



## 8.0 Introduction

As has been reported throughout *Australia's welfare 2017*, some Australians face profound disadvantages. These can affect not only their physical and mental health, but also their participation in education, employment and social activities. This chapter profiles Australians living with disability and discusses some of the challenges they face, including being meaningfully involved in everyday life.

Living with disability may limit what a person can do in their daily life, or restrict their participation in other ways. Socioenvironmental factors can add to these difficulties—for instance, availability of services, accessibility of the physical environment, and social attitudes towards people with disability. How people with disability participate in society can also be influenced by the opportunities and help available to them, as well as by the severity of their disability.

About 4.3 million Australians (or 18% of the population) have a disability, and about 1.4 million people with disability have a severe or profound core activity limitation. This means that they sometimes or always need help with everyday activities—self-care, mobility and communication.

While the number of people with disability has increased over time (from 4 million in 2003), the proportion of the population with disability has decreased (from 20% in 2003 to 18% in 2015). The majority of people with disability live in households; only 4.5% live in some form of cared accommodation. People with disability are about 4 times as likely as people without disability to rely on a government pension or allowance as their main source of income. While around 1.1 million people with disability of working age participated in the labour force in 2015, almost as many (1.0 million) did not.

Almost all people with disability take part in some social activities away from home, but this involvement differs by the severity of disability. People with severe or profound limitation are less likely to leave home to take part in everyday activities as often as they would like.

This chapter also profiles Australia's 2.7 million informal carers—about one-third of whom are primary carers for a person with disability. The time and costs of providing care to another person can present challenges for carers. There may be increased financial stress, limited access to education and employment, and restricted involvement in social and community life. One-third of primary carers spend 40 hours or more per week caring for the recipient of care, and one-third have spent 10 or more years in the caring role.

