

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024





The Vanier Institute of the Family is a national, independent, think tank committed to enhancing family wellbeing by making information about families accessible and actionable. Positioned at the centre of networks of researchers, educators, policymakers, and organizations with an interest in families, we share evidence and strengthen the understanding of families in Canada, in all their diversities, to support evidence-based decisions that promote family wellbeing.

## VISION

A Canada that recognizes and supports the central role of families in society and invests in strengthening and being inclusive of their diverse expressions.

## MISSION

To advance the understanding of wellbeing of families in Canada in all their diversities, recognizing that families are at the core of a healthy and inclusive society.

## VALUES

- **Integrity:** We share rigorous, non-partisan, knowledge-based information that is informed by evidence.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** We recognize and foster the contributions, presence, and perspectives of different groups of people.
- **Responsiveness:** We monitor current issues facing diverse families in Canada and provide accessible and timely information resources for knowledge users.
- **Capacity Development:** We invest in building skills and experience among family scholars.
- **Collaboration:** We engage with knowledge creators and knowledge users to encourage and promote new understandings of diverse family experiences and to motivate policy change.

## The Vanier Institute of the Family

### Annual Report 2023-2024

This report can be downloaded from: <https://vanierinstitute.ca/about/annual-reports/>

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*The Vanier Institute of the Family is located on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people, who have protected this land since time immemorial. We acknowledge and appreciate the generosity of our Indigenous neighbours whose ancestral lands are where we live, work, and thrive. We strive to support decolonization by amplifying voices and research that highlight the ongoing impacts of colonialism, displacement, and systemic racism on Indigenous family and community connections, cultures, and wellbeing. Through our efforts and commitment, may we be reconciled so that we truly experience equality, justice, and harmony.*

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

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It has been a busy and productive year at the Vanier Institute of the Family, as the 30th anniversary of the United Nations' International Year of the Family (IYF+30) draws to a close and our 60th anniversary approaches in 2025.

Our IYF+30 activities included the launch of a new edition of *Families Count*, which provides statistical portraits and overviews of a wide range of topics related to families in Canada. Each section is rooted in a different component of the **Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework**: Family Structure, Family Work, Family Identity, and Family Wellbeing. The report highlights trends since the first edition was published during International Year of the Family in 1994.

A second IYF+30 activity was in response to an invitation by the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UNDESA) to address global megatrends related to families that have been prioritized by the United Nations. We organized and facilitated three special sessions at the Work and Family Researchers Network (WFRN) 2024 conference, two of which showcased work by research partnerships: Families Matter and Reimagining Care/Work Policies. The third session explored family wellbeing through the lens of family work through three different job sectors. The Vanier Institute commissioned several reports from researchers with expertise on "megatrends" topics. A team led by Nicole Denier prepared an Issue Brief about families and digital technologies, and another led by Shelley Clark provided the latest information on demographic change in an Issue Brief on Family Change and Diversity in Canada.

In 2024, two multi-year partnerships were completed. The Families Matter Research Group built capacity among family researchers to address topics important to the families of military, Veteran, and public safety personnel. We will continue to promote and amplify findings from their research projects. The MatchWork project advanced knowledge about caregiving in Canada by examining the economic value of caregiving, and providing comprehensive knowledge of caregivers' wellbeing at the intersection of care work, paid work, and gender.

One of our strategic priorities this year was to strengthen capacity development in the family research sector, with a special focus on early career scholars. To this end, we undertook several initiatives. Our new Student and Postdoctoral Fellow Travel Funding program provided 10 grants to assist early scholars to attend conferences where they had been accepted to present research, facilitate roundtables, or lead workshops. We continued to work with Loran scholars, this year publishing a report on interjurisdictional differences in the rights of common-law partners written by Laurence Breton.

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We also awarded our first secondary data analysis grant to early career scholars Gaëlle Simard-Duplain and Tímea Laura Molnár, who are using Statistics Canada datasets to examine the optimal time for mothers' return to work after childbirth, from the perspective of parents' mental health and children's development.

We continue to build knowledge and create partnerships to understand families and facilitate the development of policies and programs to support family wellbeing. By continuing to mobilize and activate knowledge of families in Canada, in all their diversities, policies and services can be better informed to ensure that they assist families rather than exclude vulnerable groups. We look forward to sharing more information on these issues and how they affect family wellbeing as we approach our 60th anniversary year in 2025.

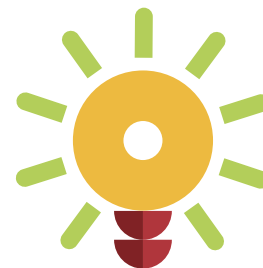
*Norah Keating, Board Chair,  
and Margo Hilbrecht, Executive Director*

**We continue to build knowledge and create partnerships to understand families and facilitate the development of policies and programs to support family wellbeing.**

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# MOBILIZING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FAMILIES IN CANADA

As Canada's national resource for information about families, we continued to produce timely knowledge products that translate new research and other knowledge forms into plain, non-technical language. All of our knowledge products are now envisioned and developed to align with the Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework, which highlights the diversity of families in Canada in terms of family structure, family work, family identity, and family wellbeing.



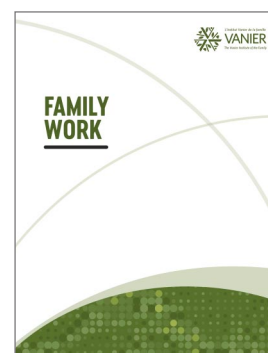
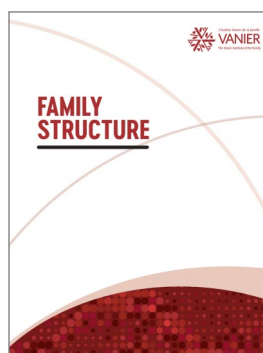
With 2024 being the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family, we paid special attention to how things have (or have not) changed for families over the last three decades, with a focus on family diversity and family wellbeing. We also explored some global "megatrends" identified by the United Nations that are affecting families worldwide, including demographic change, migration and urbanization, climate change, and digital technologies.

## **Families Count 2024**

Our flagship publication of the year was *Families Count 2024*, which revisited and updated one of the Vanier Institute's most popular resources. At the time of writing this Annual Report, we have released two installments in this four-part series, each a compilation of brief chapters that provide statistical portraits of families and family life, highlights trends over time, and offers insights on what it all means for families in Canada. Originally entitled *Profiling Canada's Families*, the Vanier Institute published the first edition during the International Year of the Family in 1994. It quickly became our most widely accessed resource, which has since been updated and republished three times.

The Family Structure section provides overviews of topics and trends related to how people come together to form and grow families and family households, and transitions that occur over the life course. Topics include marriage and divorce, family living arrangements, demographic change, and structurally diverse families.

The Family Work section explores the diverse ways family members provide for each other. It



explores how families organize and manage paid and unpaid work, and how things have changed over the last 30 years in a context of shifting gender roles, population aging, and greater insecurity in the labour market and economy.

Written in plain language for a broad audience, *Families Count* contributes to a better national understanding of the diversity of families in Canada, informs conversations, and strengthens the evidence base to promote the development of policies, programs, and services to enhance the wellbeing of all families.

The next two sections, which will focus on family identity and family wellbeing, will be released in 2025 during our 60th anniversary.

## “Megatrends” Publications

We explored various aspects of demographic change and how they shape and affect families, as highlighted in two Issue Briefs released this year.

Families in Canada are projected to become increasingly diverse, and understanding this diversity is essential to supporting the wellbeing of all families. In *Family Change and Diversity in Canada*, Shelley Clark, Sarah R. Brauner-Otto, and Mahjoubé AmaniChakani examine the evolving profile of families across the country and discussed implications for family wellbeing.

Continued population aging also means that more families are expected to be living with disability. In *Families, Disability, and Wellbeing in Canada*, Margaret Campbell provides a statistical profile of these families, and discusses some of their experiences, challenges, and the relationships between caregiving and family wellbeing. This publication was a valuable addition to our resources aligned with the Family Identity component of the Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework.

Executive Director Margo Hilbrecht explores megatrends and families in a report prepared for an Expert Group Meeting hosted by the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UNDESA). She presented *Interlinkages Between Demographic Change, Migration, and Urbanization in Canada: Policy Implications* following the 2023 National Council of Family Relations (NCFR) conference. The report explores interlinkages between declining fertility, population aging, migration and immigration, and urbanization, with consideration of policy implications and consequences for family wellbeing in Canada.



## Research Snapshots

Through our large and growing body of Research Snapshots, we continue to profile and share findings from Canadian research. Some have focused on families that commonly experience inequalities, including LGBTQI2S+ families, racialized families, newcomer and refugee families, and families living with disabilities. Others have highlighted factors or issues that can create inequalities between all families, such as work-life integration, family caregiving, and parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic. By working directly with many of the authors of these studies, our snapshots have proven to not only help mobilize knowledge, but also build and strengthen relationships with diverse researchers from across the country.

This year, one of our snapshots was also the Vanier Institute’s first publication available in an Indigenous language. The summary, *Inuit Mothers’ Visions for Child and Family Wellness in Nunavut, Canada*, focuses on the experiences of Inuit mothers involved with the child welfare system. It was translated into the Kivalliq dialect of Inuktitut, the language spoken by the families who participated in the study. This increases the accessibility of this resource for Indigenous families, and we plan to continue translating additional resources into Indigenous languages to more effectively mobilize this knowledge.

# ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS



## Projects and Partnerships

### Reimagining Care/Work Policies

Reimagining Care/Work Policies is a research program committed to expanding possibilities for policies, practices, and meanings of care/work for families in Canada. The team is researching and sharing information on how programs such as childcare, parental leave, and employment policies impact the everyday lives and wellbeing of diverse Canadian families, including Indigenous, racialized, newcomer, solo-parent, LGBTQI2S+, and low-income families. Funding has been secured for another four to five years, as well as our involvement as an organizational partner. The outputs from the project have been extensive and impressive, ranging from academic articles to reports to opinion pieces. This research builds on our growing understanding of the Family Work component of the Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework.

### National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care

Through the National Advisory Council (NAC) on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC), we are strengthening our relationship with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), and the federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. Our Senior Program Specialist, Sophie Mathieu, has been featured in the media regularly to discuss childcare issues in Canada.

### Affiliates Network

We are developing an Affiliates Network to advise on current issues for families in Canada, collaborate with the Vanier Institute on knowledge creation and mobilization/uptake, and support media relations. This network will bring together diverse participants from the academic, government, and non-profit sectors who have shown innovative approaches to areas that address family diversities. Regular discussions with network members will also help us to advance thinking about key issues related to families and the realities of family life.



## Events

Vanier Institute team members make public appearances and presentations in diverse settings across the country to share research and engage in conversation about families in Canada. Throughout the year, we continued to facilitate dialogue and shared learning among researchers, government departments, organizations, knowledge holders, and people with lived experiences.

We extended our network nationally and internationally through participation in and sponsorship of the Work and Family Researchers Network (WFRN) 2024 conference. This high-profile event featured the latest research from around the globe on employment sectors, workplace cultures, and social policies designed to enhance work-life integration. This research directly informs and is informed by the Family Work lens in the Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework.

Laurel Sakaluk, board member and Program Committee Chair at the Vanier Institute of the



Family, represented the Institute as an invited speaker at the 40th Anniversary of the Family Division of the Manitoba Court of King's Bench. Laurel presented an overview of families in Canada, tracing our understandings of family over time, and drawing upon the Institute's definition of the family and the Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework. The Honourable Sheilah L. Martin, Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, provided the keynote address.

# BUILDING CAPACITY IN FAMILY SCIENCE RESEARCH



The Vanier Institute is committed to ensuring the sustainability, depth, and strength of Canada's family research sector by supporting the career advancement of new scholars at a critical juncture in their careers. We nurture current and future generations of family researchers and others with an interest in families by providing placement and internship opportunities for students and graduates in family research and knowledge mobilization.

## Early Career Scholar Program



We were pleased to have welcomed Anastasia Hamici as our Loran Public Policy Intern. During her internship, she prepared a report about interjurisdictional differences

in fertility treatments across Canada. Set for publication in early 2025, her report assesses the options available to families for fertility treatment, and examines interjurisdictional differences in access to clinics and funding through provincial health insurance plans.

"Working at the Vanier Institute of the Family allowed me to explore both federal and jurisdictional policies relating to diverse families. Supported by my colleagues and supervisor, I was able to create an impact through research, writing, and outreach, all while fuelling my own knowledge of family wellbeing. Coming from a background in STEM, I am grateful to have had this experience as a Public Policy Intern, as I have learned meaningful skills, used valuable resources, and discovered different ways of communicating information."

– Anastasia Hamici

We continued to work with Mitacs postdoctoral fellow Margaret Campbell, who was affiliated with the Families Matter project at Queen's University. She is currently writing two academic papers



in collaboration with Margo Hilbrecht about international approaches to defining and measuring family wellbeing. Margaret's [interview about families and disability](#) is a valuable addition to our *Researcher Spotlight* series.

## Student and Postdoctoral Fellow Travel Grants

The Vanier Institute of the Family provided conference funding to doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows to support participation in family science knowledge exchange.

As part of our capacity building priority, we allocated 10 travel grants to assist doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows to attend conferences to advance their professional development. The funding was used to offset conference registration fees and travel and accommodations. Participating in academic conferences is essential to career development, and funding is often a challenge for junior scholars.

The conferences exposed early career scholars to new findings and methodologies, and provided insights into the range of topics exploring family diversities. One participant noted:

"The conference offered a platform to engage with a wide range of topics, from insights about work-life balance to organizational policies promoting family-friendly environments. These insights not only expanded my knowledge base but also

equipped me with practical tools that I can apply to my own research and professional endeavours.”

Grant recipients were excited to meet established scholars and others working in their field, which allowed them to expand their peer and professional networks. This was reflected in further feedback from the participants:

“Networking at WFRN was particularly enriching. I had the privilege to connect with academics from diverse backgrounds, interests, and disciplinary orientations. These interactions facilitated meaningful exchanges and these connections have broadened my professional network, potentially opening doors to future collaborations.”

“I’m thankful for the Vanier Institute of the Family’s support of post-doctoral fellows. It is often challenging to find funding as a post-doctoral researcher since we don’t fit into the ‘graduate student’ or ‘faculty’ categories.”

## Secondary Data Analysis Funding Competition

To support early career scholars and encourage the reuse of Statistics Canada and other nationally representative datasets, we held a funding competition for one research grant, valued at \$25,000. Preference was given to researchers who had completed their PhD within the past seven years.

After applications were externally reviewed, the grant was awarded to co-investigators Gaëlle Simard-Duplain, Department of Economics, Carleton University, and Tímea Laura Molnár, Department of Economics and Business, Central European University, for their proposal titled “Mothers’ return to work after childbirth, and the role of spousal involvement in shaping parents’ mental health and children’s development.” The findings of the study will be mobilized by the researchers, supported by the Institute’s knowledge mobilization specialists.

Both funding opportunities were directed toward developing scholars, who are typically limited in the amount of funding they can access at a

critical point in their careers. This funding program enhances the employability of family science scholars, and supports the work of Statistics Canada by contributing to the justification of ongoing data collection for less frequently used surveys.

## Internal Capacity



The team participated in staff retreats in August 2023 and January 2024, where we developed an Impact Measurement Framework for our Theory of Change. Our goal is to select baseline indicators as we progress through our strategic plan. We will also consider and adopt some qualitative approaches to measuring impact. The retreats were also an opportunity to plan for 2025, with a focus on the Vanier Institute’s 60th anniversary activities.

To better meet the needs of our diverse audiences and facilitate our role as a national resource for information and research insights about families in Canada, we launched a new, optimized website. Developed by Banfield, our new platform enhances the user experience and improves access to information.



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Year ended June 30, 2024

	Operating Fund	Endowment Fund	Total	2023 Total
<b>Opening Balance</b>	391,540	19,158,962	19,550,502	18,569,465
Donations, Grants, and Service Income	19,707	–	19,707	64,483
Realized Investment Income	2,037	1,635,040	1,637,077	813,080
Unrealized Investment Income	–	291,242	291,242	1,420,193
Income	21,744	1,926,282	1,948,026	2,297,756
Charitable Expenditure	1,028,952	101,293	1,130,245	784,906
Administrative Expenditure	243,031	–	243,031	454,336
Governance Expenditure	95,641	–	95,641	77,477
Expenses	1,367,624	101,293	1,468,917	1,316,719
<b>Net Annual Revenue</b>	<b>(1,345,880)</b>	<b>1,824,989</b>	<b>479,109</b>	<b>981,037</b>
Transfers Between Funds	1,297,375	(1,297,375)	–	–
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>343,035</b>	<b>19,686,576</b>	<b>20,029,611</b>	<b>19,550,502</b>

This table presents summary information for this report only. For audited financial statements, visit [www.vanierinstitute.ca/financials](http://www.vanierinstitute.ca/financials).