

New data reveals Fathers are still lacking workplace support when it comes to parental leave

- New data reveals just one in five new dads were well supported by their workplace during their partner's pregnancy, while one in three were supported when returning to work after parental leave
- This International Fathers' Mental Health Day (19 June), Gidget Foundation Australia is raising awareness to encourage more expectant and new dads to seek early and ongoing support
- Perinatal depression and anxiety affects one in ten Australian fathers each year, yet more than two thirds don't know how to identify the signs

EMBARGO – 19 June 2023 – New data released in line with **International Fathers' Mental Health Day (19th June)** reveals that new dads feel a lack of support from their workplaces pre and post parental leave. In Australia, perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA) affects one in five mothers and one in ten fathers – yet there's still a stigma associated with the mental health condition. Because of this, struggling new dads are less likely to seek help even though two in five (40%) say they found parenting much more challenging than expected.

Gidget Foundation Australia's Fathers' Mental Health Data reveals just one in five (20%) expectant and new dads with children under five say they were well supported by their workplace during their partner's pregnancy, while one third (32%) say they were well supported by their workplace when returning from parental leave. Even more concerning is that nearly half (45%) of Australian fathers, aren't aware that men can experience PNDA¹ with more than two thirds (68%) of new dads not knowing how to identify the signs.

Gidget Foundation Australia's Senior Clinical Team Leader and Clinical Psychologist, Chris Barnes explains that the issue of new dads not seeking help is complex and that acknowledging PNDA as a condition that doesn't just impact mothers is a step in the right direction.

"We speak with families experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety every day, so we know this is an issue that affects dads and partners too. Balancing work and parental responsibilities can place pressures on new dads. The expectation of taking only minimum parental leave means most dads do not have sufficient time to support themselves or their family in those early parenting days. Men want to be more involved now more than ever before and we know that fathers have a significant role to play in raising healthy and happy children," Ms Barnes says.

"The issue of fathers' mental health is something that needs to be tackled both within the workplace and the wider community. If we can educate more organisations as well as dads on how to identify the signs of PNDA then we encourage more conversation, address gender inequality, reduce stigma and help develop ways workplaces can support them by normalising flexible working."

Only 5% of Gidget Foundation's clients are new dads and unless experts and communities band together to educate and encourage more expectant and new fathers to seek help, struggling dads will continue to suffer in silence.

Gidget Foundation Australia CEO, Arabella Gibson says International Fathers' Mental Health Day is a date to recognise that perinatal mental health challenges don't discriminate based on gender.

"Although PNDA affects half as many new dads as it does new mums, the fact that just five per cent of our clients are fathers tells us that there's still men who are struggling behind closed doors. What these new dads don't realise is that they are far from alone and help is available, with early treatment incredibly important for the best chance of recovery," Ms Gibson says.

“The more men we can encourage to speak up about PNDA the better, and the more we can encourage conversations and reduce stigma, the more fathers – and mothers – will seek out and receive early support.”

Gidget Foundation Australia is encouraging all Aussies to donate what they can **this Gidget Giving Day (21 June)**. All donations made on the day will be matched in an effort to raise \$200,000, which will go directly towards providing complete care for 66 parents experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety.

To donate or learn more about how Gidget Foundation Australia is supporting the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents, head to gidgetgivingday.org.au. To hear stories of Australian parents with lived experience of PNDA, listen to Gidget Foundation Australia’s new podcast, [1 in 10 Mothers, 1 in 10 Fathers](#).

About Gidget Foundation Australia

Gidget Foundation Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents, to ensure they receive timely, appropriate and specialist care.

As the national leading provider of perinatal mental health services Gidget Foundation Australia offers year-long, free, specialist perinatal mental health psychological services, via face-to-face and telehealth; and invests in retention, engagement, and development of its 120+ clinicians through an innovative training, mentoring and supervision workforce development program.

About Gidget

Gidget was the nickname of a vibrant young mother who tragically took her own life while experiencing postnatal depression, a diagnosis she kept close to her heart.

Together her loving family and friends created Gidget Foundation Australia determined that what happened to *Gidget* would not happen to others.

Contact: Media Cast | Lauren Irvine | 0402 361 266 | lauren@mediacast.com.au

About the Research & Citations

The survey by Gidget Foundation Australia was carried out on a national representative sample of 508 expectant Australian parents and parents with children under 5 in April 2023. Methodology: The data sample was weighted against ABS data for age, gender and location using an online survey that is independently conducted and verified PureProfile.

1. <https://www.gidgetfoundation.org.au/health-professionals/the-cost-of-pnda>