



# International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF)

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Guide dogs provide greater independence, mobility, and social connection for people who are blind or have low vision. International Guide Dog Day recognises and celebrates the extraordinary contribution of these highly trained dogs, as well as the profound impact they have on the lives of their handlers. Beyond essential mobility support, guide dogs also offer companionship, confidence, and emotional reassurance.

The use of guide dogs dates back to the sixteenth century. In recognition of centuries of service and partnership, International Guide Dog Day is observed each year on the last Wednesday of the month of April.

The **International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF)** is the global professional body and standard-setter for guide dog organisations, representing more than 100 member organisations worldwide. Guide dogs are the most widely recognised form of assistance dog globally. Over time, guide dog organisations have led the development of training methods now used across many types of assistance dogs supporting people with disabilities or long-term health conditions.

To mark **International Guide Dog Day 2026 on 29 April**, IGDF has published its latest global statistics, providing an overview of guide dog services and their impact around the world.

## Guide Dog Statistics

### As of 31 December 2025

As of the end of 2025, **18,978 guide dogs are actively working worldwide**, supporting people who are blind or have low vision to live independent, self-directed lives. This represents a modest increase from **18,682 guide dog teams in 2024**, marking the first year-on-year growth in working teams since the Covid-19 pandemic.

During 2025, **2,600 guide dogs were trained globally**. While this figure is slightly lower than the **2,893 dogs trained in 2024**, it is consistent with recent years (**2,598 in 2023** and **2,426 in 2022**). The global Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact on IGDF member organisations; however, their resilience and innovation enabled the continued delivery of vital guide dog services.

IGDF member organisations collectively employed **6,776 full-time and part-time staff** in 2025, an increase from **6,631 in 2024**. Their dedication, expertise, and professionalism ensure that thousands of people who are blind or have low vision receive safe, effective, and high-quality guide dog services worldwide.

In addition, **47,853 individual volunteers** contributed their time and experience to IGDF member organisations during 2025, up from **46,520 volunteers in 2024**. This growth highlights the enduring strength of community engagement and global support for guide dog services.

A total of **7,456 guide dog puppies entered training in 2025**, a significant decrease from **8,974 puppies in 2024**. Many organisations report a shortage of volunteer puppy raisers as the primary factor limiting training capacity. IGDF member organisations remain committed to expanding guide dog provision and reducing waiting times for those in need. These puppies represent the guide dogs of the future and are essential to meeting growing demand.

Further statistics are available on the IGDF website:

<https://www.igdf.org.uk/about-us/facts-and-figures/>

Overall, these figures demonstrate that IGDF member organisations continue to recover from the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, due to that disruption, global guide dog training levels have not yet fully returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Beyond providing safe and effective independent mobility, guide dogs offer significant social and emotional benefits to their handlers, enriching lives and fostering confidence, connection, and wellbeing.

IGDF continues to celebrate and promote the life-changing work of guide dogs and to raise awareness of the experiences and perspectives of guide dog handlers worldwide.

In the latest IGDF podcast, due to be published ahead of International Guide Dog Day, host **John Welsman** explores the question “*Why a guide dog?*” in conversation with a panel of guide dog handlers from around the world.

Listen to the IGDF podcast here: [Podcasts - International Guide Dog Federation](#)

## About the IGDF

The **International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF)** is the global charity responsible for defining and maintaining international standards for the training of guide dogs. Through this work, IGDF helps to ensure the quality, safety, and consistency of guide dog services worldwide for people who are blind or have low vision.

Founded in **1987** by representatives from 15 guide dog organisations across 10 countries, IGDF has grown substantially. Today, it comprises **100 member organisations in 33 countries**. Collectively, these organisations support more than **20,000 people** who are blind or have low vision to travel safely and independently with the support of a guide dog. Despite this impact, the **World Health Organization** estimates that over **250 million people worldwide** are blind or have low vision, highlighting the continuing need for accessible mobility services.

In addition to setting international standards, IGDF actively supports the development of emerging guide dog organisations around the world. This includes guidance and oversight to help organisations progress toward full accreditation against IGDF standards. IGDF also offers professional development scholarships, enabling guide dog instructors to enhance their skills through secondments with established member organisations.

The first **International Guide Dog Day** was celebrated in **1992** and is observed annually on the **last Wednesday in April**, recognising the vital role guide dogs play in promoting independence, mobility, and inclusion.

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