



## **Preconception Health Characteristics of Women with Disabilities in Ontario: A Population-Based, Cross-Sectional Study**

### **What is this research about?**

[Preconception health](#), defined as the health of all reproductive-aged individuals, impacts fertility and health during pregnancy. Women with disabilities are becoming pregnant at [increasing rates](#). However, little is known about their preconception health.

### **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.

The preconception health characteristics of women with and without disabilities were described, including those related to:

- Socioeconomic characteristics,
- Physical health,
- Mental health,
- Use of medications that could cause birth defects,
- History of experiencing assault, and
- Consistency of care by the same family physician.

### **What did the researchers find?**

- Women with disabilities experienced several preconception health disparities.
- Women with disabilities had higher rates of chronic conditions like diabetes, mental illness, use of medications that could cause birth defects, and history of experiencing assault than those without disabilities.
- Women with intellectual/developmental disabilities were the most socioeconomically marginalized group and had the greatest health disparities.

### **What you need to know**

Reproductive-aged women with disabilities experience important health disparities.

The diverse needs of women with disabilities should be considered in Ontario's preconception health programs.

# THE DISABILITY AND PREGNANCY STUDY

## snapshot

## 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.

## Support

This research was supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (Grant #5R01HD092326-02). The opinions, results, and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not reflect that of the NIH or the data providers. No endorsement by the NIH is intended or should be inferred.

## Keywords

*Disability, preconception health, health disparities, pregnancy, preventative medicine*



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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## How can we use this research?

The findings from this research highlight the need for tailored preconception supports that address the unique needs of women with disabilities. These supports must look beyond individual health behaviours and consider the various ways in which women with disabilities are marginalized in education, health care, and other systems.

## About the researchers

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## Do you want to know more?

This snapshot is based on the following article: Tarasoff LA, Lunsky Y, Chen S, Guttmann A, Haverkamp S, Parish S, Vigod S, Carty A, & Brown HK. Preconception Health Characteristics of Women with Disabilities in Ontario: A Population-Based, Cross-Sectional Study. *Journal of Women's Health*. 2020; <https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2019.8273>

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