

One in five Canadians with mental health-related disabilities lives in core housing need

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Canadians with mental health-related disabilities were more than twice as likely as those without disabilities to live in households considered to be in core housing need in 2017. Canadians with mental health-related disabilities were also more likely than those without disabilities to live alone, to rent their homes and to live in subsidized housing, according to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD).

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has identified those living with pre-existing mental health-related disabilities as [a particularly vulnerable population](#) because of the impacts of isolation and disruptions to mental health-related services during the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent crowdsourcing survey by Statistics Canada found that almost three-quarters (73%) of participants with mental health-related disabilities stated that their [mental health had worsened since the beginning of the pandemic](#). In addition, PHAC has indicated that those living with inadequate or unsuitable housing are also more vulnerable during the pandemic and are at higher risk of [contracting COVID-19](#).

In recognition of Bell Let's Talk Day, Statistics Canada is releasing a new infographic titled "[Housing vulnerabilities among Canadians with mental health-related disabilities](#)," based on findings from the 2017 CSD. While the data presented predate the COVID-19 pandemic, they provide valuable insight into the prevalence of certain living situations and housing conditions among Canadians with mental health-related disabilities that may put them at greater risk of contracting COVID-19, as well as into the emotional and psychosocial impacts of living through a pandemic.

The prevalence of mental health-related disabilities differs between women and men

Over 2 million Canadians aged 15 and older (7.3%) had a mental health-related disability in 2017. The prevalence of mental health-related disabilities was higher among women (8.9%) than men (5.5%).

In 2017, Canadians with mental health-related disabilities were almost twice as likely as those without disabilities to live alone (20.4% vs. 11.6%) or to be a lone female parent (7.7% vs. 3.8%). In contrast, there was almost no difference in the prevalence of lone male parents among those with mental health-related disabilities (1.2%) versus those without disabilities (1.1%).

Canadians with mental health-related disabilities are more than twice as likely as those without disabilities to live in core housing need

Just over one-fifth (21.2%) of those with mental health-related disabilities were living in households considered to be in core housing need in 2017, compared with 8.1% of those without disabilities. A household is in core housing need if its housing fails to meet at least one of three standards established for housing adequacy, suitability and affordability, and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards).

Canadians with mental health-related disabilities were also more likely than those without disabilities to rent their homes (41.7% vs. 24.9%). Among renters, those with mental health-related disabilities (18.0%) were twice as likely as those without disabilities (8.5%) to live in subsidized housing.



Almost half of those with mental health-related disabilities who consider themselves housebound list a lack of social connections outside the home as a contributing factor

Over 429,000 Canadians with mental health-related disabilities considered themselves housebound in 2017 because of one or more of their conditions. Nearly half (45.2%) said this was because social connections outside the home were limited, and more than one-third (35.2%) said they did not feel safe when leaving home. Increased social isolation as a result of public health measures intended to slow the spread of COVID-19 may be particularly difficult for those who were already feeling alone or afraid to leave their homes.

In contrast, over 1 million Canadians with a mental health-related disability received help with at least one type of everyday activity because of their condition. Among them, 373,000 relied solely on help from outside their household. This may have become more difficult to obtain during the pandemic.

Note to readers

The 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability provides comprehensive data on persons with disabilities by province and territory, and age group, as well as disability types and severity of the disability. The survey population is composed of Canadians aged 15 years and older as of the 2016 Census of Population (May 10, 2016) living in private dwellings.

It is important to note that the majority of those reporting a mental health-related disability also reported at least one other type of disability. Therefore, the data are based upon the impact of all disability types individuals with a mental health-related disability may have had.

Only private, non-farm, non-reserve owner or renter households with incomes greater than zero and shelter-cost-to-income ratios lower than 100% are assessed for core housing need. Non-family households with at least one maintainer aged 15 to 29 attending school are considered not to be in core housing need regardless of their housing circumstances. Attending school is considered a transitional phase, and low incomes earned by student households are viewed as a temporary condition.

Adequate housing is reported by residents as not requiring major repairs, such as to address problems that compromise the dwelling structure or the major systems of the dwelling (heating, plumbing and electrical).

Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of resident households according to National Occupancy Standard requirements.

Affordable housing has shelter costs equal to less than 30% of total before-tax household income.

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

The infographic "[Housing vulnerabilities among Canadians with mental health-related disabilities](#)" is now available as part of the *Statistics Canada — Infographics (11-627-M)* series.

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