



FAQ

What Does It Mean To Be Immunocompromised?

Who is considered immunocompromised?

Immunocompromised (IC) people have a weakened immune system which **impairs the body's response to infections and vaccines**. This impairment can be caused by health conditions, drug treatments, infections, and genetic conditions.

There are two main types of immune deficiencies:

- 1. Primary immunodeficiency:** Health conditions that a person has from the time they are born (e.g. genetic conditions) that cause a weakened immune system.
- 2. Secondary immunodeficiency:** A weakened immune system caused by an illness, medical treatment, or complex disease.

A person's immune function depends on many factors which include the conditions they have, their age, the medications they take, and how advanced their disease is.

What are the impacts of having a weakened immune system?

IC people are at an increased risk for **severe illness, health complications, hospitalization or death** from common infections. As a result, many members of this community must make adjustments to their lives to stay protected, which can have poor impacts on their physical and mental health.

What proportion of people in Canada are immunocompromised?

Statistics Canada reported in 2020 that approximately 14% of Canada's population has a compromised immune system. This number is often underestimated as many health conditions cause a weakened immune system.

How does CIAN support immunocompromised people?

- 1. Increase public knowledge and awareness** for the IC community and the challenges they face.
- 2. Advocate for healthy policies** that protect IC people from contracting infections (e.g., vaccines, masking, remote work options).
- 3. Advocate for equitable access** to life-saving therapeutics and treatments for infectious diseases.

Read our position
paper for more ways
to support the IC
community!

