

# THE FACTS ABOUT DISABILITY IN CANADA

The definition of disability has evolved over time and today it challenges the stereotypical perceptions. Make no assumptions about an individual's abilities.

Disabilities can be visible or invisible, permanent, temporary or acquired. They can be physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairments, and they can impact a person's full and equal participation in society. This includes your parent who experienced a stroke, a student with autism, your co-worker who suffered a brain injury, your neighbour who is hearing impaired, your daughter who has social anxiety, your friend who experiences pain, or the Olympic athlete who won a gold medal in wheelchair basketball.

**27%**  
of Canadians (over 15 years of age) have one or more disabilities

This represents an increase of 5% since 2017, in large part due to Canada's aging population and a significant increase in mental health-related disabilities among youth and working-age adults.

- Disability is higher among women (**30%**) than men (**24%**). Women (**43%**) are more likely than men (**39%**) to have a more severe disability.
- Of those who experience disability, the most common type is pain-related disability (**62%**). Flexibility (**40%**), mobility (**39%**) and mental health-related disabilities (**39%**) were the next most prevalent.

 20%  
20% of youth (aged 15 to 24 years) have a disability

 24%  
24% of the working-age population (25 to 64 years) have a disability

 40%  
40% among seniors (age 65+) are living with a disability



**1 in 6**

One in six people with disabilities lived in poverty (over 1.5 million people).

With an aging demographic in Canada, the rise of mental health disabilities in other age groups, and the thought that these figures are an underestimate, the urgency to address disabilities is far more significant than most Canadians or governments acknowledge.

## **Active Abilities Canada**

Established in 1989, Active Abilities Canada (formerly the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability) supports communities and organizations to ensure that persons with disabilities have access and opportunity to meaningful participation in physical activity, recreation and community sport. We do this by:

- facilitating connection between organizations and communities
- ensuring research and knowledge translates into action
- advocating for changes to reduce barriers

For more information about [Active Abilities Canada](#) and how we contribute to the health and well-being of individuals and communities, contact Christa Costas-Bradstreet at [christa@activeabilities.ca](mailto:christa@activeabilities.ca).