

Australian mums on parenting Generation Alpha



There are many people and groups that play an important role in a person's life - from when they are a child right through to adulthood. These people include friends, teachers, siblings, aunts, uncles, co-workers, partners, and spouses. Yet of course, the most significant people are often our parents or guardians. That is why we have international days of recognition to celebrate and thank our mums and dads for all they do, and this Mother's Day we want to pay homage to the more than six million mums in Australia.

Mothers in Australia

In the last year there were over 300,000 births in Australia, equating to 35 babies born each hour. Children born since the year 2010 are known as [Generation Alpha](#), and most of their parents are known as Generation Y (or the Millennials). Today, Generation Y describes those

in their family forming years (those aged between 26 and 41). The general trend is that parents today are older than in the past, as over the last two decades the median age of mothers has increased by 1.8 years, from 29.7 to 31.5. Reflecting Australia's cultural diversity as a nation, one in three new mums (36%) were born overseas.

The changing role of mothers

Life today is busier and more complex than it was just a few decades ago. Generation Alpha mum, Jen, shared her experience with us: 'I think women have it harder than ever because before they could stay home and look after the kids, whereas now they have to work full-time, look after the kids, do the washing, do all the housework. So now it's like they've got two or three jobs. There's more stress because it is hard work juggling all those things.'

Over the last fifty years, female participation in the workforce has increased significantly. Striking a balance between paid work and raising children is something every parent strives for, yet we know this can be challenging for full-time workers. The latest [HILDA survey](#) shows that women are increasing their paid work participation but men are not picking up more of the unpaid domestic hours. Females continue to work longer hours doing housework and childcare tasks than males, regardless of the earnings arrangement of the household.

In couple households who have dependent children where the male is the breadwinner, the female on average spends fifty-five hours per week on housework and childcare, compared to the male contribution of twenty-six hours. In female breadwinner households, not only do females work longer in paid work but they also work longer in unpaid work (these women spend an average of forty-three hours on housework and childcare, compared to thirty hours for males). Females with dependent children in households where they are the breadwinner are the busiest people in Australia, working on average eighty-one hours per week (total of paid and unpaid work), compared to their male counterparts (sixty-eight hours).

In couple households with children where the earnings are approximately even, here again females (when including paid and unpaid work) work longer hours (eighty-one hours) compared to males (seventy-six hours). Again, in this category while the hours invested in paid work are similar for males and females, it is the hours spent on housework and childcare that differentiates females from males.

While women have increased their participation rate in paid work, males, although they have increased the hours spent in active childcare tasks, have not made significant inroads into closing the gap on unpaid domestic work.

‘Mum guilt’

‘As mums, we put the pressure on ourselves. If we don’t send them to a good school, put them in a sport, do an after-school activity or put them in tutoring because they’re struggling, then we’re not good parents. You’re just constantly wondering, am I doing a good job?’

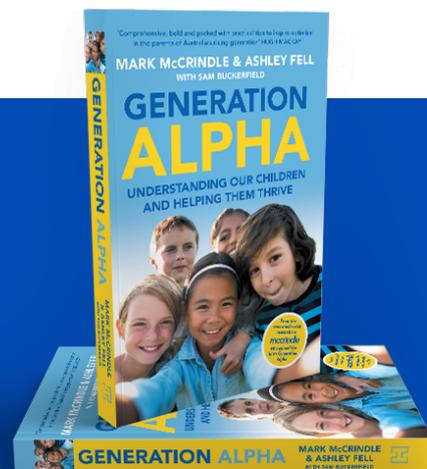
‘I feel like there’s more pressure on me as a parent to put the effort in. My son goes to tutoring, is on a tennis team, does computer coding, and the time it takes to organise all that is a lot - and I work full-time.’

- comments from two mums of Generation Alpha children

Raising children is extremely rewarding but can also be tough. For parents to be the best they can be, we need to alleviate ‘mum or dad guilt’. This starts with mums having compassion with themselves, and uplifting others on the parenting journey. The fact that women with children are often shouldering the brunt of home duties shows an area of improvement for households across Australia, and the need to show our appreciation for busy mums by helping lighten their load and distributing the housework and childcare responsibilities more evenly.

Generation Alpha
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Contact

Ashley Fell : info@mccrindle.com.au