

Caregivers from Marginalized Communities Report Experiencing Barriers to Care in Canada

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Respondents who are Black, Indigenous, and people of colour say they experience more discrimination; have less access to support services

CALGARY, Sept. 9, 2024 - The [Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation](#) & TRADE; continues to raise awareness about family caregiving in Canada. According to its latest research, in partnership with Leger, a majority (68%) of family caregivers who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) report increased difficulty accessing essential support services for their loved one. These marginalized caregivers face challenges navigating the healthcare system, balancing career and caregiving responsibilities, and making financial ends meet

"Many caregivers face daily struggles to get the support they need, and this survey reveals that marginalized caregivers are impacted even more," says Leila Fenc, Executive Director of the [Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation](#). "By highlighting their distinct challenges, we hope to build awareness that leads to better support for them in their vital caregiving role."

Challenges with the healthcare system

More than half of family caregivers (55%) report that accessing necessary support services has become more difficult since the pandemic, with 68% of BIPOC respondents agreeing compared to 50% of non-BIPOC caregivers.

In addition, 39% of BIPOC caregivers report that they and their loved ones have experienced discrimination from healthcare professionals compared to 22% of non-BIPOC caregivers. In fact, whether they have experienced it or not, nearly half (48%) of BIPOC caregivers have been concerned about discriminatory behaviour from healthcare professionals compared to 24% of non-BIPOC caregivers.

Language is also a barrier to care for family caregivers whose first language is neither English nor French. 34% say they faced challenges obtaining medical care for their loved ones due to language barriers, compared to 15% of French speakers and 22% of English speakers.

Increased workplace and financial challenges

Half of all caregivers (50%) say that inflation and current economic conditions have worsened the financial strain of caregiving with 60% of men (vs. 41% of women) and 58% of those under 55 (vs. 43% of those aged 55+) feeling this impact more acutely. Notably, almost one in four (24%) BIPOC caregivers report that long-term financial planning or savings are significantly impacted by caregiving, compared to 13% of non-BIPOC caregivers. Of LGBTQ+ respondents, 35% note experiencing financial planning issues (vs. 14% of heterosexual caregivers) and 20% say caregiving affected their educational pursuits (vs. 6% of heterosexual caregivers). Among caregivers who are or were employed during their time as a caregiver, 39% reported missing 1 to 6 days of work per year due to caregiving obligations, while 23% reported missing 7 or more days. Within this employed caregiver group, those younger than 55 and BIPOC miss work up to twice as often as non-BIPOC caregivers and those over 55.

No matter their background, caregiving responsibilities also significantly affect caregivers' personal lives. Among all caregivers, caregiving most often impacts personal hobbies or leisure activities (34%), social interactions like spending time with friends or loved ones (32%) and vacations or personal travel (28%).

"Caregiving is often an unseen and undervalued labour of love," says Fenc. "We hear stories of caregivers sacrificing their own well-being, career aspirations and financial stability to provide for their loved ones. No one should have to choose between caring for a loved one and their own wellness and future."

Beckie Labilliois, an Indigenous Elder and artist from the Mi'kmaq Ugpi'Ganjig First Nation, shared her personal experience as a family caregiver to her mother, who suffered from dementia. "Being a caregiver meant I had to stop working, which put immense financial strain on me. When moving my mom into a care home, we faced communication challenges because she returned to her mother tongue, and no one could understand her. Additionally, there was a lack of understanding for our cultural rituals, like smudging, which meant I had to physically remove her from the facility to perform these important traditions. It made an already difficult situation significantly more traumatic for me and my mom."

CareMakers' latest discussion paper captures insights from marginalized caregivers

The challenges revealed in the survey results were also echoed by many participants in a Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation roundtable, which brought together caregiving experts including researchers, professors, caregivers and executive members of Canada's caregiving organizations. Participants emphasized that marginalized family caregivers often incur additional out-of-pocket expenses beyond the reported average. These costs can be substantial and place financial strain on family caregivers who already face significant hardships.

"During our roundtable discussion, which we summarize in our discussion paper, we heard real-life stories of hardship from marginalized Canadian caregivers," notes Fenc. "Caregivers spoke of personal sacrifices, like dipping into savings, cutting back on essentials, and even postponing their own medical needs to care for their loved ones. Their voices underscore the urgent need to address barriers marginalized caregivers encounter."

Read the full discussion paper, The Experiences of Marginalized Canadian Family Caregivers, at caremakers.ca.

About Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation

Launched in 2020, the Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation™ creates awareness about family caregiving in Canada and inspires Canadians to help by raising funds to enable charitable organizations across the country to provide critical programs and resources for family caregivers. CareMakers is a registered Canadian charity that receives contributions from Suncor, the proud owner of Petro-Canada™, as well as other corporate and individual donors.

About Leger

Leger is the largest Canadian-owned market research and analytics company, with more than 600 employees in eight Canadian and US offices. Leger has been working with prestigious clients since 1986. An online survey of 511 current and former caregivers was completed between April 26 to 28, 2024 using Leger's online panel, LEO. Leger's online panel has approximately 400,000 members nationally and has a retention rate of 90 per cent. No margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample (i.e. a web panel in this case). A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of ± 2.4 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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