



**Canadian Attitudes Towards Disability Issues;
2004 Benchmark Survey**

FINAL REPORT

Prepared for the:

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APPENDICES

- A - Questionnaire (English and French)
- B - Banner Tables (*under separate cover*)

Introduction

In the past few years, the Government of Canada has adopted a “Disability Agenda” to remove barriers and improve the social and economic inclusion of Canadians with disabilities. The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) within Social Development Canada (SDC) (formerly Human Resources Development Canada) carries a lead role in advancing this agenda, through: a) improving knowledge and understanding of disability issues; b) improving policy and program coherence; c) encouraging innovation through pilots/demonstrations of access and inclusion; and d) broadening partnerships and engagement.

Progress in this area requires a thorough understanding of Canadians’ awareness and attitudes towards persons with disabilities, and the various issues pertaining to disabilities. Some research has been conducted on this topic in a piecemeal fashion, but nothing systematic has yet been conducted that addresses the core issues in a comprehensive way.

To address this gap, ODI commissioned a national study of public awareness and attitudes towards disabilities in Canada. The purpose of this research is to gauge Canadians’ attitudes towards persons with disabilities and awareness of disability-related issues, and in particular identify how these compare between individuals with and without disabilities.

More specifically, the research is intended to improve our understanding of:

- What the term “disability” means to Canadians (e.g., as a medical/health versus rights/citizenship versus human capital/economic issue);
- Attitudes and perceptions of disabilities by type and severity;
- The degree of acceptance versus rejection of persons with disabilities in various settings (e.g., educational, workplace, community) and in various roles;
- Personal experience with disabilities, either first or second-hand, and how this experience influences attitudes and perceptions;
- General opinions about prejudice and discrimination against persons with disabilities, and their role in society;
- Awareness and opinions about the barriers to inclusion created by disabilities (e.g., physical access, social isolation, economic obstacles, absence of social support);
- Awareness of existing sources of support available to persons with disabilities;
- Beliefs about the appropriate roles for different sources of support for persons with disabilities (e.g., government, NGOs, families, local communities); and
- How awareness and attitudes vary by population segment (e.g., by disability status, region, demographic characteristics, and extent of experience with persons with disabilities).

The study was conducted in two parts: a) a national public opinion survey of Canadians (quantitative); and b) in-depth focus groups with selected groups of Canadians in four locations (qualitative). This report addresses the quantitative part, with the qualitative results presented under separate cover.

The quantitative research consisted of telephone interviews with a representative sample of 1,843 Canadians (18 years and older), conducted between January 22 and February 12, 2004. The sample was stratified across the country's 10 provinces and three territories to provide for analysis within each region. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is plus or minus 2.3 percent (at the 95% confidence level). The sample includes 521 respondents with a self-defined disability, for which results are accurate to within plus or minus 4.3 percent.¹ A more detailed description of the methodology used to conduct this study is provided at the back of this report, along with a copy of the questionnaire (Appendix A).

This reports begins with an executive summary outlining key findings and conclusions, followed by a detailed analysis of the survey data. Provided under separate cover is a set of detailed "banner tables" that present the results for all questions by population segments as defined by region, demographic characteristic, and disability status. These tables are referenced by the survey question in the detailed analysis, which can be found adjacent to or below the graphs and tables. *All results are expressed as a percentage unless otherwise noted.*

¹ Disability status was defined using the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) protocol developed by Statistics Canada. This protocol consists of two questions, which appear as questions 1 and 2 on this survey (See Appendix A).

Executive Summary

The following presents the key findings and conclusions drawn from this survey.

Public Conceptions of “Disability”

For many Canadians, the prototypical image of “disability” is a person in a wheelchair. When asked to bring to mind their own internal associations with this term, most people think primarily of a physical handicap (principally entailing reduced mobility), or (in more functional terms) of someone with limited capabilities for activity and life roles. Mental conditions are much less apt to be a part of the public’s definition of this concept.

Beyond people’s own personal images of disabilities, what is covered under this term broadens considerably when prompted with specific conditions. Beyond those conditions that fit the classic definition of a disability (involving a wheelchair or deafness, around which there is virtual consensus), a clear majority of Canadians would agree this term also applies to conditions that are less severely limiting to personal functioning, such as difficulty speaking (78%), limited vision even with corrective lenses (74%), difficulty learning new things (69%), requiring a cane to walk (69%), and requiring a hearing aid (67%). Less obvious is the finding that similar majorities would also agree the term disability applies to such conditions as chronic pain (72%) and chronic depression (67%).

There is less agreement on whether or not the concept of “disability” should apply to conditions that stray farther from the conventional concept of a disability, such as having difficulty with social interactions (49%), obesity (44%), HIV/AIDS (42%) or homelessness (31%). These fit what appears to be a separate category of conditions that more commonly engender social stigma, and seen as lifestyle-related. These conditions are more likely to be considered legitimate disabilities by the most vulnerable segments of society (older, lower socio-economic status, women, persons with disabilities), who would be more apt to have personal and/or indirect experience with these conditions, in comparison with younger, more affluent Canadians (who might be more inclined to see them as lifestyle choices).

Further insight into Canadians’ conceptions of persons with disabilities comes from views about such individuals’ capabilities in society. The emphasis on physical handicap leads most people to say that a person with a disability can do just as well as others in fulfilling such roles as a community volunteer, small business owner, parent or teacher, but not as a police officer. Opinions diverge significantly when more non-conventional disabilities are considered: In comparison with being in a wheelchair or deaf, someone with HIV/AIDS is more likely to be seen as equally capable in fulfilling such roles, while someone with chronic depression is considered much less able to do so. This latter finding indicates that internal or mental conditions may not fit most people’s definition of a disability, but tend to create uncertainty and discomfort that results in a form of stigma that is more powerful than the one attached to persons with a physical disability.

Personal Experience with Persons with Disabilities

Many Canadians have some degree of exposure to persons with disabilities. Three-quarters (75%) report to personally know someone with a disability, who in most cases is an extended family member or friend. Moreover, more than half of this group claims to have actually discussed the disability with this person (or persons) at some point. Three in ten (31%) workers are aware that a person with a disability is currently employed in their workplace. There is no evidence from this survey, however, that such contact exerts a

significant impact on how Canadians without disabilities view persons with disabilities and the issues they face, although there seems to be a modest influence in some areas.

Persons without disabilities largely see themselves as being comfortable in the presence of persons with disabilities, in that they tend to say such situations evoke positive feelings such as admiration, rather than negative ones such as awkwardness, indifference or fear. At the same time, it is clear that the nature of the disability makes an important difference. People appear to be much more comfortable being around persons with conventionally-defined physical disabilities (e.g., in a wheelchair, blind), than around someone with chronic depression, a developmental disability, or HIV/AIDS (this last case being perhaps unique because of perceived risk of transmission). Canadians with disabilities are less likely than others to believe that persons without disabilities will be comfortable in the presence of any of these disabilities.

Perceptions About Barriers Facing Persons with Disabilities

Canadians articulate a mixed view about the extent to which they believe persons with disabilities face barriers to inclusion in today's society. Seven in ten (71%) believe persons with disabilities are at least "somewhat" included in Canadian society, and more than eight in ten (83%) say there has been at least some progress toward this goal over the past decade. But a majority also recognizes that persons with disabilities face real barriers in many areas of their lives, especially in terms of achieving financial security and having reliable access to transportation.

Canadians are most likely to point to prejudice on the part of individuals and society-at-large as the most significant barrier to inclusion facing persons with disabilities (49%), a view shared by citizens with and without disabilities. To a lesser extent, the public identifies obstacles in the form of physical barriers (e.g., lack of accessible buildings and transportation) (29%), the limited capabilities of persons with disabilities (17%) and a lack of confidence that such individuals might have in themselves (15%). Relatively few (13%) identify a lack of government and institutional supports as a principal barrier to the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

In the workplace, Canadians employed in settings that include persons with disabilities firmly believe these individuals are contributing as much as others to their organization, and are fully accepted by their co-workers. At the same time, the public acknowledges that persons with disabilities face discrimination in having equal access to employment opportunities.

In the area of public education, few (13%) believe the educational needs of children with disabilities are being fully met, with another half (50%) saying they are being "somewhat" met. When it comes to meeting these needs, a majority (55%) of Canadians endorse integrated classrooms as being in the best interests of children with disabilities, in cases of physical disabilities. But such support is much weaker when it comes to how Canadians view the best interests for children with mental or learning disabilities (33%). Of note is the finding that the public appears to be much less concerned about the impact of integrated classroom situations on students without disabilities.

Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities

Discrimination against persons with disabilities is a widely acknowledged reality in Canada today. More than eight in ten Canadians believe there is either a great deal (19%) or some (63%) discrimination taking place in today's society. This view is widely held across the population, although not noticeably more so among persons with disabilities themselves.

More than one-third (36%) of Canadians without disabilities report to have witnessed discrimination against persons with disabilities, an experience that is most widespread in western Canada, and least so in Quebec. Such experience appears to have a small but noticeable impact on individuals' awareness and attitudes towards disability issues. More than half (52%) of persons with disabilities report to have themselves experienced some type of discrimination on a regular or occasional basis, most commonly in areas dealing with financial security and their social life. This type of experience is more apt to be reported by those with a psychological or learning disability, and by individuals with lower incomes.

With prejudice seen as the principal cause of discrimination against persons with disabilities, it is not surprising that Canadians believe the primary solution to the problem lies in increasing public awareness of the issue (62%), whether this involves public education campaigns, programs in schools, and strategies for giving people more direct exposure to persons with disabilities and the challenges they face. Others see the solution in finding ways to increase public acceptance of persons with disabilities (30%) (e.g., through more integration, job opportunities), while few look primarily to more tangible supports in the form of government programs, services or legislation (9%).

Support for Persons with Disabilities

Who is seen as having the most responsibility for supporting persons with disabilities? Canadians do not place this responsibility on any one group. When considered in general terms, the public is most apt to believe it is families of persons with disabilities and voluntary organizations (e.g., the CNIB) who can play the most essential role. But the public looks primarily to governments when the focus shifts to more specific areas of assistance, such as health care, transportation, specialized equipment, education and adequate housing. Voluntary organizations are seen as having an important role in helping to provide recreational opportunities, while families are viewed as being important in helping person with disabilities to raise their own families.

Opinion is divided on whether the federal (34%) or provincial/territorial (37%) governments are best able to support the needs of persons with disabilities, with another 14 percent identifying municipal governments. The federal government is most widely endorsed in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies, while this view is least evident in Quebec (where residents tend to insist this role must be shared across jurisdictions). It is in the Territories where citizens express the most confidence in the capability of provincial/territorial governments to fulfil this role.

Results from the survey reveal that Canadians know very little about government legislation, policies and programs currently in place that support persons with disabilities. Only one in five (21%) professes to be aware of any such initiatives, and few among this group can identify anything specific, a finding that applies equally to Canadians with and without disabilities. In terms of legislation, the most common responses are the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (mentioned by 2% of all Canadians), and the Canadian Human Rights Act (1%).

Perhaps because so little is known about what is currently in place, Canadians offer a mixed assessment of government performance in this area. Fewer than one in five (18%) believe governments are very supportive in helping the needs of persons with disabilities, while most believe they are "somewhat" supportive (59%). The public tends to believe that persons with disabilities receive less government support than immigrants, low-income citizens and Aboriginal Canadians, disadvantaged groups which tend to have greater public and media profile.

Variation by Population Segments

In most cases the survey findings are generally similar across the Canadian population, regardless of disability status, region or demographic characteristics. While variation is evident on many questions, and in some cases to a significant degree, the overall conclusions presented above largely hold for all groups examined.

One of the most striking findings to emerge from this survey is the similarity in perspectives voiced by Canadians with and without disabilities. These two groups express similar attitudes and opinions on many topics, and most of the differences that do appear are not substantial enough to conclude there is a fundamental divide in opinion. Among persons with disabilities, the group that stands out most are those with a psychological or learning disability, who tend to be more negative on such topics as discrimination towards persons with disabilities. As well, those who have multiple disabilities (three or more) on some issues express a more distinct viewpoint than those with one disability or none at all.

The most notable divergence in perspectives to emerge from the data is the one between English and French-speaking Canadians. On many issues, members of these two linguistic groups express significantly different opinions, whether it is how disabilities are defined, personal experience with persons with disabilities, the perceived degree of discrimination, or beliefs about who has the most responsibility to support them. The basis for this difference is not immediately clear, nor is it apparent whether it is a function of language or culture (almost all of the French-language interviews were conducted in Quebec). This remains an important question to be addressed in future research.

Some differences were observed across age groups. For instance, younger Canadians are more likely than older ones to believe persons with disabilities are equally capable in fulfilling a number of roles in society, and are also more likely to say they have witnessed discrimination against persons with disabilities. Older Canadians are more apt to define as disabilities such conditions as chronic pain, obesity and difficulty climbing stairs. But these differences are neither substantial enough in magnitude nor consistent enough across areas to indicate an overall difference in perspective between young and old on this topic.

Finally, the data for each question was broken out for survey respondents who identified themselves as either an Aboriginal person or a member of a visible minority. However, because of the low incidence of these groups within the Canadian population, the sample produced relatively small numbers from each group, thereby limiting the extent to which their opinions can be statistically distinguished from the rest of the population. Within the limits of this analysis, the data do not reveal any striking variations from the norm, in terms of how disability issues are viewed by Aboriginal Canadians or those belonging to other visible minority groups in this country.

Public Conceptions of Human Disabilities

How Canadians Define “Disability”

Canadians define the concept of disability in a number of ways, but chiefly in terms of physical handicap (e.g., uses a wheelchair, deaf). Perspectives on this issue are surprisingly consistent between persons with and without disabilities.

Unprompted Associations of Disability. The initial survey question was open-ended, asking respondents what first comes to mind when they think of the word “disability”, to capture their general associations. This question evokes a broad range of responses, but most fall into several broad themes.

The results largely confirm that Canadians tend to think of human disabilities in terms of physical handicaps, and that for many, a person in a wheelchair is the prototypical image. The most predominant theme of association pertains to **“physical disability”** (mentioned by 52% of the population), which is most likely to be mentioned with reference to wheelchair use/mobility issues or being physically challenged. Within this theme, considerably fewer define disability in terms of limited sight or hearing, loss of a limb, an accident or speech difficulties.

The second major theme emerging from this question characterizes disability in more functional terms, as **“limitations on activity”** (42%). This entails the concept of persons with disabilities as unable to do everything/some things other people can do, requiring help of others, and being unable to support themselves.

FIGURE 1
How Canadians define “disability”

Physical disability	52	General	25
Wheelchair/mobility issues	31	Handicapped	12
Physically challenged	20	Problem/difficulty/impaired	6
Blind/sight problems	9	Disabled/disability	4
Deaf/hearing problems	5	Other general responses	5
Loss of/can't use limb	2	Mental Disabilities	21
Injury/accident	2	Mentally challenged	18
Other physical impairment	3	Learning disability	2
Limited activities	42	Emotional challenges	1
Can't do everything/some things	23	Health Problems	7
Can't do normal activities	11	Other responses	13
Need help/can't do things alone	8		
Can't work/earn a living	5		

Specific responses total more than 100% of themes because of multiple responses

By comparison, Canadians are much less likely to think about disabilities that affect **mental or cognitive functioning** (21%). Most who identify this category think of it primarily in terms of individuals who are mentally challenged, rather than experiencing learning disabilities or emotional problems.

Most of the remaining responses to this question are general in nature, referring in non-specific terms such as “handicapped”, “impairment” and specific disease or health issues. A small number of individuals make specific reference to either their own disabilities or those of someone they know. Very few of those interviewed articulate a view of disability in economic issues (e.g., unable to work or earn a living) or a citizenship or human rights issue. Noteworthy is the fact that only three percent of the population were unable to provide *any* meaningful response to this question.

Analysis of this question across the population reveals that Canadians’ associations with the term “disability” are surprisingly similar across the population, although some variations do exist. What is perhaps most notable is that the conceptions of persons with and without disabilities are not very different. Canadians with disabilities are marginally more likely than persons without disabilities to define it in terms of limited activities and health problems, but conceptions of the term do not appear to be strongly influenced either by individuals’ particular type of disability or its onset (e.g., those with psychological or learning disabilities are not significantly more likely than others to define it in terms of mental functioning).

Persons without disabilities are more apt to think of persons with disabilities in the general terms of being physically or mentally challenged. Personal experience with persons with disabilities does not appear to have much influence on how persons without disabilities think about this term, except in the case of mental disabilities. Overall, these differences are not substantive enough to conclude that these two groups hold distinct conceptions of what is meant by the term “disability.”

FIGURE 2
How Canadians define “disability”
 By disability status

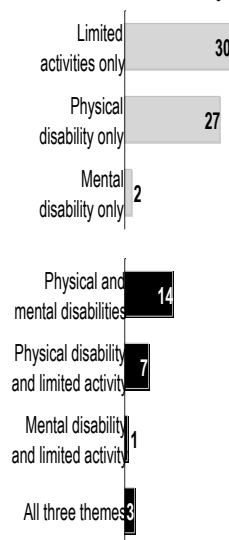
Theme	Non-disabled	Persons with disabilities
Physical disability	55	47
Limited activities	41	47
General	26	25
Mental disability	24	13
Health problems	6	10
Other responses	13	16

Public associations with the term “disability” are largely consistent across regions of the country and many demographic characteristics of the population. Socio-economic status appears to play some role, as those with higher levels of education and income are more likely to identify mental disabilities, and those with lower levels more apt to emphasize limited activities. Language may also play a role, with English-speaking Canadians giving more attention to physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and a range of other definitions, while French-language individuals give comparatively more emphasis to limited activities.

Further insight can be gained from these results if considered in terms of how much overlap exists in the identification of the different themes around the concept of disability. That is, to what degree do Canadians define the term on the basis of one or more of these themes? More than half of those surveyed, in fact, define disability using only one of the themes, either “limited activities “ (30%) or “physical disabilities” (27%), while very few (2%) define it solely in terms of “mental disability.” One in four Canadians think of disabilities more broadly, using two or more of these themes, the most common combinations involving physical disabilities. There is minor variation in this pattern across the population, except for one notable difference: French speakers are much more likely than English speakers to limit their definition of disability to only one theme, the most prominent being “limited activity.”

FIGURE 3

Mention of disability themes



Prompted Definition of Disability. A second, more prompted approach was also used to capture the public’s definition of what constitutes a disability, in which respondents were asked whether they consider each of 15 specific conditions to be a disability.

Across the types presented, there is considerable variation in the extent of public agreement around what is and is not a disability. Consistent with the results from the unprompted question, there is virtual consensus that someone who uses a wheelchair has a disability (95%), with almost as many placing this descriptor on someone who is deaf (89%). This finding suggests that permanent wheelchair status and deafness are two conditions that classically define “disability” across the Canadian population (along with blindness, which was not specifically tested in this survey because deafness was used as the principal sensory type of disability).

Beyond these obvious types of disability, there is majority agreement but less than consensus around the disability status of 10 other conditions, including using a wheelchair only some of the time, difficulty speaking, limited vision (but short of blindness), chronic pain, difficulty learning, limited mobility, requiring a hearing aid, difficulty remembering things, and chronic depression. In each case, two-thirds to three-

quarters of Canadians believe this condition to be a disability, and only a very small percentage (4-6%) are unable to provide a clear yes or no assessment.

The list also includes four other conditions not traditionally defined as a disability, and this is reflected in the survey results. Fewer than half of the Canadians interviewed expressed the opinion that this term should apply to someone who has difficulty with social interactions (49%), is obese (44%), or has HIV/AIDS (42%), and only three in ten (31%) believe it applies to someone who is homeless.

FIGURE 4
What constitutes a disability

Condition	
Uses a wheelchair all the time	95
Is deaf	89
Uses a wheelchair some of the time	79
Has difficulty speaking	78
Has limited vision, with glasses, contacts	74
Experiences chronic pain	72
Has difficulty learning new things	69
Walks with a cane	69
Has difficulty remembering things	67
Has chronic depression	67
Requires a hearing aid	67
Has difficulty climbing stairs	65
Difficulty with social interactions	49
Is obese	44
Has HIV/AIDS	42
Is homeless	31

Opinions of what conditions constitute a disability vary somewhat across the population, although largely as variations on the broad pattern, rather than in any fundamental way. Chronic pain, for instance, is more likely to be considered a disability by women, older Canadians, those with disabilities (particularly those with mobility, pain and/or psychological disabilities, those with more than one disability, and those who have had a disability for more than five years), and among persons without disabilities who know someone with a disability or have witnessed discrimination against them.

Defining chronic depression as a disability increases with level of education (75% among those with a university degree, compared with 60% among those who have not finished high school), among English-speakers, and among Canadians without disabilities who know a person with a disability. It is least apt to be defined as such by residents of Quebec and the Prairie provinces.

Persons with disabilities are more likely to define some conditions as a disability, notably chronic pain, difficulty remembering things, difficulty climbing stairs, and HIV/AIDS. Overall, however, neither disability status nor type in itself appears to have a significant influence on people's perceptions about which conditions rate as disabilities.

Age is a factor that comes into play in some areas but not others. Affirmative responses increase with age in the cases of difficulty remembering things, difficulty climbing stairs, chronic pain, obesity, limited vision, HIV/AIDS, difficulty with social interactions and homelessness, but not for the other eight areas. The reverse pattern is evident in the case of deafness, where it is the youngest group of Canadians (18-30) who are most apt to define this as a disability.

Exposure to persons with disabilities may to some degree sensitize persons without disabilities in a way that prompts them to be somewhat more inclusive in their definition. Canadians who know a person with a disability and/or have witnessed discrimination against a person with a disability are somewhat (although not substantially) more likely to consider most of these conditions to be a disability.

The results to this question were further analyzed to identify relevant patterns in the types of conditions deemed to be a disability. Factor analysis reveals that these conditions group into three conceptually distinct clusters as follows:

1. Severe Disabilities: This includes those conditions around which there is the strongest agreement as being disabilities, and which are seen as being the most challenging to overcome. This category includes using a wheelchair (all or some of the time) and deafness.

2. Limiting Disabilities: This group includes those conditions which are seen to only partially limit an individual's ability to function in their personal lives and in society. Included in this category are chronic pain, difficulties with climbing stairs, learning, remembering and speaking, walking with a cane, requiring a hearing aid, and having limited vision.

3. Questionable Disabilities: This category (the most statistically cohesive of the three factors) includes those conditions which are least apt to fit people's conventional definition of disability, and which are most likely to be stigmatized (in part because they may be seen as lifestyle-related). Included are HIV/AIDS, homelessness, chronic depression, difficulty with social interaction and obesity.

This third factor is most likely to include the more vulnerable segments of the population, including women, individuals 65 and older, rural residents, those with lower levels of education and income, and those with two or more disabilities. These groups are more likely to have experienced these types of conditions first-hand or indirectly, prompting them to be more likely to acknowledge them as legitimate disabilities. It is younger, more affluent Canadians who may be more apt to consider such conditions as obesity, homelessness or HIV/AIDS as self-inflicted or the result of life choices.

Perceived Capabilities of Persons with Disabilities

Canadians generally feel that persons with disabilities can do as well as others in such roles as factory worker, parent or teacher, but are more divided on how they would perform as a doctor or police officer. Type of disability matters, with chronic depression causing the most concern.

The public's conception of disabilities is further explored by examining attitudes about the capabilities of people with disabilities to perform certain roles in society. For each of seven specific occupations or roles, Canadians were asked if they felt persons with one of four types of disability could do as good a job as someone without this condition.

The results reveal that Canadians are more likely than not to believe (or at least say) that someone with a disability can perform equally as well as anyone else in these roles. At the same time, both the role and the type of disability make a difference in the public's perception of capability.

By role, Canadians are most likely to feel that a disability would not be a significant limitation in being a community volunteer (77%), small business owner (76%) or parent (74%), while somewhat fewer believe this would be the case for teachers (63%) or factory workers (60%). By comparison, no more than half (53%) of Canadians believe a person with a disability could do a good a job as a doctor, and only a third (33%) say that a disability would not limit the ability to serve as a police officer. These results are consistent with the public's general view of disability as involving physical limitations.

FIGURE 5

Roles in which the disabled can do as good a job as others

Role	Overall	Deaf	Uses a wheelchair	HIV/AIDS	Chronic depression
Community volunteer	77	86	85	83	57
Small business owner	76	82	88	87	51
Parent	74	87	87	84	41
Teacher	63	59	88	78	32
Factory worker	60	66	45	79	52
Doctor	53	56	69	61	28
Police officer	33	27	20	64	24

This ranking of capability by role largely holds for the traditional types of disability (e.g. wheelchair use, deafness), but reveals a very different pattern for other less conventional conditions. Although chronic depression is not as widely considered in Canadians' definition of a disability (see above), it is a condition that most see as among the most limiting. Persons with chronic depression are much less likely to be seen as capable of serving in each of the seven roles tested, compared with individuals with other forms of disability tested. This is most likely to be the case with doctors, teachers and police officers.

By comparison, HIV/AIDS is the one condition among the four tested that Canadians are least apt to see as a limitation in carrying out these types of roles in society. A clear majority believe someone with HIV/AIDS can do each of these roles as well as anyone else, including fulfilling the duties of a police officer (64%) and a doctor (61%).

Across the population, it is Canadians without disabilities who are more likely than persons with disabilities to feel that each of these roles could be filled as effectively by someone with any of the four specified disabilities. The largest discrepancy in positive responses between these two groups is in the case of doctors (15 point difference) and the smallest gap is in views about being a parent (7 points). This gap could be present because people without disabilities feel more social pressure to provide a politically correct response to this question. It is persons with learning and/or psychological disabilities who are least apt to endorse the capabilities of persons with disabilities as it pertains to being a community volunteer, small business owner and parent.

Age also appears to play a role in Canadians' views about the relative capabilities of persons with disabilities in fulfilling these types of roles in society. The belief that a person with a disability could handle each role as well as others decreases somewhat as age increases, with the most noticeable drop after age 65. Perceptions of capability also increase along with Canadians' level of education.

Experience with Persons with Disabilities

Direct Contact with Persons with Disabilities

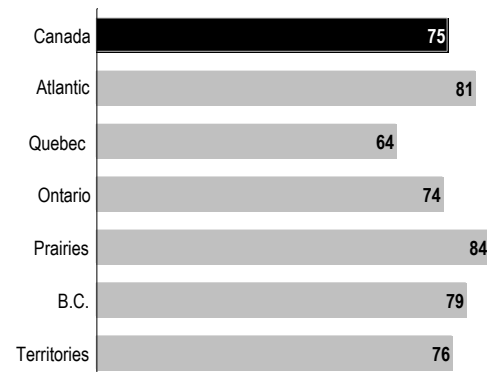
Three-quarters of Canadians report to personally know someone with a disability, in most cases a family member or friend.

Canadians' experience with persons with disabilities is fairly wide, if not extensive. Three-quarters (75%) say they personally know someone with a disability. This response comes from a clear majority from every identifiable segment of the population, but increases along with level of education, and is higher among residents living outside the country's largest population centres, and those living in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies. Residents of Quebec (64%) and those without a high school diploma (65%) are among those least apt to know someone with a disability.

FIGURE 6

Personally know someone with a disability

By region

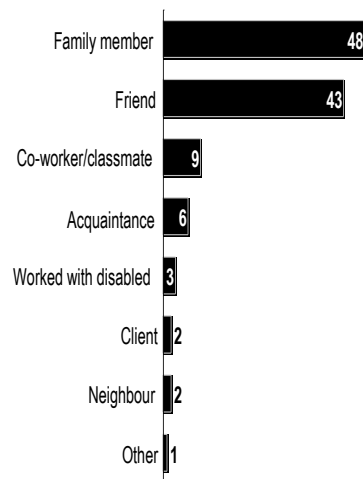


These persons with disabilities are most likely to be either a family member (48%) or a friend (43%). By comparison, relatively few say the person(s) they know is a co-worker or classmate, acquaintance, neighbor or in some other capacity (e.g., client, employer).

Family members with disabilities are most likely to be someone outside of the immediate family, such as an uncle or cousin (27%), while others identify a parent (11%), child (6%), grandparent (5%) or spouse (2%). Among those Canadians who have a family member with a disability, only 11 percent report that this individual is currently living with them in their home.

FIGURE 7

Relationship to disabled person
Those who know someone who is disabled



Personal Experience with Persons with Disabilities

Most Canadians report positive rather than negative feelings towards strangers with an obvious disability. Many who know a person with a disability say they have discussed the person's disability with the individual.

The significance of knowing someone with a disability is in how this contact might influence their experience of such individuals and their attitudes about the broader issues surrounding disabilities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that obvious disabilities (generally physical in nature) make many people uncomfortable and this results in social isolation for individuals who have these conditions. The survey examined this issue in several ways.

One indicator of people's comfort level with disabilities is whether or not it is explicitly acknowledged. Among the Canadians who know someone with a disability (other than a family member), just over half (56%) say they have had a specific discussion with this person about his or her disability and how it affects their life.

Such a discussion is somewhat more likely to have taken place among women, Canadians with higher levels of education and income, and among those 45 to 64 years of age (and then drops off significantly at 65). This type of discussion is much more likely to be reported by people who say they have witnessed discrimination against persons with disabilities (66%) than among those who have not (47%) (see discussion of these data below). The likelihood of reporting such a discussion is only somewhat greater if the person with a disability is a friend (63%) than in some other type of non-family relationship (50%).

Another measure of Canadians' experience with persons with disabilities is their reported reaction when meeting someone unfamiliar who has an obvious disability. Most Canadians claim to have feelings of admiration and sorrow in such situations, but few acknowledge a negative reaction, such as fear or indifference.

When encountering someone they do not know with an obvious disability, three-quarters (76%) say they often or occasionally feel **admiration** for the person, while just over half (54%) often or occasionally feel **sorry**. By comparison, considerably fewer admit they often or occasionally feel **awkward** or **indifferent** in this type of situation, while almost no one claims that they find themselves to be **afraid** of an unfamiliar person with a disability.

FIGURE 8
Personal reaction to someone with a disability

Reaction	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Admiration	45	31	8	9
Sorry	21	33	17	24
Awkward	5	26	22	43
Indifferent	6	12	19	58
Afraid	*	4	13	80

* Less than one percent

This pattern of reported reactions to encountering someone unfamiliar with a disability largely holds across the population, with only modest variation across groups. Knowing someone with a disability appears to make some difference in terms of boosting the likelihood of feeling admiration when meeting other persons with disabilities, but much less so in the case of the other emotions tested.

Gender also exerts some influence, with men somewhat less apt to be comfortable in these situations (being more likely to acknowledge awkwardness and indifference). Across age cohorts, Canadians 65 and over are more apt to say they feel sorry for people with disabilities they meet, while those under 30 are more likely than others to admit to being indifferent. Quebecers are less likely than other Canadians to say they would feel sorry or indifferent in these situations.

These results measure how Canadians report to react in this type of situation, but they cannot provide an accurate indication of how people actually feel. Two confounding factors are at play in this case. First, is that the question is general and asks about hypothetical situations rather specific cases. Second (and more significant) is the social desirability of the questions. Many people may answer these questions based on how they believe they should feel in such situations or what they think they would be expected by societal norms. Given these limitations, the results should not be considered an accurate reflection of how Canadians truly respond to encounters with unfamiliar persons with disabilities, but rather how they believe they and others *should* respond.

Perceptions of Public Comfort with Persons with Disabilities

Canadians are most likely to believe people in general will be comfortable around persons with conventionally-defined disabilities involving physical handicaps, and much less so in cases of "hidden" disabilities, such as chronic depression and HIV/AIDS.

One way to address the social desirability of this issue is to ask Canadians about how they think *other* people would react in such situations (this often works as an effective proxy for respondents' own attitudes and behaviors). The survey asked respondents about the degree of comfort they believe people in general would feel being around individuals with each of eight specific types of disability.

Once again, Canadians are more likely than not to believe that people in general would be at least somewhat comfortable with most of the disability types tested, but there is notable variation. The greatest degree of comfort is associated with those disabilities that most closely fit with the conventional conception of "disability", which are primarily physical in nature. Eight in ten (80%) believe that people in general would be very or somewhat comfortable around someone who uses a wheelchair, while two-thirds believe this would also be the case involving someone who is blind (68%) or deaf (67%).

There is also a high degree of comfort around being with individuals who are obese (72%). Obesity does not fit most people's definition of a disability, but it meets the criterion of being a physical condition, and one that is not threatening to most people.

By comparison, there is clearly less comfort seen in being around individuals with more "hidden" disabilities, such as chronic pain (61%), developmental disabilities (52%), chronic depression (46%) and HIV/AIDS (37%). The fact that these conditions are internal rather than easily seen by others may create uncertainty and unpredictability about their nature, affecting social interaction with other people.

FIGURE 9

Public's comfort level being around specific disabilities

Someone who is/has	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Not very comfortable	Not at all comfortable
In a wheelchair	27	53	15	4
Obese	22	48	21	6
Blind	17	51	25	5
Deaf	17	50	24	6
Chronic pain	12	49	28	7
A developmental disability	8	44	37	8
Chronic depression	6	40	39	12
HIV/AIDS	8	29	36	22

HIV/AIDS is seen to cause the most discomfort because it is associated with a potentially deadly disease that can be transmitted between individuals. There is considerable evidence documenting the extent to which persons with HIV/AIDS have been stigmatized because of fears about personal safety (and secondarily because of prejudices against high risk groups).

FIGURE 10

Public's comfort level being around specific disabilities

By disability status / very or somewhat comfortable

Someone who is/has	Non-disabled	Persons with disabilities
In a wheelchair	82	74
Obese	71	62
Blind	69	64
Deaf	70	61
Chronic pain	63	49
A developmental disability	53	46
Chronic depression	46	33
HIV/AIDS	37	31

As might be expected, Canadians with disabilities are less likely than those without to feel that people in general will be comfortable in the presence of persons with disabilities. This gap appears across all eight types of disability tested, although it is not a particularly substantial gap, ranging from a low of five percentage points (for reactions to blind persons) to a high of 15 points (in the case of chronic pain).

Among those with disabilities, the severity of disability (based on the PALS measure) also appears to influence views on this question (those with more severe disabilities are less apt to believe others will be comfortable), but their own specific type of disability does not seem to be a factor (e.g., those who are deaf are not less likely than others to believe that Canadians will be uncomfortable around deaf persons).

Language is another factor influencing attitudes on this issue, with French-speaking Canadians significantly less apt to feel that people will be comfortable with all disability types, excepting obesity. Age has a modest influence, with Canadians 65 and older less likely than younger cohorts to believe people will be comfortable around disabilities, particularly as it relates to chronic pain, chronic depression, HIV/AIDS, and obesity.

Barriers to Persons with Disabilities

Extent of Inclusion in Canadian Society

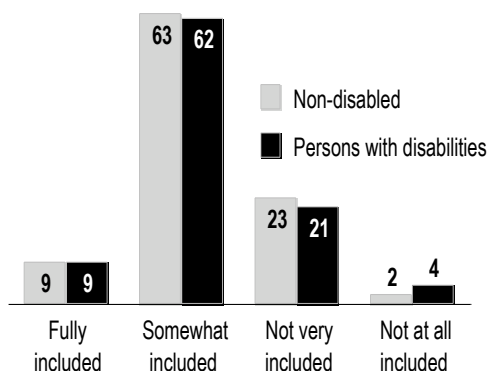
Canadians believe persons with disabilities are able to participate at some level in society, but face numerous barriers, first and foremost the prejudices of other people and society. At the same time, there is broad agreement that progress has been made over the past decade.

The survey examined public perceptions about the degree to which Canadians with disabilities are able to participate in society, in comparison with persons without disabilities. Results show that Canadians are more likely than not to feel that persons with disabilities are included, although few believe they are able to do so to the same extent as others.

Canadians are most likely to express the view that persons with disabilities are “somewhat” included in society today (67%), while only one in ten (10%) go as far as to say they are “fully” included. One in four believe that persons with disabilities are not very (22%) or not at all (2%) included, while another three percent are unable to provide a definitive response to this question.

FIGURE 11

Are disabled Canadians able to participate in society?
By disability status



Somewhat remarkable is the fact that Canadians with and without disabilities share virtually identical views on this question -- whether or not one has a disability does not seem to make a significant difference in perceptions about the opportunities for person with a disability to be included in Canadian society. Nor is the type or number of disabilities a factor in influencing such views.

Across the country, belief in the opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in society is greater among English-speaking Canadians, among men, and among those with higher levels of education and income (with income showing the greater disparity between the bottom (63%) and top (77%) brackets). And among Canadians without disabilities, those who have witnessed discrimination against persons with disabilities are predictably less likely to believe this group is able to participate as much as others (65%, versus 77% among those who have not encountered this type of situation).

Those who say that persons with disabilities are not fully able to participate along with others were also asked (unprompted) what they see as the principal obstacles facing persons with disabilities in Canada today. A number of responses were given to this question, but the predominant reasons have to do with the prejudices and attitudes of individuals and society in general, mentioned by almost half (49%) of those asked the question.

By comparison, fewer than three in ten (29%) identify physical barriers as a major obstacle to persons with disabilities, including barriers relating to transportation or mobility. Others emphasize issues such as the inherent limitations in the capabilities of persons with disabilities (17%), the lack of confidence that some people with disabilities have in themselves (15%), the absence of important forms of support, such as government programs or equipment (13%), and financial barriers (11%).

Perceptions of barriers vary only a little by disability status. Persons without disabilities are noticeably more likely than persons with disabilities to mention prejudice and societal attitudes, although this gap is less evident among people with three or more disabilities and those developed a disability prior to 18 years of age. This opinion is noticeably higher among person without disabilities who know someone personally who has disabilities and/or has witnessed discrimination against such persons.

FIGURE 12

Barriers to greater participation by persons with disabilities

Prejudice/society	49	Support	13
Prejudice/stereotypes/ignorance	39	Lack of government programs/funding	8
Other people/society	29	Insufficient help/assistance	4
Public Awareness	2	Lack of equipment	2
Physical barriers	29	Finance	11
Accessibility	23	Opportunity/can't find work	9
Mobility/transportation issues	9	Money	2
Limited abilities of disabled persons	17	Depends on extent of disability	4
Lack of confidence of themselves	15	Other	7

Specific responses total more than 100% of themes because of multiple mentions

Among persons with disabilities, the only type of obstacle that figures more prominently is the lack of confidence that some people with a disability have in themselves (21%, versus 14% among persons without disabilities).

Across the population as a whole, the identification of prejudice, physical barriers, lack of support and financial constraints all increase along with Canadians' level of education and income. Those 65 and older are less likely than younger cohorts to view prejudice as a barrier to persons with disabilities, and also less likely to be able to identify any types of barriers to participation in society.

The survey also asked specifically about people's perception of the degree of difficulty facing persons with disabilities in participating in each of eight broad areas of living. Canadians do in fact believe persons with disabilities face considerable although not insurmountable obstacles in most areas.

Three in four express the view that it is either very or somewhat difficult for persons with disabilities to participate in such areas as achieving financial security (77%), maintaining stable employment (74%), having access to reliable transportation (76%), raising a family (75%), and having opportunities for recreation (75%), while almost seven in ten (68%) believe persons with disabilities experience difficulty in having a social life. The public is noticeably less apt to feel persons with disabilities face as much of a barrier in terms of getting a good education (52%) or health care (48%) - this may be because of the assumption that there are programs and special arrangements in place for persons with disabilities to ensure they have access in these areas.

In all of the areas rated, the public is much more likely to believe the opportunity to participate is "somewhat" rather than "very" difficult, in most cases by a two-to-one margin. This may have to do with uncertainty: Most Canadians are not in a position to know in any detail about the obstacles facing persons with disabilities in general (even those who themselves have a disability), and so are less apt to express a strong viewpoint on this question. Persons with a particular type of disability may have a limited perspective on the particular challenges facing individuals with other types of disability, with which they themselves have limited knowledge or experience.

FIGURE 13

Degree of difficulty for disabled persons to participate in specific aspects of life

Aspect of life	Very difficult	Somewhat difficult	Not very difficult	Not at all difficult
Achieving financial security	28	49	11	6
Access to reliable transportation	25	51	13	8
Recreation opportunities	20	55	14	7
Raising a family	21	54	13	8
Maintaining stable employment	22	52	13	7
Having a social life	15	53	18	11
Getting a good education	12	40	26	18
Getting good health care	14	34	25	21

Canadians who themselves have a disability are more likely than other people to believe that person with disabilities face a "very difficult" challenge in all areas (except in raising a family), although this difference disappears when the "somewhat difficult" ratings are also factored in. The perception of strong difficulty also increases along with the number of disabilities reported by Canadians, as well as by the degree of severity (as based on the PALS measure). In a couple of cases, the specific type of disability also appears to be a factor (e.g., those with a learning disability are among the most likely to believe persons with disabilities find it very difficult to get a good education).

Across the country, English-speaking Canadians are much more likely than French speakers to believe persons with disabilities face difficulties in participating in these aspects of life, although the difference

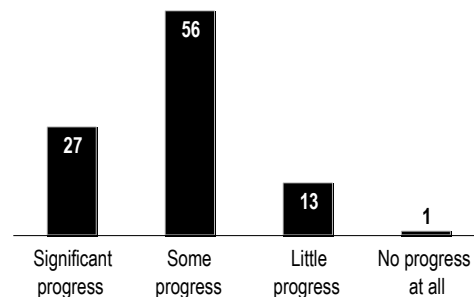
shows up primarily in the “somewhat” response category (in a few cases it is French speakers who are more apt to say participation is very difficult). As well, the level of difficulty identified increases as socio-economic status declines, perhaps because Canadians with less education and income are more apt to face difficulties themselves in being successful in these areas of life.

While the survey demonstrates public awareness of obstacles facing persons with disabilities in our society, Canadians also believe there has been definitive progress over the past decade. More than eight in ten say there has been significant (27%) or at least some (56%) progress in including persons with disabilities into Canadian society over the past 10 years. Most of the remainder (13%) believe there has been little progress, while very few feel there has been none or are unable to offer an opinion.

Opinions on this question are largely similar across the country. A similar degree of progress is identified by Canadians with and without disabilities, but among persons with disabilities it is those with fewer and less severe disabilities who are more likely to say the progress has been significant. Significant progress is also more apt to be the view of Canadians with higher household incomes, and those living in Ontario and Western Canada.

FIGURE 14

Progress in including disabled persons in Canadian Society Over past 10 years



Inclusion in the Workplace

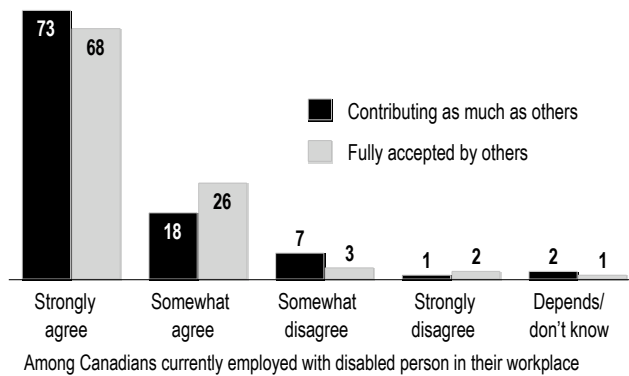
The public believes, based partially on experience, that persons with disabilities are largely accepted in the workplace, but at the same time acknowledge they face discrimination because of their condition.

The workplace is an important setting for persons with disabilities; being able to contribute and gaining acceptance alongside co-workers is essential to gaining and maintaining employment and financial independence. How do Canadians believe persons with disabilities are faring in the country's workplaces today?

A significant minority of workers have some experience on which to base such opinions, although this is far from a universal experience. Three in ten (31%) Canadians currently employed report there are persons with disabilities currently employed in their workplace, and based on this experience, the public is largely positive about the success with which these persons with disabilities have been fully included into the work environment.

FIGURE 15

Disabled persons are full participants in the workplace



Among employed Canadians in settings with co-workers with disabilities, three in four (73%) strongly agree that these individuals are contributing as much as others to the organization, and almost as many (68%) strongly agree these persons are fully accepted by others in the workplace. Most of those who do not express this view at least “somewhat” agree with these statements, while fewer than one in ten clearly disagree. This view is held across the population, being marginally stronger among English-speakers and those without any disabilities.

More broadly, Canadians were asked their opinions about the workplace opportunities for persons with disabilities relative to those without disabilities, and the results also indicate a generally positive perspective. Those who are employed are almost twice as likely to agree (64%) than disagree (32%) that “my workplace is accessible to employees with visible or non-visible disabilities.” This perception is more strongly held by persons without disabilities (65%, versus 51% among those with a disability), although it is actually most widely held among those with multiple disabilities (59%). Belief in equal access to the workplace also increases significantly with level of education (from 41% among those without a high school diploma, to 71% among those with a university degree).

FIGURE 16

Opinions about workplace opportunities for persons with disabilities

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
My workplace is accessible to employees with visible and non-visible disabilities	40	24	13	19
Canadians with disabilities are less likely to be hired for a job, even if qualified	34	44	13	6
I would hide a non-visible disability from my employer and co-workers	26	28	18	24

This view notwithstanding, Canadians are not fully positive about the opportunities for persons with disabilities in the workplace. Almost eight in ten strongly (34%) or somewhat (44%) agree that *“Canadians with disabilities are less likely to be hired for a job than those without disabilities, even if they are equally qualified.”* Once again, this opinion is a clear majority view across the population, with strong agreement in this case among Canadians with disabilities (particularly those with learning or psychological disabilities, those with three or more disabilities, and those who developed a disability prior to turning 18 years of age). This view is also stronger among French-speaking Canadians, those who have witnessed discrimination against persons with disabilities, and those with lower levels of education and income.

Moreover, many Canadians also seem to recognize potential workplace obstacles facing people with disabilities, particularly those in which there might be a stigma attached. More than half strongly (26%) or somewhat (28%) agree that *“If I had a non-visible disability, such as dyslexia or depression, I would hide it from my employer”*, compared with four in ten who somewhat (18%) or strongly (24%) disagree. Agreement is somewhat more widespread among men, individuals with more education, and English-speakers.

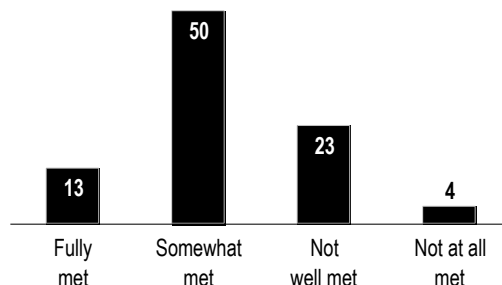
Children with Disabilities in the Public Education System

Canadians feel the needs of children with disabilities are being only partially met by the educational system. Most believe children with physical disabilities should be taught alongside other children, but this is a minority view in cases of mental and developmental disabilities.

The survey also examined the public’s views about the extent to which the public education system is addressing the needs of children with disabilities. As in other areas, the public expresses a positive but qualified assessment. More than six in ten believe the educational needs of person with a disability students are being met at some level, but only 13 percent maintain these are being “fully met”, as opposed to “somewhat met” (50%). At the same time, only a handful (4%) express the opinion that these needs are not at all being met.

FIGURE 17

Is public education meeting the needs of disabled children?

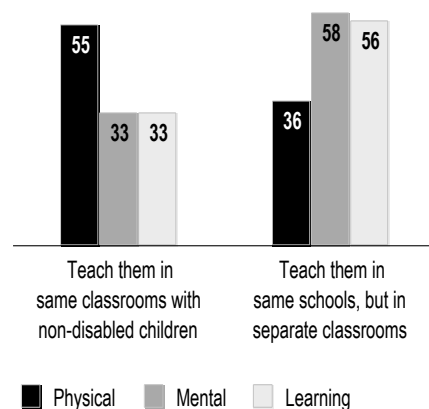


No more than two in ten from any group believe the education needs of children with disabilities are currently being fully met, with this view most evident among Canadians under 30 years of age and

residents of the Prairie Provinces. The most negative assessment is voiced by Canadians with a learning or psychological disability, among those with three or more disabilities, and Quebec residents. Level of education appears to have limited influence on opinions about this issue, with university-educated Canadians marginally more negative than others.

An important consideration in addressing the educational needs of children with disabilities is the degree to which they are integrated versus segregated from other children without disabilities within the school environment. There are arguments and advocates on both sides of this issue, and Canadians as a whole are also somewhat divided in their opinions. Four in ten (40%) believe it is in the best interest of children with disabilities to place them in the same classroom as children without disabilities, while slightly more (50%) believe it is better to have them in the same schools but in special classes. A very small percentage (1%) advocate teaching children with disabilities in their own separate schools, while others (8%), cannot provide a clear opinion on this issue.

FIGURE 18
What is the best way to teach children with disabilities?
 By type of disability



Views on this issue depend in part on the type of disability in question. This survey question was asked in the context of one of three broad classes of disability (achieved by splitting the sample into randomly-assigned thirds), revealing an important distinction. When considering children with a **physical disability**, a clear majority (55%) of Canadians say it would be best to teach them alongside other students. By comparison, only one-third (33%) believe this is the best approach in cases involving a **mental** or **learning** disability.

Regardless of disability type, support for integrating students with and without disabilities is stronger among persons without disabilities and younger Canadians. Belief in integration of children with physical disabilities increases with household income and is also higher in Western Canada.

When Canadians are asked to consider this issue from the perspective of children without disabilities, opinions shift noticeably as most believe that such children would either benefit or not experience any educational shortfall by being taught in classrooms along with students with disabilities. A clear majority (59%) say it would be in the best interest of children without disabilities to be taught alongside those with

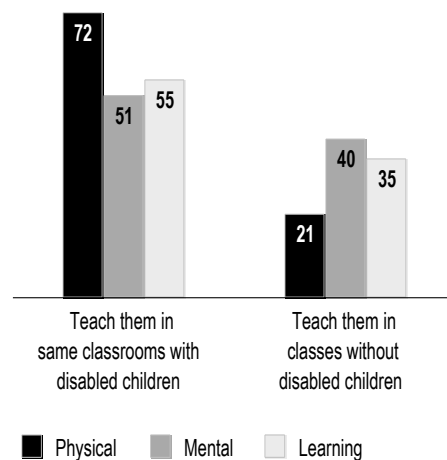
a disability, compared with one-third (32%) who believe they would be better off in classes that do not include children with disabilities. Less than one in ten express some other opinion or are unable to provide a response.

Once again, public views on this question depend in part on the type of disability involved. As with what was seen as best for children with disabilities, Canadians are most likely to also think integrated classrooms are best for students without disabilities in the case of physical disabilities (72%), while opinions are more divided for mental (51%) and learning (55%) disabilities. And as with attitudes about the interests of children with disabilities, belief in the benefits of integrated classrooms for children without disabilities is somewhat greater among Canadians without disabilities, younger individuals and English-speaking residents. Support in the case of physical disabilities increases along with socio-economic status.

FIGURE 19

What is the best way to teach children without disabilities?

By type of disability



Public Support for Community-Assisted Living

There is widespread public support for funding persons with challenging disabilities to live independently in the community.

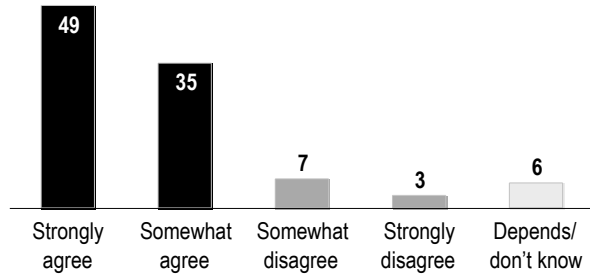
The survey also asked a question to gauge general public support for community-assisted living for people with even the most challenging disabilities to live in the community rather than in institutions. While it is safe to say that few Canadians are well informed about this particular issue, the survey results show that most strongly endorse it in principle.

More than eight in ten say they strongly (49%) or somewhat (35%) agree with the statement that “*persons with even the most challenging disabilities should be supported by public funds to live in the community rather than in institutional settings.*” Such support is evident across the country, voiced by at least 80 percent from every identifiable segment of the population. Strong support is marginally more likely to be

expressed by persons with disabilities and by persons without disabilities who know someone person with a disability, as well as among English-speakers (particularly in Ontario and the Prairies), and among Canadians with higher levels of education (but not income).

FIGURE 20

Provide public funds to support independent living



Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities

Perceived Extent of Discrimination in Canada Today

More than eight in ten Canadians believe people with disabilities face at least some discrimination in society today. This view is most strongly held in Quebec.

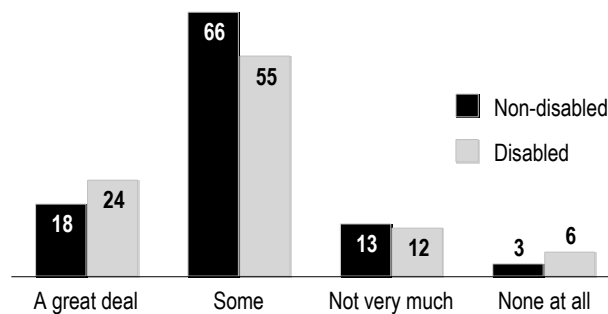
Canadians were asked about the extent to which they believe persons with disabilities face discrimination in today's society. While other findings point to the fact that the public as a whole believes that progress is being made in providing opportunities for inclusion in the workplace and other areas of life, they also acknowledge that discrimination continues to be widespread.

Almost one in five (19%) Canadians express the view persons with disabilities today face "a great deal" of discrimination in their lives, although the most common belief is that there is "some" discrimination (63%).

FIGURE 21

Extent of discrimination against disabled people today

By disability status



Disability status does not appear to have much impact on opinions about this issue. Persons with disabilities are somewhat more likely to believe there is a great deal of discrimination, but less apt to say there is at least "some" discrimination. Among persons with disabilities, however, the belief in a great deal of discrimination is notably higher among those with a psychological disability, those with a more severe condition, and those whose disabilities began prior to age 18 (with this view least evident among those whose disabilities developed in the past five years).

Among Canadians without a disability, belief in a great deal of discrimination is marginally higher among those who know a person with a disability and/or who have witnessed discrimination themselves. Among the population-at-large, this view is more evident among women and Canadians with the least education and income. The most striking finding, however, is that this belief about extensive discrimination against persons with disabilities is twice as strong among Quebecers (32%) than among Canadians living elsewhere (15%).

Personal Experience with Discrimination

One in four Canadians with a disability report experiencing discrimination on a regular or occasional basis in such areas as employment, social life and health care. More than a third of Canadians without disabilities have witnessed discrimination against persons with disabilities.

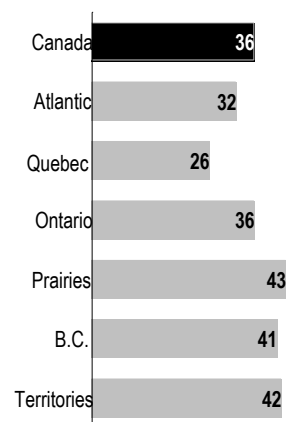
Beyond the general perceptions of discrimination, what about people's own personal experience? This was examined among Canadians with and without disabilities.

Canadians without disabilities. Among Canadians without disabilities, more than one-third (36%) say they have at some point in their lives witnessed a situation in which a person with a disability experienced discrimination because of his or her disability. As might be expected, this experience is much more common among those who know one or more persons with disabilities personally (42%, versus 15% among those who do not). It is also somewhat more common among Canadians 18 to 30 years of age and lowest among those 65 and over. And while it is French-speakers who are most apt to express a general belief about discrimination against persons with disabilities, it is English-speakers who are more likely to say they have actually witnessed this (38%, versus 26%).

FIGURE 22

Have personally witnessed discrimination against a disabled person

Non-disabled Canadians by region



Canadians with disabilities. Canadians with disabilities were asked about their own direct experience with discrimination in each of eight areas of life. In each case, a small but appreciable percentage report experiencing discrimination due to their disability(ies) on a regular or occasional basis. This is most likely to be reported in terms of their efforts to achieve financial security (26% regularly or occasionally), having a social life (25%), maintaining stable employment (22%) and getting good health care (24%), while least evident in the case of raising a family (11%) (which may be low in part because many may not have aspired to this goal).

Reports of regular or occasional discrimination are more widespread among Canadians with a psychological disability (excepting in the cases of recreation and transportation), as well as among those with multiple disabilities and those who developed a disability before 18 years of age. Household income also seems to be a factor, with discrimination more likely to be reported as income level declines.

FIGURE 23

Personal experience with discrimination due to a disability
 Canadians with disabilities

Aspect of life	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Financial security	14	12	10	62
Social life	11	14	10	63
Stable employment	11	11	7	65
Good health care	10	14	7	68
Recreation opportunities	8	14	11	66
Reliable transportation	7	11	6	72
Good education	7	9	8	72
Raising a family	5	6	5	77

When these data are examined across all areas, more than half (52%) of persons with disabilities report to have experienced discrimination on a regular or occasional basis in at least one of these areas, and for almost three in ten (28%) this has been on a regular basis. Such discrimination on a regular basis is most likely to be reported by persons with a psychological (56%) or learning (44%) disability, and by those who have three or more distinct types of disability (44%). Discrimination is also tied to household income, with those in the bottom bracket (42%) more than twice as likely as those in the top bracket (20%) to report regular discrimination in at least one area.

Solutions to Stopping Discrimination

Canadians believe increasing awareness and public education is the most important way to reduce discrimination against persons with disabilities. Few place a high priority on improving supports provided to the person with a disability.

With discrimination against persons with disabilities a widely-acknowledged problem in society today, what do Canadians see as the solution? When asked (without prompting) to identify what they believe to be the most important way to stop discrimination against persons with disabilities, the public identifies a range of responses, most of which fall into one of three broad themes.

By far the most common solution to discrimination is seen in terms of increasing awareness about persons with disabilities, mentioned by more than six in ten (62%) Canadians. Within this theme, the principal solution identified is more public education and information (46%), while others emphasize the need to talk about it more, making this issue more of a priority within the school system, expanding people's exposure to persons with disabilities, and doing more in the media. This emphasis on increasing awareness is consistent with the public's view that prejudice and attitudes constitute the greatest barrier facing persons with disabilities (see above).

The second and related theme encompasses the broad notion of “increasing acceptance” of persons with disabilities, identified by three in ten (30%) Canadians. Within this theme are the concepts of improving acceptance or equality for persons with disabilities, ensuring they are integrated into society or offered opportunities for employment and other roles in life.

The third theme addresses more tangible solutions in the form of providing government supports and other forms of assistance to persons with disabilities - this type of solution is mentioned by fewer than one in ten (9%) Canadians. Beyond these three themes, another seven percent identify other types of solutions (none mentioned by as much as one percent of the population), while 15 percent are unable to suggest any response to this question.

FIGURE 24

Solutions to stopping discrimination against persons with disabilities

Increase awareness	62	Increase support to persons with disabilities	9
Public education/awareness	46	Government programs/services/legislation	6
Raise awareness/talk about it	15	Help/assistance/support	3
Teach it in school	9	Other solutions	7
Exposure to the disabled	7	dk/na	15
More media/campaigns	5		
Increased acceptance	30		
Acceptance/equality	18		
Inclusion/integration	10		
More opportunities/jobs	4		

Public opinions about solutions to discrimination are notably consistent across the population. Canadians with and without disabilities offer essentially the same ideas in the same proportions, even in the lack of emphasis given to tangible government supports. Across the country, the focus on building awareness increases along with education and income, and is somewhat higher among English-speaking Canadians. Government programs are given low priority among all groups, although marginally higher in Eastern Canada and Ontario, among residents of Canada’s largest urban centres, and those who are part of a visible minority group.

Support for Persons with Disabilities

Responsibilities for Helping Persons with Disabilities

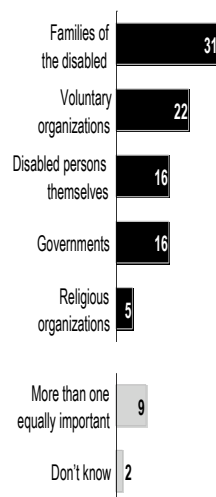
The public does not see any one group as having overall responsibility for assisting persons with disabilities, but Canadians are most likely to look to government to take a lead role in such areas as health care, transportation, and providing specialized equipment.

The final section of the survey examined public attitudes about the roles of government and other groups in supporting people with disabilities. Respondents were first asked which one of five groups they consider to be most essential in helping persons with disabilities participate in society.

Responses indicate there is no public consensus on the relative importance of these roles, but Canadians are most likely to look to the families of persons with disabilities (30%) or voluntary organizations (22%), followed by persons with disabilities themselves (16%), governments (16%) and religious organizations (5%). Another one in ten (9%) volunteered that more than one of these are equally essential to the support provided to persons with disabilities.

FIGURE 25

Who has most essential role to help disabled persons?



Opinions on this issue are largely similar between Canadians with and without disabilities. Persons without disabilities are marginally more apt to emphasize voluntary organizations. People with one disability are more likely to put this responsibility on families, while those with multiple disabilities are among those most apt to insist that more than one of these “players” are equally important. Residents of Quebec are more likely than other Canadians to emphasize the role of government, and also to insist on the importance of more than one of these choices.

The survey also addressed this issue in greater detail, to better understand how opinions about roles varies depending on the area of support involved. In fact, the results demonstrate that desired locus of support is noticeably different across such areas.

By a wide margin, Canadians believe **governments** have the primary role for supporting persons with disabilities when it comes to providing good health care (71%), reliable transportation (61%), specialized equipment (60%), and good education (54%), and to a lesser extent in other areas examined, with the exception of raising a family. In contrast, very few see **employers** as having a primary role in any of the areas, except in the case of helping persons with disabilities maintain stable employment (28%), which is comparable to the percentage who look first to government. The **voluntary sector** (e.g. charities) are not seen by a significant percentage of Canadians as having a primary role in any of the areas, except in the case of providing opportunities for recreation (33%, versus 28% who choose government).

FIGURE 26

Plays most important role in supporting needs of the disabled in specific areas

Areas of life	Gov't	Employees	Voluntary org.	Families of disabled	Disabled themselves
Good health care	71	3	5	10	8
Reliable transportation	61	3	14	15	5
Specialized equipment	60	3	15	11	7
Good education	54	3	5	19	16
Adequate housing	47	3	13	16	14
Financial security	40	14	4	16	20
Stable employment	28	28	7	16	16
Recreation opportunities	28	5	33	16	15
Raising a family	15	6	7	38	28

Families are not seen by most as having the primary responsibility for supporting family members with disabilities in most of these areas, despite the general viewpoint expressed in an earlier question.

Families are most apt to be looked to assist persons with disabilities with raising a family (38%), but in no other area is this group identified by as many as one in five. Finally, a similar pattern is evident in terms of the responsibilities that **people with disabilities themselves** have for addressing these areas of their lives. They are most apt to be seen as having primary responsibility for raising a family (28%) and achieving financial security (20%), while least apt to be held accountable in such areas as health care and transportation.

Opinions about the importance of these different groups are generally similar across the country, in that the relative order is largely the same across relevant population segments, although some variations do emerge. Persons with and without disabilities generally agree on these roles. The number of disabilities one has may influence such attitudes somewhat in that those with at least three disabilities stand out somewhat from those who have fewer disabilities (e.g., place more emphasis on family for health care, on themselves for transportation, while placing less importance on government for stable employment).

Governments are given relatively greater priority by more highly educated Canadians for areas involving education, transportation, health care and housing. Quebecers are more apt to say government has an essential role in assisting persons with disabilities with specialized equipment, opportunities for recreation and financial security, but less so than others in the case of adequate housing. Urban residents look

most to government for providing reliable transportation and good education, while it is Atlantic Canadians who are most apt to believe that government has the principal role to help persons with disabilities maintain stable employment.

Perhaps the most intriguing findings to emerge from these data is the difference in views between English and French-speaking Canadians on the respective roles of persons with disabilities and their families. French-speaking individuals are much more likely to express the view that persons with disabilities themselves, rather than their families, are responsible for addressing these areas of their lives; except in the case of stable employment and financial security where it is English-speakers who look to persons with disabilities rather than their families.

FIGURE 27

Plays most important role in supporting needs of the disabled in specific areas
By language

Areas of life	FAMILIES OF DISABLED		DISABLED THEMSELVES	
	English	French	English	French
Good health care	15	1	5	19
Reliable transportation	19	1	4	13
Specialized equipment	15	1	5	12
Good education	24	3	14	30
Adequate housing	20	1	9	32
Financial security	18	12	20	12
Stable employment	7	46	18	6
Recreation opportunities	20	*	11	30
Raising a family	49	3	23	46

* Less than one percent

Extent of Government Support for Persons with Disabilities

Canadians believe that governments are supportive of persons with disabilities, but at the same time feel this group is receiving less support than immigrants, low income citizens and Aboriginal Canadians.

Canadians were asked the extent to which they believe their governments are currently supportive of persons with disabilities, in terms of laws, policies and programs. Overall, the public is mixed in its assessment of the government's activities, with fewer than one in five (18%) saying the government is very supportive, and most indicating they are only somewhat (59%) supportive in this area. Fewer than one in five believe governments have not been supportive, while few (4%) are unable to offer an opinion.

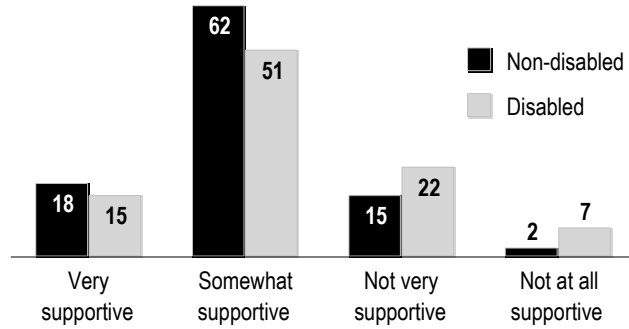
A clear majority from all identified segments agree that governments are at least somewhat supportive toward helping persons with disabilities, but this view is less widely held among Canadians with disabilities, particularly those more severely affected by their disability (62% of whom say the government is strongly or somewhat supportive). A positive assessment of government support increases along with

education and income, while decreasing with age (e.g. 83% among those 18 to 30, declining to 62% among those 65 and older). English-speaking Canadians (79%) are also more likely to believe governments have been at least somewhat supportive, in comparison with French-speakers (63%).

FIGURE 28

Extent of government support to help disabled persons

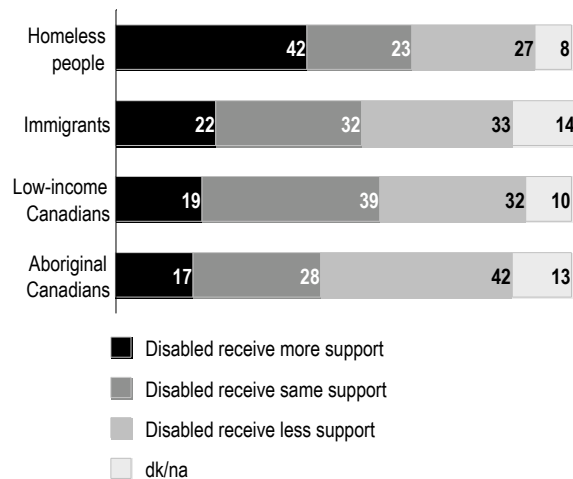
By disability status



The survey also asked Canadians about government support to persons with disabilities relative to support provided to each of four other disadvantaged groups in society. Of the four comparisons made, Canadians are most likely to believe that persons with disabilities fare well relative to **homeless people**: 42 percent believe persons with disabilities receive greater support than this group, compared with 27 percent who maintain they receive less support.

FIGURE 29

Government support for the disabled Relative to other disadvantaged groups



However, persons with disabilities are seen as not doing quite as well in comparison with **immigrants** and **low-income Canadians**. In both cases only about one in five feel that persons with disabilities receive better government support, compared with one in three who believe they do worse. Finally, when considered in relation to **Aboriginal Canadians**, the public is more than twice as likely to say that persons with disabilities do worse (42%) than better (17%) when it comes to government programs and policies.

Views on this issue vary somewhat across the population. Persons with disabilities are more apt to be seen as doing better in relative terms among Canadians without disabilities, English-speakers, younger individuals, and those with higher levels of education and income. These differences are less apparent in the comparison made with Aboriginal Canadians, in which there appears to be a broader consensus that persons with disabilities receive comparatively less government support.

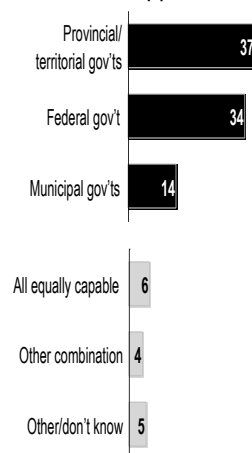
Jurisdictional Responsibility for Persons with Disabilities

Canadians are divided on whether the federal or provincial/territorial governments are best able to provide the support needed by persons with disabilities.

Which level of government is best able to provide support to persons with disabilities? There is no public consensus on this question, with most Canadians evenly divided in assigning this responsibility to either the federal (34%) or provincial/territorial (37%) governments. A much smaller percentage (14%) express the view that municipal governments would be in the best position to address the needs of persons with disabilities, while another one in ten (11%) volunteer that two or more of these jurisdictions are equally capable of fulfilling this role.

FIGURE 30

Which level of government is best able to support the disabled?



Opinions on this question are similar regardless of disability status and demographic profile, but vary across regions. Belief in the primacy of a federal government role for persons with disabilities is most widespread in Atlantic Canada (49%) and the Prairies (41%), while least evident in Quebec (25%) where residents are more likely than others to insist this must be a shared role (21%). Residents of the

Territories are most likely to endorse a primary role for provincial/territorial governments (43%), while it is residents of Ontario who are more likely than others to believe that municipal governments can do the best job in this area (16%).

Awareness of Government Supports for Persons with Disabilities

Few Canadians are knowledgeable about government legislation, policies or programs directed at supporting persons with disabilities in Canada.

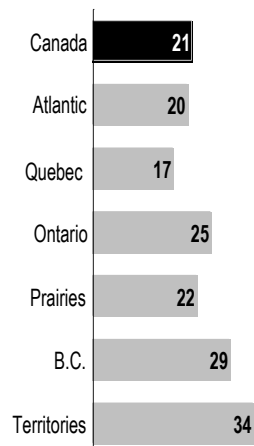
While the public may have clear opinions about government's role in supporting the needs of persons with disabilities, the survey also reveals that Canadians know very little about what governments are currently doing in this area.

Only one in five (21%) claim to know of any legislation, policies or programs governing rights or provisions for persons with disabilities in Canada. Such awareness is only marginally greater among Canadians with disabilities (24%) but more so among those whose disability(is) began prior to age 18 (30%). Awareness of legislation, policies and programs also increases with level of education and income (as it typically does with this type of knowledge), and is highest in B.C. and the Territories, while lowest in Quebec.

FIGURE 31

Aware of legislation, policies or programs protecting disabled persons in Canada

By region



Stated awareness is useful, but a more accurate measure of understanding comes from what people can actually identify without prompting. When those who claimed awareness of legislation, policies and programs were then asked to name them, the results provide a revealing picture of the absence of public knowledge in this area. In response to this question, only two-thirds could provide any answer, and none of the responses provided were given by more than a small percentage of citizens.

Most answers to this questions fall into one of two broad themes. The most common theme covers various policies and programs (mentioned by 39% of this group, which constitutes 8% of all Canadians),

which in most cases are general responses (e.g., employment, transportation) rather than specific initiatives, such as the Canada Pension Plan Disability or Workers Compensation. The second theme includes legislation or regulations, the common responses being the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (2% of all Canadians), the Canada Human Rights Act, and provincial legislation covering education and other areas.

FIGURE 32

Identification of specific legislation, policies or programs
Among those aware of any

Policies and Programs	39	Legislation/Regulations	30
Employment/work-related	11	Charter of Rights & Freedoms	11
Access to parking/building/transportation	10	Canada Human Rights Act	6
Social assistance program	4	Education Act	5
Canada Pension Plan Disability	4	Provincial laws/regulation	4
Transportation-related	3	Ontario with Disabilities Act	4
Employment Assistance for people with disabilities	3	Housing legislation	2
Community-assisted living	2	Other	1
Health-related	2	Other forms of support	12
Income tax-related	2	Don't know/no answer	35
Assisted device-related	2		
Long-term disability insurance	2		
Workers' Compensation	2		
Right to Home Care	2		
Other	5		

Other responses are more general in nature (12%), while one-third (35%) of those who previously said they were aware of something in this area were unable to identify anything when prompted to do so. The small size of the sample claiming any awareness in this area limits the analysis of subgroup differences, but the data do not reveal any obvious differences by disability status, demographics or region.

These results clearly show that Canadians know very little about current government activities at any level directed at persons with disabilities. This suggests that the public's attitudes and expectations about government's role and track record in this area are based largely in the abstract rather than on knowledge of what governments have actually been doing (or not doing). This would also suggest why many Canadians do not believe that persons with disabilities are receiving as much support as other disadvantaged groups, which may be receiving a higher profile.

Types of Support Needed by Family Caregivers

Financial assistance and help with medical care are most likely to be identified as the types of assistance needed by families caring for persons with disabilities.

Families clearly play an important role in supporting persons with disabilities, and the survey results show this is recognized by many Canadians. The survey asked the public its view about what types of assistance they believe families need most to fulfill this role.

Canadians provide a range of responses to this question, but most fit into one of six themes. Financial assistance (52%) is most widely identified as the type of assistance most needed by families caring for persons with disabilities. In most cases this is not expressed more specifically, although a few mention improved health coverage or Pharmacare.

FIGURE 33

Types of assistance most needed by family caregivers

Theme	
Financial assistance	52
Medical assistance (in-home support, home visits)	34
Education/counseling	21
Physical assistance (transportation, housing, equipment)	17
Government programs	5
Respite care	4
Other types of support	13
dk/na	16

Other themes to emerge include medical assistance (34%), encompassing in-home support and care (e.g., home visits by health practitioners), education or counseling to help family members learn what to do and cope with the challenges (21%), different forms of physical assistance, such as transportation, housing or specialized equipment (17%), respite care, to provide family members a break from this responsibility (4%), or government programs, services and legislation (5%). Other types of needs are identified by 13 percent, while a comparable percentage (16%) are unable to suggest anything.

The types of assistance for family caregivers do not vary noticeably across the population. Canadians with and without disabilities identify the same themes in essentially the same proportions. The emphasis given to financial support increases with household income, and is greater among those aged 31 to 64 (those most likely to be in a position to fulfill this type of caregiving role). The need for medical assistance and education/counseling increases along with education.

Study Methodology

Sample Design

The sampling method was designed to complete interviews with a representative sample of 1,800 Canadians, 18 years of age and older, and includes a large sample of persons with disabilities. The sample was stratified by region, age group, and disability status. Based on the most current Statistics Canada data available (2001), it was estimated that between 12 and 15 percent of Canadians have the type of disability of interest of this study. The sample was also generated through Random-Digit-Dialling (RDD) methods as a basis for drawing a national sampling frame for this survey.

The sample design also addressed the age distribution of persons with disabilities. Since this distribution is heavily skewed towards individuals 65 years and older, the sample of persons with disabilities was stratified to ensure sufficient subsamples in the lower age cohorts.

The following table outlines the final sample distribution and the margin of sampling error for each sample segment. The final data were weighted by disability status within age groups and by region to ensure the national results are fully proportionate to the actual distribution of the target population across the country.

FIGURE 34

Final Sample Distribution by Region and Disability Status*

Region	Total weighted sample	Total unweighted sample	Persons without disabilities**	Persons with disabilities**
Atlantic Canada	137	201 (+/- 6.9%)	150 (+/- 8.0%)	50 (+/- 13.9%)
Quebec	436	406 (+/- 4.9%)	284 (+/- 5.8%)	122 (+/- 8.9%)
Ontario	713	517 (+/- 4.3%)	374 (+/- 5.1%)	143 (+/- 8.2%)
Prairies	309	211 (+/- 6.8%)	153 (+/- 7.9%)	58 (+/- 12.9%)
British Columbia	242	302 (+/- 5.6%)	209 (+/- 6.8%)	93 (+/- 10.2%)
Territories	6	206 (+/- 6.8%)	151 (+/- 8.0%)	55 (+/- 13.2%)
CANADA	1,843	1,843 (+/- 2.3%)	1,322 (+/- 2.7%)	521 (+/- 4.3%)

*Margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence level

**Unweighted sample

From within each household contacted, respondents 18 years of age and older were screened based on their disability status. A two-question scheme based on Statistics Canada's 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) study was used to ensure that only Canadians with the types of disability of interest to this study were selected. A respondent with disabilities would qualify if they had any difficulty hearing, seeing, communicating, walking, climbing stairs, bending, learning or doing any similar activities (question 1), or if they had a physical or mental condition or health problem that reduces the amount or the kind of activity they can do either at home, at work or at school, or in other activities (question 2).

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire used for this survey was completely new and designed to address the general research objectives and specific areas of interest as outlined by ODI. This questionnaire was developed in consultation with ODI officials, and reviewed by selected major national disability organizations.

The core of the questionnaire contained a common set of questions for all survey respondents, but was tailored to address the different perspectives of those with and those without disabilities (e.g., the former were asked about specific experiences with barriers, while the latter were asked about their awareness and perceptions of such barriers).

Once the questionnaire was finalized and approved by ODI, it was translated into French using the company's professional translators. A copy of the French language version of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix A.

Pre-test. Prior to finalizing the survey for field, Environics conducted a full pre-test with "live" respondents. This consisted of telephone interviews in the same manner as for the full survey, but with a small sample of respondents with and without disabilities.

The interviews were monitored by Environics' senior research team and a representative from ODI. Following the pre-test, Environics provided ODI with a detailed assessment of the pre-test results, and recommendations on changes to the questionnaire.

Fieldwork

Telephone Interviewing. The interviewing was conducted from Environics' central facilities in Toronto and Montreal, between January 22 and February 12, 2004. Field supervisors were present at all times to ensure accurate interviewing and recording of responses. Ten percent of each interviewer's work was unobtrusively monitored for quality control in accordance with the standards set out by the Canadian Association of Marketing Research Organizations (CAMRO). The average length of time required to complete an interview was 25 minutes. Respondents that could not complete the interview due to their disabilities were given the choice to either conduct the interview using TTY or through a proxy (in this case a family member of a friend but not a professional caregiver).

Up to eight call-backs were made to reach each household selected in the sample, and such calls were made at different times of the day and days of the week, to maximize the chances of catching someone at home.

All surveys were conducted in respondents' official language of choice. In addition, respondents were advised of their rights under the Privacy and Access to Information Act (e.g., identifying purpose of research, identifying sponsoring agency and research supplier, the voluntary nature of the survey, and the protection of their responses under the Act). Respondents were also told how to obtain a copy of the final report, if so requested. This survey was registered under the Canadian Survey Research Council (CSRC). This registration system permits the public to verify a survey call, inform themselves about the industry and/or register a complaint.

Completion Results

A total of 41,043 numbers were available for this survey. During fieldwork, a total of 32,540 telephone numbers were drawn from this initial sample, and a total of 1,843 interviews were completed. The margin of error for a sample of 1,843 is +/- 2.3 percentage points, 19 times in 20. The margins are wider for regional and demographic subsamples.

The effective response rate for the survey is 9 percent: the number of completed interviews (1,843) divided by the total dialled sample (32,540) minus the non-eligible households, the non-valid/ non-residential numbers, the numbers not in service, and the numbers that presented a language barrier (12,224). The actual completion rate is 22 percent: the number of completed interviews (1,843) divided by the number of qualified respondents contacted directly (8,562). The following table presents the final disposition of all numbers dialled.

FIGURE 35

Completion Results

	#	%
Total Dialled Sample	32,540	100
Households Not eligible/ quota full	1,670	5
Non Residential/ Not in service	9,894	30
Language barrier	660	2
Subtotal	12,224	38
New Base (32,540 – 12,224)	20,316	100
No answer/line busy/respondent not available/ callbacks	11,754	58
Refusals	6,575	32
Mid-interview termination	144	*
Subtotal	18,473	91
Net Completions (20,316 - 18,473)	1,843	9
Completion Rate [1,843/(20,316 - 11,754)]		22

* Fewer than one percent

Note: percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.

Sample Profile

The following table presents a profile of the final unweighted sample, as well as a profile of respondents with and without disabilities, and by region/province and demographic characteristics.

Characteristics	Final Unweighted Sample		Persons without Disabilities		Persons with Disabilities	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
TOTAL SAMPLE	1,843	100	1,322	100	521	100
REGION						
Atlantic Provinces	201	11	150	11	50	10
New-Brunswick	62	3	51	4	11	2
Nova-Scotia	78	4	52	4	26	5
Prince Edward Island	10	1	6	0	4	1
Newfoundland	51	3	42	3	9	2
Quebec	406	22	284	21	122	23
Ontario	517	28	374	28	143	27
West	513	28	362	27	151	29
British-Columbia	302	16	209	16	93	18
Alberta	118	6	88	7	30	6
Saskatchewan	51	3	36	3	15	3
Manitoba	42	2	29	2	13	2
Territories	206	11	151	11	55	11
GENDER						
Men	757	41	557	42	200	38
Women	1,086	59	765	58	321	62
AGE*						
18-29	280	15	234	18	46	9
30-44	544	30	457	35	87	17
45-64	666	36	453	34	213	41
65 and over	295	16	135	10	160	31
LANGUAGE						
English	1,459	79	1,048	79	411	79
French	384	21	274	21	110	21
HOUSEHOLD INCOME**						
\$25,000 or less	357	19	187	14	170	33
\$25,001 to \$50,000	499	27	365	28	134	26
\$50,001 to \$75,000	366	20	278	21	88	17
More than \$75,000	422	23	346	26	76	15

* excludes respondents who declined to provide exact age

**excludes respondents who declined to provide exact income

Note: percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.