



Gender, Disability, and Low-Income

Background

Following the 2006 Census, Statistics Canada used the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) to gather information about people with disabilities. Disability was defined as any long-term or recurring difficulty in activities related to hearing, seeing, communicating, mobility, agility, learning or similar activities or a condition or health problem that reduces the amount or kind of activity people can do at home, work, school or other activities such as transportation or leisure. Based on PALS, 16.5% of adults or almost 4.2 million Canadians have at least one disability.

Together, the Census and PALS provide information about people with disabilities who live on low incomes (people in households that spend after taxes 20% or more than the average on food, shelter, and clothing). This is the after-tax low-income cut-off (LICO) and is sometimes called the 'poverty line'. It doesn't include disability-related costs such as medication, services, or aids for mobility, communication or learning. In 2005 almost half a million (20.5%) working-age adults 15 to 64 years with disabilities lived on a low income. This fact sheet compares the rates at which men and women with and without disabilities experience low incomes.

Disability and Gender

- Among working-age Canadians without disabilities, half are women (50.3%) whereas this is the case for slightly more than half of working-age Canadians with disabilities (53.2%).

Severity of Disability and Age

- More than half (53.5%) of working-age women with disabilities who live in low-income households have a severe to the very severe level of disability compared with just over a third of their counterparts (37.9%) who live above the LICO.



- Among working-age women without disabilities, one in four (25.1%) are 50 to 64 years of age. Among women with disabilities, this is the case for half (50.2%) who live on low incomes and on incomes above the LICO (50.3%)

Living Arrangements

- Most working-age women without disabilities (59.3%) live with a partner in a marriage or common-law union. Among women with disabilities who live in low-income households, only about one in five (19.1%) live in such arrangements. In contrast, most women with disabilities in low-income households (56.1%) live as “unattached” individuals, whether alone (45%) or with others to whom they are not related by ties of kinship (11.1%). Among their women counterparts with disabilities who live above the LICO, only 11.5% are 'unattached'.
- 18.4% of working-age women with disabilities in low-income households are lone parents compared with 9.9% of their counterparts who live above the LICO and 7.9% of women without disabilities. Only 4% of men with disabilities who live on low incomes are lone parents.
- 15.1% of working-age women with disabilities in low-income households live in places that are in need of major repairs, such as for defective plumbing or electrical wiring or for structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings. This is the case for 12.1% of their counterparts who live above the LICO and for 6.4% of women without disabilities.

Education, Employment, and Social Assistance

- Women tend to assume responsibility for childrearing and elder care and are more likely to be lone parents and to have fewer opportunities for stable, high-paid employment. It is, therefore, reasonable to anticipate that women with disabilities would be more likely than men to live in low-income households. The data reveals that women with disabilities are indeed slightly more likely than their male counterparts to live below the low-income cut-off (21.3% vs. 19.6%, respectively).
- That said, among working-age women with disabilities who live in low-income households, nearly four in ten (38.6%) have not received a high school graduation



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certificate and only one in four (24.2%) are working at a job or business. Among women without disabilities, only 17.5% haven't received a high school graduation certificate and most (70.7%) are employed.

- Among working-age women with disabilities who live in low-income households, half (49.5%) received social assistance in the past 12 months compared with fewer than one in ten (8.6%) whose household income was above the LICO.

Help with Everyday Activities

More than four in ten women with disabilities who live in low-income households (43.7%) have one or more unmet needs for disability-related help with everyday activities such as meal preparation, household chores, running errands, banking, personal care, moving about at home, etc. This is the case for less than one in three women with disabilities whose household income is above the LICO (30.7%). Men with disabilities are less likely to have unmet needs for help with everyday activities, regardless of whether their household income is above or below the LICO (20.7% and 29.4%, respectively).

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