

What is the pay gap between persons with and without disabilities?

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Employment and income experiences for persons with disabilities often differ from persons without disabilities. Barriers to accessibility within these areas often lead to lower employment rates and decreased income levels for persons with disabilities, in relation to persons without disabilities, which aligns with the study titled "[A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017](#)." Examples of barriers include inaccessible technology, lack of materials in alternate formats, physically inaccessible spaces, and discriminatory attitudes towards persons with disabilities. The [Accessible Canada Act \(ACA\)](#) aims to eliminate the barriers in seven priority areas in Canada by 2040; one of the priority areas is employment. Eliminating barriers within employment leads to increased employment opportunities, resulting in increased income, reduced labour shortage, and helps economic prosperity.

The Government of Canada recognizes and supports accessibility through many avenues, including [National AccessAbility Week](#). To support public awareness about accessibility, Statistics Canada is releasing a fact sheet titled "[Earnings pay gap among persons with and without disabilities, 2019](#)." This fact sheet highlights differences in earnings between persons with and without disabilities in Canada. Analysis based on data from the 2019 Canadian Income Survey (CIS) establishes a baseline for the disability pay gap which coincides with the implementation of the ACA. Furthermore, this fact sheet examines possible contributing factors for pay differences between persons with and without disabilities, including sociodemographic and occupational characteristics and disability type.

Persons with disabilities earn less on average than persons without disabilities

The 2019 CIS revealed that persons with disabilities aged 16 years and older had an average annual income of about \$11,500 less than persons without disabilities (\$43,400 and \$55,200, respectively). This results in a 21.4% pay gap between persons with and without disabilities, or persons with disabilities earned 79 cents to every dollar earned by persons without disabilities.

Men with disabilities have lower annual average earnings than men without disabilities

Men with disabilities reported a 24.3% pay gap in annual average earnings compared with men without disabilities (\$48,700 and \$64,300, respectively). Women with disabilities also experienced a pay gap compared to women without disabilities; however, it was narrower than the pay gap between men with and without disabilities, likely due to women with and without disabilities earning less than their male counterparts. The pay gap between the annual average earnings of women with and without disabilities was 13.7% (\$38,900 and \$45,100, respectively).

Persons with cognitive disabilities annually earn less than half of what persons without disabilities earn annually

The type of disability a person has may also impact earnings. For example, in 2019, persons with cognitive disabilities earned less than half (46.4%) of those without disabilities. Similarly, pay gaps were also found for persons with the following types of disabilities when compared to persons without disabilities: mental health-related disabilities (31.0%), physical disabilities (20.7%) and sensory disabilities (12.3%). Information on how disability information was collected can be found in the note to readers section.

The disability pay gap persists among full-time employees

In 2019, among employed persons, persons with disabilities were less likely to work full-time (76.9%) than persons without disabilities (84.5%). However, among those with full-time employment, persons with disabilities earned, on average, \$11,200 less than persons without disabilities annually, resulting in a pay gap of 16.6%. In addition, persons with and without disabilities were equally likely to be permanently employed, but the disability pay gap

persists. Among those with permanent positions, persons with disabilities earned 20.5% less than persons without disabilities. Similarly, among those with temporary positions, persons with disabilities earned 17.0% less than persons without disabilities.

Note to readers

The results of this report are taken from the 2019 Canadian Income Survey (CIS), an annual national cross-sectional survey developed to provide a portrait of the income and income sources of Canadians, with their individual and household characteristics. The survey is collected from January to June and the reference period is the calendar year prior to collection. The survey is administered to a sub-sample of Labour Force Survey respondents. The resulting sample size for the CIS is about 72,000 households. Persons with disabilities were identified from their responses to the short version of the Disability Screening Questions (DSQ), which was included in the 2019 CIS. The DSQ is only asked of one randomly selected household member aged 16 years or older.

The 2019 CIS was selected to align with the year the Government of Canada implemented the Accessible Canada Act (ACA). The CIS 2019 provides a baseline for the disability pay gap, with future analysis exploring change over time to evaluate the impacts of the ACA.

Disability type (grouped):

- 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.

The disability pay gap is based on the persons with disabilities – persons without disabilities earnings ratio, which is calculated by dividing the average annual earnings of persons with disabilities by the average annual earnings of persons without disabilities. This ratio is then subtracted from 1 and multiplied by 100, resulting in the pay gap presented as the percentage of how much less persons with disabilities earn compared to persons without disabilities. The analysis includes only paid employees during the reference year, therefore self-employed individuals are excluded.

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Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5200](#).

The paper "[Earnings pay gap among persons with and without disabilities, 2019](#)," 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).