



Fact Sheet on Limited Mobility

June 2023

13% (4.2 million) adult Canadians have limited mobility,
compared with 1.2% who rely on mobility devices.

Persons with limited mobility are independently mobile but can only walk a short distance or stand unsupported for a brief time without serious health consequences.

Restricted social participation is the primary consequence of limited mobility.

Safe distance to walk unaided:

- 15 m is walkable for most [“short distance”]
- 32 m is walkable for 18%

Safe time to stand unaided:

- 1-2 minutes is possible for most [“brief time”]
- 5 minutes is possible for 33%

Common health conditions causing limited mobility:

- Arthritis
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Heart disease

Physical consequences of walking too far:

- 62% Increased joint pain
- 33% Increased difficulty breathing
- 32% Walk more slowly until almost not moving
- 32% Have trouble walking at all the next day
- 28% Increased muscle spasms
- 23% Begin to stagger and lose balance
- 15% Become immobilized by pain

Use of mobility devices for distance:

- 12% Cane
- 14% Walker (with seat)
- 20% Wheelchair (manual)

Public reactions to a person walking slowly:

- 43% Ignored, as though invisible
- 31% Treated with anger or irritation
- 22% Pitying looks

Social consequences of limited mobility:

- Social isolation
- Loss of serendipitous encounters
- Persistent pressure to walk too far
- Over-dependence on others to act for self
- Constant self-advocacy

Difficulties in community life:

- 64% Having to stand in line for service
- 57% Attending events where everyone stands
- 55% Shopping at a supermarket or mall
- 31% Using public transportation
- 30% Entering buildings with parking 15m away

44% don't vote due to distance to be walked

If they voted in last election:

- 36% Stood in line more than 2 minutes
- 77% Not offered seating while waiting

Self-advocacy:

- Resist walking/standing more than comfortable
- Ask to sit down for service

Solutions to Improve Accessibility

- Replace waiting lines with numbers and seating; provide seated options for service.
- Provide seating at entrances, elevators, and all customer service counters.
- Procure adequate departmental customer seating and equipment to bring services to customers.
- Provide clear wayfinding and website communication that supports those with limited mobility.
- Train employees and managers to watch for and accommodate those with limited mobility.

For more information: www.HiddenMobilityDisabilities.com or alliance@hiddenmobilityDisabilities.com

This Fact Sheet is based on results from the *Survey on Hidden Mobility Disabilities*, December 2022, which are reliable within ± 2.0 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.