



People with disabilities

Generally, a disability is defined as a condition that gets in the way of an individual performing core activities, i.e., activities associated with self-care, mobility and communication. There are various levels of disability as some individuals with various conditions can perform the majority of core activities with little assistance while others cannot care for themselves, are immobile and have difficulty communicating.

Module one | Exploring the four specific groups within the community

Prevalence of the group within the community

An estimated one in six people in Australia (17.7% or 4.4 million people) had disability in 2018, including about 1.4 million people (5.7% of the population) with severe or profound disability.

In general, people with disability report poorer general health and higher levels of psychological distress than people without disability. They also have higher rates of some modifiable health risk factors and behaviours, such as poor diet and tobacco smoking, than people without disability.

To learn more about people with disability, watch the following YouTube videos:

- <https://youtu.be/GGCnhCXSQBg>
- <https://youtu.be/ugFIHHom1NU>

Health risk factors

People with disability generally have higher rates of some modifiable health risk factors and behaviours than people without disability. But there can be particular challenges for people with disability in modifying some risk factors, for example, where extra assistance is needed to achieve a physically active lifestyle, or where medication increases appetite or affects drinking behaviours.

In 2017–18, compared with people without disability, people with disability were:

- more likely to report an insufficient level of physical activity in the last week (72% with disability compared with 52% without disability, for people aged 15 and over)
- more likely to report that they smoked daily (18% compared with 12%, for people aged 15 and over)
- more likely to be overweight or obese (72% compared with 55%, for people aged two and over)
- more likely to report eating insufficient serves of fruit and vegetables per day (47% compared with 41%, for people aged two and over)
- less likely to report risky alcohol consumption in the last week (14% compared with 16%, for people aged 15 and over).

Source: *Australia's health snapshots 2020* (AIHW, 2020)

Activity

1. Explore the different types of limitations people with disability may encounter.

2. Evaluate the statistics surrounding the number of people with disability and discuss whether this number surprises you. Why/why not?

3. Analyse the types of disabilities that would impact on an individual's living arrangements.

4. Reflect on the types of disability prevalent in your neighbourhood.

Adequate standard of living

Individuals with disability, like all individuals, are entitled to secure, safe and appropriate housing. Often modifications may need to be made to cater for their diverse needs.

Health

Depending on the type and severity of a disability, individuals will experience varying levels of health and wellbeing. Some individuals are able to care for themselves or complete their day-to-day tasks with the help of family and friends. Others may require the ongoing support of health professionals. In some cases, having a disability may be a predisposition for other health concerns at a higher rate than people without disability. For example, a person confined to their bed may develop acute problems such as pressure ulcers and respiratory tract infections due to being sedentary.

For detailed information on the health of people with disability, read pages 489–497 of AIHW's report *Australia's health snapshots 2020*.

Activity

1. List common home modifications for individuals with disability.

2. Visit www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release. Using this report, gather relevant data regarding the health status of people with disability compared to those without disability.

Employment

Labour force participation for people with disability has remained stable since 2015, in contrast to an increase in the participation rate for people without disability. In 2018, 2.1 million people with disability living in households were of working age (15–64 years). Of these:

- 53.4% were in the labour force, compared with 84.1% of those without disability
- 47.8% were employed, compared with 80.3% of people without disability
- 46.6% were not in the labour force, compared with 15.9% of those without disability.

Source: www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release

There are a range of government and community-based services that cater for individuals with disabilities trying to find a job. Centrelink offers employment services for eligible individuals as they provide information about appropriate working environments and makes referrals specific to an individual and the needs associated with the disability.

Activity

Visit www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/programmes-services/disability-employment-services and use the links on the page to gather relevant information and answer the questions that follow.

1. Identify the two clearly distinct programs regarding assessment and referral processes.

2. Describe the key distinguishing feature of Disability Employment Services.

3. Outline the services provided to job seekers regarding job placement and support.

Job Access through the Australian Government offers a range of programs for individuals with disability, including Work Assist (to help people with disability stay in work if they risk losing their job through illness, injury or disability) and reimbursement to employers for the costs of workplace modifications when employing people with disabilities.

Safety and security

Individuals with disability have the right to feel safe and secure in their surroundings. In some situations where risk is apparent, individuals with disability may be disadvantaged in their quest to eliminate risk or remove themselves from a dangerous situation.

Activity

Research and identify a range of items that assist in the safety and mobility of people with disability. Estimate the cost of each item. Examples have been provided.

Item	Cost	Item	Cost
Weekly pill dispenser	\$14.95	Bendable knife and fork	\$16.50

Sense of identity

Individuals with disability can often experience a lack of sense of identity. They may compare themselves to individuals without disability, and concentrate on the experiences they are unable to encounter and the lifestyle they will never have. It is important for families, carers and friends to promote the sense of identity of people with disability by challenging negative beliefs and distressed emotions. Individuals with disability also need to support their sense of identify by participating in various activities, showing their interests and involving themselves in hobbies.

Activity

Identify a range of opportunities in your local area that enable individuals with disability to be active and valuable members of society.
