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Reports on Disability and Accessibility in Canada

A profile of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, 2022

by Tasha Rabinowitz

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Highlights

- Reflecting the younger age structure of the 2SLGBTQ+ population overall, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities are younger on average than their non-2SLGBTQ+ counterparts
- Mental health-related and learning disabilities are the most prevalent disability types among 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities
- Over three-quarters of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities experience 1 or more barriers to accessibility
- 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 to 24 years have more co-occurring disabilities and more severe disabilities than non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities
- 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years are more likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher compared with non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities

Introduction

In 2022, nearly 8.0 million Canadians aged 15 years and over had one or more disabilities according to the Canadian Survey on Disability (Textbox 1). Among them, approximately 8.7%, or 694,090 individuals reported being a 2SLGBTQ+ person, representing 2.3% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and over. Previous research shows that sexually and gender diverse populations have different outcomes than non-2SLGBTQ+ people in matters related to health^{1,2}, employment and income^{3,4,5}, housing security⁶, food security⁷ and educational outcomes.³ At the same time, persons with disabilities have unique employment, labour force, and educational outcomes compared to those without disabilities.⁸ For the first time, the Canadian Survey of Disability is able to produce data for 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities. Research on a range of disability characteristics, and on the full 2SLGBTQ+ population will provide insight into the lived experiences of these populations.

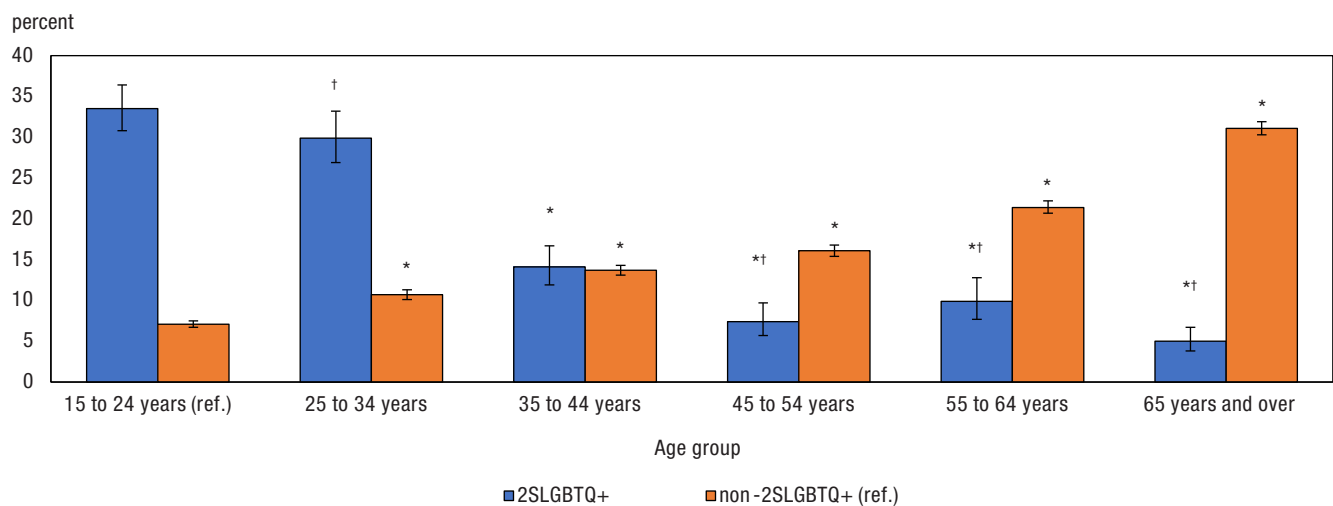
Textbox 1: Canadian Survey on Disability

The [Canadian Survey on Disability](#) (CSD) is the official source of data on persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada. In 2022, the CSD reflected the [changes made to the 2021 Census](#) by asking respondents both their gender (male, female or please specify) and sex at birth. The 2022 CSD also asked respondents their sexual orientation for the first time (heterosexual, lesbian or gay, bisexual or please specify). Together, the gender, sex at birth and sexual orientation questions allow for the analysis of data on 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada. Results from the 2022 CSD show that 27.0% of the Canadian population 15 years and over, or 8.0 million people, have a disability.

2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities are younger on average than their non-2SLGBTQ+ counterparts

In 2022, there were nearly 700,000 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over, according to the 2022 CSD. Among persons with disabilities, the median age of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals was substantially younger (29 years) than their non-2SLGBTQ+ counterparts (56 years). Almost two thirds (63.4%) of persons with disabilities who reported being a 2SLGBTQ+ person were between the ages of 15 and 34, compared with 17.8% of the non-2SLGBTQ+ population (Chart 1). This finding of those who report being 2SLGBTQ+ are younger than those who report being cisgender and heterosexual, or non-2SLGBTQ+, is consistent with previous research.^{1,9,10} It is important to note that these data do not necessarily mean that younger people are more likely to be 2SLGBTQ+. Older 2SLGBTQ+ people may be less likely to report their identity in surveys because of their lived experience in a social context less accepting of sexual and gender diversity compared to now.

Chart 1
Age distribution of 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ populations with disabilities, 2022



* significantly different than 15 to 24 age group in the same 2SLGBTQ+ status at $p < 0.05$

† significantly different than non-2SLGBTQ+ population for the same age group at $p < 0.05$

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

Textbox 2: Note on age-related analysis

Younger persons with disabilities are more likely to report being 2SLGBTQ+ than older persons with disabilities meaning that, for the purposes of analysis, the 2SLGBTQ+ population with disabilities is younger than the non-2SLGBTQ+ population with disabilities. Furthermore, disability characteristics such as disability type and severity vary with age. In order to facilitate comparisons between 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities and non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, age groupings are used to explore many of the characteristics in this report. In order to reduce the influence of age on the analysis, the following age groups are used, 15 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years and 35 to 64 years. In this way, the influence of age is reduced when comparisons are made between groups. The only exception to this age group breakdown is related to the analysis by educational attainment and employment status, as these concepts are typically examined by the population aged 25 to 64 years. Given the relatively small number of those aged 65 years and over within the 2SLGBTQ+ population, this age group was not examined in the age analysis but it is important to note that the overall analysis of the 2SLGBTQ+ population includes the total population aged 15 years and over.

Disabilities related to mental health, pain and learning are the most common disability types among 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities

Among 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over, seven in ten persons (69.9%) had a mental health-related disability, making it the most common disability type (Table 1). 2SLGBTQ+ populations experience higher rates of harassment, violent victimization and unwanted sexual behaviours^{11,12,13} than their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts (i.e., non-2SLGBTQ+ persons). Minority stress, that is, chronic stress related to social stigma, discrimination and the internalization of negative societal attitudes, is a common explanation for poorer mental health outcomes among the 2SLGBTQ+ population.¹ Pain-related (48.9%) and learning (36.8%) disabilities were the next most common among 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities. One quarter of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities had a seeing disability (26.3%), while one in five 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities had a flexibility (21.4%), memory (20.8%) or mobility disability (20.5%).

Table 1
Type of disability for 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, aged 15 years and over, 2022

Disability type	Percent	95% confidence interval	
		lower	upper
Total population with disabilities	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mental health-related	69.9	66.4	73.1
Pain-related	48.9	45.3	52.5
Learning	36.8	33.8	40.0
Seeing	26.3	23.2	29.5
Flexibility	21.4	18.6	24.4
Memory	20.8	18.3	23.6
Mobility	20.5	17.8	23.4
Hearing	14.7	12.4	17.3
Dexterity	9.7	7.7	12.1
Developmental	9.2	7.7	11.0
Unknown disability type	1.7	0.9	3.1

Note: Respondents could have multiple disability types, therefore the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

Mental health-related disability continued to be the most common type of disability among 2SLGBTQ+ persons with a disability across all age groups. The proportion of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with a mental health-related disability ranged from 84.1% among those aged 15 to 24 years, to 72.2% among those aged 25 to 34 years and then to 59.3% for those aged 35 to 64 years.

Some key differences emerged when looking at the prevalence of certain disability types by age among 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities. 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 to 24 years were more likely to have a mental-health related (84.1%) or learning (47.8%) disability than their non-2SLGBTQ+ peers (61.1% and 38.2%, respectively).¹⁴ Similarly, among those aged 25 to 34 years, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities were more likely to have a mental health-related disability (72.2%) compared with their non-2SLGBTQ+ counterparts (57.2%).

Among those aged 35 to 64 years, the 2SLGBTQ+ population were less likely to have pain-related, flexibility or mobility disabilities than the non-2SLGBTQ+ population. However, these findings may be a result of the differences in the age structure of these populations, given the increased prevalence of disability among older adults. Given the relatively small number of 2SLGBTQ+ persons aged 35 to 64 years, the opportunity for more detailed analysis for disability types within this age group is limited.

Younger 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities are more likely to have co-occurring disabilities than their non-2SLGBTQ+ counterparts

Looking further into disability characteristics, 28.8% of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over had one type of disability, 41.8% had two or three disability types and 29.4% had four or more disability types. In addition, four in ten (37.8%) 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities had a ‘more severe’ disability while 6 in 10 (62.2%) had a ‘milder’ disability.¹⁵

Overall, 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities had similar profiles in terms of the number of types of disability (Table 2). However, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 to 24 years were more likely than non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities to have two or more disability types. In addition, among those aged 15 to 24 years of age, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities were more likely to have a more severe disability compared to their non-2SLGBTQ+ counterparts. No differences in disability severity among those aged 25 to 34 years and 35 to 64 years were found between the 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ populations.

Table 2
Number of disability types, 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, by age group, aged 15 to 64 years, 2022

Age group	Number of disability types	2SLGBTQ+			non-2SLGBTQ+ (ref.)		
		Percent	95% confidence interval		Percent	95% confidence interval	
			lower	upper		lower	upper
15 to 24 years	1 disability type	26.6*	22.7	30.9	44.4	40.8	48.0
	2 to 3 disability types	49.1*	44.5	53.6	41.5	38.0	45.1
	4 or more disability types	24.3*	21.0	28.1	14.2	11.9	16.8
25 to 34 years	1 disability type	32.1	25.9	39.1	42.6	38.9	46.5
	2 to 3 disability types	43.2*	36.5	50.1	38.0	34.3	41.8
	4 or more disability types	24.7	19.1	31.3	19.4	16.3	22.8
35 to 64 years	1 disability type	30.0	23.9	36.9	30.7	28.9	32.5
	2 to 3 disability types	33.4	27.1	40.3	36.2	34.4	38.1
	4 or more disability types	36.6	30.2	43.5	33.1	31.3	34.9

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

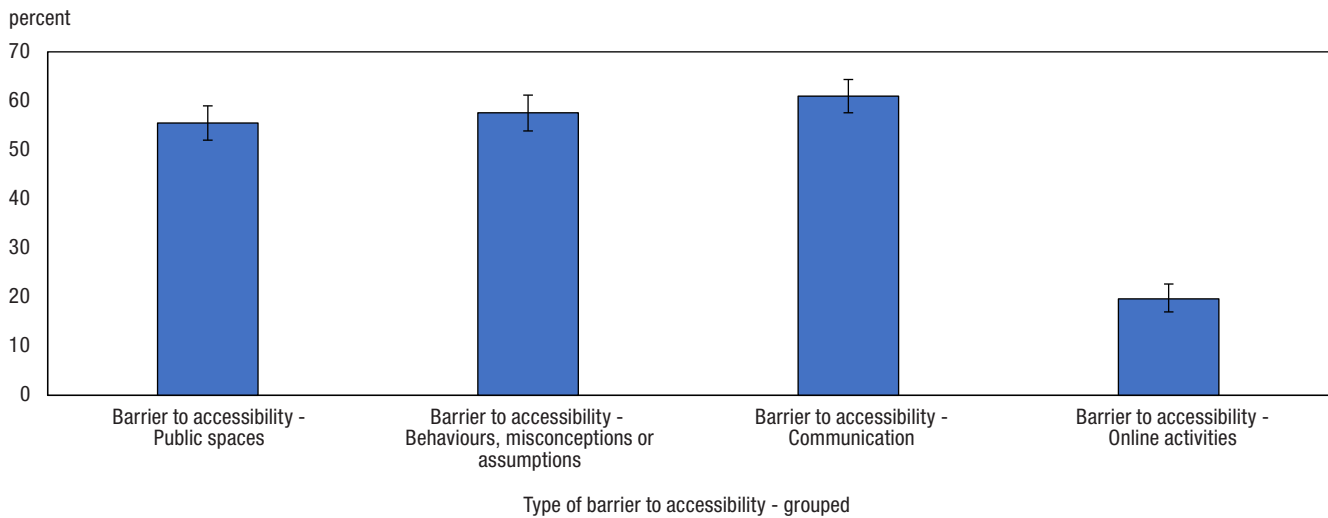
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

Over three-quarters of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities face barriers to accessibility

The 2022 CSD collected information on barriers to accessibility in support of the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA). Respondents were asked whether they experienced barriers to accessibility that might limit their access to different areas and activities in their daily life due to their condition in the previous 12 months.¹⁶ In 2022, 78.5% of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over reported that they experienced one or more of 27 types of barriers to accessibility because of their condition in the past year. Compared with non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, the proportion experiencing a barrier overall was higher among both those aged 15 to 24 years and 25 to 34 years among the 2SLGBTQ+ population.

Among 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over, barriers to communication¹⁷ were most commonly experienced (61.0%; Chart 2), followed by barriers related to the behaviours, misconceptions or assumptions of others¹⁸ (57.6%), barriers related to public spaces, such as entrances or exits and sidewalks¹⁹ (55.5%), and barriers related to activities while using the Internet²⁰ (19.7%).

Chart 2
Grouped type of barrier to accessibility, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, aged 15 years and over, 2022



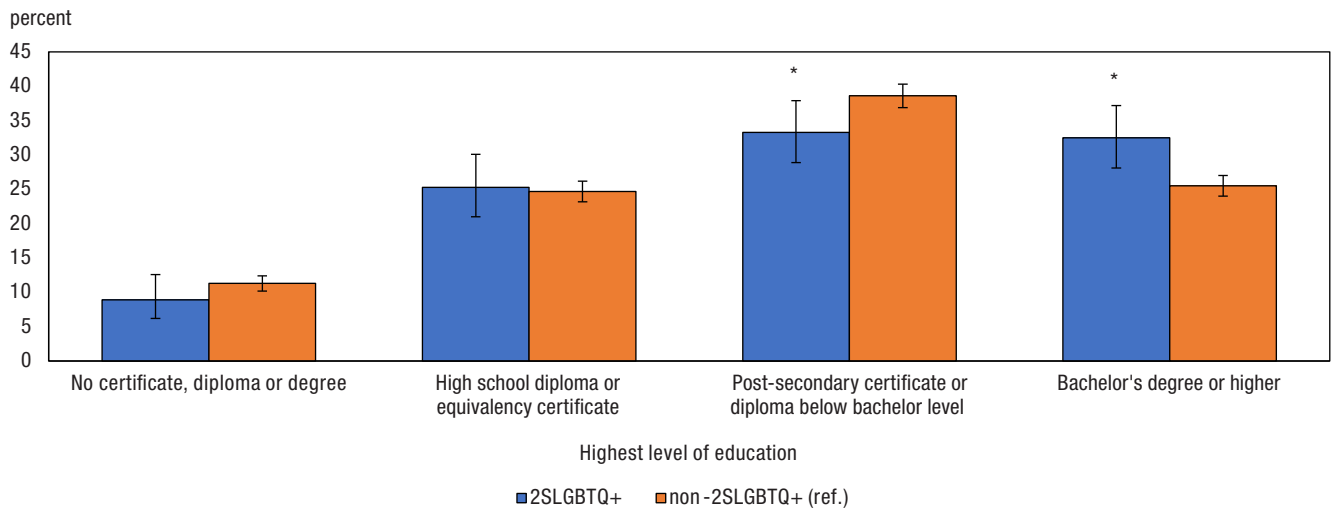
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

Some variations emerged when looking across age groups between 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities. Across all age groups, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities were more likely to experience a barrier to communication or a barrier related to the behaviours, misconceptions or assumptions of others, compared with non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities. In terms of experiencing a barrier related to public spaces, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 to 24 years and 25 to 34 years were more likely to experience this type of barrier than their non-2SLGBTQ+ counterparts. Conversely there were no differences observed among those aged 35 to 64 years between the two populations for barriers in public spaces. 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 15 to 24 years were more likely than non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities to encounter barriers related to activities while using the Internet, whereas there were no differences among those aged 25 to 34 years and 35 to 64 years.

Over one quarter of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, two-thirds are employed

Looking at the highest level of educational attainment among 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, 32.5% had a bachelor’s degree or higher, while 33.3% had a post-secondary certificate or diploma below a bachelor’s degree. When compared to their non-2SLGBTQ+ counterparts, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years were more likely to have a bachelor’s degree or higher but less likely to have a post-secondary certificate or diploma below a bachelor’s degree (Chart 3). There were no differences between the two populations in terms of having a high-school certificate or equivalent, or having no certificate, diploma or degree.

Chart 3
Highest level of education, 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, aged 25 to 64 years, 2022



* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

The employment rate for those aged 25 to 64 years was similar among 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities (66.5%, 63.7% respectively). The two groups did not differ in terms of the unemployment rate, however, the proportion of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities who were not in the labour force was lower (23.8%) when compared with their counterparts (28.9%).

Conclusion

This fact sheet provides a profile of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, as well as key differences from the non-2SLGBTQ+ population with disabilities by age group. Being a 2SLGBTQ+ person and having one or more disabilities means that characteristics including age, disability types, disability severity, number of co-occurring disabilities, and barriers to accessibility faced can influence their experiences and create unique challenges.

Future research to build on the information provided in this factsheet could include analysis of the disability and socioeconomic experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities. This research could provide additional insight into lived experiences and challenges of 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, on topics such as income, poverty, food and housing insecurity, underemployment and disability supports.

Note to Readers

The survey population for the 2022 CSD was comprised of Canadians aged 15 years and over as of the date of the 2021 Census of the Population (May 2021) who were living in private dwellings. It excludes those living in institutions, on Canadian Armed Forces bases, on First Nations reserves and those living in collective dwellings. As the institutionalized population is excluded, the data, particularly for the older age groups, should be interpreted accordingly.

The Canadian Survey on Disability identifies persons with disabilities using the Disability Screening Questions (DSQ), which are based on the social model of disability. The DSQ first measures the degree to which difficulties are experienced across 10 domains of functioning, then ask how often daily activities are limited by these difficulties. Only persons who report a limitation in their day-to-day activities are identified as having a disability. For more detailed information on the DSQ, please see the [Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022: Concepts and Methods Guide](#).

The Government of Canada adopted the acronym 2SLGBTQI+ to refer to Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people and those who use other terms related to gender and sexual diversity. Statistics Canada uses the acronym 2SLGBTQ+ for data analysis purposes, as information is not yet collected specifically about intersex people in surveys.

In this analysis, the term “transgender” refers to people whose reported gender does not correspond to their reported sex at birth and “non-binary” describes all genders that are neither exclusively man nor woman.

The term “non-2SLGBTQ+” is used to refer to people who are both cisgender (people whose reported gender corresponds to their reported sex at birth) and heterosexual.

See [Improving data on 2SLGBTQ+ populations](#) and [Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan 2022](#) for more information.

Data for the 2SLGBTQ+ population are not available from the census. As such, it is not possible to compare outcomes for 2SLGBTQ+ persons with and without disabilities. This also means that producing an overall rate of disability among the 2SLGBTQ+ population is not possible.

Notes

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14. In this article when two estimates are said to be different this indicates that the difference was statistically significant at a 95% confidence level (p-value less than 5%).
15. A global severity score was developed for the CSD, which was calculated using the number of co-occurring disability types, level of difficulty experienced in performing certain tasks, and the frequency of activity limitations. To simplify the concept of severity, four severity classes were established: mild, moderate, severe, and very severe. 'Mild' and 'moderate' classes were collapsed into 'milder', while 'severe' and 'very severe' classes were collapsed into 'more severe'. It is important to understand, however, that the name assigned to each class is simply intended to facilitate use of the severity score and is not a label or judgment concerning the person's level of disability.
16. Respondents were asked if they experienced barriers because of their condition using the response categories of "not applicable," "never," "sometimes," "often" and "always." Respondents who indicated that they experienced barriers "sometimes," "often" or "always" are included as having experienced a barrier at least sometimes.
17. Includes experiencing a barrier related to communicating in the following situations: in person or over the phone with family or close friends, in person or over the phone with medical or health care professionals, in person or over the phone with others such as the general public, customer service or government representatives, with automated voice message system, using video conferencing or using social media or online chat forums.

18. Includes experiencing a barrier related to behaviours, misconceptions or assumptions made about them from family or close friends, staff of a business, medical or health care professionals, or staff of government services or programs.

19. Includes the following features: entrances or exits, floorplans, lighting or sound levels, public washrooms, wait lines, self-serve technology, announcements or alarms, signs or directions, pedestrian signals, sidewalks when covered in ice or snow, or sidewalks in general.

20. Includes barriers using the Internet for online banking or online shopping, online booking for appointments, services or reservations, or online access to government information, services or supports.