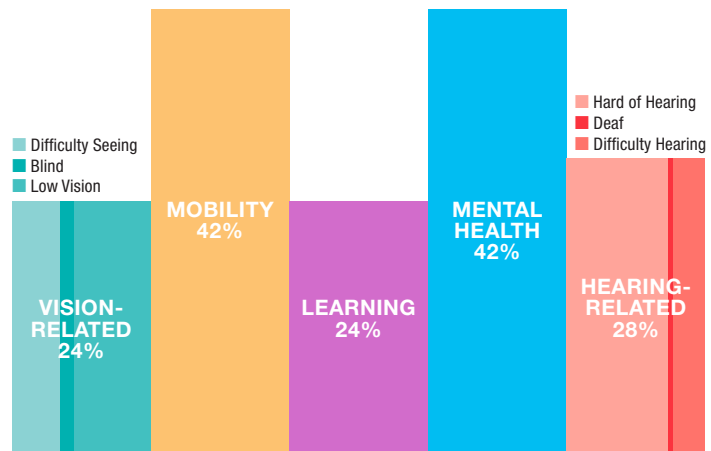


Connecting with those who face physical and/or emotional barriers and challenges

Nearly one in 10 working-age Canadian adults have some form of disability, according to the latest available Stats Can data. With an aging population, this has been increasing and will continue to do so as mobility, hearing, sight and cognitive challenges grow. Yet no brands or companies have consistently demonstrated that they are designing products and services for this growing segment of our population. It's a sentiment we've heard from a unique community of more than 1,000 people with disabilities (PWD) that Ipsos draws upon for both qualitative and quantitative insights.

Profile of the Ipsos Disabilities Community



Total number of panellists = 1,017*

*Some panelists have multiple disabilities

We hear stories like this one from one individual who is non-hearing: She was recently at a restaurant and the waitress serving her, upon realizing that she was not being understood and that the customer had a disability around communication, gave her a braille menu. The customer is not visually impaired, she is non-hearing. This inappropriate and unhelpful reaction to serving someone with unique needs is not an isolated case, and service providers, retailers and manufacturers alike should consider how they address these opportunities.

Increasing and enhancing the accessibility of your organization is a smart business move. According to The Conference Board of Canada, people with disabilities represent a consumer spending base of \$25 billion. And, every person with a disability influences the spending decisions of other Canadians. The Martin Prosperity Institute estimates that the income controlled by people with disabilities and those at risk of disability in Canada will be \$536 billion by 2031. To that end, Rich Donovan, head of the Return on Disability Group in New York suggests that companies should think of disability not as a niche market but as an *emerging* market.

Brands must learn to tread the fine line between meeting specialized needs of PWDs and not treating them as “outsiders.” Some of what we hear is that they don’t want special treatment, and many of them don’t consider themselves “disabled.”

One principle companies can follow is to design better products and services for everyone. In fact, companies that meet the needs of a disabled customer are more likely to design products that better meet the needs of other consumers. For example, the OXO vegetable peeler—designed for those with arthritis—is now universally popular. As well, consider the ability to use your smartphone in the sun, which has been made much easier due to accessibility guidelines for contrasts. These guidelines were initially built to help those with limited vision to see their screen more easily but provide a benefit to all users.

Likewise, simplifying the fine print in a terms and conditions document will make it easier for people with learning disabilities to read and comprehend, but will also improve the experience for those without cognitive barriers and/or challenges.

Part of the challenge has been a historical lack of interest on the part of marketers to research this perceived low-value segment. But part of the problem has also been the inability of researchers to include PWD in commercial innovation strategies, or consumer research. This is in part because research tools/approaches haven’t been sensitive to the needs of the PWD community. Survey platforms need to be accessible (which may include the use of relay services with real time sign language interpreters) and survey interviewing needs to be sensitive to what research accessibility means for potential non-reading/ non-hearing/ non-seeing consumers.

To this end, Ipsos has developed a community of People with Disabilities (PWD) that can be accessed to do research with this growing, important, unique segment of the population.

Our goal is to help businesses ensure that their products and services are meeting the needs of every audience, regardless of physical and cognitive ability. Companies that lead by learning through research about the innovations that are needed and the language they use will get noticed by this growing number of Canadians.

Together, we can ensure that your brand is making their lives, and everyone’s lives a little easier.

To find out more about the Ipsos PWD offering, please contact:

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