



# COVID-19 DISABILITY SURVEY

Report for Data Collected from  
September 19th, 2021 to April 11th, 2022



## Who made the survey and this report?

The survey was made by the Abilities Centre and their partners. These partners are from the Canadian Disability Participation Project. They work as researchers at The University of British Columbia and Queen's University.

Here are the all the partners who also helped make the survey:

- Abilities Centre
- Canadian Disability Participation Project
- University of British Columbia
- Queen's University
- Rick Hansen Foundation
- Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance
- Canadian Labour Congress

Here are the members of the COVID-19 Disability Survey Research Team who helped with the survey:

- Kathleen Martin Ginis (University of British Columbia)
- Cameron Gee (University of British Columbia)
- Femke Hoekstra (University of British Columbia)
- Amy Latimer-Cheung (Queens University)
- Joan Úbeda-Colomer (University of British Columbia)
- Pinder DaSilva (Abilities Centre)
- Melanie Carrey (Abilities Centre)
- Stuart McReynolds (Abilities Centre)
- Tara Joy Knibbe (Abilities Centre)
- Meagan O'Neill (Abilities Centre)
- Emilie Michalovic (Abilities Centre)
- Mikaeli Cavell (Abilities Centre)

Here are the other people and groups who also helped with the survey:

- Jonathan Lai (Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance)
- Canadian Labour Congress
- COVID-19 Disability Working Group for the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Rick Hansen Foundation

Here are the people who made this report:

- Kathleen Martin Ginis
- Cameron Gee
- Femke Hoekstra

Here are the people who designed how this report looks and did different versions:

Canadian Hearing Services, and Christine Deschênes contributed to the translation to ASL and French respectively. The report is formatted by Sarah Tarpey (Abilities Centre).

### Contact Information

Find out more about the survey at this website: [www.disabilitysurvey.ca/](http://www.disabilitysurvey.ca/)  
Email questions to this address: [disabilitysurvey@abilitiescentre.org](mailto:disabilitysurvey@abilitiescentre.org)





## Summary of this report

This report shows the results of a survey. The survey looks at how COVID-19 has changed the lives of people with disabilities. It tries to find out if their needs are being met. It tries to measure their well-being and health.

The results of this COVID-19 survey are useful. It will help COVID-19 planners make sure everybody's needs are met. It will help planners who look after dealing with the virus. It will help community groups. It will help the government. It will help groups that work with people with disabilities. This will be good for all Canadians.

This report shows the responses from people who took the COVID-19 survey. This survey was for people who have a disability. It was also for their family members or caregivers. The survey was open for 7 months. It started on September 19th, 2021. It finished on April 11th, 2022.

People could do the survey in English, French, Plain Language, or American Sign Language. A diverse group of people did the survey. This included people with many kinds of disabilities. A total of 402 people finished the survey.

In this report, the people who completed the survey are called 'respondents.'

## Key findings of the second COVID-19 Disability Survey:

### Mental health and social isolation

Most respondents (76%) said the pandemic has hurt their mental health. In the adult respondents, 87% had a worse mental health score than the average population. Most adults (79%) were also more isolated and lonelier than average. Almost all children with disabilities (98%) have worse relationships with their peers than average.

### Unmet needs

More than half of the respondents said they have unmet needs. Unmet needs are mostly about the lack of services. This includes supports like mental health services. It also includes services to make sure people are not isolated and alone. Many (over 70%) said these three important needs are unmet.

- Emotional counseling
- Peer support
- Access to recreation and leisure programs

### Worries and stressors

Respondents said that they worry a lot. Half of the respondents worry often about the following issues.

- Finances
- Future plans

### They also worry about the following things:

- Access to vaccines
- Catching COVID-19
- Friends and family
- Keeping up with school or work

### Health habits

The number of adults that are meeting the World Health Organization's (WHO) adult exercise guidelines has increased from 19% in the first survey and 32% in the second survey. In this survey, the number was up to 37%.

### Children with disabilities

Physical inactivity in children with disabilities is a concern. 44% of children do not do 60 minutes of moderate to hard activity on any day of the week.

More information about the survey can be found at this website:  
<https://osf.io/z4gr2/>





## Key messages

- This report shows a view of how the pandemic is affecting Canadians with disabilities. It shows the effect of COVID-19 on their well-being.
- The report shows that people are very concerned about the following issues.
  - Physical health
  - Mental health
  - Social isolation
- People with disabilities have unmet needs since the start of the pandemic. They need services to support their mental health. They also need services to prevent social isolation. People said they need more of the following services:
  - Counselling
  - Peer support
  - Recreation and leisure programs
- Canadians with disabilities continue to report concerns about finances and future plans during the pandemic.



## Introduction to this report

The purpose of the COVID-19 survey is to get information. The needs and concerns of people with disabilities are important in this information. It will help with supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will help with the response to COVID-19. It will help in meeting the needs of people of all abilities.

Adults who identify as a person with a disability can take the survey. Parents and caregivers of children with a disability can also take the survey. The survey includes questions about people's needs and fears. It also asks about their lifestyle and well-being.

Respondents will take the survey more than once. This will show any changes in their situation over time. This report shows the results of the third time the survey was done. The results are for 402 people who took this survey. They did it between September 19th, 2021 and April 11th, 2022.

The survey is available in English, French, and Plain Language. It is available in American Sign Language on this website: [www.disabilitysurvey.ca/](http://www.disabilitysurvey.ca/). More information about the survey can be found here <https://osf.io/z4gr2/>. The records that support this report are also on this website. This report is divided into three parts.

Part 1 looks at the information from the following survey respondents.

- Adults living with a disability
- Family members of people with disabilities
- Roommates of people with disabilities

Part 2 looks at the information about children with disabilities.

Part 3 shows information from the first, second, and third rounds of the survey. It shows information that is the same or different between the three surveys.



## PART 1: Information about who took the survey

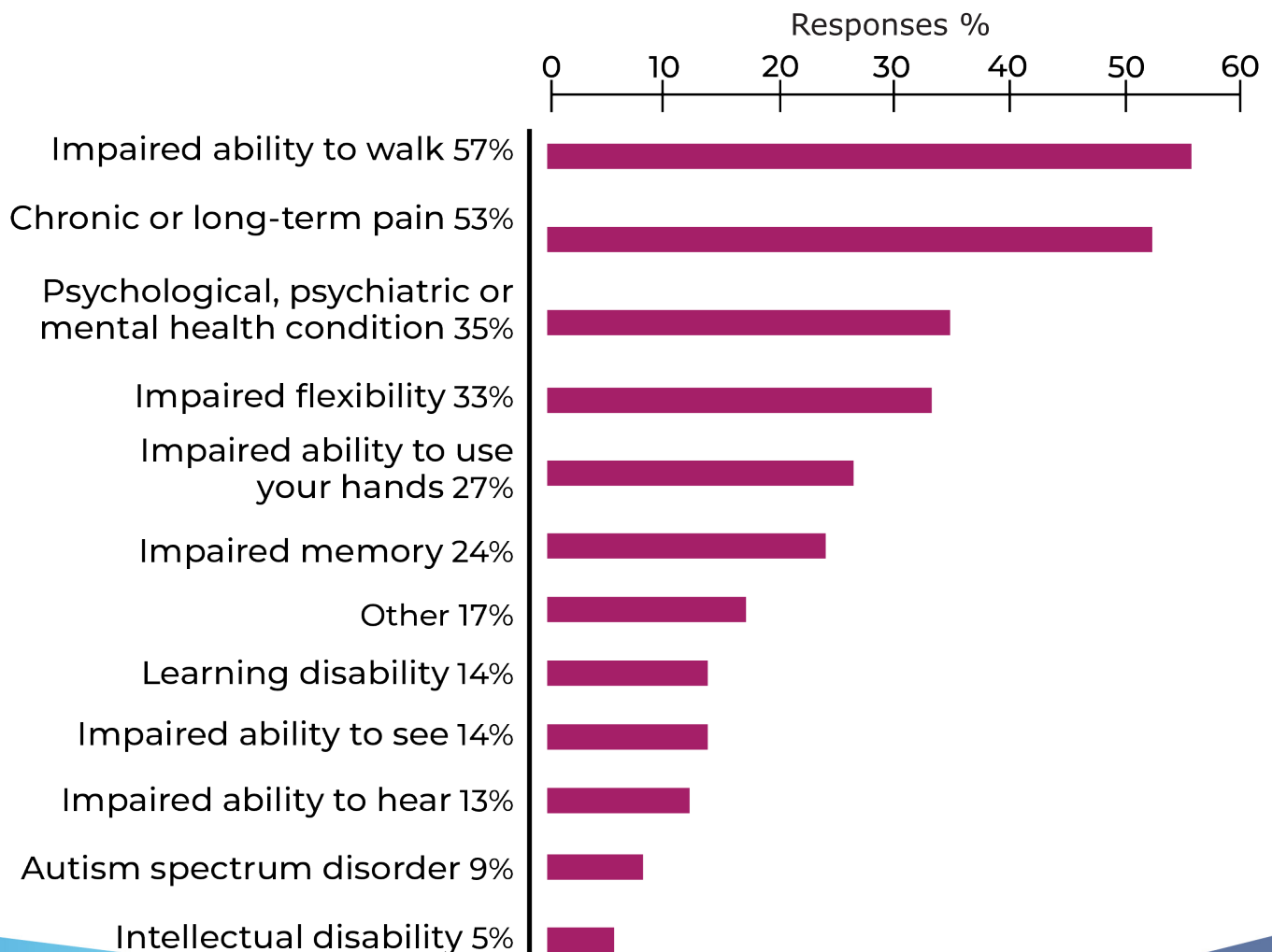
### Who took the survey?

This part gives information about the people who took the survey. This includes things like who they are and where they are from.

A total of 402 people filled out the survey.

- 83% said they were a person with a disability (332 respondents).
- 24% said they were a parent or caregiver of a child with a disability (96 respondents).
- 23% said they have a family member or roommate with a disability (91 respondents).
- 71% said they were women.
- 24% said they were men.
- 5% did not say their gender. They may have also said another gender identity.
- Their ages range from 22 to 92 years old.
- Their average age was 48 years old.

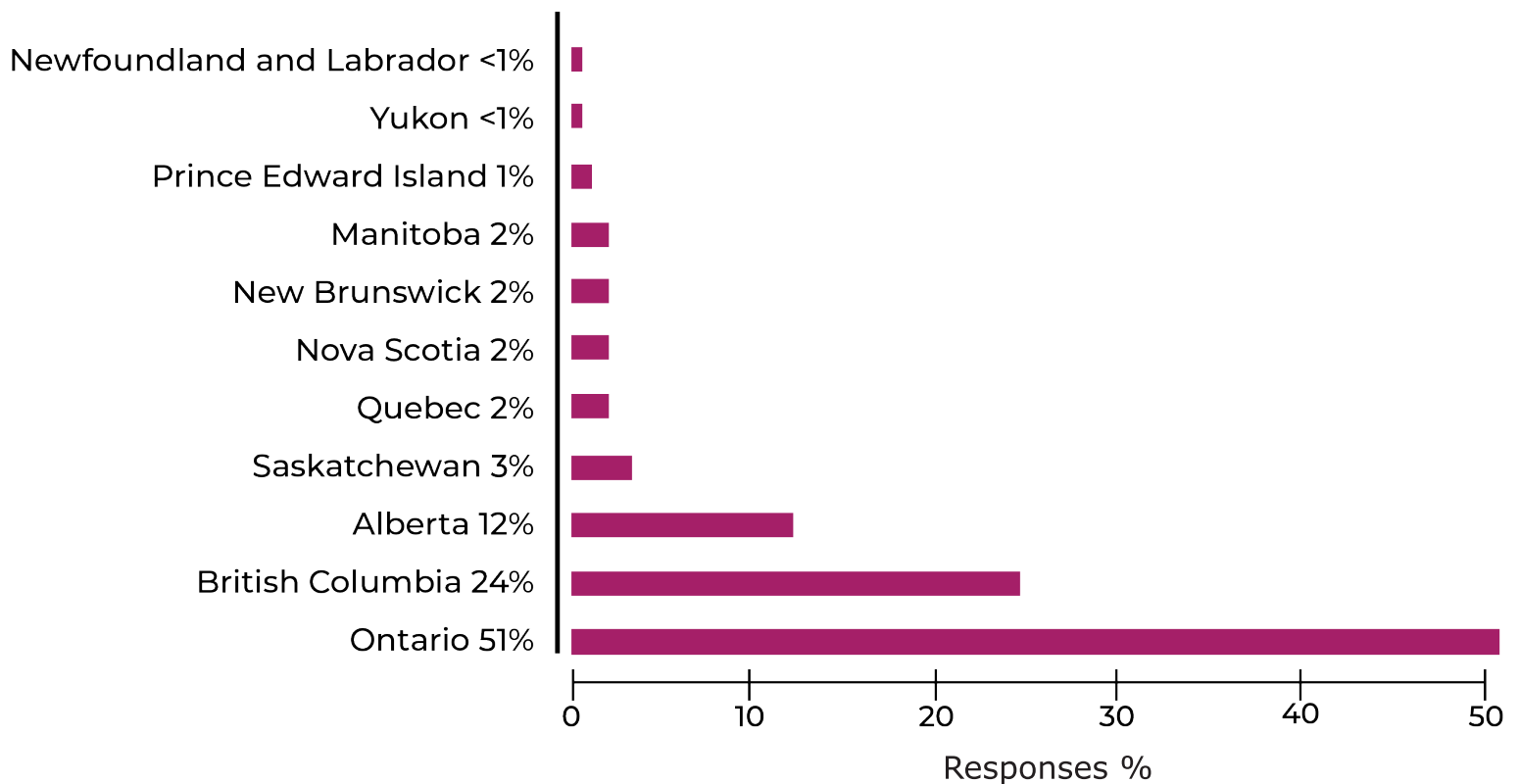
### Types of disabilities reported by respondents



Examples of other impairments/conditions/disabilities reported:

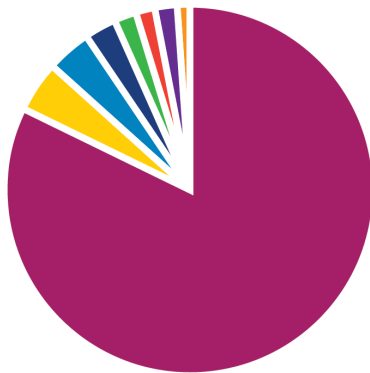
- Brain injury
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Cancer
- AIDS
- Kidney Disease
- Neurological disorders
- Multiple conditions
- Autoimmune disorders

## Province or territory of residence





## Ethnicity



- Caucasian **88%**
- First Nations or Métis **5%**
- Other **4%**
- Black **3%**
- South Asian **2%**
- East Asian **2%**
- Hispanic **2%**
- West Asian **<1%**

## Highest level of education received



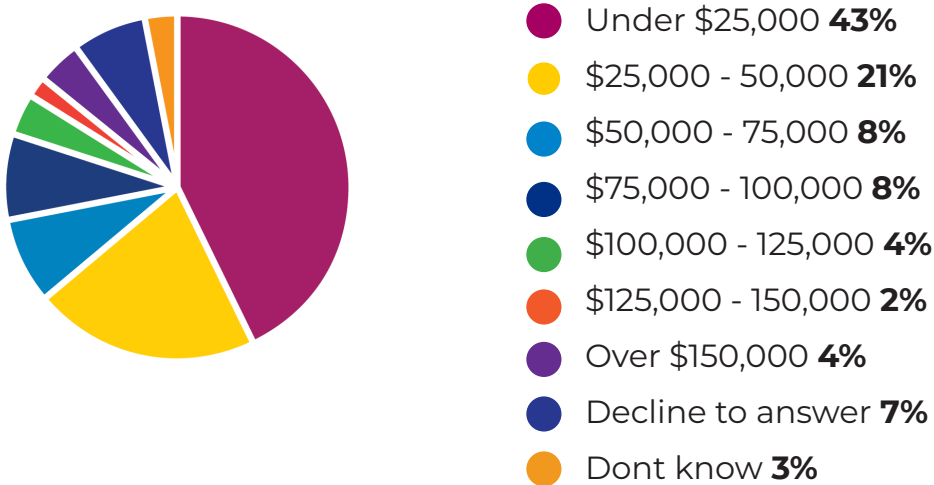
- University degree **37%**
- College or trade school degree **22%**
- Some college or trade school **16%**
- High school **10%**
- Some university **10%**
- Some high school **6%**

## Marital status

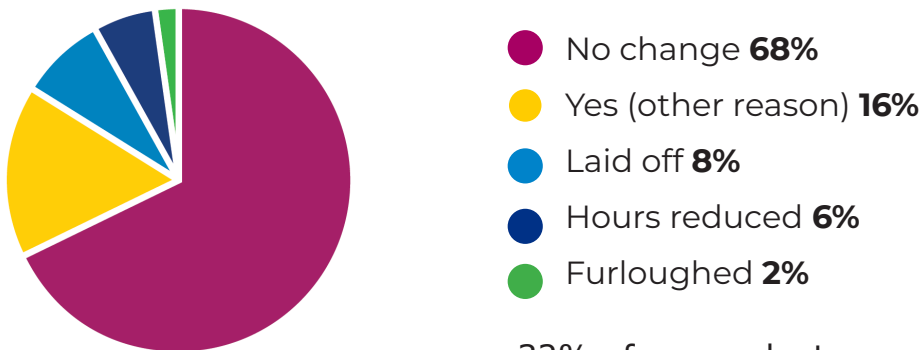


- Never married **36%**
- Married or living as if married **35%**
- Divorced or separated **22%**
- Widowed **5%**
- Other **2%**

## Total household income after taxes in last 12 months

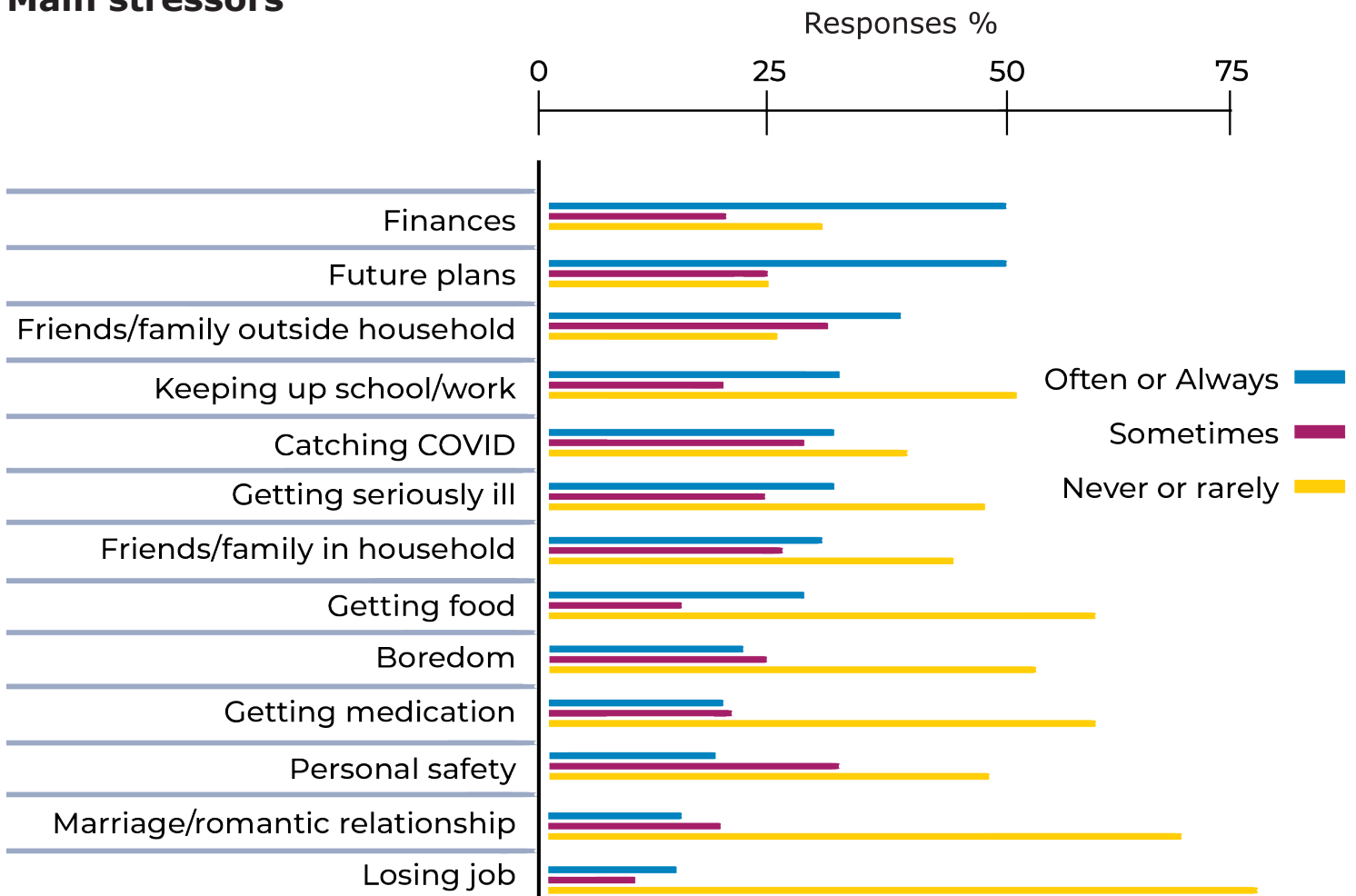


## Impact of COVID-19 on employment



32% of respondents reported a change in their job status since the start of the pandemic. Some people said that their hours had been reduced. Some said that they had been laid off. Some said they were on leave with no pay.

## Main stressors



Respondents talked about the things they worry about. The things they worried about the most were their future and their friends and family. Sometimes, they are also worried about their money or finances. They are sometimes afraid of catching COVID-19 or getting seriously ill as well.

Respondents also reported other fears and worries in the following areas:

- Access to vaccination
- Suicide, loneliness, abandonment
- Social interactions
- Death of loved ones
- General anxiety/world stability
- Transportation safety and hygiene
- Access to services, medical support & care



## Needs and Unmet Needs of Canadians with Disabilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abbreviations: G = Government; CO=Community Organizations; O=Others which may include friends, family, and/or neighbours.

Need	Respondents who have this need	Respondents with need who said it was met 'not at all' or 'very little'	Respondents who received support for this need during COVID	Main sources of support
Accessible housing	28%	<b>61%</b>	11%	CO,O
Attendant care	24%	<b>56%</b>	46%	G
Income support	<b>55%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>60%</b>	G
Equipment/medical supplies/aids	37%	50%	19%	G
Transportation	29%	<b>48%</b>	38%	O
General health care	48%	46%	42%	G
Emotional counselling	<b>51%</b>	<b>71%</b>	19%	CO,O
Peer support	36%	<b>70%</b>	29%	CO,O
Recreational and leisure programs	<b>57%</b>	<b>72%</b>	19%	G,CO,O
Access to food/shops/groceries	37%	<b>51%</b>	43%	O
Internet and technology	22%	<b>41%</b>	24%	O
Accessible media and websites	23%	34%	20%	CO,O
Other	15%	<b>78%</b>	-	-

## What information does the table above show?

This table looks at people's needs. The first column shows the types of needs people have. The second column of Table 1 shows that respondent's needs were not met during the pandemic. Over 70% said that 3 different types of needs were not met. Here is a list of the areas of needs that were not met.

- Emotional counselling
- Peer support
- Recreation and Leisure programs

The third column shows the number of respondents who have received support for each need. Most respondents got support for their need of income support (60%). This was mainly supported by the government.

People with disabilities need support during the pandemic. Many respondents (60%) said these three important needs are not being met.

- Recreation and leisure programs
- Emotional counselling
- Peer support

Less than one quarter (from 19% to 29%) of respondents got assistance for these three needs. The support they got came from community groups, friends, family, or neighbors.

Over 50% said that other needs were also not being met. These needs are in the following areas:

- Attendant care
- Accessible housing
- Income support

46% of respondents received support for attendant care and 60% received income support from the government. Less than one quarter (11%) of respondents said they received support for accessible housing. This support was from community groups, friends, family, or neighbours.

78% of respondents had 'other' needs. Some examples of other needs include:

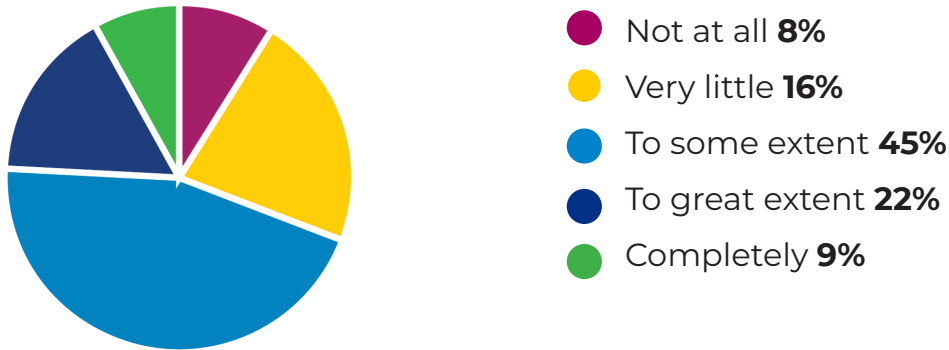
- Social interaction
- Help with pet care
- Financial security
- Respite care



## General impact on mental health

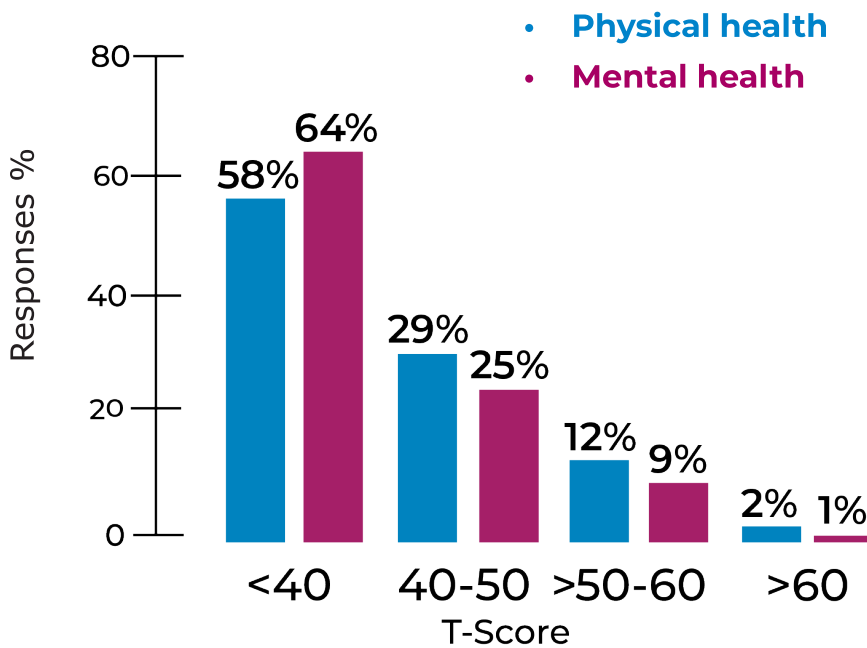
These results are from adults who identified as a person with a disability.

### COVID Impact on mental health



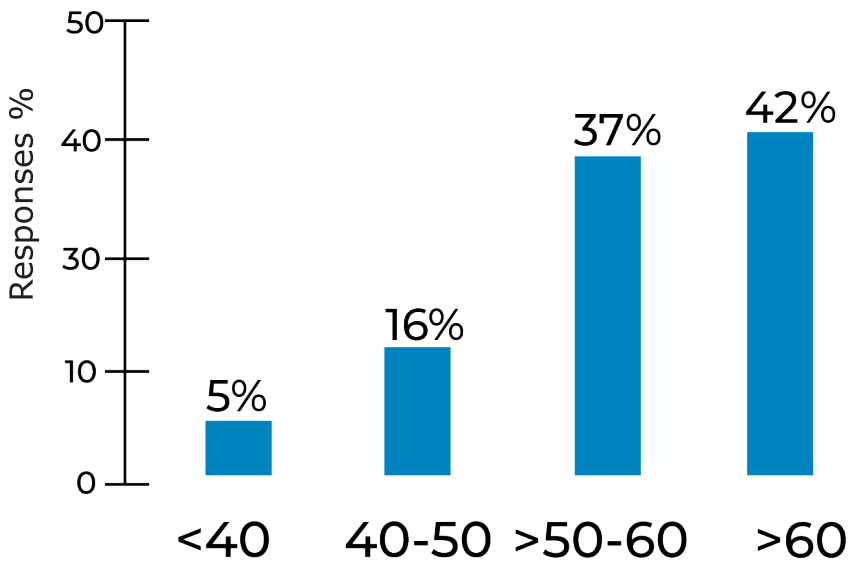
Most respondents (76%) said that the COVID-19 pandemic has made their mental health worse.

### Physical and mental health





## Social isolation



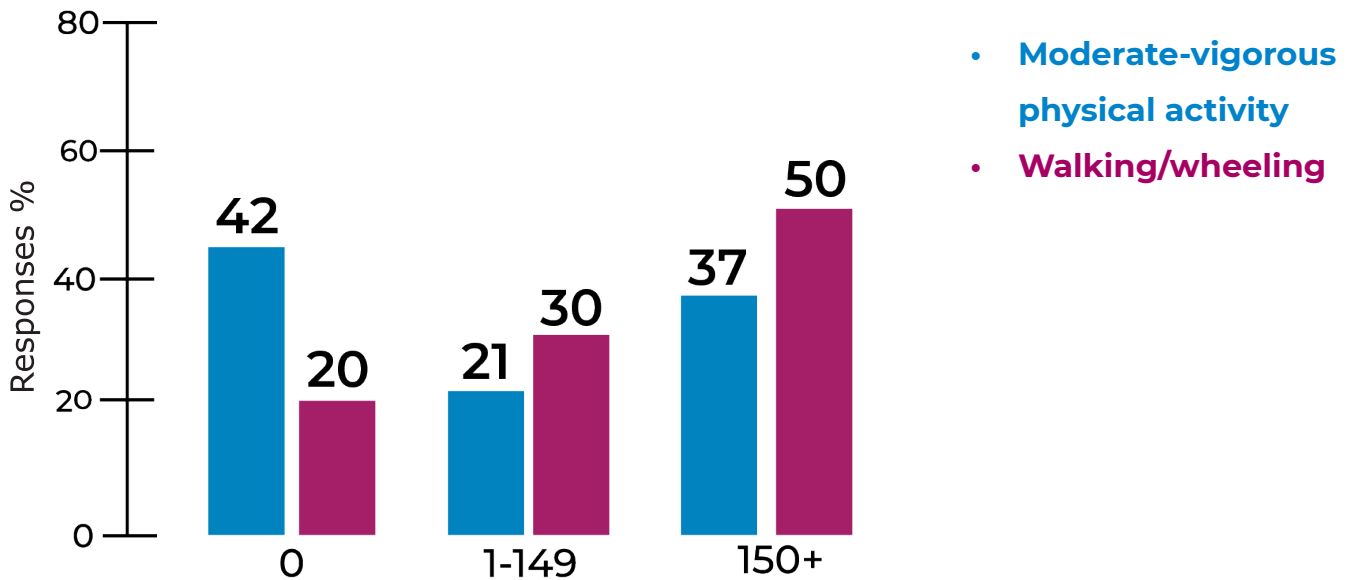
A regular questionnaire method was used for the survey. People were asked about the following areas.

- Their physical health
- Their mental health
- Their feelings of social isolation or loneliness

The survey found that people with disabilities did worse in these areas than the average person.

- Almost all, 89%, said their physical health is worse than the average person.
- About 79% said they are lonelier and more isolated than the average person.
- About 13% said their mental health is better than the average person.
- About 87% said their mental health is worse than the average person.

## Physical activity levels



Respondents say they have been less physically active because of the pandemic.

- Almost half (42%) say they did not do any moderate or hard exercise
- The World Health Organization (WHO) says adults need 150 minutes of moderate exercise every week. Only 37% of respondents get this amount.
- Most said they did some walking or wheeling in the last week.
- About one-fifth (20%) said they did no walking or wheeling at all.

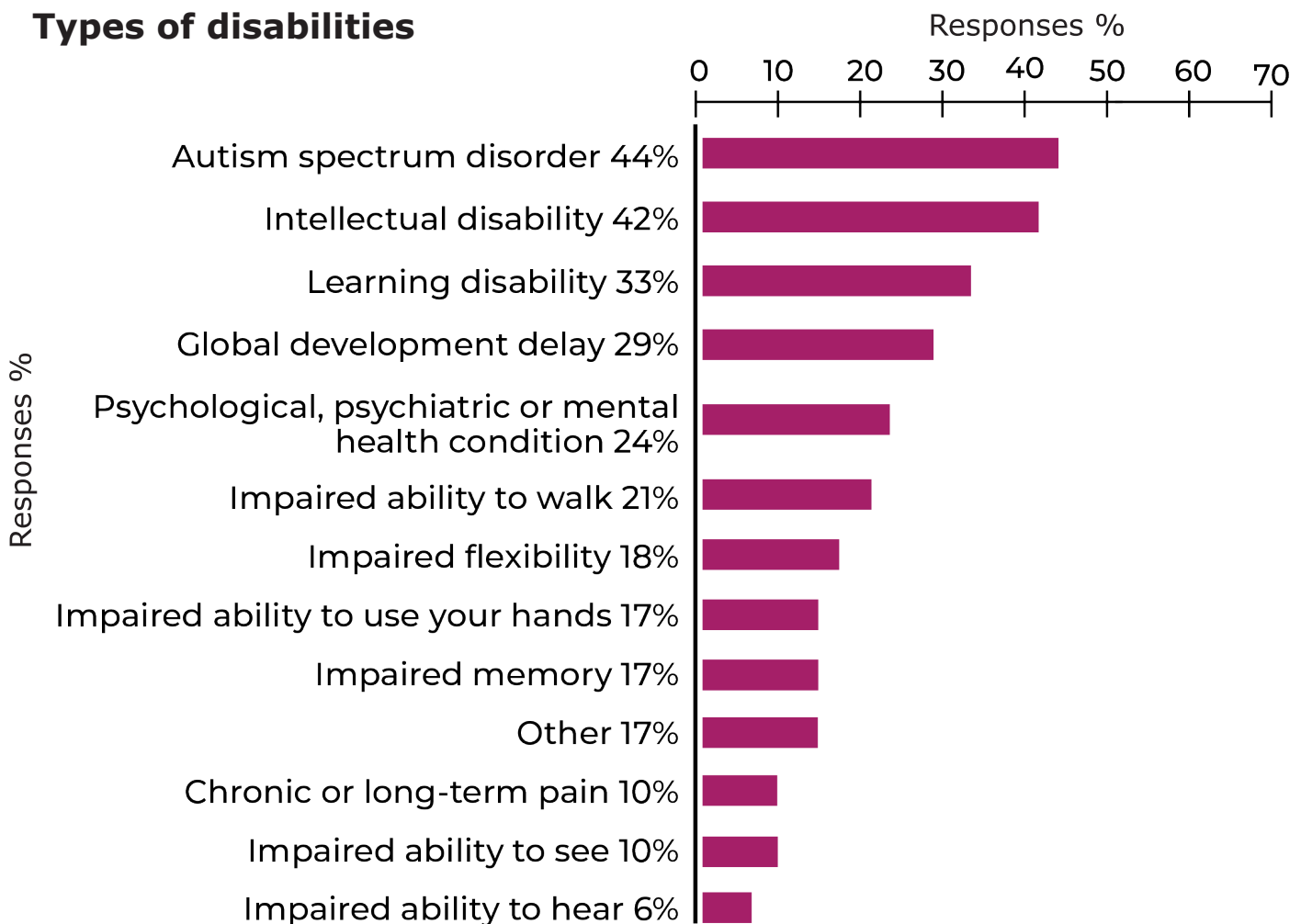
## PART 2: Information about children with disabilities

### Demographics of children with disabilities

This section has information about children with disabilities.

- 96 respondents said they are a parent or caregiver to a child with a disability.
- 65% of the children are boys.
- 34% of the children are girls.
- 1% of the children are non-binary
- The children range in age from 2 to 51 years old.
- The average age of the children is 17 years old.

### Types of disabilities

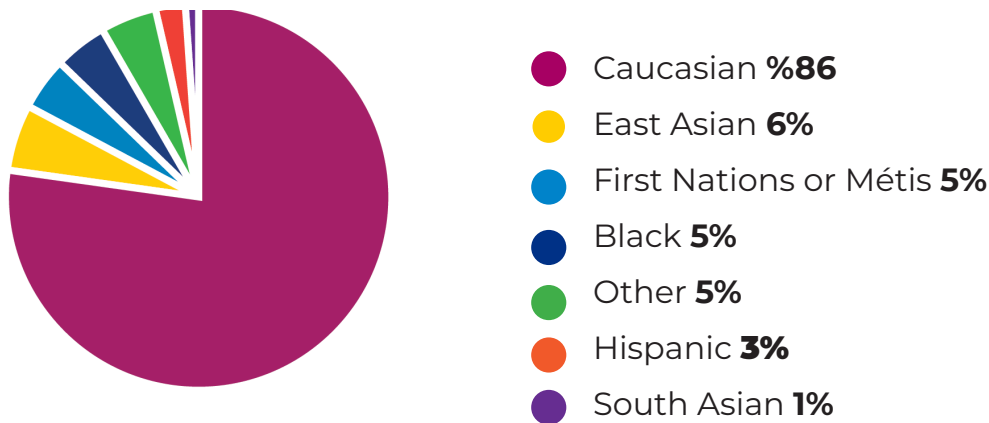




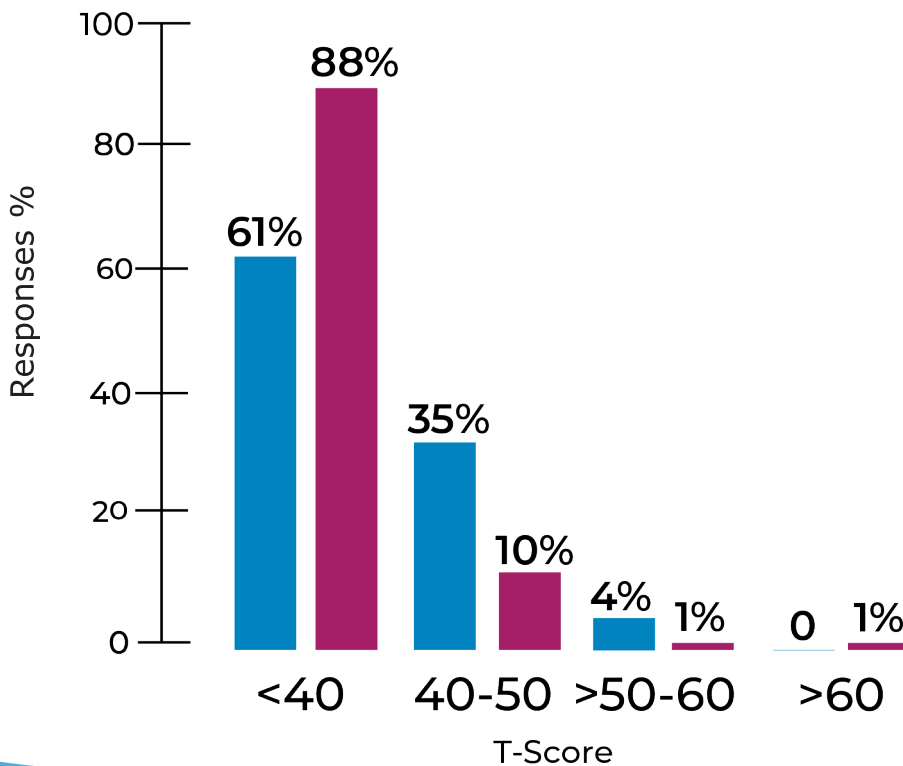
## These are examples of other disabilities reported:

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Acquired brain injury
- Seizures
- Impaired ability to speak
- Down Syndrome

## Ethnicity



## General health and peer relationships



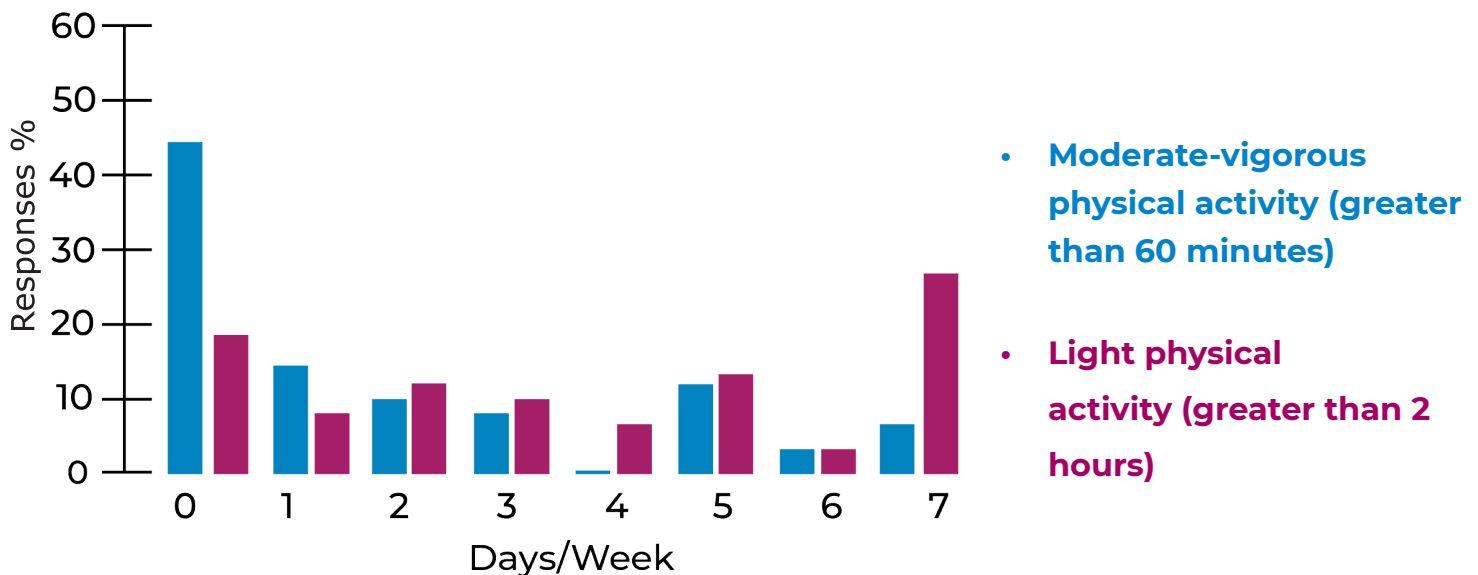
- General health
- Peer relations

Note: These scores are for children without disabilities from the United States. There can be some differences in these scores. But there is not a lot of difference. (These scores are reliable.) There is no information about children from Canada.

Respondents gave information about their child's health.

- All said their child's health seems to be less than the general population.
- Almost all (98%) said their child's relationships with their friends seem to be worse than the general population.

On how many days each week did your child engage in moderate-vigorous physical activity for more than 60 minutes or light physical activity for 2 or more hours?



There are World Health Recommendations for exercise. For children, it is 60 minutes of moderate to hard exercise every day. More than 44% of children with disabilities do not do this. Most (72%) do not do light exercise for more than two hours each day. Light physical activity means things like walking or wheeling. Only 6% of children with disabilities meet these daily recommendations.

## PART 3: How does this report compare to the previous reports

- The first report shows responses over the first six months of the survey. This was from June to December 2020.
- The second report shows survey responses over the next nine months. This was from December 2020 to September 2021.
- This report (Report 3) shows survey responses from September 19th, 2021 to April 11th, 2022.

### Section 1A: Demographics

- The number of people who took the third survey was less than reports 1 and 2. There were 402 people who did the third survey. There were 713 who did the first survey and 708 who did the second survey.
- The number that identified as a man, woman, or preferred not to answer was similar in each.
- The average age was similar. In this third report, the average age was 51. It was 49 years old in the first report and 48 years old in the second report. The age range was also similar.
- The ethnic diversity of the respondents was similar.
- The most common reported disabilities were the same for all three surveys.
  - Limits in the ability to walk
  - Chronic pain
  - Psychological, psychiatric, or mental health condition
- There were about 40% of respondents who reported a similar income in all three surveys. This was a total household income of under \$25,000 in the past 12 months.

### Section 1B: COVID-19 related stressors and needs

- Fewer respondents in this third survey reported that their hours of work had been reduced, they had been laid off or furloughed during the pandemic, than the first two reports.
- The greatest unmet need in all surveys was access to leisure and recreation programs. Most respondents in the first survey (76%), second survey (69%), and this third survey (72%) said this need was unmet.
- Less people had unmet needs for access to medical supplies in this third survey compared to the first survey or second survey. Around 58% had unmet needs in the first survey. About 42% had unmet needs in the second survey. In this third survey, 34% had the need unmet.





## Section 1C: General health and social isolation

- The pandemic had a negative effect on the mental health of about 80% of respondents. This was similar in all three surveys.
- People in all three surveys said they had worse physical health than average.
- A similar amount of people in this third survey had a physical health score of less than 40 compared to report 2. There were 64% reporting it in both the second and third surveys.

## Section 1D: Lifestyle

- More people in this second survey met the WHO's weekly exercise guidelines. This went up from 19% in the first survey and 32% in the second one to 37% in this third survey. People reporting no exercise in the previous week went down from 59% (Report 1) and 44% (Report 2) to 42% in this third report.

## **Section 2A: Demographics of children with disabilities**

- This third report had fewer responses from adults who were a parent/caregiver of a child with a disability. There were 96 in this third survey. There were 183 in the second survey and 150 in the first survey.
- In each survey, more children were identified as boys than girls.
- The average child's age was similar in all three surveys. The average age was 17 in this third survey. It was 16 years old in the second survey. It was 15 years old in the first survey.
- For all three surveys, the most common disability reported is autism spectrum disorder. In this third survey, 44% of respondents identify with having autism spectrum disorder. There were 62% of respondents in the second survey and 45% in the first survey.?

## **Section 2B: General health and social isolation**

- Similar to iteration 2, 88% of parents/caregivers scored their child's peer relationships to be <40. A score of 50 is average for the general population.

## **Section 2C: Lifestyle**

- In this third survey, 44% of respondents said their child had no days when they completed 60 minutes of moderate to hard physical activity. This is less respondents than in the second survey. In the second survey, it was 56%.

## COVID-19 Disability Survey

The COVID-19 Disability Survey was developed by Abilities Centre and The Canadian Disability Participation Project.

The following project partners contributed survey questions:

- Rick Hansen Foundation
- Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Association
- Canadian Labour Congress
- COVID-19 Disability Working Group for the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction