

DISABILITY CAN

Key Statistics and Facts:
Disability in Canada

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This document provides key statistics and facts about disability in Canada to support Disability Can's communications, advocacy, and storytelling.

These statistics can be used in presentations, speeches, reports, media materials, and advocacy campaigns to strengthen messages about accessibility, inclusion, and the removal of barriers.

All statistics are drawn from credible sources, including Statistics Canada and other recognized research organizations. When referencing these statistics, ensure the original source is cited and confirm the data remains current.

This package will be updated periodically as new data becomes available.

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INTRODUCTION

At Disability Can (formerly March of Dimes Canada), we work alongside people with disabilities to help remove barriers and expand opportunities for independence, participation, and community inclusion. The statistics in this document help illustrate both the challenges people face and the importance of continued progress toward a more accessible Canada.

Disability is part of everyday life in our country. Eight million people in Canada identify as disabled or as having a disability. Disability spans every age group, community, and region of the country. For many people, disability is not defined by limitation alone, but by the barriers they encounter in environments, systems, and attitudes that were not designed with accessibility in mind.

The statistics in this document highlight several important realities about disability in Canada today. Disability is becoming more common as Canada's population ages and awareness grows. Many people experience more than one type of disability, reflecting the complexity and diversity of disability experiences. At the same time, people with disabilities continue to face significant barriers in areas such as employment, income, accessibility, and access to services.

Understanding these realities helps inform the work needed to build a more accessible and inclusive society.



DISABILITY IN CANADA

Disability is part of everyday life in Canada.

1 in 4 people in Canada has a disability.

27% of people aged 15+ have one or more disabilities (8 million people).[i]

Disability is increasing

As Canada's population ages and people's understanding of disability improves, more people are experiencing and identifying as having a disability.

- 22% in 2017 to 27% in 2022.[ii]

Age group breakdown:

- 40% of seniors aged 65 and older
- 24% of working-age adults aged 25 to 64
- 20% of youth aged 15 to 24 (representing the largest increase since 2017)[iii]

  Among youth with disabilities:

  - mental health-related (68%)
  - learning (46%)
  - pain-related (34%) are the most common types of disability.
- Women (43%) are more likely than men (39%) to have severe disability.[iv]

Disability is complex

- 71% of people with disabilities in Canada have two or more disabilities.
- 29% of people with disabilities in Canada have one disability type.

As individuals age, they are more likely to experience a higher number of co-occurring disabilities.

- 42% of seniors with a disability have four or more co-occurring disabilities.[v]

  Among working-age people with disabilities, the most common disability types are:

  - pain-related (63%),
  - mental health-related (46%), and
  - flexibility (36%).[vi]

ACCESSIBILITY BARRIERS

Disability is not the problem, barriers are.

People with disabilities experience physical, service, economic, communication, and atitudinal barriers.

Accessibility Barriers

- 72% of people with disabilities in Canada report accessibility barriers in daily activities.[vii]
- 56% experience barriers at entrances, exits, and sidewalks.

Service Barriers

- 66% of people with disabilities in Canada report unmet needs related to health care, medication, assistive devices, or daily activities.[ix]

Communication and Attitudinal Barriers

- 48% of people with disabilities in Canada experience one or more accessibility barriers when communicating.
- 37% experience attitudinal barriers (behaviours, misconceptions, assumptions).[viii]

Economic Barriers

- 62% of people with disabilities in Canada are employed, compared with 78% of people without disabilities.[x]
- 17% of people with disabilities in Canada aged 15-24 are not currently working, in school, or in employment training.[xi]
- 43% of people with disabilities in Canada who are employed say they could work more hours if their workplaces were more accessible.[xii]
- People with disabilities in Canada have lower median incomes and are more likely to live in poverty than those without disabilities.
- People with disabilities in Canada are more likely to have a low income ($34,300 vs $41,000).[xiii]
- In 2020, 14% of people with disabilities in Canada lived in poverty, compared to 9% of those without disabilities.[xiv]



PROGRESS TOWARD ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Over the past two decades, there has been growing recognition of the rights of people with disabilities and the need to remove accessibility barriers across Canadian society. Governments at the international, federal, and provincial levels have introduced legislation and frameworks designed to advance accessibility and inclusion.

Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international agreement that commits governments to protecting and advancing the rights of people with disabilities. Federally, the Accessible Canada Act (2019) established a proactive approach to identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers across federally regulated sectors. In 2025, the federal government introduced the Canada Disability Benefit, designed to supplement provincial and territorial disability income supports for working-age people with disabilities.

Across the country, provinces have also introduced accessibility legislation aimed at reducing barriers in everyday life. Together, these initiatives reflect growing recognition that accessibility and inclusion require coordinated action across governments, institutions, and communities.

At the same time, more must be done. People with disabilities continue to face discrimination, exclusion, and limited opportunities as a result of biased attitudes and inaccessible built environments and systems.

People with disabilities have the right to a barrier-free world and everyone shares responsibility for building it. When we remove barriers, everyone wins because our society becomes more inclusive.

Public Support for Accessibility

- 90% of people in Canada agree accessibility is a human right.
- 90% believe it should be a high priority for Canada.[xv]

According to the Government of Canada, more people in Canada want to:

- Be allies.
- Support inclusive communities.
- See governments and employers lead the change.[xvi]



NOTES

i. Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

ii. Statistics Canada. The Daily — Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022.

iii. Statistics Canada. Data table — Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022.

iv. Statistics Canada. The Daily — Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022.

v. Statistics Canada. The Daily — Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022.'

vi. Statistics Canada. The Daily — Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022.

vii. Statistics Canada. The Daily.

viii. Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability data tables.

ix. Statistics Canada. The Daily.

x. Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

xi. Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

xii. Rick Hansen Foundation. Accessibility report.

xiii. Statistics Canada. Income of individuals by disability status (Canadian Income Survey / CSD-linked tables), 2020.

xiv. Statistics Canada. Canadian Income Survey (Market Basket Measure), 2020.

xv. Rick Hansen Foundation. Accessibility and attitudes about disability in Canada.

xvi. March of Dimes Canada (MODC) research; Government of Canada inclusion frameworks.

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