

# Niagara Priority Profiles



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To improve health and health equity, it is important to understand specific groups in the planning of programs and services. The information in these profiles will help you understand how the different conditions and systems in which people are born, grow, work, and live impact their health. They provide some comparisons of different groups and over time. As populations change, programs can adapt to meet changing needs.

These profiles were created for Niagara Region Public Health, but can be used by anyone. You can use these profiles in planning and making decisions in any sector, department, or organization.

Intersectionality is the idea that people have many layers of their identity. Each person has a unique identity. That identity leads to different ways that the systems they live in benefit or harm them. Due to this, some individuals experience more health concerns than others. When you read these profiles, think about these different experiences. When planning projects, think about how you can include people with different voices and perspectives. To learn more about intersectionality, visit: [NCCDH Intersectionality and Health Equity](#)<sup>1</sup>.

For further information, please visit:

[Government of Canada Health Inequalities Data Tool](#)<sup>2</sup>

[Public Health Ontario Health Equity Data Tool](#)<sup>3</sup>

Please note the date ranges used within these profiles vary based on the data available, and are included in the references. These Profiles were created in 2020 and updated in 2023. The intent is to update with each census cycle. For more information or if you have any concerns, please contact [healthequity@niagararegion.ca](mailto:healthequity@niagararegion.ca).

<sup>1</sup> <https://nccdh.ca/resources/entry/public-health-speaks-intersectionality-and-health-equity>

<sup>2</sup> <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/health-inequalities/data-tool/index>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/health-equity>

# Niagara Priority Profiles



Niagara Priority Profiles: Disabilities  
Version 2

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Note:

If referencing a hardcopy of this Niagara Priority Profile, please confirm that it is the most up to date version by visiting: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/equity/priority-profiles.aspx>

The version number can be found at the top of this page on each profile.

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## What are Disabilities?

The term disability is broad and complex in that it describes a variety of conditions and individuals. The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) acknowledges this complexity by describing disability as “an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (4).

Section 10 of The Ontario Human Rights Code provides the following definition of disability (4):

1. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
4. a mental disorder, or
5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

## Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The provincial government in Ontario has set a goal for the province to be fully accessible by 2025. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), passed in 2005, aims to achieve this goal through the prevention and removal of barriers for people with disabilities. Specifically, AODA outlines accessibility standards and requirements across 5 areas (5):

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Transportation
- Employment
- Design of Public Spaces

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Government, public and private institutions, and businesses with more than one employee are all required to comply with this legislation. Non-compliance can result in significant financial penalties.

As mandated by the AODA, Niagara Region has established an Accessibility Advisory Committee to advise Regional Council in the development of a five-year accessibility plan, which is to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities in the Region's by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services (6).

## Disabilities: Demographic Information

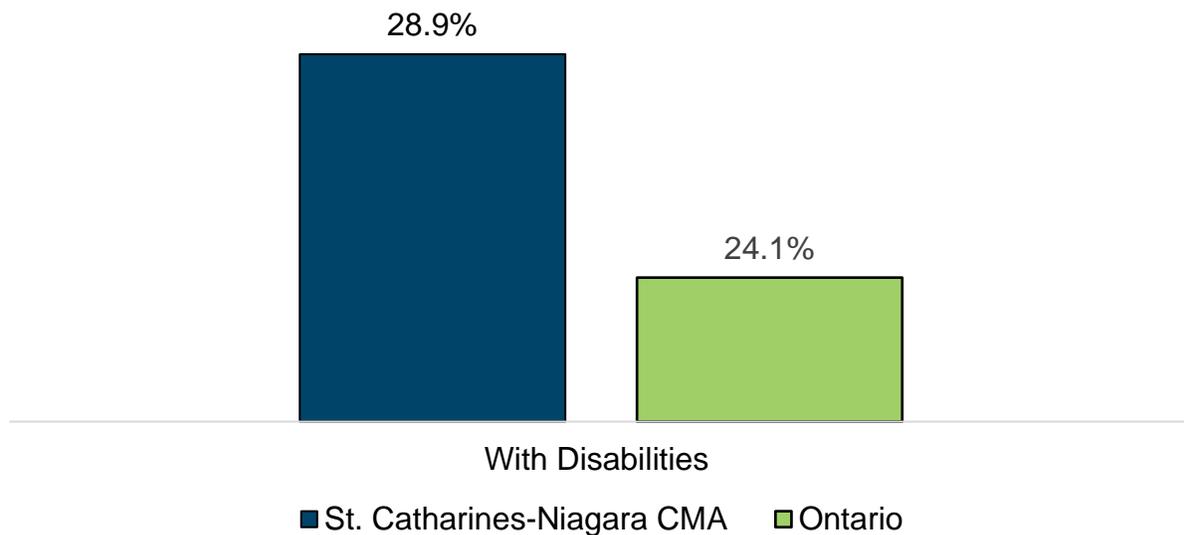
### Frequency of Disabilities in Niagara and Ontario

- The Canadian Survey on Disability identifies persons with disabilities using the Disability Screening Questions (DSQ), which measure the degree to which difficulties are experienced across 10 domains of functioning and then asks how often daily activities are limited by these difficulties (1)
- The St. Catharines-Niagara Census Metropolitan Area CMA has 90,500 persons with disabilities (28.9%) and 223,150 without (71.1%) (Figure 1)
  - St. Catharines-Niagara CMA has a higher proportion of individuals with disabilities compared to Ontario (24.1%) (Figure 1)
- Note: The St. Catharines-Niagara Census Metropolitan Area is not inclusive of the entire Niagara region, it excludes Grimsby and portions of West Lincoln

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Figure 1: Frequency of disabilities in St. Catharines-Niagara CMA and Ontario (2017)



**Data Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0750-01: Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, census metropolitan areas & Table 13-10-0374-01: Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories

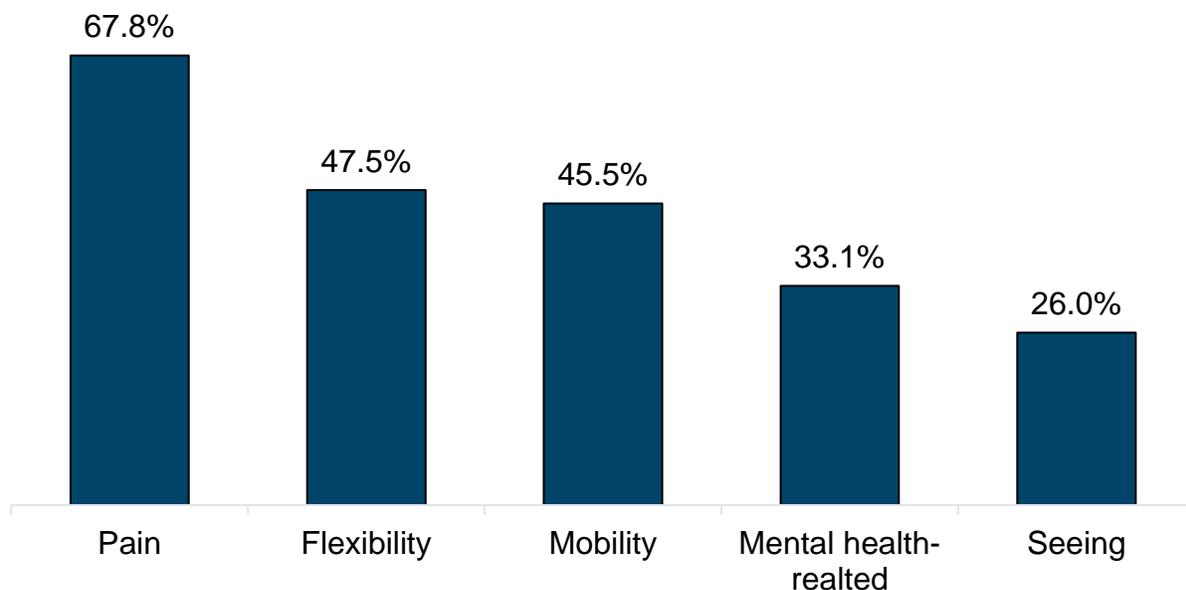
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## Types of Disabilities in Ontario

- Ontario has a higher percentage in each category of disabilities compared to Canada, except for learning disabilities which is slightly lower (17.3% to 17.7%) (1)
  - Pain is the most common type of disability in Ontario at 67.8% (Figure 2)
  - Note: Some individuals have more than one disability

Figure 2: Top five disabilities<sup>4</sup> in Ontario (2017)



Data Source: Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0376-01: Type of disability for persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories

<sup>4</sup> Disability categories are not mutually exclusive as individuals may identify with more than one disability.

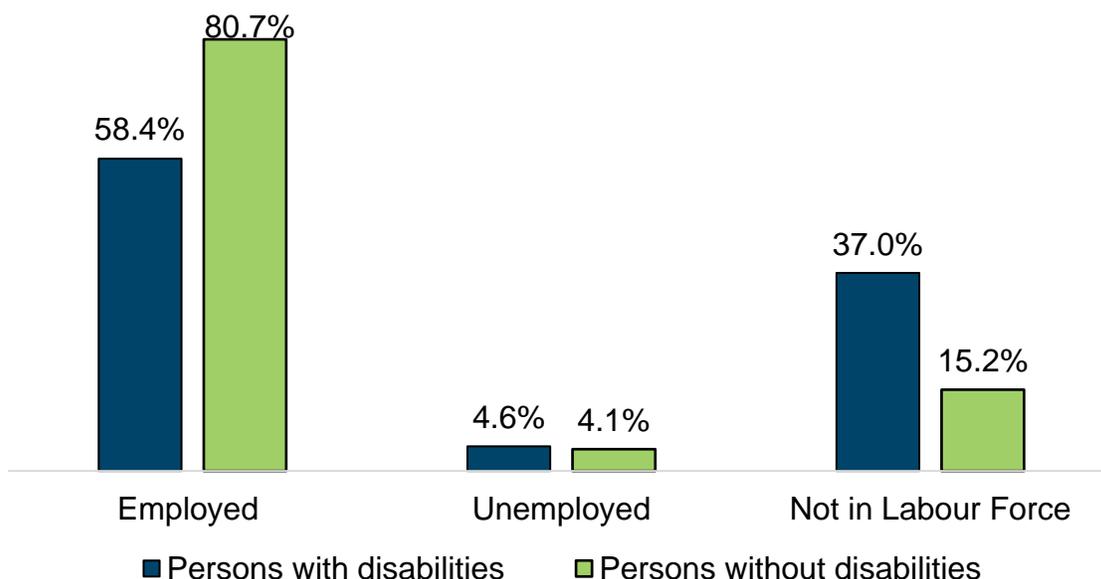
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## Labour Force Characteristics and Disability

- In Ontario, labour force characteristics differ substantially by disability status
- **Employed** refers to persons who during the reference period did any work for pay or profit, including those who had a job but were absent from work (1)
- **Unemployed** refers to persons who were available for work during the reference week and who had looked for a job within the previous four weeks (1)
- **Not in Labour Force** refers to persons unwilling or unable to work (1)
  - 58.4% of persons with disabilities are employed, compared to 80.7% of persons without disabilities (Figure 3)
  - 37.0% of persons with disabilities are not in the labour force, compared to 15.2% of persons without disabilities (Figure 3)

**Figure 3: Labour force status of persons with and without disability in Ontario (2017)**



**Data Source:** Statistic Canada. Table 13-10-0377-01 Labour force status of persons with and without disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories

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## Economic Cost of Disabilities

- A systematic review of literature on the direct costs associated with living with a disability found that the highest economic costs are for those with severe disabilities and among persons with disabilities living alone (2)
- In Canada, about 15.0% of youth with milder disabilities were neither in school nor employed, compared with about 31.0% of youth with more severe disabilities (1)
- In Canada, people with no disabilities have a higher median after tax income (\$39,000) compared to those with milder disabilities (\$34,300) and those with severe disabilities (\$19,200) (1)

## Gender, Age, and Disability

- The 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) estimates that 1 in 5 Canadians (6.2 million) over the age of 15 has one or more disabilities that limit their daily functions (1) and finds:
  - 13.0% of youth (aged 15-24) has one or more disabilities (1)
  - 20.0% of working age adults (aged 25-64) has one or more disabilities (1)
  - 38.0% of older adults (aged 65+) has one or more disabilities (1)
  - Women (24%) are more likely to have a disability than men (20%) (1)

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## Disabilities: Social Outcomes

Each person with a disability has a unique experience, which leads to unique barriers to health. The severity of disability can impact all aspects of a person's life, the more severe a person's disability, the more barriers they can encounter. Potential barriers to health include: having a harder time finding safe and secure housing, an increased chance of having a lower education and employment rate, and poorer mental health outcomes.



### In Canada, those who identify as having a disability<sup>5</sup>:

- Experience food insecurity at a rate that is 4.0 times more than that of those without a participation or activity limitation
- Are 13% less likely to identify a somewhat or very strong sense of community belonging compared to those without a participation or activity limitation
- Are 1.6 times more likely report feeling stressed at work compared to those without a participation or activity limitation

**Data Source:** Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Data (3)

<sup>5</sup> Participation or activity limitation was used as a proxy measure for disability. This is defined as often experiencing limitations in daily activities (i.e. work, home, school) related to a long-term physical health condition, mental health condition or health problem that has lasted or will last 6 or more months

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