Caregivers in Alberta: impact of caregiving on well-being

Making a meaningful difference in the lives of older adults and their families by bridging research, policies and practice

Caregivers in Alberta

A caregiver is someone who assists a family member or friend with challenges resulting from illness, disability or aging.

53% are female  
47% are male

2 in 5 Albertans (44%) have been a caregiver at some point in their life—that’s 1.4 million people!

Most caregivers in Alberta support people living with:

30%  
11%  
10%  
9%  
6%

Aging-related needs  
Cardiovascular disease  
Cancer  
Neurological diseases (including dementias)  
Mental illnesses

4 in 5 (81%) care for family members like parents (in-law), grandparents, spouse/partners, siblings and children.

1 in 5 (19%) care for friends, neighbours and co-workers.

Caregiving impacts caregivers’ own health and wellness

1 in 2  
1 in 3  
1 in 7

46% are tired and 1 in 3 (33%) report sleep disturbances because of their caring.

31% feel overwhelmed, short-tempered or irritable because of their caring.

18% report that their health has suffered because of their caring.

1 Consequences questions are asked only of caregivers who provide care 2 or more hours per week.

Most caregivers live with or near the care receiver, but some live afar.

1 in 4 – 24% same household  
1 in 2 – 51% within half hour drive  
1 in 4 – 25% at a distance

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This infographic was written by Jacquie Eales, Choong Kim, Sandy Sereda, and Janet Fast based on analyses of Statistics Canada’s 2012 General Social Survey on Caregiving and Care Receiving; quotes are from a 2018 online survey of 700 caregivers in Canada about enhancing their well-being. Funding for this infographic was provided by AGE-WELL NCE Inc. (WP2.4 CRP Plus program).
Caregiving impacts caregivers’ relationships and can lead to loneliness

2 in 3 (66%) caregivers in Alberta are married or partnered. To accommodate their caregiving duties, 2 in 5 say that their spouse or partner modified their life and work arrangements (41%); and that extended family members provided them with help (40%).

Nearly 1 in 3 (29%) caregivers in Alberta have children under 15 years at home. To accommodate their caregiving duties, 2 in 5 (40%) say their children helped them.

While 3 in 4 (74%) caregivers in Alberta say that caregiving strengthened their relationship with the person receiving care, caring may strain other relationships or leave caregivers feeling alone and isolated.

- 47% spend less time with their partner and on social activities and hobbies
- 24% feel that caring strained relationships with family or friends
- 16% feel lonely or isolated because of their caring

Caregiving impacts young caregivers’ education

While most caregivers in Alberta have completed high school (33%) or post-secondary education (54%), some have not yet completed school. 1 in 7 are still attending school, college or university (15%) and say their studies have been affected because of their caregiving.

Young caregivers surveyed said: I wish I had more time to do school, work and be there for my family • I interrupted my studies three times for my mother • I eventually dropped out.

Caregivers in Alberta need more supports to sustain their caregiving

- 43% need financial support or government assistance
- 31% need Home Care or support provided to their care receiver
- 36% need information and advice and help from health care professionals

Caregivers surveyed said: I wish I had more supports and a Home Support System that worked • Respite is not time off to go do groceries or get a hair cut • The ability to have a break and know my loved one is cared for • I wish I had the energy to manage my own mental and physical health • I wish I had a resource person or guide to point me in the right direction at the start of my caregiving journey.