector is a sure win for Provider Dad.



Achiever Dad — [Subaru's "Cut the Cord"](#):

He's off to work, but still doing his part and taking the time to say goodbye. Work is a constant tug for Achiever Dad, but he still makes time for the important things.



Blender Dad — [Chevrolet's "What Do You Do?"](#):

Chevrolet's portrayal leaves us to imagine whether or not he's married, remarried, working or not working. It casts him very clearly as busy and involved, but leaves dads to fill in the rest of the story for themselves.



Socializer Dad — [Hyundai's "Don't Tell Mom"](#):

Socializer Dad believes that family fun is his job. This ad plays up that role while avoiding dad-as-clown typecasting. Bonus points for portraying Mom's subversive side as well.

More from IconoIQ

[Research Brief: M5: The Five Moms You Need to Know Now](#)

[Consumer Outlook: Moms and Dads in 2013](#)

[Consumer Outlook: Men in 2013](#)

[Trend: Daddy Oh!](#)

[Trend: Mindful Man](#)

[Trend: Generation X](#)

[Trend: In with the New, Blend with the Old](#)