

Study: Persons with disabilities and employment

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The employment rate of Canadians aged 25 to 64 with disabilities was 49% in 2011, compared with 79% for Canadians without a disability. Among those with a 'very severe' disability, the employment rate was 26%.

Canadians with disabilities include those with a physical or mental disability related to seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain, learning, development, psychological/mental disorders or memory.

More than two million Canadians aged 25 to 64, or 11% of the population in this age group, reported being limited in their activities because of at least one of these conditions. Of this group, approximately one million were employed in 2011.

To account for the fact that some disabilities can be more limiting than others, each person with disabilities was assigned a 'severity score' based on the number of disability types, the intensity of difficulties and the frequency of activity limitations. Using this score, persons with disabilities were classified across four categories of severity: 'mild,' 'moderate,' 'severe' and 'very severe.'

Among those who had a mild disability, the employment rate was 68%, compared with 54% of those who had a moderate disability. The rate drops to 42% for persons who had a severe disability and 26% among those who had a very severe disability.

University graduates with a mild or moderate disability have employment rates similar to their counterparts without a disability

The difference in age-adjusted employment rates between persons with disabilities and those without a disability was lower among university graduates.

University graduates with a mild or moderate disability had employment rates that did not significantly differ from those of their counterparts without a disability. The employment rates for the three groups, the mild or moderately disabled, as well as the non-disabled, ranged from 77% to 83%.

The employment rate of university graduates with a severe or very severe disability was lower at 59%.

However, a lower level of educational attainment may represent one employment barrier among those with disabilities, particularly among those who had a severe disability.

In 2011, the age-adjusted employment rate of individuals who had less than a high school education and had a severe or very severe disability was 20%, compared with an employment rate of 65% among those who did not have a disability.

Both severity of condition and level of education were important determining factors of employment among Canadians with disabilities, along with the type of condition (that is, mental or psychological versus physical).

Perceptions of discrimination higher among young individuals with disabilities

The survey also asked persons with disabilities whether they had perceived employment discrimination in the five previous years.

Among Canadians with disabilities who were employed at some point in the five previous years, 12% reported having been refused a job as a result of their condition.

Perceptions of discrimination, however, were higher among younger disabled individuals, especially if they had a severe or very severe disability and were without a job at the time of data collection.



Among individuals aged 25 to 34, 33% of those with a severe or very severe disability said that they had been refused a job in the past five years because of their condition.

Among men aged 25 to 34 with a severe or very severe disability who were without a job, 62% reported they had been refused a job because of their condition.

Employed persons with disabilities more concentrated in personal services and sales occupations

In part because persons with disabilities are less likely to be university-educated, they were more likely to be employed in specific occupations, such as personal service and customer information service occupations, or sales occupations.

For instance, employed men with a severe or very severe disability were at least twice more likely than their counterparts without a disability to be in personal service and customer information service occupations.

University graduates with or without a disability were more alike in their employment profile. About 18% of those with a mild or moderate disability and 9% of those with a severe or very severe disability had a university degree, compared with 27% among those without a disability.

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.

However, university graduates with disabilities were less likely to work in management occupations. This was especially the case among men, since 12% of those with disabilities held a management occupation (compared with 20% among those without a disability).

As well, 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.

Note to readers

In this study, data from the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) are used to examine the employment dynamics of Canadian adults whose daily activities are limited because of a long-term condition or health-related problem.

The CSD was conducted in 2012 on the basis of a sample of persons who reported an activity limitation in the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS). The results of this study are therefore a combination of disability information collected as per the CSD itself in 2012, with employment information from the 2011 NHS. Employment statistics refer to the employment situation at the time of the NHS collection, that is, on May 10, 2011.

To identify whether a person had a disability, screening questions were asked to survey respondents on the basis of 10 possible types of disabilities. A severity score was also calculated for each person with a disability, depending on the scores obtained for each disability type. At the time of the CSD survey collection (in 2012), 31% of persons with disabilities had a 'mild' disability, 19% had a 'moderate' disability, 23% had a 'severe' disability and 27% had a 'very severe' disability.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers 3251 and 5178.

The article "Persons with disabilities and employment" is now available online in *Insights on Canadian Society* (75-006-X) from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

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