

Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Friday, March 13, 2015

A profile of persons with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years or older

In 2012, almost 14% of the Canadian population aged 15 years or older—or 3.8 million individuals—reported a difficulty or impairment due to a long-term condition or health problem that limited their daily activities.

Women (15%) reported a slightly higher prevalence of disability than did men (13%). Disabilities related to pain (10%), flexibility (8%), and mobility (7%) were the most common, while more than three-quarters of persons with disabilities reported being affected by more than one type.

The prevalence of disability increased with age. The average age of onset was the early 40s. About 13% of persons with disabilities who were of working age (15 to 64 years) reported that they had been born with their disability.

A global severity score that takes into account all disability types, the level of difficulty, and the frequency of the activity limitation was developed to better analyze the situation faced by persons with disabilities. To make the global severity score easier to use, severity classes were established. About one-quarter of Canadians with disabilities were classified as having a very severe disability.

Less likely to be university graduates

While 27% of Canadians aged 25 to 64 years without disabilities had a university degree at the bachelor's level or higher, the figure among those with disabilities was 14%. The percentage with a university degree decreased as the severity of the disability increased.

Just under half of 25- to 64-year-olds whose disabilities existed before they completed school said that the condition influenced their choice of courses and career and 30% reported that it took them longer to achieve their current level of education.

Almost half of working-age adults with disabilities employed

Close to half (47%) of 15- to 64-year-olds with disabilities reported that they were employed, compared with 74% of those who were disability-free. More persons with disabilities (45%) were not in the labour force compared with those without disabilities (21%).

Just over one-quarter of Canadians with disabilities who were employed reported that their employer was not aware of it. Among the working-age population with disabilities, 24% required modified hours or days or reduced work hours.

Median total income of persons with disabilities \$10,000 less than median for those without disabilities

In 2010, the self-reported median total income of Canadians aged 15 to 64 years with disabilities was slightly more than \$20,000, compared with just over \$30,000 for those without disabilities. Non-employment income (pensions, lump-sum payments or investment income) was the lone source of income for 37% of persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64 years.

Most use at least one aid or assistive device

More than 80% of persons with disabilities reported using at least one aid or assistive device. A slightly higher percentage of women (83%) than men (80%) used at least one aid or assistive device.

Just over one-quarter (27%) of Canadians with disabilities said there was at least one aid that they needed that they did not have. The prevalence of unmet needs for aids varied by age, peaking at 30% among 45- to 64-year-olds. Cost was the most commonly reported reason for unmet needs for aids or assistive devices.



Help with heavy household chores most common

Help with heavy household chores was the assistance most commonly received by persons with disabilities (49%). Family members were most often the reported source of help.

One-fifth regularly use public transit

Public transit was used by 20% of persons with disabilities, while 8% reported using specialized transit. The majority reported no difficulty using public or specialized transit, but this depended on the severity of the disability. For those with moderate disabilities, about 4% reported experiencing "a lot" of difficulty in using transit. This increased to 29% among those with very severe disabilities.

Note to readers

In this study, data from the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) are used to present a profile of Canadian adults whose daily activities are limited because of a long-term condition or health-related problem. The study provides information by type of disability, information on supports for persons with disabilities, and on their employment, income and participation in society.

The CSD was conducted in 2012 on the basis of a sample of persons who reported an activity limitation in the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS). The results of this study are therefore a combination of disability information collected as part of the CSD in 2012, with information from the 2011 NHS.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3251](#).

The report "[A profile of persons with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years or older, 2012](#)," as part of *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012 (89-654-X)*, is now available from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

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