

Childbirth, accidents and mental disorder are the three main reasons why Canadians from 15 to 44 years old are admitted to hospital. In the next age group, 45-64 years, heart disease leads with 10% of hospital days. Next are mental disorder and disease of the nervous system.

Among the elderly the leading causes of hospitalization are heart disease, stroke and respiratory disease.

The Canadian Health and Disability Survey (*Report of the Canadian Health and Disability Survey, 1983-84*, Statistics Canada Catalogue 82-555) was a household survey administered as a supplement to the Canadian Labour Force Survey in October of 1983 and June of 1984. The combined results are intended to be representative of the Canadian population, excluding those living in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, persons living on Indian reserves, full-time members of the armed forces and inmates of institutions (the exclusions constitute less than 3% of the population). This survey represents a first attempt at the collection of national data on the prevalence of disability according to the functional definitions of disability and handicap accepted by the World Health Organization. In this survey, adult respondents aged 15 or over were considered disabled if they indicated that they had trouble performing any one of 17 activities of daily living, such as walking up and down a flight of stairs, or if they experienced a limitation in the kind or amount of activity they could perform at home, work or school because of a long-term physical condition or health problem, or if they had a mental handicap. Children under the age of 15 were classified as disabled on the basis of using one or more of a number of aids or prosthesis; if they had a long-term health condition that limited activities normal for a child of that age; if they were required to attend a special school or classes because of a physical condition or health problem; or if they had other specified long-term health conditions. Highlights from the survey follow.

Among the adult population, 12.8%, representing nearly 2.5 million Canadians, reported some level of disability. The rate of disability increased with age, from a low of 3.8% among those aged 15-24 to 38.6% of those aged 65 or over.

The most frequently reported types of disability were those related to mobility, such as climbing stairs. Mobility problems were reported by 65% of disabled persons. Difficulties with body movements, such as reaching for

things (agility) were reported by 54% of disabled persons. These were followed by hearing and seeing disabilities. Uncorrected hearing disabilities were reported by 634,000 Canadians, and 331,000 reported uncorrected seeing disabilities. For each disability mentioned, the respondent was asked to identify the main condition or health problem that caused the disability. The most prevalent disabling conditions for adults were diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue, arthritis and rheumatism, and hearing disorders.

Although many disabled adults were already using special aids or devices, many reported either unmet needs or additional requirements for aids. An estimated 85,000 persons reported the need for some feature such as ramps or elevators, to improve access to housing. Approximately 120,000 persons expressed the need for mobility aids such as handrails within their houses; 83,000 people with a hearing disability required hearing aids, and 20,000 with a seeing disability reported the need for a pair of glasses.

The Canadian Health and Disability Survey also found that disability tends to be accompanied by socio-economic disadvantage. Disabled adults are much less likely to be employed, and much more likely to be classified as "not in the labour force" than those who are not disabled. In the 15-64 age range, 42% of those reporting a disability were employed, compared to 67% of those who were not disabled. More than one-half (52%) of disabled adults aged 15-64 were not in the labour force (not working and not looking for work), compared with one-quarter (25%) of non-disabled adults in the same age range.

Disabled adults are more likely to have received fewer years of formal education than those without disability. Of those reporting a disability, 44% had eight or fewer years of schooling, compared to 17% of the non-disabled population. Conversely, 15% of those with a disability had either received some postsecondary education or had completed a degree or diploma, compared with 32% of the non-disabled population. This tendency applied to both younger and older age groups.

Lower incomes tend to be reported among disabled adults than among non-disabled adults, and this is due, in part, to the lower levels of labour force participation among disabled adults. A comparison of income levels between those who reported a disability and the total Canadian population (the Canadian Health and Disability Survey did not collect data on income from the non-disabled respondents, thus the