



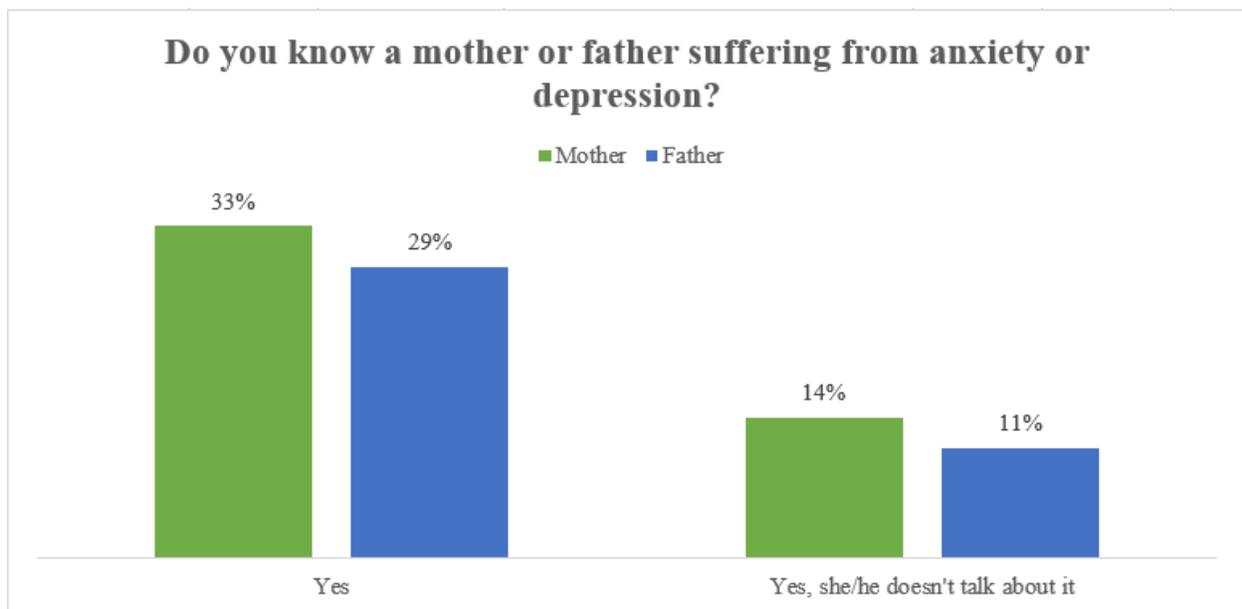
Fathers talk about mental illness, too June 13, 2018

By Neil Seeman and Danielle Goldfarb

Father's Day, this coming Sunday, is usually a day of fun and celebration for kids and their fathers. However, new RIWI Corp. data show a more serious side of fatherhood.

Over May and June 2018, RIWI asked 2,287 randomly engaged Canadians and Americans how many mothers and fathers they knew who were depressed or anxious.

Twenty-nine percent of survey respondents said they knew a father suffering from depression or anxiety. This is surprisingly close to the share who knew a mother suffering from depression or anxiety. Thirty-three percent of respondents knew mothers who suffered from depression or anxiety. Even more surprising, men are slightly more likely to be open about their suffering.



Source: RIWI Data

The surprise to us is not that more mothers than fathers appear to their friends and relatives to be depressed or anxious. It is well established that women suffer more from anxiety and depression than men. What is surprising is that the percentages are, in fact, so close. Depression and anxiety are not unique to mothers.

A 2012 New Zealand household survey corroborates the view that mothers and fathers suffer similar levels of mental health problems. The survey, analyzed by Susan Collings of the University of Otago and reported in the *Journal of Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* in 2014, revealed mostly the same share of mothers and fathers experiencing high to very high levels of psychological distress, when controlling for variables such as educational level, workforce status and, most importantly, socioeconomic status.



Do fathers suffer in silence? RIWI data may challenge the commonly held view that men don't talk about their problems and that women are more open. In the view of the survey participants, roughly 2 in 5 depressed or anxious mothers suffered in silence, just slightly more than the number of fathers.

This suggests that men may actually be more likely to talk about their depression than women are, at least to their close friends. Men are clearly beginning to share the worries and woes that flow from parenting or from mental illness.

Not long ago there had been a widespread assumption among social scientists that women had an inborn biological drive to bear children, whereas, in the absence of a female partner, men had little desire for children. Parenthood was considered central to a woman's sense of self, but peripheral to masculinity.

Contemporary thinking has changed all that. Child welfare agencies report that single men are now seeking parenthood via fostering, adoption and surrogacy. No longer merely coaches, teachers and disciplinarians - the historic role of fathers - men today spend time building emotional relationships with their children, just like mothers have always done.

While women's innate hormones prepare them for pregnancy and childcare, in men, the experiences of childcare are what trigger hormonal responses that, in turn, set off powerful signals that shape and mold the central nervous system. If we image paternal brains, we find that men are as invested in parenting as women. Hence they go through the same parenting agonies, the same stresses and concerns as women do. We know that many women fall into depression by the difficulties of mothering. Many men may as well.

When suffering from mental illness, self-awareness is a first step to positive action, whether that be seeking out a healthcare professional or finding a close friend with whom to share personal challenges. It is a wise father who speaks openly of his own troubles this Father's Day and beyond.

If you are interested in these findings or have other questions relating to RIWI's continuous trackers, please contact:

Danielle Goldfarb, Head, Global Research, RIWI Corp.
1-888-505-RIWI (7494)
daniellegoldfarb@riwi.com



About RIWI Technology: A Continuous, Global Random Survey System

For this study, RIWI randomly engaged over 1000 Canadians and over 1000 Americans across all age groups, regions of the two countries, and both men and women.

RIWI technology captures continuous, anonymous, and representative views of the global online population. The technology is often used to capture true global sentiment on stigmatized issues such as mental health. RIWI offers a “truly random sample of the Internet population”, according to IRIS (International Research Institutes), the largest scientific association of independent research agencies in the world, when describing RIWI’s technology (referred to as Random Domain Intercept Technology™, or RDIT). Since its incorporation in 2009, RIWI has received more than 1.2 billion responses across the world responding to RIWI surveys, digital campaigns and ad tests.

RIWI’s patented survey technology enables the continuous capture of broad, randomized opinion data on an uninterrupted basis in any geography of the world. RIWI delivers anonymous surveys to random Web users who are surfing online by typing inactive, non-trademarked websites directly into the Web address bar (i.e., URL) and, further, ensures that the exposed survey audiences are representative of the Web-using geography of interest. When these users type in websites that are vacant or no longer exist, RIWI invites these inbound random visitors, filtered through a series of proprietary algorithms, to participate in a language-appropriate survey for no incentives. RIWI’s global survey platform thus enables rapid and non-conditioned survey response data from any random respondent encounter. No personally identifiable information is collected, stored or transferred.