

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) in Canada

New Statistics Canada Data (2025)



3.1 Million Canadians

report MCS

9.4%

Canadian adults
report having MCS

2.7%

Canadian adults with
an MCS diagnosis

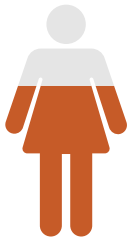
3.1 Million
Report MCS

900, 100
Diagnosed MCS

2.2 Million
Living with MCS
without a diagnosis

Women are Disproportionately Affected

12.8%



5.9%



Why This Matters

Individuals living with MCS frequently report barriers to accessing essential services and participating fully in society.



MCS IS NOT A NICHE ISSUE

With 1 in 10 Canadian adults reporting MCS, the condition represents a significant accessibility, disability, and public health issue.



ASEQ – EHAQ

Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec
Environmental Health Association of Quebec



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New Statistics Canada Data Suggest More Than 3 Million Canadians Report Living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

For years, Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) has often been viewed as a relatively rare condition affecting a small number of individuals. New preliminary Statistics Canada data suggest otherwise. These findings build on earlier analyses of the Canadian Community Health Survey, which documented a steady increase in diagnosed MCS in Canada between 2000 and 2020 (Robins et al., 2026).

According to data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (January–July 2025), more than 3.1 million Canadian adults—representing 9.4% of the adult population, or approximately one in ten Canadian adults—report living with MCS. Nearly 70% of those reporting MCS are women. In fact, approximately one in eight Canadian women (12.8%) report living with MCS. In contrast, only 900,100 Canadian adults (2.7% of the population) report having received a diagnosis of MCS.

The findings reveal a striking gap between lived experience and diagnosis and suggest that more than two million Canadians may be living with MCS without formal recognition within the healthcare system.

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MCS in Canada: A Growing Issue

Analyses of Canadian Community Health Survey data found that diagnosed MCS increased from approximately 611,000 Canadians in 2000 to more than 1.1 million Canadians in 2020 (Robins et al., 2026). Preliminary 2025 Statistics Canada data suggest that approximately 3.1 million Canadian adults now report living with MCS.

What is Multiple Chemical Sensitivity?

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) is a recognized disability characterized by adverse health effects triggered by exposure to common chemicals found in everyday products such as fragrances, cleaning products, solvents, pesticides, and personal care products. These exposures can create significant barriers to participating fully in daily life.

People living with MCS frequently report difficulties accessing healthcare services, workplaces, schools, housing, public spaces, transportation, and community activities due to chemical exposures present in these environments.

A Significant Diagnosis Gap

While 3.1 million Canadians living with MCS is noteworthy on its own, the most significant finding may be the gap between those who report having MCS and those who report receiving a diagnosis.

- 3.1 million Canadians report MCS
- 900,100 Canadians report a diagnosis of MCS
- Approximately 2.2 million Canadians may be living with MCS without a formal diagnosis

This gap raises important questions about awareness of MCS within the healthcare system, access to knowledgeable healthcare providers, timely diagnosis, and the ability of affected individuals to obtain accommodations, disability supports, and services.

Without recognition of a disability, individuals may face additional barriers when requesting accommodations in workplaces, educational institutions, housing settings, transportation systems, and healthcare environments.

MCS Is Not a Niche Issue

The new data suggest that MCS is neither rare nor isolated.



With approximately one in ten Canadian adults reporting MCS, the condition represents a significant accessibility, health, and disability issue affecting millions of Canadians.

Women are disproportionately affected, with approximately one in eight women (12.8%) reporting MCS, compared with 5.9% of men. Women also account for approximately two-thirds of diagnosed cases.

These findings indicate that MCS represents a significant and often overlooked disability-related condition in Canada.

Accessibility Begins with the Air We Share

For many individuals living with MCS, accessibility begins with the air they breathe.

Exposure to fragrances, cleaning products, air fresheners, solvents, pesticides, and other common chemicals can limit access to essential services and public spaces. Barriers may arise in healthcare settings, workplaces, schools, public transportation, housing, hotels, shelters, government offices, and recreational facilities.

As governments, institutions, employers, and service providers advance disability inclusion initiatives, accessible indoor environments and exposure-management measures must be considered as part of broader accessibility planning.

For many individuals living with MCS, accommodation is achieved through source control—that is, reducing or eliminating avoidable exposures by choosing fragrance-free, lowest-emission, and least-toxic products whenever possible. Appropriate product selection can help create more accessible environments and reduce barriers for a broad range of individuals, including those living with MCS, asthma, allergies, migraines, autistic people, and others with sensory sensitivities. Creating healthier indoor environments can support accessibility across multiple disability communities.

Just as physical accessibility addresses barriers in the built environment, indoor environmental accessibility addresses barriers that arise from avoidable chemical exposures.

Implications for Disability Inclusion

The findings have implications that extend beyond healthcare.

Individuals living with MCS frequently report barriers related to:

- Transportation



- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Healthcare
- Community participation

These barriers can affect quality of life, economic participation, social inclusion, and overall well-being.

As disability organizations work to advance equity and inclusion, it is important that people living with MCS are included in conversations about accessibility, accommodations, and disability rights.

Looking Ahead

The new Statistics Canada findings provide important evidence that MCS affects a substantial number of Canadians and deserves greater attention within disability, accessibility, healthcare, transportation, housing, employment, and public policy discussions.

The data also highlight the need for further research to better understand why such a large gap exists between reported MCS, and reported with a diagnosis of MCS and what barriers may be preventing individuals from obtaining appropriate recognition, care, accommodations, and support.

For millions of Canadians, MCS is not simply a health issue. It is an accessibility issue, a participation issue, and a disability inclusion issue.

As Canada continues to advance accessibility and disability rights, ensuring that people living with MCS are included in these efforts will be essential.

Recent Canadian research, including work by Yousufzai and colleagues, has documented the substantial impacts of MCS on participation, accessibility, and quality of life, highlighting the need for inclusive policies and accommodations across multiple sectors.

Key Statistics (January–July 2025)

- 3.1 million Canadians (9.4%) report MCS (**1 in 10 Canadian adults**)
- 900,100 Canadians (2.7%) report a diagnosis of MCS
- Approximately 2.2 million Canadians may be living with MCS without a diagnosis
- 12.8% of women report MCS (**1 in 8 Canadian women**)
- 5.9% of men report MCS



Sources

- Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, January–July 2025 (preliminary estimates, adults aged 18 years and older, excluding territories).
- Robins, S., Molot, J., & Peris, R. (2026). Prevalence of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity in Canada Between 2000 and 2020. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 23(2), 236. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph23020236>
- Yousufzai, S. J., Psaradellis, E., Peris, R., & Barakat, C. (2025). A Qualitative Exploration of Policy, Institutional, and Social Misconceptions Faced by Individuals with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 22(9), 1383. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22091383>