



# *What Does It Mean to Have Learning Disabilities in Alberta?*

## **ADULTS 22 TO 29**

This profile focuses on adults aged 22 to 29. People in this age group are typically making decisions about their careers. They are also establishing themselves as independent adults — setting up their own homes, getting married, starting families.

*The data in this section were taken from the 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS). PALS was a cross-sectional survey that was focused on disability. The PALS sample was selected from those people who answered “yes” to one or more of the disability questions on the 2001 Census of Population long questionnaire.*

## **HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE LEARNING DISABILITIES?**

Of those people aged 22 to 29, slightly more than one person in 100 (0.9%) said that they had a learning disability on the 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS). Among males aged 22 to 29, the rate was 1%; it was lower for females at 0.8%.

Among those young adults who said that they had a learning disability, 56.4% were males. Males make up 44.1% of the total population of Ontario.

## **WHAT TYPES OF FAMILIES DO THEY LIVE IN?**

Half (50.2%) % of people with learning disabilities aged 22 to 29 reported that they were the head of their household or spouse of the head of the household, similar to the total population aged 22 to 29 years. Amongst that population, the figure was 51.3%.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT AT SCHOOL?

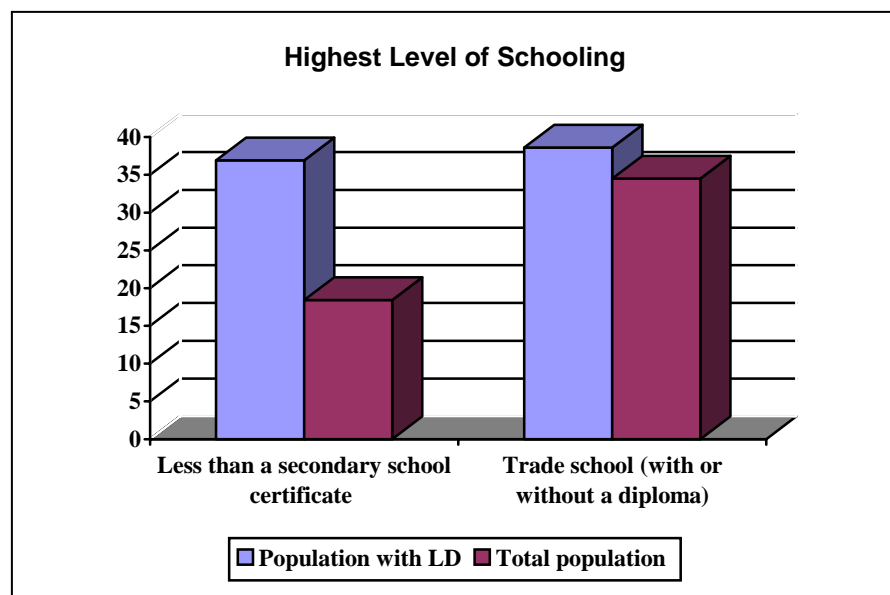
### Thoughts from the Focus Groups

*I had one teacher who helped me when I was in school; his was the only class that I excelled in. I went to school for three years and I felt like I didn't come out any smarter for it.*

*Public school was a bad fit for me. I was like the square peg in the round hole.*

### What the Data Tell Us

Just over one-third of males and females aged 22 to 29 who said that they had a learning disability (36.9%) reported less than a secondary school certificate as their highest level of schooling. In addition, 38.6% reported attending trade school (with or without a diploma).



Among persons aged 22 to 29 years with learning disabilities, 36.4% reported that it took them longer to achieve their current level of education because of their disability.

The story was different among the total population of Alberta aged 22 to 29. For this population, 18.4% reported less than a secondary school certificate as their highest level of schooling but a similar proportion to those with learning disabilities said they had attended trade school (with or without a diploma) — 34.5%.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT AT WORK?

### Thoughts from the Focus Groups

*It takes me a while to adjust to things. My boss wasn't interested in trying to help me adjust. She was only interested in making money, not helping me.*

*I always question how my employers perceive me. Other people who I came into the organization with are further up the ladder than I am. They all have their weaknesses too. It sometimes makes me doubt myself.*

### What the Data Tell Us

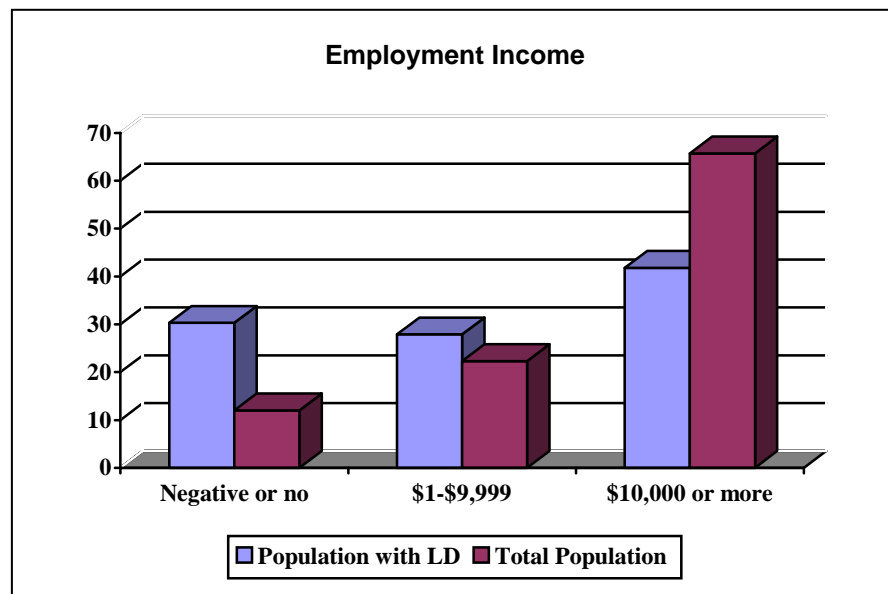
People with learning disabilities aged 22 to 29 were less likely than the total population of the province to have said that they were employed in the week prior to the 2001 Census. The figures were 53.6% and 78.5%, respectively.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON INCOME?

Having a learning disability did have an impact on the amount of income earned by adults with learning disabilities. Adults aged 22 to 29 with learning

disabilities — both sexes — earned less than adults in the same age group in the total population. 30.2% of those with learning disabilities reported that they had earned either a negative or no

income in 2000; this figure was 12% among the total population aged 22 to 29. 27.9% of adults with learning disabilities said that they had earned between \$1 and \$9,999 in 2000 and 41.8% said that they had earned \$10,000 or more. These figures were 22.3% and 65.7%, respectively, for the total population aged 22 to 29.



Almost half (48.2%) of adults aged 22 to 29 with learning disabilities — both sexes — were not members of low-income families (as calculated using data from the 2001 Census). This figure was 76% for the total population aged 22 to 29.

According to the *2001 Census Dictionary*, the **low-income cut-off** is defined as the income level at which families or unattached individuals spend 20% more than the average on necessities (i.e., food, shelter and clothing).

*The data in this section were taken from the 2000 and 2002 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), Cycle 1.2 – Mental Health and Well-being. The CCHS was a cross-sectional survey (it was only done once) that focused, in this cycle, on mental health and well-being. The sample for this survey was selected from the Canadian Labour Force Survey.*

## **WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON HEALTH?**

More than half (57.2%) of the survey respondents aged 22 to 29 with learning disabilities — both sexes — reported that they thought their health in general was excellent or very good. This figure was higher (68.8%) among the total survey population aged 22 to 29.

When asked about their physical health, slightly over half (51.2%) of the population aged 22 to 29 with learning disabilities — both sexes — rated their physical health as excellent or very good. The figure was 55.1% for the total population.

Survey respondents were also asked about their mental health. Amongst the population aged 22 to 29 with learning disabilities — both sexes — 53.7% said their mental health was either excellent or very good. This figure was higher at 67.2% the total population aged 22 to 29.

The CCHS also asked respondents about their ability to handle the unexpected problems that can arise. Among both males and females aged 22 to 29 with learning disabilities, 70.4% said that they thought their ability to handle unexpected problems was excellent or very good. Among the total population aged 22 to 29, slightly less (60.9%) reported excellent or very good.

When asked about their ability to handle unexpected demands, 8.5% of people with learning disabilities aged 22 to 29 — both sexes — said their ability was either excellent or very good. This figure was 65.9% among the total population aged 22 to 29.