

The State of Caregiving Among Canadians 50+:

A Public Policy Challenge

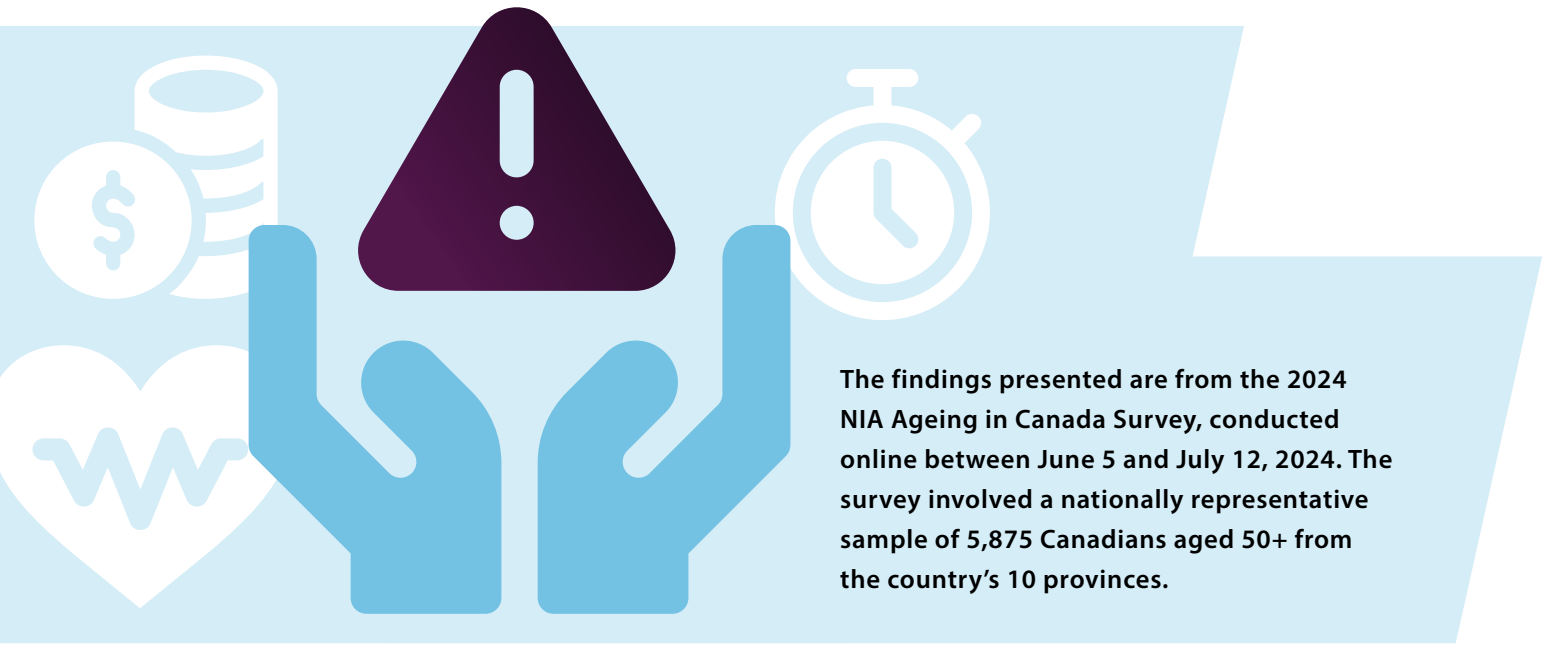


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Canadian Centre for
Caregiving Excellence

NIA NATIONAL
INSTITUTE
ON AGEING*



The findings presented are from the 2024 NIA Ageing in Canada Survey, conducted online between June 5 and July 12, 2024. The survey involved a nationally representative sample of 5,875 Canadians aged 50+ from the country's 10 provinces.

Introduction

Half of all Canadians will be a caregiver at some point in our lives, yet it often goes unrecognized. Nearly 8 million Canadians provide care today for family members or friends facing health challenges, disabilities, or ageing-related issues. The reality? Caregivers contribute an estimated 5.7 billion unpaid hours each year — work valued at over \$97 billion — but with little support.

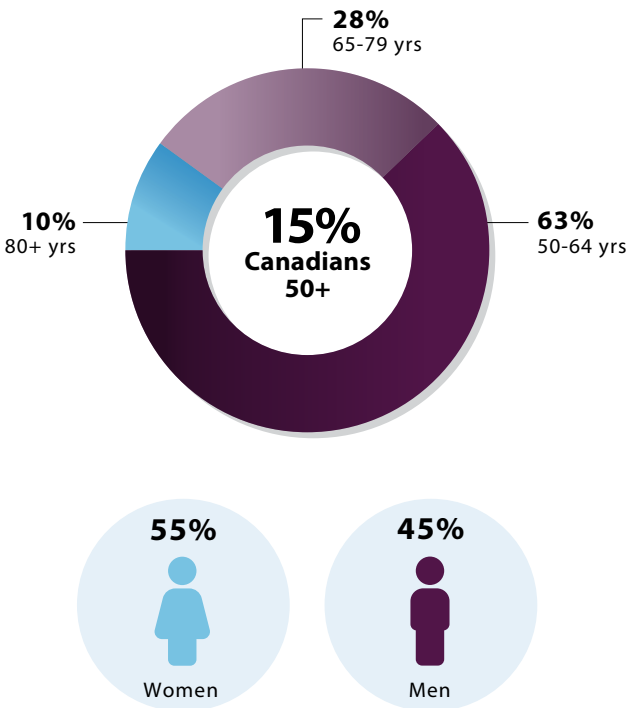
The Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence (CCCE) warns that we are already living in a caregiving crisis. As caregivers age and fewer people are available to provide care, the demand is only increasing. Whether it's helping with medical needs, household tasks, or simply offering emotional support, caregivers play a vital role—not just in the lives of their loved ones, but in keeping Canada's healthcare system afloat.

CCCE has spent the last year working with caregivers, care providers, recipients of care, researchers, and leaders in every part of the country to develop a National Caregiving Strategy to address this problem. The NIA has been involved in this process from the beginning.

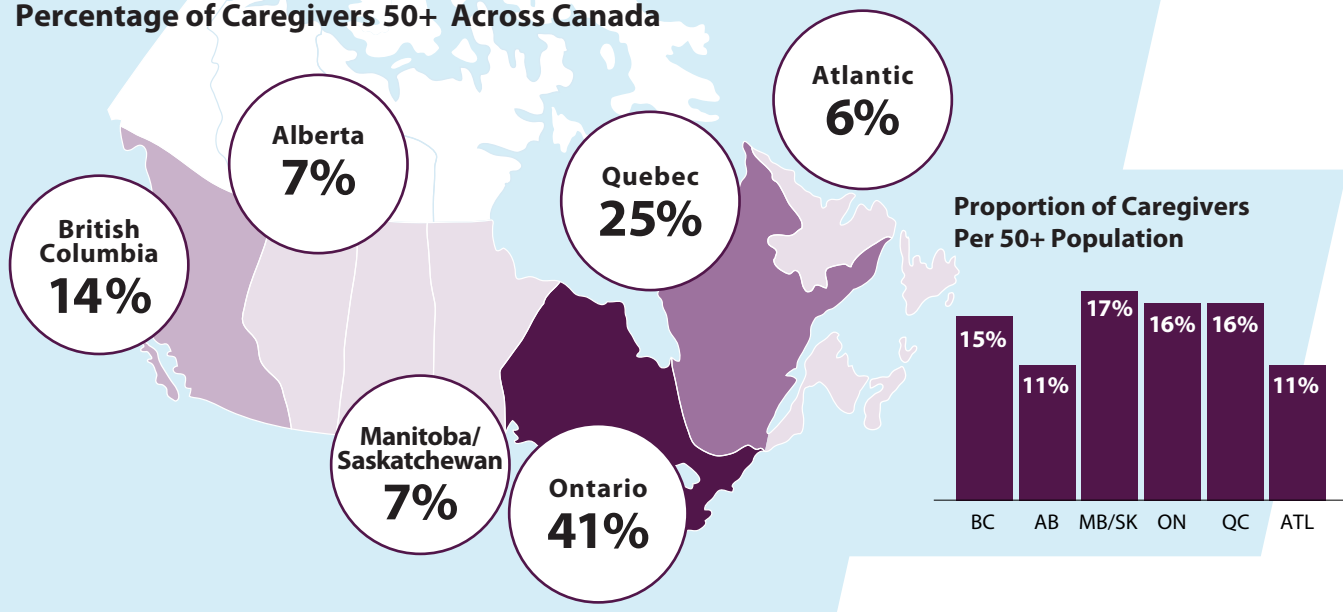
Profile of Canadian Caregivers 50+

Who Are the Caregivers?

In 2024, approximately 15% of Canadians aged 50+ identified as caregivers, providing personal support to a loved one. The majority (63%) of these caregivers are between 50-64 years old, while 28% are aged 65-79 and 10% are aged 80+.



Percentage of Caregivers 50+ Across Canada



Gender and Regional Distribution

Among caregivers aged 50+, the majority of caregivers are still women, but caregiving is becoming more common among men: in 2023, among caregivers aged 50+, only 41% were men, whereas 58% were women. By 2024, the proportion who were men had increased to 45%, whereas the proportion who were women decreased to 55%.

Regionally, 66% of caregivers aged 50+ reside in Ontario and Quebec, with 41% in Ontario and 25% in Quebec. British Columbia accounts for 14% of caregivers aged 50+, while the remaining 20% are spread across Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Atlantic Canada. Interestingly, Manitoba and Saskatchewan had the highest proportion that reported being a caregiver, at 17%.

The Well-being of Caregivers

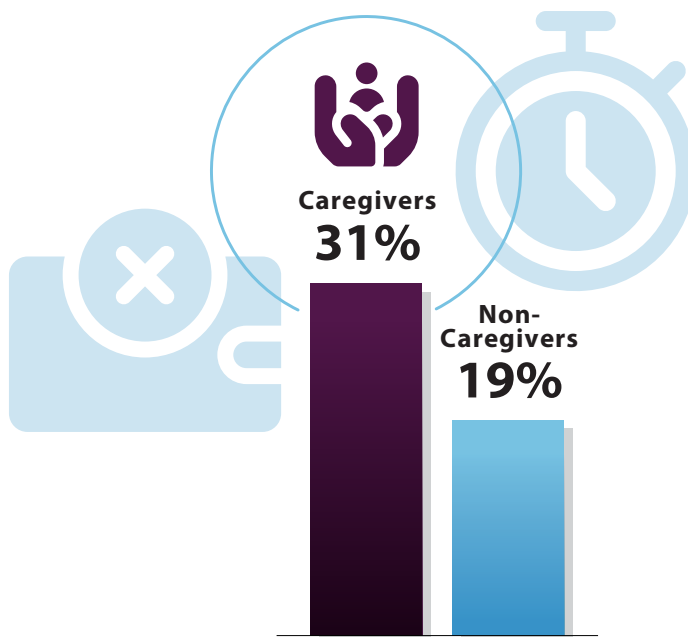
Caregiving comes with both positive and negative social experiences.

Among Canadians aged 50+ who participated in social activities less often than they wanted, caregivers aged 50+ were more likely to report that being too busy or having other responsibilities were a reason why they engaged socially less often than they would have liked. Among caregivers who participated less often than they would have liked, 31% cited being too busy as a barrier compared to 19% of non-caregivers. Financial constraints impact social participation too, with 44% of Canadian caregivers aged 50+ who were less social than they would have liked reporting that a lack of funds or activities costing more than they can afford limit their social engagement.

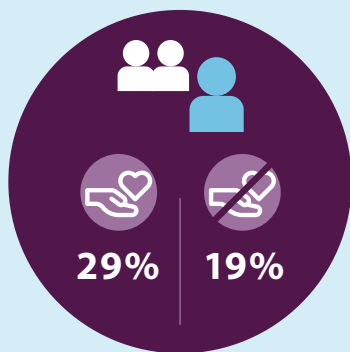
Mental health disparities exist between those who are caregivers and are those who are not, with 49% of caregivers aged 50+ reporting excellent or very good mental health compared to 55% of non-caregivers. Instead, caregivers are more likely to report only “good” mental health (30%) than their non-caregiving counterparts (26%).

Many caregivers struggle to access the home care and community support services they require for themselves or someone else. In 2024, only 43% of caregivers who required home care services could access them all or most of the time, compared to 52% of non-caregivers. Similarly, only 40% of caregivers could access necessary community support services all or most of the time, compared to 48% of non-caregivers.

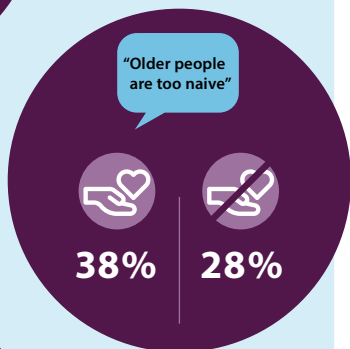
Proportion who said that being too busy limited their social engagement



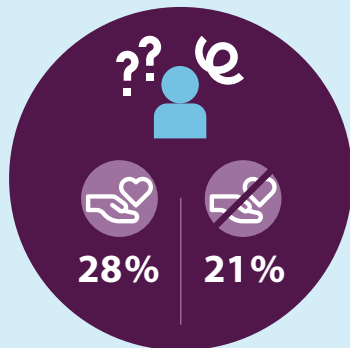
Feeling undervalued



Exposure to negative stereotypes



Assumptions about memory



Assumptions about hearing/vision



- 50+ Caregiver
- 50+ Non-caregiver

Experiences of Ageism

The 2024 NIA Ageing in Canada Survey found that caregivers are more vulnerable to ageism, with 17% experiencing age discrimination in the past year compared to 7% of non-caregivers.

Among Canadians aged 50+ who participated in social activities less often than they wanted, caregivers (31%) were more likely than non-caregivers (19%) to report that being too busy was a reason why they engaged socially less often than they would have liked. Financial constraints impact social participation too, with 44% of Canadian caregivers aged 50+ who were less social than they would have liked reporting that a lack of funds or activities costing more than they can afford limit their social engagement.

Canadian caregivers often feel undervalued, and are more likely to say that people often or sometimes assume they don't do anything important or valuable (29%) when compared to those who aren't a caregiver (19%). At the

same time, caregivers are also more likely to report experiences of everyday ageism, such as hearing jokes about old age or others assuming they have difficulty understanding or remembering things.

Financial Security of Caregivers

Financial strain is a common concern among caregivers. Canadian caregivers aged 50+ express more concern about future financial challenges, including rising costs and lack of support systems. When thinking about the future, Canadian caregivers aged 50+ are more concerned about running out of money (55%) than those who aren't caregivers (47%). Despite these challenges, caregivers are more proactive in retirement planning, with only 12% having saved nothing for retirement, compared to 20% of non-caregivers.

Conclusion

The growing prevalence of caregiving among Canadians aged 50+ highlights a pressing need for policy interventions. Caregivers face financial insecurity, social limitations, and increased exposure to ageism, all while playing a crucial role in supporting vulnerable individuals. Addressing these challenges through enhanced financial support, improved access to care services, and stronger public recognition of caregiving contributions will be essential to ensuring the well-being of caregivers and those they support. Policymakers must prioritize caregiving as a fundamental public policy issue, to ensure that Canada's ageing population receives the support it needs to thrive.



Caregivers aged 50+ are less likely to say that their incomes are good enough to save and more likely to be financially stretched.

