

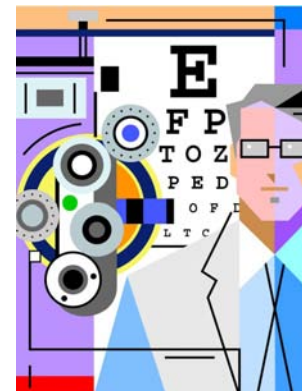
Catalogue no. 89-628-X 2009013

ISSN 1915-0466

ISBN 978-1-100-11755-3

Fact Sheet

Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006 Facts on Seeing Limitations



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Facts on Seeing Limitations

No. 3

Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 89-628-X

ISSN: 1915-0466
ISBN: 978-1-100-11755-3

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The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) is a national survey funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and conducted by Statistics Canada that is designed to collect information on adults and children who have an activity limitation, that is, whose everyday activities are limited because of a condition or health problem.

The following fact sheet is a profile of Canadians 15 years of age and older, who reported having a seeing limitation. It is important to note that this includes people who are legally blind, have low vision or have milder seeing conditions. This fact sheet examines the areas of education, employment, computer usage, aids and assistive devices, and transportation for such persons.

It should also be noted that while the main focus of this fact sheet is on people with seeing limitations, the majority of the population with a seeing difficulty *has* one or more other limitations. This should be considered when interpreting the results since the effects of only the seeing limitation cannot be isolated.

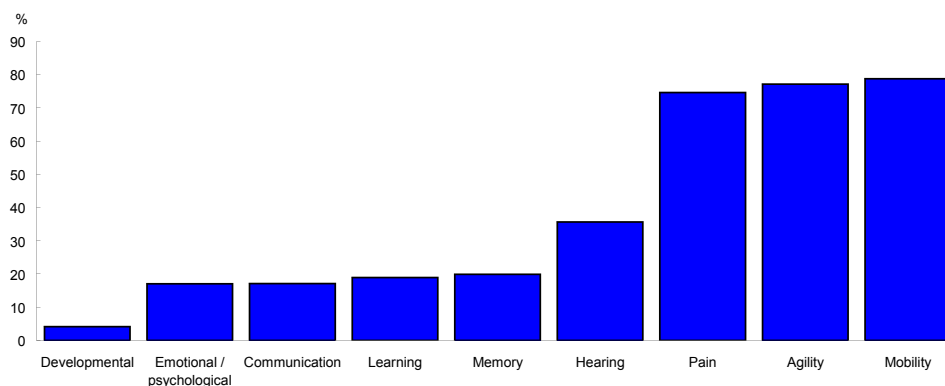
For more information, please refer to the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: Technical and Methodological Report (see 89-628-X 2007001).

Demographics

In 2006, approximately 816,250 (3.2%) Canadians aged 15 and older reported having some type of seeing limitation. These limitations varied in kind, from persons who reported difficulty seeing even while wearing glasses, to those who had been diagnosed as legally blind. Seeing limitations also varied in their severity. Almost eight in ten (78.5%) seeing limitations were considered to be mild while the remaining 21.5% were considered to be severe.

Of the people who indicated they had a seeing limitation, 4.5% (36,870) reported that it was their sole limitation, while 95.5% (779,380) indicated that they had multiple limitations. Just over three-quarters (76.0%) of people with a seeing condition also reported experiencing pain, or limited agility or mobility (see chart 1).

Chart 1
Common conditions paired with seeing limitations, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

Individuals 75 years and older had the highest rates of seeing limitations (13.4%) while individuals aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 34 had the lowest (see table 1). In addition, people aged 75 years and older were significantly more likely than the youngest respondents aged 15 to 24 to have a severe seeing limitation (30.5% versus 16.7%).

Table 1
Seeing limitation rates by age group, 2006

Age groups	Total Population	Population with seeing disabilities	Total seeing disability rate
	number		%
Total – aged 15 and over	25,422,280	816,250	3.2
15 to 24	4,147,070	22,650	0.5
25 to 34	3,942,260	30,760	0.8
35 to 44	4,747,620	73,870	1.6
45 to 54	4,912,800	173,700	3.5
55 to 64	3,623,390	147,540	4.1
65 to 74	2,239,630	125,205	5.6
75 and older	1,809,500	242,530	13.4

Note: Includes Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

Women were more likely than men to report having a seeing condition (58.9% versus 41.1%). However, there were no differences with regard to severity between men and women, as both sexes were more likely to indicate that their limitation was mild.

Demographics of the legally blind

Of the 816,250 people who reported having a seeing condition, 87,830 reported that they had been diagnosed as legally blind. Of this group, 24.5% were classified as having a mild seeing limitation, and 75.5% were classified as having a severe seeing limitation. Women comprised over half (56.5%) of the legally blind, while men represented the remaining 43.5%. People aged 75 and older had the highest rate of legal blindness (2.1%).

Education

In April of 2006, 5.4% (24,280) of people with a seeing condition age 15 to 64 were attending a school, college, or university, with the majority attending on a full time basis (68.3%). Of the 24,280 people who attended in April of 2006, almost half (47.9%) were between the ages of 15 and 24. People with a severe seeing limitation were just as likely to attend school as those with a mild limitation.

Highest level of attainment

Approximately four in ten people with seeing difficulties had an educational attainment greater than a high school diploma. In 2006, 20.1% of people with a seeing limitation held a college or non-university diploma / certificate, 12.6% had obtained a trade or registered apprentice certificate, 9.0^E% held a bachelor's degree and 3.5^E% had obtained education above a bachelor degree.

^E use with caution

Impact of condition on education

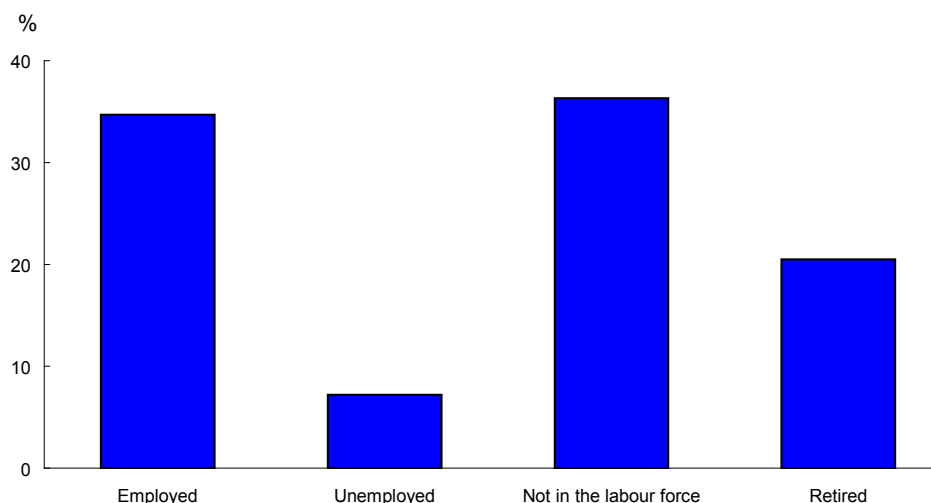
According to the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey findings, people with seeing limitations experienced various effects on their education. For example, over one-third (34.5%) of people with a seeing difficulty indicated they discontinued their formal education as a result of their condition, while 32.9% reported that it took them longer to achieve their current level of education.

Other common effects included the interruption of studies for a long period of time (26.3%), having to change the course of their studies (22.3%), and incurring extra expenses for their schooling (14.9%).

Employment

In 2006, over one-third (36.3%) of people with a seeing limitation aged 15 to 64 said they were not in the labour force, while an additional third (34.7%) reported being employed. Fewer than one in ten (7.2%) stated that they were unemployed and 20.5% reported that they were retired.

Chart 2
Labour force status of people aged 15 to 64 with a seeing limitation, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

Employed

People with seeing conditions reported that they were limited at work

In 2006, over half (56.1%) of employed people aged 15 to 64 with a seeing condition stated their condition limited both the amount and type of work they could perform. Older individuals were more likely to state that they were limited at work than were younger people. For example, people with a seeing condition aged 35 to 44 were twice as likely as those aged 15 to 24 to report being limited at work (64.9% versus 32.9%).

Modified or reduced hours most required employment adjustment

The job adjustment most commonly required by people with seeing limitations were modified hours / days or reduced work hours (23.4%), followed by special chairs or back supports (21.9%), and job redesigns (15.6%). Severity of the limitation did not make a significant difference in the modifications required, and for the majority of people these requirements were met.

Condition limited work hours, making advancement and job change difficult

Although people with seeing limitations are usually provided with the necessary workplace or job modifications, they experience challenges in advancing or changing jobs. Of those who reported being employed, one-half (50.0%) reported that they had experienced difficulty in changing or advancing in their current job. Common reasons for experiencing difficulty included being limited in the number of hours that they could work (39.7%), followed by being limited in their ability to search for a job (21.2^E%).

Unemployed

Unemployed limited in the amount of work they can do

In 2006, 7.2% of people with a seeing limitation reported that they were unemployed, producing an unemployment rate of 12.9% for this group. Of these people, over seven in ten (70.9%) reported that their condition would limit the amount or kind of work they could do at a job, while over half (54.6%) stated that their condition affected their ability to look for work.

Not in the labour force

Two-thirds of people not in the labour force were completely prevented from working

In 2006, approximately three out of ten (36.3%) people between the ages of 15 and 64 with seeing limitations were not in the labour force. This group includes people who were not looking for work, but excludes those who were retired. Two-thirds (67.6%) of people with seeing limitations who were not in the labour force stated that their condition prevented them from working.

Volunteer work

Over one in four did unpaid volunteer work

Regardless of employment status, over one in four (25.2%) people reported participating in unpaid volunteer work in the previous twelve months. People with a mild seeing condition were more likely to have performed unpaid volunteer work (27.0%) than those with a severe seeing condition (17.9%).

Computer and Internet use

Severity influenced computer and Internet use

Almost three in four people (71.2%) with a seeing limitation indicated that they had used the Internet in the previous twelve months, with people with mild seeing limitations reporting higher rates of use than those with severe limitations (74.5% versus 56.1%). Of the people who had not used the Internet, 54.8% stated that it was due to a lack of interest.

^E use with caution

Accessibility limits computer use

The accessibility of computers and the Internet posed challenges for some individuals. For example, almost one-third (30.9%) of people with seeing limitations said they had experienced problems with the lack of availability of the special aids or equipment needed to use a computer or the Internet.

Internet improves communication and quality of life

Of the people with seeing conditions who used the Internet, 46.2% reported that the Internet had increased their ability to communicate with people who had similar interests / experiences. Overall, 60.1% of respondents indicated that the Internet had moderately or significantly improved their quality of life.

Aids and assistive devices

People with severe seeing limitations were more likely than people with mild limitations to indicate that they used an aid or an assistive device (49.1% versus 23.8%). The aids most frequently used by people with mild seeing conditions included magnifiers (94.7%) and large print reading materials (40.6%). People with more severe seeing limitations used a wider variety of aids, but also used magnifiers and large print reading materials most frequently (see table 2).

Table 2
Aids and assistive devices used by people with severe seeing limitations, 2006

Aid and/or assistive device	proportion (%)
Magnifier	85.3
Large print reading materials	45.9
White cane	31.9
Talking books	30.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

People with severe limitations more likely to have an unmet need for an aid

Almost one in five people with a severe seeing limitation (19.6%) said there were aids or specialized equipment for visually impaired persons that they needed but did not have. In comparison, 6.1% of people with a mild seeing condition also indicated unmet needs. Cost was the most frequently cited reason for not having the aid (38.0%).

Transportation

People with severe seeing conditions were more likely to use taxis

Regardless of the severity of the seeing limitation, the types of transportation used by people with seeing conditions were similar with the exception of taxi's. People with severe seeing conditions were more likely to use a taxi (33.0%) than were those with mild seeing conditions (23.6%).

Reasons for prevention using local public transportation

In 2006, 21.0^E% of people with a seeing limitation reported that they were not able to use a car, 16.8% were not able to use a bus, and 9.2% a taxi.

One of the most commonly reported barriers to bus or a taxi use related to difficulties in getting on or off, or in and out of the vehicle (43.0% and 21.4% respectively)¹.

This fact sheet has highlighted key findings from the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey pertaining to seeing limitations. For more information on this topic and other publications from the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey please consult <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=89-628-X&chprog=1&lang=eng>.

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1. Due to small sample size, estimates of the factors preventing car use were too unreliable for publication.

How to obtain more information

Specific inquiries about this product and related statistics or services should be directed to: Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6 by telephone: 613-951-5979 or by e-mail at sasd-dssea@statcan.gc.ca.

Statistics Canada National Contact Centre

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