

# Persons Living with Disabilities

The rate of disability is increasing. 250 respondents to the 2023 Community Social Needs Assessment (CSNA) public and stakeholder surveys identified as living with a disability. Based on the findings from the surveys, **persons with disabilities** are one of the groups identified as being underserved within St. Albert.

A person with disabilities is defined as persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric, or learning impairment that has an adverse effect on carrying out normal day-to-day activities and hinders a person's ability to participate fully in the community.

Alberta's Family and Community Support Services Accountability Framework identifies barriers to full employment as a prevention priority.

## St. Albert Context

- **20%** of St. Albert's population identifies as living with a disability.
- Applying this rate to St. Albert's 2021 population means that nearly 14,000 residents are living with a physical or mental disability.
- In 2023, Transitions Rehabilitation Association of St. Albert and District developed and provided specialized continuous learning sessions for persons living with developmental disabilities, considering their unique needs (non-verbal; different learning methods; anxiety) and offered in their fully accessible, technology equipped training rooms.
  - Topics included financial literacy, food security, personal boundaries, online safety, avoiding scams, positive social media, meaningful relationships, creative meals, positive thinking, and achieving goals to address current physical and mental issues.



## Quality of Life

In the CSNA public survey, respondents were asked to identify quality of life aspects that they felt were St. Albert's greatest strengths.

Respondents with a disability ranked the following quality of life aspects the highest:

- safe neighbourhoods
- walkability
- personal safety
- gathering places
- cultural and recreational opportunities
- sense of pride and belonging in the community
- volunteering

Respondents with a disability ranked the following quality of life aspects the lowest:

- affordability
- housing
- civic involvement
- equity
- timely access to supports

Respondents were also asked to help identify important social and housing issues. The top issues selected by people with disabilities were as follows:

### Social issues

- primary healthcare
- mental health
- suicide
- poverty
- Supports for those with disabilities

### Housing issues

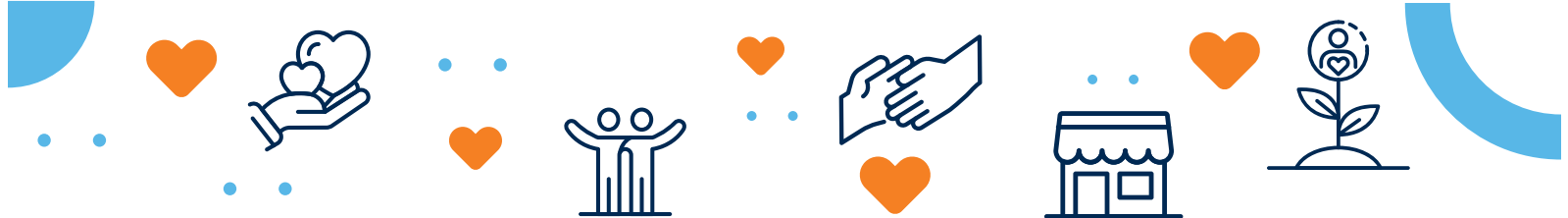
- aging in place
- accessibility
- affordability



Persons with disabilities cite limited and inadequate accessibility to programs, services and transportation options.



We need accessible, affordable housing for people with disabilities so they can continue living in the town that they grew up in.



The most common barriers identified by public survey respondents who identified as living with a disability when accessing social programs and services are:

- accessibility
- programs not available in St. Albert
- programs being unaffordable
- transportation issues

According to the stakeholder survey, the top services organizations refer people to outside of St. Albert include:

- shelter or housing services (65%),
- mental health services (41%),
- addiction services (35%),
- support groups or peer networks (27%)

Social programs missing in St. Albert include autism supports and more equitable, accessible, and inclusive safe services, resources and spaces.

## Inclusion and Feeling Welcome

When asked, “In your experience, is our community welcoming, inclusive and do we value diversity”, public survey respondents with disabilities indicated:

Agree	Unsure	Disagree
57%	27%	16%

The stakeholder survey identified challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in accessing housing and related services.

- Affordability challenges: People, especially those living on Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped or with developmental disabilities, face difficulties in finding affordable accommodations.
- Underserved groups: Persons with disabilities are identified as one of the underserved groups in St. Albert, with a concern highlighted by 35% of respondents.
- Service improvement needs: Respondents express the need for enhanced services catering to individuals with disabilities, emphasizing the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion.
- Priority areas: Visual minorities, seniors, and individuals with disabilities are recognized as priority areas for addressing gaps in services.
- Identified gaps: Affordable housing for youth and individuals with disabilities is identified as a notable gap in St. Albert.



## National Issues and Trends

### Disability Rates Are Increasing

In 2022, **27%** of Canadians aged 15 and older, or eight million people, had at least one disability. This represents an **increase of 4.7** percentage points from 2017.

From 2017 to 2022, mental health-related, pain-related, and seeing disabilities had the **largest increases**, contributing the most to the rise in the Canadian disability rate.

In 2022, the rate of disability was **higher among women** (30%) than men (24%), following the same pattern from 2017.

### Mental Health-Related Disabilities

- Persons with disabilities were almost **twice as likely** as persons without disabilities to report that most days are quite a bit or extremely stressful (23.4% vs. 11.9%).
- Persons with disabilities were more than **ten times as likely** as persons without disabilities to report that their main source of stress was related to their health (13.8% vs. 1.1%).
- Persons with mental health-related disabilities were **less likely** than those without mental health-related disabilities to have three or more close friends and relatives.

### Discrimination and Stigma

- Discrimination and stigma are major barriers that hinder full participation and inclusion.
- Social exclusion for those with disabilities from health care, employment, education, and general participation in society can be linked to the relationship between disability and poverty.
- Disabled Canadians face continued discrimination and are more likely to experience homelessness and live below the poverty line than Canadians without disabilities.



## Disability and Poverty

**917,000** working-age Canadians with disabilities (23%) are living in poverty.

Individuals with **severe disabilities** (28%) and **very severe disabilities** (34%) are notably vulnerable, facing a higher risk of poverty.

- Canadians with disabilities, encompassing women, men, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, racialized communities, and Indigenous people, exhibit higher levels of financial insecurity compared to the general population.
- 25% of Canadians with disabilities allocate more than 30% of their total household income to shelter costs.
- Employment rate in 2022 for those aged 16 to 64 years without disabilities was 80%, compared with 65% for persons with disabilities.
- The unemployment rate was nearly twice as high for persons with disabilities (6.9%) than for those without (3.8%), and median hourly wages were on average 5.5% lower.
- Canadians with disabilities earn 12% less for milder disabilities and 51% less for more severe disabilities.



To learn more, visit the Government of Alberta's website at [alberta.ca/persons-with-developmental-disabilities-pdd](https://alberta.ca/persons-with-developmental-disabilities-pdd)



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