

# Canadians and Advance Care Planning

A Snapshot of Current Trends

Summer 2021

# Introduction

Over the past few years, health, community and life planning organizations have been encouraging Canadians to give as much thought to planning ahead for their health as they do to planning their finances, wills and estates.

Have these efforts had an impact?

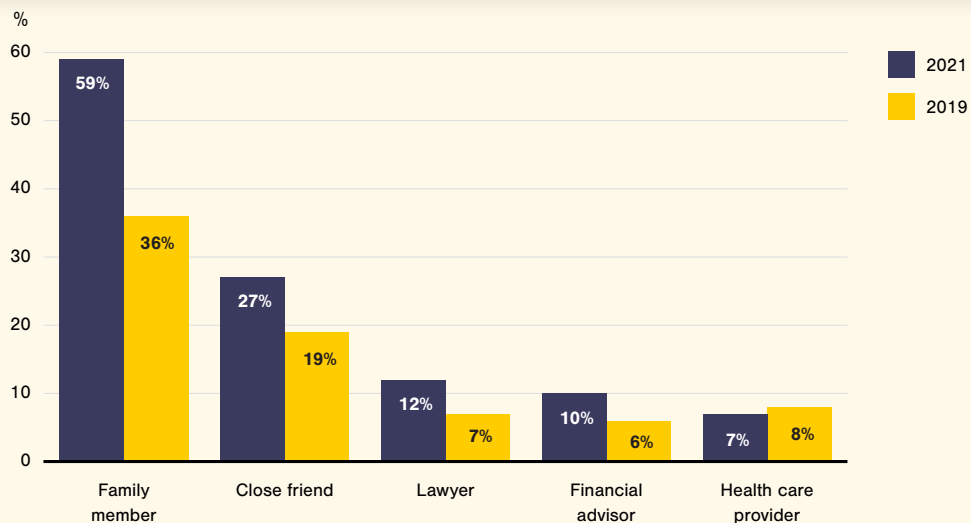
A bi-annual Nanos survey of 3,002 Canadians 18 years and older, commissioned by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (CHPCA), says they have. It also says there's still work to do.

## Key Findings

### More Canadians are talking to family members about the kind of care they want

More than 9 in 10 Canadians (**93%**) say it's important to talk to family members about their care wishes. And more are having those conversations. Between 2019 and 2021, the number of Canadians who talked to a family member almost doubled: from one in three (**36%**) to almost two in three (**59%**). More are also talking to close friends, lawyers and financial advisors. However, very few (**7%**) are talking to their health care providers.

Who are Canadians talking to about their wishes?



**Advance Care Planning (ACP) is a process of reflection and communication in which people express their wishes for their future health and/or personal care if they could not speak for themselves.**

### **Canadians are more comfortable talking about their wishes**

In the past, one of the key barriers to advance care planning was having the conversation. People felt uncomfortable talking about it. That is changing: in 2021, **70%** of Canadians (compared to **63%** in 2019) felt comfortable having advance care planning conversations.

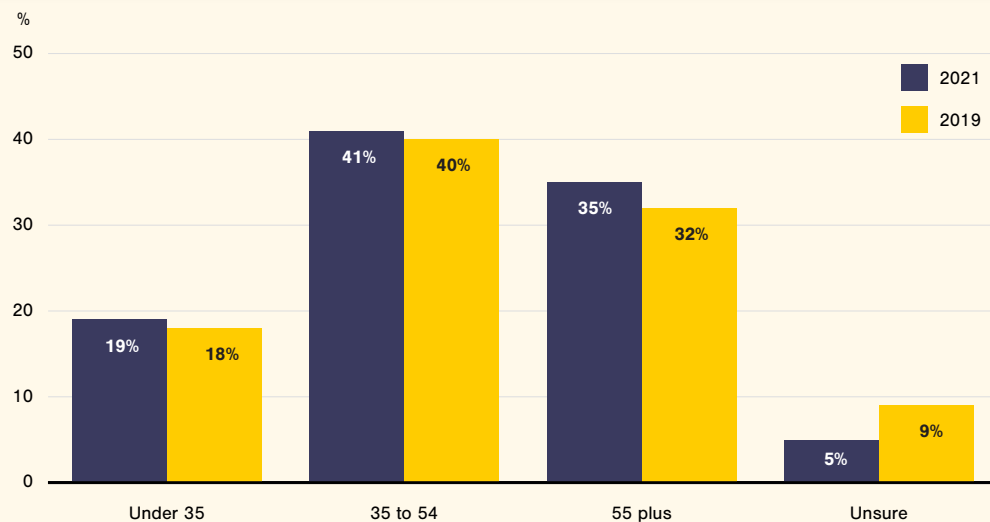
### **Advance care planning reduces stress and provides peace of mind**

Canadians who have been involved in advance care planning say it's an important and necessary task. It reduces stress and provides peace of mind.

### **People should start planning when they are young and healthy**

In 2021, more than four in 10 Canadians (**42%**) thought it was important to start planning young: up from **36%** in 2019. The ideal age? Between 35 and 54. Almost one-third (**29%**) think Canadians should do advance care planning when they make their wills.

**What's the best age to start planning?**



## Planning is particularly important for people in long-term care

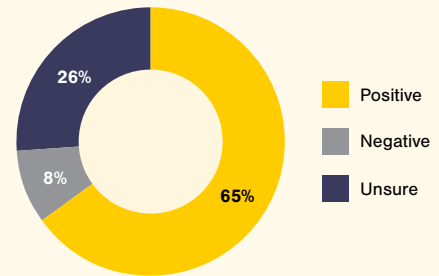
Two-thirds of Canadians (**65%**) think planning is especially important for people in long-term care, and will lead to better quality care.

## What nudges people to start advance care planning?

What causes people to go from thinking advance care planning is a good idea to actually doing something about it? There are many reasons. For example, some Canadians:

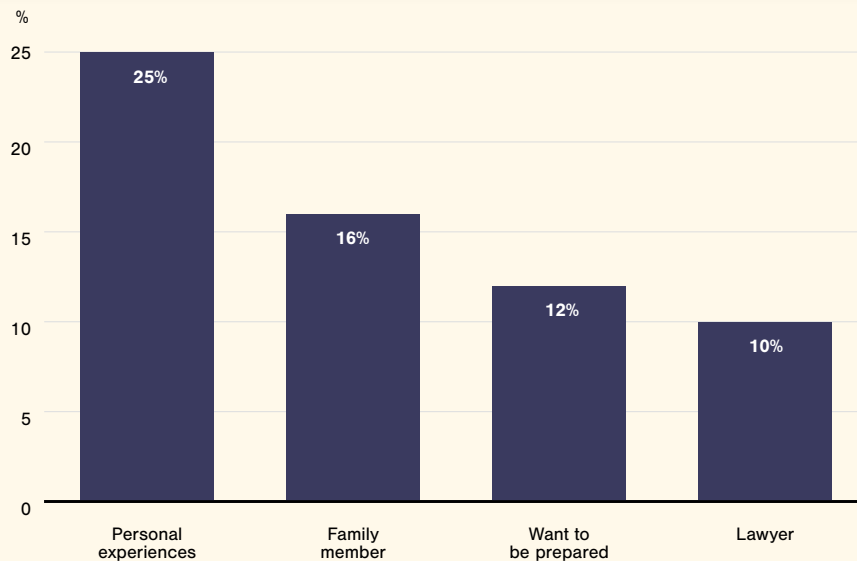
- ▶ were motivated by personal experiences (**25%**) — they either had a death in the family, a sick loved one or nearly died themselves
- ▶ got the idea from a family member (**16%**) or a lawyer (**10%**)
- ▶ just want to be prepared (**12%**)

## Impact of advance care planning for people in long-term care



Charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

## Reasons to start planning

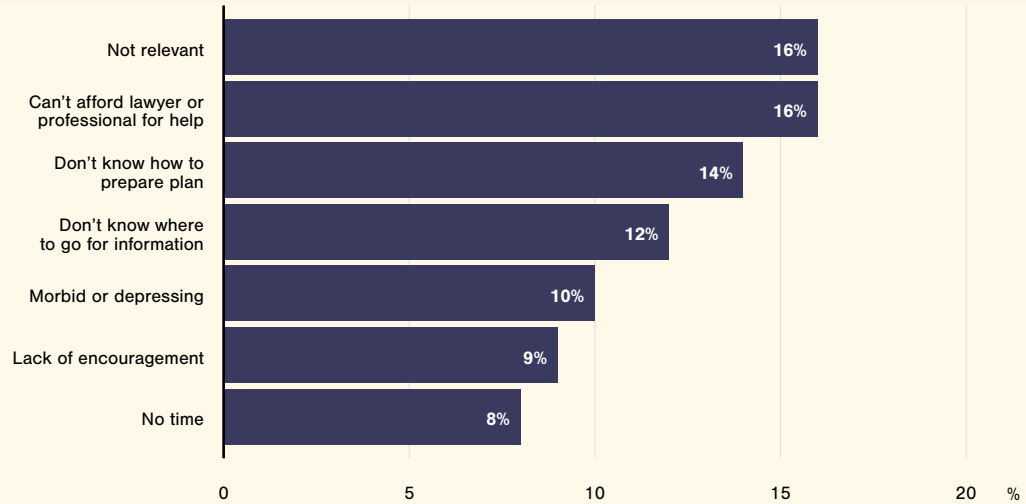


## What keeps people from doing advance care planning?

The main barriers seem to be lack of information or resources. For example, Canadians said they:

- ▶ couldn't afford a lawyer or professional to help them **(16%)**
- ▶ didn't know how to prepare a plan **(14%)**
- ▶ didn't know where to go for information and advice **(12%)**

### Perceived barriers to planning



They also talked about reasons for not planning, such as not feeling it's relevant to them **(16%)**, it's morbid or depressing **(10%)**, not being encouraged to do so by the people close to them **(9%)**, and not having time **(8%)**.

## What would assist people in having conversations about the kind of care they would want near the end of life?

Canadians say it would be easier to have discussions about their future health care if :

- ▶ they had more support from family and friends to talk about their wishes
- ▶ more information about how to do advance care planning
- ▶ more personal time to reflect on their wishes and values
- ▶ if society were more accepting of people talking about death, dying and end-of-life care

# Take-Home Messages

## The Good News

- ▶ Canadians think advance care planning is important.
- ▶ More people are talking with family, friends and others about their care wishes, and they say they feel comfortable having these conversations.
- ▶ More Canadians think people should start advance care planning when they are young and healthy.
- ▶ Two-thirds think advance care planning will lead to better quality care in long-term care.

## The Challenges

- ▶ **Many Canadians think advance care planning is more complicated than it is.** They think they need professional legal help — which is not the case — as well as more advice and information. These misperceptions may be preventing people from engaging in advance care planning.
- ▶ Despite the progress, **many people still find it difficult to have conversations about advance care planning.**
- ▶ **Canadians are not talking to their health care providers about their wishes.** Even though **77%** of Canadians think it's important to talk to their health care providers about their wishes, only **7%** said they had done so (down from **8%** in 2019). If health care providers don't know their wishes, Canadians may not get the kind of care they want.

## The Opportunities

- ▶ De-mystify the advance care planning process (*see below*) and make it as accessible as possible
- ▶ Talk about the advantages of starting to plan early and integrating health planning with other life tasks, such as will planning (*see Life Planning Model below*)
- ▶ Reinforce that advance care planning is not just something we do when nearing end of life: it is about planning and living well at any age or stage of life
- ▶ Find ways to help everyone feel more comfortable having essential advance care planning conversations
- ▶ Identify and overcome systemic barriers that may keep health care providers talking to patients about their wishes and vice versa

Advance care planning is a process that takes place over your lifetime. It involves five steps:



**THINK**



**LEARN**



**DECIDE**



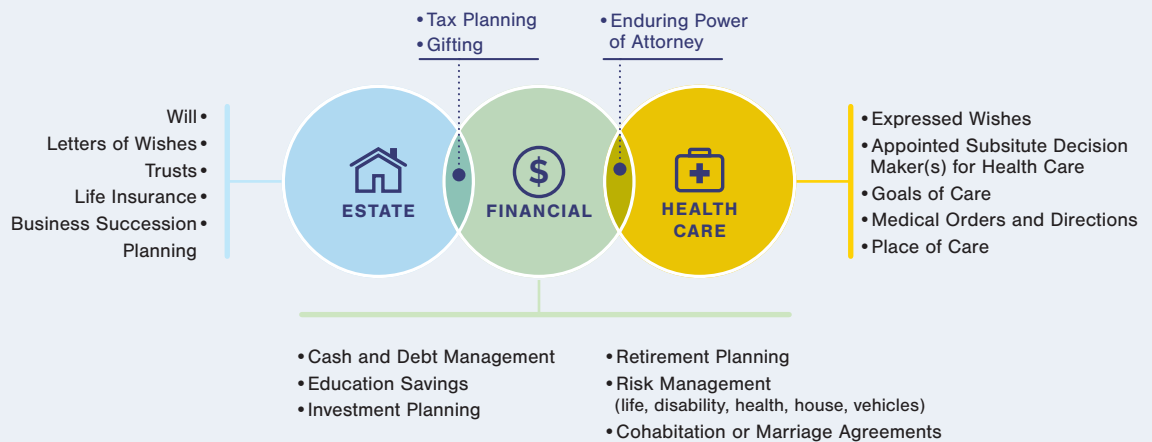
**TALK**



**RECORD**

Learn more at [advancecareplanning.ca](http://advancecareplanning.ca)

### Life Planning Model



Learn more about advance care planning and available supports and resources for individuals, families, health care and other professionals at [advancecareplanning.ca](http://advancecareplanning.ca).



[www.advancecareplanning.ca](http://www.advancecareplanning.ca)

The Advance Care Planning (ACP) in Canada initiative is a national collaborative project led by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (CHPCA).

This report was developed with input from the National Advance Care Planning Task Group.



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