



# The Canada Family Life Project

NANOS RESEARCH POLL RESULTS  
FOR CARDUS FAMILY

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Cardus is a think tank dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture. Headquartered in Hamilton, ON, with a satellite office in Ottawa, Cardus has a track record of delivering original research, quality events, and thoughtful publications which explore the complex and complementary relationships between virtues, social structures, education, markets, and a strong society. Cardus is a registered charity.

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# Executive Summary

Canadians place a high value on family. Yet a number of obstacles threaten their ability to achieve the family lives to which they aspire. In May 2016, Cardus Family commissioned Nanos Research to ask Canadians about their goals for their families, and to discover the challenges Canadians say they face in achieving the family life they desire. The poll explores the following issues:

- Children and child care.
- The pursuit of a positive family life, including the role of marriage.
- Care for aging parents and the elderly.

This report offers a snapshot of these three issues, and in some instances we include historic data for comparison. In the case of providing elder care, Canadians were asked to consider what their family responsibilities may look like in the future.

The results reveal a number of gaps between Canadians' realities and their expectations.

Nanos conducted an RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between April 28th and May 3rd, 2016 as part of an omnibus survey. The research was commissioned by Cardus. See page 19 for details on methodology.

## Highlights from Questions on Children and Child Care

- Canadians are not having as many children as they say they want.
- Only half (50 percent) of Canadians surveyed believe it is very important for their personal aspirations to have as many children as they want.
- The number-one obstacle Canadians face is money.
- If the government should spend money on caring for children, direct payments to parents is the way to do it.

The ideal number of children Canadians say they want is 2.76 on average. That number has not been achieved since the 1960s<sup>1</sup>—our survey shows Canadians are having, on average, 2.27 children.

## Highlights from Questions on Family Life and Marriage

- About 78 percent of respondents think marriage has a positive or somewhat positive effect on family life.
- When asked if marriage is an outdated institution, most Canadians disagree or somewhat disagree, at 56 percent.
- Younger people ages eighteen to twenty-nine are least likely to value marriage, and almost 30 percent of eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds (28.4 percent) agree or somewhat agree that marriage is outdated.
- One-fifth of Canadians are neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that marriage is an outdated institution.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, “Fertility: Fewer Children, Older Moms,” March 31, 2016, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2014002-eng.htm#a1>.

<sup>2</sup> This trend may be reflected in the numbers of people who are choosing to get married according to Statistics Canada data, as contrasted with other family forms like cohabitation. “Between 2006 and 2011, the number of common-law couples rose 13.9%, more than four times the 3.1% increase for married couples.” Statistics Canada, “Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada,” Census 2011, September 2012, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011001-eng.cfm>.

**In ten short years, the  
number of seniors  
Canadians report they  
will be caring for will  
double**



**Highlights from Questions on Caring for Elders**

- In ten short years, the number of seniors Canadians report they will be caring for will double.
- Canadians report that being able to care for one's elders is a high priority, but they believe society is only doing an average job of facilitating the ability to care for one's elders.

The Nanos Research poll asked Canadians to consider the role of government in addressing this growing challenge. Individuals can take steps toward facilitating senior care in their own lives, and indeed, according to this survey, 12 percent think this is a personal responsibility where government solutions should be very limited. That leaves roughly 60 percent who desire some government assistance, and a high percentage, at 28.2 percent, of Canadians who are unsure how the government should respond.

Through this survey and ongoing research, Cardus Family aims to achieve three things. One is to create a larger body of Canadian family research. Another is to bring existing experienced and reliable academic and think-tank voices together in a healthy discussion. And finally, Cardus Family aims to help create a renewed and informed interest in the strength of the Canadian family for our communities and country.

# Children and Child Care

Canadians would like more than the number of children they are having.

*Finances are the main obstacle, followed by age and infertility/health.*

When we contrast the importance attached to being able to have the desired number of children with the importance placed on caring for elders or having a positive family life, having the number of children one wants is *least* important.

Ninety-three percent of Canadians say having a positive family life is *very* important, 73 percent of Canadians say managing their parents' health care is *very* important. By contrast, only 50 percent of Canadians feel that being able to have the number of children they want is *very* important.

How important are the following to your personal aspiration?	MEAN SCORE	
	<b>9.49</b>	HAVING A POSITIVE FAMILY LIFE
	<b>8.14</b>	BEING ABLE TO MANAGE THE HEALTH CARE OF PARENTS
	<b>6.69</b>	BEING ABLE TO HAVE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN YOU WANT

MEAN SCORE ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN, ONE BEING NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT AND TEN BEING VERY IMPORTANT.

Fig. 1

At the same time, across regions, different ages, and genders, Canadians report wanting more than two children, 2.76 children on average.

The ideal number of children is highest in the Prairies, at 3.06, and lowest in Quebec, at 2.62.

The actual number of children is highest in Atlantic Canada and lowest in Quebec. Poll respondents with children had an average of 2.27 children, including step children, biological children and children who had been adopted. Unlike the national fertility rate which includes all women with or without children, our poll inquired about the number of children among men and women who had children already.

Region	Ideal number of children	Actual number of children	Difference between Ideal and actual number of children	On a scale of 1 to 10, one being not at all important and 10 being very important, how important is being able to have the number of children you want? Mean score
ATLANTIC CANADA	2.78	2.48	.30	6.68
QUEBEC	2.62	2.11	.51	7.09
ONTARIO	2.73	2.24	.49	6.54
PRAIRIES	3.06	2.44	.62	6.89
BRITISH COLUMBIA	2.65	2.21	.44	6.08
TOTAL	2.76	2.27	.49	6.69

Fig. 2



## Ideal Number of Children Historically }



Fig. 3 Sources: data for 1981 and 1990 from Reginald W. Bibby, *A Survey of Canadian Hopes and Dreams*, The Future Families Project (Ottawa: The Vanier Institute of the Family, 2004) . Data for 2016 provided by Nanos Research

## A Historic Look at Ideal Number of Children in a Family

### GALLUP CANADA (VARIOUS YEARS)

	2 CHILDREN OR LESS	3 CHILDREN	4 OR MORE CHILDREN
	%	%	%
1945	17	23	60
1974	52	24	24
1984	61	26	13
1994	61	29	10

Fig. 4 Source: P. R. Wilson, *Canadian Attitudes on the Family* (Langley: Focus on the Family Canada, 2002), 18.

Quebecers placed the highest value on having the number of children they want, with a mean of 7.09, while those from British Columbia had the lowest mean, at 6.08. Interestingly, this held true from the 2004 Bibby study, where Quebecers led all other provinces in stating that having children was *very important*.<sup>3</sup>

That said, Quebecers felt we do the poorest job as a society in promoting or helping people to achieve the ideal number of children. This is interesting given that most Canadians perceive Quebec to offer an effective and full package of family benefits including publicly funded IVF and the province’s funded day-care system. The Prairies thought we do the best job as a society in promoting the number of children people want to have.

<sup>3</sup> Reginald W. Bibby, *A Survey of Canadian Hopes and Dreams*, The Future Families Project (Ottawa: The Vanier Institute of the Family, 2004), 40.

**Importance of being able to have the number of children you want, provinces, gender, and age**

SUBGROUPS	MEAN SCORE
Atlantic (n=100)	6.68
Quebec (n=250)	7.09
Ontario (n=300)	6.54
Prairies (n=200)	6.89
British Columbia (n=150)	6.08
Male (n=500)	6.56
Female (n=500)	6.82
18 to 29 (n=155)	7.21
30 to 39 (n=156)	6.73
40 to 49 (n=211)	6.38
50 to 59 (n=240)	6.32
60 plus (n=238)	6.75

Fig. 5

**Satisfaction with the number of children one has had is high.**

Canadians have both a high satisfaction level (77 percent are satisfied; 16 percent are somewhat satisfied) with the number of children they have, while simultaneously saying their ideal number is higher than what most Canadians have. At first glance this appears to be a contradiction, but respondents might ideally like more kids but wouldn't express their current situation in the negative. Also, a percentage of respondents will have more children in the future.

**Challenges to Having the Ideal Number of Children**

Less than half of Canadians, at 44 percent, feel that society is doing a very good job at promoting being able to have the number of children they want.

The most expressed challenge to having more children is cost: 29 percent of Canadians with children feel that the number-one challenge for them is cost/affordability/income. Age and/or infertility make up significant categories, at a combined 13 percent (7 percent age, 6 percent infertility).



## Challenges to Having the Ideal Number of Children, May 2016

REPORTED NUMBER ONE CHALLENGE	FREQUENCY (N=725)
Cost/Affordability/My income	29%
There are no challenges for me	17%
My age	7%
Infertility/health issues	6%
I don't have enough time	5%
I don't want any more children/have the same amount that I want	4%
Arranging for child care/daycare	3%
Ensuring they have a good education/good future	3%
I am not emotionally able to handle it	2%
I am single/have not found right partner	1%
My spouse/partner doesn't want more	1%
Already have special needs child/children	1%
Other	1%
Unsure/no opinion	20%

Fig. 6 Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

The youngest age cohort (eighteen to twenty-nine) places the highest value on the ability to have the number of children they desire at 7.21 on a scale of 1 to 10, with ten being very important. This may suggest that at younger ages we are slightly more idealistic about what we want to achieve and that, as life goes on, we alter our ideals.

Financial stress continues to be a persistent challenge for families. A 2002 poll of Canadians also showed finances to be a great struggle for Canadian families in making their decisions about children, suggesting that this is an ongoing tension for families.<sup>4</sup>

Recent reports state that just under half of Canadians believe they are within \$200 a month of being able to pay their bills.<sup>5</sup> The Parliamentary Budget Office reported that Canadians outpaced all other G7 countries in the growth of debt-to-income ratio since 2000.<sup>6</sup> Debate continues about the long-term severity of household debt, but these results suggest that many Canadians are living with a sense of financial stress that adversely affects their aspirations for the future.

Among other challenges expressed by respondents were physical limitations such as age and infertility.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, *Canadian Attitudes on the Family*, 10

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Press, "Many Canadians within \$200 of Being Unable to Pay Bill: Poll," *Business News Network*, 2016, 16 February 2016, <http://www.bnn.ca/News/2016/2/16/Many-Canadians-within-200-of-being-unable-to-pay-bills-Poll-.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

In the past, children were economic assets, helping out on the farm, for example. In today's environment, having children presents a considerable expense. Estimates vary over how much raising a child cost, but they all tend toward the punitively high. One Manitoba Agriculture estimate in 2004 said raising children cashes in at \$167,000 and that was without paying for post-secondary education.<sup>7</sup>

Pursuing higher education also delays child-rearing, and age at having a first child is a predictor for having a second and then a third.<sup>8</sup>

Decreased interest in having children may also be correlated with the uncertainty around marriage. Canadians, while still getting married, are more uncertain about marriage than they were in yesteryear. Scholars surmise that divorce and uncertainty about marriage result in lower fertility.<sup>9</sup>

There are many factors contributing to challenges in achieving the number of children Canadians say they would like to have. Yet fully one in five Canadians said they were unsure, or had no opinion (20.2 percent).

It would be unfair to conclude this section without at least a nod to the almost one in five Canadians who say they have no challenges (16.8 percent).

**Government Spending on Child Care**

Child care is the frequent subject of political debates. Yet among poll respondents, only 3.1 percent said arranging for child care/day care was a challenge to having the number of children they wanted.

**If the government should spend money to look after children, how should they do so?**

n 727

Cash payments directly to parents who could choose any form of child care they deem best, including having a parent stay at home and care for their children	<b>25.2%</b>
Change the tax system to provide all parents with a child tax deduction whether they work or stay at home	<b>16.3%</b>
Provide subsidies to child-care centres to improve quality and/or create more spaces	<b>15.3%</b>
Expand the public school system to include younger children so that eventually, child care for children of all ages is included	<b>14.8%</b>
Return the money to all taxpayers through reduced taxes	<b>11.3%</b>
Provide targeted child-care funding exclusively for disadvantaged families	<b>9.4%</b>
Don't know	<b>7.8%</b>

Fig. 7

Cash payments directly to parents remains the most popular option, reflecting the policy of two successive Canadian governments. Sixty-two percent of Canadians support policy measures that involve helping parents directly, rather than giving money to centres, spaces or schools.

7 P. J. Mitchell, *Canada's Shrinking Families* (Ottawa: Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, 2010), 3.

8 Ibid.

9 I. Dowbiggin, *The Birth Dearth* (Ottawa: Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, 2006).

# The Importance of Positive Family Life and Marriage

The vast majority of Canadians (93 percent) believe having a positive family life is very important to them. Despite changes over the last number of decades, Canadians clearly retain a belief in the value of and the desire for a happy home.

## Family Structure of the Sample

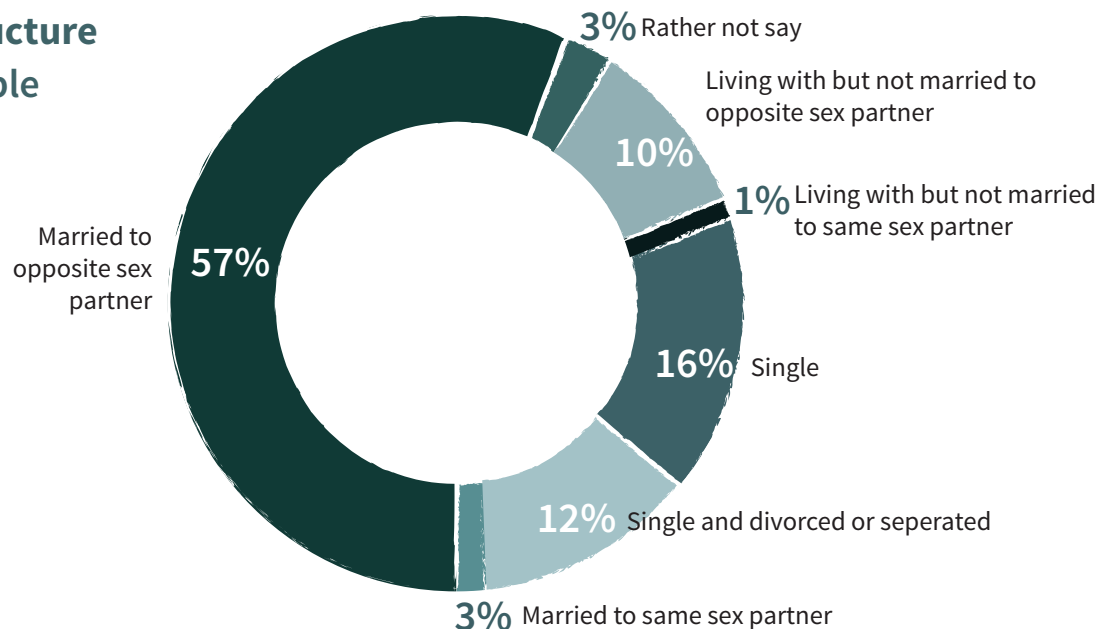


Fig. 8

When it comes to evaluating society's role in facilitating positive family life, three-fifths of Canadians feel that society does an average job.

## Challenges in Achieving a Positive Family Life

When Canadians were asked to identify the challenges to achieving a positive family life, the clear obstacles to emerge are time and money.

The number-one challenge to having a satisfactory family life according to respondents is the cost of living and their financial situation (24 percent). The second-highest cited challenge is work-life balance and issues around having time for family and friends (17 percent).

This finding is consistent with a 2005 poll in which financial stress topped the list of challenges to family relationships.<sup>10</sup> Time and money are ongoing tensions to be managed.

One in ten Canadians reports facing no challenges in achieving a satisfactory family life.

<sup>10</sup> Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, *What's at the Heart of the Canadian Family?* (Ottawa: IMFC, 2005).

## Challenges to Personally Achieving a Satisfactory Family Life

	FREQUENCY (n=1,000)
Cost of living/Financial Situation	24%
Work and life balance/Time with family and friends	17%
No challenges/I am happy	12%
Health issues of myself or family member/partner	7%
Lack of a dating/social life	4%
My family is too far away/spread out	3%
Personal/relationship issues	3%
Ensuring my children are well-off	2%
Aging and related issues	1%
Mental health issues	1%
I want/wanted children	1%
Loss of family members/spouse	1%
Other	1%
Unsure/no opinion	24%

Fig. 9 Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

Unsurprisingly, when Canadians were asked to propose solutions to improving family life, many focused on time and money. In addition to simply having more money (14 percent), Canadians suggested that working less/more flexible hours (11 percent), better access to health care (6 percent), and lower cost of living, lower taxes, and lower housing prices (5 percent) would improve family life.

Similarly, financial issues at particular life stages were identified, including better job prospects, help with student loans for those just starting out, and more benefits for seniors (4 percent).

Some Canadians talked about relational rather than financial issues. Thirteen percent of Canadians identified improving relationships, finding relationships, or more time for friends, family, and hobbies as a way to bolster family life.

It is worth noting that 32 percent, so almost one in three Canadians, had no opinion on how to improve family life.

## Solutions to Improve Family Life

	FREQUENCY (n=1,000)
A better income/have more money	14%
Work less/have a job with more flexible hours/retire	11%
Nothing/I am satisfied already	10%
Have access to better health care	6%
Lower taxes/lower housing prices/lower cost of living	5%
Better job prospects for youth/help with student loans	4%
Better benefits and resources for seniors	4%
Make more time for friends/family/my hobbies	4%
Live closer to my family	4%
Have a closer relationship with my spouse/partner	3%
Find a partner/spouse	2%
Stay home with my children/better childcare options	1%
Other	1%
Unsure/no opinion	32%

Fig. 10 Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

## Marriage Remains Important

Despite many news stories about the decline of marriage—and there is decline—marriage still remains a valued aspect of a positive family life.

For a majority of Canadians (78 percent), the concept of marriage remains a positive aspect of family: 61 percent agree and 17 percent somewhat agree that marriage has a positive effect on family life.

On the flip side, almost one in five Canadians are neutral, negative, or unsure about whether marriage contributes to a positive family life.

Yet very few respondents view marriage as negative (1 percent) or somewhat negative (3 percent).

## The Effect of Marriage on Family Life

A majority of Canadians believe marriage is still a relevant social institution in society. When asked whether marriage is outdated, a majority (56 percent) of Canadians disagree or somewhat disagree, while 21 percent neither agree or disagree.

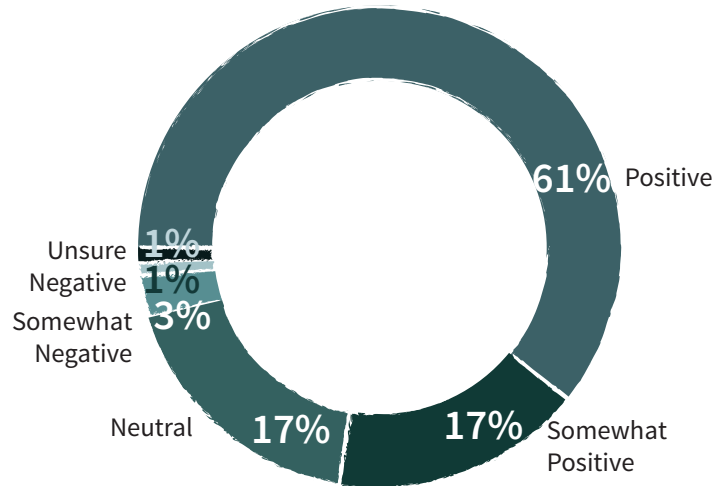


Fig. 11

## Is Marriage an Outdated Institution in Canada?

Interestingly, men are slightly more positive about marriage than women. When it comes to marriage as a positive contributor toward family life, 81 percent of men agree or somewhat agree, compared to 75 percent of women.

Men (59 percent) were more likely to disagree or somewhat disagree that marriage is an outdated institution compared to women (54 percent). Women (23 percent) were slightly more likely to neither agree or disagree than men (19 percent) that marriage is an outdated institution.

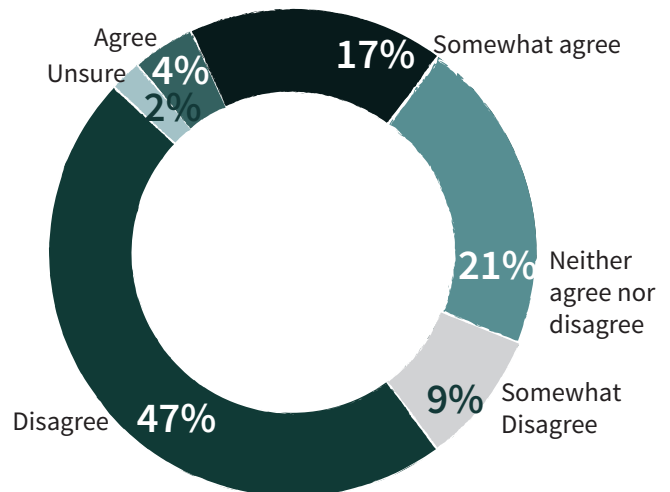


Fig. 12



## Generational Gap

Younger Canadians are more likely to agree or somewhat agree that marriage is an outdated institution.

### Is Marriage an Outdated Institution [CANADA, BY AGE]

	18 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 plus
Agree	8	7	3	2	2
Somewhat agree	21	16	19	13	14
Neither agree or disagree	22	23	21	20	20
Somewhat disagree	8	9	9	9	10
Disagree	38	44	47	53	54
Unsure	4	2	1	1	0.4

Fig. 13

There is a significant generational gap between the youngest cohort (eighteen to twenty-nine) and the oldest cohort (sixty-plus) when it comes to connecting marriage to a positive family life. Among eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds, 72 percent view the concept of marriage as a positive or somewhat positive contributor toward a positive family life, while 89 percent of those aged sixty and above held the same view. Over one in five eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds view the concept of marriage as a neutral contributor to a positive family life compared to only 9 percent of those sixty and older.

Interestingly it was Canadians thirty to thirty-nine years old who were the least positive (68 percent) and most negative (8 percent) about the concept of marriage as a contributor to married life. As the average age of divorce in Canada is in the early forties, it is possible that this cohort is more likely to be presently experiencing marital conflict.

## Historical Shift in Understanding the Institutional Aspect of Marriage

While a majority of Canadians say marriage is not an outdated institution, the proportion who say this has declined since 2002.<sup>11</sup>

In 2002, about 73 percent of Canadians thought marriage is *not* an outdated institution. In 2016, 56 percent said the same.

There is little difference from 2002 with regard to agreeing or somewhat agreeing that marriage is an outdated institution, with 18 percent affirming in 2002 compared to 21 percent today.

The portion of those who neither agree nor disagree has shifted significantly, from 7 percent in 2002 to 21 percent today. So while Canadians have soured a little on the concept of marriage as a relevant institution today, a significant number of Canadians have shifted to a neutral position.

This may reflect a decline in understanding of what marriage does for society.

<sup>11</sup> Historical comparison should be used with some caution, as polling methods may vary.

## Is Marriage an Outdated Institution in Canada? [2002 AND 2016]

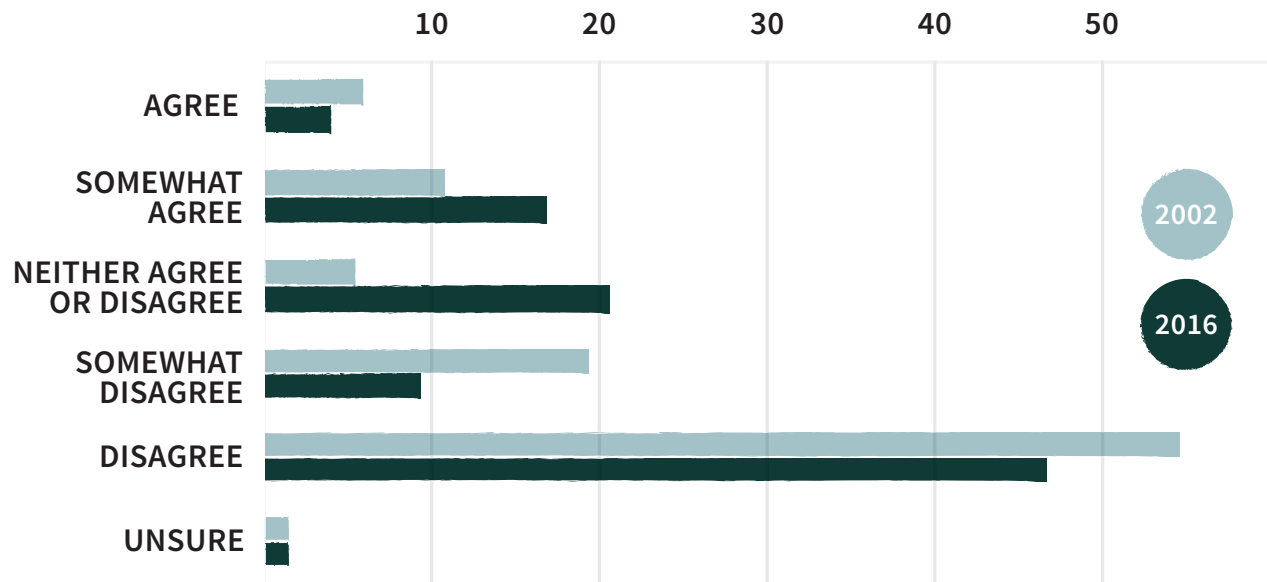


Fig 14. Sources: 2002 data from Wilson, *Canadian Attitudes on the Family*. 2016 data provided by Nanos Research

A 2004 study of Canadians by sociologist Reginald Bibby found that people choose to marry because it signifies a commitment, or it aligns with their values and beliefs. Bibby reported that two out of three married people say they married because it was the “natural thing to do.”<sup>12</sup> The current data shows that Canadians largely value marriage as a personal option, but it does raise questions about how they view the function of marriage in society. One in five Canadians seem to be noncommittal on the concept of marriage as an institution in society, shifting to the middle compared to a dozen years ago.

The institutional concept of marriage does not hold the same level of cultural authority that it once did.



<sup>12</sup> Bibby, *Survey of Canadian Hopes and Dreams*, 35.

# Caring for Elders

## Canadians expect that the average number of seniors who they will care for to double.

Being able to manage parents' health is important to Canadians. This issue is going to become a greater priority, as our poll reveals. Canadians expect the number of elderly they will be responsible for in ten years will more than double—from 0.5 to 1.2.

As of 2015, Canada has more people over age sixty-five than people under the age of fifteen.<sup>13</sup> According to Statistics Canada's medium growth demographic projections, the number of people in Canada over sixty-five will increase from 15 percent of the Canadian population to 24 percent by 2038.<sup>14</sup>

This suggests the reliance on natural caregivers will rapidly increase in the decades ahead.

### Currently:

- 54 percent of Canadians do not provide direct care for any senior.
- 45 percent provide some care in the following breakdown:
  - 19 percent provide direct care for one parent.
  - 17 percent provide direct care for a senior who is not a parent.
  - 9 percent, almost one in ten, provide care to both parents.

## How We're Doing by Province, Now and Ten Years from Now

	Atlantic Canada	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	BC	Canada
Currently providing direct care for one or more parents/seniors	31%	42%	48%	53%	50%	45%
Number of seniors that respondents are currently providing direct care for (mean)	.39	.53	.55	.61	.50	.53
Number of seniors respondents are expecting to provide direct care for in ten years (mean)	1.31	1.20	1.09	1.24	1.07	1.17
On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (very good), how do we do as society in promoting being able to manage the health care of parents? (mean)	5.49	6.14	5.50	5.52	5.25	5.62

Fig. 15

13 Statistics Canada, "Canada's Population Estimates, Age And Sex, July 1, 2015," 29 September 2015, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150929/dq150929b-eng.pdf>.

14 Nora Bohnert, Jonathan Chagnon, and Patrice Dion, "Population Projections for Canada (2013 to 2063), Provinces and Territories (2013 to 2038)," section 3, table 3.5, "Proportion of the Population Aged 65 And Over, Observed (2013) and Projected (2063) According to Seven Scenarios, Canada, Provinces and Territories," Statistics Canada, 2015, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-520-x/91-520-x2014001-eng.htm>.

## How Are We Doing as a Society in Caring for Elders?

When Canadians were asked how they feel society does at promoting the ability to manage parents' health, Canadians feel they are merely doing an average job.

## How is Society Doing in Promoting Family Support for Seniors?

In contrast with having children, where money was the biggest challenge, for those caring for seniors the biggest challenge by far was time, work scheduling, and availability, at 16 percent. The other significant challenges were money (12 percent) and emotional, physical and mental exhaustion, and personal health (11 percent).

A high percentage, over a quarter at 27 percent, also said they were unsure or had no opinion.

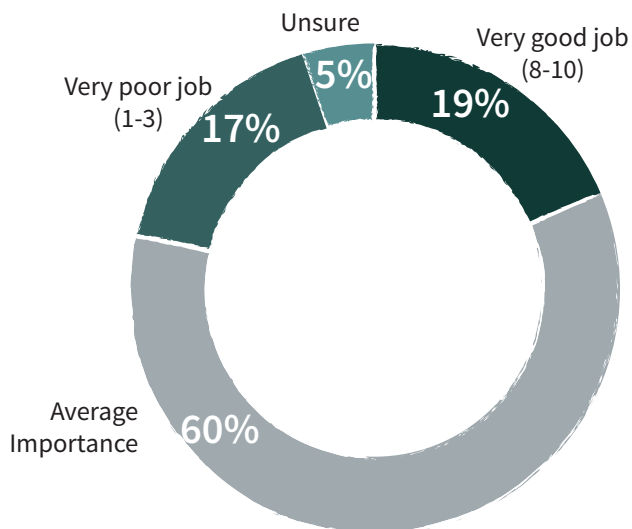


Fig. 16

## Challenges to Providing Direct Care to Seniors

Number one Challenge	Frequency (n=670)
Time/Work Scheduling/ Availability	16%
Money	12%
Emotional/Physical/Mental Exhaustion/Personal Health	11%
Distance/Location of Senior/ Transportation	9%
Managing healthcare needs/ Helping	8%
Lack of community/skills	5%
Housing	3%
None	8%
Other	1%
Unsure	27%

Fig. 17

There is a spectrum of activities included in providing elder care. Some of these activities, such as daily personal care, consume more emotional capital and time. Therefore, the experiences and needs of care providers differ.

Employed family caregivers can experience tension between work roles and family roles.<sup>15</sup>

One Canadian study found a clear link between employees facing challenges in balancing work and care responsibilities, and workplace productivity.<sup>16</sup> The notion of a clear division between employees' work and home lives is more fiction than fact.

Employers will need to consider how to address these issues, which will become more acute in the years ahead.

<sup>15</sup> A 2014 Canadian study found that providing care to a parent or in-law can increase the chance of leaving employment for women working full-time, adult only-children and women and men who do not have children. C. Le Bourdais and C. Proulx, "Impact of Providing Care on the Risk of Leaving Employment in Canada," *Canadian Journal on Aging* 33, no. 4 (December 2014).

<sup>16</sup> L. Duxbury and C. Higgins, *The 2012 National Study on Balancing Work and Caregiving in Canada: Report Two: Causes, Consequences, and Moderating Factors of Strain of Caregiving among Employed Caregivers* (2012).

## Geographic Distance to Seniors Canadians Care For

Research suggests that geographical distance increases stress on natural caregivers. Respondents providing care for seniors were asked to think ahead to the next ten years and determine the geographical distance between themselves and the senior they would expect to make personal care decisions for who lived the farthest distance away.

Half of respondents (48 percent) live within the same household or under a thirty-minute drive. An additional 10 percent live between thirty minutes to an hour by car.

About 14 percent live one to three hours away. Over one-fifth of respondents (22 percent) live more than three hours by car away.

## Distance from Seniors Requiring Direct Care

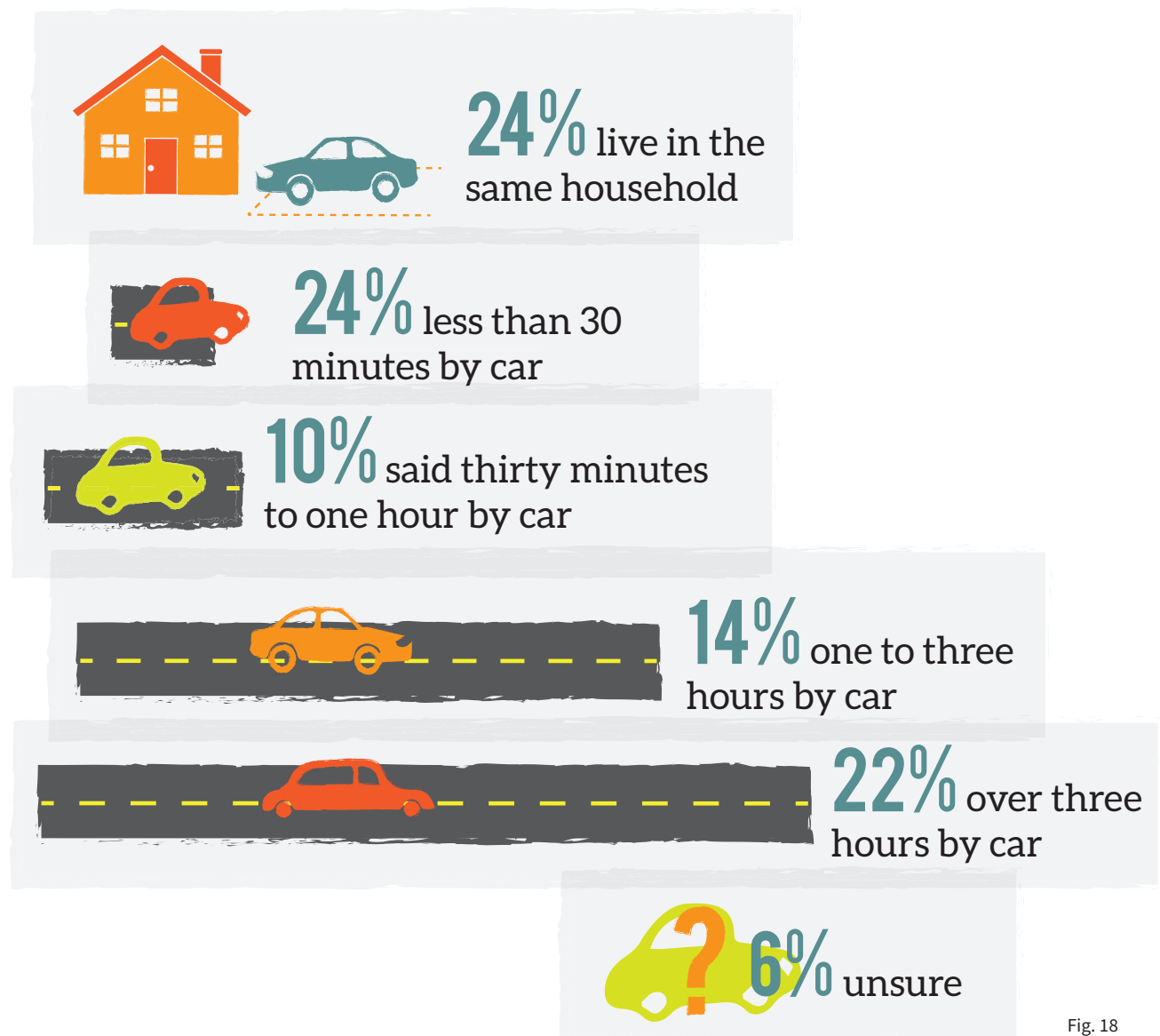


Fig. 18

## Canadians on Elder Care Solutions

Elder care is quickly becoming a critical public-policy issue. As a result, respondents were asked to specifically consider “the most realistic solution you would like governments to advance for you to improve your experience in providing direct care on a personal basis for seniors in your life.”

About one-fifth of respondents (19.9 percent) indicated that access to care, better care, or community care would be a realistic and helpful solution. Another 18 percent suggested that financial assistance or subsidization would offset senior care challenges. Just under 15 percent expressed support for increased home care, and 3.5 percent suggested more affordable/better housing.

Four percent of Canadians indicated that reduced taxes is a realistic option. Another 2.5 percent indicated that senior care is a personal responsibility, and 5.1 percent suggested that nothing needs to be done. This group of people, of just over one in ten Canadians (11.6 percent), prefer the government to take a hands-off approach to elder care.

Two other categories included “less work/more time,” at 2.2 percent—certainly a *cri de coeur* for those stressed by caring responsibilities, but not necessarily something easily acted on by government.

Interestingly, 28 percent of respondents indicated being unsure. Perhaps those who do not currently have care responsibilities are less sure of the solution.

Finally, it’s worth noting that under one percent (0.8 percent) mentioned assisted suicide as a realistic solution for governments to improve one’s experience in providing direct care on a personal basis for seniors in one’s life.

This may speak to Canadians wanting the option of legalized assisted suicide, while few would like to take that option for their loved ones. Alternatively, that this was raised as a solution at all may also speak to the fact the legalization of assisted suicide was very much in the news leading up to the time Canadians took this survey.

The results show a need for a robust discussion of what it means to care for our seniors, parents, and elders, particularly when, in ten years’ time, we expect to be doing a lot more of this than we are today.

## Looking to the Future

As we consider the future, there is obvious cause for concern.

If time is the biggest issue today, followed by money and emotional and physical health/exhaustion, we can expect these issues to double in ten years’ time, just as the number of seniors Canadians care for will double.

The growth of the senior population has been broadly commented on; however, it’s worth noting once again that when we look at solutions for elder care, they are needed in the short-term, if they aren’t already here right now.

# Conclusion

Canadians value their families. As such, it remains of fundamental importance that we understand families—what is happening, how they are changing, and to what effect. This survey tells us only about the first part of that equation, and together with historic data we can consider these changes. The effects of these changes are the subject for future research.

There is not enough Canadian family-related research that would allow Canadians to educate themselves on why, for example, marriage matters not merely for personal reasons but also in creating stronger communities, or why it helps protect against poverty, or how a good marriage can in certain instances even protect physical and emotional health.

One thing remains certain from this survey: Canadians are not always either 100 percent sure or in agreement about family, marriage, child care, or related policy outcomes. Nonetheless, a thriving family life is something Canadians hold very dear.

To this end, Cardus Family will forge ahead with research aiming to elucidate the nature of family and marriage as a social institution.

# Methodology

Nanos conducted an RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between April 28th and May 3rd, 2016 as part of an omnibus survey. Participants were randomly recruited by telephone using live agents and administered a survey online. The sample included both land- and cell-lines across Canada. The results were statistically checked and weighted by age and gender using the latest Census information and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada.

Individuals were randomly called using random digit dialling with a maximum of five call backs.

The margin of error for a random survey of 1,000 Canadians is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The research was commissioned by CARDUS.

Note: Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

\* The questions regarding number of children desired were provided by Cardus to Nanos Research and originate from a 2013 survey conducted by Abingdon Research for the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. Please see the following link for the full study:  
[http://www.imfcanada.org/sites/default/files/monthly\\_release/DaycareDesiresMay2013.pdf](http://www.imfcanada.org/sites/default/files/monthly_release/DaycareDesiresMay2013.pdf).



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