The MaRS and CIBC Inclusive Design Challenge

Research Report

December 2020

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Executive Summary

Persons with disabilities account for a large untapped talent pool in the Canadian labour market. In 2017, 3,727,920 Canadians between the ages of 25 and 64 identified as having a disability.[1] However, only three in five (59%) of these individuals were employed. Of those who were not employed, nearly 645,000 (40%) had the potential for paid work but were unable to find suitable work.[2] While there is significant evidence[3] of benefits to companies from inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce, many individuals struggle to find a job and access meaningful employment opportunities that appropriately utilize their skillsets. Meaningful employment has been shown to give people purpose in life and increase mental well-being.[4] Cross-sector collaboration is required in order to find solutions to help persons with disabilities find meaningful employment and foster an inclusive Canadian labour market.

Based on research conducted by MaRS with support from CIBC, three societal challenges and eight direct barriers were identified.

These categories are complex and interconnected, discreetly impacting the individual based on disability, intersectionality and socioeconomic status.

Societal challenges are broader obstacles that are prevalent throughout one's entire journey when in pursuit of meaningful employment. The societal challenges include;

- **Bias** - Discrimination against people with disabilities based on preconceived notions that contribute to their economic marginalization.

- **Onus on the individual with lived experience** - Additional responsibility a person with disability must exert when pre-planning routes and navigating inaccessible infrastructure and technology.

- **Government resources** - Unequal distribution of available government resources limits the economic participation and independence of persons with a disability. A lack of enforcement of anti-discriminatory rules

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[1] Morris et al., 'A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017' (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2018).

[2] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'. Note: having 'work potential' is defined by Statistics Canada as persons with disability not currently working, not currently in school, not housebound and no preventions from working. They stress that it is not an

attempt to measure an individual's capacity or ability to work, but a way to examine how the labour market could change in a more inclusive market. For more, see StatsCan's Annex A: Work Potential.

[3] Jerdee, 'What companies gain by including persons with disabilities' (2019).

[4] Bailey and Madden, 'What makes work meaningful -or meaningless' (2016).

and regulations removes accountability from legal wrongdoing.

Direct barriers present themselves at multiple stages of one's employment journey and are not mutually exclusive. The direct barriers identified include;

- **Impact of support networks** - An absence of support networks can hinder an individual's well-being and professional success, which can lead to isolation and depression.

- **Access to technology** - Disproportionate access to technology poses barriers in the recruitment process and limits the individual's potential to succeed.

- **Recruitment process** - Organizational processes and/or policies that discriminate against people with disabilities in the recruitment, application and selection process.

- **Workplace disclosure** – Process in which individuals decide when and if they will disclose their disability to their employer, and the implications of this decision.

- **Physical environments** - Infrastructural and institutional structures that can create physical limitations.

- **Workplace structure** - Organizational cultures of a workplace impact the extent to which one can feel welcomed and advance professionally.

- **Appropriate clothing** - Impractical, expensive and maladaptive clothing restricts mobility and limits an individual's ability to feel their best, which can cause discomfort in social and professional settings.

- **Transportation challenges** - Transportation challenges such as delays and inflexible scheduling restricts mobility and personal freedom.

This report provides details regarding the research approach and methodology, as well as an overview of the societal challenges and direct barriers identified that are hindering persons with disabilities in finding and maintaining meaningful employment.

Introduction

CIBC and MaRS Discovery District

CIBC and MaRS have set out to address employment barriers for persons with disabilities. We know the future competitiveness of our country depends on engaging all of our intellectual capital and enabling more persons with disabilities to be full participants in our economy is not just a positive gesture, it's good for businesses and for Canadian economic growth. This initiative is rooted in the needs and priorities of the disability community through their active engagement. The initiative invites the disability and innovation ecosystems to develop solutions that remove some of the barriers to finding meaningful employment. These may include: accessing education; finding opportunities that use relevant skill sets; applying for a job; commuting to an interview or a job; accessing the interview or work setting; accessing affordable and suitable clothing for an interview or occupation; getting hired; achieving success in the field; upskilling; earning promotions; and more.

Disabilities in Canada

The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace has become a topic of extensive global research. According to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, almost 1 in 5 Canadians live with a disability. Among those aged 25 to 64 years, persons with disabilities were less likely to be employed (59%) than those without disabilities (80%)[5]. As the severity of the disability increased, the likelihood of being employed decreased. In the same age group, there was an employment rate of 76% among people with mild disabilities, compared to 31% among those with very severe disabilities.[6] Although Canada's employment rate of persons with disabilities is higher than other countries, a large gap still exists between those with and without

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[5] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

[6] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'

disabilities, leaving much room for improvement (see appendix A). Government legislation and various initiatives from the private sector aim to combat economic and social exclusion. However, the process for these programs to reach persons with disabilities is complex. Narrowing the employment gap for those with disabilities requires collaborative, cross-sector solutions.

Approach

CIBC and MaRS will invite the public to pitch solutions that address barriers to employment for persons with disabilities. This will be done through a series of crowdsourcing competitions known as innovation challenges. Innovation challenges are often used to engage innovators in identifying concepts, technologies and solutions in priority areas. They often spur scientific or technological breakthroughs or address specific social issues or problems. Incentive-based competition enables sponsoring organizations to engage with a broad range of innovators. This democratization of innovation opens the problem space to a more diverse set of skills, experiences and perspectives than traditional approaches.

The first challenge of the series will call for ideas from the disability community to determine the focus for the innovation challenges. This will be supported by a rigorous research approach that engages persons with disabilities in identifying barriers that they experience on a daily basis. A judging panel consisting of individuals with lived experience and subject-matter experts (SMEs) will determine the winners of each challenge.

Research methodology

Research design

This research aims to understand the challenges encountered by persons with disabilities when pursuing meaningful employment. A pan-disability approach was used to connect with the disability community and to gain candid perspectives regarding these challenges.

MaRS conducted 12 ethnographic interviews with self-identified persons with disabilities.[7] Ethnographic research is a qualitative method used to gain insights into target populations. Observing people in their own environment enables immersive research and rich, first-hand data collection. This information can be used to identify key challenges that people with lived experience encounter on a daily basis. The ethnographic research participants are as follows; Pratulya, Amber, Camilla, Leonard, Lorenzo, Luis, Sonia, Harmony, Malik, Heather, Carrie and Silvia (see appendix B).[8]

Employment barriers for persons with disabilities are present in many forms including transportation, education and government policy. Interviews with 24 SMEs provided a more holistic perspective on societal challenges. Specific SMEs were selected to provide a unique viewpoint on employment and workplace barriers for persons with disabilities (see appendix C). Each of these individuals played a critical role in the research process by providing context, guidance and expertise in many areas (application and hiring processes, support systems, etc.). In addition, CIBC circulated a Workplace Disability Research survey through their Consumer Market Research Panel to vet and quantify the themes surfaced through the research with a wider population (see appendix D). 402 respondents completed the CIBC survey. Following primary data collection, secondary research was conducted to validate findings.

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[7] It is important to note that none of the participants were employees of CIBC at the time of the research, and so none of the information is specific to CIBC or its standards.

[8] Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of the participants.

Barriers to meaningful employment

Throughout a person with disability's process to finding and maintaining meaningful employment, many barriers and challenges arise in the various stages. The figure below represents the typical journey of an individual throughout the process, with the societal challenges (represented by a letter in the green circle) and direct barriers (represented by a number in a black circle) that occur at each respective stage.
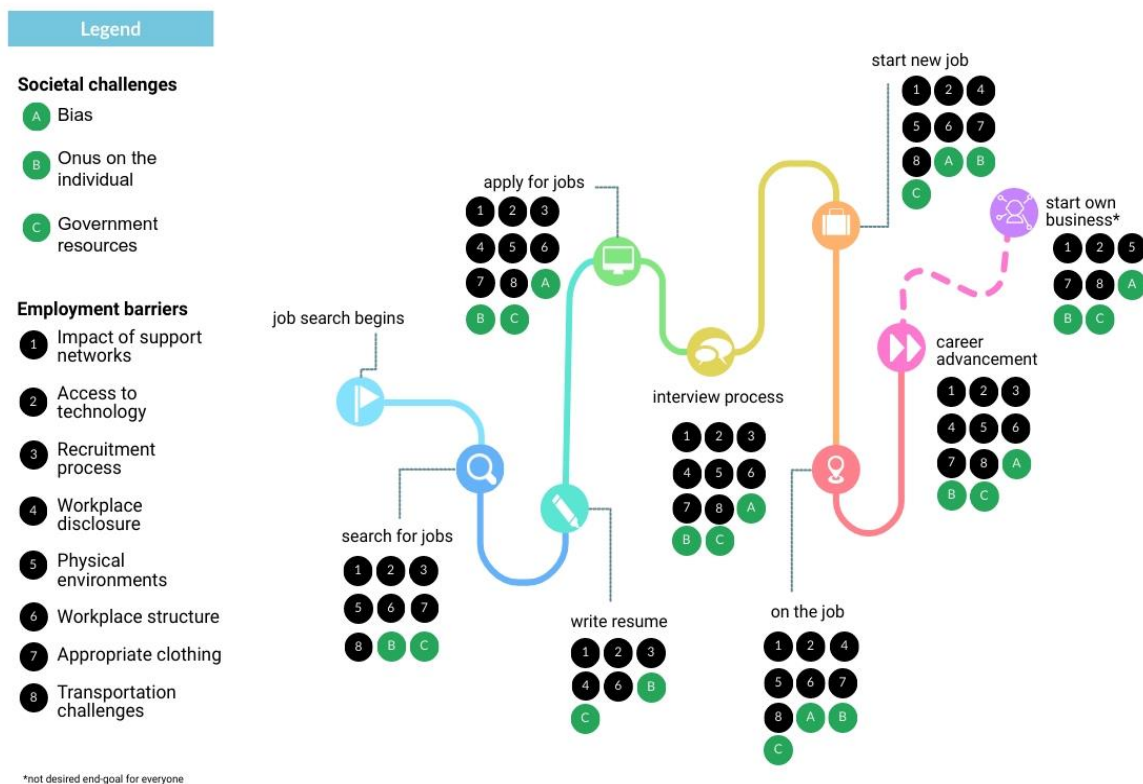

Figure 1: Journey map to finding meaningful employment

Societal Challenges

Primary and secondary research conducted by MaRS with support from CIBC surfaced the following broad challenges. These underpin barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, described in the direct barriers section.

Bias

Stigma and discrimination

The majority of the challenges and barriers surfaced in this report stem from deeply rooted systemic biases. These biases remain entrenched in social beliefs, attitudes and norms, negatively impacting persons with disabilities. A lack of education and understanding results in both conscious and unconscious discrimination and gives rise to biases that present themselves in many ways. Persons with disabilities face stigma and discrimination based on perceptions of their physical and cognitive capabilities, performance potential, importance and value. This results in a restriction of their ability to receive necessary accommodations, enter the workforce, perform optimally and advance in their careers.

The benefits of employing persons with disabilities far outweigh any accommodation costs. Research from the World Economic Forum found that more inclusive companies are twice as likely to have higher shareholder returns than their competitors.[9]

Additionally, these companies have achieved 28% higher revenue, twice the net income and 30% higher economic profit margins over a four-year period.[10] Yet, an SME in the field of accessible technology shared that many people still buy into common misconceptions. There are popular beliefs that people with disabilities cost more to accommodate, are difficult to work with, and are less productive and profitable.

These judgments prevent persons with disabilities from receiving early employment opportunities. An SME in Human Resources with a focus on recruitment reiterated this challenge, stating; "systemic issues are hindering individuals to even get past the interview stage. Hiring managers and companies don't know what they don't know". An SME in the field of employment for youth with disabilities highlighted that paid work experience in high school is a predictor of employment in adulthood. Recognizing this, biases that hinder people from getting their first job are of significant concern. CIBC's consumer market research panel survey found that, among students

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[9] Jerdee, 'What companies gain by including persons with disabilities'.

[10] Jerdee, 'What companies gain by including persons with disabilities'.

with disabilities, 56% of respondents anticipate feelings of stress with the application process. Additionally, 36% anticipate discrimination and prejudice during the interview process. The anticipated feelings of stress and discrimination among students has the potential to negatively impact their mental well-being and performance when applying for jobs. Without early employment, one cannot typically gain experience in the workforce. As such, a negative feedback cycle arises, where stigma makes it more difficult for persons with disabilities to enter the workforce and gain the professional experience required for career advancement.

Perceived ability in contrast to actual ability of persons with disabilities

The full potential of persons with disabilities often goes unrecognized. In fact, according to CIBC's consumer market research panel survey, 29% of persons with disabilities feel that they were not given career growth opportunities due to their employer's perceptions of their limitations. This may be due to the assumption that persons with disabilities are unable to complete tasks to the same degree as individuals without disabilities. Such assumptions stem from a common instinct to make judgements based on appearance. This may also cause a misconception that disabilities impair mental capacity and productivity. It was also found

that 47% of survey respondents stated that they do not disclose their disability, due to fear of discrimination. Research from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) supports these findings, stating that many persons with disabilities "fear that hiring committees will focus on their disability rather than their qualifications".[11] Carrie, an ethnographic research participant, shared that upon returning to work as principal of a school following the amputation of their lower leg, parents of the students petitioned not to let them back. These parents didn't think Carrie could fulfill their responsibilities as principal. Carrie stated "my leg was amputated, not my brain". The actual ability of persons with disabilities is misunderstood, resulting in challenges and consequences that directly impact one's daily life.

Perceived hierarchy of disabilities

Visible disabilities are often more easily understood and accommodated than those that are non-visible. In general, people are more accepting of disabilities that they can see, and consider them 'more legitimate' disabilities. In contrast, non-visible (or 'invisible') disabilities require the trust of another's word or supporting documents. Furthermore, research found that persons with invisible disabilities are often accused of faking or imagining their disabilities.[12] As such, some individuals with visible disabilities report acquiring accommodations with fewer challenges than those whose

[11] Thomson, 'Disclosure of disability in the workplace' (2018).

[12] Disabled World, 'Invisible disabilities: List and general information' (2019).

disabilities are not apparent. For example, an SME with lived experience stated "no one is going to question my disability because it is visible. I have never had to explain why I have needed accommodation". Camilla, a research participant, added "for those who don't have visible disabilities like myself... disclosing it is held against them and impacts the way they are regarded as colleagues". People with non-visible disabilities have reported being perceived as weak and less capable in the workplace, as their disabilities are deemed less credible.

Such biases are further exacerbated by broad unawareness of the relationship between disabilities and well-being and the negative impact that one can have on the other. Heather, another ethnographic research participant, shared that stress and anxiety trigger increased inflammation of their endometriosis, causing extreme physical pain. Team members at their previous workplace did not understand how mental health impacted their disability. As a result, Heather's colleagues would ignore their emails when they needed time off. Results from CIBC's survey supports the lack in understanding between mental and physical disabilities as well as the potential for discrimination towards non-visible disabilities. 61% of respondents with mobility/dexterity disabilities report that they feel comfortable disclosing their disabilities to their employers, compared to 42% of respondents with mental-health related disabilities. The stigma attached to mental health leads to relatively lower levels of comfort disclosing one's disability. The information gap between those with and without lived experience results in many

persons with disabilities having to 'prove' their disability, which research participants have described as uncomfortable, discouraging and impeding on their ability to get the accommodation they need to be successful.

Challenges for newcomers

Perceptions and steps to address disabilities differ across regions and cultures. Luis, an ethnographic research participant with post-polio syndrome (PPS), shared that before seeking refuge from Colombia due to LGBTQ+ discrimination, they did not identify as a person with a disability. In Colombia, Luis pushed themselves beyond their physical limits, resulting in tremendous physical pain. While his may have helped Luis become more resourceful, independent and resilient, the toll on their body was high. This inconsistent diagnosis of disabilities across regions creates a lack of understanding among persons with disabilities and employers around the need for accommodations. The emotional burden of navigating differing cultural standards can be taxing, especially when such norms are not made explicitly clear.

Support networks and social interactions contribute to confidence and emotional well-being. Persons with disabilities who have support from their family, friends and personal support workers (PSWs) report greater feelings of happiness relative to those who do not. Persons with disabilities who are new to Canada can have difficulty finding and creating these support networks due to language barriers and different social norms. According to a report from the

Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 26% of new Canadian immigrants cite learning a new language as the greatest challenge they have faced since arriving in Canada.[13] Support networks play an important role in helping persons with disabilities with their daily activities, including handling the bias and discrimination they may face. Pratulya, a newcomer to Canada, shared that they have limited support networks or social interactions and report experiencing few positive moments on a daily basis. Those who do not have support networks must confront many of these challenges on their own. This can result in feelings of isolation and limited independence. Moreover, social interactions play an important role in developing social skills, which are critical in the workplace. As the majority of job recruitment stages depend on communication (written applications, video interviews, etc.), people who have not developed these skills may face challenges in professional settings where biases exist.

Finally, a lack of internationally accepted credentials presents another barrier to finding meaningful employment when coming from a different region. Recognition of credentials and experience can be difficult for recent immigrants: 11% cited this as the greatest challenge they faced after their arrival in Canada.[14] Luis noted that

organizations do not always recognize foreign credentials. As a result, newcomers may be required to apply to World Education Services (WES) to have their credentials evaluated. This process is complex and costly. Before the evaluation process begins, applicants first need to have their academic documents translated. Once the evaluation process is underway, there is no guarantee that their skills will be recognized. In addition to the challenge of non-transferable skills, language barriers can result in discrimination, adding to the difficulties for newcomers. Research shows that nearly 36% of Canadian immigrants have been subject to discrimination in the past five years in comparison to approximately 28% of Canadian-born residents.[15] Luis has been taking English classes for two years and has great writing skills. However, they sense judgment of their oral skills from others due to their accent. This often makes Luis feel self-conscious and stressed when communicating with others. They worry that their oral abilities will be used as an indicator of their intelligence.

Impact of data

Data provides a foundation for information and decision-making. As stated above in the **stigma and discrimination** section, there are significant benefits in hiring a person

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[13] Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 'Welcoming immigrants and refugees to Canada: The role of municipalities' (2019).

[14] Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 'Welcoming immigrants and refugees to Canada: The role of municipalities'.

[15] Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 'Welcoming immigrants and refugees to Canada: The role of municipalities'.

with a disability however, the research is not enough to change perceptions of said people. The advantages of persons with disabilities in the workplace is not widely understood or known. An SME in the field of employment for persons with disabilities stated that Canadian policy makers and advocates "haven't done a good enough job at measuring the impact of diversity. Because we haven't, the capital allocated towards improving the [diversity of the] workforce is next to nothing". An SME in the field of advocacy for persons with disabilities further noted that there is a "need to demonstrate and quantify value in hiring persons with disabilities for it to become commonplace". It is clear that data can be leveraged to frame disabilities as an asset. This would create the context for disability to be championed within organizations. Without data that supports a business case for employers to hire persons with disabilities, systemic stigma and discrimination persists in the workplace.

Onus on the individual with lived experience

Emotional labour

The emotional burden of barriers to persons with disabilities highlighted throughout this report are most often carried by those with lived experience. They often result in feelings of stress, frustration, lack of control and reduced personal freedom. An SME with lived experience shared that the onus on persons with disabilities to navigate these barriers and problem-solve independently is emotionally taxing. In addition, the implications of such efforts are often overlooked and not well understood. For example, as outlined in the section on bias, stress and anxiety increased the physical pain Heather experiences from their disability. Job applications are stressful, making it a difficult task to complete when they are also in physical pain. They stated "it's a vicious cycle that stops me from efficiently applying to jobs".

Time to plan routes and accommodations

Many persons with disabilities spend a significant amount of time planning and coordinating routes and accommodations. Applying, commuting or interviewing for a job, as well as completing work tasks can require a tremendous amount of effort in advance. According to the Angus Reid Institute's 2019 accessibility report, 30% of Canadians say that accessibility is a consideration for them when deciding which places they will go to and which they will avoid.[16] Primary research supports these findings. For example, Amber, one of the ethnographic research participants, noted that their disability produces pain throughout the day. As a result, they have to plan ahead to ensure minimal long-distance movement. Carrie has a lower-leg amputation. They must organize the accommodations that they will need when going to unfamiliar environments, allowing them to move freely without being aware of the layout of the space. This time spent planning presents significant opportunity costs. Many persons with disabilities would rather spend their time on more productive tasks. An SME in the field of transportation emphasized this challenge, stating "if you have to spend an hour or two to book your public transit, how are you going to get anything done?" Factors that limit mobility, such as poor weather, can make planning mobility arrangements significantly more difficult. An SME in the field of recruitment and human resources observed that this planning makes persons with disabilities more proactive, detail-oriented and adaptable. It also results in less spontaneity, freedom and flexibility for this population.

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[16] Angus Reid Institute, 'Accessibility: A source of future anxiety and a significant consideration for Canadian consumers today' (2019).

Government resources

Funding gaps

Based on conversations with the families of persons with disabilities, an SME in the field of youth employment reported a lack of resources that prepare persons with disabilities to transition into the workforce. There is a gap in funding around programs that support youth with disabilities in preparing for professional employment. A subject-matter expert in the public sector shared that the amount of income support a student can receive from programs such as the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is impacted by other funding sources a student may already be receiving. The early years of professional development are critical to the trajectory of one's career. As noted by an SME in the **bias** section, there is not enough attention given to the importance of the first job. As a result, there is little capital designated to alleviate the challenges to meaningful employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. This is made worse by insufficient data to prove the business case for diversity and inclusion hiring. This prompts a cycle where a lack of awareness results in insufficient resources allocated for youth persons with disabilities, which impedes the potential for education and responsiveness.

Access to existing programs

Many individuals report that access to assistive technology, as well as basic technology (ex. personal computer, smartphone) is costly. An SME in the public sector noted that provincial and federal government funding is provided to corporations to pay for accommodations. This funding comes in the form of incentives and wage subsidies intended to promote diversity and inclusion. However, many corporations are unaware of or choose to dismiss this opportunity. These funding opportunities and/or incentives include:[17]

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[17] National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS), 'Finding funding to accommodate employees with disabilities' (n.d.).; Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal (CCMM) 'Directory – wage subsidies' (2020).; Province of Manitoba, 'Employability assistance for people with disabilities' (2016).

Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities	federal
Student Work-Integrated Learning Program	federal
Young Canada Works	federal
Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities	agreement between Canada and each province and territory
Disability-Related Employment Supports	Alberta
Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities	British Columbia
AccessAbility Supports	Prince Edward Island
Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities	Manitoba
Training and Employment Support Services	New Brunswick
The Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities	Newfoundland and Labrador
Diversity Accommodation Fund	Nova Scotia
Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Disability Support Program Employment Supports	Ontario
Job Integration Contract Measure	Quebec
Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities	Saskatchewan

These programs are not always effectively communicated at the organizational or the individual employee level. Furthermore, many researchers, advocates and persons with disabilities argue that incentives do not work in providing long term employment, nor do they improve the stigma and discrimination associated with hiring a person with a disability.[18]

In addition, there is a lack of communication and enforcement between government and corporations around the purpose of this funding. The way funds are distributed often leaves persons with disabilities to use their personal finances to pay for accommodations both in the workplace and at home. According to the 2017 Statistics Canada report, 1.5 million persons with disabilities aged 15 and over had an unmet need for an aid or device (ex. cane, special

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[18] Prince, 'Inclusive employment for Canadians with disabilities' (2006).

software).[19] Of these, 1 million noted that cost was the reason for their unmet need.[20] Canadian programs that provide funding support for persons with disabilities requiring assistive technology include the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP), Disability Tax Credit (DTC), March of Dimes Canada - Assistive Devices Program and the Easter Seals Society.[21] While there are various programs that offer financial support to help persons with disabilities pay for their required assistive technologies, research participants emphasized the cost of assistive technologies and the challenges in receiving it. This could be due to the structure of such programs and eligibility requirements. More research would be necessary to determine why many persons with disabilities report financial limitations to technology accommodations.

Complex legislation

Policies and funding to alleviate barriers for persons with disabilities are complex. They encompass legislation, regulations and programs that span different jurisdictions and government departments. Unlike other developed nations, in Canada there is no explicit national disability legislation. Resources exist at the federal level, such as EI, CPP, CPP children's benefits for dependents under 25 and Disability benefits for veterans. Different legislation and programs also exist in each province and territorial jurisdiction. Proponents of Canada's provincial and federal legislation argue that a combination of the pension and health care systems provides comprehensive resources to persons with disabilities. Others disagree and believe that there have been increasing shortfalls in disability programs in recent years. The complexity of disability policy, consisting of many parts and providers, causes many persons with disabilities to perceive it as impenetrable. According to the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance, disability policy in Canada requires significant patience and time to understand. They describe it as conflicting, fragmented, incoherent, not user-friendly and a "hit-or-miss" affair.[22] Across the provinces, disparities exist between the income earned by people with disabilities and those without. The Conference Board of Canada found that Manitoba is the province with the most equitable income, with persons with disabilities making an average of 76.5% what people without disabilities earn.[23] Alberta is the worst performing province, with persons with disabilities earning on average 67% that of people without disabilities.[24] Various factors impact the different results across provinces. None of our participants, SMEs or secondary research pointed to differences between the regulations, resources, or programs offered between provinces as a cause. Further analysis would need to be conducted to

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[19] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

[20] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

[21] Disability Credit Canada Inc., 'Assistive technologies give people with disabilities opportunities for independence' (2016).

[22] McColl et al., 'A review of disability policy in Canada' (2017).

[23] The Conference Board of Canada, 'Income of people with disabilities' (2017).

[24] The Conference Board of Canada, 'Income of people with disabilities.

identify if differences were an important factor.

Legal action

Currently, Canadian accessibility standards vary across the nation, with every province and city having their own set of standards.[25] The federal government has many laws in place to protect Canadians from discrimination. The laws are not specific to accessibility, but they prohibit the discrimination of persons with disabilities. These laws include: the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Employment Equity Act.[26] Furthermore, each Canadian province or territory have their own provincial human rights legislation, which "make it illegal for discrimination against people with disabilities to occur in a host of areas such as the provision of goods and services, employment and housing".[27] Like the federal laws, these are not specific to persons with disabilities. In recent years, accessibility-specific laws have emerged to ensure that persons with disabilities are being treated equally. Most notably, the federal government passed the Accessible Canada Act in 2019. Various provinces have also developed their own accessibility-specific legislation that focuses on the rights of persons with disabilities.

These provincial laws include;[28]

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) (passed in 2005)
- Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) (passed in 2013)
- Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (passed in 2017)

According to eSSENTIAL Accessibility, a platform that ensures organizations achieve and maintain digital compliance, other provinces are expected to pass their own accessibility legislation. British Columbia is aiming to be the most progressive province by 2024 by developing new laws, standards and policies to better support persons with disabilities.[29] In 2018, British Columbia proposed the British Columbia Accessibility Act (Bill M 219) and had its first reading in May 2018, but has yet to enact as a law.[30] As for the AMA, it is "not complaints based legislation, [meaning that] individual complaints are not investigated and mediation services are not offered".[31] Although not investigated, complaints are recorded by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission to identify trends. In 2019, "over 45% of all formal complaints to the

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[25] Angus Reid Institute, 'Accessibility: Consideration for Canadian consumers today'.

[26] eSSENTIAL Accessibility, 'An overview of Canada's accessibility laws: A look at the old and the new' (2018).

[27] eSSENTIAL Accessibility, 'Overview of Canada's accessibility laws', para 8.

[28] eSSENTIAL Accessibility, 'Overview of Canada's accessibility laws'.

[29] Government of British Columbia, 'Accessibility through legislation' (2019).

[30] Exley, 'British Columbia Accessibility Act' (2018).

[31] Province of Manitoba, 'The Accessibility for Manitobans Act: Compliance' (n.d.).

Manitoba Human Rights Commission related to disability discrimination".[32] In almost all cases, settlements or accommodations were made at the individual level, which have left policies and practices unchanged.[33] While the AMA has been enacted, the Accessibility Standard for Employment (second standard under the AMA) has not been fully implemented across the province. Public sector organizations are set to comply by May 1 2021 and private sector organizations by May 1 2022. For said reasons, less information on Manitoba employment legal actions and its enforcements is currently available.

The recently enacted Nova Scotia Accessibility Act plans on developing multiple standards under its act, which will cover areas such as; goods and services, information and communication, transportation, education, employment and built environments.[34] It is expected that each standard related to the act will take two years to complete, helping the Accessibility Act to achieve its goal of having an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.[35] According to the province's framework, Nova Scotia plans on enacting their first standards by 2021, which will focus on built

environment and education standards.[36] Currently, employment standards are not outlined on their roadmap (see appendix E). Similar to Manitoba, the majority of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act complaints received in 2017 - 2018 are "related to discrimination in the area of employment, particularly with respect to mental and physical disabilities".[37] Most cases are settled or accommodated at the individual level as well.[38]

As accessibility-specific laws are relatively new to Canada and its provinces and territories, there is a lack of nation-wide data on provincial enforcements of accessibility standards. However, as Ontario was the first province in Canada to pass an Accessibility Act, more information on the law, compliance and non-compliance is available compared to other provinces and territories.

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[32] Barrier-Free Manitoba, 'The legal and Human Rights of Manitobans with disabilities' (2020), para 8.

[33] Barrier-Free Manitoba, 'The legal and Human Rights of Manitobans with disabilities'.

[34] Retail Council of Canada, 'NS Government passes accessibility legislation – Standards to be developed' (2017).
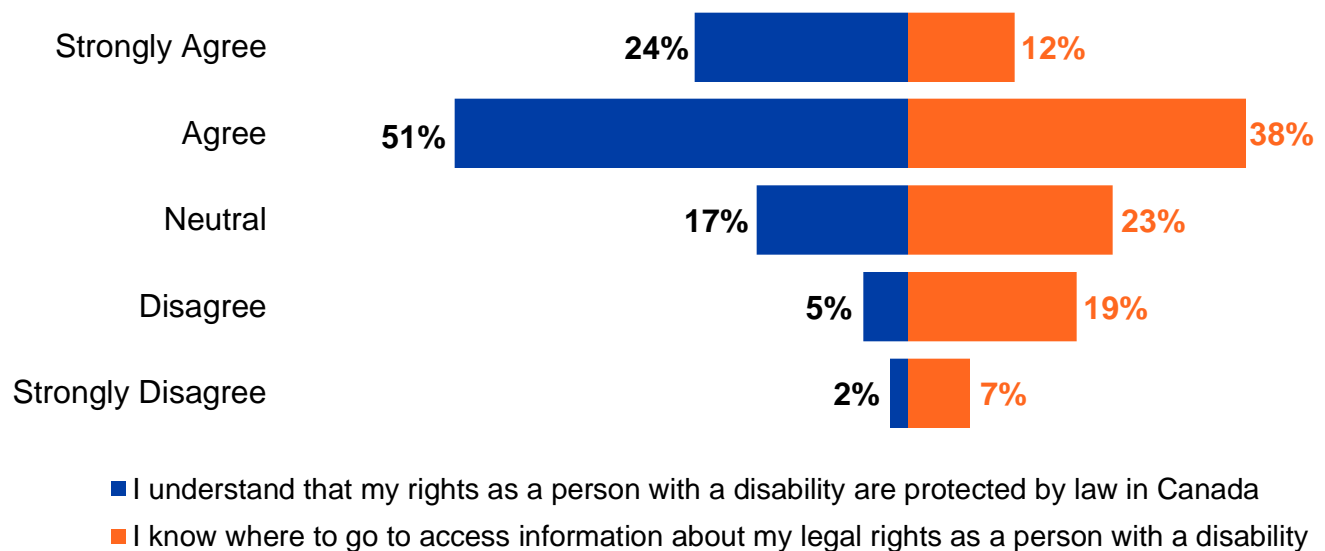
[35] Retail Council of Canada, 'NS Government passes accessibility legislation'.

[36] Government of Nova Scotia, 'Access by design 2030: Achieving an accessible Nova Scotia' (2020).

[37] Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, 'Annual report 2017 – 2018' (2018), 7.

[38] Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, 'Annual report 2017 – 2018' .

Figure 11: Awareness of rights and access to information

- ■ I understand that my rights as a person with a disability are protected by law in Canada
- ■ I know where to go to access information about my legal rights as a person with a disability

While the majority of the CIBC consumer market research panel survey participants understand that their rights as persons with disabilities are protected by law in Canada, only half know where to access this information (see figure 11). Having employers properly abide by these rights and having standards enforced, is a larger challenge for persons with disabilities. Through the ethnographic research, two participants found it difficult to return to work following the amputation of their

extremities due to an illness. This was largely due to human resources staff not following the AODA. The AODA seeks to remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities by instating accessibility legislation across the province.[39] The AODA provides educational videos and toolkits to ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment. The province of Ontario has unprecedented standards of workplace accessibility, but the enforcement structure that holds organizations accountable is insufficient.

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[39] Accessibility Services Canada, 'AODA questions & answers'

In fact, a 2018 AODA Alliance report deemed the AODA enforcement measures not up to standards; "its implementation and enforcement in recent years has been uneven, insufficient and in key ways, too lax".[40] While the AODA has their own inspectors to enforce the Act, there is "no mechanism within the AODA regime for an individual to initiate an AODA complaint against one's employer or an organization".[41] If an individual wants to log a complaint, this must be done through the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO). In this case, the onus is on the individual to fight a long and expensive battle with their employer. This jeopardizes a person's employment status in order to gain equal access to their job site and receive the same treatment as their peers. Further, as these discrimination cases tend to have lower-paying settlements (typically between $5,000-$10,000), they are not seen as lucrative or appealing to lawyers.[42] As a result, cases are rarely picked up and frequently dropped. Legal support is also expensive, with a lengthy and complex process for filing a Human Rights complaint. These inhibitors often outweigh the benefits for the plaintiff, especially for those in part-time employment. Therefore, many cases are dropped from the plaintiff side as well. Those who continue with their complaint

and see it to trial usually do so in order to see a change in policy. However, a subject-matter expert in the legal field explains that policy change is contingent on information from the Human Rights Tribunal nationwide. Due to the nature of these cases, as stated above, there is a lack of data to support the policy changes. The subject-matter expert in the legal field further explains:

Disability is something that can happen to everyone – there are often other grounds of discrimination which can complicate Human Rights cases to the detriment of the individual. We know that across Canada in every single jurisdiction, disability is the most litigated ground. Disability related claims come up way more than any other. One of the issues we have – regardless of where we are in Canada, is that almost every jurisdiction requires you to go through settlement negotiations and mediations before reaching the tribunal as a way to reduce the case load. While it might provide individuals with a means of getting compensation, or mandating diversity and inclusion training, which is all great, but they are hidden in these confidential settlements that the

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[40] Thomson, 'AODA alliance report on 5 years of lax AODA enforcement comes up in the legislature and the media' (2018), para 9.

[41] Stam, 'Who enforces AODA standards?' (2012), para 2.

[42] Rudner, 'Harsher penalties to stop workplace discrimination, boost accommodation' (2018).

public never sees and don't become part of law.

At the time of the ethnographic research conducted for this initiative, 5 out of the 12 participants had filed Human Rights complaints against their employer at one point in time. Out of the filed Human Rights complaints, four are awaiting trial and one case was dropped by the plaintiff. While Ontario remains one of the provinces that has made great strides for persons with disabilities, there is much more to do: "we do well in Ontario, but off the record, one of the big issues is the way we do compliance and enforcement".[43]
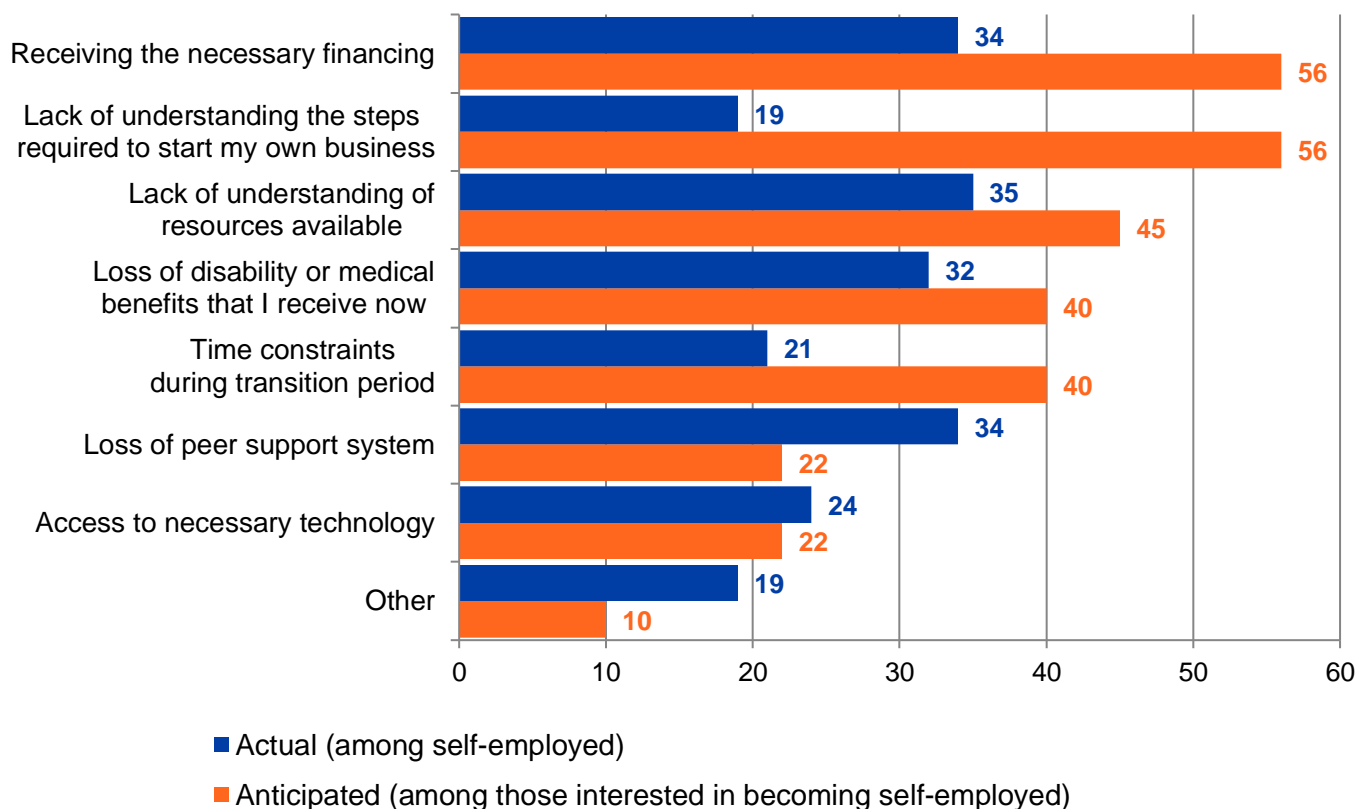
Resources for entrepreneurs

Some persons with disabilities look to become entrepreneurs and focus on their passions when they are unable to find meaningful employment. Two ethnographic research participants are entrepreneurs at not-for-profit organizations. Among the subject-matter experts, three are entrepreneurs and founded for-profit companies. Further, 62 of the survey respondents (15%) were currently self-employed while 193 (48%) would be

interested in becoming self-employed. Although some of the self-employed survey participants indicated that their employment status was due (at least in part) to challenges they faced due to their disability, 69% did not believe that their disability impacted their decision to become self-employed. While becoming self-employed solves many of the organizational structure barriers (ex. flexible hours, accessible technology, avoiding public transit, better work culture, etc.), it does not address the overarching issues. An SME in the field of advocacy for persons with disabilities explains that "people like the idea [of being an entrepreneur] as there are programs to support small businesses. However, none of them solve problems a disabled person is dealing with - yes, there is flexibility but it is all on you - you can't take a week off to have a medical procedure". There are many anticipated challenges associated with becoming self-employed, including lack of required capital, knowledge and understanding of resources related to starting a business. Similarly, the actual challenges reported by entrepreneurs with disabilities were lack of understanding the resources available, lack of required capital and the loss of peer support systems (see figure 12).

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[43] Research participant asked to remain anonymous.

Figure 12: Actual / anticipated challenges in becoming self-employed

Receiving the necessary financing — Actual: 34, Anticipated: 56
Lack of understanding the steps required to start my own business — Actual: 19, Anticipated: 56
Lack of understanding of resources available — Actual: 35, Anticipated: 45
Loss of disability or medical benefits that I receive now — Actual: 32, Anticipated: 40
Time constraints during transition period — Actual: 21, Anticipated: 40
Loss of peer support system — Actual: 34, Anticipated: 22
Access to necessary technology — Actual: 24, Anticipated: 22
Other — Actual: 19, Anticipated: 10

■ Actual (among self-employed)
■ Anticipated (among those interested in becoming self-employed)

Source: CIBC Market Research, Workplace Disability Research, 2020

In addition, having a limited number of entrepreneurs with disabilities creates challenges in finding a cohesive group or network. This limits the ability of these entrepreneurs to support one another, build networks and raise capital. Furthermore, there is a lack of resources available to persons with disabilities to support entrepreneurship. This creates a cycle where there is a lack of accessible entrepreneurship tools, which perpetuates the lack of persons with disabilities becoming entrepreneurs. If there were more entrepreneurs with disabilities, they would push for more accessible resources. For example, an SME with lived experience noted that they cannot find accessible accounting packages for bookkeeping. Furthermore, there is extensive paperwork required to become incorporated and these forms are rarely accessible to those with visual impairments. Finally, grant and funding opportunities are complex in structure and time-consuming processes that also lack accessible documents. As these documents are rarely requested in formats that are accessible, they have not yet been created, which adds to the chain of events and results in fewer entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Direct barriers identified

Primary research grounded in lived experience uncovered the following barriers experienced by persons with disabilities, people/organizations that work with persons with disabilities and the systems that surround these groups (see appendix F for the emotional journey maps that helped to surface barriers). Below are eight direct barriers that surfaced from primary research. A description of each barrier, how it pertains to the research findings and the implications for people with different types of disabilities are explored.

Impact of support networks

Social networks and community

Support networks were frequently identified as key contributors to personal well-being and professional success. It has been found that "social capital, friendships and connectedness are critically linked to health, happiness and longevity".[44] Social capital can be explained as "a positive product of human interaction… And in business terms, social capital is the contribution to an organization's success that can be attributed to personal relationships and networks, both within the organization and outside of it".[45] Social networks and interactions help a person feel more included in society, which commonly transitions into the workplace.

Positive social interactions can improve interpersonal skills, increasing confidence and success both during the job search and in the workplace. This was especially prevalent for those with mobility/dexterity and visual impairments, expressed both in the ethnographic research and in the CIBC consumer market research panel survey. See below for examples taken from interviews of individuals with disabilities, to show how support networks are key contributors to personal well-being.

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[44] The Conference Board of Canada, 'Exploring disabilities in Canada' (2018).

[45] Kenton, 'Reading into social capital' (2019).

Pratulya, an employed newcomer to Canada, does not have access to a support network aside from their paid PSWs. Although they have multiple roommates, Pratulya does not consider any of them to be part of their support network. The figure below showcases their activities and emotions in a typical day: primarily negative experiences with only one positive experience (see figure 2).
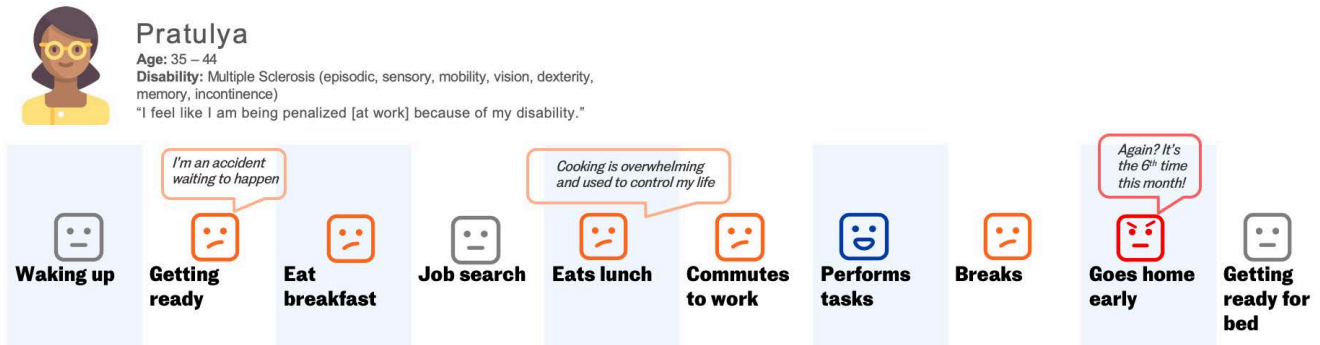

Figure 2: Emotional journey map of an average day in Pratulya's life

Leonard, who is unemployed, has a very small local support network that consists of an employment counsellor and case workers. They live in an apartment by themselves and have moved away from family years ago. Their typical day is primarily neutral emotions and one positive interaction (see figure 3).
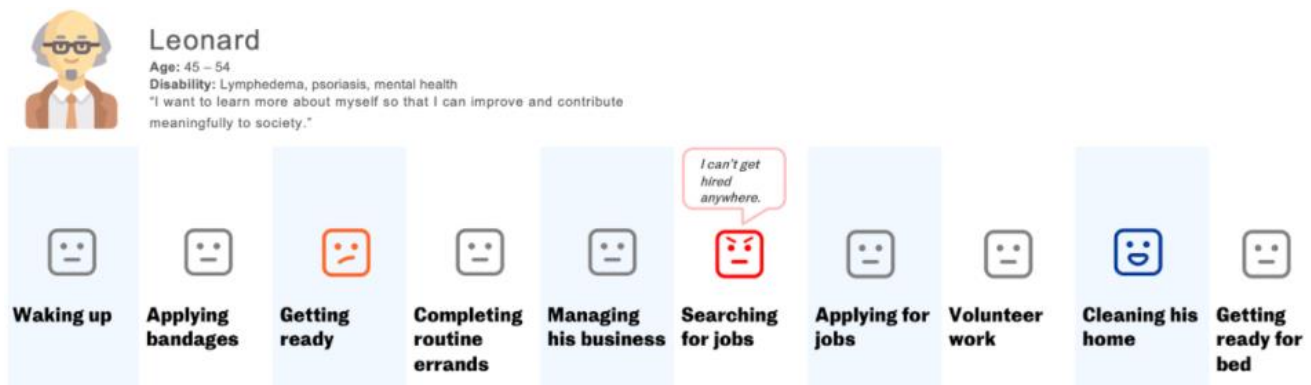
Figure 3: Emotional journey map of an average day in Leonard's life

In contrast, **Carrie** is an individual with a lower-leg amputation who has a large support system, which includes their husband, two kids and close colleagues. They have six positive moments in their day, with one neutral and only one negative experience (see figure 4).
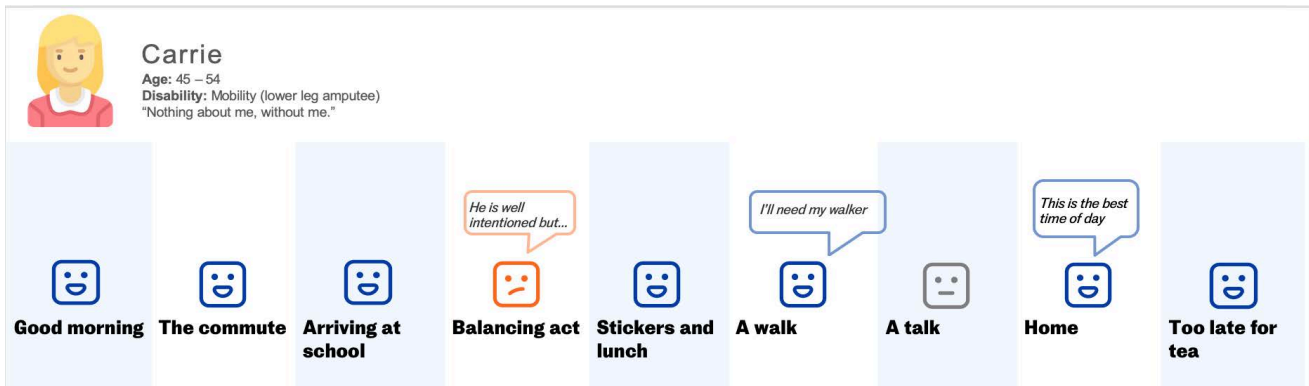

Figure 4: Emotional journey map of an average day in Carrie's life

Lorenzo is an unemployed individual with a physical disability that is surrounded by their support networks. They live in a duplex with their wife. Friends own the apartment above and they are part of a large and supportive community. Their day (see figure 5) has more positive and less negative emotions than their unemployed counterparts.

Figure 5: Emotional journey map of an average day in Lorenzo's life

These examples demonstrate how individual support systems can drastically impact emotional wellbeing, which has lasting impressions in other parts of life.[46] An SME in the field of youth employment for persons with disabilities emphasizes the need for these social networks, stating; "support networks at home and responsibilities at home are prerequisites to understanding how to perform and interact in the workplace. [...] It's important to understand how these factors affect adulthood employment". An SME in the field of accessibility technology agrees; "without social networks one can become isolated very quickly". Isolation can adversely impact both the emotional and physical well-being of the individual. Support networks further help individuals who are looking for employment by acting as a centralized source of information. They help in providing emotional, physical and financial assistance. Most importantly, these support networks often lead to a person's first job - an important asset to join the workforce.

Another challenge that was frequently raised by participants is the shift in support available following diagnosis or development of a disability (ex. after surgery or an amputation). In these cases, people who have acquired a disability may be perceived differently by their network and need to find new support systems, or be left without one. For example, Heather, an individual with

endometriosis, shared that their family was not supportive throughout medical diagnosis of their physical and mental disabilities; "my dad used to be my number 1 supporter. But after he passed away, my support networks changed and I lost support from those who discredited my disabilities. My family isn't very supportive because they are very traditional and so they don't understand. I've found new support networks with those I volunteer with as we have more in common". Carrie also saw a change in their networks; "since my surgery, I've changed my network of friends. They're mostly people I've met through volunteering who have been through similar life experiences as me. I feel that I've lost my old friend network because they feared my disability would make them take care of me more. That's not the case. I have my husband and son who are very supportive and help taking care of things. Since the surgery, my husband has really stepped up". These examples illustrate that stigma can exist both within and outside the networks of persons with disabilities.

Independence vs social isolation

Each individual and type of disability is unique and will require different levels and forms of support. A PSW may support people with mobility impairments to assist with daily tasks including morning hygiene routines, getting dressed and making food. This support reduces mobility limitations and isolation which can improve mood.

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[46] The Conference Board of Canada, 'Exploring disabilities in Canada'.

Some research participants stated that they rely solely on their PSW or other support networks in order to be independent. For Pratulya, this means only taking a shower or making food with their PSW present, limiting decision-making ability and freedom. While having a PSW can increase an individual's independence and opportunities for social interaction, it can also make them dependent on the PSW. Consequently, if the PSW cancels or misses their shift, the person with a disability loses control of their day and falls into social isolation. This can further create issues for those who are employed as they are unable to get ready for their day (get dressed, shower, brush teeth, etc.) which prevents them from being able to get to work. This is a serious pain point for many individuals and increases frustration as their independence decreases. An SME in the field of advocacy for persons with disabilities stresses the importance of social interaction; "you can't underestimate the need for social interaction for persons with disabilities. They need to interact with They need to interact with others -you don't want them to get stuck at home.... [they'll] get depressed. You can't underestimate how isolated persons with disabilities can get".

Even beyond those with mobility issues, independence is important to many persons with disabilities. Having a strong support network and gaining responsibility helps people feel empowered, autonomous and confident. An SME in the field of employment for persons with disabilities

explains; "my younger brother has autism. He faced barriers created by environments, misconceptions and lack of empathy. When he started becoming more independent, it gave him pride to do things on his own. He was empowered and gained autonomy and freedom".

Mentorship and professional networks

Entering the workforce can be a scary and overwhelming time, which is especially true for young persons with disabilities. The transition from student to worker leaves a lot of uncertainty. The CIBC consumer market research panel survey asked students about their biggest anticipated challenges when entering the workforce. 60% cited difficulties in finding work that matches their education and/or past experience. Many youths want to find meaningful employment following their studies but are simply unsure how. In 2017, there were over 83,000 youths with disabilities that were neither in school nor employment and had the potential to work.[47] This demonstrates a large struggle in the transition from education to employment for persons with disabilities. An SME in the field of employment for persons with disabilities explains: "the education system focuses on checking boxes, respite and repair, rather than preparing for post-graduation. [We need to be] preparing parents and caregivers to support transitioning those with disabilities after

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[47] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

school. We need more education and awareness in this need. We need to identify areas of interest, strengths and areas for success".

Many individuals rely on family members, friends and other support systems to help them transition from education to the workplace. Not everyone has the right support systems in place to aid them in this transition. In fact, 28% of CIBC consumer market research panel survey respondents cited not having access to support systems as a barrier. This challenge was more prevalent for those with pain-related (80%) and mobility/dexterity (50%) disabilities. Coaching can be essential to persons with disabilities for a smooth transition into the workforce. A coach may help with learning adaptive interview styles, providing individualized training materials, understanding social norms in the workplace and strengthening support networks. Coaches can also facilitate introductions to employers and support with disclosing disabilities to the employer, removing stress and anxiety from the person with a disability. An SME in the field of youth employment for persons with disabilities explains the necessity and advantages of coaching: "young persons with disabilities have had some limitations on their experiences, which puts them at an earlier development stage than their peers and so they require some additional time and coaching to make the transition into the

workforce. Without coaching, some youth with disabilities feel discouraged". Although many organizations help individuals find jobs, few offer support to help them stay employed once they are placed. This is an unknown for many persons with disabilities, as they are unaware of how to navigate the workforce once employed. An SME in the field of advocacy for persons with disabilities supports this argument, by emphasizing the need for mentorship throughout the transition; "they need to learn how to say things to their potential employer, understand job postings and if the job is [a right fit], understand what professionalism looks like, know how to negotiate salary, ask for time off etc.".

Further, these experts stress the importance of building trust in manager-employee relationships. Having a workplace champion and/or mentor can have many benefits to persons with disabilities; providing encouragement and empowerment, facilitating cultural change in the organization, helping them feel welcome in the workplace and assisting with personal and professional development. Although social networks provide some support with entering and navigating the workforce, access to a professional network increases opportunity, accelerates growth in status and self-confidence and helps develop long-lasting relationships, which are essential for persons with disabilities.[48]

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[48] Cole, '10 reasons why networking is essential for your career' (2019).

Access to technology

Computers and smartphones

In today's digital age, the majority of workplaces are dependent on devices such as personal computers and smartphones to perform work. Thus, the technology a person has access to impacts their ability to complete daily tasks. Some individuals do not have the financial means to acquire personal devices, as previously discussed in the government funding section. According to Statistics Canada, persons with disabilities between 25 and 64 years old with more severe disabilities (28%) were more likely to be living in poverty than those without or with milder disabilities.[49] Among that age group, single parents and people who lived alone were the most likely to be living in poverty (among all household living arrangements).[50] The risk of living in poverty disproportionately affects women, accounting for 80% of single parents.[51] Among persons with disabilities aged 15 and older living in poverty, 38% reported an unmet accommodation need due to cost, with 41% of women having unmet needs due to cost compared to 33% of men.[52] The proportion of persons with disabilities living in poverty is of great concern, as they have limited financial means to access the technologies they require to work.

Camilla, an individual with an undisclosed disability, shared that they commute to the library to use the public computers, as they cannot afford their own. Being in a public space to access this technology makes Camilla uncomfortable and frustrated. They fear discriminatory harassment and move around the library to find a space that feels safe and private. For those who have access to personal computing devices, other challenges arise. An SME in the field of advocacy for persons with disabilities shared that people who work from home can struggle to work effectively if their technology is out of date. As such, old technologies can impede one's capacity to work productively, requiring people to choose publicly available resources (ex. computers in public libraries). For those who have access to the appropriate resources, advantages are contingent on understanding how to use technology independently. Those with inadequate computer skills may not complete technology-oriented tasks effectively. For those who need to work from home to accommodate their disability,

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[49] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

[50] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

[51] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

[52] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

the implications of using and accessing technology present significant challenges.

Internet access

Without internet access, even the availability of appropriate technology is unlikely to facilitate productive remote work. Like computers and smartphones, internet access can be costly. Those who cannot afford to pay for internet access often resort to public spaces where they can use free Wi-Fi. Harmony, an ethnographic research participant, works from the McDonalds near their home for eight hours every day, as the internet is free to use. They often feel discomfort when sensing other guests judging their appearance, but they do not let that take away from their work. An SME in the field of advocacy for persons with disabilities noted that in addition to the cost of internet access, the physical location of work can also impede one's ability to use the internet. "If you aren't in a major urban centre, slow internet speed will not support you working from home regularly." Slow internet can cause emotional and physical stress for people who depend on working remotely to accommodate their disability. This is even more true if these obstacles force people to go outside of their homes to work.

Internet access affects the extent to which one can have an online presence. A subject-matter expert in the field of Human Resources, focused on recruitment, shared that many persons with disabilities are not using professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn. These platforms can play a part in adding value and credibility to a candidate. Moreover, they can provide a network that supports individuals in accessing career opportunities. The Society for Human Resource Management found that 90% of recruiters regularly use Linkedin.[53] They also found that new employees sourced through LinkedIn are 40% less likely to leave the company within the first 6 months.[54] Additionally, hires that are influenced by LinkedIn are twice as likely to be above average hires and in high demand.[55] Those without internet access and a professional online presence may be at a disadvantage when searching for employment, as recruiters will not be able to seek them out or identify them.

Assistive technology

A subject-matter expert in the field of accessible technology noted that the benefits of technology and internet access only emerge when they meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Assistive technologies are expensive, on top of

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[53] Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 'Social networking websites and recruiting/ selection' (2013).

[54] Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 'Social networking websites and recruiting/ selection'.

[55] LinkedIn Talent Solutions, 'The ultimate list of hiring statistics for hiring managers, HR professionals, and recruiters' (n.d.).

technology (computer, tablet, smartphone, etc.) that may already be unaffordable. According to said SME, a single screen-reader license can cost $1,200 and transitioning to a video conferencing tool with audio-to-text technology can cost between $800-900 per year. The cost of assistive technology is sometimes absorbed by employers, but it often falls to the individual. A lack of assistive technologies can stop persons with disabilities from feeling empowered and confident, as they are prevented from performing tasks to the best of their ability. An SME in the field of employment for persons with disabilities further emphasized that assistive technologies give the freedom to choose how and when they engage with the world. They described that their brother, who is autistic, takes pride in being able to perform tasks on their own. The extent to which one feels comfortable and empowered to operate independently depends on having access to the right technologies to carry out desired tasks.

Recruitment process

Structural challenges

The recruitment and job application process are a hurdle for many persons with disabilities. 60% of SMEs and 67% of ethnographic participants cited structural challenges as being a significant barrier to finding meaningful employment. Each phase of the recruitment process comes with its own set of barriers, from the job posting through to the interview process. The CIBC consumer market research panel survey asked respondents what challenges they typically face when finding a new job, role, or promotion. Many cited various structural challenges as a barrier (see table 1). These structural challenges include: the stress associated with the application process (understanding job descriptions) and discrimination and prejudice in the job application process.

Table 1: Current challenges respondents are facing when finding a new job, new role or promotion.

Challenges	Total	Pain related	Mobility/ dexterity	Mental health	Vision	Hearing	other
Difficulties finding meaningful employment	**51%**	56%	62%	6%	65%	5%	52%
Discrimination & prejudice in the job application process	**22%**	25%	38%	23%	35%	28%	2%
Discrimination & prejudice during the interview process	**21%**	22%	42%	22%	18%	22%	2%
Challenges getting to interviews	**2%**	19%	15%	2%	29%	22%	32%
Finding an accommodating workplace culture	**3%**	44%	46%	35%	53%	44%	28%
Fear of disclosing my disability	**24%**	41%	42%	27%	47%	33%	2%
Finding an employer with appropriate technology / resources for you to excel in your role	**16%**	16%	27%	1%	35%	22%	2%
Having access to support systems and networks	**16%**	16%	31%	15%	29%	17%	16%
Stress associated with the application process	**4%**	47%	46%	52%	53%	33%	48%
Organizations or workplaces following government accessibility guidelines/regulations	**9%**	13%	23%	7%	18%	6%	8%
Other	**9%**	9%	15%	5%	6%	11%	4%
None of the above	**17%**	16%	12%	1%	12%	22%	16%

Source: CIBC Market Research, Workplace Disability Research, 2020

Job descriptions often include jargon and vague responsibilities, making it difficult for individuals to understand if they are a strong candidate for a specific role. This is not only specific to persons with disabilities, but to all candidates looking for employment. Furthermore, the use of ableist words, or words that discriminate in favour of persons without disabilities, can discourage qualified people from applying. Amber, a research participant who has had their extremities amputated, noted that many job descriptions include a requirement for "ergonomic capabilities". From their perspective, this is a skillset that many assume only able-bodied individuals are capable of. Amber has been told they were not a good fit. Without fingers, it is believed that they would be unable to type on a computer. In fact, Amber described that individuals with finger and hand amputations can adapt to keyboards, typing with one hand, using their thumbs and stubs and leveraging speech-to-text technology. Other examples of ableism in job descriptions include words such as; physically able to perform, good manual dexterity, ability to walk, sit, or stand for long periods of time, etc. While many employers use templates to create job descriptions, these words can put off potential qualified candidates.

Similarly, an SME in the public sector has found that job ads create systematic barriers for individuals;

The Law Society of Ontario has been teaching the need to simplify and move to a grade 8 reading level. There is a large need to simplify language. This is something that is prevalent in all industries. When you look at job ads there are a lot of superfluous job details, there are often requirements which border on discrimination – lots are not occupational requirements.[56]

In addition, online job postings themselves may sometimes not be accessible, especially to those with vision impairments. In February of 2020, WebAIM conducted an accessibility evaluation of the top 1,000,000 websites. The company found that 98% of home pages had detectable failures of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).[57] WCAG is a set of international web accessibility standards set in place in order to increase online accessibility.[58] These failures were mostly due to low contrast text (86.3%) and missing alternative text for images (66%).[59] Of the websites tested, 4,283 were career sites, which saw an average of 55.8% detectable failures per

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[56] For more on plain language in legal writing and its benefits, see The Canadian Bar Association article or the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General article

[57] WebAIM, 'The WebAIM Million: an annual accessibility analysis of the top 1,000,000 home pages' (2020).

[58] WebAIM, 'The WebAIM Million'.

[59] WebAIM, 'The WebAIM Million'.

page.[60] These failures make it difficult to read online job postings, and further exclude persons with disabilities from finding meaningful employment.

Resume structures also pose issues. Many persons with disabilities have large gaps in their resume due to accidents, surgeries, short- and long-term disability leaves, rehabilitation, etc. The way resumes are typically structured focuses on credentials and experience, without leaving space to elaborate or explain one's story. These gaps create uncertainty and skepticism for hiring managers and human resources when reviewing an application. As a result, persons with disabilities struggle to pass the pre-screening phase. An SME in the field of recruitment and human resources further explained that internal pressures have normalized recruiters spending 5-10 seconds per resume. This short skim of the resume can lead to preconceived notions and bias regarding a candidate's abilities.

For persons with disabilities who pass the initial screening, the interview phase is another challenge. In the CIBC consumer market research panel survey, 21% of participants cited discrimination and prejudice during the interview process as a barrier to finding a new job, role, or promotion. This was especially challenging for those with a mobility or dexterity disability, with almost half (42%) facing said challenge. In-person interviews pose barriers for those with mobility/dexterity disabilities. The recent increase of screening

candidates via phone and video also poses problems for those with developmental impairments, hearing or memory loss. An SME in the field of workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities examines issues of disability accommodation in the workplace. She explains; "interviews, in-person and over the phone, are not conducive to persons with disabilities" as not all candidates excel in this type of environment (especially for people on the autism spectrum or with learning disabilities) and it can introduce conscious or unconscious biases. Furthermore, in-person interviews require the candidate to travel to a specific location, which adds another barrier to those with mobility impairments, while over the phone interviews poses issues for those with hearing impairments. Another SME in the field of employment for persons with disabilities further explains; "studies show that unstructured interviews are poor tools for predicting positive outcomes in employment". This style of interview often does not allow participants to properly demonstrate their skills. Instead, they suggest structured alternative methods, such as observational, competency-based, or behavioural interviews. Observational interviews allow the employer to gain insights into the way in which a candidate would carry out various job functions. Competency-based and behaviour interviews focus on the candidate's behavior,

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[60] WebAIM, 'The WebAIM Million'.

knowledge, skill and ability.[61] Most participants in this research believe that there are barriers throughout the recruitment process for persons with disabilities. A change to the existing system is required to remove these barriers. Some corporations are advocating for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Yet these same corporations have barriers for those with disabilities at every stage of their hiring processes.

Overqualification

3 out of 4 participants (75%) of the ethnographic research participants believed that they are overqualified for their current (or past, if currently unemployed) role. Largely, this is tied to their disability. These individuals believe that they have more to offer to their organizations than they do currently. Many of these individuals believe that they are unable to obtain a job that uses their skill sets due to a lack of skill recognition and disability-based stigma. For the same reasons, persons with disabilities are typically overlooked for career advancements. Furthermore, 84% of the research participants have applied for a position they knew they were overqualified for. From the perspective of these individuals, this is due to their preference to be underemployed than unemployed.

Silvia is an individual with lived experience who holds an MBA and currently works part-time as a crossing guard. They explain;

"while I recognize that I could be doing a far higher skilled job, I have been unemployed long enough that I see this as a last resort. I need this job to pay my bills and to feed myself. I used to think that applying to these types of roles was demoralizing, but I have now accepted that I have to do this current job for survival - it's only temporary after all". Many persons with disabilities are left to decide between applying for a job that they are overqualified for, or relying on ODSP, a program that offers financial aid to those living with a disability. Both options have negative consequences for their self-esteem. In spite of being overqualified, persons with disabilities are often overlooked for open roles. Participants believe that this is due in part to the interviewer assuming they lack ambition or would get bored in the position, and to the perception that entry-level jobs are 'reserved' for younger candidates. It is demoralizing for a person with a disability not to get a position that they feel they are overqualified for. The overqualified candidates rarely hear back from these positions, which leaves them confused about the job process and unaware of how to proceed. When asked about the worst part of the job application process, 80% of the unemployed participants cited the lack of feedback throughout the hiring process. This gap in information restricts their ability for self-improvement and can lead to mental-

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[61] Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 'Behavioural interview guide: Early career job candidates' (2016).

health related challenges, impacting self-esteem.

Workplace disclosure

Disclosure of disability

When filling out an application, going to an interview, or preparing for the first day of a new job, persons with disabilities need to decide whether or not to disclose their disability. According to the CIBC consumer market research panel survey, only 51% of survey respondents feel comfortable disclosing their disability. Furthermore, when asked "what are the challenges you are facing finding a job / new role or promotion?" 24% of respondents cited fear of disclosing their disability. The fear of disclosing is common among persons with disabilities as it carries a potential for discrimination and dismissal, which has been experienced by many. In fact, a 2003 University of Massachusetts Medical School study found that 35% of those who disclosed their disability in the workplace, regretted the disclosure. This leaves many persons with disabilities to weigh the benefits and risks of disclosing during the recruitment process. While disclosing a disability can help to ensure the necessary accommodations are received during recruitment and while on the job, past experiences and recommendations from others can persuade persons with disabilities to not disclose. Non-disclosure can be seen by a person with a disability as a good idea in the short-term, as it permits them to be hired and/or retain employment.   However, non-disclosure has long-term negative drawbacks; "an ongoing lack of accommodation means individuals may be identified as problem workers and subsequently dismissed. Other costs include the impact on people's health and well-being, both in terms of potential physical harm and the stress and anxiety associated with nondisclosure".   As many SMEs pointed out, it is difficult to determine if and when a disability should be disclosed in the recruitment process. An expert in the field of recruitment and human resources explains; "We do not ask people to disclose if they have a disability, as [our organization] is still trying to understand where we stand on this issue. While asking to disclose can help some, it can hurt others due to stigma and biases. It's hard to say where it should be included since there are so many pros and cons of disclosing".

Discrimination

Disclosure discrimination occurs in every phase of the recruitment process, from the application to the interview to the first day

on the job. This acts as a particular barrier during the interview phase, as stated by a subject-matter expert in the field of advocacy for persons with disabilities; "people feel that they are discriminated against and turned away… If they show up for an interview [without disclosing disability] people complain they never get past the first impression". Some participants disclose their disability to "move up the list" of applicants, but others have experienced repercussions upon disclosing. In some cases, disclosing a disability is believed to cause screening out of potential candidates and wrongful terminations. Silvia and Heather both have pain-related disabilities. Both participants recalled their support workers from an employment organization for persons with disabilities advising them to avoid disclosing their disability in the workplace whenever possible. Heather's disability has caused gaps in their resume, which many hiring managers consider to be problematic.

In contrast, Lorenzo, who has a physical disability, is content to disclose. Lorenzo sees disclosure of their disability as an advantage when looking for jobs, as organizations are increasing their diversity hiring through the inclusion of persons with disabilities. As discussed earlier, when asked if they felt safe disclosing their disability to a potential employer, less than half of participants said yes. All respondents who said yes have a visible physical impairment (the participants either had a cane, walker, wheelchair, braces, or prosthesis), while those who did not feel comfortable disclosing their disability or said that they felt comfortable sometimes disclosing their disability did not have a visible disability (pain-related, developmental and undisclosed). This could be the result of a perceived 'hierarchy of disabilities' or due to the more challenging nature of hiding a visible disability. Lorenzo explains; "as someone with a visible disability, I don't really have the option not to". An invisible disability can be defined as "an umbrella term that captures a whole spectrum of hidden disabilities or challenges… Invisible disability, or hidden disability, are defined as disabilities that are not immediately apparent [to others]".[62] If common practice is for people with an invisible disability not to disclose, additional challenges can arise for this group during the application process. These include gaps in a resume and being seen as overqualified, which limit advancement in the recruitment process.

Feeling 'welcomed' in the workplace

In order to truly succeed in the workplace, an individual must be willing to bring their whole selves to work.[63] This is true for everyone, but especially for persons with disabilities. Mike Robbins, author of 'Bring your whole self to work', explains that this can expand an individual's impact, performance, influence and successes at

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[62] Disabled World, 'Invisible disabilities: List and general information' (2019), para 3.

[63] Robbins, 'How to bring your whole self to work' (2019).

work.[64] It can also bring greater happiness, job satisfaction and workplace relationships, increasing productivity and workplace retention.[65] Bringing your whole self means "showing up authentically, leading with humility, and remembering that we're all vulnerable, imperfect human beings doing the best that we can. It's also about … [connecting] with others in a genuine way, allowing ourselves to be seen".[66] However, this ability depends on the people you work with and the workplace environment. Having a workplace where an individual feels welcomed is conducive to people being themselves, bringing their whole selves to work and feeling comfortable disclosing their disability.[67]

As demonstrated in table 2, the disclosure of a disability can be challenging for many. As previously discussed, 51% of respondents feel comfortable disclosing their disability to their employer. Of those, people with mobility and hearing disabilities were more likely to feel comfortable disclosing their disability than those with, pain-related and mental health disabilities. Similarly, half of the ethnographic research participants agree that they feel comfortable bringing their whole self to the workplace. Of those 6 participants, 5 have visible disabilities. Among the 6 who do not agree, 5 have invisible disabilities. This shows that those with visible disabilities are more likely to feel that they can bring their whole self to work.

Sonia, who has a pain-related disability, explains that this is partly due to stigma and potential impediments to workplace advancement; "I don't want pain on my file as it may affect me getting shifts in the future". Similarly, Camilla generally refrains from disclosing their disability; "there is no advantage to disclose at any point as the wrong assumptions are made about my ability, efficiency and value". Those with non-visible disabilities can have a hard time seeing the benefits of disclosing and bringing their whole self to work. "I try not to disclose my disability unless I absolutely have to. I will only tell my coworkers if I feel that they are open-minded and receptive… I've been burned in the past" (Leonard, an individual with lived experience). Although it may be difficult for a person with a disability to bring their whole self to work, disclosing their disability has many advantages. Some of these include educating others on disabilities to decrease stigma and discrimination, pushing employers to improve their understanding of workplace accommodations and removing negative assumptions made by peers. As an example, Pratulya mentioned that due to their MS and the incontinence associated with it, they must take multiple bathroom breaks per day. This has given the perception of being unmotivated, less productive than others and preferring to 'play around' than do work. For these reasons, Pratulya believes

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[64] Robbins, 'How to bring your whole self to work'.

[65] Robbins, 'How to bring your whole self to work'.

[66] Robbins, 'How to bring your whole self to work', para 2.

[67] Robbins, 'How to bring your whole self to work'.

that they have been deemed a bad employee and overlooked for promotions and career advancement.

Table 2: Percentage of respondents who agree with feeling comfortable to disclosing their disability, by segment.

Comfort Disclosing Disability by Segment							
NET Agree vs. Total (Strongly / Somewhat)	Total	Disability Type					
		Pain-related	Mobility / Dexterity	Mental Health	Vision	Hearing	Other
I feel comfortable disclosing my disability to my peers	58%	-3%	+9%	-9%	+7%	+10%	-5%
I feel comfortable disclosing my disability to my employer	51%	0%	+10%	-9%	+2%	+15%	-4%
I believe that my disability brings some benefit to myself or my employer	22%	0%	-2%	+1%	0%	0%	+5%
Base: n=	292	92	90	186	70	76	91

Source: adapted from CIBC Market Research, Workplace Disability Research, 2020

Physical environments

Infrastructure

55% of employed research participants said that their workplace was not accessible to their needs. This includes a lack of power door operators, activation switches located too far from doors, tight layouts and a lack of elevators, among others. Simply put, Canadian organizations are not appropriately set up for persons with disabilities. This circumstance is largely due to the historical lack of enforcement in infrastructure to support government policies. Although the AODA sets accessibility standards, building accessibility is governed by the Ontario Building Code. "The Building Code does not require organizations to retrofit existing buildings when no renovations are planned. Under the Building Code, barrier-free design requirements must be included when a new building is constructed, when an existing building undergoes an extensive renovation, or when a building is renovated because of a change to how the building is used. Otherwise, under Ontario's Building Code, it is grandfathered".[68] In other words, existing buildings do not need to be made physically accessible. This results in barriers for persons with disabilities, as many workplaces cannot accommodate their accessibility needs. In some instances, the preservation of heritage buildings limits the ability to make accessibility-related alterations. Those who work in inaccessible workplaces do not have access to certain parts of the building, limiting opportunities and personal freedom.

Furthermore, as noted by an SME in the field of accessible infrastructure, some disabilities require competing accommodations. For example, a large open space is helpful for those with mobility limitations as it provides more room to circulate. However, large open spaces create problems for those with visual impairments, as echoes and acoustics can cause confusion. In order to rectify the issue, organizations place installments like sculptures or fountains to reduce these echoes. While this helps those with visual impairments, they constrain the physical space, adding barriers for those with mobility limitations.

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[68] Accessibility Services Canada. 'AODA questions & answers' (2020), para 18.

Do you receive your workplace accommodation?

- ■ Yes
- ■ Some
- ■ No
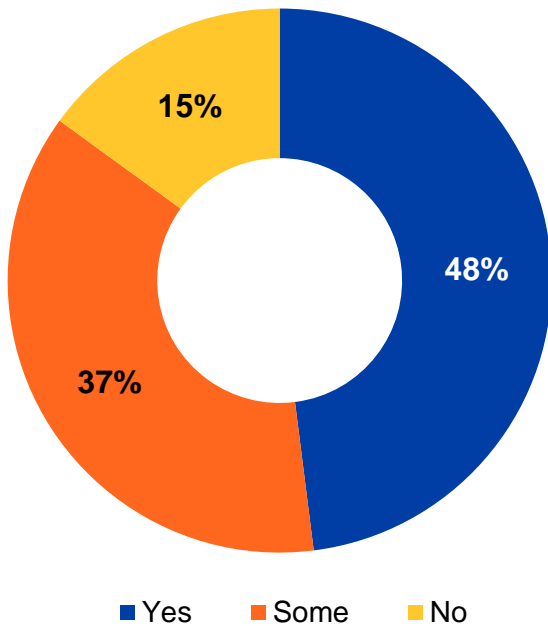
Figure 8: Percentage of individuals who are receiving workplace accommodations when they have requested them to their employer. Source: CIBC Workplace Disability Research survey.

An SME in Human Resources reminds us that there are workplace accommodations that go beyond physical space. For example, for an interview, who should hire the ASL translator? Is this the organization's responsibility, or does the onus fall on the individual? The same questions apply to speech-to-text technology or screen reader software. Employment Standards under the AODA state that employers are responsible for making the hiring process accessible to applicants and candidates with disabilities.[69] This makes the organization responsible for

How would you rate your employer at meeting your needs?

- ■ very good
- ■ good
- ■ average
- ■ poor
- ■ very poor
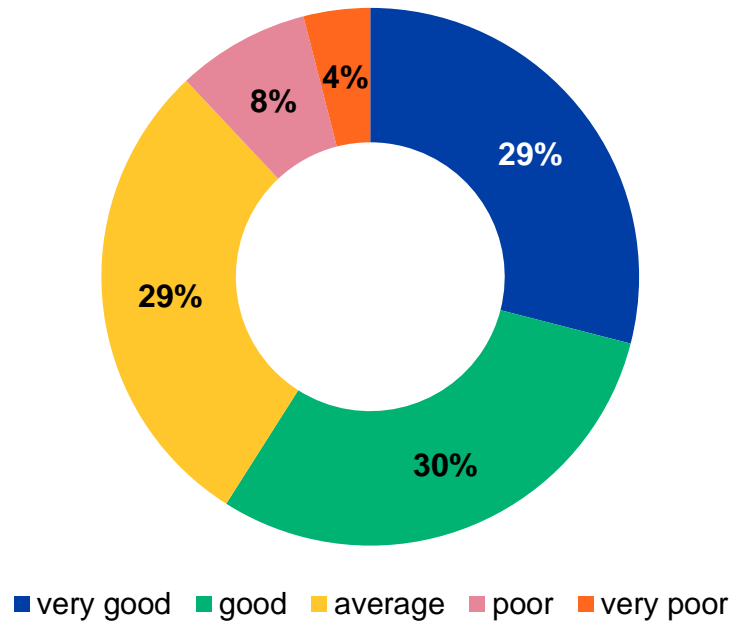
Figure 9: Rate of employers at meeting workplace accommodation needs. Source: CIBC Workplace Disability Research survey.

these costs. However, many HR departments and hiring managers are unaware of how to proceed in these instances (see Structural limitations). As a result, organizations may choose to focus on other candidates. According to CIBC's consumer market research panel survey, about 1 in 4 respondents (27%) require workplace accommodations. Of those who require accommodations, less than half (48%) are receiving the appropriate workplace accommodations from their employer (see figure 8). 59% rate their workplace accommodations as being net

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[69] Accessibility Services Canada. 'AODA Questions & Answers'.

good at meeting their needs (see figure 9). There is an opportunity for employers to do a better job at meeting accommodation needs.

Workplace structure

Institutional structures

When speaking with the research participants, many mentioned human resources representatives as being a barrier in the workplace. As will be discussed below, the return to work process following leave can be a difficult experience. While workplace absence can happen for several reasons, disability leaves are one of the most common across Canada.[70] "A long absence from work can have serious psychological, social and financial consequences for the employee. It can make him or her feel insecure and vulnerable which can lead to isolation, a diminished sense of dignity and reduced motivation. Often, returning to work has a therapeutic effect and can be a critical phase of the employee's recovery".[71] Some individuals are able to have a smooth transition back to work, but others find the process quite challenging. By Canadian standards, employers have a legal obligation to facilitate an accommodating return to work following an absence.[72] Amber, a

research participant with lived experience, explained how their transition back to work was a negative experience. "My biggest barrier when it comes to my job, is how I am treated by HR. They have made my experience back to work so painful... it has been very difficult." Amber's HR representative did not facilitate an accommodating return and had yet to implement the proper workplace accommodations to suit Amber's needs. This has left Amber feeling frustrated and unwelcome in their workplace following their long-term disability leave. Others mentioned that the lack of communication between their HR representative and supervisor(s) was a pain point. In Pratulya's case, their disability and required accommodations were not disclosed to their supervisor. They were reprimanded for taking multiple bathroom breaks and longer lunches - two important accommodations they need throughout their workday due to their MS. Disclosing a disability to multiple levels of management can be even more challenging than disclosing to an HR representative. This is necessary when a person with a disability is not supported by HR and can make an individual feel very uncomfortable in their workplace.

Another institutional structure that creates barriers for persons with disabilities is inflexibility in work arrangements. Some

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[70] Homewood Human Solutions, 'Supporting Employees in a Return to Work' (2014).

[71] Homewood Human Solutions, 'Supporting Employees in a Return to Work', 2.

[72] Homewood Human Solutions, 'Supporting Employees in a Return to Work'.

persons with disabilities require flexibility to take days off for medical reasons, which can create a challenge to maintaining employment. Although many organizations offer paid sick days and personal days, this is not standardized for all workers. Many persons with disabilities with part-time positions are not entitled to paid sick and personal days, requiring them to take unpaid time off for doctor's appointments or surgeries. In 2016, there were nearly 400,000 persons with disabilities working part time, which represents around 22% of persons with disabilities (compared to 13% of persons without disability working part-time).[73] In addition, there are also issues for persons with disabilities who work in unions. An SME in the field of workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities notes that working for a union has many benefits, such as health benefits, job security and consistent hours. However, unions are rigidly standardized across the organization, making it very difficult for persons with disabilities to receive flexible work hours, or alter their job descriptions to include accommodations. Flexible work hours are especially crucial to those with mobility impairments, as they depend on personal support workers to get ready in the mornings and they rely on Wheel-Trans or a similar service for transportation. As a subject-matter expert in advocacy for persons with disabilities explains, "it is notoriously difficult to keep up with a job and regular support as they can't reliably

show up at exactly the same time every day. Sometimes, the care doesn't show up at all, which means I can't physically get to work. Workplaces need to be more flexible with allowing different start times, or to work from home". Some organizations offer flexible start times but working from home is an uncommon privilege that hasn't become available to all workers. This inflexibility in office space restricts the individual to workplace infrastructure which may not be accommodating for all persons with disabilities. Some organizations have found ways of being more accommodating. As a subject-matter expert in the field of accessible technology mentioned; "companies that do it right [to be more accommodating] are the bigger tech companies, as they understand assistive technologies. Therefore, most persons with disabilities are typically employed at large organizations, such as big banks and tech startups".

The importance of the first job is an additional institutional structure that creates barriers for persons with disabilities. Entry-level roles, including working in retail or food service, are naturally more difficult for individuals with some types of disabilities. These jobs can sometimes be labour-intensive and demand polished communication skills. These requirements can be difficult for individuals with mobility impairments and developmental disabilities than for others. In addition, these jobs are

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[73] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

typically 'reserved' for younger people. Thus, it becomes difficult for older individuals to earn entry-level positions that may accommodate their needs better, or support individuals who are getting back into the workforce after short- or long-term disability leave.

Workplace culture and advancement

Persons with disabilities face many challenges finding a job and may experience similar barriers advancing internally. Career development, upskilling opportunities and promotions can be challenging for persons with disabilities. According to Statistics Canada, 2,212,490 persons with disabilities were employed in 2017, which represents almost 60% of adults aged 24 to 64 who have a disability. In 2011, persons with disabilities were mostly concentrated in sales, retail, personal and customer information services, administration and administrative support roles (see full breakdown in appendix G).[74]

Statistics Canada ties specific occupations to an individual's level of education. This limits the potential for persons with disabilities to attain certain jobs, as they are less likely to be university-educated. University graduates with or without a disability were more similar in their employment profiles; "in particular, university graduates with disabilities were just as likely as those without a disability to be employed in occupations typically requiring a university degree (or professional occupations).

Among university graduates with disabilities, 49% of men and 54% of women were employed in professional occupations. These percentages were the same among university graduates without a disability".[75] However, persons with disabilities who hold university degrees were less likely to hold a management position to their counterparts (see appendix H). This difference in seniority is directly tied to income, creating a clear inequity between those with and without disabilities. While there is a large discrepancy between the average income for male university graduates with and without disabilities, a woman with a disability is further marginalized. "Male university graduates with disabilities earned less than their non-disabled counterparts. Among men working on a full-year full-time basis, the average employment income was $69,200, compared with $92,700 among their non-disabled counterparts. Among women working full-year full time who had a university degree, employment income averaged $64,500 among those with disabilities, compared with $68,000 among those without a disability".[76]

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[74] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'. Note: Statistics Canada has labelled this information as "too unreliable to publish" and should be used with caution.

[75] Turcotte, 'Persons with disabilities and employment' (2014), para 4.

[76] Turcotte, 'Persons with disabilities and employment', para 4.

When asked about upskilling, only 13% of employed ethnographic research participants said their organization had provided them with any opportunities. The lack of upskilling is due to numerous reasons, but the most common reasons among our participants were perceived ability of their skillset and lack of available opportunities in their workplace. **None** of the employed participants said they had any opportunities for a promotion. Jimmy, an individual with lived experience, recounts their past advancement opportunities; "I've never really been given any type of promotional opportunity. If I wanted a promotion, then I typically had to search for an opportunity elsewhere. You have to leave the company to make any lateral moves". Similarly, none of the employed participants had career growth opportunities or believed that their organization is dedicated to their professional development. A lack of career growth opportunities was also commonly found among CIBC's consumer market research panel survey respondents. According to their findings, 21% of employed participants cited limited access to career growth opportunities as a challenge in their current workplace (see figure 10). This was the most common workplace barrier for those living with all disabilities, excluding mental health (see appendix I). Carrie, a principal at an elementary school in the GTA, explains how they were overlooked for promotions following their limb amputation; "I am qualified to be a superintendent and was on track to become one before the surgery. But once I came back to work, I was no longer advanced in the placement process". Other notable challenges that employed persons with disabilities faced in the workplace included fear of disclosing disabilities, insensitive workplace culture, access to mental-health related supports and discrimination and prejudice.

Figure 10: Common challenges faced in the workplace due to respondent's disability.
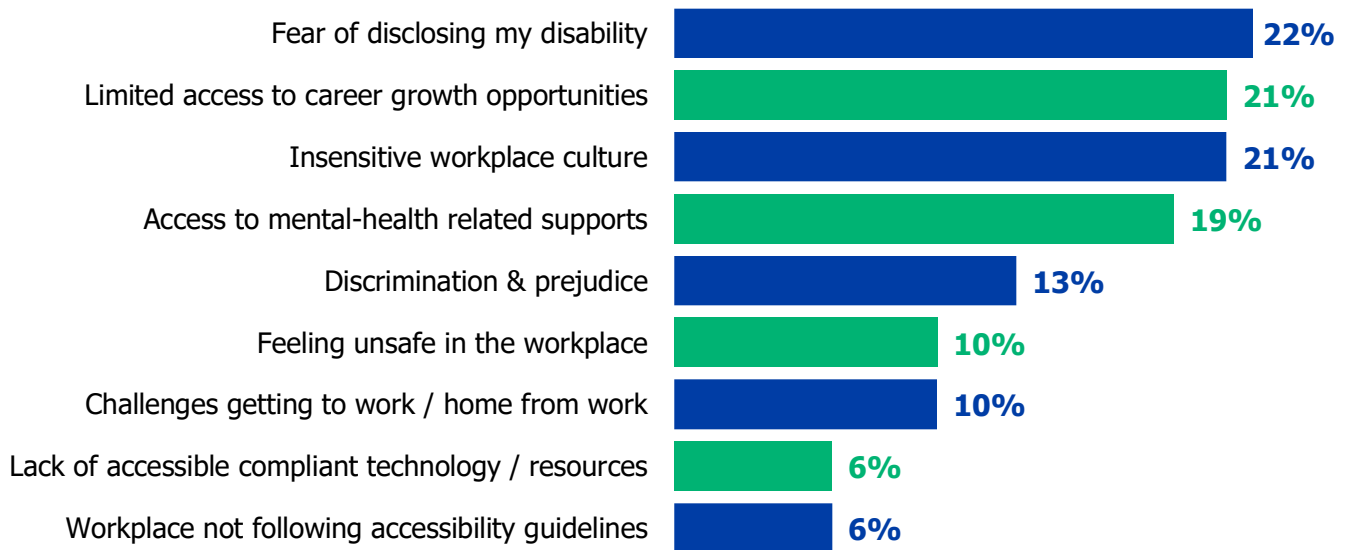
Challenge	Percentage
Fear of disclosing my disability	22%
Limited access to career growth opportunities	21%
Insensitive workplace culture	21%
Access to mental-health related supports	19%
Discrimination & prejudice	13%
Feeling unsafe in the workplace	10%
Challenges getting to work / home from work	10%
Lack of accessible compliant technology / resources	6%
Workplace not following accessibility guidelines	6%

This issue is also tied to the perceived abilities of persons with disabilities and existing organizational cultures. A subject-matter expert with lived experience highlights the lack of persons with disabilities, especially in the deaf community. Many teachers do not know American Sign Language (ASL), impacting the learning of deaf children and making it harder for them to gain the appropriate skills to be job-ready. This makes them less desirable for employers. As a result, they are more frequently placed in part-time positions, making advancement in the workplace more difficult. This expert explains; "if you look at employment rates, more people are getting work at entry-level but not higher-level [management positions]". The lack of full-time opportunities for persons with disabilities was reiterated by the majority of SMEs. Those who receive opportunities for upskilling, career growth and career advancement typically have a workplace champion. These workplace champions catalyze culture change by helping the person with a disability feel more welcomed and will advocate for the individual to get the recognition they deserve. Heather, an individual with endometriosis, explains how their workplace champion had an impact on their work;

I was paired with a partner who was my 'mental health champion'. They were a huge supporter of the needs of those with disabilities and helped me advocate for workplace flexibility. I helped create and roll-out a new standard for workplace flexibility, which was previously just a privilege for senior executives. I feel immense reward for making [the organization] more accessible to those with disabilities and for changing people's perspectives at the firm regarding mental and physical health. Being able to work from home increased my productivity and removed many barriers for myself.

Evidence from Statistics Canada further supports the frequency of part-time work among persons with disabilities, as trends emerge from the Canadian Survey on Disability. As shown in table 3, persons with disabilities have a higher probability of working part-time than their persons without disability counterparts. In fact, the percentage of persons with disabilities holding full-time employment is significantly lower than persons without disabilities.[77] The severity[78] of the disability and the

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[77] Morris et al., 'Demographic, employment and income profile'.

[78] A global severity score was developed by Statistics Canada for the Canadian Survey on

gender of the individual also negatively impact the likelihood of having a full-time position. 25% of men and 30% of women with severe disabilities are part-time workers, which is much higher than the 8% of men and 19% of women without disabilities.

Table 3: Employment of Canadian population aged 25 to 64 years, by hours worked, disability status, severity and sex, 2016.

| Hours worked | Persons without disabilities | | Persons with disabilities | | | |
| | | | Milder | | More severe | |
	number #	percent %	number #	percent %	number #	percent %
Women						
Part-time	1,015,900	18.8	175,390	22.8	84,610	29.1
Full-time	4,374,820	81.2	595,500	77.2	205,840	70.9
More than 50 hours	249,960	4.6	35,110	4.6	13,810[E]	4.8[E]
Men						
Part-time	457,000	7.5	80,510	10.8	54,340	25.1
Full-time	5,625,570	92.5	665,580	89.2	162,560	74.9
More than 50 hours	708,890	11.7	85,470	11.5	19,110[E]	8.8[E]

[E] use with caution. **Source:** Morris et al., Demographic, Employment and Income Profile.

The Canadian government has introduced various financial incentives to increase diversity in the workplace, recognizing that an "inclusive workplace is good for business".[79] However, diversity does not always constitute inclusion. The disability community argues the push for diversity in the workplace can create tokenism. Some organizations hire persons with disabilities to appear diverse, without considering inclusion, career growth or advancement for the individual. Camilla, an individual with an undisclosed disability who has experienced tokenism in the past, expresses their frustration with this issue; "they plug in individuals with disabilities in departments just to tick a box and don't think about how to grow that talent". This common practice is "naive, misguided and truly dangerous because there are real risks associated with focusing primarily

Disability, for more information see Statistics Canada's definition of the severity score.

[79] Government of Canada, 'Hiring persons with disabilities' (2020).

on diversity and largely ignoring inclusion".[80] According to Dana Brownlee, a workplace culture specialist, a lack of inclusion inhibits psychological safety, creates a false sense of security, misses an opportunity for enhanced business performance and risks creating the perception of tokenism.[81] Tokenism can create a "negative boomerang effect"[82]   as underrepresented individuals realize that they do not hold the same influence as their counterparts and continue to feel like an outsider. There must be a change in mindset and a significant commitment to achieving diversity and inclusion in the workplace.[83]

Appropriate clothing

Fashion

Figure 6:
Dundas Stretch Crisp White Shirt with Magnetic Closures
$195.00
Source: IZadaptive.com

Having the right clothing for an interview can provide significant advantages for the interviewee. It can boost one's mood and increase self-esteem by helping a person feel more confident and powerful.[84] Some ethnographic research participants mentioned that finding clothes that accommodate their disability and lifestyle can be challenging and are rarely trendy or in style. Luis recounts "getting ready when you have polio can be difficult…it is very hard to get [fashionable] jeans over my braces, as well as to find shoes that are wide enough for my braces". Like many other persons with disabilities, Luis has to be selective when choosing clothing items, to ensure it fits over their mobility aids and comfortable enough to wear all day. This is a more common issue for those with mobility issues, as they need to consider their jackets and blazers dragging on the floor (due to wheelchairs) and having pants that are comfortable enough for long periods of sitting. Zippers, buttons and clasps pose additional barriers for those with dexterity issues. Having limited fashion choices can be challenging, reducing a person's ability to feel their best and to 'look and feel the part'. This reduces confidence during an interview and while in the workplace, as well as increasing the potential for negative bias or stigma.

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[80] Brownlee, 'The dangers of mistaking diversity for inclusion in the workplace' (2019), para 6.

[81] Brownlee, 'The dangers of mistaking diversity for inclusion in the workplace'.

[82] Brownlee, 'The dangers of mistaking diversity for inclusion in the workplace', para 11.

[83] Brownlee, 'The dangers of mistaking diversity for inclusion in the workplace'.

[84] University of Hertfordshire, 'Happiness: It's not in the jeans' (2012).

Cost

Figure 7:
Relaxed Classic Shirt
for Women
$27.90
Source:
oldnavy.gapcanada.ca

Adaptive clothing can be a solution to finding suitable fashion for persons with disabilities. However, these options typically come at a higher price. For example, the adaptive white blouse by IZ Adaptive costs $195, compared to a similar non-adaptive Old Navy shirt which costs only $27.90. As a marginalized population, it is difficult for many persons with disabilities to afford the more expensive item, even though it is more suited to their needs. As a result, individuals are more likely to resort to the cheaper option. Alternatively, items can be taken to a tailor and adjusted to suit the unique needs of the person with a disability, but this imposes extra steps and costs. As many cannot afford this extra burden, most persons with disabilities use non-adaptive clothing. While the majority of research participants admitted to having some type of struggle with non-adaptive clothing, only one individual mentioned paying for alterations.

Environmental factors

Fashion and cost are common barriers to finding appropriate clothing, but the biggest barriers uncovered from research participants were environmental factors. Many persons with disabilities cited difficulty finding clothing that is suitable for Canadian winters. These challenges include finding adaptive winter footwear that fit orthotics, a winter jacket that fits over a wheelchair and warm gloves that fit the needs of a person with partial hand amputations or motor impairments. Malik, who has a spinal cord injury explains "it's difficult to get around during the winter time as snow and slush get stuck in my walker, which makes me scared of rust. [It's also] difficult to find warm slip-off shoes and to find warm gloves for my hands". For these reasons, Malik limits social interactions and in-person interviews during the winter months. Malik isn't the only one who feels this way. Pratulya, who has MS, says they don't feel comfortable leaving the house during the winter either; "I don't go out during the winter - it's too scary. I know my cane will slip, I will fall and hurt myself and I will be unable to get back up". Incompatible clothing, mobility limitations and physical discomfort are additional stressors persons with disabilities face during winter months. As many people with mobility issues require help getting dressed, they become increasingly dependent on their support networks to put on additional winter gear. Small tasks like going to an interview or showing up for work become increasingly difficult for persons with disabilities during the winter months.

Transportation challenges

Public

Many people rely on public transit to get to where they need to be. Existing gaps and challenges with this form of transportation for persons with disabilities can restrict mobility and flexibility. Pratulya, an individual with MS, shared that services like the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) offer accessibility training, including information regarding well-lit areas of each subway platform with direct access to priority seating. However, accessing and navigating this information can be challenging. In Toronto, many individuals rely on Wheel-Trans (a service of the TTC) as a more accessible form of public transit. Demand for this service is high, which puts constraints on its availability. As a result, Wheel-Trans is often considered to be unreliable, time-consuming to arrange and inflexible with scheduling needs. Pratulya, who uses Wheel-Trans, noted that when asked by their employer to stay at work late or leave early, they face challenges in finding an alternative method of transportation. They may choose to stay at the office without pay until the Wheel-Trans ride they had scheduled earlier arrives, or pay the extra cost for a taxi to get home. Alternatively, they must negotiate a suitable time to end the work day with their employer that aligns with Wheel-Trans' schedule. Such transportation constraints limit freedom of movement to and from workplaces and come with additional expenses. In addition, Pratulya indicated that they feel unsafe waiting for Wheel-Trans

when it runs behind schedule. When this happens, Pratulya is forced to wait outside their workplace late into the evening. An SME with lived experience shared their experience with the local paratransit system in Fredericton, New Brunswick; "I've had to go to my doctor's appointment 4 hours early and then wait for an hour afterwards to get picked up as that was the only time slot they had available".

Private and personal

For those who have acquired disabilities during their life, the transition from personal to public means of transportation can be difficult. Silvia, an individual with a pain-related and mobility disability, shared that they can no longer drive due to their disability. This has forced them to use public transit, making their commute to work more time-consuming and less comfortable. Persons with disabilities with personal means of transportation report other challenges, including increased expenses to accommodate their needs. As discussed above, inflexible scheduling for accessible public transportation (including Wheel-Trans) can require the use of alternative, more costly methods of transportation such as Uber or taxi. Silvia and many others would prefer a private means of transportation, but this is not affordable due to their employment status or the cost of retrofitting. An SME with lived experience reported that retrofitting their van to accommodate their mobility disability cost them $73,000. Carrie, an individual with a

lower-leg amputation, reported that purchasing a larger car that accommodated their needs was a significant investment. The cost of mobility is high, but individuals absorb the cost in order to travel to where they need to be.

Limitations due to weather

Winter weather has a significant impact on mobility and the flexibility of transportation. Many persons with disabilities report mobility challenges due to snow and ice, which can result in public transportation delays and safety risks. Luis, an individual with PPS reports that in the winter, they depend on Wheel-Trans. The service drops them off exactly where they need to be, unlike standard buses and subways. However, the risk of slipping and falling while waiting outside for Wheel-Trans makes them uncomfortable. Some persons with disabilities recognize these dangers and continue to be mobile in the winter, while others avoid the potential safety hazards by restricting travel. Carrie refuses to go into the office when it is snowing as they fear falling when walking from their car to the entrance of their workplace. Pratulya shared that limitations in their ability to travel in the winter make them "feel broken down" and "penalized because of their disability". In this way, environmental factors can inhibit mobility for persons with disabilities. This impacts the emotional well-being of some individuals whose movement and independence is impacted.

Conclusion

Before launching a competition for solutions, it is critical that we understand the problem area from a variety of perspectives. Throughout the research phase, we gathered information from the disability community to identify barriers encountered by persons living with disabilities when finding meaningful employment. The societal challenges and direct barriers highlighted in this report will be used as the foundation for a multi-year initiative, aiming to identify and support solutions to these barriers.

The work outlined in this report will first be supplemented by an open call to the disability community, seeking to widen the perspectives of barriers to employment that are being faced. This will create an added layer of validation from the perspectives of even more individuals who encounter these barriers on a daily basis. The outputs from this report and this open call will inform a

series of four crowdsourced innovation challenges, each focused on surfacing solutions to a different barrier to employment for persons with disabilities. The direct barriers will be chosen based on feasibility, and potential for impact both on an individual and community level. Although the societal challenges and direct barriers identified are analyzed separately throughout this report, it is important to recognize how they are deeply interconnected. As such, solutions to the challenges outlined have the potential for indirect impact on multiple barriers.

In partnership with CIBC, the innovation challenge series will not only help incubate innovative ideas leading to greater employment opportunities for persons with disabilities – an important determinant of long-term self-sufficiency and a critical starting point to achieving ambition – but will also help foster an inclusive labour market, which can benefit all Canadians.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Employment rates and ratios in selected countries

Employment rates and ratios in selected countries				
Country	Year	Employment rate of persons with disabilities %	Employment rate of overall population %	Employment ratio
Australia[a]	2003	41.9	72.1	.58
Austria[a]	2003	43.4	68.1	.64
Canada[a]	2003	56.3	74.9	.75
Germany[a]	2003	46.1	64.8	.71
India[b]	2002	37.6	62.5	.61
Japan[a]	2003	22.7	59.4	.38
Malawi[f]	2003	42.3	46.2	.92
Mexico[a]	2003	47.2	60.1	.79
Netherlands[a]	2003	39.9	61.9	.64
Norway[a]	2003	61.7	81.4	.76
Peru[c]	2003	23.8	64.1	.37
Poland[a]	2003	20.8	63.9	.33
South Africa[d]	2006	12.4	41.1	.30
Spain[a]	2003	22.1	50.5	.44
Switzerland[a]	2003	62.2	76.6	.81
United Kingdom[a]	2003	38.9	68.6	.57
USA[e]	2005	38.1	73.2	.52
Zambia[g]	2005	45.5	56.5	.81

Note: The employment rate is the proportion of the working age population (with or without disabilities) in employment. Definitions of working age differ across countries. Sources: a (38); b (8); c (39); d (7); e (40); f (41); g (42).

Appendix B: Ethnographic research participants

	Name	Age	Disabilities
	Silvia	55 - 64	Back disability
	Amber	35 - 44	Amputee
	Heather	35 - 44	Endometriosis
	Lorenzo	35 - 44	Spina Bifida
	Camilla	65+	Not disclosed
	Sonia	35 - 44	Visual limitation, fibromyalgia, epilepsy, PTSD
	Harmony	25 - 34	Learning, Intellectual, PTSD, Anxiety, Depression
	Leonard	45 - 54	Lymphedema, psoriasis, mental health
	Luis	35 - 44	Mobility (Polio)
	Malik	25 - 34	Spinal Cord injury (mobility, dexterity, memory, learning, mental health, speech impediment)
	Pratulya	35 - 44	Multiple Sclerosis (episodic, sensory, mobility, vision, dexterity, memory, incontinence)
	Carrie	45 - 54	Mobility (lower leg amputee)

Appendix C: Subject matter expert (SME) participants

Participant	Areas of expertise
CEO of an employment organization for persons with disabilities • Focused on growing the employment market for people on the autism spectrum or facing similar challenges.	• Innovators • Employment • Organization • Advocacy
Policy Advisor for Ontario Public Service • Accessibility Policy Professional	• Government • Accessibility and Accommodation
Recruitment Professional for not-for-profit organization • Part of the talent acquisition team that helps identify improvement opportunities and develop solutions to address them.	• Human Resources
Project Lead for persons with disabilities at a healthcare organization • Lead for a hospital's multi-year transition strategy focused on employment and enabling work participation for those with mental and physical disabilities.	• Advocacy • Support Networks
Policy Advisor for Ontario Public Service • Responsible for policy development, program design and operational support related to employment supports and benefits, health benefits and disability adjudication.	• Government
Lived Experience SME • Advocate for rights of the Deaf and hard of hearing related to education and employment.	• Government • Advocacy • Lived Experience
Manager at startup company focused on accessible technology • Startup engages a diverse community of people living with disabilities to ensure tools are accessible.	• Innovators

Entrepreneur with lived experience • Started their own company after a climbing accident. Part of an organization working to empower the independence and community participation of people with spinal cord injuries and mobility disabilities.	• Entrepreneur • Advocacy • Innovator • Lived Experience
Manager for employment organization for persons with disabilities • Program that focuses on job-training programs, personal coaching sessions, assisting individuals with disabilities to gain a competitive advantage for employment.	• Clothing • Innovators
Customer Experience Manager of a transit organization • Leads customer experience team and has a great deal of knowledge and experience in accessibility and helping the underserved in transit.	• Transportation
Federal Crown Prosecutor • Conducting trials and appeals as lead counsel at both the Provincial Court, and Superior Court as well as the Court of Appeal.	• Legal • Lived Experience
Center Manager at spinal cord injury research center • Manager of spinal cord injury research center, making sure that peers have the information they need at all stages of life after a spinal cord injury.	• Advocacy • Lived Experience
Associate at law firm • Member of a law firm that focuses on Labour, Employment and Human Rights practice group who help employers from all facets of industry.	• Legal
Manager at not-for-profit organization focusing on employment for persons with disabilities • Responsible for managing and building the corporate and post-secondary educational institution partnerships key to the success of the organization's mandate in the Canadian marketplace.	• Employment Organization • Innovators
Professor at canadian university • Examines the issues surrounding disability accommodation in the workplace and ways to support the workplace integration of newcomers to Canada.	• Researcher • Human Resource Management
Content Lead at an organization focused on accessible infrastructure • Has extensive knowledge of local and international accessible design standards and universal design principles, having worked as an accessibility consultant in both private and non-profit organizations.	• Advocacy • Infrastructure

Policy Advisor at Ontario Public Service • Responsible for policy development, program design and operational support related to financial eligibility of programs that support people living with disabilities.	• Government
Founder at startup company focusing on accessibility of product and services • This startup transforms the way people with autism and other cognitive special needs interact in the world, and the way companies and brands interact with those individuals.	• Support Networks • Innovators
Adult Education Teacher • Experience with students with disabilities and their transition to employment.	• Education
Scientist & Researcher at a healthcare organization • Research focuses on the participation and social inclusion of children and youth with disabilities at school, work and in the community.	• Advocacy • Transportation
Manager at startup company focused on accessible technology • Recruits people who live with disabilities and make use of assistive technology to conduct testing on prototypes, and ensure these companies' products and experiences meet accessibility compliance.	• Innovator • Lived Experience
Program Coordinator at spinal cord injury research center • Connects with the spinal cord injury community during acute care, rehabilitation and also community events such as weekly and monthly coffee groups.	• Advocacy • Lived Experience
President of startup company focused on the transition from education to employment • Empowers students with disabilities to become successful business leaders & hosts training sessions for startups serving people with disabilities.	• Support Networks • Lived Experience

Appendix D: CIBC consumer market research panel survey demographic overview

	292 Working full-time / part-time	62 Self Employed	23 Unemployed & 25 Students
Mental Health	46%	40%	56%
Pain-related	22%	26%	23%
Mobility/Dexterity	21%	29%	21%
Hearing	19%	26%	8%
Vision	17%	18%	17%
Learning/Memory	7%	5%	8%
Other	16%	15%	21%

1 in 3 say they are actively looking for a new job/role

1 in 3 say that they are self-employed (at least in part) due to their disability

3 in 5 say that they are unemployed (at least in part) due to their disability

Appendix E: Achieving an accessible Nova Scotia, timeline

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Built Environment Standards Development			Built Environment Standards Enacted	Built Environment Standards Implementation - Nova Scotia Government*								
					Built Environment Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies*							
						Built Environment Standards Implementation - Other*						
Education Standards Development			Education Standards Enacted	Education Standards Implementation - Nova Scotia Government								
					Education Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies							
						Education Standards Implementation - Other						
			Third Standards Development		Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - Nova Scotia Government						
							Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies					
								Standards Implementation - Other				
				Fourth Standards Development		Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - Nova Scotia Government					
								Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies				
									Standards Implementation - Other			
					Fifth Standards Development		Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation - Nova Scotia Government				
									Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies			
										Standards Implementation - Other		
						Sixth Standards Development		Standards Enacted	Standards Implementation -Nova Scotia Government			
										Standards Implementation - Public Sector Bodies		
											Standards Implementation - Other	
Awareness and Capacity Building												
Government of Nova Scotia Leadership - Implement accessibility plans												
Collaboration and Support - public sector bodies, community organizations, private sector, and other stakeholders												
	Compliance and Enforcement											
Monitoring and Evaluation			Legislated Review	Monitoring and Evaluation				Legislated Review	Monitoring and Evaluation			

Appendix F: Emotional journey maps

Silvia

Age: 55 – 64
Disability: Back disability
"Working full time at something I'm good at is the best pain killer I know."

				Life is alright!	There must be a better way		I'm really bored		
😐	🙂	😐	😐	😃	🙁	😃	🙁	😐	🙂
Waking up	**Getting ready**	**At the intersection**	**Leaving for the library**	**Break #1**	**Break #2**	**School's out**	**Nearing the end**	**Journey home**	**The best time of day**
As Marta's alarm went off, the hum of their back pain wrapped around their body like a familiar blanket.	Marta places their medication under their tongue. Marta dresses lying down with extra layers seeing the weather forecast for the day.	Marta walks briskly to their post to defy the pain that comes with gravity. The intersection is calm as Marta sets their thermos down in the snow. Marta hopes it does not get any colder.	It got colder – that's what the pain says. Marta longs for the warmth of the library. Their back brace is tight. It reminds them that they haven't been able to use the washroom since 7am.	Marta feels accomplished after completing a job application. They enjoy their pre-packed lunch and begrudgingly put the 5 layers back on.	Will it always be like this? Is this time going to be different? Marta reviews their job application.	The school bell rings. Marta smiles as they see parents holding hands with their children. A dog nuzzles Marta's leg for affection.	The evening street lights come on. Everything aches and everything is cold. Marta recites a poem in their mind to keep busy.	A woman kindly lets Marta take the designated priority seat on the bus. Marta closes their eyes with relief.	Lying down with braces off, Marta feels their best. They take their pills and has a glass of wine. Marta wishes to stay in their bed forever.

Amber

Age: 35 – 44
Disability: Amputee
"There's nothing wrong with us, it's the inaccessible spaces that are the problem. We belong there too."

					No one holds them accountable		There must be a better way!		
😐	😐	🙁	😃	😐	😠	😃	🙁	🙂	😐
Waking up	**Getting ready**	**Commuting to work**	**Teaching**	**Lesson planning**	**Meeting with HR**	**Social activities**	**Self care**	**Study**	**Ready for bed**
Amber wakes up at their partners house, as their own current apartment isn't accessible to their needs.	Morning routine includes putting on sleeves, sockets and prosthetic feet. They slip into some flowy pants that hides their prosthetics, a dress shirt, eat breakfast, brush their teeth and then head out.	Amber drives themselves 30 minutes outside of Toronto to head to work. The frustrations of going back to work starts to build as they get closer.	As a Grade 6 English teacher, Amber loves their job. However, they feel they have more to offer both the school and kids.	Lesson planning can be a tedious task for Amber, as the printer and scanner are far from their desk. Having to go back and forth between their office and printer has not only become exhausting, but painful as well.	Amber meets with HR to discuss their accessibility needs and desires to become a guidance counsellor. HR denies this demand due to assumptions of Amber's capacity.	After work, Amber heads to a local community center to coach a basketball team for an upcoming basketball tournament.	Once back home, Amber cleans all of their systems and lays them all out to try, and then hops in the shower. Due to post-shower swelling, Amber can only do this activity at night.	To fulfill their passion to help others, Amber is currently studying to becoming a psychologist.	Amber ends their busy day by scrolling through social media and watching some television.

Heather

Age: 35 – 44
Disability: Endometriosis (pelvic pain due to growth in uterus)
"I've encountered some barriers, so it would be great to talk about [the barriers] and bring awareness to them."

	I am ready for today!		I don't feel very good					
😐	😀	😐	🙁	😀	🙁	😀	😀	😀
Waking up	**Bullet journal**	**Breakfast**	**Taking on the day**	**Well deserved break**	**Feeling grey**	**Had enough**		**TV time**
Heather wakes up to a heavy ache in their pelvis. They practice the thought exercises their therapist suggested. Heather reminds themselves that a healthy mind makes a healthy body.	After bullet journaling, Heather feels more in control. They have a plan and are ready to take on their tasks for the day.	Task #1 – eat. Following their strict diet, Heather reluctantly drinks a smoothie. It was expensive and doesn't taste good, but they drink it anyways.	How do I describe my strengths without disclosing my disability? The pain in their pelvis feels stronger. Heather tries to ignore the pain and overcome the desire to take any medication.	Heather receives a text from Lianna, a friend from a volunteer group, to make plans for the weekend. Heather's cat lies down on their lap and starts to purrs gently while Heather scrolls through their phone.	When did I last eat? The pain in Heather's pelvis remind them of their low blood sugar. They nibbles on a granola bar and wonders how they should modify their resume.	Heather feels content with their day. They will celebrate this small and irregular win. Their endorphins spike up and help wash away some of the pelvic pain.		Heather watches tv. They don't think about much. The numbness is soothing.

Lorenzo

Age: 35 – 44
Disability: Spina Bifida
"Take me for who I am, and not who you want me to be."

	I'm the most abled disabled person		I feel more independent with my own car						Go Leafs Go!
😀	😐	😐	😀	😐	🙁	😐	😀	😀	
Waking up	**Search for jobs**	**Getting ready**	**Commuting**	**Meeting with agencies**	**Waiting for the recruiter**	**Continue job search**	**Making dinner**	**Relaxing**	
Lorenzo wakes up next to their wife, in their basement apartment. While their wife gets ready for work, Lorenzo makes breakfast.	As early as 6AM, Lorenzo starts their job hunt by looking at their email notifications and filter through job applications.	Once they have applied to what they think they're qualified for, they shower and get dressed for their day. Lorenzo puts on some business slacks and dress shirt and heads out the door.	After years of frustrations with Wheel-Trans, Lorenzo made the decision to invest into a hand-controlled car to help them commute easier.	Lorenzo has two appointments with recruitment agencies to help them land a job. Having difficulties applying online, Lorenzo hopes meeting in person will solve some issues.	Lorenzo's recruiter is running behind and they have been sitting down for a while. Their knees start to hurt and they become irritated.	Following Lorenzo's appointments, they head back home to continue the job search.	Lorenzo's wife returns home after a split shift, and they begin to start cooking dinner together.	Although Lorenzo loves to work out, they've had to end their membership recently as a way to cut costs. Lorenzo heads over to their mom's house to watch some hockey and cheer for their favourite team.	

Camilla

Age: 65+

Disability: Not disclosed

"There is a hierarchy in the disability community, visible disabilities are given more weight than invisible disabilities… If accommodation was about the person, then it shouldn't matter what the disability is- even if it is not something you recognize or understand."

Waking up	Getting ready	Heading to Library	Morning Mentoring	Afternoon Lull	Heading Home	Reflection	Had Enough	Getting Ready for Bed
			I enjoy this!				*I'm so frustrated!*	
😐	😐	🙁	🙂	🙁	🙂	😐	🙁	😐
Camilla struggles to wake up after a night of restless sleep.	They get dressed while listening to the news on the radio.	It's a long commute. Camilla tries to engage with people without any luck.	Camilla works to instil confidence in their mentees. The quality of conversation is inspirational.	Will I be given a chance to show my skills are transferrable? Camilla wonders as they use the library computer to apply for jobs	It was much better than the morning ride. They were able to chat with someone most of the way home.	Home is quiet. They read their favorite business strategy book and feels confident that they'll be good at connecting the dots.	Linda, a family member, stops by to chat about the job search. "Why can't you be less picky?" Linda asks. Camilla refuses to address the question and announces that it's time for bed.	Camilla does some free writing to get stress-filled thoughts on paper. They are in for another restless night.

Sonia

Age: 35 – 44

Disability: Visual limitation, fibromyalgia, epilepsy, PTSD

"Disabilities should be called abilities because they add to who you are."

Waking up	Getting ready	Commuting to work	Answering phone calls	Using the computer	Working with the team	Finishing the shift	Commuting home	Arriving at home	Getting ready for bed
					I love my team!		*There must be a better way!*		
😐	😐	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙂	🙁	🙁	🙂	😐
Five days out of the week, Sonia works at an office. During these days, Sonia wakes up at 7:00AM to begin their day.	After getting out of bed, Sonia eats, has a morning coffee, and takes pain medication.	By 8:03AM, Sonia leaves for work. Their father sometimes offers a ride to work but was unable to do so today. Sonia takes the TTC to work, an activity that can be difficult for Sonia.	Having multiple people in their office, or multiple calls coming through, can be a stressor for Sonia. Stress exacerbates their pain, which in turn makes their medicinal injections less effective.	Sonia's visual limitation makes it difficult to view computer screens for prolonged periods. They prefers to use her phone screen.	Sonia has a great relationship with their co-workers, considering most of them as close friends.	Sonia finishes work at 7:15pm. Along with their team, they complete daily closing duties and head home.	Sonia's visual limitation makes seeing at night extremely difficult and so they prefer to commute with friends. However, today they are alone. Sonia will have to go out of their way to take well-lit paths to get home.	After a tiring 9-hour shift, Sonia unwinds and eats dinner.	Sonia goes to bed at 10:00PM.

Harmony

Age: 25 – 34
Disability: Learning, Intellectual, PTSD, Anxiety, Depression
"Everyone should have the right to work freely and make a living, and be proud of what they do."

			Treat others the way you want to be treated…		I think I helped them!			
😐	😐	🙂	🙁	😐	🙂	🙁	🙂	🙂
Waking up	**Getting dressed**	**Ready for work**	**McDonalds**	**Another grant down**	**Another coffee**	**Going home**	**Cathy visits**	**Making dinner**
Although it was only 11:30AM, it felt like 7:00AM as Harmony forced themselves out of bed.	What outfit would my afternoon visitor like best? Harmony wears a bright multicolored sweatshirt. They don't notice the hole in the sleeve anymore.	Harmony fills their desk organizers with the new stickers, condoms and pens that just came in. They are satisfied with the order of the office, and awaits their visitor.	It's the lunch hour rush at McDonalds. Harmony sits in their usual spot. A group of teenagers grimace over, Harmony smiles back.	Dre and TT, Harmony's coworkers, text about their new flyer design. Harmony thinks they could look better and decides that they will edit them once they finish grant proposals.	Harmony orders another coffee refill unconsciously. They recall how comforted their visitor was earlier. The McDonalds cashier doesn't look at Harmony when the coffee is handed over.	It's cold out on their walk home. Harmony is hungry and although it's 4:00PM, they haven't eaten yet. But that's usual.	Harmony's APSW worker, Cathy, comes by the house. They ask Harmony how they've been feeling while describing the next phase of their transition.	The "Sixth Sense" is on Netflix. Harmony eats a package of KD and feels relaxed. The chest tightness dissipates.

Leonard

Age: 45 – 54
Disability: Lymphedema, psoriasis, mental health
"I want to learn more about myself so that I can improve and contribute meaningfully to society."

					I can't get hired anywhere.				
😐	😐	🙁	😐	😐	😡	😐	😐	🙂	😐
Waking up	**Applying bandages**	**Getting ready**	**Completing routine errands**	**Managing his business**	**Searching for jobs**	**Applying for jobs**	**Volunteer work**	**Cleaning his home**	**Getting ready for bed**
Leonard wakes up early in the morning and begins their day.	The first thing they is apply bandages to their legs, and then take their medication. Applying bandages on both legs has "some effect on time management".	Leonard has to wait two hours after taking their medication before they can finally have breakfast.	On days when Leonard needs groceries or other supplies, they take brief trips to the supermarket. Transit poses no issue for Howard.	Leonard owns and runs a business that does not generate any profit. They spend a large portion of the day sending emails, making calls, and completing other work-related tasks.	Leonard receives job notifications daily from job websites. Once they have systematically organized employment opportunities, they begin the application process.	During peak hiring periods, Leonard spends 6-7 hours daily completing job applications. Activities include updating their resume and drafting cover letters.	Leonard often volunteers their time by providing tax advice to various organizations. A small portion of their day is dedicated to this.	Leonard likes to clean their home often, it brings them joy.	After completing their oral hygiene routine, Leonard goes to bed.

Luis

Age: 35 – 44
Disability: Mobility (Polio)
"I never felt that I had a disability until I came to Canada. It has helped me be resourceful, independent and resilient."

Waking up	Getting ready	Commuting to work	Daily tasks	Calls Columbian doctor	Goes to the gym	Making dinner	Job search	Getting ready for bed
		Why didn't I know about this before?		*There must be a better way!*		*I feel like a superhero in the kitchen*		*A good way to go through life is to take it one day at a time*
Luis wakes up ay 7:30AM and heads to the kitchen to make Columbian coffee. This brings Luis warmth as they reminisce about their time on the family farm, surrounded by their mother and sisters.	As they don't want to wear their braces without shoes, and cannot wear their shoes inside, getting ready is a slow and painful process for Luis.	Having recently signed up for Wheel-Trans, Luis commutes 20 minutes to a community church where they volunteer for the day.	Luis provides administrative support to LGTBQ+ refugees, which leaves them feeling fulfilled, but disappointed that it does not lead to a paycheck	Due to language barriers, Luis was unable to properly express medical needs when fitting for new braces. This resulted in poorly fitting (and expensive) braces. Luis had to get braces imported from Columbia.	Following the frustrating braces experience, Luis heads to the gym to de-stress and work on increasing their muscle mass.	Luis whips up their famous empanadas for dinner. Cooking and entertaining is when they feel at their happiest.	After dinner, Luis goes online to find employment opportunities. Luis believes their main barrier to employment is language and people's perception of their abilities.	Luis goes to bed feeling excited and optimistic for what tomorrow brings.

Malik

Age: 25 – 34
Disability: Spinal Cord Injury (mobility, dexterity, memory, learning, mental health, speech impediment)
"I want to do what I love, and love what I do."

Waking up	Job search	Lunch	Exercise and TV	Dinner	Interview prep	Leisure	Commuting back from the movies	Getting ready for bed
	I don't have time for this					*Since the accident, I've lost a lot of friends*		
Malik wakes up at 6:15AM and heads to their bathroom to washup before their morning prayer. Recent renovations have allowed Malik to be independent and get ready without aid.	As Malik has not been able to find stable employment since their 2008 accident, they spend the first hours of the day searching for job opportunities. Long job descriptions leave Malik feeling overwhelmed.	Before enjoying a homecooked meal, Malik and their mother pray together.	In order to improve their mobility, Malik exercises a couple times a day. As winter makes it difficult to travel, Malik skips the gym and decides to ride their stationary exercise bike while watching TV.	Malik's sister and brother-in-law join the family for another homecooked meal prepared by Malik's mother. They talk about their upcoming weekend plans, which include watching the Leafs, and attending youth activities at the mosque.	Malik's uncle got them an interview with an airline company, which leaves them feeling overjoyed. However, the more they prepares for the interview, the more anxiety kicks in and self-doubt arises.	Post-dinner activities used to include playing field hockey with friends. Since the accident, Malik has turned to sedentary social activities. Malik uses their Access 2 pass to see Bad Boys for Life and then head to Demetres to get a chocolate sundae.	It's closing time for Demetres and Wheel-Trans is running late. Unfortunately, Malik cannot wait inside for security reasons and so they wait alone for 30 minutes. Snow starts to accumulate on their walker, and Malik gets nervous about possible rust.	Before heading to bed, Malik does a bit of Chair Yoga to loosen up their muscles and reduce pain. They read the Quran and perform the final prayer of the day. The excitement and nervousness of the job interview will keep Malik up all night.

Pratulya

Age: 35 – 44
Disability: Multiple Sclerosis (episodic, sensory, mobility, vision, dexterity, memory, incontinence)
"I feel like I am being penalized [at work] because of my disability."

Waking up	Getting ready	Eat breakfast	Job search	Eats lunch	Commutes to work	Performs tasks	Breaks	Goes home early	Getting ready for bed
	I'm an accident waiting to happen			*Cooking is overwhelming and used to control my life*				*Again? It's the 6th time this month!*	
😐	🙁	🙁	😐	🙁	🙁	🙂	🙁	😠	😐
Due to late night work hours, Pratulya wakes up around 10AM. MS incontinence forces Pratulya to rush to the washroom and hopes that none of their 5 roommates are already occupying the shared washroom.	Using the bathroom is a difficult and time consuming task for Pratulya. Since their shower isn't accessible and their PSW isn't coming in today, they forgo cleaning themselves.	Pratulya enjoys dumplings and plantains that were previously prepared by their PSW. In order to feel functional for their workday, Pratulya needs two full servings of high-calorie food, per meal.	Having a vast background in environment, public health, sustainable development and policy, Pratulya looks for professional job opportunities in these areas.	Pratulya starts to feel moody and dysfunctional as lunch time approaches. They head back to their messy kitchen to eat their 3rd & 4th meal of the day.	Pratulya starts to feel anxious as they waits for Wheel-Trans to arrive. Their inconsistency and lateness has lead to issues with their employer in the past. As the landlord forgot to shovel the driveway, again, Wheel-Trans arrives angry.	Recent positive comments from a direct supervisor in their increased productivity has left Pratulya feeling empowered.	As per their doctor's note, Pratulya takes a longer break to eat their FoodShare prepared meal. They know this means they'll be reprimand for the break, but need it to be productive at work.	Returning from their break, Pratulya notices a post-it from their supervisor indicating to clock out early. This means a smaller pay-check, which angers Pratulya. Pratulya calls a taxi to head home.	Before going to sleep, Pratulya watches TV while eating a snack. They start to plan their following day based on which support service will be coming over to help them.

Carrie

Age: 45 – 54
Disability: Mobility (lower leg amputee)
"Nothing about me, without me."

Good morning	The commute	Arriving at school	Balancing act	Stickers and lunch	A walk	A talk	Home	Too late for tea
			He is well intentioned but…		*I'll need my walker*		*This is the best time of day*	
🙂	🙂	🙂	🙁	🙂	🙂	😐	🙂	🙂
Carrie wakes to the sound of a coffee machine as their husband makes breakfast. They put on their prosthetic and decides they wants to wear a skirt today.	Carrie enjoys the morning drive. Carrie can't drive a stick shift anymore but they like automatic better anyways.	With their backpack on the walker, Carrie steps out of the car. As always, Dave, the custodian, has shoveled and salted the pathway from the car to the front doors of the school.	A parent tries to help Carrie open the front office door. Carrie feels their balance falter - they were carefully weighted between the door and the walker. Carrie kindly says thank you, and regains balance.	Lara, Sam and Quinn, three students, come into Carrie's office for lunch as they always do. Sam is excited about the new stickers they brought for Carrie's prosthetic.	Carrie takes their walker with them down the hall. They know the classroom is a bit too far without it. Pushing the walker against the blackboard, they sit down. They give the class an update on the upcoming Wellness day.	Carrie's left side starts to ache as they have been standing for too long talking to a parent. The parent looks at Carrie's leg and seems surprised to learn they are the Principal.	Carrie does some reading while their husband cooks dinner. Once Carrie's son is back from picking up their daughter from soccer, they'll eat all together. The house smells like sautéed onions.	While putting on the kettle, Carrie realizes it's 9:00PM. They don't want to have to get up at night, so they turn the burner off. Carrie takes off the prosthetics while sitting in bed.

Appendix G: Employment profile of persons aged 25 to 64, by presence and severity of disability, adjusted for age, 2011

	Men			Women		
	No disability (ref.)	Mild or moderate disability	Severe disability	No disability (ref.)	Mild or moderate disability	Severe disability
	percentage					
Occupation						
Management	15.7	11.8 ±	10.1 E±	10.1	7.4 ±	9.939 E
Professional	17.4	14 ±	11.5 E±	23.5	19.3 ±	16.3 ±
Technical and paraprofessional	9.6	10.9	7.5 E	11.5	14.5	10.1
Administration and administrative support	6.7	7.6 E	7.1 E	21.5	21.3	22.7
Sales	6.6	6.6	13.5 E±	9.2	9.0	11.3
Personal and customer information services	8.3	13.6 ±	19.9 E±	19.4	24 ±	25.7 ±
Industrial, construction and equipment operation trades	15.6	16.0	12.1 E	0.4	F	F
Workers and labourers in transport and construction	11.0	10.1	9.2 E	1.0	F	F
Natural resources, agriculture and relation production	2.4	1.8 E	2.4 E	0.6	0.6 E	F
Manufacturing and utilities	6.8	7.6 E	6.6 E	2.9	2.1 E	F
Industry						
Goods sector						
Agriculture and natural resources	5.0	3.9 ±	2.8 E±	1.9	1.3 E	F
Utilities and construction	11.9	9.9	10 E	1.8	F	F
Manufacturing	15.0	13.8	9.6 E±	5.4	4.5 E	5.9 E
Service sector						
Wholesale trade	5.9	5.5 E	F	3.1	3.6 E	1.7 E±
Retail trade	8.9	12.4 ±	14.2 ±	10.8	11.2	15.4 ±

Transportation and warehousing	7.2	8.4 E	8.7 E	2.6	3.8 E	F
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental	5.8	2.4 ±	3.3 E±	7.3	5.4 ±	6.3 E
Professional, scientific and technical	12.4	13.3	9.7 E	11.2	11.4	8.6 E
Education services	5.3	6.2 E	F	11.7	12.6	8 E±
Health care and social assistance	4.0	6 E	F	21.7	21.6	20.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	4.0	3.9 E	5.3 E	4.0	3.9 E	5.7 E
Accommodation and food services	3.2	5.2 E	11.8 E±	5.3	6 E	10.4 E±
Other services	4.1	3.2 E	4 E	5.2	4.4 E	4.4 E
Public administration	7.4	6.0	9.8 E	7.8	7.9	7.8 E
Work activity in 2011						
Part-time, part-year	4.0	10.2 E±	9.2 E±	10.5	13.9 ±	16.3 ±
Part-time, full-year	2.5	4.5 E±	12.5 E±	9.7	9.5	12.1
Full-time, part-year	22.9	24.0	27.5	21.5	22.7	26.0
Full-time, full-year	70.6	61.3 ±	50.8 ±	58.4	53.9	45.7 ±
Average employment income [1] ($)	67,599	56,624±	49,242±	49,565	45,448±	42,688±

E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

± significantly different from reference category (ref.) (p < 0.05)

[1] Full-time full-year workers with positive employment income

Note: Persons employed during the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) reference week.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disabilities, 2012.

Appendix H: Employment profile of men and woman aged 25 to 64 with a university degree, by presence and severity of disability, adjusted for age, 2011

	Men		Women	
	No disability (ref.)	Disability	No disability (ref.)	Disability
	percentage			
Job skill level				
Management	19.7	11.6 E±	11.9	11.2 E
Skill level A - Occupations that usually require a university education	48.5	48.5	54.4	54.1
Skill Level B - Occupations that usually require a college education or an apprenticeship program	19.5	22.1 E	19.4	21.2
Skill Level C - Occupations that usually require a high school education or job-specific training	10.0	13.3 E	12.0	10.8 E
Skill level D - Occupations for which on-the-job training is usually given	2.4	F	2.3	F
Work activity in 2011				
Part-time, part-year	4.5	4.4 E	10.3	13.9 E
Part-time, full-year	2.6	F	8.0	8.8 E
Full-time, part-year	22.1	15.6 ±	21.4	20.5
Full-time, full-year	70.7	73.3	60.3	56.8
Average employment income [1] ($)	92,681	69,197 ±	68,041	64,503 ±

E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

± significantly different from reference category (ref.) (p < 0.05)

[1] Full-time full-year workers with positive employment income

Note: Persons employed during the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) reference week.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disabilities, 2012.

Appendix I: Most common challenges faced in current workplace, by disability

Disability	total #	Most common workplace challenges									
		1st	%	2nd	%	3rd	%	4th	%	5th	%
Pain-related	65	Limited access to career growth opportunities	29	Fear of disclosing my disability	26	Insensitive workplace culture	tied 20	Challenges getting to work / from work	tied 20	Discrimination and prejudice	15
Mobility	62	Limited access to career growth opportunities	26	Fear of disclosing my disability	19	Insensitive workplace culture	18	Discrimination and prejudice	tied	Challenges getting to work / from work	16
										Access to stress of mental-health related support	16
Hearing	56	Limited access to career growth opportunities	18	Fear of disclosing my disability	16	Feeling unsafe in the workplace	13	Access to stress of mental-health related support	13	Insensitive workplace culture	11
										Discrimination and prejudice	11
Vision	51	Limited access to career growth opportunities	24	Insensitive workplace culture	18	Discrimination and prejudice	18	Fear of disclosing my disability	18	Feeling unsafe in the workplace	12
Learning / Memory	8	Limited access to career growth opportunities	25	Insensitive workplace culture	50	Access to stress of mental-health related support	50	Fear of disclosing my disability	50	Feeling unsafe in the workplace	38
										Government guidelines not followed	38
Developmental	5	Access to stress of mental-health related support	60	Limited access to career growth opportunities	40	Discrimination and prejudice	20	Insensitive workplace culture	20	Lack of accessible compliant technology / resources	20
Neuro-diversity	1	Limited access to career growth opportunities	100								

Appendix J: Challenges in the current workplace, by disability and employment status

292 participants	Total	Question 4								Question 1			Question 3	
		Pain-related	Mobility/ Dexterity	Mental Health	Vision	Hearing	Other	None	Prefer not to answer	Employed	Self-employed	Other	Yes	No
Total	**292**	**65**	**62**	**134**	**51**	**56**	**65**	**0**	**0**	**292**	**0**	**0**	**117**	**175**
Discrimination and prejudice	13%	15%	16%	19%	18%	11%	11%	0	0	13%	0	0	15%	11%
Challenges getting to work / home from work	10%	20%	16%	12%	10%	4%	6%	0	0	10%	0	0	11%	9%
Insensitive workplace culture	21%	20%	18%	31%	18%	11%	17%	0	0	21%	0	0	21%	21%
Limited access to career growth opportunities	21%	29%	26%	25%	24%	18%	25%	0	0	21%	0	0	22%	20%
Feeling unsafe in the workplace	10%	14%	10%	12%	12%	13%	11%	0	0	10%	0	0	9%	10%
Fear of disclosing my disability	22%	26%	19%	31%	18%	16%	20%	0	0	22%	0	0	28%	18%
Lack of accessible compliant technology / resources	6%	8%	13%	4%	10%	4%	6%	0	0	6%	0	0	9%	5%
Access to stress or mental-health related support	19%	12%	16%	34%	14%	13%	22%	0	0	19%	0	0	21%	18%
Organizations or workplace not following government regulations	6%	12%	10%	6%	8%	5%	9%	0	0	6%	0	0	7%	6%
Other	2%	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%	6%	0	0	2%	0	0	3%	2%
None of the above	48%	45%	48%	34%	49%	59%	45%	0	0	48%	0	0	46%	50%