

Participation and Activity Limitation Survey: 2006

Statistics Canada recently released information from the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS). This survey gathers information about adults and children whose daily activities are limited by physical, mental, or other health-related conditions or problems. The PALS was conducted as a follow-up survey to the 2006 census; this is the first time the three territories were included in this survey.

A few of the highlights from the PALS release include:

- A disability rate is the proportion of persons that report having a disability (hearing, seeing, speech, mobility, agility, pain, learning, memory, developmental, psychological, or other), relative to the total population
- Disability rates ranged from a low of 6.4% in Nunavut to a high of 20.0% in Nova Scotia; the national average disability rate was 14.3%
- Across the territories, Yukon had the highest reported disability rate at 13.5%, with the NWT at 8.6%, and Nunavut having the lowest rate in the country
- Comparative results indicate that between 2001 and 2006, disability rates increased in all provinces. While aging of the population was partially responsible for the increase, it is assumed that another contributing factor may be increased social acceptance of the reporting of disabilities

Table 1 Disability Rates (%), by Age and Gender
Canada, Provinces and Territories
2006

	Under		--- 15 years and over ---			15-64	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+
	Total	15 years	Total	Male	Female					
Canada	14.3	3.7	16.6	15.4	17.7	11.5	4.7	8.0	18.3	43.4
Northwest Territories	8.6	..	10.4	10.4	10.5	8.2	4.1	5.3	15.1	46.6
Nunavut	6.4	..	8.4	8.4	8.5	6.8	2.9	5.6	14.4	46.8
Yukon	13.5	..	15.7	15.7	15.7	12.8	6.3	8.6	19.4	45.6
British Columbia	16.0	4.0	18.4	16.9	19.7	12.8	5.7	9.1	19.7	45.7
Alberta	13.6	4.1	15.8	15.1	16.5	11.3	4.8	8.1	18.8	47.0
Saskatchewan	16.0	3.9	18.8	17.9	19.7	12.1	4.4	8.8	19.5	48.2
Manitoba	15.7	4.1	18.5	16.8	20.0	12.4	4.4	8.9	20.1	47.6
Ontario	15.5	3.8	18.1	16.6	19.5	12.6	5.3	8.7	20.6	47.2
Quebec	10.4	3.0	11.9	10.9	12.8	7.9	3.0	5.5	12.4	32.3
New Brunswick	17.2	4.0	19.8	18.9	20.6	14.3	5.5	9.8	22.3	46.5
Nova Scotia	20.0	4.5	23.0	22.0	23.9	16.7	6.5	10.9	26.4	52.7
Prince Edward Island	16.3	4.1	18.9	18.1	19.7	12.9	4.1	8.7	21.1	47.7
Newfoundland	14.9	3.9	17.0	17.0	16.9	12.5	4.8	8.6	19.2	40.9

Note: (i) Due to the small sample of children in the survey, separate estimates for respondents 'under 15 years of age' are not available at the individual territory level, but are available for the three territories in aggregate.
(ii) '..' identifies data that is not available

Comparing severity of disability for the NWT and Canada (Table 2) reveals that the NWT has a slightly lower reporting of 'severe' and 'very severe' across most age groups, aside from persons 65 years and over.

Table 2 Severities of Disabilities for Persons with Disabilities (%)
Northwest Territories and Canada
2006

	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Very Severe
Northwest Territories				
15 years and over	39.4	25.5	23.6	11.2
15 - 64	42.0	24.8	22.3	10.9
15 - 24	x	x	x	x
25 - 44	51.4	25.7	17.1	x
45 - 64	37.3	24.6	24.6	13.4
65 and over	32.5	27.7	27.7	12.0
Canada				
15 years and over	35.4	24.8	26.3	13.5
15 - 64	34.8	25.4	26.6	13.2
15-24	48.2	22.3	19.4	10.1
25-44	36.1	26.9	25.8	11.2
45-64	32.6	25.2	27.8	14.5
65 and over	36.2	23.9	26.0	13.9

Note: 'x' identifies data that has been suppressed for reasons of confidentiality or data quality.

As previously mentioned, there is a relationship between aging and the incidence of disability, but this relationship is particularly strong for disabilities involving mobility and agility. Table 3 shows that NWT disability rates for these two categories rise sharply with age. Conversely, the learning disability rate shows the opposite relationship – i.e., it declines with age.

Table 3 Type of Disability as a Percent (%) of Persons with a Disability, by Age group
Northwest Territories
2006

	15+	15-64	15-24	25-44	45-64	65 +
Persons with a disability	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Hearing	32.0	28.2	x	37.1	26.1	43.4
Seeing	20.2	17.6	x	18.6	17.6	27.7
Speech	17.7	20.6	37.0	15.7	19.7	9.6
Mobility	60.2	54.6	25.9	42.9	65.5	75.9
Agility	55.9	52.5	x	37.1	65.5	66.3
Pain	62.1	63.9	44.4	54.3	71.8	59.0
Learning	14.9	19.3	55.6	15.7	14.1	x
Memory	11.2	11.3	x	x	13.4	10.8
Developmental	2.5	2.5	x	x	x	x
Psychological	14.9	18.9	x	15.7	16.2	x
Unknown	2.5	2.9	x	x	3.5	x

Note: Multiple responses by individuals mean that the percentages will not sum to 100

A set of detailed tables outlining the PALS results for the Northwest Territories, with comparative estimates for Canada and the other two territories is available on the Bureau of Statistics' website.