

Canadians identify accessibility for people with disabilities as top priority for new public buildings

New survey reveals Canadians believe it is worthwhile to incentivize the construction industry to do better

December 2, 2016 – Canadians identify accessibility for people with disabilities as a top priority for new public buildings, with nearly 9-in-10 Canadians saying a LEED-style program to rate building accessibility would be ‘worthwhile’, according to a new national survey that highlights the problems facing people with disabilities today.

Released in advance of the United Nations’ International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, the survey shows respondents strongly agree that accessibility is a basic human right and not a privilege, but indicates that communities have a long way to go to reach the ideal level of access for all.

Canadians see a large gap between how accessible private buildings currently are and how accessible they *ought* to be. The public also views one of the biggest obstacles to making accessibility a reality as the cost and difficulty of either designing fully accessible new buildings, or renovating those that aren’t.

This data, gathered from a randomized sample of 1,330 Canadians, is part of a national public opinion poll canvassing disability and accessibility conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, in partnership with the Rick Hansen Foundation.

Key findings of the survey include:

- 95% of Canadians surveyed said that it would be very/moderately important that a new public building being constructed in their community be accessible to people with disabilities
- 46% (almost half) of Canadians surveyed view the difficulty of renovating older buildings, as well as cost(35%) as the two biggest obstacles to addressing the accessibility gap
- 86% (almost nine-in-ten) of survey respondents say a LEED type program aimed at incentivizing more accessible design would be worthwhile
- 92% of Canadians agree that accessibility for people with physical disabilities is a basic human right, not a privilege
- Half of Canadians agree with the statement “it’s understandable that employers feel it is risky to hire people with physical disabilities.” Among those currently responsible for hiring decisions, 45% cite expense of making a workplace accessible as one of the main reasons employers might have this opinion.

Read the full report [in English](#) and [in French](#). An accessible Word version of the report is available upon request.

Quotes:

“The theme of this year’s UN’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities is ‘Achieving 17 Goals of the Future’, and our goal at the Rick Hansen Foundation is to ensure all the places we live, work and play are accessible for people with disabilities,” says Rick Hansen, CEO of the Rick Hansen Foundation. “This report shows that the built environment is one of the biggest barriers to addressing the accessibility gap. By ensuring universal access is a priority for all Canadians, we can create an inclusive world where people with disabilities are living to their full potential, and as a result the entire community and economy will benefit.”

“A further, massive gap identified by Canadians speaks to a lack of understanding and belief in the potential of people with disabilities. This Angus Reid Institute study reveals some myths associated with the underemployment of disabled people, and measures potential solutions aimed at ending employment discrimination against these individuals,” says Shachi Kurl, Executive Director, Angus Reid Institute.

About the Rick Hansen Foundation:

The Rick Hansen Foundation was established in 1988, following the completion of Rick Hansen’s Man In Motion World Tour, to continue raising funds and awareness to create a world without barriers for people with disabilities. Over nearly 30 years, RHF has worked diligently to achieve real change through collaboration, partnerships and teamwork, inspired by Rick Hansen’s original dream to liberate the amazing potential of people with disabilities. RHF breaks down barriers by changing attitudes, creating accessible spaces and inspiring an inclusive world.

About the Angus Reid Institute:

The Angus Reid Institute was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

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