

Study: Senior care: Differences by type of housing, 2012

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In 2012, 5.4 million Canadians provided care to a senior family member or friend. This care was most often provided to a senior living in their own private residence, though the intensity of care was highest for caregivers who lived with their care recipient.

Overall, 62% of caregivers helping seniors said that the care receiver lived in a private residence separate from their own. Another 16% lived with their care recipient, 14% provided help to a senior in a care facility (such as a hospital or a nursing home), and 8% helped seniors in supportive housing.

The intensity of care was highest among those living with their care recipient, with more than half (56%) saying that they spent at least 10 hours a week providing care.

Caregivers' weekly commitments were also elevated for those helping someone in a care facility, but to a lesser extent. About 22% of these caregivers spent 10 hours or more providing care to a senior in a care facility.

The intensity and type of care varies between types of housing

Among those helping seniors in a care facility, the care receiver's more advanced age and more severe health conditions were the leading factors to explain the greater time commitment.

For example, 60% of caregivers within a care facility said that they helped a senior who had a "serious" medical condition. Also, 25% of these caregivers said that the primary condition for which they provided care was dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

A lower proportion (45%) of those living with their care recipient said that the medical condition was "serious," and 8% provided assistance to someone who had dementia or Alzheimer's. This suggests that other factors, such as proximity and relationship to the care receiver, explain the longer hours provided by caregivers living with their care recipient.

Caregivers of seniors in a care facility and those living with them were also more likely to provide personal care (such as bathing and dressing) on a weekly basis. Specifically, 21% of those providing care within a care facility and 33% of those living with their care recipient reported that they had provided personal care on a weekly basis.

In contrast, 8% of caregivers helping seniors in separate households and 12% of those helping seniors in supportive housing provided personal care on a weekly basis.

The profile of care recipients varies by type of housing

The majority of caregivers of seniors took care of their parents or parents-in-law, regardless of where the senior lived. This was particularly the case among those who helped a senior in a care facility and in supportive housing (61%).

Spousal care was most often found among those who lived with their care recipient.

In 2012, nearly 30% of caregivers who lived with their care recipient provided help to their spouse. This compared with 2% among those who helped someone in a care facility.

Care receivers in a care facility (and in supportive housing) tended to be older. More than 55% of care recipients in care facilities and supportive housing were aged at least 85, while about one quarter of those who lived in a separate household or with their caregivers were in this age group.



Because they represent the majority of seniors, the vast majority of care receivers in all housing types were women. This was especially the case among those who lived in a care facility or in supportive housing.

Strain on family relationships higher among caregivers living with care recipients and those helping seniors in care facilities

The survey also examined the psychological, financial and social consequences among caregivers who provided two or more hours of care per week.

In general, caregivers helping seniors in a care facility and those living with their care recipient were most likely to report various consequences associated with their caregiving responsibilities. For instance, 33% of those who helped a senior in a care facility and 29% of those who resided with the care recipient reported that their caregiving responsibilities had caused strain with other family members.

In comparison, this proportion varied between 21% and 23% among caregivers providing care to seniors in other categories of housing.

Caregivers who helped someone in a care facility or lived with their care recipients also reported more out-of-pocket expenses for their caregiving activities. This was particularly true for those who lived with their care recipients, as more than one-quarter of this group spent at least \$2,000 annually for various out-of-pocket expenses.

Note to readers

In this study, data from the General Social Survey (GSS) are used to examine differences in care provided to seniors, depending on the type of housing used by the care recipient.

Caregivers are classified across four types of housing, depending on the housing arrangement of their primary care receiver: (1) seniors who lived in private households separately from their caregivers; (2) seniors who lived in support housing, which are providing minimal to moderate care such as homemaking or personal care so people can live independently; (3) seniors who lived in care facility or institutions (such as hospital or nursing home); and (4) seniors who lived together with their caregiver in a private household.

In the GSS, caregivers are defined as persons 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 provinces.

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

The article "Senior care: Differences by type of housing" is now available online as part of the *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)) series. From the *Browse by key resource* module of our website choose *Publications*.

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