


The Conference Board of Canada

A photograph of two women in a professional setting. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a light blue blazer over a red shirt. The woman on the right has dark curly hair and is wearing a dark blue cardigan over a patterned top. They are both looking at a laptop and a large sheet of paper on a table. The background is a bright, modern office space with a window.

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From Compliance to Culture

Accessibility Beyond Disclosure

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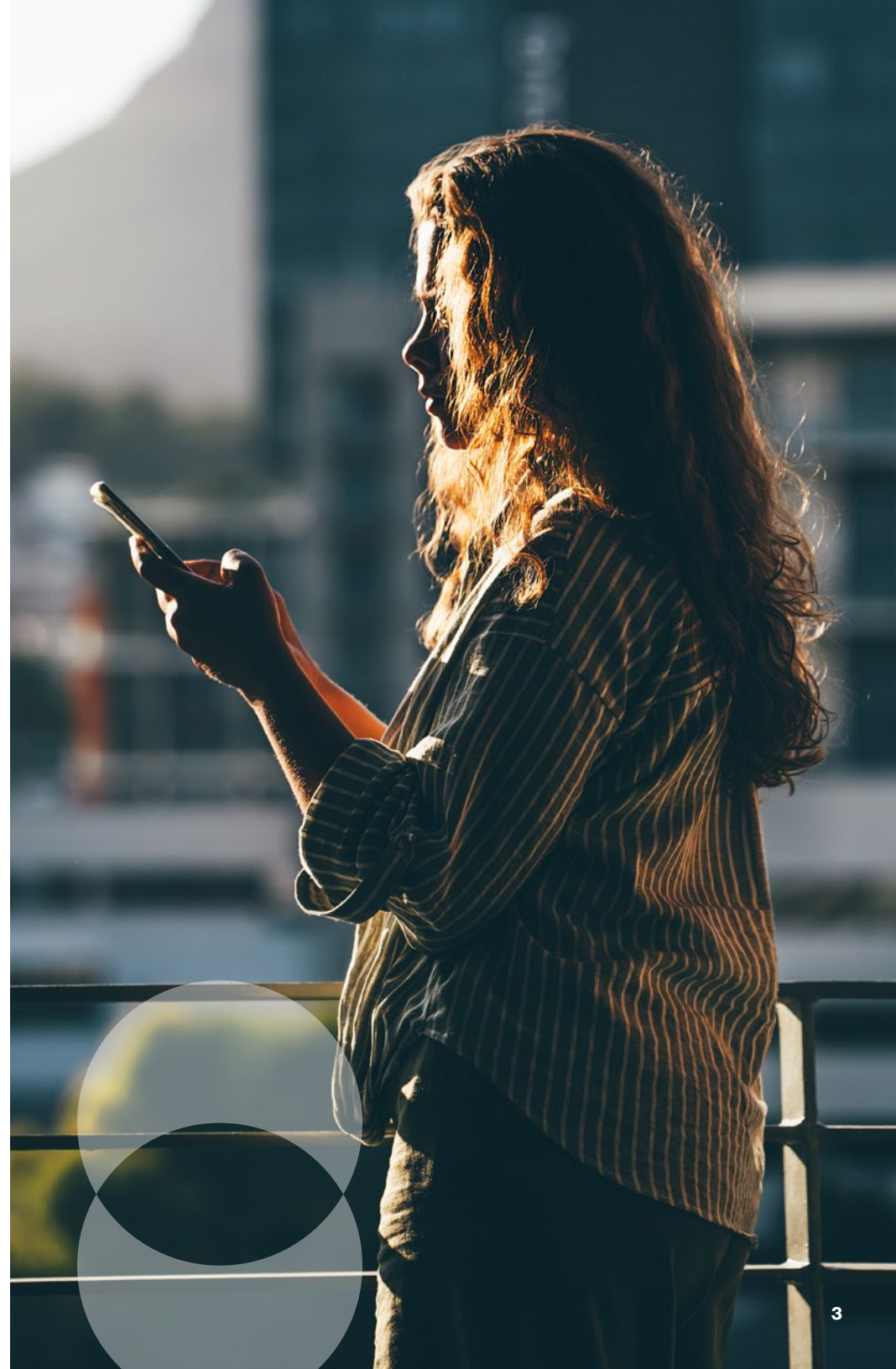
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Key findings

- Disclosure for employees with disabilities is complex and context dependent. Many employees disclose a disability only when it becomes absolutely necessary to address performance-related concerns – whether because they needed accommodations to complete their tasks (53.6 per cent), or they had to explain impact on performance (50.3 per cent) or work absences (42.7 per cent).
- Fear of negative consequences in response to disclosure was widespread among survey participants. Respondents were particularly concerned about being perceived differently (47.4 per cent), losing job opportunities or promotions (32.6 per cent), and facing discrimination (29.6 per cent).
- Negative past experiences with disclosure can have lasting effects. Nearly two-thirds (65.2 per cent) of survey participants who hadn't disclosed their disability to their current employer attributed their decision, at least in part, to negative experiences with disclosure to past employers.
- More than two-thirds (70.7 per cent) of survey participants disclosed their disability to their current employer. However, disclosure rates were lower among younger individuals (56.7 per cent) and employees with low organizational tenure (54.5 per cent). Disclosure was especially low among younger individuals with mental-health-related disabilities, with only 48.4 per cent reporting their condition to their employer.
- Although most organizations (77.3 per cent) offer opportunities for self-identification, many employees reported limited knowledge on how to effectively navigate the accommodation process, including how it works and what qualifies as a reasonable accommodation.



Why workplace accessibility matters

Despite modest gains in recent years, people with disabilities in Canada continue to face barriers in the workplace. Between 2017 and 2022, their labour market participation increased, yet a persistent and wide employment gap remains: The employment rate for Canadians with disabilities (65.1 per cent) lags behind that of people without disabilities (80.1 per cent). Individuals with disabilities are also more likely to be employed part-time and earn a median hourly wage that is 5.5 per cent lower than their peers.¹

These disparities reflect broader structural accessibility issues. Results from Statistics Canada's Survey Series on Accessibility—Experiences with Accessibility and Employment (SSA-EAE) showed that nearly 70 per cent of people with disabilities encountered barriers during the hiring process or were discouraged from applying for jobs altogether. Difficulties disclosing a disability (54 per cent), unmet accommodation needs (32 per cent), and a lack of support from hiring staff or past colleagues (31 per cent) are among the most common obstacles reported.²

These findings point to persistent structural barriers that limit the full participation of people with disabilities in the workforce. At the same time, they highlight a critical opportunity for employers. A systematic review of 39 studies found that hiring people with disabilities can improve profitability, retention, punctuality, customer loyalty, and innovation.³

Moreover, as the Canadian labour market tightens—due to aging demographics⁴ and lower immigration flows⁵—organizations will face growing pressure to tap into labour pools that have often been ignored. People with disabilities represent a skilled, motivated, and largely overlooked segment of the workforce, whose inclusion can help build stronger, more responsive organizations.



1 Statistics Canada, "Canadian Survey on Disability."

2 Statistics Canada, "The Daily."

3 Lindsay and others, "A Systematic Review of the Benefits of Hiring People With Disabilities."

4 Conference Board of Canada, *The, Retirements, Migrants, and New Technological Frontiers*.

5 Guccini, Hamman, and Monteiro, "The Leaky Bucket 2024."



The road to accessible workplaces: Beyond disclosure

Employers are essential to accessibility, given how central work is to daily life. It's important to foster work environments where employees feel safe disclosing a disability, but greater impact comes from inclusive practices that reduce the need to disclose at all.

To help Canadian organizations build more inclusive practices, The Conference Board of Canada conducted a multi-method research project that included a survey of 100 employers, a national survey of 1,000 people with disabilities, as well as structured interviews with 30 individuals, 10 organizational Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and accessibility leaders, and two employer focus groups. (See details in [Appendix A: Methodology](#)).

We found that the need to disclose disabilities is often a barrier to workplace inclusion. Integrating accessibility into policies, physical spaces, technologies, and workplace culture ensures a more inclusive environment for all employees.

Here's how your workplace can incorporate what we heard.

Reframing workplace accessibility

Accommodation for people with disabilities often begins with disclosure—a step governed by legal frameworks outlining the roles and responsibilities of both employer and employee. While helpful, accommodations focus solely on individual needs rather than broader systemic change aimed at making workplaces accessible for everyone.

Most organizations that responded to our employer survey (77.3 per cent) said they offer opportunities for people with disabilities to self-identify, and of this group, 73.0 per cent reported using the data to inform accessibility strategies. However, when required to expand on their current challenges with disability inclusion, survey responses suggested organizations adopt a primarily reactive approach, providing accommodations only when requested and often struggling to meaningfully meet even the minimum legal requirements. Employers reported gaps in understanding the accommodation process, confusion over what qualifies as reasonable accommodation, and challenges arising from disclosure hesitancy among employees.

This reactive approach to accessibility, where accommodation for individual needs remains the primary—often only—workplace accessibility tool places the burden entirely on employees to disclose and advocate for support. By understanding the challenges employees face with disclosure, the risks they weigh when considering disclosure, and how workplace culture can prevent them from coming forward, a new path emerges that opens access to support.

Disclosure is often a difficult decision that may come too late

In our national survey, we found that most employees who had disclosed a disability to their employer did so only when it became absolutely necessary to address performance-related concerns—whether because they needed accommodations to complete their tasks (53.6 per cent), or they had to explain their weaker performance (50.3 per cent) or work absences (42.7 per cent) (see Chart 1).

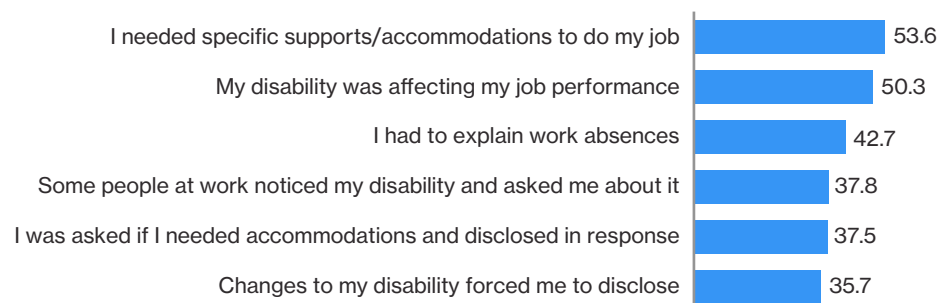
Nearly a quarter (24.9 per cent) of respondents had not yet disclosed their disability to their employer. Less than half of those who hadn't disclosed (48.9 per cent) reported that being able to manage work independently was a pivotal factor in their decision not to disclose, which suggests that many individuals who could benefit from workplace supports may go without them.

Chart 1

Situations leading to disability disclosure

Q: Did any of the situations listed below play a part in your decision to disclose to your employer?

(n = 384; percentage of respondents)



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could select multiple situations influencing their decision to disclose.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

“The rule of thumb is unless you absolutely need accommodations, never ever disclose. You have a disability. It’s just how it is.”

Interviewee with lived experience of disability

Disclosure requires self-advocacy skills

Young workers with disabilities face added barriers to disclosure.⁶ Many lack experience advocating for accommodations and feel unsure about what to expect from their employer. Without role models, peer support, or validating networks, they may choose not to disclose. New employees—regardless of age—often hesitate as well, uncertain about workplace culture or policies, or about how leaders view employees with disabilities and react to accommodation requests.

Disclosure is also less common among respondents with mental health conditions. Just 57 per cent of respondents identifying as having a mental health condition disclosed their condition to their employer. This reflects existing research: Stigma and uncertainty around suitable workplace accommodations make it harder to disclose non-apparent conditions.⁷

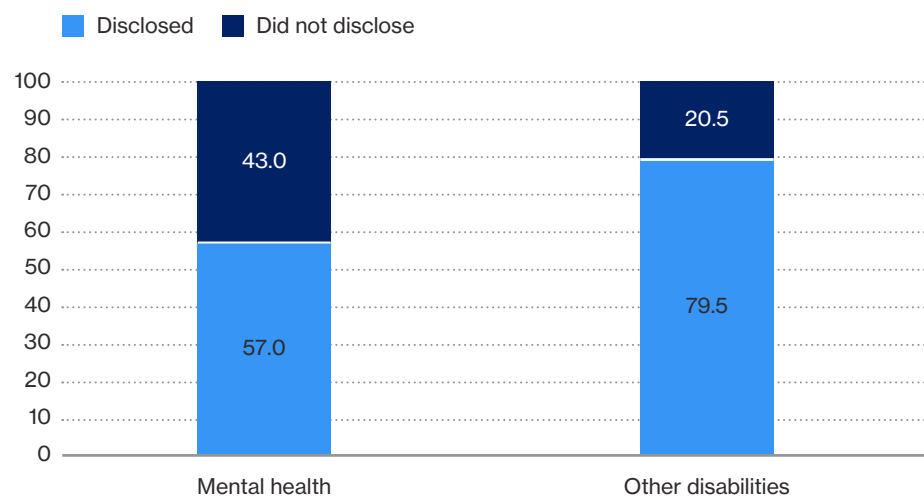
Employers who rely on disclosure as the primary driver for providing support are limiting themselves and their staff given the rising prevalence of mental-health-related conditions⁸—especially among younger individuals entering the workforce.⁹

Chart 2

Disclosure rates among individuals with mental health related disabilities

Q: Have you disclosed your disability to your current employer?

(n = 519; percentage of respondents)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

6 Lindsay, Cagliostro, and Carafa, “A Systematic Review of Workplace Disclosure and Accommodation Requests Among Youth and Young Adults With Disabilities.”

7 Gignac and others, “Does It Matter What Your Reasons Are When Deciding to Disclose (or Not Disclose) a Disability at Work?”

8 Statistics Canada, “Canadian Survey on Disability.”

9 Statistics Canada, “Mental Health Indicators.”

Needs are non-linear—accommodations should be too

People with disabilities have a wide range of experiences, which can vary in severity, may be episodic, and can change over time. At the same time, job demands differ across roles and work context. Understanding the interaction between job demands and lived experiences is often challenging, and employees can struggle to distinguish between what is essential for them to succeed versus what is simply helpful.

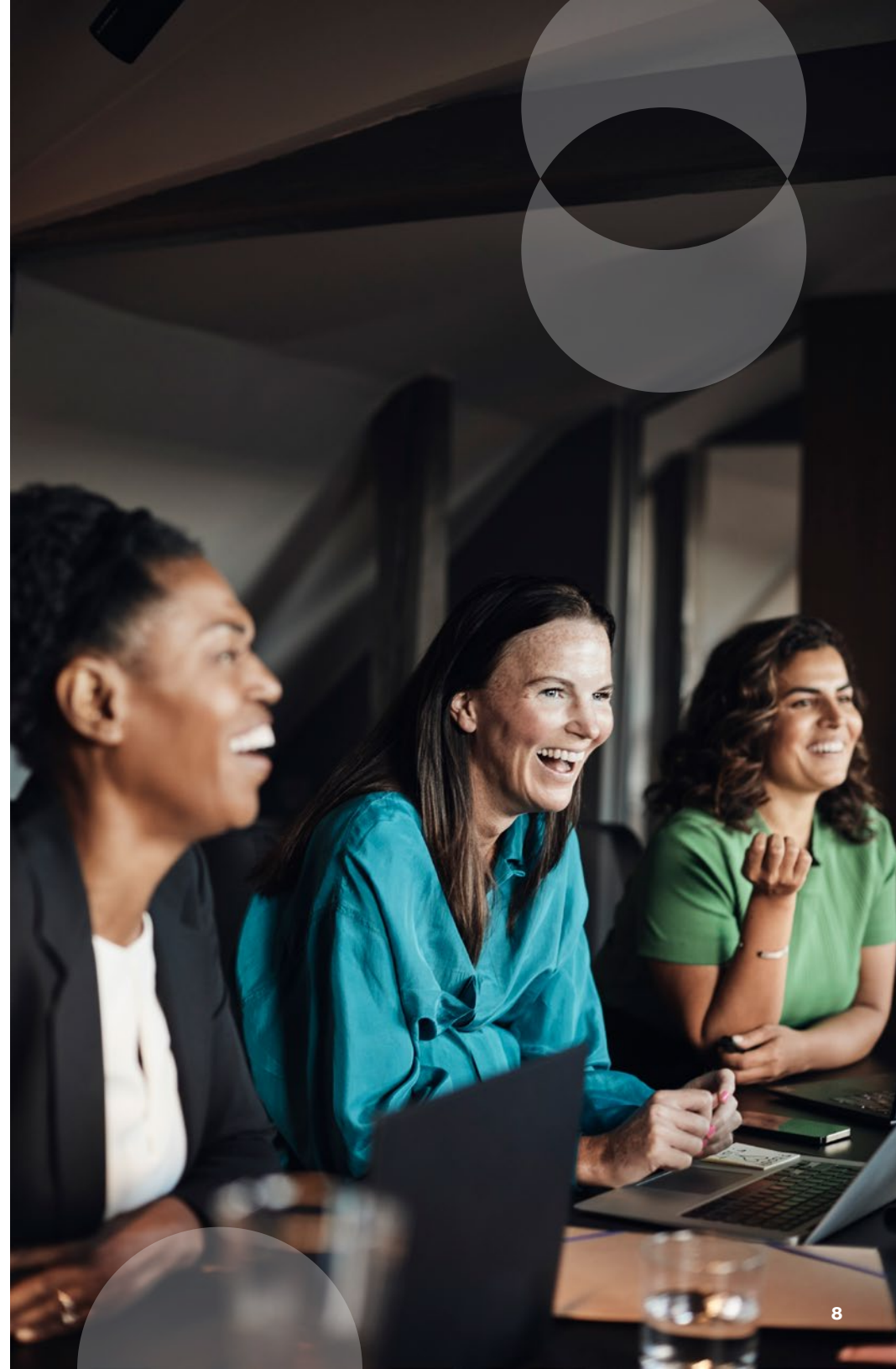
In our national survey, nearly one in three respondents (30.7 per cent) reported difficulty deciding when to request accommodation. More than one in five (21.6 per cent) found it difficult to understand their rights in the process. This uncertainty highlights the need for clearer guidance, proactive support, and workplace cultures that empower employees to identify and request the accommodations they need.

“[I had] difficulty requesting accommodations before I started the job since I didn’t know my role.”

Survey participant

“The symptoms [of my disability] requiring accommodation have periods when they are more severe and times when they recede, which made it difficult to know how or when to request accommodation.”

Survey participant



Negative experiences impact willingness to disclose

Employees decide whether, when, and how to disclose based on past experiences and workplace signals. Many draw on previous interactions with employers—especially during accommodation requests—to guide their choices. Negative experiences can have lasting effects, making employees less likely to disclose their disability in future roles. For instance, our survey data shows nearly two-thirds (65.2 per cent) of participants who hadn’t disclosed to their current employer attributed their decision, at least in part, to negative experiences with workplace disclosure in previous jobs.

Even when employees disclose, their experiences with the accommodation process may prevent them from asking again. Among survey respondents, 26.9 per cent found the process to be lengthy and difficult, 23.2 per cent reported experiencing stigma or discrimination when requesting accommodations, and 25.5 per cent noted that their employer lacked knowledge about accommodations (see Chart 3).

“I’ve experienced having to leave a workplace because of lack of accommodation.”

Interviewee with lived experience of disability

“My employer refused [to] work with my doctor and occupational therapist to allow me to work less hours per day. Instead, if I wanted to keep my job, I had to work a standard shift, which is 10 hours.”

Survey participant

Chart 3

Challenges experienced when requesting accommodations

Q: What were the main challenges you faced when asking for accommodations from your employer or potential employers?

(n = 449; percentage of respondents)



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could select multiple challenges that they experienced when requesting accommodations in the past.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.



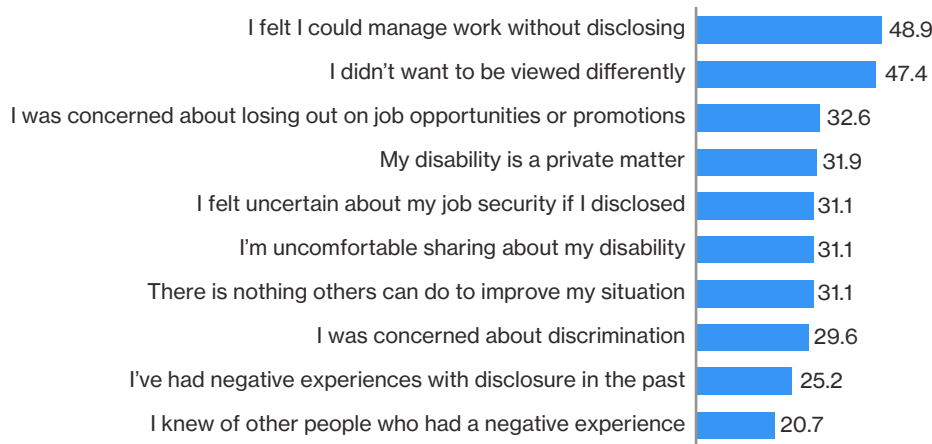
Beyond personal experiences, workplace culture and employer attitudes shape how employees approach disclosure. Employees take cues from their work environment, observing how disability and accommodations are discussed and handled. In our survey, almost half of the respondents who chose not to disclose (47.4 per cent) cited concerns about being perceived differently as a decisive factor. Similarly, fears of negative consequences were widespread: Almost one-third reported that concerns about losing job opportunities or promotions (32.6 per cent) and facing discrimination (29.6 per cent) strongly influenced their decisions. (See Chart 4.)

Chart 4

Motives preventing disclosure to employers

Q: To what extent did the following reasons contribute to your decision to NOT disclose to your employer?

(n = 135; percentage of respondents)



Note: Respondents were presented with all motives and rated the extent to which each influenced their decision to not disclose. They used a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (to a very great extent). Values in the chart represent the proportion of respondents that selected 6 or 7.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.



“I knew that my managers and co-workers would treat me differently if they knew.”

Survey participant

“Some people see my particular impairment as not being real, and I don't want to invite criticism and questioning.”

Survey participant

A way forward

Shaping the environment through leadership

For accommodations to be effective, employees must feel safe disclosing. This requires a workplace culture that consistently signals support—not risk.

Leaders play a critical role in shaping this culture. Through their actions, policies, and daily interactions, they influence employees' willingness to disclose disabilities. Leaders are often at the centre of both positive and negative experiences with disclosure and accommodation requests—experiences that shape employees' future decisions.

When leaders actively engage with employees, maintain open lines of communication, and demonstrate a willingness to listen, they foster an environment of trust and psychological safety. Employees feel safer discussing their needs when they perceive their leaders as accessible, supportive, and open to dialogue. Our survey results revealed that employees who view their leaders in this way are more likely to disclose their disabilities (83.8 per cent).

In contrast, when leadership is perceived negatively, employees are less likely to disclose their disability (63.0 per cent) and more likely to delay disclosure until it becomes unavoidable—typically when their job performance is affected (75.9 per cent). This reactive disclosure pattern suggests that employees see risks in disclosing to unsupportive leadership. Instead of feeling empowered to seek accommodation, they may feel compelled to justify their need for support only when their ability to work is visibly impacted.

Leadership also shapes employees' broader sense of belonging. Workers who see their leaders as accessible and inclusive are more likely to feel connected to their organization—reinforcing the link between leadership, inclusion, and workplace culture.



“The manager at that time made a comment about my medic alert not being company dress-code policy, and if I were to wear it, I would be out of code.”

Interviewee with lived experience of disability

“My leader at the time had been complaining about another staff member being off sick and suggested that she was going to give her a poor performance rating because of her absences. I felt if I didn't disclose, I could get painted with the same brush. That manager is no longer with the company. Now I feel 100 per cent comfortable openly speaking of my health issues.”

Survey participant

Employers can make accessibility the rule, not the exception

Accessibility goes beyond accommodations and disclosure. It requires organizations to take proactive steps to remove barriers—supporting all employees, regardless of whether they disclose. This means anticipating common needs and embedding supports that reflect the organization’s context.

The goal is simple: make accessibility standard, not exceptional. When inclusive practices are built into everyday operations, employees don’t have to fight for basic support.

While individual needs differ, broad and adaptable supports help create inclusive environments.

Know what supports are most important

To better understand what kinds of accommodations are most helpful, we asked respondents which workplace supports would improve their ability to do their job.

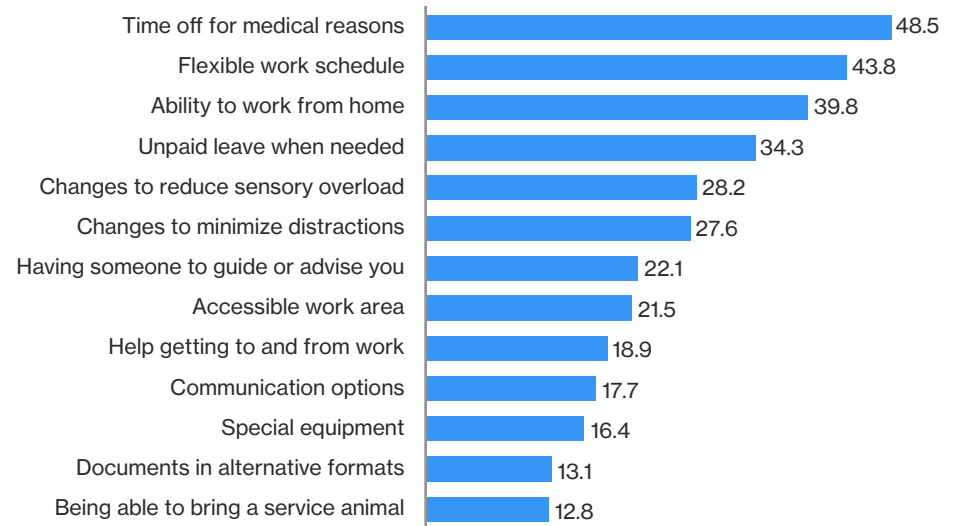
The results are clear: Flexibility is the one aspect of a job that helps most individuals. Nearly half of the respondents (48.5 per cent) said time off for medical reasons would be very or extremely helpful—the most frequently cited need. Many also emphasized flexibility in where and when they work: 39.8 per cent strongly valued remote work, while 43.8 per cent prioritized flexible schedules. Another 34.3 per cent said unpaid leave options would be highly beneficial. These preferences span diverse experiences, reinforcing the critical role of flexible policies in building inclusive workplaces for all employees. (See Chart 5.)

Chart 5

Supports and accommodations needed in the job

Q: How helpful are the following supports for your work?

(n = 293; percentage of respondents)



Note: Respondents rated each support on a scale from 1 (not at all helpful) to 7 (extremely helpful). Values in the chart represent the proportion of respondents that selected 6 or 7.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Accessibility begins before workers are hired

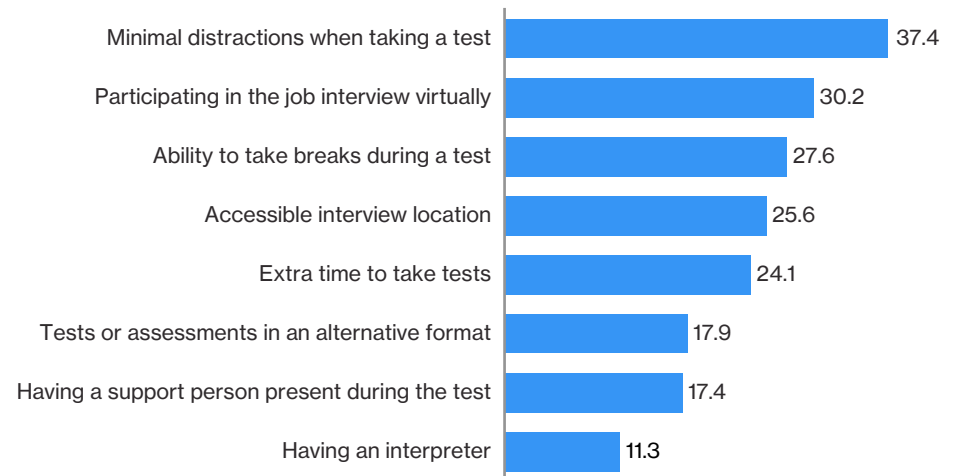
How an organization approaches recruitment sends a strong signal about its overall culture and commitment to accessibility. The survey responses show that flexibility matters during recruitment, especially when accommodations are needed in the selection process. A distraction-free assessment room was identified as highly valuable by 37.4 per cent of respondents, and 27.6 per cent highlighted the need for breaks during assessments. Virtual interviews were another key preference, with 30.2 per cent citing them as an important option for accessibility. These insights underline the importance of tailoring hiring processes to diverse needs, ensuring recruitment is inclusive and accessible for all. (See Chart 6.)

Chart 6

Supports and accommodations needed when applying for jobs

Q: How helpful are the following supports when applying for jobs?

(n = 291; percentage of respondents)



Note: Respondents rated each support on a scale from 1 (not at all helpful) to 7 (extremely helpful). Values in the chart represent the proportion of respondents that selected 6 or 7.
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Actionable insights

Employers who want to make their workplaces more inclusive for people with disabilities can:

- **Identify and implement proactive workplace supports where possible.** While the feasibility of proactively offering supports will vary depending on the nature of the job, industry, and workplace set-up, organizations can begin to create accessible workplaces by integrating an accessibility lens into job analysis and regularly gathering employee input on support needs. By offering key supports to all employees, organizations can reduce the need for disclosure, fostering a more inclusive and accessible organization. More specifically, employers can:
 - **Integrate accessibility into job analysis to identify which supports can be offered to all employees.** By applying an accessibility lens to job analysis, organizations can proactively identify where flexibility and support can be built in—minimizing the need for individual disclosure. This includes clearly distinguishing between essential job functions (core duties that must be performed) and non-essential tasks that can be modified, shared, or supported through tools or accommodations. Identifying these in advance enables organizations to consider assistive tools, technology, or flexible work arrangements that can be offered as standard practice—without waiting for disclosure—while also contributing to a clear accommodation process.
 - **Gather employee insights on workplace supports to know what’s working well and what can be improved.** Since accessibility needs are diverse and evolving, organizations can regularly (annually or semi-annually) survey employees to understand current barriers, the effectiveness of existing supports, and opportunities for proactive improvements. These surveys can reveal areas where employees experience persistent barriers to inclusion or performance, and identify preferences for supports that would help—without requiring formal disclosure. Combined with the job analysis information, data gathered in these surveys can identify highly effective, low-cost accommodations that can be incorporated into workplace practices (e.g., adding dimmer switches to lights, offering noise-cancelling headphones, allowing flex time for appointments).

- **Use HR tools and documents to communicate what is available, how to access it, and who to contact for help.** To ensure employees can access and benefit from workplace supports, organizations must clearly and consistently communicate what is available, how to access it, and who to contact for help. This includes embedding information across multiple channels—such as onboarding materials, employee handbooks, HR portals, and internal communications—and ensuring that all materials are available in accessible formats (e.g., compatible with screen readers, using plain language, alternative formats upon request). Managers should be equipped with the knowledge and tools to guide inclusive, confidential conversations, and trained accessibility champions should be visible and available to offer support. Regular reinforcement of these messages helps to normalize the use of supports, reduce stigma, and build trust in the organization’s commitment to inclusion.
- **Integrate accessibility into hiring processes.** Accessibility should begin during recruitment and be made available to all applicants without requiring disclosure—examples include offering virtual interviews, interview questions in advance, breaks during assessments, multiple formats (e.g., written, oral, task-based), and distraction-free rooms. Clearly communicate these options in job postings and recruitment materials to normalize support and reduce the need for disclosure.
- **Create a clear and easily accessible accommodation guide.** Ensure employees know how to request support by creating a clear, accessible accommodation guide. It should outline the steps, timelines, key contacts, and examples of available accommodations. Share it widely—when onboarding, on internal websites, and in staff resources—to build trust and transparency.
- **Train managers to foster inclusive workplaces.** Managers strongly influence whether employees feel safe disclosing accommodation needs. Our findings show that poor responses can discourage both current and future disclosures. Provide managers and leaders with regular training on how to respond to disclosure, recognize barriers, and share support options. Equip them with practical tools—like disability-awareness training, conversation guides, and case examples—and ensure they have access to HR or accessibility specialists when needed.
- **Implement inclusive mentoring and coaching programs.** Mentoring and coaching programs can help create a more supportive, accessible workplace—especially for new or low-tenure employees with disabilities. Integrate these programs into onboarding to provide guidance, build trust, and offer a safe space to navigate challenges and access support early on.

Appendix A

Methodology

The Conference Board of Canada conducted two phases of research (phases 1 and 2) and a final phase for comprehensive reporting on the quantitative and qualitative data (Phase 4). Phase 3 (not depicted in this briefing) was focused on disseminating the research findings, using presentations and webinars, to external stakeholders.

In Phase 1, we conducted surveys of employers and working-age adults with disabilities.

The employer survey explored how organizations collect self-identification information and support disclosure, the extent to which they prioritize disability inclusion, and the mentoring initiatives currently in place. This component was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the current disability disclosure practices and procedures of Canadian employers?
2. What practices do Canadian organizations have in place to support mentorship for disability inclusion?

The survey of persons with disabilities gathered data on experiences with disability disclosure, accommodation requests, participation with mentoring programs, and standard demographic information (e.g., gender, age, province). This part of the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. From the perspective of persons with disabilities, what are the current facilitators and barriers to disability disclosure in the workplace?
2. To what extent is mentoring beneficial for persons with disabilities, and what factors influence its impact?

We followed Phase 1 with a qualitative-focused Phase 2. We conducted interviews and round tables with employers, as well as interviews with mentors and mentees with lived experience of disability. We used the following research questions to guide Phase 2:

1. What are the key features of mentoring initiatives that effectively foster disability inclusion within organizations?
2. What challenges do mentors and mentees with disabilities face in company-sponsored mentoring programs?
3. How can organizations effectively implement mentoring initiatives for disability inclusion?

Although Phase 2 was primarily focused on mentorship, the topics of disclosure and accommodations also emerged across the interviews and round tables. This issue briefing draws on findings from both phases of the research project with a focus on data related to

disability disclosure and experience with accommodations in the workplace.

Definitions

Disclosure is defined by the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) as the process by which workers reveal their disabilities to their employers to receive accommodation.

Workplace accommodation is defined by the [Canadian Human Rights Commission](#) as the legal obligation that employers have to make changes to either physical spaces or policies to ensure that everyone can be included.

Detailed methods

National survey of persons with disabilities

The survey was developed based on findings from our literature review on disability disclosure in the workplace. Questions were reviewed by both the Canadian Association for Supported Employment and the Research Advisory Board for the project.

The online survey was open from December 17, 2024, to January 9, 2025. The survey was administered to a nationally representative sample of 1,000 working-age adults with disabilities. Quotas were established based on a representative segmentation of age, region, and gender. Participants were recruited by the panel research company Leger.

Before fielding the survey, the research team, in partnership with Leger, conducted a pre-test of the survey with 30 participants to ensure its external validity, identifying any language or accessibility issues. After data collection was completed, the overall quality of the responses was analyzed. As a result, responses from 10 participants were excluded and new respondents were recruited to reach the target sample number.

Since the survey was administered by a panel research company using a non-random sample, this survey cannot be considered a random probability sample. Therefore, a margin of error cannot be applied to this data set.

All data was analyzed using R and SPSS. Power BI was used to create dashboard visuals. Data analyses included but were not limited to:

- Analysis of descriptive statistics
- Group mean difference testing (e.g., independent samples t-test, ANOVA)

Please note that the precision of estimates (e.g., proportions) improves as the sample size increases. When viewing data broken down by gender, age group, region, and disability category, please interpret these comparisons with caution, as smaller sample sizes in specific groups affect the reliability of the estimates.

Employer survey

Between May and June of 2024, The Conference Board of Canada and the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE) sent a survey to their networks of employers to gather information on disability inclusion and mentoring practices within Canadian workplaces. In total, a non-random sample of 100 organizations responded to the survey.

All data was analyzed using R and SPSS. Power BI was used to create dashboard visuals. Data analyses included but were not limited to:

- Analysis of descriptive statistics
- Group mean difference testing (e.g., independent samples t-test, ANOVA)

Interviews and round tables

We conducted 40 interviews with employers, mentors, and mentees, and two round tables with employers. The interviews and round tables were distributed among the groups as follows:

- 10 employers with an interest in mentorship for persons with disabilities
- 15 mentors and 15 mentees with disabilities
- two round tables with seven employers

Based on the community's composition, this identified list provided sufficient coverage of experiences of mentors and mentees with disabilities in mentorship programs as well as the experiences of employers interested in disability-inclusion-focused mentorship programs. Employer representatives and mentors were not required to have a disability to participate in this study, while mentees were required to have a disability to participate in this research to capture their lived experience.

The interview and facilitation guides were developed based on the existing disability studies literature. The final guides can be found by clicking on the links below, which will expire after one year.

1. [Employer guide](#)
2. [Mentor guide](#)
3. [Mentee guide](#)
4. [Roundtable guide](#)

To answer the research questions, the guides focused on understanding:

- the perspectives, experiences, and needs of Canadian workers with disabilities and their employers;
- the development of more effective workplace tools and supports aimed at enhancing employment inclusion for those experiencing disability, with an emphasis on mentoring programs;
- perceptions of policies or practices that would enhance workplace inclusivity in Canada;
- employer insights on organizational diversity-focused mentorship programs, policies, procedures, and best practices.

The guides underwent the Research Ethics Review process. All interviewees and round-table participants were guaranteed confidentiality.

Employer interviews

Employers were recruited to participate in an interview or round table through an email invitation that was sent to a list of employers provided by CASE as well as Conference Board of Canada council members (specifically members of the Compensation Research Centre, Councils of Human Resources Executives (Eastern and Western Canada), Council on Workplace Health and Wellness, Council on Inclusive Work Environments, and the Labour Relations Council). These emails were sent in November 2024, and 10 interviews were conducted between December 2 and 23, 2024. We collected 133 pages from the 10 employer interviews.

Round tables

Round-table participants were recruited alongside outreach for the employer interviews. These round tables were conducted on December 9 and 17, 2024, using Microsoft Teams. There were seven participants in the two round tables. We collected 22 pages from the round tables.

Mentee and mentor interviews

Within one week of having the Phase 1 survey data, we created a list of participants who had consented to be contacted for future research. Participants were emailed to schedule virtual interviews with a member of the research team through a Microsoft Outlook booking link. Consent forms were sent to participants once they scheduled an interview or expressed interest in providing a written response. Of the 125 people approached, 34 accepted invitations to be interviewed. The response rate was 27.2 per cent.

The final sample of 15 mentor and 15 mentee interviews was obtained through turnover, such as interviewee dropouts (n = 3) and exclusion due to poor quality data (n = 1). This sample was collected from January 10 to 31, 2025, using Microsoft Teams for virtual interviews and Outlook for written responses. One interview was collected on February 13, 2025, due to an earlier dropout. Twelve rounds of follow-up interviews with various-sized groups were conducted between January 16 and 28 in order to target female participants and increase the number of participants with experience as a mentor. A total of 424 pages of cleaned transcripts were collected.

In the mentor and mentee interviews, participants were skewed toward men (56.7 per cent), particularly men closer to retirement age. Female participants made up a smaller proportion of the overall sample (33.3 per cent) and were younger, on average, than male participants (42.6 versus 50.4 years old, respectively). Most participants (48.1 per cent) reported residing in Ontario, followed by British Columbia (25.9 per cent), Alberta (11.1 per cent), Quebec (7.4 per cent), New Brunswick (3.6 per cent), and Nova Scotia (3.7 per cent).

Qualitative analysis

Overall, 579 pages of cleaned transcripts were collected as part of this study. This text was coded and analyzed using NVivo software. Coding themes were developed inductively, with codes created as the data was analyzed. Themes were examined based on how frequently they were noted, as well as the intensity of the observation. Due to the small sample size, we cannot generalize to these populations.

Appendix B

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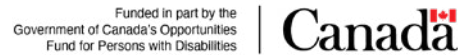
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