



Employment and  
Social Development Canada

Emploi et  
Développement social Canada

# Government of Canada 2019 Pilot Public Opinion Research Survey on Accessibility

## Employment and Social Development Canada

October 2019

## Executive Summary

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Canada 

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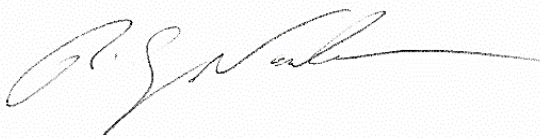


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Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Nadeau", is written over a light gray, dotted rectangular background.

Rick Nadeau, President  
Quorus Consulting Group Inc.

## Overview – Background and Methodology

In 2018, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)'s Accessibility Secretariat commissioned a study to measure Canadians' awareness and experience(s) with accessibility and disability issues. The results of the survey will be used primarily to track progress for Canadians in the implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act* and becoming a Canada without barriers.

The scope of the study involved two key population segments: persons with disabilities and members of the general population (i.e. individuals who do not have a disability). An Instrument was developed to identify people with disabilities specifically for the purpose of this public opinion research. While some of the wording for some of the questions used was borrowed from the Disability Screening Questions (DSQ) of the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, the instrument is completely different from the DSQ and does not pretend to replicate it in any way. Questions on difficulty with certain activities along with questions about how these difficulties limit people in their everyday lives were used to screen respondents into the disability segment of the survey. The study focused on accessibility and not the degree a person's disability limits their daily activities.

The data collection approaches used for each segment can be summarized in the following ways:

### General Population

- A total of 1,350 telephone interviews with Canadians, 18 years of age and older.
- The sample consisted of traditional wireline telephone numbers and a sub-quota of cell phone-only households.
- The margin of error of this sample size is +/- 2.7%, 19 times out of 20.
- Data was weighted by region, gender, and age to ensure that the final distributions within the final sample mirror those of the Canadian population according to the latest Census data.

### Persons with Disabilities

- A total of 2,456 surveys were completed with persons with disabilities at least 18 years of age, of which 666 were completed by telephone, 1,788 were completed online and 2 were completed by respondents who submitted a hardcopy version of the questionnaire or completed and emailed an electronic version of the questionnaire.
- Nearly all surveys completed over the telephone (~650) consisted of traditional wireline telephone numbers and a sub-quota of cell phone-only households. The remaining telephone interviews were completed with individuals who dialed into the toll-free number to schedule an interview.

- Surveys through other data collection modes were completed by individuals contacted through departmental partnerships and stakeholder networks.
- In 2018, more than 50 organizations, interested in creating relevant and effective federal legislation, came together to form the *Federal Accessibility Legislation Alliance (FALA)*. The federal government provided a grant to assist these organizations in working together. Feedback was sought from the disability community to determine how to strengthen the legislation. By the end of the project, there were over 100 organizations and over 2,700 individuals working with FALA. The questionnaire used for this study was designed by Quorus Consulting in consultation with ESDC, and the leadership team of FALA. In the questionnaire, the definition of disability from the *Accessible Canada Act* was used. The entire questionnaire underwent a plain language edit by a service provider to ensure it was as approachable as possible for persons with intellectual and learning disabilities.
- Respondents from this segment could complete the survey using a variety of accessible formats: telephone, online, American or Quebec Sign Language, downloadable PDF and MSWord versions, e-text, Braille, digital Braille, DAISY, VRS and hardcopy versions.
- Given the non-probability nature of the sampling, a margin of error cannot be calculated. As well, data for this segment were not weighted. Therefore, the population segment that participated in this survey cannot be compared to the broader population of people with disabilities in Canada.

Study parameters common to both segments included the following:

- Data collection occurred between May 24<sup>th</sup> and July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and included a pretest of all data collection modes and formats. In addition to testing for accessibility, the pretest helped assess the flow of the survey, comprehension of the questions, language, data integrity, and the length of the survey instrument.
- All study respondents were informed that the study was being conducted by Quorus on behalf of ESDC.
- All data collection modes were available in English and in French.
- Participants did not receive any incentive for completing the survey.
- All participants were provided the following standard reassurances regarding the confidential and anonymous nature of their opinion data:

*Your responses will be kept entirely confidential and anonymous. If at any time during the survey you are not comfortable with a question, you can skip it.*

*Your decision to participate is up to you and will not affect your relationship with the Government of Canada or the services they provide you. The information provided will be managed according to the requirements of the Privacy Act. The final report on the survey will be available through Library and Archives Canada.*

Depending on their feedback, the survey took respondents approximately 15 minutes to complete.

## OVERVIEW OF RESULTS – GENERAL POPULATION

- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of the general population would say they understand quite well the idea of what a disability is (i.e. they rated their understanding at least an 8 on a scale from 0 to 10). Using the same 10-point scale, 47% would say they understand quite well the types of barriers that Canadians with a disability may encounter.
- When asked, without any examples, to describe the top three barriers respondents believed people with disabilities face, the results reveal a wide range of barriers. The most common types described included the following:
  - The most common types of barriers described were related to physical accessibility, such as access to buildings (39%).
  - At 24%, general mobility-related barriers were described while 19% specifically identified barriers to transportation or public transportation.
  - Roughly 18% mentioned barriers related to access to services.
- A majority of respondents (57%) indicated having heard of “attitude barriers” before participating in this study. For instance, people with disabilities are sometimes treated badly or differently because of behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions that other people have. This is called an “attitude barrier.”
- Respondents who were asked how often they *witnessed* different types of accessibility-related barriers, witnessed employment-related barriers the most. Statistics for each type of disability are as follows:
  - As for *employment-related barriers*, 24% indicated *always* or *often* witnessing a barrier to finding meaningful work, 21% witnessed a barrier to moving up in an organization, 21% witnessed a barrier to having access to supports or workplace accommodations, and 16% witnessed a barrier to being hired.
  - In terms of *transportation-related barriers*, 11% *always* or *often* witnessed barriers to using municipal public-transit, 10% to using taxis and ridesharing services, 5% to using

- school transportation, 2% to using ferries, 3% to using VIA rail or interprovincial trains, 6% to travel by air, and 4% to using buses that cross borders.
- Nearly one in five respondents (17%) have *always* or *often* witnessed *built environment-related barriers*, i.e. barriers that limited someone’s ability to move in and around public buildings and spaces.
  - Less than one tenth of respondents have *always* or *often* witnessed *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-related barriers*, including: website accessibility (7%), wireless service accessibility (7%), using self-service technology in a public space (6%), watching cable (5%), watching a show on a streaming service (5%), or watching a video on the Internet (6%).
  - *Program or service delivery barriers* are reported to be *always* or *often* witnessed in terms of the accessibility of a program/service provided by a company/an organization (7%), or the accessibility of a government program or service (6%).
- A minority (15%) have seen, read, or heard anything about the Government of Canada’s Bill C-81 (The *Accessible Canada Act*) and its purpose.<sup>1</sup> When asked to explain, without any examples, what they remember about this Act, 20% who remember the Bill explain it will generally support or assist people with disabilities and 16% explain it will increase accessibility.
  - Half believe their province or territory (50%) has accessibility legislation or an accessibility strategy or plan and a similar proportion (55%) believe their municipality has accessibility by laws, strategies, policies or programs.

## OVERVIEW OF RESULTS – PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

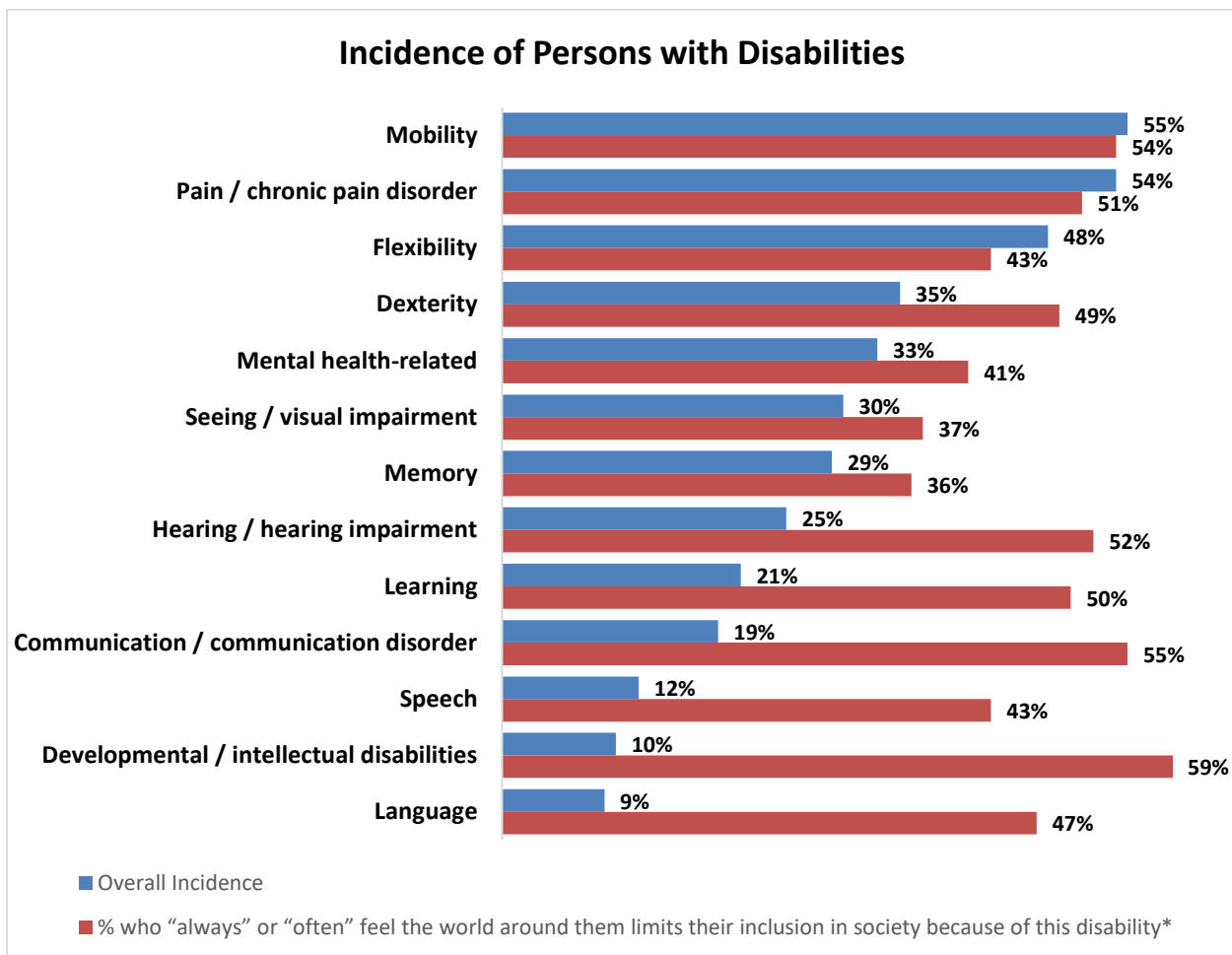
- When first asked if respondents identified themselves as a person with a disability, 74% agreed. To establish if the respondents “qualify” for the disabilities segment of the survey, respondents were presented a list of disabilities and directly asked if they have had each specific disability. If yes, then the difficulty and limitation as a result of the disability(ies) were then considered to screen participants to qualify for the persons with disabilities segment of the survey. Note that the types of disabilities listed here may not perfectly represent all persons with disabilities in Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> Bill C-81: the *Accessible Canada Act* received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019 and came into force on July 11, 2019. This took place during data collection for the survey.

The disability screening revealed the following:

**Figure 1: Incidence of Persons with Disabilities**



\*Base: respondents who indicated having the given disability

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) used equipment, an aid or a support to help them with their daily activities. Among these respondents, a very wide range of “supports” are used, the most common ones being a cane or walker (32%), a wheelchair or mobility scooter (32%), and a hearing aid (19%).
- One in ten (11%) feel they “always” experience “attitude barriers”, 30% feel they “often” encounter them and another 28% “sometimes” encounter them.
- From a communication standpoint, challenges vary according to the form of communication – more specifically:
  - 23% feel communicating over the phone is difficult
  - 21% feel writing down information is difficult



- 16% feel in person or face to face communications are difficult
- 14% feel reading and understanding written materials is difficult
- 13% feel communicating over the Internet is difficult
- Respondents who were asked how often they *experienced* the following types of accessibility-related barriers, experienced employment-related barriers the most. Statistics for each type of disability are as follows:
  - As for *employment-related barriers*, 25% indicated *always* or *often* experiencing a barrier to finding meaningful work, 24% witnessed a barrier to having access to supports or workplace accommodations, 23% witnessed a barrier to moving up in an organization, and 21% witnessed a barrier to being hired.
  - In terms of *transportation-related barriers*, 20% *always* or *often* experienced barriers to using municipal public-transit, 19% to travelling by air, 17% to using taxis and ridesharing services, 6% to using ferries, 9% to using VIA rail or interprovincial trains, and 8% to using buses that cross borders.
  - Over one quarter of respondents (30%) have *always* or *often* experienced *built environment-related barriers*, i.e. barriers that limited someone's ability to move in and around public buildings and spaces.
  - Less than one fifth of respondents have *always* or *often* experienced *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-related barriers*, including: website accessibility (12%), wireless service accessibility (10%), using self-service technology in a public space (16%), watching cable (11%), watching a show on a streaming service (10%), or watching a video on the Internet (14%).
  - Program or service delivery barriers are reported to be *always* or *often* experienced in terms of the *accessibility of a program/service* provided by a company/an organization (20%), or the accessibility of a government program or service (17%).
- Two in five respondents (41%) have seen, read, or heard anything about the Government of Canada's Bill C-81 and its purpose. When asked to explain, unprompted, what they remember about this Act, 17% who remember the Bill explain it will generally support or assist people with disabilities and 17% explain it will increase accessibility.
- Nearly half believe their province or territory (45%) has accessibility legislation or an accessibility strategy or plan and a similar proportion (45%) believe their municipality has accessibility by laws, strategies, policies or programs.

- Over the past 12 months, 42% of respondents have tried to access information on any government programs or services related to accessibility or disability.
  - Among these respondents, 69% sought out provincial information, 57% federal information, and 36% municipal information.
  - Generally, a majority felt the experience was either “very difficult” (22%) or “difficult” (37%) whereas 14% felt the experience was easy.
- When it comes to Government of Canada employees providing equal access to services and programs to people with different disabilities, including communication disabilities, 44% believe “much more” needs to be done in this area and 26% believe “a little more” needs to be done.

**Supplier Name: Quorus Consulting Group Inc.**

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