

From Laura MacGregor and Allen G. Jorgenson, *Beyond Saints and Superheroes: Supporting Parents Raising Children with Disabilities: A Practical Guide for Faith Communities*, (Toronto: Mad and Crip Theology Press, 2023), 18–20.

## Disability: A Snapshot

According to recent statistics approximately 6.2 million, or about 22% of adult Canadians, live with a disability.<sup>1</sup> The most recent Canadian data for children living with disabilities dates to 2007, estimating that approximately 10% of children under the age of fifteen in Canada have a disability.<sup>2</sup> More recent research suggests the number of children living with a disability is likely higher.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, disability has been defined as a deficit, or lack of ability that deviated from what society had defined as “normal.” We put normal in “scare quotes” because among scholars and disability advocates the term is understood to be a social construct, an idea that is created and enforced by society.<sup>4</sup> Disability advocates argue that disability is part of the spectrum of human ability and that there is no “normal” body.

Disability advocates also believe that disabled people struggle to participate in society not because of their disability, but because of the many barriers embedded within communities built for the “typical” human body.<sup>5</sup> This is referred to as the *social model of disability*. Disabled people argue that removing these barriers, for example replacing stairs with barrier free spaces, would ensure that people with disabilities are able to fully engage in community life.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, *New Data on Disability in Canada, 2017*, accessed January 11, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2018035-eng.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, *Disability in Canada: A 2006 Profile*, accessed January 11, 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/disability-2006.html#s2>.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, K. Shikako et. al, *Children with Disabilities in Canada: Alternative Report for the 5th/6th Review of Canada under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Report submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child* (March, 2020), accessed January 17, 2023, <https://www.childhooddisability.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/AlternativeREPORT.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Reynolds defines both “normal,” and the cult of normalcy. See: Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 60.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Shakespeare, *Disability: The Basics* (London, Routledge, 2018), 12–15.