

What is disability

Understand disability in relation to the NSW public sector and broader community.

On this page

[Disability in the community](#)

[Unseen disability](#)

[Can I ask videos](#)

Disability includes long-term physical, mental health, intellectual, neurological or sensory differences which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

People with disability are a very diverse group. There are many types and there can be wide variations of impact on daily living. Many disabilities are not visible, such as anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, diabetes or dyslexia.

Disability is a natural part of human diversity and everybody is likely to experience disability at some point in life. Disability may be present from birth, acquired due to illness or accident, or come about with time as a result of age.

Disability in the community

Over 4.4 million people in Australia have some form of disability, that's one in five people. A small snapshot of some key statistics include:

- 17.8% of females and 17.6% of males in Australia have disability.
- The likelihood of living with disability increases with age. 2 in 5 people with disability are 65 years or older.
- 2.1 million Australians of working age (15-64 years) have disability.
- People aged between 15 and 64 years with disability have both lower labour force participation (53.4%) and higher unemployment rates (10.3%) than people without disability (84.1% and 4.6% respectively).

- 34% of people with disability are managers and professionals.
- Graduates with disability take 61.5% longer to gain fulltime employment than other graduates.
- Almost one in 5 (18.9%) people with disability aged 15-24 years experienced discrimination. In almost half of those instances, the source of discrimination is an employer.

Source: [Australian Network on Disability - Disability Statistics](#)

Unseen disability

Unseen disability is not immediately apparent and people may be unaware of what their condition is and that it is classified as a disability.

It covers a range of conditions and symptoms, including chronic or debilitating pain or fatigue, mental health conditions, learning disorders, neurodivergence, and cognitive disability.

People with unseen disabilities may not share their disability status as they fear they may face discrimination for not 'appearing to have a disability'.

Can I ask videos

These videos give an insight on why work has special importance for people living with disability, and how communication and empathy go a long way towards helping staff with disability flourish at work.

If you manage or work with people who have disability it is important to be aware, inclusive and informed. Do not be afraid to ask questions, speak frankly and learn from people who have disability about their lived experience.

Video embed:

[Can I Ask...? Let's talk about disability and employment \(6 minutes\)](#)