

Government of
Northwest Territories



Disability Matters

A companion to the
NWT DISABILITY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: 2017 – 2027



Summary

NWT Disability Strategic Framework: 2017 to 2027

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This summary defines what disability means in today’s world in the NWT. It outlines the vision, values, principles, and goals of the Strategic Framework.

In general, a strategic framework is a way to define and understand an issue. It outlines what to do and how to do it to improve things.

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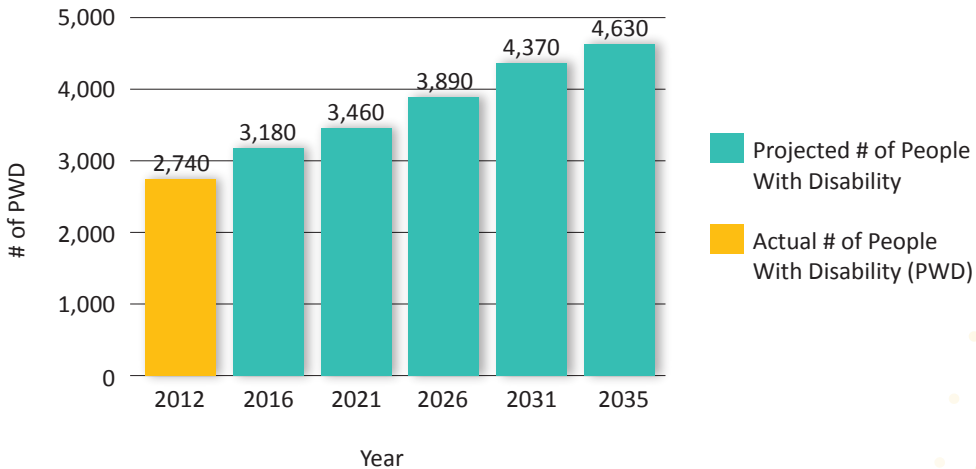
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Disability Is...

How we define and understand disability is changing. In today's world, we know that many people have an impairment – illness or injury – that affects how their body or mind works. The impairment makes it harder to do certain things – see, move, think, remember, learn, talk, or hear. It can affect a person's mental health and social relationships.

of People With a Disability 15 years and older – Northwest Territories



Prepared by: Department of Health and Social Services and NWT Bureau of Statistics.

Disability is when people with impairment face barriers that keep them from taking part in life in the same way that others do, such as:

- Buildings and other places where people live, study, work, and play do not adapt to their needs.
- Human attitudes and policies do not recognize or respect their ability, or adapt to their needs.

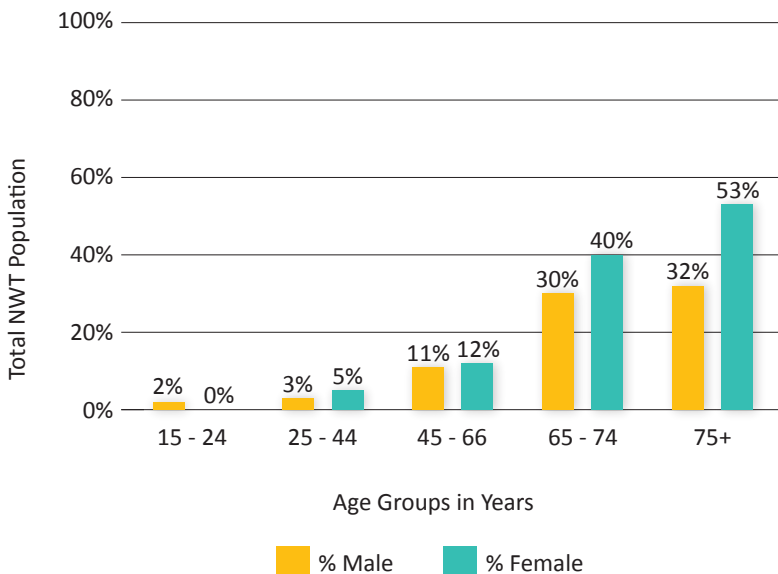
Who are People With Disabilities

Impairments related to disability can happen to anyone, at any age, for example:

- A child is born with Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, or no hearing.
- A young person loses a leg at work or has a brain injury from a snowmobile accident.
- A middle-aged person gets bad arthritis, lives with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, or has chronic back pain.
- An older person gets dementia or Alzheimer's, their eyesight gets worse, or has trouble walking.

As people age, more of them have a disability.

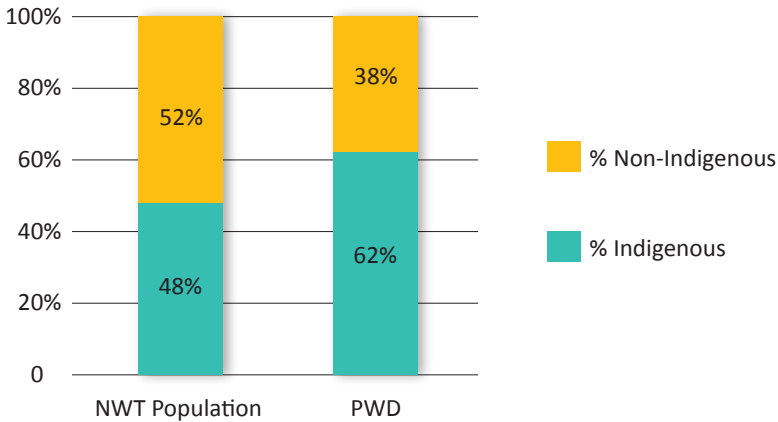
NWT People With Disability – Different Age Groups % Female and % Male of Total NWT Population



Disability in the NWT – Ethnicity and Geography

In the NWT, more Indigenous people have a disability than non-Indigenous people. Small communities and regional centres together have a larger share of people with a disability than Yellowknife.

PWD – % Indigenous and % Non-Indigenous



PWD – % in Yellowknife and % in All Other Communities





Impacts of Disability

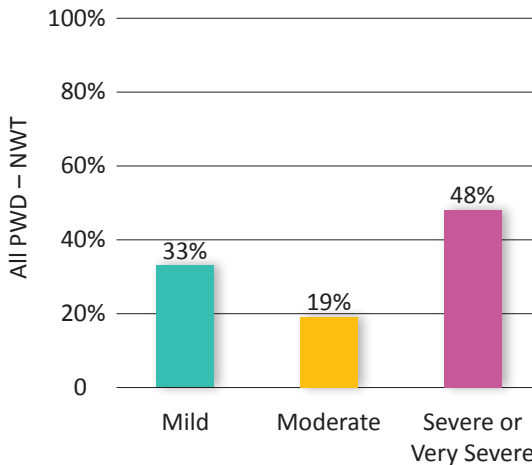
Disability affects everyone – individuals, families, caregivers, communities, and larger society. But the person with a disability, and their family and caregivers experience the most direct impacts. Here are some examples:

- More stress and other mental health problems for family and other caregivers.
- High demands on caregivers to manage medical equipment, oversee medicines, check symptoms and side effects, and deal with complex systems and services.
- Decreased overall health and wellbeing, especially if a person has more than one disability.
- Increased costs and financial strain.

A disability can be:

- Mild or severe.
- Visible or invisible.
- Short or long-term.
- Painful or not.
- Staying the same, getting worse, or improving.

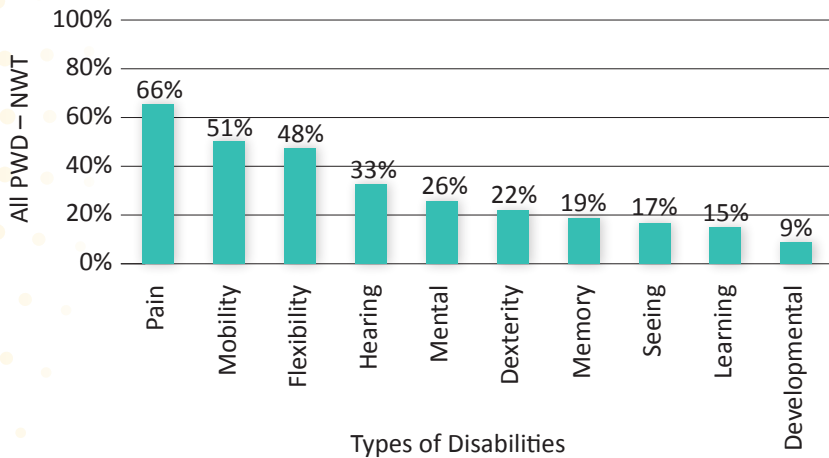
% of People with Mild, Moderate, and Severe Disability



In the NWT, almost half the people with disability have a severe or very severe disability.

In the NWT, three out of four people with disabilities have more than one type. For example, 65% of all the people with pain also have flexibility problems and 61% also have mobility problems.

% NWT People with Different Types of Disabilities



People with disabilities experience many inequalities, such as:

- More risk of violence, abuse, prejudice, disrespect, discrimination.
- Less chance for autonomy or independence.
- Less access to health care, jobs, education, taking part in society.
- Lower income and higher expenses such as medical costs, extra caregiving, special transport, mobility supports.

Lack of money has other effects, such as:

- Less access to a healthy diet and proper housing.
- More pressure on the family to help, which puts them at risk too.

People with a disability are more likely to live in poverty; people who live in poverty are more likely to have a disability.

Disability Supports – Programs and Services

A disability support is anything that helps a person overcome the barriers they experience. Many people with disabilities need supports all through their life. Supports must fit the needs of the person. Here are some examples:

- **Personal help:** caregiver, homemaker services, medication, other therapies, planning and financial advice, life skills training, and social involvement.
- **Personal physical aids:** wheelchair, hearing aid, special computer, certain features at home, school, or work.
- **Community infrastructure and services:** ramps, public spaces, transportation, respite and training for caregivers, income and employment supports, developmental services.
- **Attitudes and policies that include people with disabilities.**

People with disabilities have a wide range of needs. Supports vary from person to person and can change over time. Two people with the same disability can have very different experiences and needs.



NWT Disability Strategic Framework: 2017 to 2027

To develop this strategy, GNWT departments and non-profit groups worked together to study, and understand disability. The strategy includes a vision, values, principles, and goals.

Vision

The vision states the dreams and hopes for people with disability in the NWT.

- Every person living with a disability in the NWT has the right to full citizenship and opportunity.

Values

Values are a like a code of conduct. They explain what is right and wrong. This Framework has four values.

- Equity – being fair; not discriminating.
- Inclusion – accepting everyone; having a sense of belonging.
- Accessibility – being easy to obtain and use, reach or enter, understand or appreciate.
- Participation – taking part in something.

Principles

The principles describe what is needed for people with disability in the NWT. This Framework has 10 principles:

- Self-determination – making decisions in your own life.
- Dignity – having a sense of pride, self-worth and self-respect.
- Equal opportunity – treating all people fairly.
- Flexibility – being willing to change and compromise.
- Independence – thinking and acting for yourself.
- Respect – valuing self, other people, things; treating them well.
- Innovation – using a good idea to make useful goods or services.
- Non-discrimination – treating different groups of people fairly.
- Personal accessibility – being easy to approach, reach, enter, speak with, or use.
- Person and family centered – honouring the needs, values, and decisions of people with disabilities and their families.



Goals

A goal describes what we want to achieve – something long-term to aim for. This Framework has four goals:

Goal 1: Person and Family Centred

Support and empower each person with a disability, and their family and caregivers, based on strengths, needs, and personal choice.

Goal 2: Inclusion and Accessibility

Remove barriers – improving everyone’s ability to belong and to participate. Barriers can be: physical, social, cultural, and systemic (something in a process that makes it difficult) – and promote supports that everyone can use.

Goal 3: Awareness, Education and Training

Increase awareness, knowledge, training, and work to improve attitudes and practices related to disability.

Goal 4: Coordination, Evaluation and Reporting

Work together to do research, monitor progress, and report on disability issues – government departments and non-government organizations.

Next Steps

A separate document outlines objectives in five areas *GNWT Disability Five-Year Action Plan: 2017 to 2021*. The objectives describe the steps to take to work towards achieving the goals in the Strategic Framework, these are:

- Income security and poverty.
- Education, awareness, and training.
- Transition planning and options.
- Universal design and living supports.
- Caregiver supports.

Another document describes the current programs and services for people with disabilities – *GNWT Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities Inventory*.

Together with non-profit groups, several GNWT departments administer and deliver programs and services for people with disabilities. We need to work together to make things better for people with disabilities.



