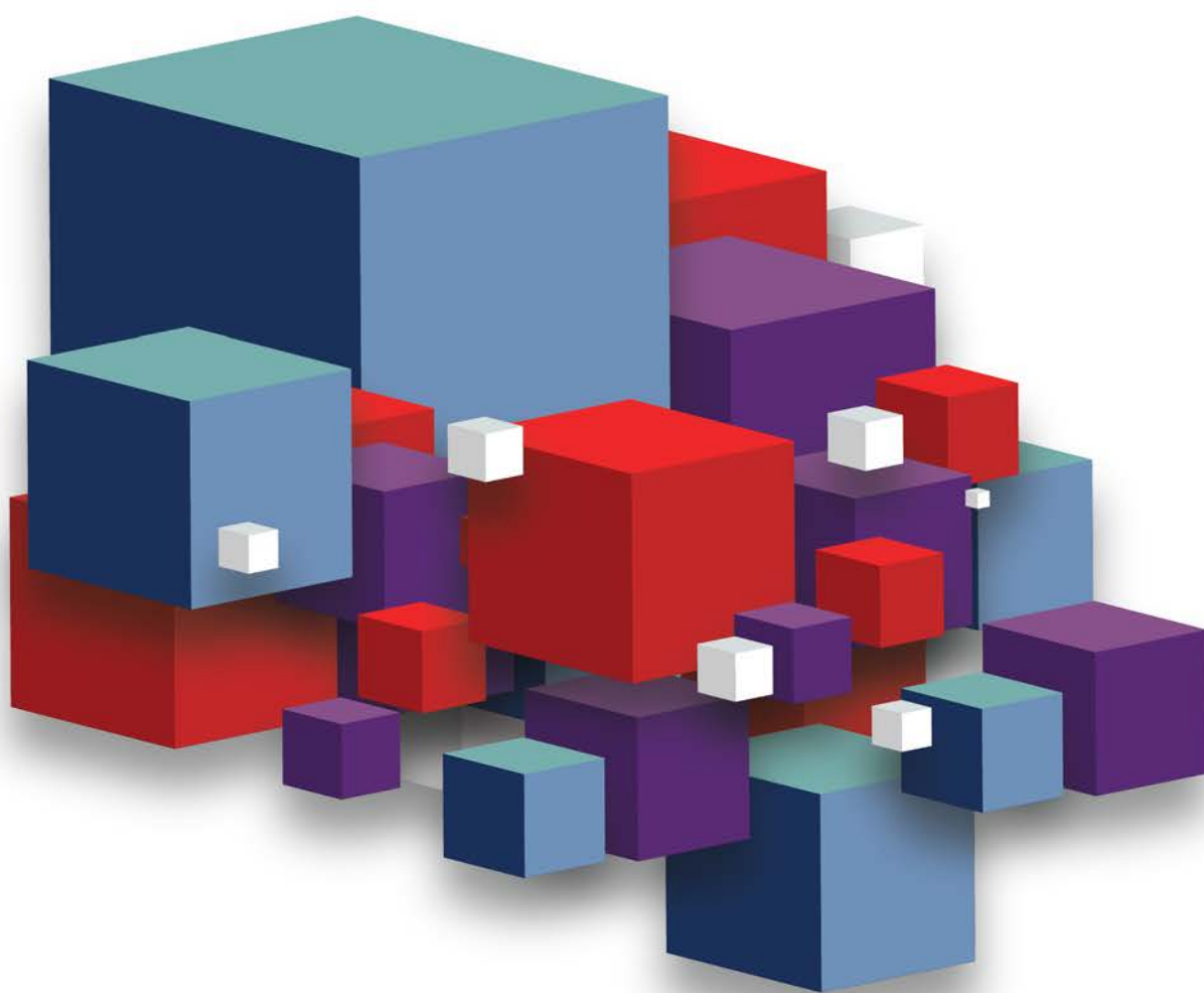


Building Inclusion in Canada: Disability in Labour Market Trends



2021

Authors

Emily McIntyre, MA

Charan Karusala, MSc

Kristiann Man, MSc

Yashraj Deshmukh, BSc, PGDM

Shaarini Ravitharan, BSc



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1

Executive Summary

The CCRW trends report has been developed to help businesses, organizations and policymakers understand gaps and trends that relate to persons with disabilities and other equity deserving groups in the active labour market during COVID-19. **The overarching goal of this report is to highlight industry-specific and COVID-19 related trends in the current landscape of employment for persons with disabilities.** Using data from the Canadian Survey on Disability (2017) and CCRW's internal programs and services for job seekers and employees with disabilities and inclusive employers, a national perspective will be garnered. First, the Canadian labour market will be analyzed with a focus on accessibility by industry, occupation, and province. Such variables will be examined in the context of CCRW's nation-wide programs and services, as well as data from Statistics Canada. Second, trends in unique work circumstances precipitated by COVID-19, such as working from home, pivots within industry operations, and opportunities for development and growth, will be examined. Third, using an intersectional lens, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment status and employment seeking behaviours of equity deserving groups will be evaluated. Data may be presented in the form of tables and figures; interactive versions of the static charts within this report are available using Microsoft Power Business Intelligence (BI)¹. Instructions for use of Microsoft Power BI can be found in Appendix A.

The findings of this report may empower business leaders and employers to make evidence-informed decisions about inclusive hiring, as well as the retention and advancement of persons with disabilities in the workforce. Further, knowledge of industry-specific and COVID-19 related trends can bolster understanding and capability of addressing existing inequities. Not only will this enhance access to employment for equity deserving groups, but it will pave the way towards a more diverse and inclusive Canada for all.

¹ Microsoft Power BI is a business analytics service. It enables users to connect to and visualize any data using a unified, scalable platform for self-service and enterprise BI.



1.1 Recommendations

- Invest time, effort, and financial resources to prioritize the inclusion of equity deserving groups in the workplace.
- Harness the power of flexibility and reasonable adjustments to improve access to employment for all.
- Routinely review company policies and practices and move towards systemic change over time.
- Make a commitment to ongoing learning across the organization and engage in partnerships to collectively drive innovation.
- Capitalize on new workplace opportunities from the COVID-19 pandemic to build an inclusive landscape of employment.



2

CCRW Research Department

This trends report was developed by the CCRW research department. CCRW is a national non-profit organization that offers employment programs and services for job seekers and employees with disabilities, and inclusive employers in Canada. The research team at CCRW works with the private, public, and not-for-profit sector and provides services in consulting; designing projects and methodologies; conducting surveys; tool and resource development; data analysis and visualization; and creating infographics and other knowledge products (Figure 1).

The CCRW research team is available to partner, collaborate, co-lead and provide research assistance on government funded projects that relate to disability and work. Alongside these offerings, the research team works within CCRW to provide data-driven insights on how the organization can more optimally support businesses, job seekers and employees.

CCRW Research Consulting Framework

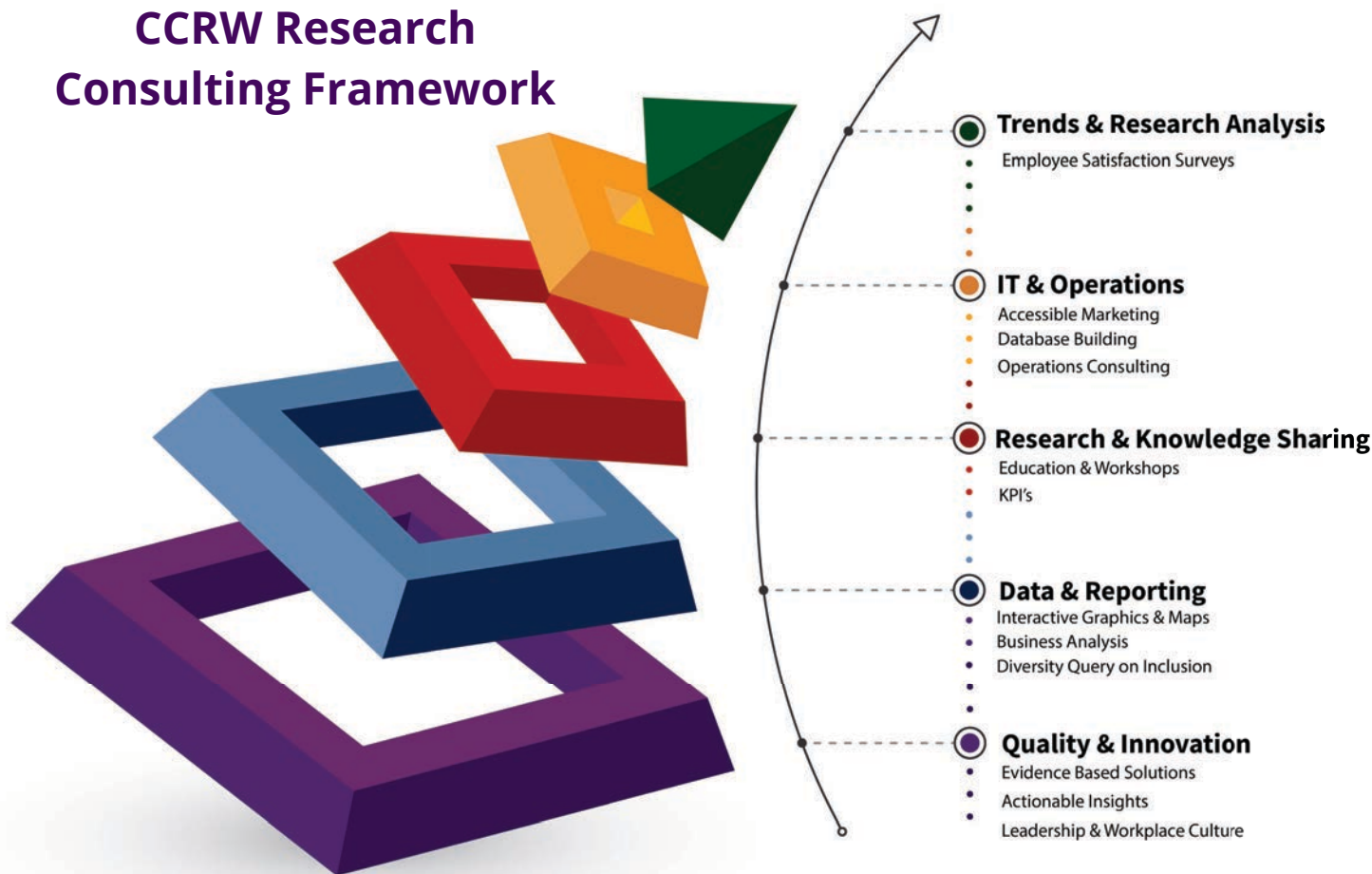


Figure 1. A schematic illustrating the various services provided by the CCRW research team.

3

Persons with Disabilities in Canada

Persons with disabilities are less likely to be employed than persons without disabilities. The Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD; 2017) is a national survey developed by Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada. It surveys Canadians who are 15 years old and over, who self-identify that their everyday activities are limited because of one or more long-term condition or health-related problem. The most recent CSD was administered in 2016, and the resulting data were published by Statistics Canada in 2017.

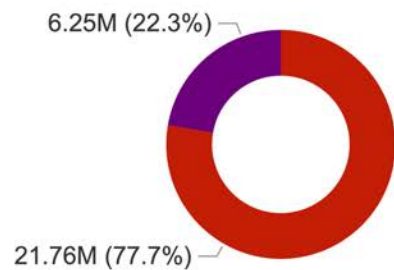
Based on the CSD, approximately one in five Canadians – equating to over 6.2 million Canadians in 2016 – had one or more disabilities that limited their participation in daily activities (2017). It is notable that for a considerable proportion of this group, such limitations also impacted their access to participation in society, including employment. Within the past few years, this number has surely grown.

Disability in Canada is diverse, and varies greatly based on location, sex, and age (Figure 2). For example, by disaggregating the percentage of persons with disabilities in Canada by province, we learn that on average, 19-25% of people have a disability in each province. Nova Scotia is marginally above the average with 30.37% of their population having a disability, and Quebec is marginally below the average with 16.14% of the population having a disability. With regards to sex, females are slightly more likely to have a disability than males, with 1 in 4 females identifying as having a disability while only 1 in 5 males identify as having a disability. Unsurprisingly, the percentage of individuals with disabilities increases with age. Considerable increases in the percentage of Canadians with disabilities occur between the 25 to 44 age group to the 45-64 age group (i.e., from approximately 15% to 25% of Canadians), and the 65-74 age group to the 75 and older age group (i.e., from approximately 31% to 47% of Canadians).

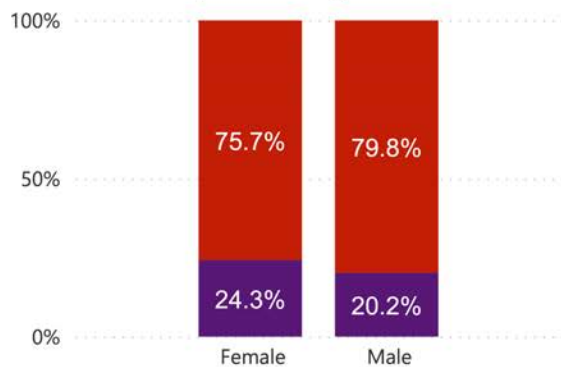


Disability in Canada

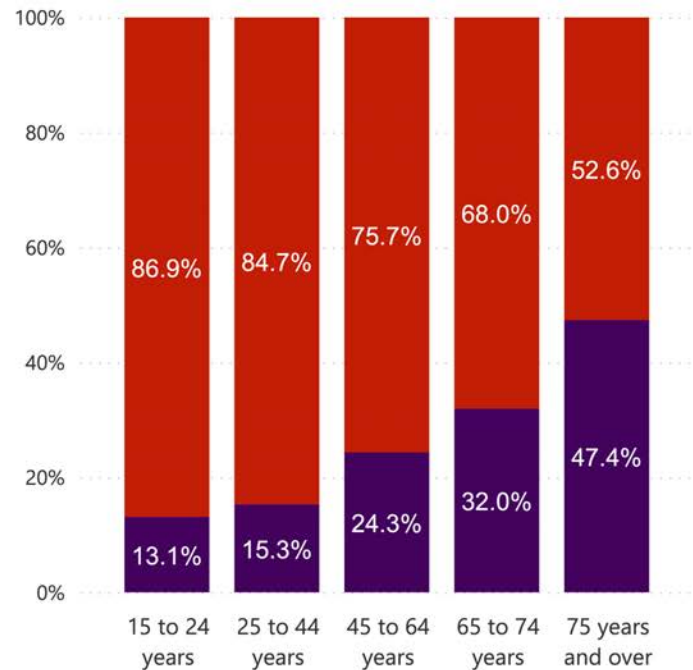
Percent of Population



Percent of Population by Sex

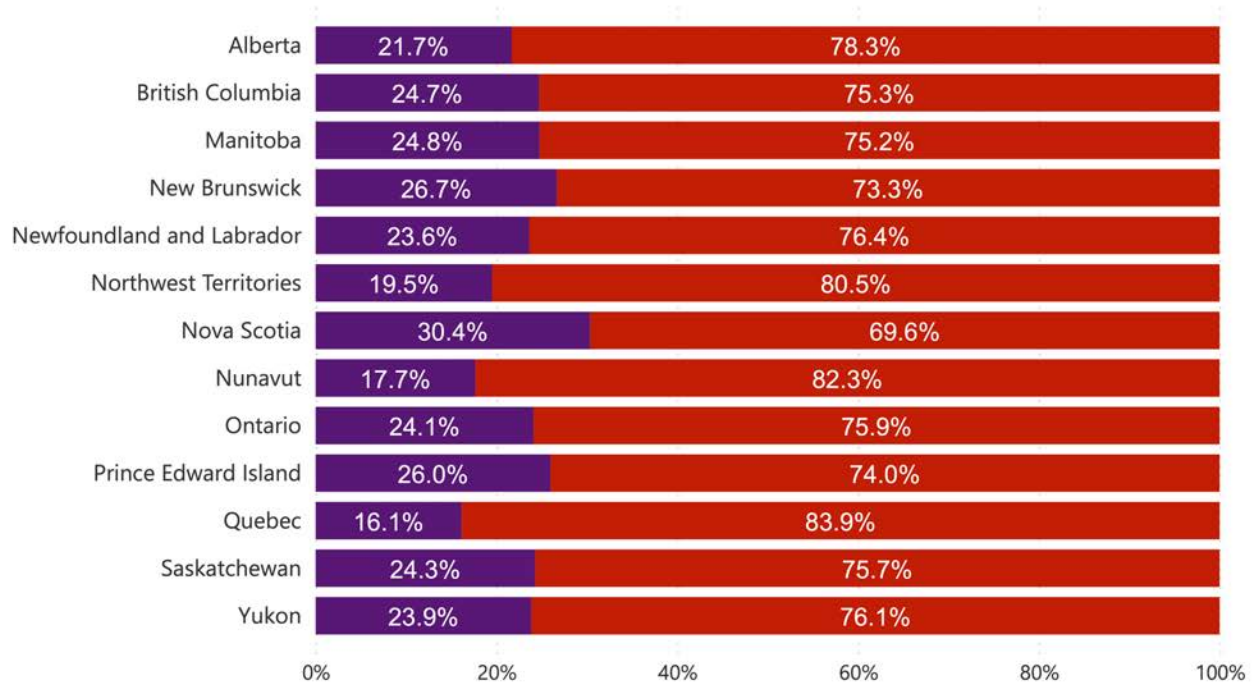


People with Disabilities Across Age-Groups



Percent of Population In Each Province

● Persons with disabilities ● Persons without disabilities



Source: [Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017](#)

Figure 2. The percentage of people with a disability by province, sex, and age from the Canadian Survey on Disability (2017).

[Click here for the interactive dashboard on Microsoft Power BI for Figure 2.](#)

4

Emerging Trends & Gaps in Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Canada

Unfortunately, it has long been known that persons with disabilities are less likely to be employed than persons without disabilities. This employment crisis persists today, despite Canada's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which explains that individuals with disabilities have a right to work on an equal basis with others, in a workplace or environment that is both inclusive and accessible to them.

4.1 Trends in Labour Status Among Persons With and Without Disabilities

Decreased rates of employment among persons with disabilities have been captured by Statistics Canada (2017). Indeed, data from the CSD show that among those aged 25 to 64 years, only 59% of persons with disabilities were employed (i.e., three in five), whereas 80% of persons without disabilities were employed (i.e., four in five). This trend worsened as the level of severity of disability increased. For example, within the same age group, 76% of individuals with mild disabilities were employed, but this number dropped to 31% among individuals with severe disabilities.



Take Action:

The creation and implementation of a hiring strategy that recognizes how to uniquely support persons with disabilities is the first step in creating an equitable workplace.

Develop a hiring strategy that supports the interviewing, onboarding, hiring, and retention of equity-deserving groups.

It starts with the job advertisement!





4.2 Trends in Employment of Persons with Disabilities by Industry

Focusing on employment of persons with disabilities by industry offers a unique lens to examine the potential areas where challenges and barriers exist for job seekers with disabilities. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of employees with disabilities across industries. Data are sourced from the CSD and are categorized according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS, 2012). The NAICS was developed by multiple statistical agencies in Canada, the United States, and Mexico to enable comparison in economic statistics within North American Countries. As seen in Figure 3, data from the CSD recognize healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade as the industries that greatest percentage of Canadians with disabilities work in. In comparison, persons with disabilities have low rates of employment in the industries of real estate, and rental and leasing, and utilities.

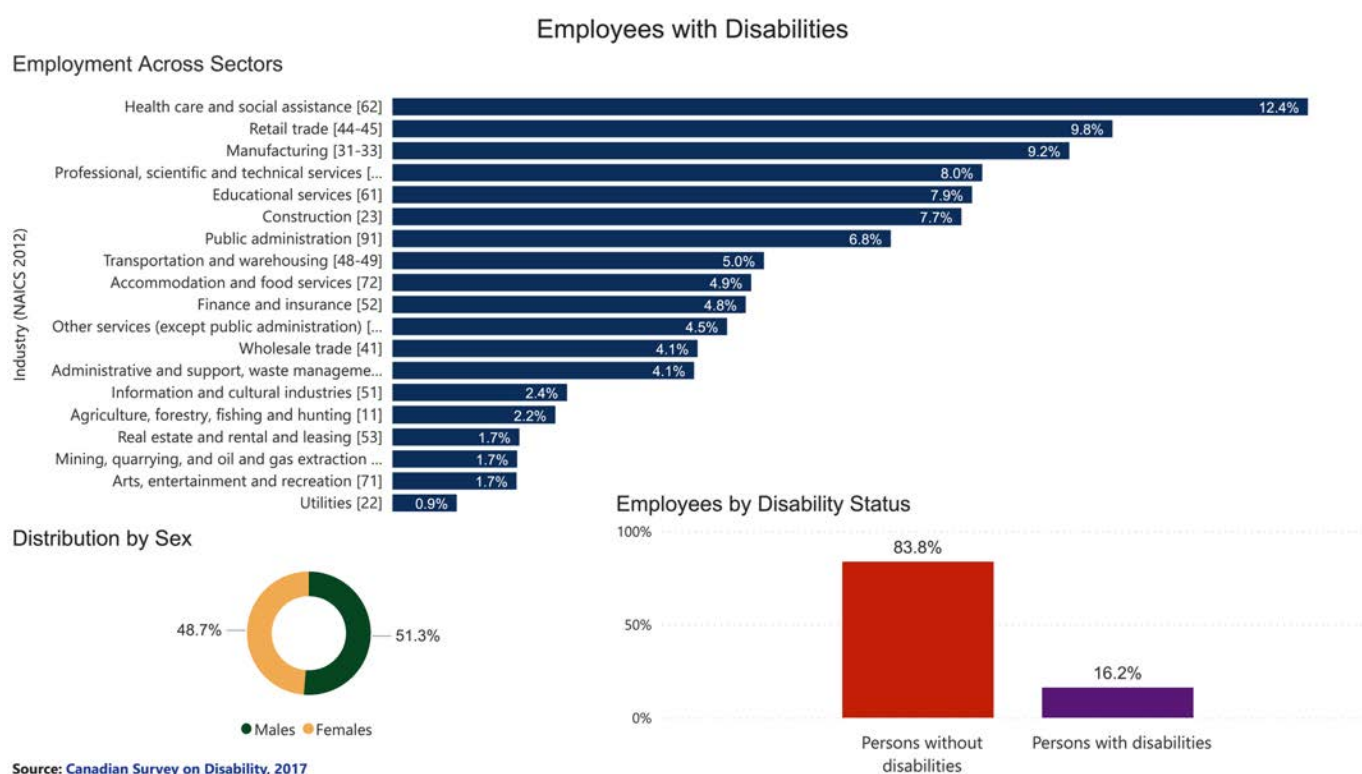


Figure 3. The percentage of Canadians with disabilities vs. Canadians without disabilities employed in each industry. Data are from the CSD (2017), and industry categorizations from the NAICS (2012).

[Click here for the interactive dashboard on Microsoft Power BI for Figure 3.](#)

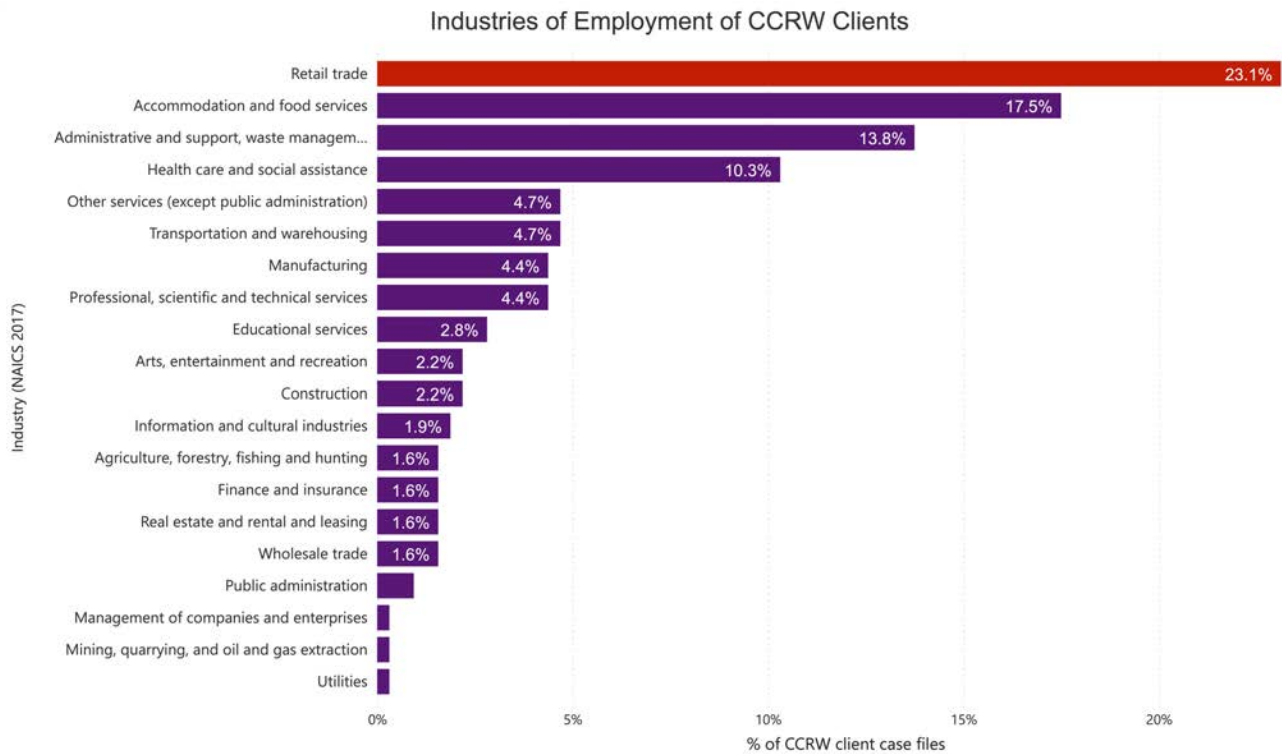


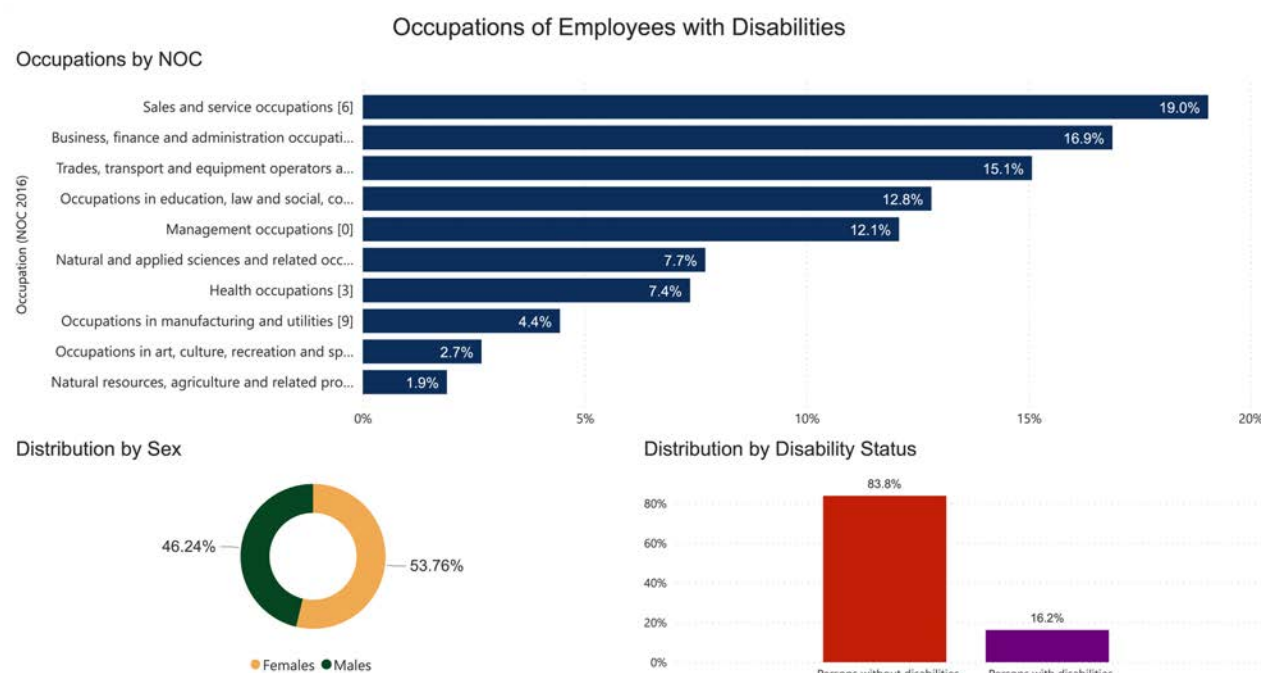
Figure 4. The industries in which CCRW clients are most frequently employed. Industry categorizations from the NAICS (2012).

The trends noted in the data from Statistics Canada are also mirrored in data from CCRW's programs and services for job seekers and employees with disabilities from November 2019 to August 2021 (Figure 4). Similar to CSD (2017) data, CCRW clients are most likely to be employed in the retail trade industry, and no CCRW clients have been employed in the utilities industry.



4.3 Trends in Employment of Persons with Disabilities by Occupation

To further unpack the industries in which persons with disabilities are employed, we can look to national data on employment by occupation. According to the CSD (2017), nearly one quarter of persons with disabilities work in sales and service occupations (Figure 5). In comparison, very few persons with disabilities (i.e., > 5%) were employed in occupations in manufacturing and utilities; in art, culture, recreation and sport; and in natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations.



Source: Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017

Figure 5. The percentage of Canadians with disabilities employed across various occupation categories. Data are from the CSD (2017), and occupation classifications are from the National Occupational Classification (NOC, 2016). Click here for the interactive dashboard on Microsoft Power BI for Figure 5.

In the context of CCRW, Figure 6 shows that over half of clients with disabilities worked in sales and service occupations (i.e., 57.85%). These percentages vary when compared to national averages for a variety of reasons. For example, factors such as open labour market opportunities in geographical regions, level of education, number or type of technical skills may vary between the population of CCRW clients and national data from the CSD (2017). While CCRW endeavours to develop partnerships with as many diverse businesses and employers as possible, the trends in Figure 6 reflect the occupations to which our clients have greater access with our existing partners.

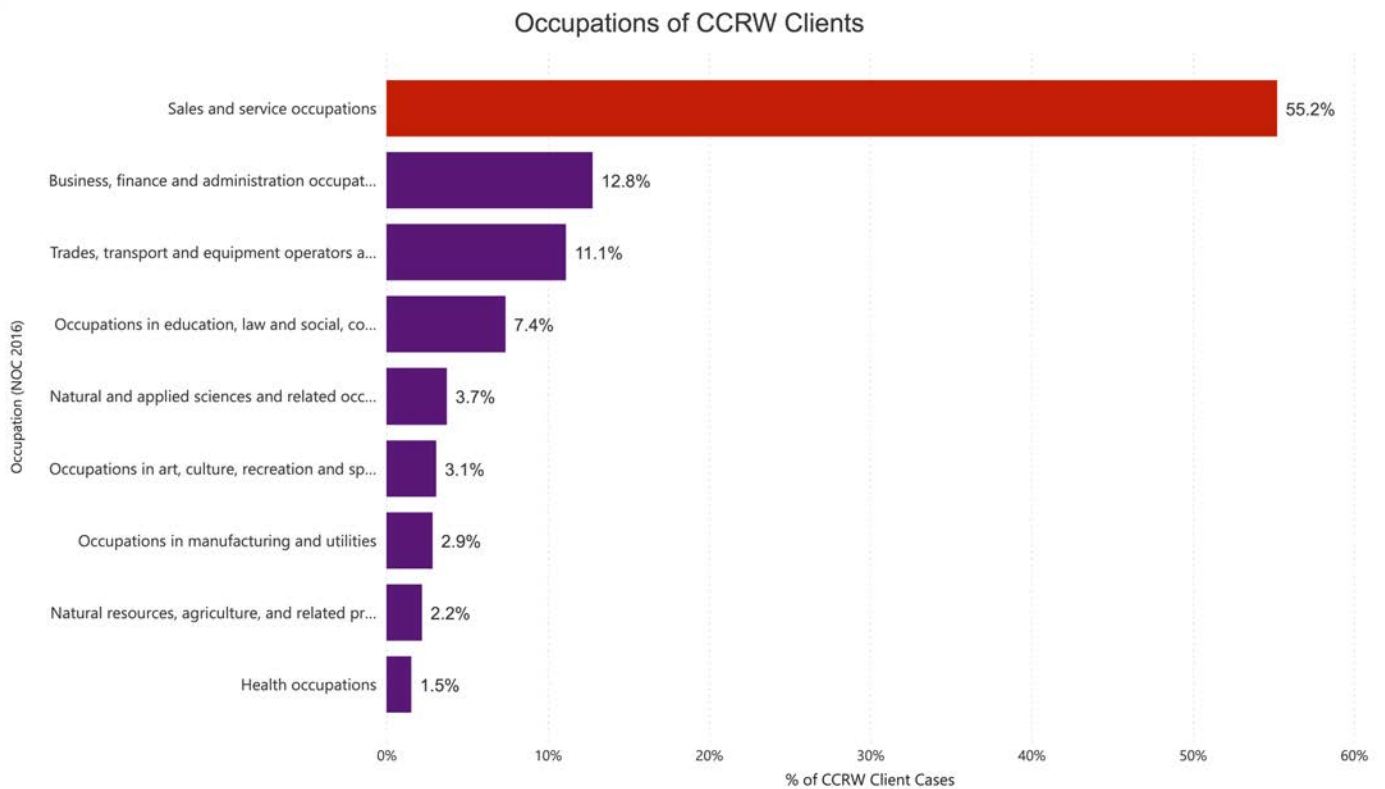


Figure 6. The percentage of CCRW clients employed across various occupation categories. Occupation classifications are from the NOC (2016).



Understand your workforce trends!

Increase your research capacity, showcase your success, and improve diversity and inclusion in your workforce!



5

Barriers to Workplace Training & Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Canada

A fundamental reason why persons with disabilities may experience low rates of employment in one industry or occupation (e.g., natural resources, agriculture, and related production occupations), yet experience high levels of employment in another (e.g., sales and service) is the presence, or absence of barriers to employment.

A barrier is defined by the Accessible Canada Act (2019) as anything — including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

In Figure 7, various barriers to employment for people with disabilities have been grouped together by type of barrier, sex, and age. According to the CSD (2017), nearly 80% of employees with disabilities experience profound and wide-ranging barriers to employment. Importantly, several of these barriers are not limited or specific to disability, such as age, lack of training, distance/location, or familial factors. In essence, these barriers to employment could potentially exist for everyone. Interestingly, women and older individuals are more disproportionately impacted. For example, females make up the majority of employees with disabilities who experience barriers to employment, and workers with disabilities between the ages of 55 – 64 years old experience twice as many barriers than workers in other age groups.

It makes good business sense to identify and address barriers to employment, and dismantle inequities in access to work for all equity deserving groups.

1. Identify barriers
2. Develop accessible solutions
3. Grow disability confidence.



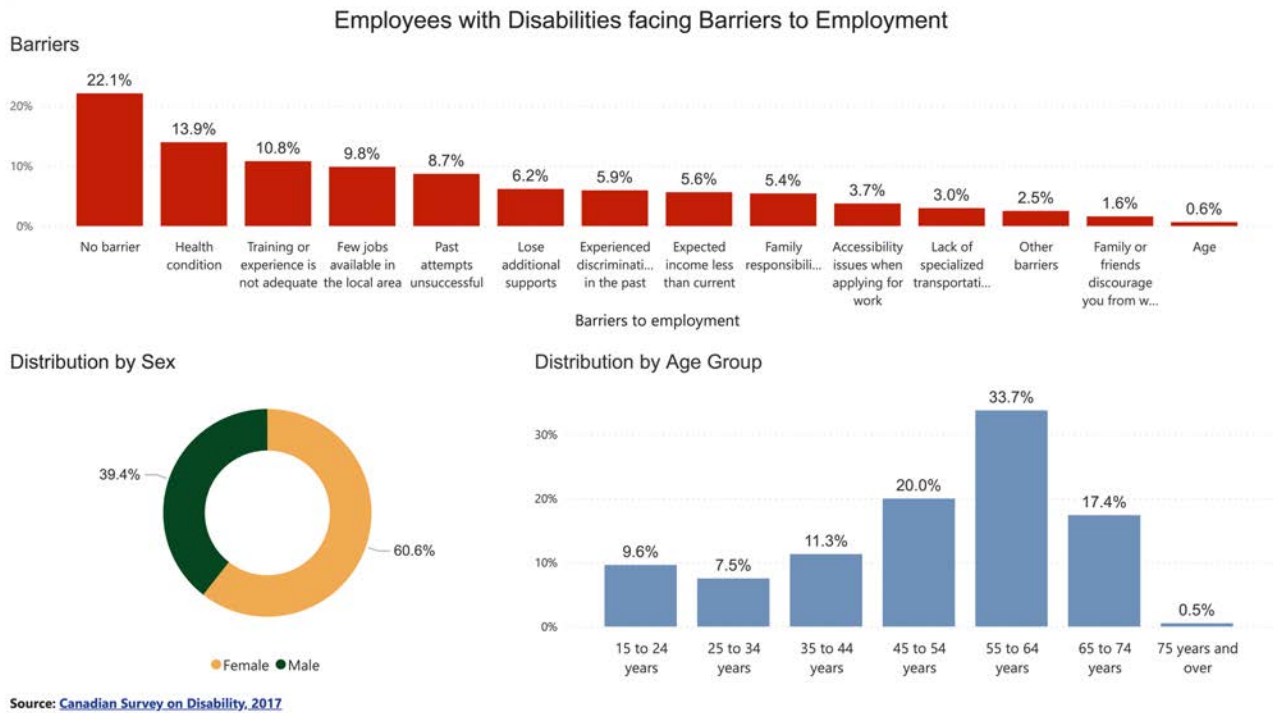


Figure 7. Percentage of employees with disabilities experiencing barriers to employment, based on the type of barrier, sex, and age. Data are from the CSD (2017).

[Click here for the interactive dashboard on Microsoft Power BI for Figure 7.](#)



5.1 Workplace Adjustments

Workplace adjustments can be used to address and mitigate potential barriers to employment. Workplace adjustments are commonly referred to as ‘reasonable adjustments,’ recognizing how employers are expected to offer modifications or changes to processes, practices, or the environment of a workplace to empower employees to perform their jobs without barriers.

In some government and legal contexts, such as with the CSD (2017) or the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), reasonable adjustments are called accommodations.² Figure 8 illustrates the number of employees with disabilities who required workplace accommodations based on type of modification, sex, and province.

²CCRW often integrates the term ‘workplace adjustment’ in addition to the word ‘accommodation’ to shine light on how all employees can benefit from flexibility and adjustments to a workplace and workspace. Where this report references content from the CSD (2017) directly or specialized reports using data from the CSD (2017), the term accommodation will be used.

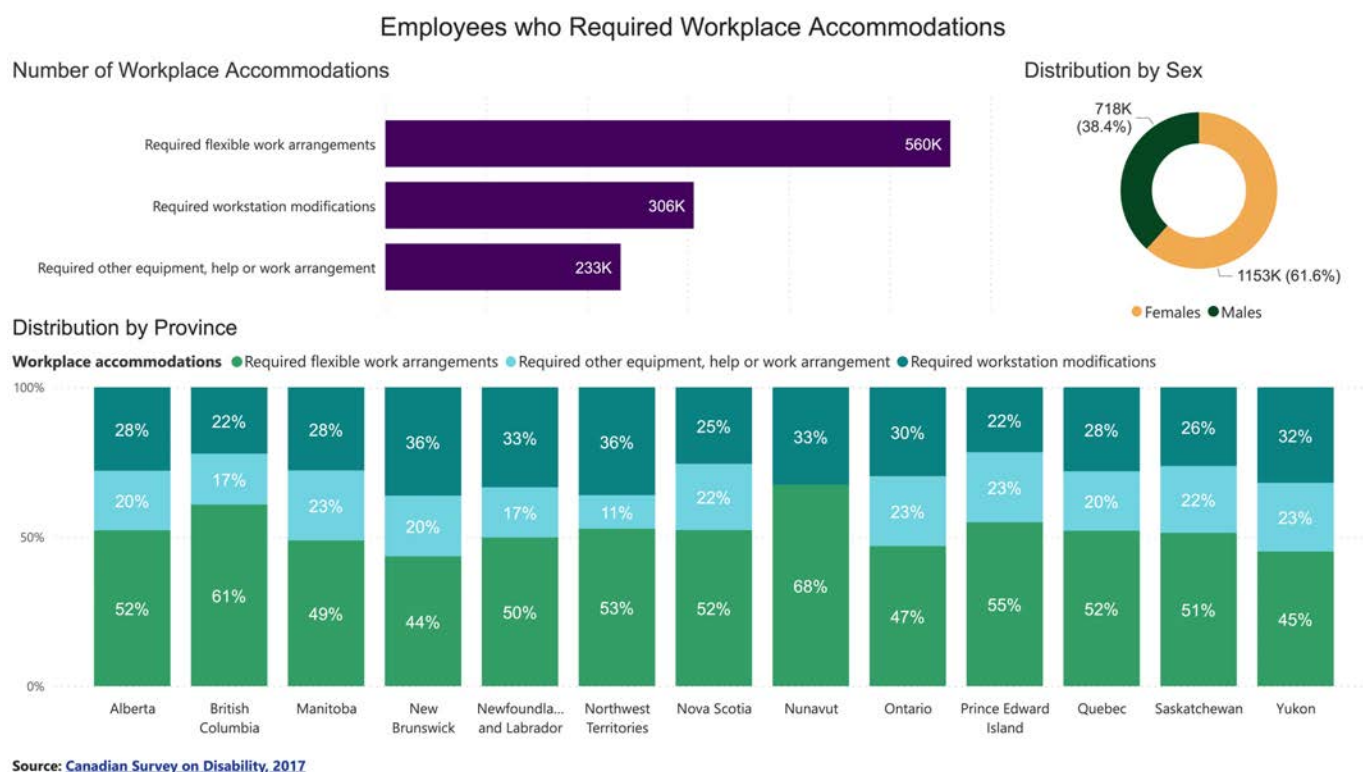


Figure 8. The number of employees with disabilities who required workplace accommodations based on accommodation type, sex, and province. Data are from the CSD (2017).

[Click here for the interactive dashboard on Microsoft Power BI for Figure 8.](#)

Further data from the CSD (2017) are displayed in the Figure 9, which illustrates the requested workplace modifications for persons with disabilities based on type of modification, sex, and age. Findings show that the most requested modifications – modified work hours and modified duties – are low cost. Creating a comfortable workplace by the means of an ergonomic chair, working from home, or a modified or ergonomic workstation are also frequently requested modifications.



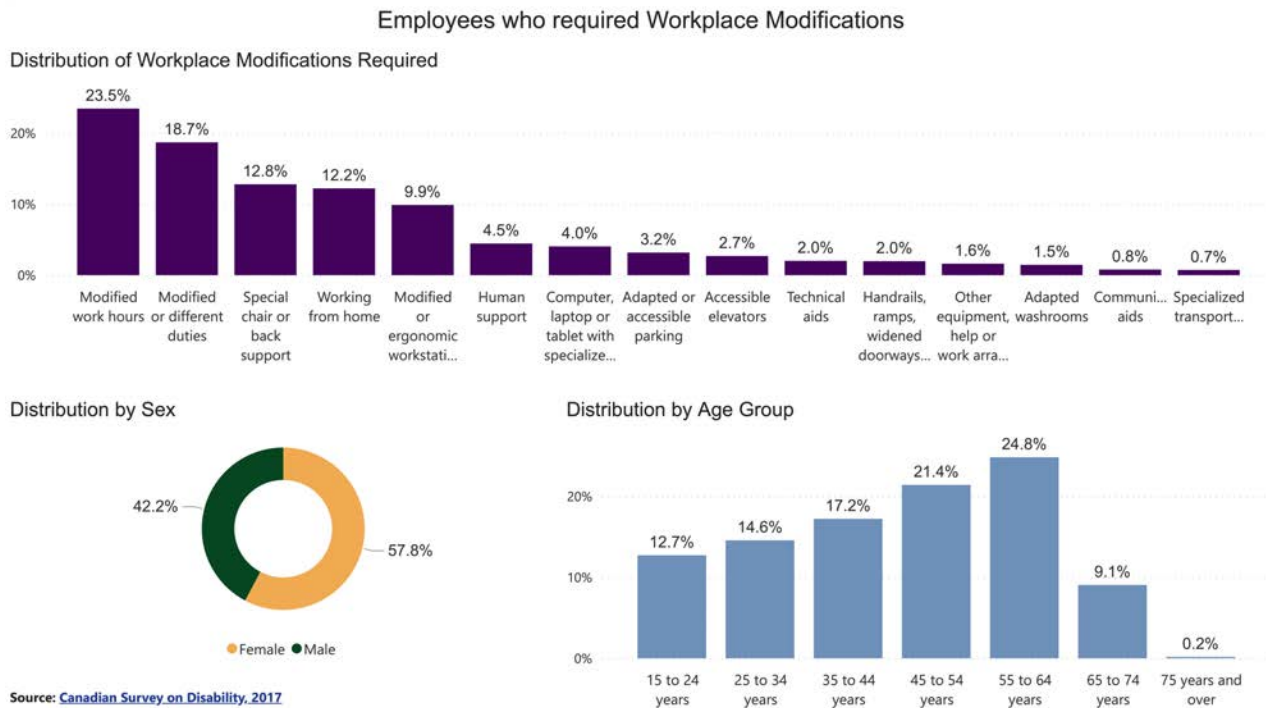


Figure 9. The number of employees with disabilities require workplace modifications, based on type of modification, sex, and age. Data are from the CSD (2017).

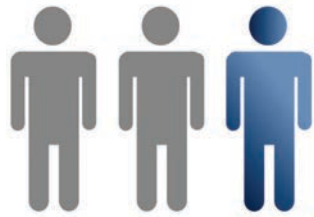
[Click here for the interactive dashboard on Microsoft Power BI for Figure 9.](#)



5.2 Workplace Adjustments Administered by CCRW

CCRW's Accommodation and Inclusion Management (AIM) service delivers proactive and responsive interventions to improve the management and implementation of accommodations and reasonable adjustments. Through the AIM service, employers have indicated that the most common workplace adjustments are flexibility in scheduling and work modifications, followed by learning supports, human supports and ergonomic supports (Figure 10).

In 2019, Morris produced a national report pointing to some interesting trends regarding reasonable adjustments:



Of employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, more than 1 in 3 (37%) required at least one workplace accommodation to be able to work. This represented just over 772,000 Canadians.

The most required type of workplace accommodations were:

27% Work arrangements

15% Work Station Modifications

6% Human or technical supports



Employees with more severe disabilities (62%) were twice as likely to require workplace accommodations compared to those with less severe disabilities (29%).

The more workplace accommodations required, the less likely all needs were met. Of those who required only one accommodation, 75% had their need met; however, this drops to 36% when they required three or more.

Of those with at least one unmet need for workplace accommodations: 25% said they did make a request for them to their employer or supervisor. However, 40% were refused their request.



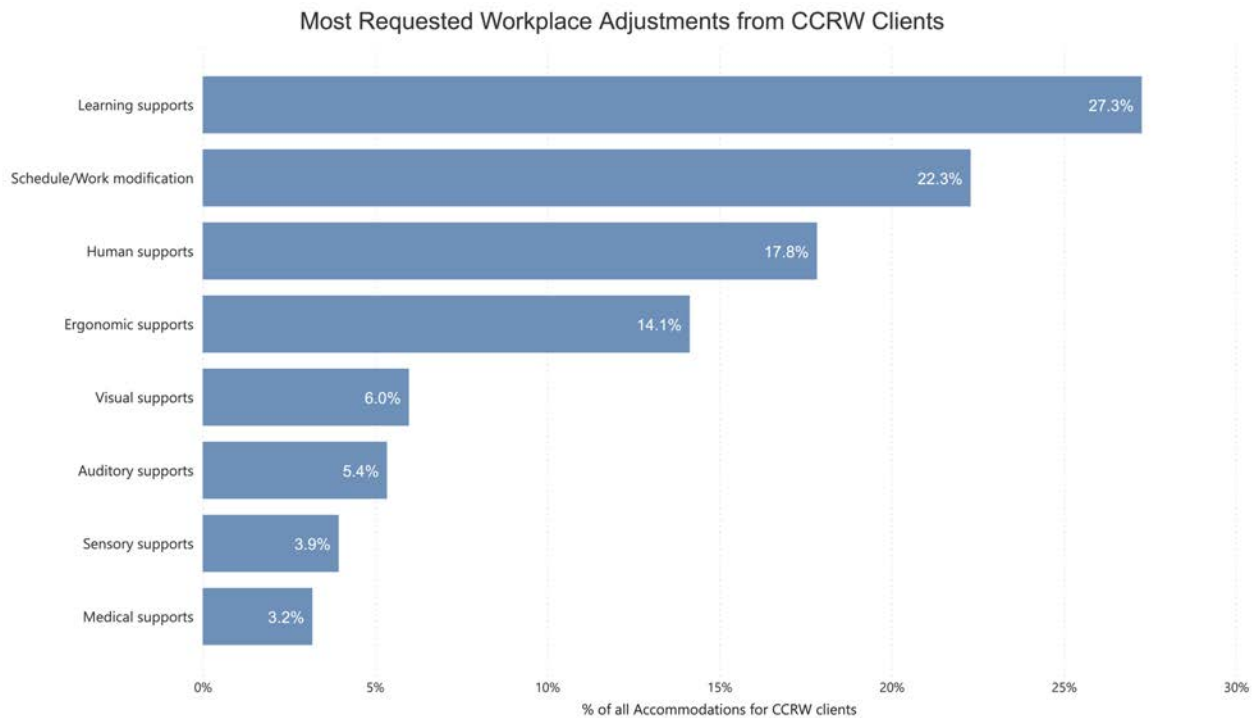


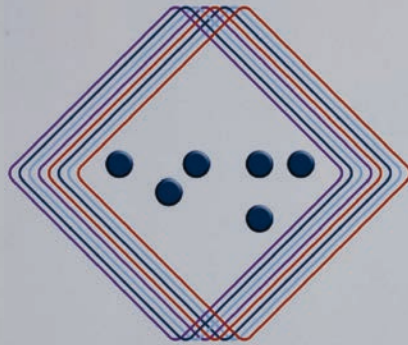
Figure 10. Comparison of the most requested workplace adjustments among clients of the CCRW AIM service (i.e., employers).

Reasonable adjustments such as flexible work schedules or workstation modifications can play an important role in creating an inclusive and accessible work environment for many employees with disabilities. One such way to enhance the comfort of both workers with disabilities and employers during the workplace adjustment process is collaborating with a disability organization such as CCRW. For example, in a post-program survey conducted among CCRW clients, 81% of them said that CCRW helped them learn more about different options for workplace adjustments.



Open your business to different
ways of thinking and enhance
workplace accessibility with **AIM**.

✉ AIM@ccrw.org



6 Inclusive Workplace Trends

6.1 Implementing Frameworks and Policies for Workplace Adjustments

Innovative Canadian employers are prioritizing processes specifically focused on workplace adjustments. For example, Air Canada has introduced an accommodation office to support any employees with the hiring and onboarding process. Through the creation of a focused office to support new employees, Air Canada has helped alleviate stress if new hires are struggling to find the right resources and help. Similarly, Public Services and Procurement Canada has launched a department-wide accessibility plan which includes an accessible procurement resource centre and a centralized HR accessibility service centre for both employees and clients. For small or medium enterprises that may not have the capacity or staffing for an accommodation office, it is recommended to work with agencies that have low or no-cost services to respond to these requests such as AIM services at CCRW.

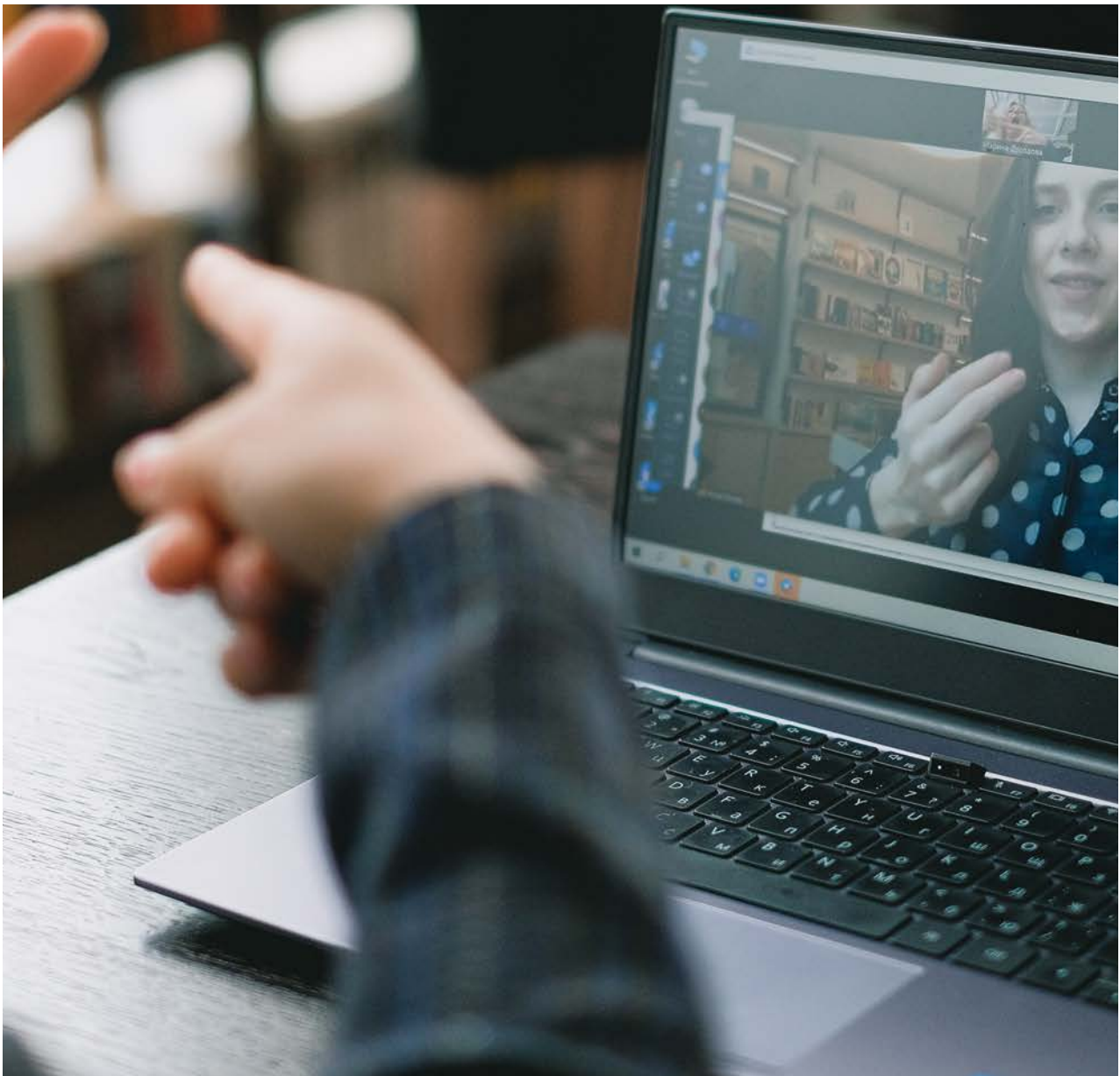
6.2 Opportunities for Inclusion Throughout the Employee Life-Cycle

While reasonable adjustments are one way to achieve accessible workplaces, there are many other steps that employers can take to enhance workplace inclusivity.



Employers have taken strides in their commitment to fostering inclusive workplaces through new practices and policies that support persons with disabilities in the labour force. For example, telecommunications company Sasktel is connecting with community partners to deliver information sessions and pre-employment workshops designed for persons with disabilities. Other Canadian employers are turning towards direct placement programs and internships to support individuals with disabilities to find meaningful work opportunities.

Organizations like Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) have established multiple work placement programs to help individuals with disabilities find sustainable employment opportunities. Through such programs, high school and post-secondary students with disabilities can access internship, apprenticeship, or job shadowing opportunities available at (AMI). Additionally, AMI provides financial support and bursaries, supporting students with permanent disabilities each year. Likewise, the British Columbia Public Service provides a direct entry "Work-Ability Graduate Internship" for post-secondary graduates with disabilities - prioritizing the needs of graduates with disabilities and fostering pathways from school that lead to employment.



6.3 Enhancing Inclusivity Through Partnerships

Businesses can also improve their accessibility through partnerships with disability organizations. Corporations such as IBM Canada LTD. and Sap Canada Inc. have partnered with autism advocacy organizations, such as Specialisterne, to ensure autistic individuals can access their recruitment and employment opportunities in an equitable way. Likewise, Women and Gender Equality Canada have partnered with CCRW to develop policies that are aligned with the Accessible Canada Act. Lastly, the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) is working with CCRW on critical initiatives that are in line with the Commission's goals to become the gold standard in implementation of the Accessible Canada Act. CCRW is providing CHRC with customized solutions such as accommodation audits, and knowledge transfer and training. Whereas disability organizations can provide consultation and support with endeavours to improve inclusivity, employees can play an integral role in reviewing and evolving your accessibility practices.

Evaluate

- Include your employees in the design of current and future accessibility policies and practices through employee feedback on workplace culture, accessibility, and well-being.
- Make evidence-based business decisions to improve your workplace.



The following page provides sample survey questions that can be used in your feedback survey. If you want a more comprehensive survey designed and customized for your organization; CCRW's research team can help.

Workplace Culture Survey

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My workplace provides resources to support my mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My workplace supports a work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel like my workplace values my health and wellness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel engaged when I am at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel productive when I am at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7

Covid-19 Trends Across Industry Sectors

7.1 Working from Home Trends

Some inclusive workplace trends were established during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the pivot to, and normalization of, working from home. Likewise, modifiable work hours during the COVID-19 pandemic have been a demonstration of new and more flexible work models. And yet, while the normalization of remote work during the pandemic may create space for future remote work options, trends show that persons with disabilities are more likely to work in industries that are reliant on in-person work with lower telework capacity.

7.2 Telework Capacity Among Persons with Disabilities

As seen in Figure 11, industries with low telework capacity such as healthcare and social assistance, retail, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction, and construction are more likely to have a higher representation of persons with disabilities. Such industries account for 63% of persons with disabilities in the labour force.



Employer Programs and Funding Sources across Canada

If you are interested in innovative programs, resources and funding sources that support assistive technology and work from home support visit [HireforTalent's program and funding sources database here.](#)

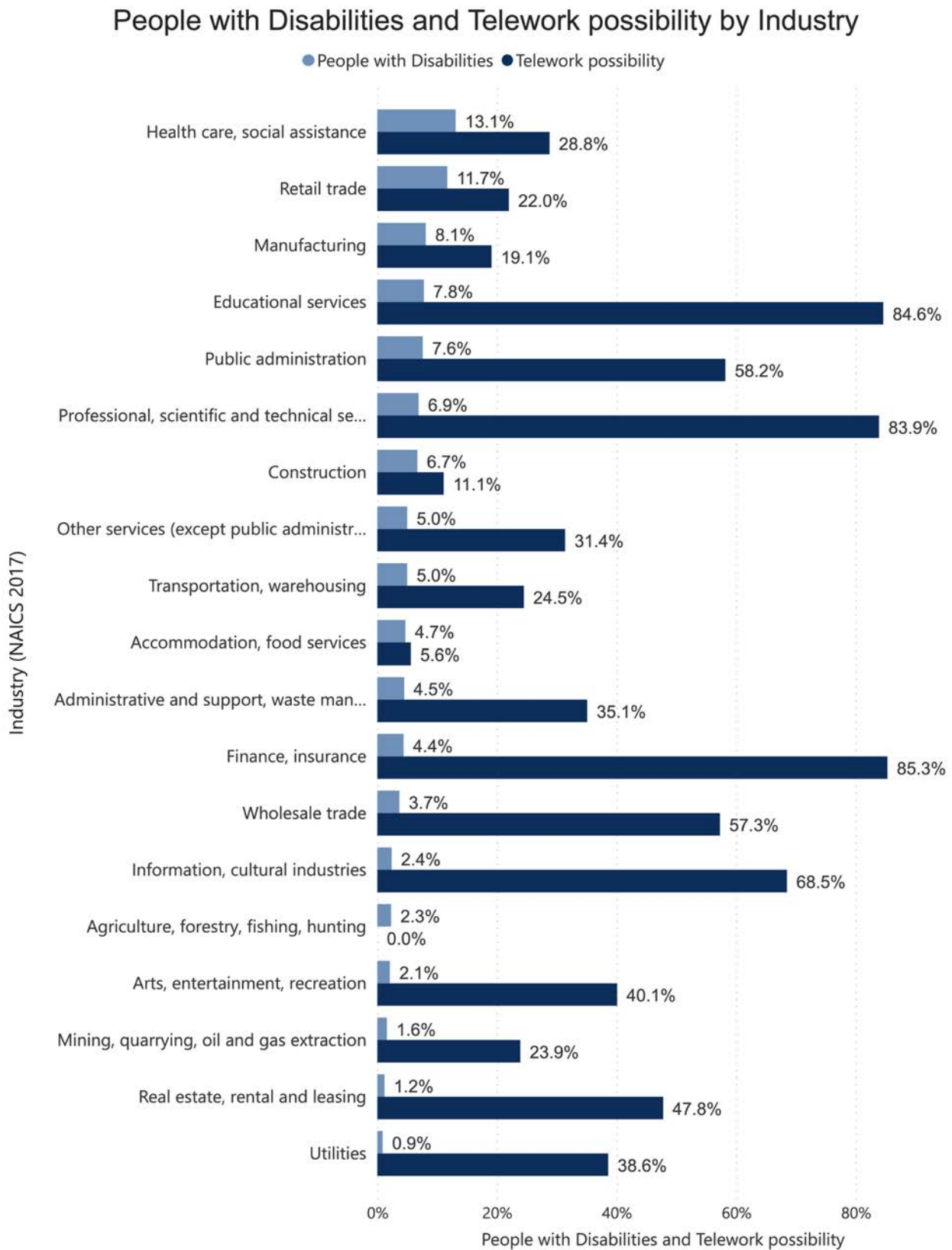


Figure 11. Scope of Telework Capacity and distribution of persons with disabilities by industry (Deng, Morisette & Messacar, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2020a).

7.3 Industry Operation Trends in Urban and Rural Canada

During COVID-19, rural Canada was slower to trend towards a work from home environment. There are several reasons for why this may be, including the compounding of a previously little used Internet network, a stronger regional culture around ‘going to the office,’ and the likelihood that industries operating in rural settings generally require more on-site staff for skilled labour.

The natural resources industry’s operations were less affected than other industries in both rural and urban areas; however, the natural resources industry tends to employ a low percentage of persons with disabilities apart from manufacturing. It is essential for these industries to examine potential barriers to work, required equipment, legal responsibilities and perceptions of occupational health and safety. Peer to peer mentoring, experiential learning, and some use of subsidization programs could help expand opportunities to persons with disabilities. An integral part of this collaboration would be to understand how to accommodate employees in industries that have ‘intrinsic obstacles’ such as increased risk, demanding physical work, work in remote locations which might reduce access to timely medical care and shift work (e.g., 14 days on, 14 days off), and to expand work from home opportunities for office work.



Industries in rural Canada that had operations that were more severely affected had low telework feasibility and were industries that employ a higher percentage of persons with disabilities. Figure 12 illustrates the impact of COVID-19 on business operations in both rural and urban Canada, across various industries that employ persons with disabilities.



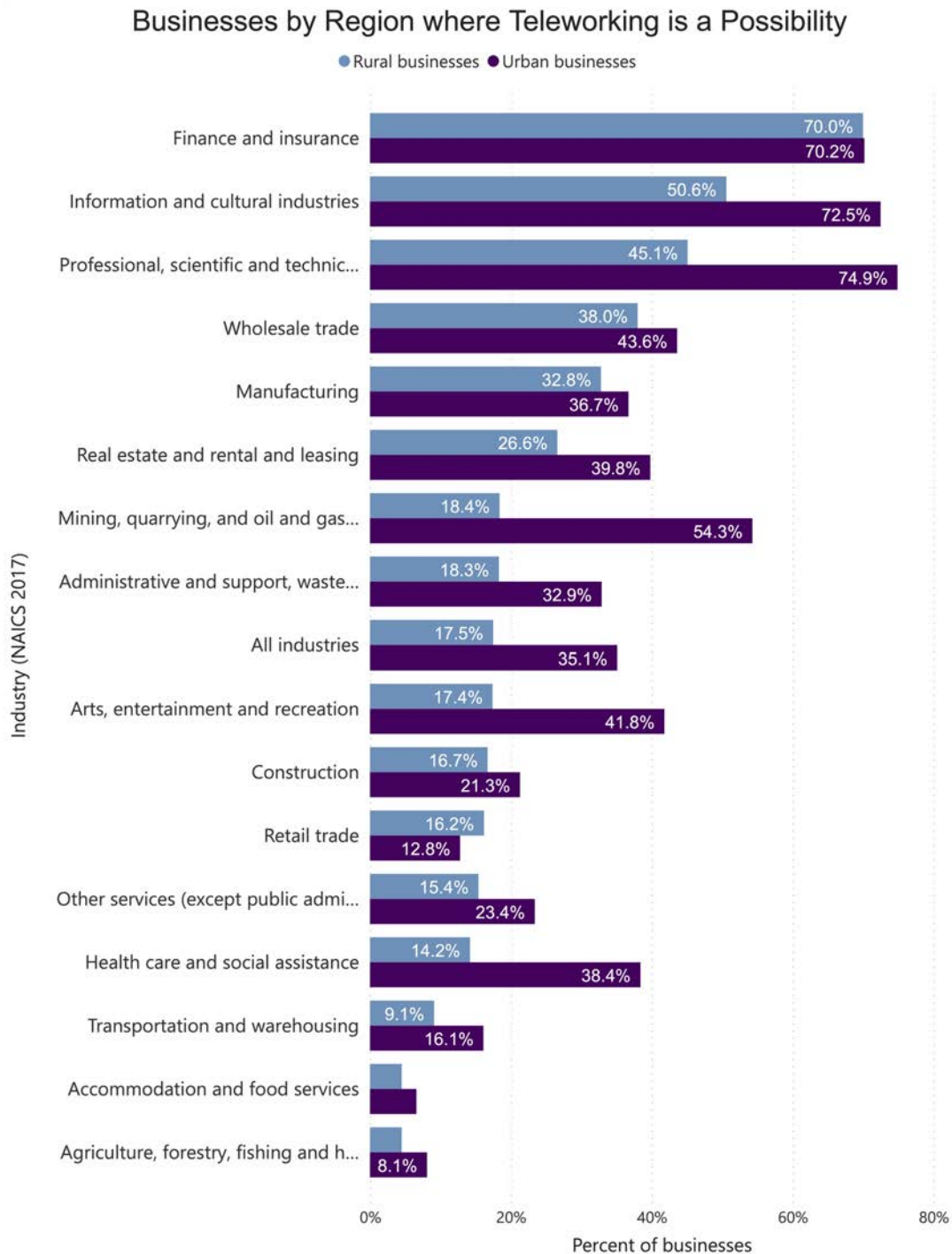


Figure 12. A comparison of the impact of COVID-19 on business operations in both rural and urban Canada, across various industries that employ persons with disabilities. Data are sourced from the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions (CSBC; 2021). Note that data on public administration, utilities and educational services were excluded (Smailes, Munro, Balcram, Fudge & Jafri, 2021 and Statistics Canada, 2020a).

According to Statistics Canada (2021a), the Labour Force Survey August 2021 shows overall employment gains have been made in the third quarter of 2021 and rose by 0.5%. Employment rose by 7.5% in accommodation and services with most of its concentration in Ontario, which will have a positive effect on persons with disabilities in this sector (Statistics Canada 2021a). The unemployment rate is the lowest since the start of the pandemic.

7.4 Trends in New Workforce Opportunities

A number of new workforce opportunities developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, re-skilling and upskilling the workforce and potential employees has become a trend during COVID-19, particularly in relation to technology. Industries that indicated high willingness to teach staff new skills are Information and Cultural Services, Finance or Insurance, and Manufacturing (Figure 13). Employers also looked towards hiring new talent with unique skillsets to supplement their businesses.

A trend towards hiring remote workers outside of an organization's vicinity emerged but was less common than the other new workforce opportunities. This suggests that although businesses are embracing telework, they are only doing so to a certain degree. Perhaps onsite meetings and work might be required intermittently, or businesses are anticipating returning to work in the office after the COVID-19 pandemic. Industries that are most likely to hire outside of their vicinity are more likely to have mainly computer-based work.

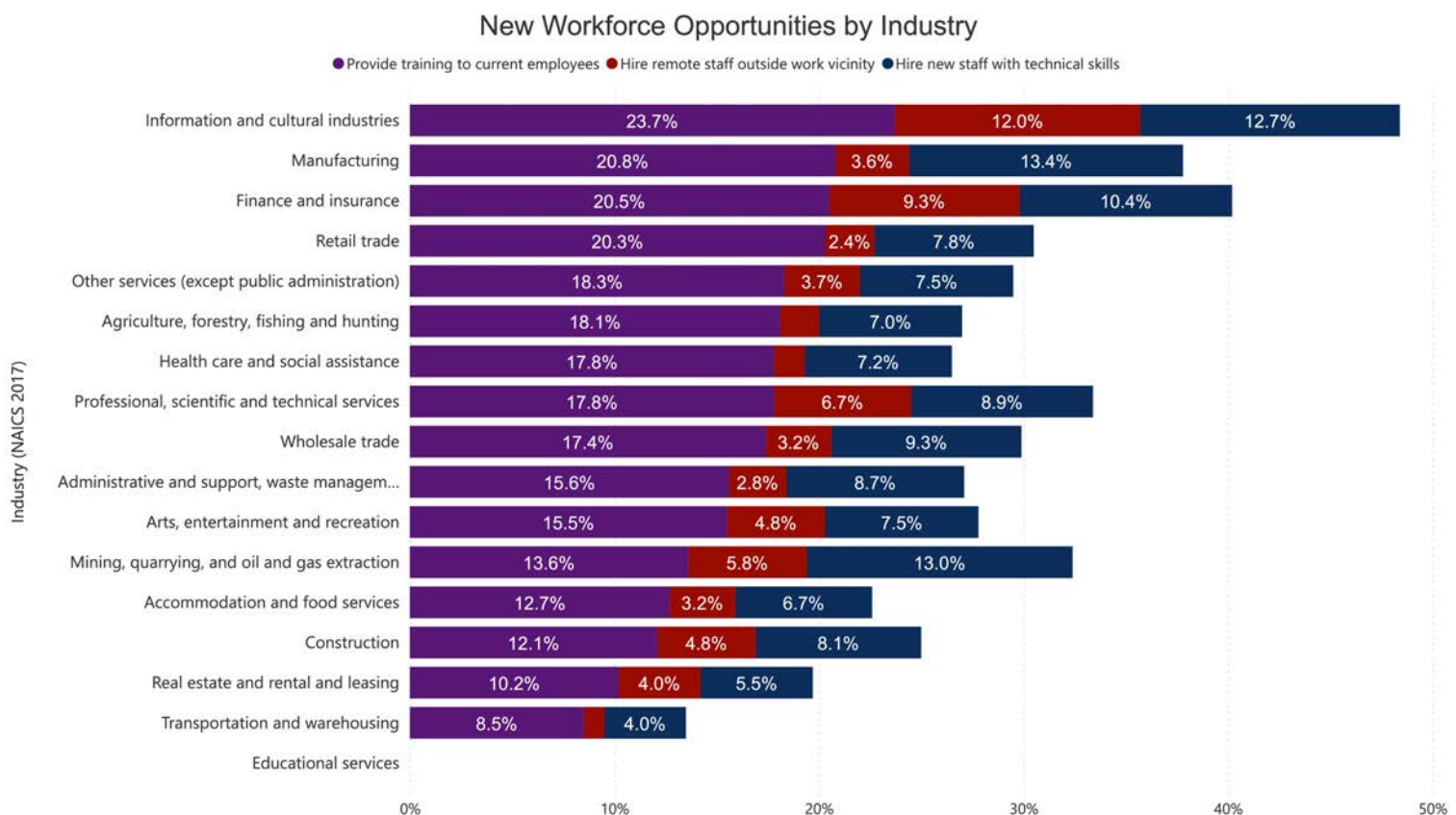


Figure 13. New Workforce Opportunities by Industry (Smailes, Balcom and Wong, 2021).

8

Inclusivity Trends in Business

8.1 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Trends

Inclusivity and accessibility are two important facets necessary in the labour force, and diversity and inclusion initiatives have been on the upturn since COVID-19, in response to a resurgence of social justice issues that were amplified during the pandemic. In a country as diverse as Canada, the compositions of our labour force should be reflective of all of our society from frontline to senior management positions. It is a call to action for employers to rethink their workplace cultures, policies, and practice, and whom their workforce is made up of to ensure it reflects all equity deserving groups. Despite the increased push towards implementing EDI strategies in the workforce, only 1 in 6 diverse employees feel better supported in the workforce, and much work needs to be done to close the policy and implementation gaps to improve workplace cultures (Ellingrud et al., 2021).

8.2 Persons with Disabilities in the Workforce

Approximately 1 in 5 Canadians have one or more disabilities – many of whom are particularly vulnerable during COVID-19 due to weakened immune systems and other increased health risks. During the pandemic, persons with disabilities experienced lower rates of employment in comparison to those without disabilities. A survey that was conducted during the pandemic found that over one third (i.e., 36%) of Canadians with long-term conditions or disabilities reported experiencing either a temporary or permanent job loss or reduced work hours (Statistics Canada, 2020b). Level of education played a factor in determining work stability as we see a shift in high wage and technology-based occupations. Canadians with disabilities between the ages of 25-64 with high school education or less were more likely than those with some university education to report a change in employment status (Statistics Canada, 2020b).

8.3 Women in the Workforce

Women in the workforce have been uniquely impacted due to the pervasiveness of gender roles. The McKinsey & Company's Women in the Workplace 2020 report demonstrates that in both Canada and the United States, 1 in 4 women faced a “double shift burden” that pushed them to either downshift their career or completely leave the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic (Corry, Huang, Kumar, Prince, Krivkovich, & Yee, 2020).



"By demonstrating the depth of talent, the extent of feasible innovation, the increase in market share potential and the outcomes of an inclusive workplace, it is possible to forever change how businesses hire."

Jamie Burton

Desjardin and Freestone (2020) found that the pandemic may have, between February and October 2020, approximately 20,000 Canadian women left the labour force while approximately 68,000 Canadian men re-joined the labour force. Interestingly, for women who had the choice to potentially re-join the labour force, some women chose not to. There are numerous reasons that could be attributed to this trend, including the tendency for women to occupy roles in industries that have been slower to recover from the pandemic (e.g., hospitality, retail, the arts, etc.), where opportunities to work from home are more limited. According to Desjardin and Freestone (2020), the pandemic may have forced women into single-handedly taking on primary family-care responsibilities (Desjardins & Freestone, 2020).



The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted Canadian working mothers and led to downshifts in their careers as schools pivoted to online delivery and childcare centres were completely inaccessible. Although Canadian men and women aged 35-39 both experienced a decline in employment during the pandemic, the effect was more pronounced amongst women. It was found that regardless of their educational attainment, women with care-giving duties felt obligated to focus themselves at home (Desjardins & Freestone, 2020). With the reopening of the economy, perhaps the burden on mothers will be alleviated as increasing childcare resources become available again, thus closing the gender parity gap.

8.4 Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Colour (BIPOC) in the Workforce

Building a more inclusive Canada requires finding better pathways to engage the skills of newcomers and racialized Canadians. According to Statistics Canada (2017), visible minorities have faced higher levels of unemployment, higher level of financial challenge, and higher representation in low-wage jobs during the pandemic (Figure 14; Statistics Canada, 2021b). As of 2016, over 1 in 5 Canadians identified as being part of a visible minority and by 2036, it is estimated that 34.7-39.9% Canadians will identify as being part of a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2017). Thus, all occupation groups should see a steady rise of the representation of racialized Canadians in the labour force.



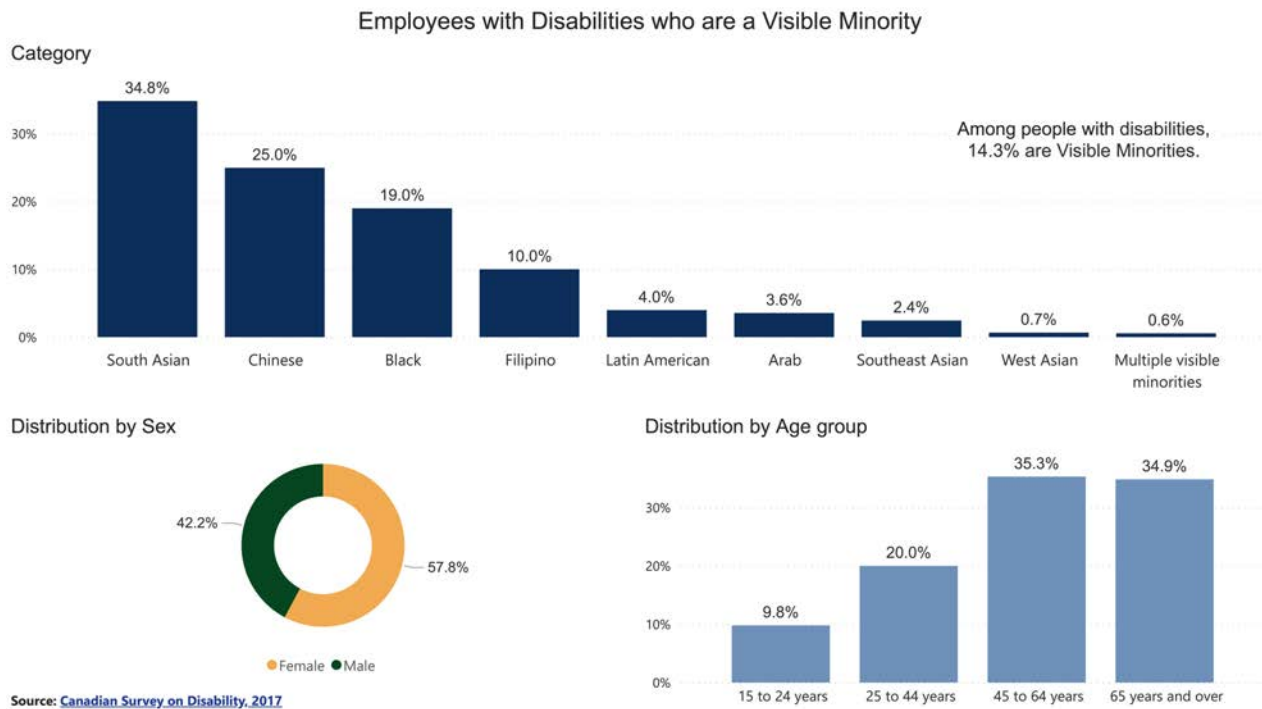


Figure 14. Percentage of persons with disabilities who are a visible minority based on sex and age. Data are from the CSD (2017).

[Click here for the interactive dashboard on Microsoft Power BI for Figure 14.](#)

8.41 The Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses Majority-Owned by Visible Minorities



As of January 2021, Black Canadians with a university degree had a lower employment rate of 86.1% compared to non-visible minority counterparts with an employment rate of 91.1% (Statistics Canada, 2021a). During the 2016 Census, Statistics Canada reported that a greater proportion of Black Canadians in the labour force were unemployed (i.e., 12.5%) compared to non-visible minority Canadians (i.e., 6.9%). The estimates shared by the Labour Force Survey suggest that between January 2020-2021, the unemployment rate of Black Canadians increased by 5.3% while it only increased by 3.7% for non-visible minority Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

8.5 Indigenous Communities in the Workforce

During COVID-19, both Indigenous men and women experienced a decrease in employment rates during early 2020, but by August 2020, Indigenous men saw an increase in employment rates while Indigenous women experienced a further decline (Bleakney et al., 2020). Indigenous women's participation in the labour force is continuously adjusted as they balance work and family obligations and as a result, continue to face employment losses.

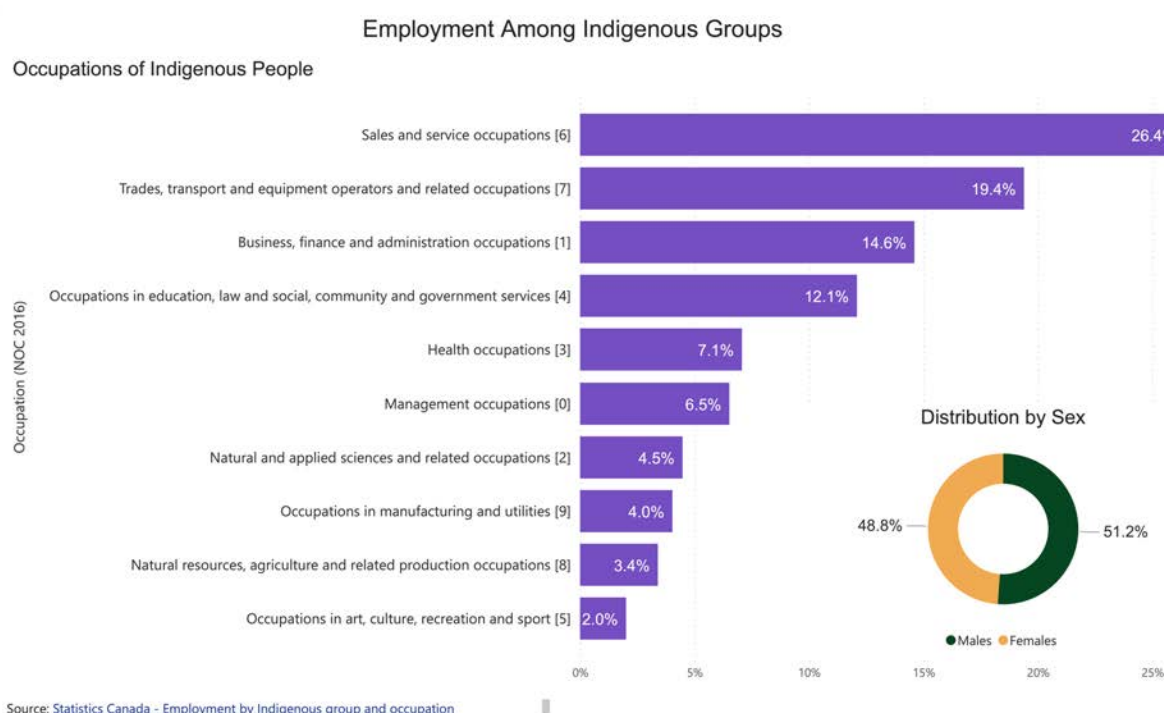


Figure 15. The percentage of Indigenous people employed across various occupation categories. Occupation classifications are from the National Occupational Classification (NOC, 2016).

[Click here for the interactive dashboard on Microsoft Power BI for Figure 15.](#)

From Figure 15, Indigenous persons are largely employed in occupations that experienced greater declines throughout the pandemic. Between June 2019 to August 2020, Indigenous people experienced a significant decline in trades, transport and equipment operations, and related occupations (i.e., -16%), sales and service occupations (i.e., -11%), and occupations in education, law and social, community and government services (i.e., -18%; Bleakney et al., 2020). The significant year-over-year employment losses for Indigenous people are comprised of these three occupation groups, which shows the importance of diversification of employment by equity deserving groups in the labour force.

8.6 The LGBTQI2S+ Community in the Workforce

Members of the LGBTQI2S+ community were found to be more likely to work in precarious conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, BIPOC LGBTQI2S+ individuals were more likely to hold jobs requiring face-to-face interaction either often or all the time (Egale and Innovative Research Group, 2020). As well, members of the LGBTQI2S+ community were more likely to commute to work that required public exposure, thus increasing the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus (Egale and Innovative Research Group, 2020).

McKinsey and Company conducted an international survey that focused on the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and found that employees who were part of the LGBTQI2S+ community disproportionately felt isolated and experienced a heightened loss of connectivity and sense of belonging in the workplace (Ellingrud et al., 2020).

Ellingrud and colleagues (2020) also found that the increased challenges faced by LGBTQI2S+ employees led to increased mental-health issues related to their work. This points to the importance of strengthening workplace practices and cultures to enhance the comfort and wellbeing of workers.

8.7 Equity Deserving Groups and COVID-19



The impact of COVID-19 on the equity deserving groups discussed above are not isolated. For many, their identities intersect, and they belong to multiple equity deserving groups – which brings forth a unique lived experience, often causing greater challenges. The common theme identified across all equity deserving groups during COVID-19 is that members of these communities have lost employment opportunities, occupied industries hardest hit by the pandemic, and are more likely to be employed on-site thus, posing a higher risk of contracting COVID-19. The trends examined in this report demonstrate, now more than ever, the clear need for businesses to uplift equity deserving groups and re-think their equity and inclusion strategies in the workplace. As we shift towards creating more inclusive workplaces, it is imperative to understand how innovative solutions practiced in different sectors and occupations, can be identified and shared by leadership teams.



Case Study: ADaPT

Looking for innovative partnerships to increase diversity in the labour force while finding potential employees with the technology skills that you need?

Ryerson University's Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) program provides 70+ hours of intensive training to individuals to bridge the gap between university and work experience. The program prioritizes upskilling members of equity-deserving groups and offers multiple streams.

Work-integrated learning programs like ADaPT train their participants with business functions and technical skills, thus preparing a successful and qualified pool of future applicants.

Professional Skills Covered in the ADaPT Program:

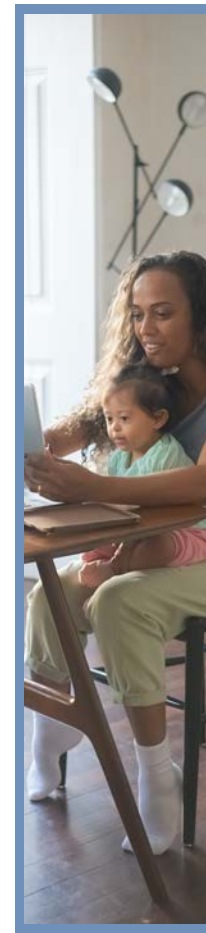
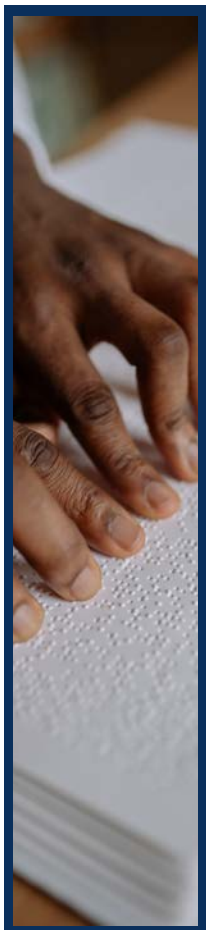
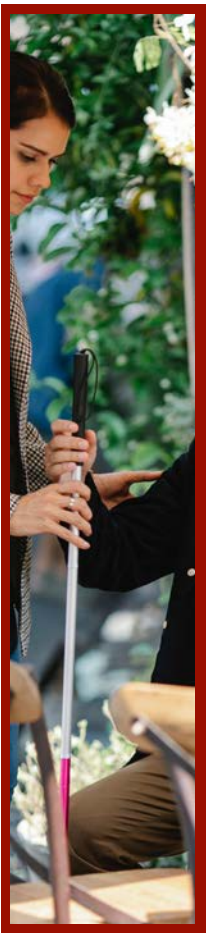
- Salesforce
- Pegasystems
- Website Design
- UX Design Fundamentals
- Data Analytics



[To find out more about the ADaPT program, click here](#)

9 Concluding Thoughts

The trends in this report highlight overall gaps and patterns of employment for persons with disabilities and other equity deserving groups in Canada. Through increased understanding of barriers to employment, reasonable adjustments, and equity, diversity, and inclusion within and beyond COVID-19, employers can better prepare themselves to respond to new and systemic workplace issues, and enhance accessibility and inclusivity for all. This report offers resources and recommendations to help employers make more equitable business decisions, re-think workforce representation of equity deserving groups in all positions and foster an inclusive workplace culture that celebrates the diversity of all employees.



**The time for equity in the workplace is now.
Are you ready?**

9.1 Recommendations

- Invest time, effort, and financial resources to prioritize the inclusion of equity deserving groups in the workplace.
- Harness the power of flexibility and reasonable adjustments to improve access to employment for all.
- Routinely review company policies and practices and move towards systemic change over time.
- Make a commitment to ongoing learning across the organization and engage in partnerships to collectively drive innovation.
- Capitalize on new workplace opportunities from the COVID-19 pandemic to build an inclusive landscape of employment.



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Appendix A: Instructions for Using the Interactive Dashboards

- In all the dashboards, clicking on the different sections of the chart lets you access statistical data that is specific to the field selected.
- You can hover the pointer on specific part of the chart to see additional details like percentages or actual values.
- You can apply filters (for example: sex, age, disability, etc) by selecting a part of the chart. You can remove these filters at any time by clicking on the selected field again or on any empty space between the charts.
- You can also click on the legend (i.e., the colour codes on top of the charts) to filter the dashboard accordingly.
- The data source for every dashboard is specified on the bottom-left (e.g., Canadian Survey on Disability (2017), Labour Force Survey, etc).

