

GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

VitalFocus.[®]

Vital Focus series details secondary impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on people with disabilities

The impacts of the pandemic are felt more acutely and have increased effects on people with disabilities

Guelph, Ont., March 11, 2021—[Toward Common Ground](#) and their collaborating partners have released the [Vital Focus report on the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on people with disabilities](#). The Vital Focus series of reports provide evidence-based recommendations on how to mitigate and address the secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those impacts are felt disproportionately by certain groups including people with disabilities.

Who has a disability in Canada?

- 1 in 5 (20%) of Canadians over the age of 15 are living with one or more disabilities
- 2 in 5 (43%) of Canadians with disabilities have a severe or very severe disability
- Based on national data, it is likely that more than 18,000 people are living with one or more disabilities in Guelph and Wellington County, and 7,200 of those have a more severe disability.

How the COVID-19 pandemic affects people with disabilities:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a notable impact on the mental health of all people in Canada, but it has been especially difficult for people with disabilities.

- Data collected in May 2020 by the Canadian Mental Health Association found that, when compared to the general population, Canadians with a disability were two times more likely to be having trouble coping since the outbreak of COVID-19
- Information provided by Family Counselling and Support Services for Guelph-Wellington (FCSSGW) noted an increase in depression and anxiety for some people with developmental disabilities since the start of the pandemic.

Issues people with disabilities are faced with because of the pandemic include:

- Job loss and financial issues
- Challenges with mask usage and exemption policies
- Access to education
- Access to healthcare, community programs and services
- Changes in services or activities
- Housing and homelessness challenges
- Negative effects of working from home and physical distancing

At a high level, the Vital Focus series of reports demonstrate several important realities:

- The pandemic hasn't created the secondary impacts being felt in the community. Rather, COVID-19 has exacerbated and made pressing issues more visible and acute.
- The pandemic has heightened pre-existing inequities. Black, Indigenous, low-income, people with disabilities and older adult communities are among those who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- And secondary impacts of the pandemic layer or compound—they are not often felt in isolation; for example, impacts to employment can at times lead to mental health impacts or increased food insecurity.

The data and recommendations presented in the Vital Focus series are starting to shape strategic decision making, community measurement, and advocacy efforts.

Resources

- [Vital Focus on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Vital Focus series site and previous reports](#)
- [Guelph City Council Information Report—Update on the Vital Focus Series: Secondary Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Contacts

Vital Focus Series

Sarah Haanstra

Manager

Toward Common Ground

sarahhaanstra@gmail.com

People with disabilities

For general questions about the impacts on people with disabilities:

Mike Greer

Disability Advocate & Outreach & Engagement Specialist

Rick Hansen Foundation

bloodsweatandwheels@gmail.com

519-841-5713

Local Spotlight: Guelph Independent Living

For questions about the impacts on people who access services and supports at Guelph Independent Living:

Janet Redman

Executive Director

Guelph Independent Living

janet@guelphindependentliving.org