

**For Immediate Release**

**New Study: 64% of Canadians have a disability or take care of a family member with a disability and accessibility in most places rated fair or poor**

**Study from Leger for The Rick Hansen Foundation Shows Improved Access Is Not Happening Fast Enough in our Communities**

**May 28, 2024, Traditional territory of the xʷməθkwəy 'əḿ (Musqueam) First Nation / Richmond, B.C.** – New national data from Leger on behalf of the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) demonstrates overwhelming support from Canadians for an accessible country that’s inclusive of people with disabilities (91%+) and while 86% believe that ensuring our buildings and spaces are accessible for people with disabilities is an urgent priority, the majority (57%) rate the level of access of the buildings where they live, work and learn as fair or poor. The impacts of these barriers are significant with more than 50 per cent of people with disabilities experiencing anxiety about getting around in public places, feeling socially isolated and avoiding less accessible places.

“People with disabilities continue to face major barriers to participating in everyday activities in their communities. If you can’t simply get in your car, hail a taxi, take a bus to work, go to a restaurant, join a protest, or even visit a friend at their house because of barriers in the built environment, then you don’t have full citizenship. This is what people with disabilities experience every day and its’ got to change.” said Brad McCannell, VP Access & Inclusion at the Rick Hansen Foundation. “The study shows that Canadians feel the accessibility of buildings and spaces in their city are improving too slowly or haven’t improved at all. Current practices simply aren’t meeting the real needs of the community. This is unacceptable and an urgent issue that must be addressed.”

The new data outlines the significance of the issue, with almost two-thirds or 64% of Canadians identifying as having a disability or having a family member they live with or take care of with a disability. The top reasons for poor accessibility include building age; renovation difficulties; high cost; lack of regulation enforcement; and the lack of prioritization from designers/builders. Both the private and public sector are believed to be responsible for improvements, with 96% putting onus on designers, developers and building owners/managers, as well as provincial (96%), municipal (96%) and federal (94%) governments. Only 51% believe the government is providing a good level of support.

In addition to physical barriers, attitudinal barriers also continue to persist. Among those with a disability or who have a person with a disability in their household, with the top challenges they face with employers include a lack of understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities (21%); a lack of understanding/belief in the potential of persons with disabilities (19%); and preconceived attitudes and perceptions about the potential of people with disabilities (19%).

“Accessibility is a significant limiting factor to participation in both our communities and in the workforce.” said Steve Mossop, EVP Western Canada at Leger. “I think employers across the country will see this new study and take serious note of the implications not only from an employment and culture perspective, but also in terms of how much inaccessibility is affecting their business potential and bottom line. With forty-three percent of those with disabilities who are employed agreeing they could work more hours if their workplace was more accessible, increased education and commitment will clearly bring increased return on investment.”

Among those with physical disabilities who are employed, unsuitable workstation design, noisy environments, a lack of automatic doors at front entrances/inside buildings, and an absence of handrails or grab bars are the top physical barriers experienced at work.

Access the [full study](#) or [presentation summary](#) for more details.

Brad McCannell and Steve Mossop are both available for interviews.

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### **About the Rick Hansen Foundation**

The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) was established in 1988, following the completion of Rick Hansen’s Man In Motion World Tour. For over 35 years, RHF has worked to raise awareness, change attitudes, and remove barriers for people with disabilities. Visit [www.RickHansen.com](http://www.RickHansen.com) to learn more.

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