In what ways are work time demands shaping the father-child relationship, and what do children make of this? We report on two studies using paired data to consider both fathers and children’s viewpoints from a population sample of Australian families. The first study considers father-child views when children are aged 10-11 and 12-13 years (5,711 father-child observations: study 1) and a second when these children are aged 14-15 (N=approximately 1,600 father-child observations). In both we consider how the hours, schedules, intensity and flexibility of fathers’ jobs are associated with how children view fathers work and family time, and his relationship with them. In the first study we link fathers’ work time to children’s views about time together and closeness. In the second we consider how father’s work time shapes adolescents’ experiences of spillover and their relationship with their fathers, comparing this to father’s own views. In both we find that fathers and their children concur on which aspects of working time support, challenge or disrupt their relationship.

At 10-11 and 12-13 years, one third of the children studied considered their father works too much, one eighth wished he didn’t work at all, one third wanted more time with him or did not enjoy time together. At 14-15 years one in ten said that their father was always or often in a bad mood after work, over half he was often or always tired after work. On the other hand, four in ten said fathers often or always talked with enthusiasm about his job, and liked going to work, and three quarters thought their father considered his job important.

Logistic regression modelling revealed that for 10-13 year olds and for 14-15 year olds, fathers working on weekends, being time pressured, being unable to vary start and stop times, and working long hours generated negative views about fathers’ jobs and time together. We then found that these translated into negative views about their fathers’ relationship with them. Although children and fathers concurred on which work time demands were problematic to their relationship, children appeared to form their views independently.

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