

# THE DISABILITY AND PREGNANCY STUDY *snapshot*



## Rates of Recognized Pregnancy in Women with Disabilities in Ontario, Canada

### What is the research about?

About one in ten reproductive-aged women has a physical, sensory, or intellectual/developmental disability. Women with disabilities have historically been under-served in reproductive health care programs because of assumptions that they are not sexually active, or are not likely to experience pregnancy. This new report compares rates of recognized pregnancy among women with and without disabilities.

### What did the researchers do?

The researchers used health administrative data held at [ICES](#) to look at all Ontario women with a physical, sensory, or intellectual/developmental disability, and those with multiple disabilities, who were between 15 and 44 years of age in 2017. Rates of pregnancy were calculated for each disability group and compared to women without any disability.

### What did the researchers find?

- Overall pregnancy rates were slightly lower in women with physical or sensory disabilities and much lower in women with intellectual/developmental and multiple disabilities compared to women without disabilities.

- Among 15 to 19 year olds, pregnancy rates were higher in women with physical, sensory, and intellectual/developmental disabilities compared to women without disabilities.
- Between 2003 and 2017, pregnancy rates decreased slightly in women without disabilities, were stable among those with physical or intellectual/developmental disabilities, and increased in women with sensory or multiple disabilities.
- In 2017, one in 8 pregnancies in Ontario was to a woman with a disability.

### What you need to know

Pregnancy is not uncommon in women with disabilities.

The diverse voices and experiences of women with disabilities need to be reflected in Ontario's reproductive health care programs.

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## How can we use this research?

Knowing that pregnancy is not uncommon in women with disabilities can help inform reproductive health care planning. Women with disabilities report barriers to accessing reproductive health care, including physically inaccessible care environments and lack of tailored information. The findings from this report demonstrate the need to develop reproductive health care programs that address the diverse needs of women with disabilities.

## About the researchers

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## Do you want to know more?

This snapshot is based on the following article: Brown HK, Chen S, Guttman A, Haverkamp SM, Parish S, Ray JG, Tarasoff LA, Vigod SN, Carty A, Lunsky Y. Rates of recognized pregnancy in women with disabilities in Ontario, Canada. *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology* in press; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2019.10.096>

For more information about this article or the Disability and Pregnancy Study, contact Dr. Hilary Brown at [hk.brown@utoronto.ca](mailto:hk.brown@utoronto.ca).

## About the Disability and Pregnancy Study

The Disability and Pregnancy Study is a research program aiming to enhance the perinatal care of women with disabilities. This work is conducted by an international team of researchers in partnership with a dedicated Advisory Committee comprised of individuals with lived experience, service-providers, and policy-makers.

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## Keywords

*Disability, Fertility, Obstetrics, Pregnancy rates*



Images in this report were obtained from the following sources:

1. Sunnybrook Hospital. (2017). Making pregnancy more accessible for women with disabilities. Retrieved June 29, 2018 from <http://health.sunnybrook.ca/pregnancy/accessible-care-pregnancy-clinic/>
2. BabyCentre. (2018). Baby signing. Retrieved June 29, 2018 from <https://www.babycentre.co.uk/a547348/baby-signing>
3. American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults. (2010). Blind children with additional disabilities. Retrieved June 29, 2018 from <https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/fr/fr29/2/fr2902tc.htm>

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