

Profile of workers with disabilities receiving payments from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit program, 2020

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Persons with disabilities were [vulnerable to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). This includes [being less likely to be employed](#) and [more likely to be living below the poverty line](#) and, among persons with certain disability types, [more likely to be in low income even when employed](#). Furthermore, many persons with disabilities were [employed in industries](#) that were hardest hit by [the initial economic lockdowns implemented in 2020](#). According to the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), 11.7% of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years were employed in retail trade, 6.7% in construction and 4.7% in accommodation and food services. Additionally, among employees with disabilities, [more than one-third \(37.3%\) required workplace accommodations](#), such as workstation modifications or assistive devices, which may present challenges for employees working from home.

In 2020, the federal government implemented several programs—including the [Canada Emergency Response Benefit \(CERB\)](#)—aimed at providing financial support to students, Canadian workers and businesses affected by the economic lockdowns triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. CERB provided financial support to employees and self-employed Canadians who had lost their job or were working fewer hours as a result of the pandemic. Canadian workers had to satisfy a number of criteria in order to be eligible for CERB. For example, they were required—among other things—to have had annual earnings of at least \$5,000 in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to the date of their application. The focus of the analysis is on workers who had employment or self-employment income of at least \$5,000 in 2019.

In recognition of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Statistics Canada is releasing two data products focused on Canadians with disabilities, which are available on the [Accessibility Data Hub](#). The infographic "[Workers with disabilities receiving payments from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit program, 2020](#)" provides a profile of Canadian workers with disabilities who received CERB payments from March to September 2020, using data from the 2017 CSD and the 2020 CERB program. In addition, using data from the 2017 CSD, the article "[Age of Disability: From Onset to Limitation](#)" examines the age of onset, the age when limitation began and the period of time from onset to limitation for different disability types.

Similar proportions of workers with and without disabilities received CERB payments in 2020

Among the approximately 2.6 million workers with disabilities who had employment or self-employment income of at least \$5,000 in 2019, 34.9% received CERB payments in 2020. Similarly, 33.3% of workers without disabilities received CERB payments during the same time period.

[Similar to the total population of workers who received CERB](#), younger workers with disabilities were more likely to receive CERB payments than older workers. More than 4 in 10 (43.1%) workers with disabilities aged 18 to 34 years received CERB payments, compared with 32.7% of workers with disabilities aged 35 to 64 years. Persons with a disability were identified from their responses to the Disability Screening Questionnaire (DSQ) in the 2017 CSD. As a result, only workers aged 18 years and older with a disability are included in the analysis. The proportion of workers with disabilities who received CERB payments was similar by sex, with 34.4% of men and 35.3% of women receiving benefits.



Workers with "more severe" disabilities more likely to have received CERB payments

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented changes in employment, with many people working less than half their usual hours or becoming unemployed. In April 2020, the [Labour Force Survey](#) reported that cumulative losses since February of that year totalled 1,946,000 (-12.5%) in full-time work and 1,059,000 (-29.6%) in part-time employment. Persons with "more severe" disabilities were [more likely to be employed part-time](#) and were [more likely to require one or more workplace accommodation](#), compared with persons with "less severe" disabilities. Workplace accommodations may not be able to be met in a modified work environment, including working from home. These factors, among others, may explain why workers with "more severe" disabilities were more likely to receive CERB payments (39.6%) compared with those with "less severe" disabilities (33.3%). This finding aligns with results from [Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians Living with Long-term Conditions and Disabilities](#), which reported that participants aged 15 to 64 years with multiple long-term conditions were more likely to experience temporary or permanent job loss or a reduction in hours since March 2020, compared with those with one long-term condition. While multiple long-term conditions or disabilities do not equate to "more severe" disabilities, the number of disability types that a person has is a component to determine severity, along with other characteristics such as level of difficulty experienced in performing certain tasks and the frequency of activity limitations.

The proportion of workers with disabilities who received CERB payments varied by disability type. Approximately two-fifths of workers with a cognitive (41.1%), physical (40.3%) or mental health-related (38.3%) disability received CERB payments. Additionally, 36.1% of workers with a pain-related disability and 32.6% of workers with a sensory disability received CERB payments.

Further research will examine CERB payments among workers with disabilities by industry, level of education and income.

Onset and limitation of disability are most likely to occur during the working age years

The age at which a person experiences the onset and limitation of a disability may impact socioeconomic status, as well as the need for education and workplace accommodations. For the first time, the 2017 CSD contained a set of questions on both the age of onset and the limitation for each disability type. The research paper "[Age of Disability: From Onset to Limitation](#)" examines these new questions to explore the relationship between disability onset and limitation, by disability type, sex and the severity of the disability. Age of onset is the self-reported age at which a person first began to have difficulties associated with a specific disability type, while age of limitation is the self-reported age at which a person's difficulties associated with a specific disability type began to limit their daily activities.

Key findings indicate that the average age of onset for flexibility, dexterity, or mobility disabilities was the oldest of all disability types, at around 53 years. Many Canadians experienced onset of a disability in their 40s, with an average age of onset of 47 years for hearing disabilities, 45 years for pain-related disabilities and 44 years for memory disabilities. The average age of onset for seeing disabilities was 35 years. Meanwhile, mental health-related and learning disabilities had the youngest ages of onset, as the average age of onset for mental health-related disabilities was 28 years and learning disabilities was 23 years. In addition, the median ages of onset for mental health-related (21 years) and learning (10 years) disabilities indicate that many people experienced onset of these disabilities at a younger age than the average. For other disability types, the median age was similar to the average age.

The majority of Canadians experienced limitations at the same age as the onset of their disability. Flexibility or dexterity disabilities had the highest rates of same age of onset as limitation (85.3% and 85.2%, respectively), followed by disabilities related to memory (78.6%), mobility (77.4%), learning (72.7%), and pain (70.6%). The percentage who experienced limitations at the same age as the onset of their disability was somewhat lower for disabilities related to mental health (63.4%), hearing (57.3%) and seeing (53.9%).

The majority of persons with pain-related, mobility, dexterity, flexibility, or hearing disabilities experienced both onset and limitation during their working years. Among those with a pain-related disability, which has the highest rates of onset and limitation during working years, 66.2% experienced onset and 66.9% experienced limitation between the ages of 25 and 64 years. Less than one-fifth of those with a pain-related disability experienced onset and limitation

between the ages of 1 and 24 years (16.5% and 13.3%, respectively), as well as after age 64 (16.5% and 19.3%, respectively). Among those with a mental health-related disability, onset and limitation were concentrated in both the younger (50.2%, 43.3%, respectively) and the working age (41.6% and 49.1%, respectively) populations. Finally, onset and limitation for a learning disability are more likely to occur during childhood and youth. Among persons with a learning disability, half experienced both onset and limitation (50.1% and 52.0%, respectively) between the ages of 1 and 24 years.

Further research will examine the impact of the age of onset and age of limitation on employment, education and income.

Note to readers

Persons with a disability were identified from their responses to the Disability Screening Questionnaire (DSQ) in the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), which included Canadians aged 15 years and older as of May 10, 2016. As a result, all workers with a disability included in the analysis are 18 years and older as of March 2020.

Information on Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) payments by disability status are only available for respondents to the 2017 CSD. Due to the dynamic nature of disability, the disability status of participants may change over time.

A global 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. It is important to understand, however, that the name assigned to each class is simply intended to facilitate use of the severity score and is not a label or judgement concerning the person's level of disability. In this paper, mild and moderate classes were collapsed into "less severe" and severe and very severe classes were collapsed into "more severe."

Participants may have multiple types of disability and therefore be included in more than one category. Cognitive disability includes learning, developmental and memory disability types. Physical disability includes mobility, flexibility, and dexterity disability types. Sensory disability includes seeing and hearing disability types.

In March 2020, the federal government introduced emergency measures to provide temporary financial support to workers, students and businesses affected by the economic lockdowns triggered by COVID-19.

These measures included the CERB, available to Canadians who had lost their job or were working reduced hours; the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, to assist businesses, including the self-employed; and the Canada Emergency Student Benefit, to provide financial support to students.

CERB was available to: individuals residing in Canada who were at least 15 years old; who had stopped working or had been working reduced hours because of COVID-19; who did not expect to earn over \$1,000 in employment or self-employment income for at least 14 days in a row during a four week period; who had employment and/or self-employment income of at least \$5,000 in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to the date of their application; and who had not quit their job voluntarily.

Because information on employment income in the 12 months prior to the date of application is not available and because information on employees who quit their job has yet to be integrated in the data, the focus of the analysis is on workers who earned at least \$5,000 in 2019. For the same reasons, the proportion of workers receiving the benefit shown in this release equals the percentage of workers who received CERB payments in 2020 among those who earned at least \$5,000 in 2019. This percentage should be interpreted as a baseline statistic for workers in a given industry or group. It is not intended to represent workers who could have been eligible for CERB in the case of a job interruption.

The CERB data highlighted in this release come from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and contain information on initial payments from both streams of the program, one administered by ESDC and the other by the Canada Revenue Agency on its behalf.

Earnings in 2019 were gleaned from employee T4 slips and net self-employment income and eligible dividends reported on T1 Income Tax and Benefit Return forms. Main industry of employment was determined from the industry of activity of the business responsible for the most earnings in 2019.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3251.

The infographic "[Workers with disabilities receiving payments from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit program, 2020](#)," which is part of *Statistics Canada — Infographics (11-627-M)*, is now available.

The article "[Age of Disability: From Onset to Limitation](#)," which is part of the publication *Canadian Survey on Disability Reports (89-654-X)*, is now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).