

NATHAN BATTAMS



A SNAPSHOT OF GRANDPARENTS IN CANADA





The Vanier Institute of the Family is a national, independent, charitable organization dedicated to understanding the diversity and complexity of families and the reality of family life in Canada. The Institute offers access to a range of publications, research initiatives, presentations and social media content to enhance the national understanding of how families interact with, have an impact on and are affected by social, economic, environmental and cultural forces.

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This edition in the Vanier Institute of the Family *Statistical Snapshots* series brings together information and insights to enhance our understanding of grandparents, exploring their evolving family relationships in Canada.

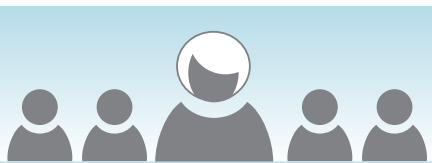
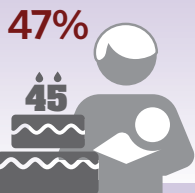
Canada's grandparents are highly diverse, and many contribute greatly to family functioning and well-being in their roles as mentors, nurturers, caregivers, child care providers, historians, spiritual guides and "holders of the family narrative."¹ As Canada's population ages and life expectancy continues to rise, grandparents will continue to play a large – and quite possibly growing – role in family life.

According to Statistics Canada, the **number of grandparents** across the country has grown at a significantly faster rate than the general population over the past several decades, while the average **number of grandchildren** has declined.



Canada was home to approximately **7.5 million** grandparents in private households in 2017, up from 5.4 million in 1995. This represents an increase of 39%, compared with the overall population growth of 25% during the same period.^{2,3}

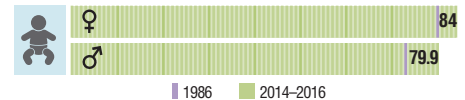
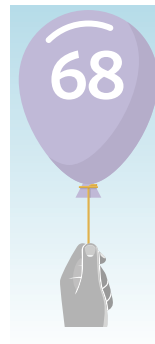
In 2017, 47% of Canadians **aged 45 and older** were grandparents, down from 57% in 1995.⁴



In 2017, grandparents in Canada had an average **4 grandchildren**, down from 5 in 1995.⁵ This number will likely continue to decline as fertility rates continue to fall. Since grandparents are the most frequent recipients of young caregivers' assistance,⁶ this trend could have a significant impact on their future care.

The grandparent population in Canada is growing older, reflecting broader demographic trends. As our population ages and life expectancy increases, grandparents (and increasingly great-grandparents) are experiencing **longer relationships** with their families than ever before.

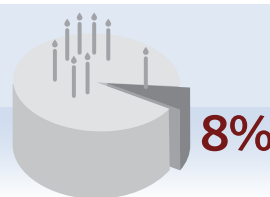
In 2017, the **average age of grandparents** was 68 (up from 65 in 1995), while the average age of **first-time grandparents** was 51 for women and 54 for men in 2017 (the first time the question was asked in the General Social Survey.⁷



In 2014-2016, **life expectancy at birth** in Canada was 84 years for women and 79.9 years for men, an increase of 4 and 6.6 years, respectively, compared with 1986.^{9,10}



In 2014-2016, **life expectancy at age 65** (i.e. estimated remaining life expectancy among those aged 65 and older only) was an estimated 22.1 years for women and 19.3 years for men, an increase of 3 and 4.3 years, respectively, compared with 1986.^{11,12}



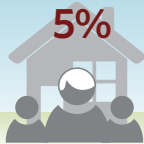
In 2017, nearly 8% of grandparents **were aged 85 and older**, up from 3% in 1995.⁸

Grandparents are experiencing longer relationships with their families than ever before.

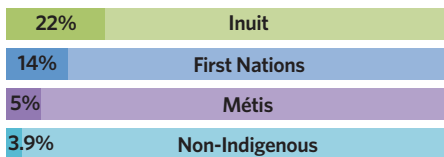




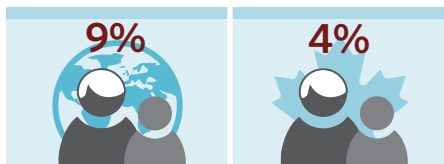
While Canada's grandparents have diverse living arrangements, some are more likely than others to **live in the same household** as their younger generations, and many play important roles in child care and family life.



In 2017, 5% of grandparents **lived in the same household as their grandchildren**, up slightly from 4% in 1995.¹³



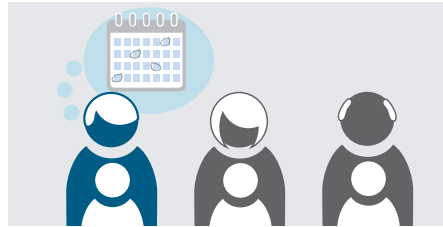
According to the 2011 GSS, grandparents reporting an **Inuit** (22%), **First Nations** (14%) or **Métis** (5%) identity were **more likely to live with grandchildren** than the *non-Indigenous* population in Canada (3.9%).¹⁴



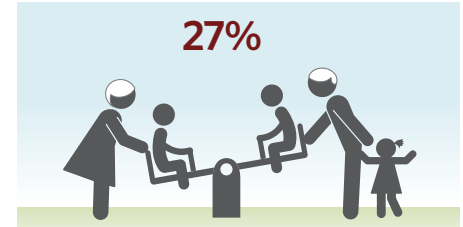
In 2017, grandparents who were **born outside Canada** were more than twice as likely as Canadian-born grandparents to live with grandchildren (9% and 4%, respectively), the result of a complex interplay of choice, culture and circumstance.¹⁵

In 2016, nearly 33,000 children in Canada aged 0 to 14 lived in **skip-generation households**, that is, living with grandparent(s) with no middle (i.e. parent) generation present.¹⁶

33,000

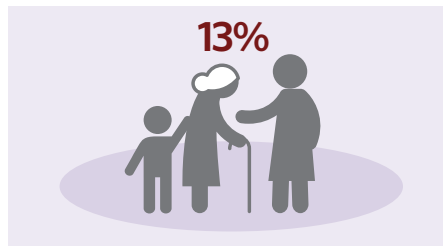


Approximately one-third of grandparents surveyed in 2013 said that they **see their grandchildren at least once a week**, while less than 1 in 10 said only once every seven to 12 months.¹⁷

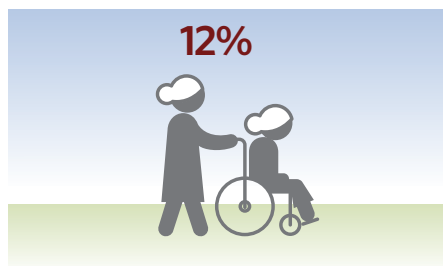


More than one-quarter of grandparents (27%) surveyed in 2013 said that **keeping up with their children and grandchildren keeps them physically active**.¹⁸

Grandparents have increasingly reported good health over the past several decades, but since age-related needs were identified as the single most common reason for caregiving,¹⁹ it is no surprise that grandparents are common recipients of **family caregiving** (though many also provide care of their own to family, friends and neighbours).



In 2012, 13% of **care recipients** in Canada were grandparents.²⁰

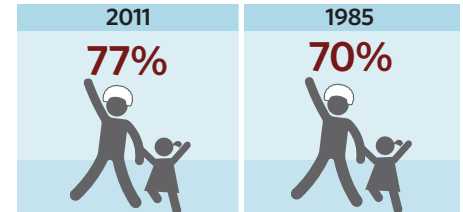


Seniors accounted for 12% of all **caregivers** in Canada in 2012 (966,000 total) and were significantly more likely than any other age group to report providing **20 or more hours** of care per week (at a rate of 23%). According to Statistics Canada, this may be the result of their higher likelihood of caring for a spouse, who often requires greater time commitments for care.²¹

23%



20 hours



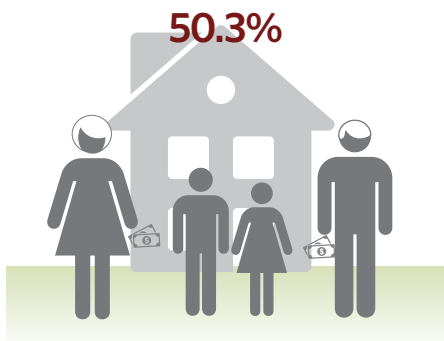
In 2011, 77% of grandparents in Canada **rated their health as good/very good/excellent** (up from 70% in 1985), while 23% reported fair/poor health (down from 31% in 1985).²²

Canada's grandparents have diverse living arrangements, and many play important roles in child care and family life.

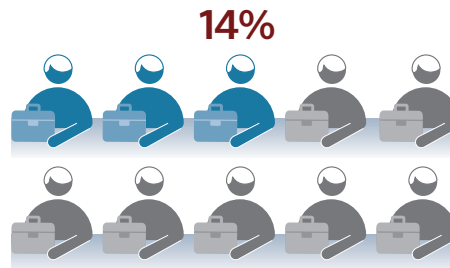
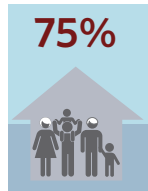
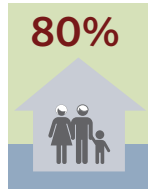




Grandparents are playing a growing role in **family finances** and the paid labour market, with some delaying their planned retirement to provide financial support to younger generations.



More than half (50.3%) of grandparents living with their grandchildren reported in 2011 having some **financial responsibility in the household**. Rates were significantly higher for those living in skip-generation households (80%) or multi-generational households with a lone-parent middle generation (75%).²³



In 2018, 14% of seniors in Canada were **in the paid labour force** (10.5% of women, 18.1% of men), up from 6.5% in 1998. The rate is significantly higher among the 65–69 age group (26.5%).²⁴



A growing number of grandparents are delaying their planned retirement to provide financial support to younger generations.



Since approximately 8 in 10 seniors in Canada are grandparents,^{25, 26} it's clear that a growing number are working today.



¹ Quote from Hon. Landon Pearson at the Vanier Institute of the Family's Families in Canada Conference 2015.

² Statistics Canada, "Family Matters: Grandparents in Canada," *The Daily* (February 7, 2019). Link: <https://bit.ly/2BnyyFO>.

³ Statistics Canada, *Population Estimates on July 1st, by Age and Sex* (Table 17-10-0005-01), page last updated May 14, 2019. Link: <https://bit.ly/2LaCsE1>.

⁴ Statistics Canada, "Family Matters: Grandparents in Canada."

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Maire Sinha, "Portrait of Caregivers, 2012," *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-652-X (September 2013). Link: <https://bit.ly/30i7SRR>.

⁷ Statistics Canada, "Family Matters: Grandparents in Canada."

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ruffeen Shumanty, "Mortality: Overview, 2014 to 2016," *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 91-209-X (June 28, 2018). Link: <https://bit.ly/2n1QYEW>.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, "Life Expectancy," *Healthy People, Healthy Places*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 82-229-X (January 11, 2010). Link: <https://bit.ly/2GfQfvi>.

¹¹ Shumanty, "Mortality: Overview, 2014 to 2016."

¹² Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, *Mortality Projections for Social Security Programs in Canada* (April 2014). Link: <http://bit.ly/2gZfFh5>.

¹³ Statistics Canada, "Family Matters: Grandparents in Canada."

¹⁴ Anne Milan, Nadine Laflamme and Irene Wong, "Diversity of Grandparents Living with Their Grandchildren," *Insights on Canadian Society*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 75-006-X (April 14, 2015). Link: <https://bit.ly/2Jkf4ry>.

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, "Family Matters: Grandparents in Canada."

¹⁶ Statistics Canada, "Census in Brief: Portrait of Children's Family Life in Canada in 2016," *2016 Census Analytics Analytical Products* (August 2, 2017). Link: <https://bit.ly/2JiCiNI>.

¹⁷ Angus Reid, *Simple Moments with Grandkids Play Vital Role in Enhancing Grandparents' Lives* (September 5, 2013). Link: <https://bit.ly/2Q2y1f3>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Sinha, 2013.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Rachel Margolis, "The Changing Demography of Grandparenthood," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78:3 (March 14, 2016). Link: <https://bit.ly/2TOoHAS>.

²³ Milan, Laflamme and Wong, 2015.

²⁴ Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Characteristics by Sex and Detailed Age Group, Annual, Inactive* (Table 14-10-0018-01), page last updated May 14, 2019. Link: <https://bit.ly/2Q2FrTi>.

²⁵ An estimated 79%–84% of senior women and 72%–84% of senior men.

²⁶ Margolis, 2016.



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