

Caregivers in Canada, 2018

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In 2018, approximately one in four Canadians aged 15 and older (or 7.8 million people) provided care to a family member or friend with a long-term health condition, a physical or mental disability, or problems related to aging.

Unpaid caregiving provided by family and friends has become increasingly recognized as an important role in society. Caregiving reduces the social costs associated with health services and institutionalization. In addition, care recipients benefit when they are able to remain at home and maintain a positive quality of life.

Caregivers perform a variety of tasks that differ in terms of the level of intensity and the degree of emotional and physical demands. While most caregivers (64%) spent less than 10 hours a week on caregiving responsibilities, 15% spent 10 to 19 hours, and 21% spent 20 hours or more.

Over the next few months, Statistics Canada will be releasing a "Care Counts" series. This series delves into key trends and societal changes influencing caregiving and care receiving in Canada.

Most caregivers provide care to parents or parents-in-law

Almost half of all caregivers (47%) reported caring primarily for their parents or parents-in-law in 2018. Caring for parents was the most common form of caregiving reported in Canada, and was particularly common among caregivers aged 45 to 64 (61%).

Those who provided care to their parents or parents-in-law typically spent four hours a week on caregiving responsibilities. For this category of caregivers, the most common type of help given was transportation (such as to run errands, shop or attend medical appointments), reported by 84% of caregivers. This was followed by meal preparation and house cleaning, reported by 64% of caregivers.

About 13% of caregivers reported that they provided care to their spouse or partner. These caregivers were more likely to be older than those who cared for a parent or parent-in-law, and spent about 14 hours a week on caregiving activities.

Of the 7.8 million caregivers, over 600,000 (8%) provided care to their child with a long-term health condition, or a physical or mental disability. Providing care to children can be a challenge, given that children often require more intense care, but also because many caregiving parents are active in the labour market. Despite the often competing demands of care and working in a paid job, the parents who provided care for their child typically spent just over 14 hours on caregiving activities per week.

Other categories of care receivers include a close friend, a colleague or neighbour (13%); an extended family member (10%); or a grandparent (9%). Caregivers in these categories typically spent fewer hours on caregiving activities.

The majority of caregivers receive help or assistance for their caregiving duties

Social and financial support that caregivers may receive can help mitigate some of the potential negative impacts associated with caregiving, such as increased stress, financial difficulties and even physical and mental health problems. Support to caregivers can take several forms, including unpaid assistance provided by friends, neighbours and families, as well as paid services and assistance received from government programs and tax credits.

In 2018, about 70% of caregivers said they received some kind of support or assistance for their caregiving duties.

The most common source of social support was when the caregiver's spouse or partner modified their life or work arrangements to help (45%). Many caregivers were also helped with their caregiving duties by their children (43%) or by extended family members (39%).



The most common form of financial support for caregivers came from family or friends, at 14%, compared with 8% of caregivers who said they received federal tax credits and 6% who said they received money from government programs.

Some caregivers have unmet caregiving needs

Some caregivers do not receive all the social or financial support and assistance they require. In 2018, about one-third of caregivers said that there was another kind of support that they would have liked to have received in the past year.

The most common types of support that caregivers with unmet needs said they would have liked to have received were financial support, government assistance, and tax credits (68%). The next most common was home care or support (40%), followed closely by information or advice (39%) and help from medical professionals (36%).

Close to half of those who provided care to their children reported unmet needs, as did 4 in 10 of those who cared for their partners or spouses. In comparison, about one-fifth of those who provided care to grandparents, friends, neighbours and colleagues reported unmet needs.

Note to readers

These results are based on data from the 2018 General Social Survey – Caregiving and Care Receiving. The analysis covers the population aged 15 years and older and living in a private household (20,258 respondents representing almost 31 million Canadians). The main focus of this paper is the 7,664 respondents who reported providing care in the 12 months preceding the survey.

In the General Social Survey, caregivers were asked about the type of support they received for their caregiving duties. Support could come in two broad types: social and financial. There are six categories of social support: (1) spouse/partner modified their life and work arrangements, (2) children provided help, (3) extended family members provided help, (4) close friends or neighbours provided help, (5) community, spiritual community, cultural or ethnic groups provided help, and (6) had occasional relief or respite care. Meanwhile, financial support comes from three sources: (1) family or friends, (2) government programs, and (3) federal tax credits for which caregivers may be eligible.

Available tables: [44-10-0011-01](#) to [44-10-0013-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [4502](#).

Today, to accompany the first release of data from the 2018 General Social Survey – Caregiving and Care Receiving, Statistics Canada is providing a profile of the country's 7.8 million caregivers with a new infographic titled "[Care counts: Caregivers in Canada, 2018](#)."

A new study, "[Support received by caregivers in Canada](#)," is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).