

Study: The wealth of unattached men and women aged 50 and older, 1999 to 2016

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From 1999 to 2016, unattached women aged 50 and older saw their median wealth holdings grow almost twice as fast as those of unattached men aged 50 and older, according to a new study.

The study uses data from the Survey of Financial Security to document the evolution of the wealth holdings of unattached individuals aged 50 and older, a group that represented 3.0 million individuals in 2016, up from 1.7 million in 1999.

The study shows that the median wealth of unattached women grew by 91% from 1999 to 2016, compared with an increase of 48% for their male counterparts. As a result, median wealth holdings of unattached women amounted to \$266,100 in 2016, compared with \$195,000 for unattached men.

Unattached women experienced stronger wealth growth than their male counterparts largely because their housing wealth and registered pension plan (RPP) assets increased at a faster pace.

For example, unattached women with RPP assets saw the median value of these assets increase by 63% from 1999 to 2016, almost twice the rate of 33% observed for their male counterparts.

The study also shows that, both in 1999 and 2016, unattached men and women had substantially smaller wealth holdings than couples of a similar age with no children.

For example, the median wealth of couples with no children headed by a man aged 50 or older amounted to \$801,500 in 2016, four times the median wealth of \$195,000 observed for unattached men aged 50 and older.

While these findings paint a reasonably positive picture of the wealth holdings of unattached women relative to those of unattached men, they are also a reminder that unattached individuals are generally more vulnerable to income shocks and unexpected expenditures than couples.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2620](#).

The study "[The Wealth of Unattached Men and Women Aged 50 and Older, 1999 to 2016](#)," part of the *Analytical Studies Branch Paper Series (11F0019M)*, is now available.

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).

To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact René Morissette (rene.morissette@canada.ca), Social Analysis and Modelling Division.

