



# International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF)

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## 30th April 2025 – International Guide Dog Day PRESS RELEASE

Guide dogs provide opportunities for social interaction and greater independence for people who are blind or have low vision. International Guide Dog Day pays tribute to the dogs who do this impressive work. Guide dogs help their owners make their way through the world while offering love and comfort in so many ways.

References to guide dogs date back to the 16th Century, so for the hundreds of years of service that these faithful companions have provided, we pay tribute to their service this year on April 30<sup>th</sup> (the last Wednesday in April).

The International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) is the professional organisation and standard-setter for guide dog organisations with 99 member organisations around the world. There are more guide dogs in the world than any other type of assistance or service dog. Guide dog organisations have pioneered the development of training methods for dogs to assist people with disabilities or long-term health conditions and there are now also many other types of assistance dogs worldwide.

To mark International Guide Dog Day 2025, IGDF has published its latest global statistics which give a picture of guide dog services worldwide.

### Guide Dog Statistics as at 31 December 2024

**18,682** guide dogs are currently working worldwide. This means that 18,682 people who are blind or have low vision have the support of a guide dog to help them live life on their terms. This is a small decrease from the 19,537 guide dog teams working in 2023, as a result of decreased training numbers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2,893** guide dogs were trained during 2024. The global Covid 19 pandemic had a severe impact on IGDF members around the world, but they showed resilience and creativity and found ways to continue to deliver these essential services. The 2024 figure of 2,893 is a solid improvement on the 2023 figure of 2,598, the 2022 figure of 2,426, the 2021 total of 2,405 and the 2020 figure of 2,038, and is close to matching the pre-pandemic levels of 3,000 guide dogs being trained each year.

**6,631** individuals were employed full or part-time by IGDF organisations around the world. This is a small decrease on the 7,007 number for 2023. Their dedication, expertise and professionalism enable thousands of people who are blind or have low vision to enjoy a safe and effective guide dog service.

**46,520** individual volunteers gave their time and experience to help IGDF member organisations deliver these life-changing services. This is a substantial increase on the 38,348 individual volunteers recorded in 2023. This demonstrates the strength and breadth of community involvement and support around the world.

**8,974** guide dog puppies started guide dog training during 2024. This is a small decrease on the 9,312 puppies who started guide dog training during 2023. The Covid 19 pandemic had a severe impact on guide dog training and guide dog waiting lists have increased worldwide. IGDF member organisations are determined to increase guide dog provision and reduce the time people have to wait for a guide dog. These new puppies are the guide dogs of the future.

More statistics on the IGDF website: <https://www.igdf.org.uk/about-us/facts-and-figures/>

Overall, these statistics show that IGDF member organisations continue to recover following the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, and because of that disruption, total guide dog training numbers have not quite reached their pre-pandemic levels.

Despite the increasing number of guide dog teams being trained and the record number of individuals volunteering for guide dog organisations worldwide, guide dog handlers continue to face access issues in many parts of the world.

During 2025, IGDF collaborated with Assistance Dogs International (ADI) to conduct the first ever international survey on access refusals to better understand the scale of this problem and its impact on individual guide and assistance dog handlers. We are currently working on a report analysing these issues to be published later in 2025.

In his latest podcast, John Welsman discusses the 2024 statistics and other topics associated with the guide dog industry. The podcast will be available from the IGDF podcasts page: <https://www.igdf.org.uk/podcasts/> on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

## **About the IGDF**

The International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) is the charity that defines and maintains international standards for the training of guide dogs around the world. This work ensures the quality and safety of guide dog services for people who are blind or have low vision.

IGDF was established in 1987 by representatives of 15 guide dog organisations from 10 different countries. IGDF has grown significantly over the years and now has 99 member organisations from 33 different countries. Over 20,000 people who are blind or have low vision enjoy the benefits of safe, independent travel through their partnership with a guide dog. However, the World Health Organisation estimates there to be over 250 million people who are blind or have low vision worldwide.

As well as developing international standards, IGDF supports new guide dog organisations around the world, helping them to grow and progress towards full accreditation against the IGDF standards. IGDF also offers scholarships which enable guide dog instructors to develop their professional skills by undertaking secondments with established IGDF member organisations.

The first International Guide Dog Day was celebrated in 1992 and is held on the last Wednesday in April each year.

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