



# GRANDPARENTING SERIES

## An important and meaningful social role

1  
OF  
3



### **The role of grandparents: creating a new life balance**

Being a grandparent brings health and happiness. The birth of grandchildren can even give new meaning to grandparents' lives and reinforce their sense of purpose.

Seniors are living longer, healthier lives than ever before. This enables them to provide greater support to younger generations. As well, they often have a full-time or part-time job when their first grandchild is born. In some cases, their children have only recently moved out of the house. Some grandparents are busy retirees, with schedules that are at times busier than when they were working.

Blended families are more common today, which can often make for more complex intergenerational bonds. Moreover, it is not uncommon for grandparents to break up and form new couples.

Grandparents therefore face a real challenge: finding the right balance between the role of a grandparent, adapting to retirement and meeting one's own need to participate in meaningful social activities.

How do you find your rightful place in a growing family?



## A few facts and figures about families and grandparents

### Today's families

In 2021, 59% of families are two-parent families, 30% are single-parent families and 11% are blended families.

### A common role

In 2017, **three out of four people** aged 65 and over in Quebec were grandparents, for both women and men.

### A role to play at an older age, for a longer period and with fewer grandchildren

The average age for becoming grandparents was **68** in 2017 in Canada, up from 65 in 1995. In fact, as the population ages and women become mothers at a later age than they once did, grandparents are older today than they were before.

More than three quarters of grandparents had fewer than five grandchildren in 2017. With fewer grandchildren, they have more time to devote to each one.

### Living together

In 2021, nearly one in ten children aged 0 to 14 **was living with at least one grandparent** in Canada.

**Grandparents born abroad are twice as likely to live with their grandchildren** as grandparents born in Canada (9% vs. 4%) in 2017.

## Mutually beneficial effects

Grandchildren and grandparents benefit from the relationship that develops between them over time. This gives them the opportunity to share in many social and family events.

BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF GRANDPARENTS ON GRANDCHILDREN	BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF GRANDCHILDREN ON GRANDPARENTS
<b>Well-being and self-esteem</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Source of love and affection</li><li>• Time spent playing, going out or telling stories</li><li>• An open door for confiding and sharing</li></ul>	<b>Joy and happiness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Source of joy, happiness and wonder</li><li>• Sense of youth</li><li>• Sense of purpose</li><li>• Sharing mutual passions</li></ul>
<b>Safety and stability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A reassuring presence, especially in times of family stress</li><li>• Guidance in a variety of situations</li><li>• Advice in times of need</li></ul>	<b>Stimulation and learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shared activities that evolve over time and lead to different learning experiences (games, reading, trips, outings, technology, and cultural, artistic and sporting activities).</li></ul>
<b>Family memory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Passing on traditions, memories, values and knowledge</li><li>• Sense of belonging and affiliation</li></ul>	<b>Openness and curiosity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interest in current social realities (youth culture, technological developments, topical issues, sexual and gender diversity)</li></ul>
<b>Academic involvement and social behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting academic perseverance</li><li>• Reinforcing positive social behaviours</li></ul>	<b>Continuity and transmission</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transmission of knowledge providing a sense of continuity in their own family history</li><li>• Developing the ability to open up to others and share with them</li></ul>
<b>Reducing prejudice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fewer preconceived ideas about seniors</li><li>• Better understanding of aging, illness and death</li></ul>	<b>Reducing prejudice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fewer preconceived ideas about the young</li><li>• Better understanding of the realities and concerns of the young</li></ul>



*"The relationship between grandparents and grandchild is in a sense a meeting between the past and the future, where everyone reaps the benefits... This relationship makes the grandchild all the wiser and the grandparents all the younger."*

Ferland & Ferland, 2023



## A few words from grandparents

**Maria, 70 | Grandmother of two young children:** "We're happy to be able to simply have fun with them and have a good time."

**Marie, 78 | Substitute grandmother of a young woman:** "Keep an open mind. Be attentive to young ones. Reassure them. Introduce them to role models and try to set a good example... Understand their need for freedom, for surpassing themselves. Make them aware of realities they haven't yet experienced, remind them of the history of both their family and their homeland."

**Rémi, 75 | Grandfather of two young adults:** "Seeing them grow up is a balm for the aging soul: if growing old means giving way to a lively, involved younger generation, then I willingly accept."



## WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

Francine Ferland et Florence Ferland (2023). Grands-parents aujourd'hui : des réalités qui évoluent. Éditions du CHU-Sainte-Justine.

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This project for active retirement is part of a larger project, the collective impact plan of Réseau Résilience Aîné.es Montréal (RRAM), which aims to promote the resilience, inclusion and social participation of seniors in the city of Montreal.



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