



# 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.

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

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

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

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# Individual diversity within the group

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) defines disability as people:

- with severe or profound core activity limitation—unable to do, or always or sometimes needs help with, a core activity (self-care, mobility and communication)
- without severe or profound core activity limitation—has a mild or moderate core activity limitation, or has restriction in schooling or employment.

The disability population is diverse. It encompasses people with varying types and severities of disability across all parts of Australian society. While the number of people with disability in Australia has increased to 4.4 million in 2018 (up from 4.0 million in 2009), the prevalence rate has decreased over this period (18.5% of the population in 2009 down to 17.7% in 2018).

Overall, the likelihood of experiencing disability increases with age for both males and females. This means the longer people live, the more likely they are to experience some form of disability. For example, only 3.7% of children aged 0–4 had disability, whereas 85% of adults aged 90 and over had disability in 2018.

Source: Australia’s health snapshots 2020 (AIHW, 2020)

## Activity

***Disability can affect an individual’s cognitive functioning, their senses and/or their mobility. Research a variety of disabilities that impact on these three areas and record your findings.***

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# Terminology used by the community to describe the group

There is a broad range of terminology used to describe people with disability, and often these terms can be insensitive or incorrect. It is important to understand terms used and what they mean because referring to someone with the wrong terminology can actually be very offensive and discriminatory.



## 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.

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2. Visit [www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release](http://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.

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## Education

Depending on the level of physical or mental disability, the education of an individual can be affected. School aged individuals with disability are supported by the education system to provide for their special learning needs. The NSW Department of Communities caters for the needs of students with disability by identifying and assessing the disability and discussing and negotiating the best option for the student.

Universities and TAFEs throughout Australia are increasingly catering for the needs of individuals with disabilities and widening their access to a range of support services. Often, facilities are specifically provided for individuals such as modified computers, modified signs and instructions in Braille and a variety of furniture and equipment that caters specifically for individuals with disability so that they can partake in the same learning as people without a disability. Educators should practice differentiated learning and inclusivity so that all students are learning the same concepts and all students feel included.

### Activity

1. Visit <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support/personalised-support-for-learning/personalised-learning-And-support> and describe how personalised learning and support is provided to students with disability.

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2. Consider the facilities available throughout schools, universities and TAFEs that are specifically provided for individuals with disability. For example, instructions in Braille.

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## 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](http://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](http://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.

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

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

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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.**

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