

Research Brief: Disability in York Region

With approximately 1.2 million residents in 2019, York Region is one of the fastest growing and most diverse communities in Canada. As residents age and the population grows and diversifies, the number of people with disabilities is also expected to increase.

This research brief focuses on the York Region population 15 years of age and over whose everyday activities were limited because of a long-term (six months or more) or health-related condition. The information in this brief is based on the results of the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD).

Why is this data important?

The data provides a profile of reported disabilities in our community and barriers that people with disabilities may face every day. It presents opportunity for evidence-based program and service delivery planning to meet the needs of people with disabilities in York Region. The data also underscores the importance of organizational and community accessibility and inclusion efforts. It can be leveraged to support York Region as a welcoming and inclusive community for people of all abilities.

Key highlights

- In 2017, 17.5% (or 162,600)¹ of York Region residents 15 years of age and over had one or more disabilities
- The prevalence of disability in York Region increased with age, from 9.3%*² (or 14,850*) for those 15 to 24 years of age to 13.6% (or 83,400) for those 25 to 64 years of age, and to 41.0% (or 64,350) for those 65 years of age and over. The same age-related pattern was observed across Ontario and Canada
- In York Region, 18.5% (or 89,550) of women and 16.3% (or 73,050) of men had at least one disability
- Overall, the most common disability types among York Region residents were pain-related, mobility and flexibility³

- The prevalent disability types were different among youth, working-age adults and seniors with disabilities:
 - For youth who were 15 to 24 years of age, the most common disability type was mental-health related (62.0%* or 9,200*)
 - For working-age adults who were 25 to 64 years of age, the most prevalent disability type was pain-related (70.7% or 59,000)
 - For seniors who were 65 years of age and over, mobility was identified as the most common disability type (72.2%* or 46,450*)
- Among York Region residents with disabilities, 20.3% (or 33,000 individuals) reported an unmet need for required aids or assistive devices due to cost and 13.2% (or 21,500) were unable to afford prescription medications due to cost
- Among working-age adults (25 to 64 years of age), people with disabilities were less likely to be employed (56.5%* or 47,150*) than people without disabilities (79.7% or 422,900)
- Among three York Region municipalities for which data was available, Vaughan had the highest rate of disability (21.4% or 54,450) followed by Richmond Hill (19.0%* or 31,300*) and Markham (12.0%* or 34,100*)

Overall findings

In 2017, nearly one out of five (or 17.5%) York Region residents who were 15 years of age and over lived with at least one disability. That represents 162,600 York Region residents whose daily activities were restricted because of a long-term or health-related condition (see Table 1). In comparison, the disability rate was 24.1% (or 2,616,170) for Ontario and 22.3% (or 6,246,640) for Canada.

About the Canadian Survey on Disability

The 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) is a national survey developed by Statistics Canada. It is based on a sample of 50,000 people across Canada who reported having difficulty on the Activities of Daily Living question from the 2016 Census long-form questionnaire. These respondents were at least 15 years of age on the Census Day and were living in private dwellings.

For more information about the 2017 CSD, see Appendix A: About the CSD Data

Table 1. Prevalence of disabilities among York Region residents 15 years of age and over, 2017

	Total Population	Persons with Disabilities	Percent of persons with disabilities
Total population 15 years of age and over	931,400	162,600	17.5%
15 to 24 years	160,450	14,850*	9.3%*
25 to 64 years	614,150	83,400	13.6%
65 years of age and over	156,850	64,350	41.0%
65 to 74	98,150	32,600*	33.2%*
75 to 84	41,000	17,650*	43.0%
85 years of age and over	17,650	14,100*	79.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, custom tabulations

Sex

In York Region, disabilities were more prevalent among women than men. While 18.5% (or 89,550) of women had restricted daily activities, 16.3% (or 73,050) men had the same. The same sex-related pattern was observed in Ontario and Canada. In Ontario, the disability rate among women was 26.0% (or 1,459,410) compared to 22.0% (or 1,156,760) among men. In Canada, 24.3% (or 3,483,090) of women had disabilities compared to 20.2% (or 2,763,540) of men.

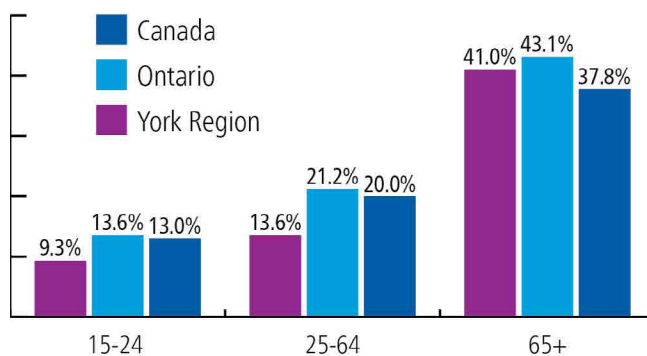
Age

The prevalence of disability increased with age. The rate of disability was lowest among youth (9.3%* or 14,580*) and highest among seniors (41.0% or 64,350). In York Region, seniors (41.0% or 64,350) were almost three times more likely to have disabilities than working-age adults (13.6% or 83,400) (see Chart 1).

While the disability rate among youth and working-age adults in York Region was lower than in Ontario and Canada, this was not the case for seniors with disabilities. The prevalence of disability among persons 65 years of age and over (41.0% or 64,350) was higher in York Region than in Canada (37.8% or 1,972,310) but still lower than in Ontario (43.1% or 870,360)

(see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Prevalence of disability by age group

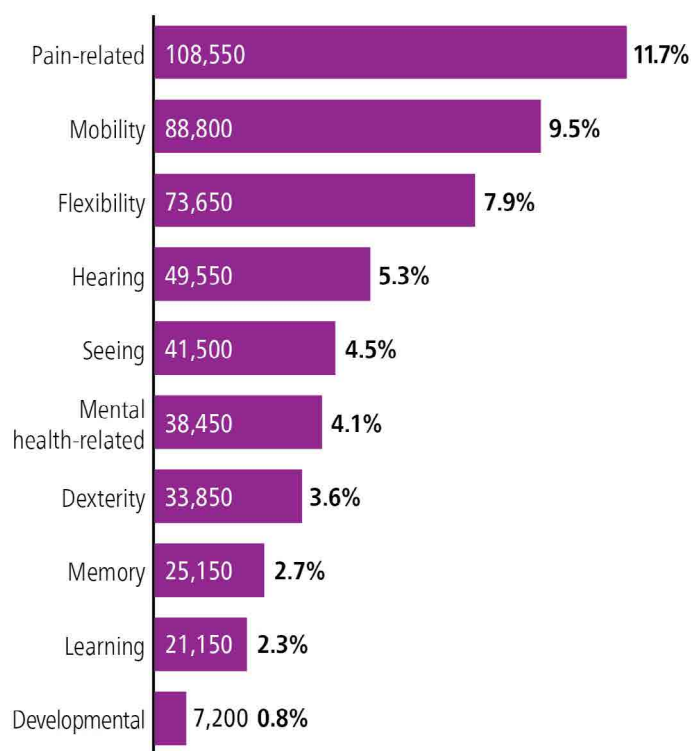


Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, custom tabulations

Types of disabilities

Among York Region residents 15 years of age and over, the three most prevalent disability types were pain-related (11.7% or 108,550), mobility (9.5% or 88,800 residents) and flexibility (7.9% or 73,650). This was followed by the following disability types: hearing (5.3%* or 49,550*), seeing (4.5%* or 41,500*), mental health-related (4.1% or 38,450), dexterity (3.6%* or 33,850*), memory (2.7%* or 25,150*), learning (2.3%* or 21,150*) and developmental (0.8%* or 7,200*) (see Chart 2).

Chart 2: Disability type among York Region residents aged 15 years and over, 2017



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, custom tabulations

The top three disability types were different for youth, working-age adults and seniors.

- Among youth with disabilities, 62.0%* (or 9,200*) had mental health-related disabilities, 54.2%* (or 8,050*) lived with a learning disability and 40.4%* (or 6,000*) had memory disability
- Among working-age residents with disabilities, 70.7% (or 59,000) had pain-related disability, 49.3%* (or 41,100*) had mobility issues and 40.0%* (or 33,350*) had restricted daily activities due to flexibility conditions
- For seniors with disabilities, 72.2%* (or 46,450*) had mobility disability, 68.1%* (or 43,850*) faced pain-related disabilities and 61.1%* (or 39,350*) were restricted due to flexibility conditions

Employment rates

Among York Region residents 25 to 64 years of age, employment rates were different for people with disabilities and for those without disabilities (see Table 2). The rate of employment⁴ of people with disabilities was 56.5%* (or 47,150*) compared to 79.7% (or 422,900) of people without disabilities. Among people in the labour force⁵, 90%* (or 47,150*) of people with disabilities were employed compared to 96% (or 422,900) of people without disabilities.

Table 2. Employment status of working-age York Region residents (25 to 64 years), 2017

	Total population 25 to 64 years of age	Percent of total population 25 to 64 years of age	Persons with disabilities	Percent of persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities	Percent of persons without disabilities
Total population 25 to 64 years of age	614,150	100.0%	83,400	100.0%	530,750	100.0%
In labour force	494,100	80.5%	52,300*	62.7%*	441,850	83.3%
Employed	470,050	76.5%	47,150*	56.5%*	422,900	79.7%
Unemployed	24,050*	3.9%*	N/A	N/A	18,950*	3.6%*
Not in the labour force	120,050	19.5%	31,100*	37.3%	88,900	16.7%

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, custom tabulations

Unmet needs due to cost

In York Region, 20.3% (or 33,000) of people with disabilities 15 years of age and over were unable to afford required aids or assistive devices due to cost. Examples of aids or assistive devices include canes, walkers, specialized software or architectural features in the home such as widened doorways and ramps. Also, 13.2% (or 21,500) of York Region residents with disabilities were unable to afford prescription medications due to cost.

Disability statistics in municipalities

Disability population statistics were available for three local municipalities: Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill. Among these municipalities, Vaughan had the highest disability rate of 21.4% (or 54,450) followed by Richmond Hill with 19.0%* (or 31,300*) and Markham with 12.0%* (or 34,100*). The sample size limited individual municipality analysis to these three municipalities only.

In Vaughan and Markham, the proportion of people with disabilities was greater among women than men. In Vaughan, 22.8%* (or 29,750*) of women experienced at least one disability compared with 20.0%* (or 24,650*) of men. In Markham, 12.8%* (or 17,750*) of women had at least

one disability compared with 11.1%* (or 16,300*) of men. However, in Richmond Hill, the proportion was reversed with 20.4%* (or 15,200*) of men having one or more disabilities, compared with 17.9%* (or 16,100*) of women.

In Vaughan, working-age adults without disabilities were almost twice as likely to be employed as those with disabilities. While 84.9% (or 117,100) of Vaughan residents without disabilities were employed, only 45.7%* (or 13,400*) of people with disabilities were employed. In Markham, the employment rates of working-age adults with and without disabilities were very similar to each other: 73.0%* (or 13,500*) and 74.4% (or 133,500) respectively. No employment data was available for Richmond Hill.

Strong, safe and caring communities

The data in this research brief presents an opportunity for evidence-based program and service delivery planning to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in York Region. Planning to meet community needs supports the Region's vision of strong, caring, safe communities. Creating accessible communities where every person who lives or visits can participate makes good sense for everyone - people, businesses, and communities.

To request a copy of this research brief in another format or to send us your comments or questions, please contact us at:

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Appendix A: About the CSD Data

It is important to note the following information when interpreting and using this data:

1. People living in collective dwellings were excluded from survey participation. Collective dwellings may be institutional or non-institutional and may include hospitals, long-term care facilities, correctional institutions, religious establishments (such as convents and monasteries), rooming and boarding houses, assisted living centres and establishments offering temporary lodging (such as hotels and shelters).
2. The CSD uses the social model of disability, which is different than how disability is defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The premise of the social model is that disability is the result of the interaction between a person's functional limitations and barriers in the environment, including social and physical barriers that make it harder to function day-to-day.
3. The OHRC and AODA use a medical model of disability. The OHRC defines disability as:
 - 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
 - A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
 - A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
 - A mental disorder
 - An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

For more information about the 2017 CSD, please visit the [Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017: Concepts and Methods Guide](#).

Endnotes

- 1 Numbers in brackets represent the number of people.
- 2 The data marked by an asterisk (*) should be interpreted with caution because, due to a larger variability of the sample, the estimates of the population for that particular group might contain a bigger margin of error.
- 3 Respondents could report more than one disability on the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability.
- 4 Rate of employment of a particular group is the number of employed people of that group expressed as a percentage of the entire population of that group. Source: Statistics Canada, Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016, p. 223.
- 5 Labour force is calculated as the sum of the number of people who are employed and the number of people who are unemployed. Source: Statistics Canada, Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016, p. 239.