

Study: Caregivers in Canada, 2012

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In 2012, about 8.1 million individuals, or 28% of Canadians aged 15 years and older, provided care to a family member or friend with a long-term health condition, disability or aging needs.

New data from the 2012 General Social Survey showed that women represented the slight majority of caregivers at 54%. The survey also found that caregiving responsibilities most often fell to those aged 45 to 64, with 44% of caregivers in this age category.

Ailing parents were the most common recipients of care, with 39% of caregivers looking after the needs of their own parents and another 9% doing so for their parents-in-law. The least common were spouses, at 8%, and children, at 5%.

For the first time, the survey looked at the types of health conditions requiring care. Age-related needs topped the list, with 28% of caregivers providing care for these needs. Cancer was next at 11%, followed by cardio-vascular disease at 9%, and mental illness at 7%.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba residents report the highest levels of caregiving

The proportion of caregivers varied across provinces, with Saskatchewan and Manitoba having the highest rates of caregiving in 2012 at 34% and 33%, respectively. Also above the national average were Nova Scotia (31%) and Ontario (29%).

In contrast, Quebec had a lower rate than the national average. About 25% of Quebecers reported that they had provided care to an ill, disabled or aging family member or friend in 2012.

Other provinces were not significantly different from the national average.

Providing transportation most common form of care

The most common type of help, provided by 73% of all caregivers, was transportation to run errands, shop, or attend medical appointments. The next most frequent types of activities were house cleaning and meal preparation at 51%, followed by house maintenance and outdoor work at 45%.

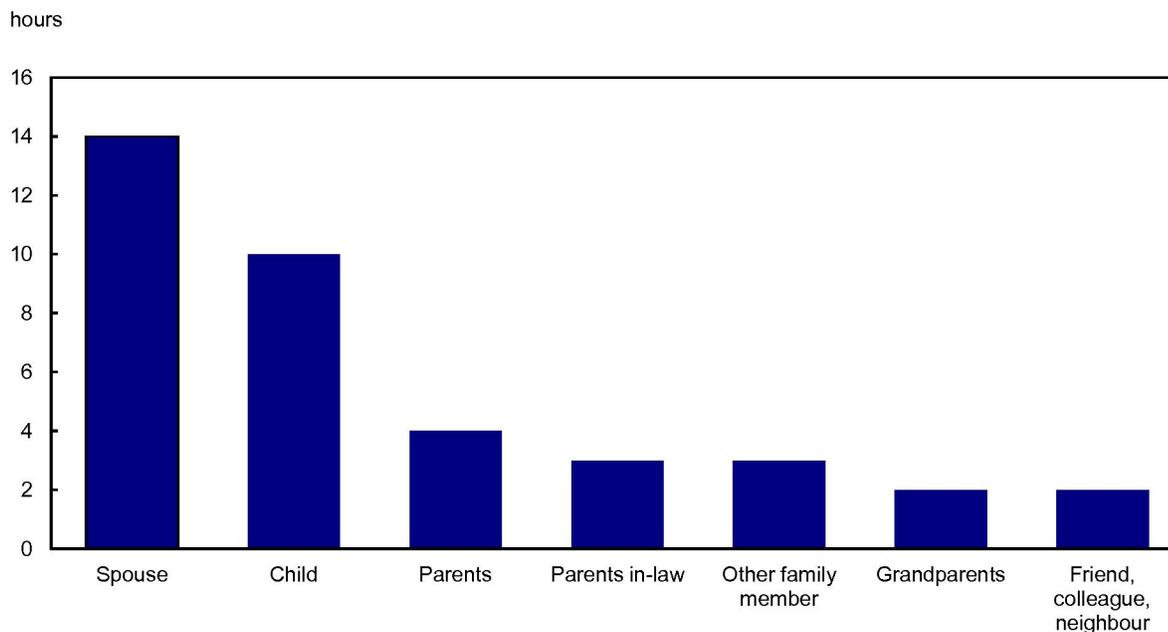
Some other tasks were provided by a lower proportion of caregivers, but were done more frequently. These tasks (including medical treatments and personal care, such as help with bathing and dressing) were provided by less than 1 in 4 caregivers. However, two-thirds of those who performed these activities did so at least once a week.

More time spent caring for ill or disabled children and spouses

Overall, caregivers typically spent 3 hours a week caring for an ill or disabled family member or friend. However, this amount varied depending on the relationship between the caregiver and care receiver.



Chart 1
Median number of hours per week spent on caregiving, 2012



Caregivers of spouses and children devoted the most time to helping activities. Spousal caregivers typically spent 14 hours a week on some form of care, while caregivers of children (including adult children) spent 10 hours per week.

Caregivers of parents, the largest segment of caregivers, typically spent 4 hours, while caregivers of grandparents and friends spent the fewest number of hours per week, at 2 hours.

Women were more likely than men to spend the longest hours on caregiving activities. In 2012, 17% of women providing care devoted 20 or more hours a week to these tasks, compared with 11% of men.

Over one-quarter of caregivers "sandwiched"

Over one-quarter (28%) of caregivers, or 2.2 million individuals, could be considered "sandwiched" between caregiving and raising children. Most of them were women between the ages 35 and 44, and were helping their parents or parents-in law, while also having at least one child under 18 living at home.

Impacts greatest for caregivers of children and spouses

The survey also examined the psychological, financial and employment consequences of caregiving among those who provided 2 or more hours of care per week. At greatest risk of negative consequences were caregivers of children and spouses, reflecting their greater intensity of care.

About half of caregivers providing care to children (51%) and spouses (46%) reported at least five symptoms of psychological distress, such as depression, feelings of isolation and disturbed sleep. This compares with 30% of those caring for their own parents and 8% caring for a grandparent.

In addition, 34% of those caring for their child and 33% of those caring for their spouse had to consult a medical professional as a result of their responsibilities, compared with 18% of those who took care of their parents. Caregivers of children or spouses were also more likely to sustain an injury while providing care.

Nevertheless, about 9 in 10 caregivers felt that the experience of providing care was rewarding. Moreover, 7 in 10 also expressed that their relationship with their care receiver had strengthened over the course of the previous 12 months.

One in five caregivers receive financial support

In 2012, 19% of caregivers received some form of financial support. Help from family and friends was the most common at 12%, followed by government programs at 7% and federal tax credit at 5%.

Those caring for their child and spouse received the most financial support from governments. In 2012, 30% of caregivers of children received government financial assistance, compared with 14% of caregivers of spouses and 5% of caregivers of parents.

Even though they received the most support from governments, 28% of those who cared for a child and 20% of those who cared for a spouse experienced financial difficulties. This compares with 7% among those helping their parents.

In addition, 52% of caregivers of children, 42% of caregivers of spouses and 28% of caregivers of parents said that they would have liked more help than they received, financial or otherwise.

Note to readers

Today, Statistics Canada releases two articles on caregiving in Canada, both based on new data from the 2012 General Social Survey on Caregiving and Care Receiving. Similar data were last collected in 2007.

The first article, titled "Portrait of Caregivers, 2012", presents the number of caregivers and their characteristics, along with the types of help provided, the number of hours of care, the impacts of providing care, and financial support for caregivers.

The second article, titled "Family caregiving: What are the consequences?" discusses the psychological, physical and financial consequences of providing care, with a focus on the relationship between the caregiver and receiver.

Caregivers are defined as individuals aged 15 years and older providing help or care to either someone with a long-term health condition or a physical or mental disability, or someone with problems related to aging. In 2012, the survey collected information from 23,093 respondents living in the 10 provinces.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4502.

The articles "Portrait of Caregivers, 2012" in *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey* (89-652-X) and "Family caregiving: What are the consequences?" in *Insights on Canadian Society* (75-006-X), are now available. From the *Browse by key resource* module of our website, choose *Publications*.

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

For more information on *Spotlights on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey*, contact Jodi-Anne Brzozowski (613-951-3230, jodi-anne.brzozowski@statcan.gc.ca), Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division.

For more information on *Insights on Canadian Society*, contact Sébastien LaRochelle-Côté (613-951-0803; sebastien.larochelle-cote@statcan.gc.ca), Labour Statistics Division.