

Quarterly Index

HOME CARE BECOMES MORE BURDENSOME

Enhanced home care and informal care giving are central to healthcare reform and restructuring in all provinces across the country. A compilation of results from *The Berger Population Health Monitor* of the past two years foreshadows some of the long-term consequences of relying on informal care givers.

Home care population – About 12% of the population 15 and older report a physical or mental disability that requires they receive long-term help or care. This group includes only those well enough to participate in a telephone interview and willing to respond to the question. The percentage of the population with long-term disabilities requiring services is likely significantly higher. The population of home care recipients will continue to increase as the population ages.

Informal care givers – The proportion of Canadians who report they provide care, attention or errands for someone with a long-term mental or physical disability has increased from 18% of those 15 and older in 1998 to 25% in 2000. Informal care giving is common in all age groups. For example:

- 25% of those 15-24 years of age report informal care giving
- Informal care giving is most common among those 45 to 64 – 32% of people in this age range report they provide informal care
- A quarter of those 65 to 74 provide informal care, as do 14% of those 75+

Looking five years ahead, informal care giving will become more common among the older population, the population increasingly likely to need such care itself.

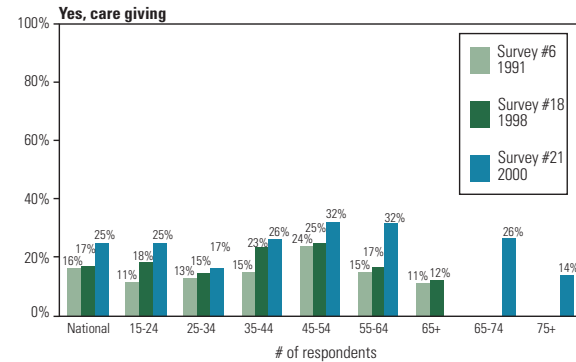
The strain of care giving is beginning to tell on the providers:

- Between 1998 and 2000, there has been an increase in the proportion of care givers who report they have had to make cuts in their budget, dip into their savings or borrow money to pay for the costs of the informal care giving they provide.
- In all, the proportion of care givers who report some degree of significant financial burden has increased from 49% of all informal care givers to 56%. That represents more than a 10% increase over two years.

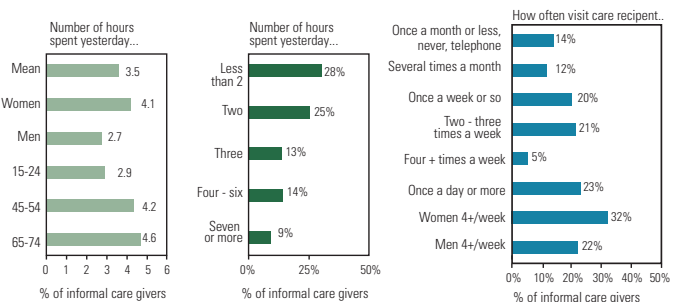
More striking is the major increase in the amount of time informal care givers are spending with the people they help out.

- In 1998, the average amount of time informal care givers spent during their last visit was 2.9 hours. This excluded those who reported spending more than 11 hours during their last visit.

Informal Care Giving: One in Four (25%) Canadians Report They Provide Informal Care Giving - Increase Since 1998



Informal Care Giving: Informal Care Giving Is A Major, Time-Consuming Occupation, Averaging 3.5 Hours for "Yesterday's Visit"; One in Four Visit Once a Day or More Often



- In 2000, the average amount of time spent during the last visit had increased to 3.5 hours.
- Among older care givers, the mean time spent is almost 5 hours.
- Half of the informal care givers report that they visit the people they help out at least 2- to 3 times a week to once a day or more often than that.

Informal care giving for many Canadians has become almost a full time job, especially for older care givers who are among the least likely to be able to keep up this pace of work.

Over the next 40 years, the 65+ population will more than double and the population of 45-64 year olds will increase by less than 40%. The future holds out the prospect of more and more home-care recipients being looked after by fewer and fewer spouses, relatives and friends. The implications for the healthcare sector are profound.

Data supplied by *The Berger Population Health Monitor*, and based on results from the May 2000 survey administered by Environics Research Group among 2,486 Canadians 15 years of age and older.

Topics in *The Berger Population Health Monitor*, which continues *The Canada Health Monitor* surveys of health issues in Canada, are prepared in consultation with The Hay Health Care Consulting Group. For more information contact: Earl Berger, Managing Director by telephone at 416 815-6405 or email at Earl_Berger@haygroup.com.