

The accessibility experiences of Canadians with disabilities, 2017

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Accessibility practices continue to evolve in Canada, and this has implications for persons with disabilities. The [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA), which came into effect in 2019, aims to identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities when interacting with federally regulated organizations. The ACA's priority areas are employment, the built environment, information and communications technology (ICT), communications, the procurement of goods, the design and delivery of programs and services, and transportation.

To shed light on accessibility in the ACA's priority areas and improve understanding, Statistics Canada is releasing a fact sheet based on data from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) that align with four of the seven priority areas. The findings provide insight into the 6.2 million Canadians with disabilities who may encounter barriers or require accessibility features. To further support the understanding of accessibility, Statistics Canada collaborated closely with Employment and Social Development Canada on various data initiatives, such as the [Accessibility Data Hub](#) and the [Survey on Accessibility in Federal Sector Organizations](#).

Just over one-sixth of Canadians with disabilities consider themselves housebound because specialized transportation is unavailable

One goal of the ACA is to ensure that any mode of transportation governed under federal law is accessible and barrier-free. A recent study, "[The accessibility experiences of Canadians with disabilities, difficulties or long-term conditions within federal sector organizations, 2021](#)," found that among those with disabilities, difficulties or long-term conditions who travelled, just over 6 in 10 (62.5%) faced a barrier while travelling by airplane, passenger train, ferry or interprovincial bus. According to the 2017 CSD, persons with disabilities have encountered various transportation-related barriers in different aspects of their lives. Just over one-sixth (17.8%) of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 and older considered themselves housebound because specialized transportation was unavailable.

Among youth with disabilities aged 15 to 24, 6.7% required specialized transportation to attend school, college, CEGEP or university. Of those who required specialized transportation, the majority (81.9%) reported that this type of transportation was available to them. Among the working population with disabilities aged 25 to 64, 29.3% reported being unable to move to improve their job or career opportunities. Among this group, 8.0% indicated that this was because of a transportation barrier. In addition, those with more severe disabilities were more likely (12.1%) than those with less severe disabilities (5.7%) to report being unable to move to another city to improve their job or career opportunities because of transportation or transit limitations.

More than two-fifths of Canadians with physical disabilities require at least one type of aid, assistive device or accessibility feature within their home

The built environment is a priority area of the ACA that focuses on accessibility features within buildings and public spaces, such as widened hallways, widened doorways, adapted bathrooms or sloped curbs. Accessibility designs and features in schools, workplaces and homes can help persons with disabilities perform certain daily tasks. In 2017, more than half (55.8%) of Canadians with disabilities reported having a mobility, flexibility or dexterity disability. Among persons with these types of physical disabilities, 44.9% required at least one type of aid, assistive device or accessibility feature within their home. The most commonly used aids or assistive devices related to building modifications or adaptation features were bathroom aids, such as a raised toilet seat or grab bars (31.7%) or a walk-in bath or shower (16.9%), as well as an access ramp or a ground-level entrance (12.4%).



Among Canadians with disabilities who do not use the Internet, almost one-fifth say it is for at least one reason related to information and communications technology

In terms of ICT, the ACA aims to ensure that persons with disabilities have accessible digital content and technologies available to them. This includes the Internet, websites, computers, software, cellphones and broadcasting technologies. In 2017, the majority (80.5%) of Canadians with disabilities reported using the Internet, while 19.5% did not. Among persons with disabilities who did not use the Internet, 18.2% cited at least one ICT-related reason, including Internet-ready devices such as a desktop, laptop or tablet not being available in the dwelling; Internet service not being available in the area; specialized adaptations or software being required; and too many websites being inaccessible.

Technology-based aids and assistive devices, such as software or hardware, can be key components of an accessible and inclusive environment for persons with disabilities. Among Canadians with disabilities aged 15 and older, 11.7% used a cellphone, smartphone or smartwatch with specialized features or a computer, laptop or tablet with specialized software or other adaptations to meet their needs. Among those who used one of these devices, almost two-fifths (39.3%) had a device with speech-to-text, text-to-speech or voice recognition software; 30.0% had a device with screen magnification software; and 16.4% had a device with a screen reader.

Employees with more severe disabilities are more likely than those with less severe disabilities to have difficulty getting the necessary supports

Workplace accommodations or modifications can help persons with disabilities perform their work-related tasks and create an inclusive work environment. A previous report, "[Workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities in Canada, 2017](#)," showed that 37.3% of employees with disabilities require at least one workplace accommodation. Among employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64, 18.2% believed their condition made it difficult to change their current job or business because of difficulty obtaining required supports or accommodations. Employees with more severe disabilities were more likely (24.1%) than those with less severe disabilities (13.9%) to report difficulty getting the necessary supports.

Among persons with disabilities who were completely prevented from working at a job or business because of their condition, 14.4% indicated that some type of workplace accommodation or modification would enable them to work at a paid job or business. These accommodations can include modified or different duties or technical aids. Moreover, among those who encountered barriers while looking for work, 7.3% reported they were discouraged from looking for work because they experienced accessibility issues when applying to jobs.

Note to readers

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

The CSD identifies persons with disabilities using the disability screening questions (DSQ), which are based on the social model of disability. The DSQ first measures the degree to which respondents experience difficulties across 10 domains of functioning, then asks how often daily activities are limited by these difficulties. Only persons who report a limitation in their day-to-day activities are identified as having a disability. For more detailed information on the DSQ, please see the [Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017: Concepts and Methods Guide](#).

The Accessible Canada Act covers accessibility-related barriers that persons with disabilities face or experiences they have while interacting with federal sector organizations. However, questions in the CSD cannot determine whether persons with disabilities faced accessibility barriers while interacting with federal sector organizations or in private settings.

*A **severity score** was developed for the CSD, which took into account the number of disability types that a person has, the level of difficulty experienced in performing certain tasks and the frequency of activity limitations. To simplify the concept of severity, four severity classes were established: mild, moderate, severe and very severe. However, it is important to understand that the name assigned to each class is simply intended to facilitate use of the severity score and is not a label or judgment concerning the person's level of disability. In this fact sheet, the mild and moderate classes were collapsed into "**less severe**," and the severe and very severe classes were collapsed into "**more severe**."*

Available tables: [13-10-0819-01](#) and [13-10-0830-01](#) to [13-10-0832-01](#) .

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

The fact sheet "[Accessibility Findings from the Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017](#)," which is part of the publication *Canadian Survey on Disability Reports* ([89-654-X](#)), is now available.

Data from the 2021 Survey on Accessibility in Federal Sector Organizations are now available in tables [13-10-0819-01](#), [13-10-0830-01](#), [13-10-0831-01](#) and [13-10-0832-01](#).

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