

Exploring the experiences of Canadians accessing alternate format print materials

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In Canada, the 6.2 million persons with disabilities often experience challenges related to accessibility in their daily lives. While persons with disabilities face unique experiences and challenges when it comes to accessibility, persons without disabilities could also face accessibility barriers. By identifying the specific barriers each group faces, there can be improvements in the design and delivery of programs and services.

This release is available in audio. The video "[Results from the Survey on Accessible Print Materials, American Sign Language](#)" is also available.

The adoption of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) has encouraged the exploration of barriers encountered by Canadians in order to create accessible communities, workplaces and services. Canada has signed onto the [Marrakesh Treaty](#), which aims to increase the availability of and access to print material in accessible formats, in support of persons who experience difficulties with print material due to visual, physical, or perceptual limitations. In [Budget 2022](#), the Government of Canada proposed funding over five years to increase the production of and access to published works in alternate formats, as well as conduct research in this area. To provide a snapshot of Canadians with difficulties with print material and their needs for alternate formats, the Survey on Accessible Print Materials (SAPM) was established. Using data from the SAPM, Statistics Canada is releasing an article titled "[Print material accessibility in Canada, 2023](#)" to provide information on Canadians who require printed works in alternate formats due to one or more difficulties when reading print materials.

Type of difficulty with print material varies by gender

According to the 2023 SAPM, around 5.2 million Canadians reported a difficulty with print material. Among those with difficulties with print material, 77.4% had difficulty seeing words in print, 25.0% had difficulty holding or turning pages of print material, and 42.2% had difficulty reading or understanding words in print. Women (74.3%) were less likely than men (79.9%) to report having a difficulty seeing words in print. However, women (44.9%) were more likely than men (40.1%) to report difficulties with reading or understanding words in print.

Over one-third of persons with difficulties with print material use alternate formats

Overall, around half (51.5%) of Canadians with difficulties with print materials said they use or would use alternate format material if it was available to them. Women (46.2%) were less likely to report that they either use alternate format materials or would use alternate format materials if they were available to them when compared with men (55.6%), while there were no differences shown by age group.

In terms of actual usage of alternate formats, 35.8% of those with difficulties with print materials used reading material in at least one alternate format. When examined by type of formats used, the most commonly reported kinds were large print versions (63.1%), accessible file formats (36.0%) and audio formats (28.2%).

Cost is the most commonly reported barrier to accessing alternate formats

In the past two years, among those who said they have difficulties with print materials and require alternate formats, 20.1% indicated they could not access an alternate format they needed. Unmet needs for alternate formats were higher among younger Canadians (aged 15 to 34 years; 27.3%) when compared with their older counterparts (aged 65 years and older; 15.0%).

Around 7 in 10 (69.5%) persons who require alternate formats experienced at least one barrier when accessing the formats they need. Cost (29.7%), unavailability of the alternate format of choice (28.3%) and difficulty finding information (22.9%) were the top types of barriers encountered when accessing alternate format materials.



Note to readers

The Survey on Accessible Print Material (SAPM) was developed by Statistics Canada in collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada. Data for the 2023 SAPM were collected from March 15, 2023, to April 15, 2023. The population covered by the SAPM is composed of persons aged 15 and over as of March 15, 2023, who indicated on the 2021 long-form census that their daily activities were limited due to one or more difficulties or long-term conditions. In the SAPM, three screening questions were used to classify whether or not the person selected had a difficulty related to print materials. Data collected include information on the use of aids or assistive devices, use of alternate formats and barriers experienced when accessing them, Internet use, digital skills, and training in relation to accessing alternate formats, and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on usage of alternate formats.

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Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5387](#).

The paper "[Print material accessibility in Canada, 2023](#)," which is part of the publication *Reports on Disability and Accessibility in Canada (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).