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## Calgary & Area Labour Market Report

# Recruiting and Employing Persons with Disabilities

Results from the 2014 Calgary & Area  
Employer Survey

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Alberta Human Services has made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this report is reliable, but makes no guarantee of its accuracy or completeness. The user of any information in this report accepts full responsibility and risk of loss resulting from decisions made by the user.

## Introduction

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Alberta Human Services (HS) provides career and labour market information products and resources, with both a provincial and local/regional focus, to enable Albertans to acquire the skills, and to access supports and information they need to succeed in the labour market.

This report provides labour market information and analysis for various groups, including: Albertans learning about the labour market and career planning; employers and industry in understanding and addressing labour market issues; and the HS Calgary Region in strategic planning for programs and services.

Increasing the number of persons with disabilities in the workforce is an important issue for governments, employers, educators, service providers and persons with disabilities, as outlined in the Government of Alberta's *Employment First Strategy*.

The objective of this report is to provide a better understanding of persons with disabilities in Canada and Alberta along with results from the 2014 Calgary and Area Employer Survey around persons with disabilities recruitment and employment practices.

### **Alberta Employment First Strategy**

The Alberta Employment First Strategy is the result of a collaboration between the Government of Alberta and its partners, with the goal of increasing the number of Albertans with disabilities who are employed and have careers that are meaningful to them.

Employment First is an approach to increasing employment opportunities for persons with all types of disabilities, including those with complex and significant disabilities for whom job opportunities in the past may have been limited or not available. It is first and foremost about a shift in mindset from employing people with disabilities as a charitable act to creating inclusive and accessible workplaces that make sense for everyone. The strategy is focused around three main outcomes:

1. More persons with disabilities are employed
2. More workplaces are inclusive
3. Enhanced collaborative partnerships with community partners

Additional information on the Alberta Employment First Strategy can be found at:

<http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/disability-services/employment-first.html>

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## Definitions

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The Canadian government has laid out a very clear definition of who is considered a person with a disability in its Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012 (CSD).

“The CSD used the World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health framework. This framework defines disability as the relationship between body function and structure, daily activities and social participation, while recognizing the role of environmental factors. In keeping with this definition, the CSD targeted respondents who not only have difficulty or impairment due to a long-term condition or health problem, but also experience a limitation in their daily activities. The CSD definition includes not only people who reported being “sometimes,” “often” or “always” limited in their daily activities due to a long-term condition or health problem, but also those who reported being “rarely” limited if they were also unable to do certain tasks or could do them only with a lot of difficulty.”<sup>1</sup>

In the last 15 years there have been two major surveys created by Statistics Canada that have included information about persons with disabilities. They are the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) mentioned above and the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS). The most recent PALS survey was published in 2006 while the CSD has information available as current as 2012. Due to its recency this report will focus on the data collected from the CSD, but will supplement this data from other sources, including that collected from PALS. It is however important to note that:

“The CSD, which was funded by Employment and Social Development Canada, incorporates significant changes from the Participation and Activity Limitation Surveys (PALS) and to the way in which disability is defined. As a result, comparisons cannot be made between PALS and CSD data.”<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to look at long term changes in data but because these two surveys have such major changes it is important to be aware while reading this report that direct comparisons between the data from these two different surveys cannot be made.

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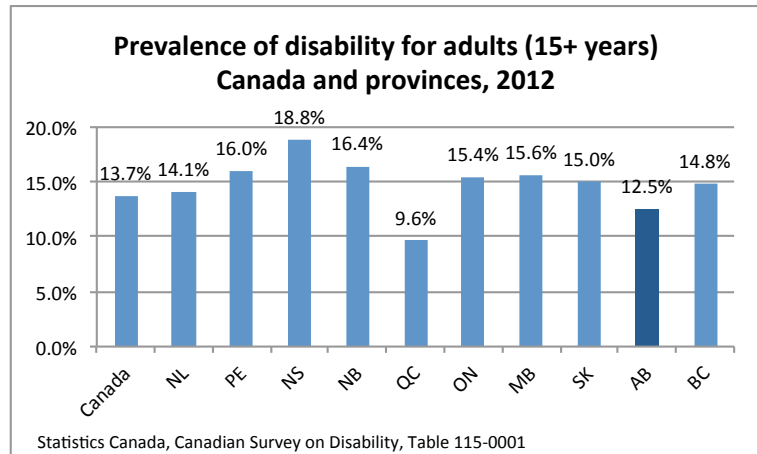
<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2015001-eng.htm#r13>

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, Dec 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2013002-eng.htm>

## Population

### Approximately 12.5 per cent of Albertans live with a disability

According to the CSD, 13.7 per cent of adult Canadians aged 15+ years (3.8 million people) reported being limited in their daily activities due to a mental or physical disability in 2012. Among provinces, Alberta had the second lowest prevalence of disability at 12.5 per cent (369,200 people), following Quebec at 9.6 per cent (616,700 people). In general, eastern provinces had a slightly higher prevalence of disability. Varying age compositions is one of the reasons for the difference in the prevalence of disability among provinces. In particular, Alberta's population is relatively young compared to other provinces.<sup>3</sup>



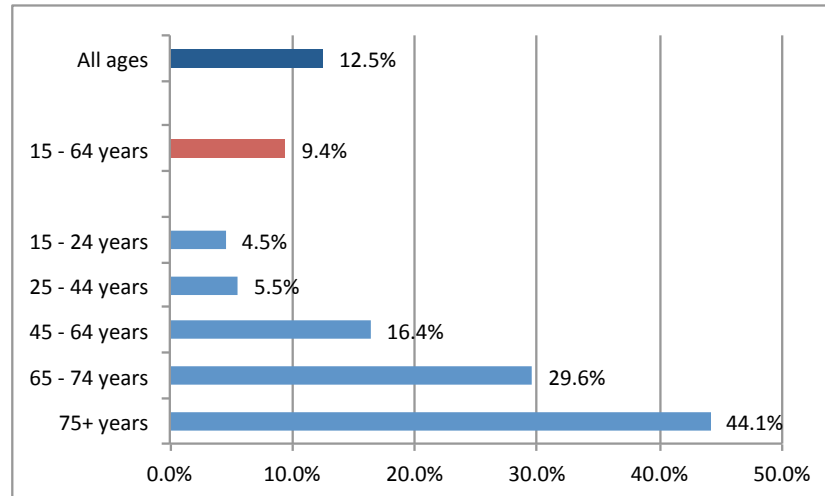
### In 2012, 9.4 per cent of working-age Albertans (aged 15 to 64) reported having a disability

The prevalence of disability increases steadily with age. The working-age population is comprised of individuals aged 15 - 64 years. In 2012, of the 2.59 million Albertans aged 15 - 64 years, 9.4 per cent (242,500 Albertans) reported having a disability. For those Albertans aged 65 - 74 years, the prevalence increased to 29.6 per cent and jumped to 44.1 per cent for those aged 75 years and older.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, A profile of persons with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years or older, 2012, Catalogue no. 89-654-X.

# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Prevalence of Disability by Age, Alberta, 2012



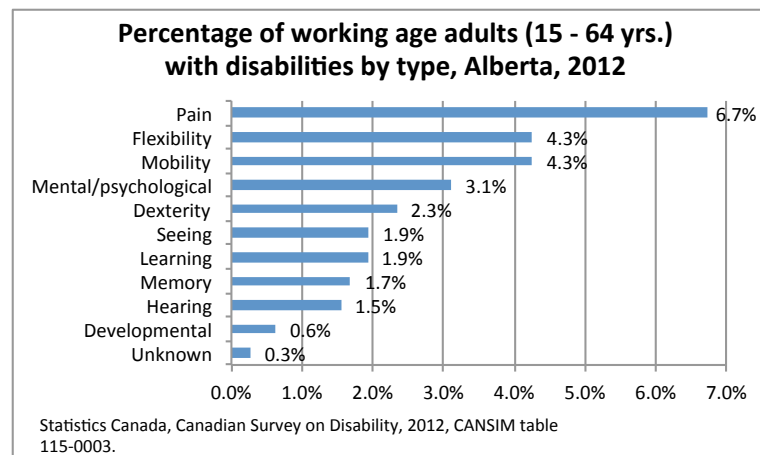
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, Table 115-0001

Looking back historically at the PALS data, the total disability rate in Canada in 2006 was 14.3 per cent, meaning that over 4.4 million Canadians, or about one in seven, had a disability. This number had increased from the 2001 PALS survey where 12.4 per cent of Canadians reported having a disability. It is believed one cause of this increase is the aging Canadian population.<sup>4</sup>

## Types of Disabilities

The three most prevalent disability types reported by working-age Albertans were pain (6.7 per cent), flexibility (4.3 per cent) and mobility (4.3 per cent). Mental and/or psychological (3.1 per cent) and dexterity disabilities (2.3 per cent) were the next most prevalent disabilities. Fewer than 1.0 per cent of working-age Albertans reported a developmental disability. Note that many of those who have disabilities often experience more than one type of limitation.

Compared with men, working-age women in Alberta had a higher prevalence of all types of disabilities in 2012, except hearing.



<sup>4</sup> Government of Canada, Statistics Canada 2006 PALS survey, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-628-x/2007002/4125019-eng.htm>

## Education

### **Albertans with disabilities are more likely to have trade certificate/diploma and college level education than those without disabilities**

The 2001 PALS showed that 47 per cent of Albertans with disabilities (aged 15 - 64 years) had a post-secondary education (trade certificate/diploma, college, university), the same as Albertans without disabilities.<sup>5</sup> In the 2006 PALS, 45 per cent of Albertans with disabilities had a post-secondary education, compared to 51 per cent of Albertans without disabilities.<sup>6</sup> Albertans with disabilities were more likely to have a trade certificate/diploma and college level education (32 per cent) than those without disabilities (28 per cent) in 2006.

### **Educational Attainment of Albertans With and Without Disabilities 2001 and 2006**

Educational Attainment	2001	2006
<b>Persons With Disabilities - Alberta</b>		
Less than High School	32%	32%
High School	21%	23%
Trade Cert/Diploma	14%	14%
College	20%	18%
University	13%	13%
<b>Persons Without Disabilities - Alberta</b>		
Less than High School	27%	22%
High School	26%	27%
Trade Cert/Diploma	12%	10%
College	16%	18%
University	19%	23%

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and 2006 PALS

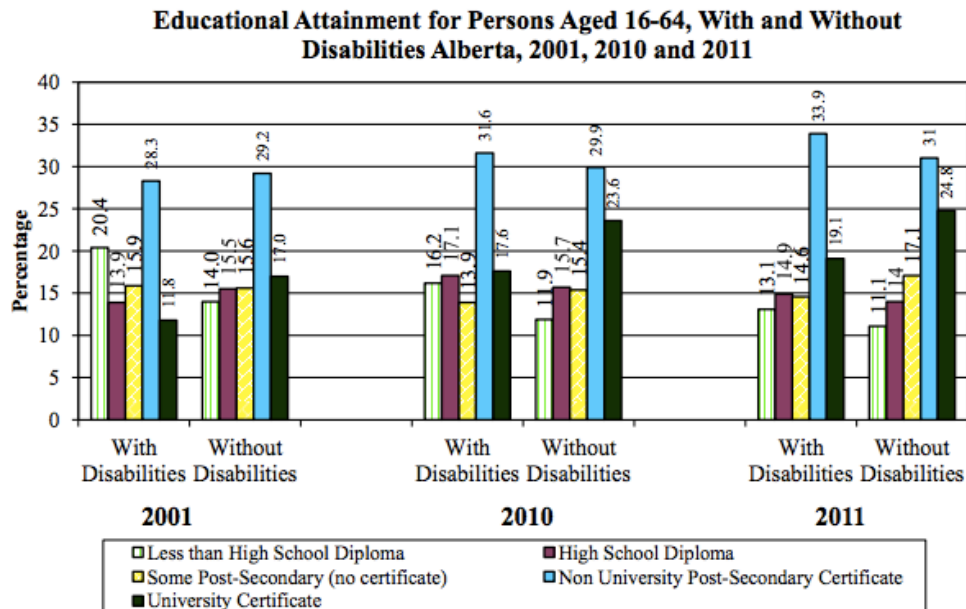
<sup>5</sup> Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Alberta Profiles, Persons with Disabilities in the Labour Force, Data Development and Evaluation, Revised February 2006, p.9.

<sup>6</sup> Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2006 Census Analysis, Persons with Disabilities Profile, April 2009, p.10.

# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

## In 2011, 53 per cent of working-age Albertans with a disability had a post-secondary education

Statistics Canada's Survey on Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) provides further evidence that Albertans with disabilities are more likely to have a college or technical/trade certificate than those without disabilities, though the definition of disability<sup>7</sup> differs from the PALS. From 2001 to 2011, the proportion of Albertans (aged 16 - 64 years) with disabilities who attained non-university post-secondary certificates (college or technical certificates) increased from approximately 28 per cent to 34 per cent. For Albertans without disabilities, the proportion of persons who attained non-university post-secondary certificates increased from about 29 per cent in 2001 to 31 per cent in 2011. Overall, according to the 2011 SLID, 53 per cent of Albertans with disabilities had a post-secondary education (non-university and university certificate) compared to approximately 56 per cent of Albertans without disabilities.<sup>8</sup>



Source: Alberta Human Services, Canada-Alberta Labour Market Agreement For Persons with Disabilities 2012/2013 Annual Report.

<sup>7</sup> The SLID defines persons with disabilities as those who report any difficulty doing any of the activities of daily living, and those who report a physical or mental condition or health problem that reduces the amount or kind of activity they can do in any of several different types of situations, including home, work, school, leisure activities or transportation. The SLID is the only data source regarding persons with disabilities in the labour market that is available annually. The SLID data for the outcomes reported here varies from that of related data sources such as the Labour Force Survey and the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) due to variations in methodology and sampling.

<sup>8</sup> Alberta Human Services, Canada-Alberta Labour Market Agreement For Persons with Disabilities 2012/2013 Annual Report., p.2.



## Employment

The employment rates among Canadians with disabilities continues to be below those without disabilities. On the positive side, employment rates did increase for Canadians with disabilities when comparing the 2001 to 2006 PALS. The 2001 PALS found that 46 per cent of people with disabilities (aged 15 - 64 years) were employed compared to 74 per cent of those without disabilities. In 2006, 51 per cent of working aged Canadians with disabilities were employed compared to 75 per cent of people without disabilities.<sup>9</sup>

### **The unemployment rate for working-age Albertans with disabilities was 3.4 percentage points higher than for those without disabilities**

Looking at more recent data, in the 2012 CSD the unemployment rate for Canadians with disabilities aged 15 - 64 years was 13.8 per cent compared to 7.1 per cent for those without disabilities. In Alberta, the unemployment rate for working-age persons with disabilities was 8.9 per cent compared to 5.5 per cent for Albertans without disabilities. The participation rate, which is the percentage of the population employed or seeking employment, was 55.6 per cent for working-age Canadians with disabilities and 79.2 per cent for those without. In Alberta, the participation rate was 64.7 per cent for working-age persons with disabilities and 83.0 per cent for those without.<sup>10</sup>

“The rates of unemployment and participation, however, may not be the most effective to illustrate the difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities, who are more likely to be discouraged from looking for work. In other words, it is not because persons with disabilities are not part of the labour force that they do not want to work. A more appropriate measure is the employment rate - defined as the number of employed people as a percentage of the total population.”<sup>11</sup>

### **In 2012, the employment rate of working-age Albertans with disabilities was 19.5 percentage points lower than for Albertans without disabilities**

In 2012, the employment rate of Canadians aged 15 - 64 years with disabilities was 47.9 per cent. This was far below the employment rate of persons without disabilities at 73.6 per cent.<sup>12</sup> In Alberta, the employment rate of working-age persons with disabilities was significantly higher than the national rate at 58.9 per cent, but was also below the employment rate of Albertans without disabilities (78.4 per

<sup>9</sup> Library of Parliament Research Publications, *Persons with Disabilities in the Canadian Labour Market: An Overlooked Talent Pool*, 2013, p.2-3.

<sup>10</sup> CANSIM Table 115-0005 Labour force status for adults with and without disabilities, by sex and age group, Canada, provinces and territories

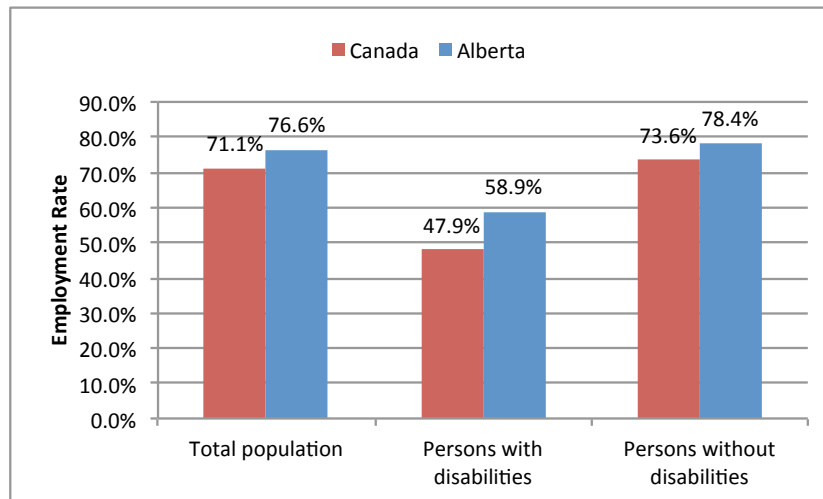
<sup>11</sup> Turcotte, Martin. 2014. Persons with disabilities and employment. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X. Insights on Canadian Society ISSN 2291-0859. p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> CANSIM Table 115-0005 Labour force status for adults with and without disabilities, by sex and age group, Canada, provinces and territories

## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

cent). Among provinces, Saskatchewan had the highest employment rate for persons with disabilities in 2012 at 60.5 per cent followed very closely by Alberta. Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest employment rate among provinces for persons with disabilities in 2012 at 41.9 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

### Age Standardized Employment Rates for Adults (aged 15 - 64 years) Canada and Alberta, 2012



Source: Statistics Canadian Survey on Disability, Table 115-0005.

Even within federally regulated businesses and industries, persons with disabilities fail to meet labour market availability. Labour market availability (LMA) refers to the share of designated group members in the workforce from which the employers could hire. The most common indicator of progress is the representation rate. The representation of designated groups is compared to their labour market availability (LMA). Progress has been made when the gap between a group's representation and its LMA narrows, or when the group's representation exceeds its LMA.<sup>14</sup>

Representation of persons with disabilities employed in federally regulated sectors (banking, communications, transportation and other) has increased from 1.6 per cent in 1987 to 2.7 per cent in 2013, but this is still below labour market availability at 4.9 per cent.<sup>15</sup> The following chart demonstrates that members of visible minorities continue to be the only designated group in the federally regulated private sector whose overall representation surpasses its LMA.

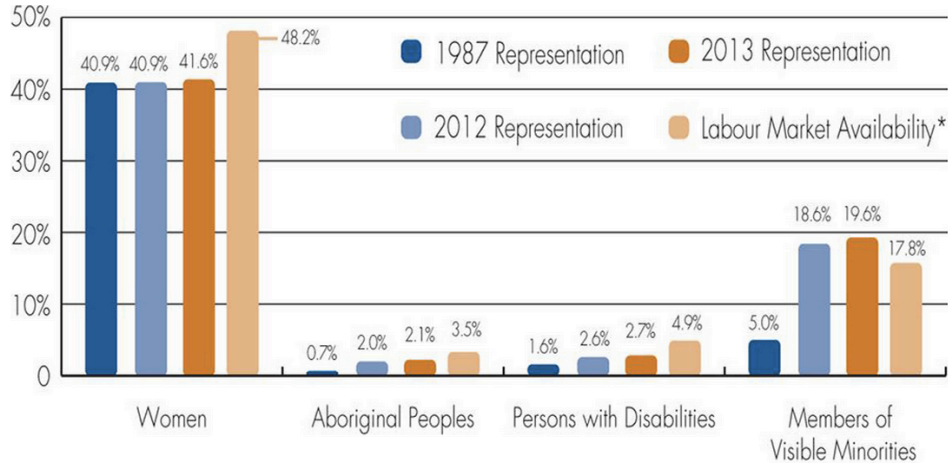
<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada Persons with Disabilities and Employment, Insights on Canadian Society. 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Government of Canada, Labour Program, Employment Equity Act, Annual Report 2014, [http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/standards\\_equality/eq/pubs\\_eq/annual\\_reports/2014/index.shtml](http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/standards_equality/eq/pubs_eq/annual_reports/2014/index.shtml)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid..

# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Progress in Representation Over Time in the Federally Regulated Private Sector



\* Sources: Statistics Canada, 2011 NHS and 2012 CSD.

Source: Government of Canada, Labour Program, Employment Equity Act, Annual Report 2014.

## Occupations and Industry

People with disabilities can be found working in virtually all industries and occupations. With this being said, their proportion compared to people without disabilities varies greatly for different job categories. It has been consistently noted throughout the past PALS and the CSD that persons with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in the managerial, supervisory and professional occupations.<sup>16</sup>

In 2012 the top two industries in which Canadians with disabilities were employed were retail trade, with approximately 207,000 people and health care and social assistance, with 194,000 people. Almost 134,000 working-age Canadians were employed in manufacturing, another 109,000 were employed in administrative and support, waste management and remediation services and 101,000 were employed in educational services. Fewer than 15,000 Canadians with disabilities were employed in the mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction and utilities industries.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Canadian Labour of Congress, *Toward Inclusion of People with Disabilities in the Workplace*. December 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada Table 115-0012 Industry of employment for adults with disabilities

# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

## Industry of Employment for Adults (aged 15 - 64 years) with Disabilities, Canada, 2012

Industry	# of persons	% of persons
Retail trade	206,880	26.6%
Health care & social assistance	194,210	25.0%
Manufacturing	133,870	17.2%
Admin & support, waste management & remediation	109,380	14.1%
Educational services	101,350	13.0%
Construction	95,470	12.3%
Accommodation & food services	85,390	11.0%
Transportation & warehousing	84,790	10.9%
Public administration	81,120	10.4%
Professional, scientific & technical services	73,090	9.4%
Other services	71,880	9.2%
Wholesale trade	47,330	6.1%
Information & cultural industries	37,970	4.9%
Finance & insurance	37,570	4.8%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	34,050	4.4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting	29,150	3.7%
Real estate & rental & leasing	27,820	3.6%
Mining, quarrying, & oil & gas extraction	14,740	1.9%
Utilities	6,630	0.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012, Table 115-0012.

The top three occupations in which Canadians with disabilities were employed were sales and service occupations (406,000 people), business, finance and administration occupations (227,000 people) and trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (221,000 people). Fewer than 45,000 working-age Canadians with disabilities were employed in art, culture, recreation and sport occupations and natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations.<sup>18</sup>

## Occupation of Employment for Adults (aged 15 - 64 years) with Disabilities, Canada, 2012

Occupation	# of persons	% of persons
Sales & service	406,090	27.2%
Business, finance & administration	227,470	15.2%
Trades, transport & equipment operators & related	220,780	14.8%
Education, law & social, community & govt services	158,780	10.6%
Management	119,360	8.0%
Health	90,340	6.1%
Manufacturing & utilities	84,300	5.6%
Natural & applied sciences & related	82,000	5.5%
Art, culture, recreation & sport	44,080	3.0%
Natural resources, agriculture & related production	30,770	2.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012, Table 115-0013

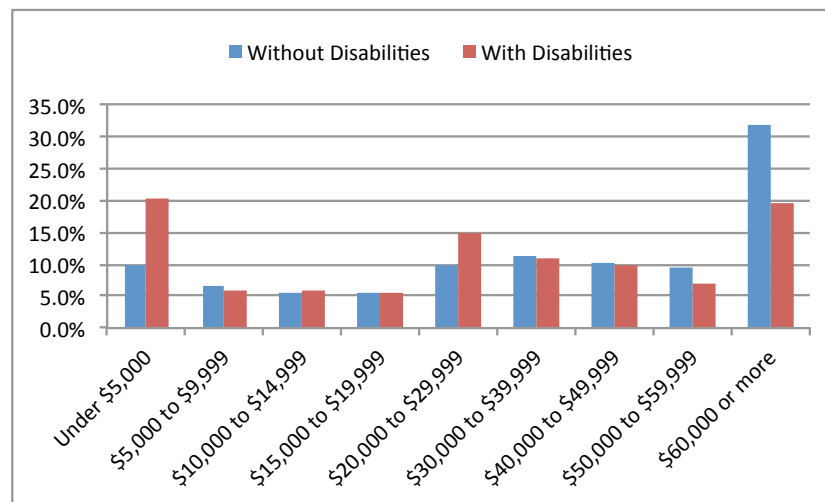
<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada Table 115-0013 Occupations of adults with disabilities

## Income

Approximately three-quarters (74.6 per cent) of Canadians without disabilities reported having employment income in 2010, compared to 43.1 per cent of Canadians with disabilities. The amount of employment income reported also varied greatly between those with and without disabilities. In the lowest category (under \$5,000 a year) out of all the persons with disabilities that reported having some sort of employment income, 23.9 per cent fell into this category compared to 12.4 per cent of people without disabilities. At the other end of the spectrum, in the highest category (\$60,000 or more per year) 14.5 per cent of Canadians with disabilities reported making this amount compared to 23.2 per cent of Canadians without disabilities.<sup>19</sup>

Looking specifically at Alberta, four-fifths (80.1 per cent) of persons without disabilities reported having employment income in 2010 compared to 51.4 per cent of Albertans with disabilities. In the under \$5,000 a year income bracket, only 10 per cent of Albertans without a disability reported making that amount a year compared to 20.4 per cent of Albertans with a disability. Approximately 32 per cent of Albertans without disabilities reported making \$60,000 a year or more compared to 19.5 per cent of Albertans with disabilities.<sup>20</sup>

**Employment Income for Adults (aged 15+ years)  
With and Without Disabilities, Alberta, 2010**



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 115-0020.

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 115-0020 Employment income for adults with and without disabilities.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

## **The median employment income for Albertans with disabilities is approximately \$14,000 lower than for Albertans without disabilities**

The median employment income<sup>21</sup> for Canadians (aged 15+ years) without disabilities in 2010 was \$32,934 per year. This is higher than the median employment income for Canadians with disabilities which was \$22,232. The gap between these two median incomes was slightly greater in Alberta. The median employment income for Albertans (aged 15+ years) without disabilities in 2010 was \$41,015 per year, while the median employment income for Albertans with disabilities was \$27,053 - a gap of approximately \$14,000.<sup>22</sup>

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## Barriers to Employment

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Barriers to employment are present in both private and public sectors. However, there are differences between the two that contribute to the accessibility for persons with disabilities.

“The public sector has the financial resources necessary to provide accommodations for people with disabilities, as well as policies to encourage their increased representation, such as the federal Employment Equity Act. Small and medium-sized businesses in the private sector face greater challenges when it comes to ensuring accessibility or accommodations, often due to limited resources.”<sup>23</sup>

When looking at employment numbers, it is important to consider factors that could influence a person’s employability. Some of these barriers include, but are not limited to:<sup>24</sup>

- ▶ Lack of education and training for persons with disabilities
- ▶ Social isolation can limit persons with disabilities from encounters with key contacts who could provide knowledge and opportunities to enter the workforce or access training
- ▶ Employers can have negative attitudes and misconceptions regarding persons with disabilities
- ▶ Employers being unaware of the capacity and abilities of a person with disabilities
- ▶ Workplaces can be inaccessible due to physical location or lack of workplace tools, “enabling” computer hardware and software, websites, etc.
- ▶ Employers lack of duty to accommodate, how to accommodate and cost of accommodations

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<sup>21</sup> Self-reported employment income during the calendar year 2010 from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS). Employment income only, not including government transfers.

<sup>22</sup> Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 115-0023 Sources of income for adults with and without disabilities

<sup>23</sup> Library of Parliament Research Publications, *Persons with Disabilities in the Canadian Labour Market: An Overlooked Talent Pool*, p.3-4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.3.

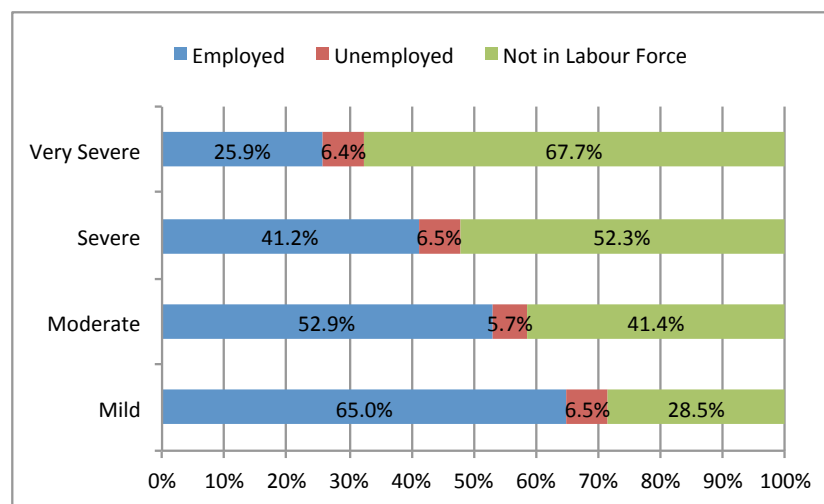
- ▶ Lack of recruitment and outreach strategies to make contact with persons with disabilities

Some of the barriers listed included actual physical and mental restrictions that need to be addressed when an employer is hiring a person with a disability. Others are perceptions that impede employment for persons with disabilities because of a bias, stereotyping or misinformation. The following sections look more closely at barriers of disability based on severity of the disability, barriers to the desire to look for work and employer attitudes. Keep in mind these are just a few of the challenges persons with disabilities can face when attempting to enter the labour market.

## Severity of Disability

The severity of a person's disability contributes to their employability. There is great variation in the number of disabilities an individual may have as well as the severity of them and how they affect their day to day lives. To account for this diversity a severity score has been developed for the CSD by looking at the number of disability types a person has, the intensity of the difficulties that come with these disabilities and the frequency of activity limitations. As well, employment varies widely depending on the level of severity of disability in the individual. In 2012, 65 per cent of Canadians aged 15 - 64 years with a mild disability were employed. This figure decreased to 53 per cent for those with a moderate disability, 41 per cent for those with a severe disability and 26 per cent for those who were categorized as having a very severe disability.<sup>25</sup>

**Labour Force Status, by Global Severity Class, Aged 15 to 64 Years with Disabilities, Canada**



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

<sup>25</sup> Statistics Canada Persons with Disabilities and Employment, *Insights on Canadian Society*. 2014, and Canadian survey on Disability, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/2015001/tbl/tbl06-eng.htm>.

## Barriers to Looking for Work

The CSD also asked persons with disabilities about barriers to looking for work. Of the 2,338,240 working-age Canadians (aged 15 - 64) with a disability in 2012, approximately 28.2 per cent (658,630 people) said they encountered barriers which discouraged them from looking for work. The top three barriers were: there are few jobs available in my local area (154,710 people), I feel my training or experience is not adequate for the current job market (152,600 people) and my past attempts to find work have been unsuccessful (134,320 people).

### Barriers to Employment for Adults with Disabilities (aged 15 - 64 years), Canada and Alberta, 2012

Barriers to Employment	# of people
<b>Experienced Barriers - CANADA</b>	<b>658,630</b>
Expected income less than current	82,360
Lose additional supports	93,960
Lack of specialized transportation	61,660
Family responsibilities	85,580
Past attempts unsuccessful	134,320
Family and/or friends discourage	38,230
Experienced discrimination	79,170
Training and/or experience not adequate	152,600
Few jobs available locally	154,710
Accessibility issues	71,480
Other reason	181,290
<b>Experienced Barriers - ALBERTA</b>	<b>61,270</b>
Expected income less than current	9,420
Lose additional supports	9,970
Lack of specialized transportation	6,960
Family responsibilities	9,480
Past attempts unsuccessful	10,070
Family and/or friends discourage	n/a
Experienced discrimination	10,440
Training and/or experience not adequate	13,610
Few jobs available locally	13,280
Accessibility issues	9,220
Other reason	18,560

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012, Table 115-0007.

### About one-quarter of working-age Albertans with disabilities encountered barriers which discouraged them from looking for work

Of the 242,540 working-age Albertans (aged 15 - 64) with a disability in 2012, approximately 25.3 per cent (61,270 people) said they encountered barriers which discouraged them from looking for work. The top three barriers were: I feel my training or experience is not adequate for the current job market (13,610 people), there are few jobs available in my local area (13,280 people) and I have experienced discrimination in the past (10,440 people).



### Employer Attitudes

In 2005-2006, a qualitative study examined barriers to employment experienced by persons with disabilities in Calgary and Regina. The major findings from this study included that primary factors impeding people with disabilities in these two cities from finding employment were the presence of workplace and employer attitudes and labeling.<sup>26</sup> This type of barrier was present when trying to secure employment as well as maintaining employment.

“Research in Canada has illustrated that some disabled people are excluded from service work for other reasons than those associated with the capacity to accomplish the task at hand.”<sup>27</sup>

When trying to secure employment, people with disabilities can be faced with the dilemma of whether or not to disclose their particular condition or disability to their employer. Not being upfront can create a number of consequences because they may need certain assistance or workplace adaptations to complete the task they are being hired to perform. But labeling themselves as disabled has been observed to lead to stereotyping and stigma. One subject from this study said:

“I won’t use the word afraid to let people know that I’m disabled, but I find if I let them know ahead of time it might give them a set of reasons to say, ‘don’t bother coming in for the interview, because we want someone who is more capable,’ for a lack of a better word.”<sup>28</sup>

The negation of human capital was also listed as a point of discrimination for persons with disabilities in this study. Human capital is generally understood to represent the accrual of desired skills and training applicable to work. As mentioned previously, in 2006 (about the same time as this Regina/Calgary study was conducted) approximately 45 per cent of working-age Albertans with disabilities achieved post-secondary educational levels.<sup>29</sup> Despite their educational achievement and past experiences, this study found that in the cities of Regina and Calgary:

“As a result of discrimination and labeling by employers with regard to respondents’ self-identified disabilities the skills and training that they had were negated and in some instances disregarded by employer perception of the disability.”<sup>30</sup>

Part of the conclusion of this study includes the recommendation to refocus policy direction and expand the resources available to educate employers and employees about the barriers and experiences

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<sup>26</sup> Disability and Society, *Barriers to employment as experienced by disabled people: a qualitative analysis in Calgary and Regina, Canada*. Vol. 24, No. 1, January 2009, 63-75, p.63.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p.67.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p.68.

<sup>29</sup> Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2006 Census Analysis, Persons with Disabilities Profile, April 2009, p.10.

<sup>30</sup> I Disability and Society, *Barriers to employment as experienced by disabled people: a qualitative analysis in Calgary and Regina, Canada*. Vol. 24, No. 1, January 2009, 63-75, p.68.

of persons with disabilities in the labour market. In addition, the study suggests a need for greater collaboration between policy makers and employers to better promote the success of persons with disabilities in the labour market.<sup>31</sup>

## **Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities**

In 2012, the Government of Canada established the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities to engage private-sector businesses and other organizations on the labour market participation of persons with disabilities. The goal was to identify best practices and the barriers employers face in increasing the labour market participation of persons with disabilities.

Some of the barriers identified by employers included:<sup>32</sup>

- ▶ Lack of a diversity champion in the company for people with disabilities – someone who can raise the profile and break down barriers, creating paths to employment.
- ▶ Limited recruiting time to identify and access potential candidates with disabilities.
- ▶ Lack of inclusive recruiting processes, preventing employers from reaching qualified people with disabilities in the first place. Examples included company websites with inaccessible design features such as small print, as well as selection software that screens for experience and other requirements.
- ▶ Uncertainty about how far to go with workplace accommodations.
- ▶ Colleagues may be less understanding of mental health issues than other more visible disabilities.
- ▶ Perception that hiring people with disabilities could bring with it legal obligations related to human rights, performance monitoring and discipline.
- ▶ Difficulty in balancing workplace accommodations with health and safety standards - particularly in physically demanding jobs.

Most of the companies consulted in the study had not documented the value, but understood the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

“Hiring people with disabilities is good for business. We heard this from senior and experienced business leaders who recognize the value of an inclusive work environment. Although mainly intuitive, their beliefs are supported by the performance of corporate diversity leaders on the capital markets, as well as data on employee retention and productivity.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Disability and Society, *Barriers to employment as experienced by disabled people: a qualitative analysis in Calgary and Regina, Canada*. Vol. 24, No. 1, January 2009, 63-75, p.72.

<sup>32</sup> Report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector*. 2013, p.8-9.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.6.

Some of the benefits mentioned included:<sup>34</sup>

- ▶ It improves the culture and reputation of a business through community goodwill, and has a “feel good” effect on employees and customers.
- ▶ An improved ability to attract talented, innovative people.
- ▶ Greater employee loyalty and commitment – essential for retaining corporate knowledge.
- ▶ Improved focus on long-term strategic thinking.

The report also summarized many case studies documenting measurable advantages associated with workers with disabilities, including lower turnover and absenteeism rates and increased productivity. In a study of almost 2,000 employers conducted by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) between 2004 and 2012, researchers learned that hiring persons with disabilities was economically advantageous for the companies. In 57 per cent of cases, no workplace accommodation was required for persons with disabilities.<sup>35</sup> When a one time cost was reported to accommodate an employee with a disability, which was the case 37 per cent of the time, the average amount spent was \$500. Employers in the JAN study experienced multiple direct and indirect benefits after making accommodations for persons with disabilities including:<sup>36</sup>

- ▶ Retained a valued employee
- ▶ Increased the employee’s productivity
- ▶ Eliminated costs associated with training a new employee
- ▶ Increased the employee’s attendance
- ▶ Increased diversity of the company
- ▶ Saved workers’ compensation or other insurance costs
- ▶ Improved interactions with co-workers
- ▶ Increased overall company morale
- ▶ Increased overall company productivity
- ▶ Improved interactions with customers
- ▶ Increased workplace safety
- ▶ Increased overall company attendance

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<sup>34</sup> Report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector*. 2013, p.15.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p.17.

Many companies are already creating inclusive workplaces and showing genuine desire to hire people with disabilities. It seems that great willingness is there to accommodate existing employees who acquire disabilities, but more education and training is still needed to help employers fully utilize this segment of the population. Community partners are also key because they understand business's talent needs and are committed to beginning the process of engaging and employing talented people with disabilities.<sup>37</sup> Highlights of the Report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities also include low-cost ways in which employers can accommodate employees with disabilities, including modifications to workplaces and the provision of aids, devices and support services, and changes to job descriptions, policies and procedures. The report was distributed and made available across Canada to federal, provincial and territorial governments, private employers, the disability community and the general public.

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## Calgary & Area Employer Survey

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In 2014, telephone surveys were conducted with over 800 Calgary and area employers (200 large-sized companies, 200 medium-sized companies, 201 small-sized companies, and 200 micro-sized companies).<sup>38</sup> Employers were surveyed on their recruitment and retention practices, including questions about company expansions and downsizes, layoffs, vacant positions, future employment, recruitment methods, recruiting difficulties, employee turnover and retention strategies. Supplemental questions on recruiting and employing persons with disabilities were added to the survey and results form the basis of the remainder of this report.

### **General Highlights from the 2014 Annual Calgary and Area Labour Market Report Employer Survey:**

- ▶ 55 per cent of the 801 employers surveyed in 2014 had vacant positions that needed to be filled at the time of their survey. The employers reporting vacancies had approximately 2,990 positions that needed to be filled.
- ▶ 47 per cent of the employers reported they had difficulty recruiting qualified employees in the 12 months prior to their survey.
- ▶ 12 per cent of the employers anticipated having more difficulty recruiting qualified employees in the 12 months following their survey.
- ▶ 68 per cent of the employers reported employees had left their company in the 12 months prior to their survey as a result of voluntary turnover.

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<sup>37</sup> Report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector*. 2013, p.8.

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix A for additional details.

## Questions Specific to Persons with Disabilities

Employers were asked the following specific questions about persons with disabilities:

1. People with disabilities identify a variety of types of disability including those that affect the senses (such as sight, hearing and speaking); those involving movement (such as mobility, agility and pain); and those involving mental capacity (such as learning, memory, developmental limitations, and emotional and psychological conditions). To the best of your knowledge, does your company currently employ individuals with a disability?
2. Does your company proactively recruit individuals with disabilities? If yes, what strategies does your company use to proactively recruit persons with disabilities?
3. How much of a challenge are the following factors to your company in recruiting persons with disabilities? Please indicate whether it is a major challenge, a minor challenge or not a challenge. (Employers were given a list of factors - see section on Recruiting Challenges for the factors)

## Survey Profile

The 801 employers surveyed employ approximately 125,965 people. Of this total, 74 per cent are full-time employees, 16 per cent are part-time employees and 10 per cent are either contract, seasonal, casual, temporary or relief staff.<sup>39</sup>

### Number of Employees and Companies Surveyed in 2014

Industry	Total Employees	Number of Companies
Mining & Oil & Gas	25,206	80
Construction	10,968	80
Manufacturing	6,149	80
Wholesale & Retail Trade	18,337	80
Transportation & Warehousing	11,339	80
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	14,008	80
Health Care & Social Assistance	8,626	80
Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment	8,302	81
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	8,589	80
Other	14,441	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>125,965</b>	<b>801</b>

“Other” represents companies from the remainder of the industry categories: Agriculture, Utilities, Information and Culture, Management of Companies, Administrative and Support Services, Educational Services, Other Services, and Public Administration.

<sup>39</sup> For additional information on survey methodology, see Appendix A.

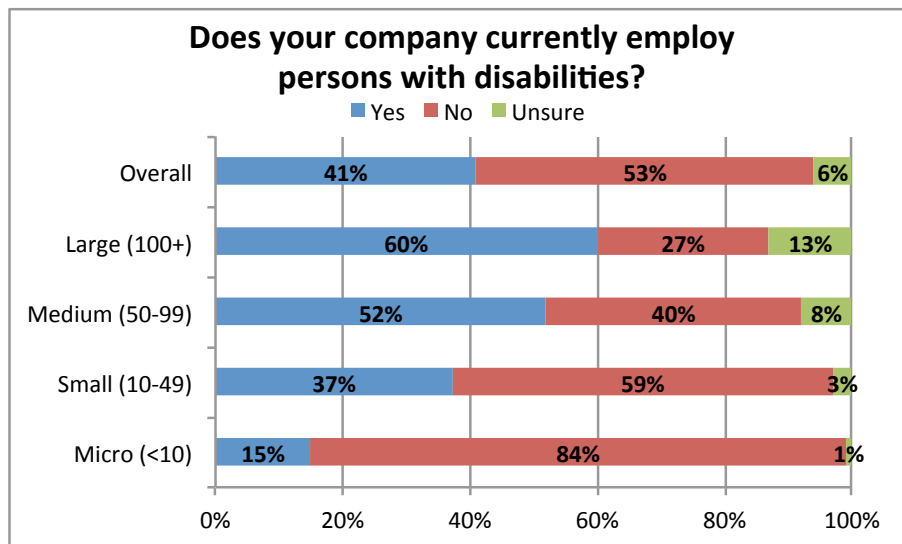
## Employing Persons with Disabilities

**Forty-one per cent of the employers reported they currently employ persons with disabilities. The larger the employer, the more likely they are to employ persons with disabilities.**

Employers were asked, “To the best of your knowledge, does your company currently employ individuals with a disability?” The following charts show the percentage of companies overall that currently employ persons with disabilities, along with results by company size and industry.

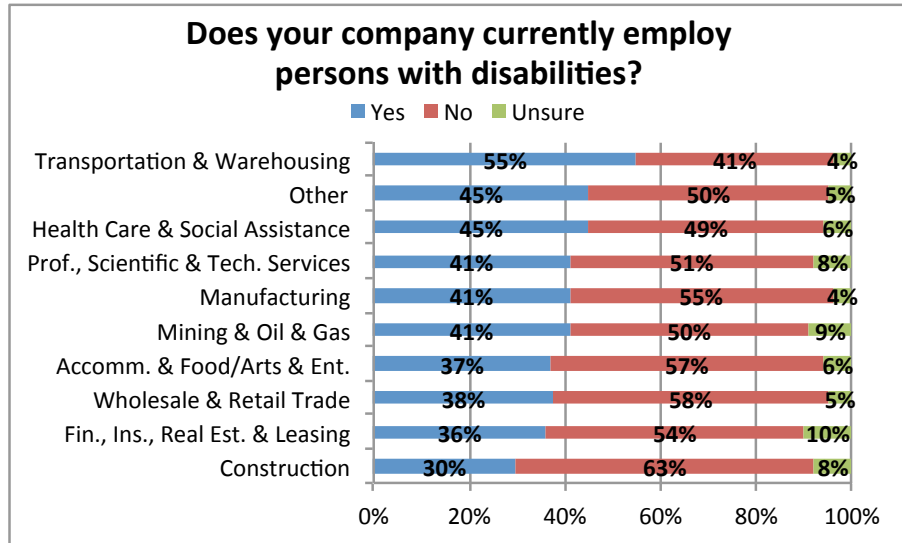
Overall, 41 per cent of the employers (328 employers) said their company currently employs persons with disabilities, 53 per cent reported they do not, and 6 per cent were unsure. The larger the employer, the more likely they are to employ persons with disabilities. Sixty per cent of the large-sized employers (119 employers) said they employ persons with disabilities, compared to 52 per cent of the medium-sized employers (104 employers), 37 per cent of the small-sized employers (75 employers) and 15 per cent of the micro-sized employers (30 employers). It is not surprising that companies with more employees are more likely to employ people with disabilities as larger companies tend to have more employment opportunities and more time and resources to commit to a diverse workplace.

### Results: Overall and by Company Size



Fifty-five per cent of the transportation and warehousing employers, and 45 per cent of the ‘other’ and health care and social assistance employers reported they currently employ persons with disabilities. In contrast, less than 40 per cent of the accommodation and food services/arts and entertainment, wholesale and retail trade, finance, insurance, real estate and leasing and construction employers currently employ persons with disabilities.

## Results: By Industry



Following are some select comments from employers that currently employ and do not employ persons with disabilities

### Employer Comments: Employers that currently employ persons with disabilities

- ▶ “All of our work here is mathematically based. We didn't realize there was an untapped resource with autistic people. We have an autistic employee that has been here for two weeks and we're absolutely flabbergasted at what he can do. We need about 12 more of him and it's really opened our eyes.” - Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We have people working here with all of the above disabilities. We have a strategy to hire persons with disabilities. We work with community based organizations that cater to all persons that would have those circumstances. We hire them for select positions based on their abilities or disabilities and we find that actually helps us with our retention strategies. In Calgary and area we have approximately 150 employees that would fit into those categories in all of our locations (retail, warehouse, office and manufacturing).” - Wholesale & Retail Trade (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “For two years in a row, we have won Canada's best diversity employer award for persons with disabilities. We've got a lot of volunteers that are part of Champions and other community-based organizations. People volunteer to sit on these boards and we attend their mentorship meetings.” - Construction (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “These two employees that have disabilities - one has been here 10-12 years and the other for five years. We would definitely recruit a disabled person for those positions if the people we have left.” - Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ “We have an employee who has been here for almost 20 years with a learning disability.” - Manufacturing (Medium-sized employer)

- ▶ “We have a special needs adult worker who has been with us for 18 years part-time. She works two afternoons a week with her aide worker and she's a wonderful asset to the organization. She's been great for company morale and has a great spirit.” - Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ “For over 10 years we did have someone with a learning disability. We're certainly open to it and would do everything we can to support these individuals.” - Health Care & Social Assistance (Micro-sized employer)
- ▶ “We hired a person who used to be on AISH and is now on old age security. He's over 65 and a part time person. He works when he can and goes home if he's not feeling well. The job that he does is excellent and this flexible position works for him. He's been working here for eight years now.” - Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing (Micro-sized employer)

## **Employer Comments: Employers that currently do not employ persons with disabilities**

- ▶ “It's pretty tough to employ people with disabilities when a lot of our jobs require employees to operate equipment or be in a physically demanding job.” - Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We're a pipeline construction company, so there's no way we could hire persons with disabilities.” - Construction (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ “We can't have disabled people on our job site.” - Construction (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “Unfortunately, we can't hire anybody like that because we have machinery. For example, it would be very difficult for people who are blind, hearing impaired or in a wheelchair to work here.” - Manufacturing (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ “No, in this business it's really difficult because it's very fast paced. Customers come all at once and our employees have to be able to adjust really fast.” - Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ “No, we are in the medical field. We need to be able to communicate very clearly to the patients. We have to be very well educated.” - Health Care & Social Assistance (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ “We can't because we're a tech company. Employees have got to cart around equipment, be able to drive and communicate well with clients.” - Other (Small-sized employer)

Other employers, while they may not currently employ persons with disabilities, are open to it or are eager to learn more about how to include persons with disabilities in the workplace.

- ▶ “I have been wanting to hire people with disabilities, but don't know where to start or who to contact. I will be looking into this today. We have looked to employ Aboriginals and are interested in targeting other under-employed groups. However, it's such a fast-paced environment that it would depend upon the disabled person if they could handle it. We would have to interview and decide if they're able to. The customers here are more demanding of the employees now to have a clean, accurate, fast and hot



food service as well as a friendly environment.” - Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment (Large-sized employer)

- ▶ “No, but I'm interested in finding out how I can proactively recruit persons with disabilities in the future.” - Other (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “Our biggest thing is we are not along a transit route. We were actually interested in hiring persons with disabilities for facility maintenance work and we looked into it. However, we couldn't find a disabled person who could get here. They either needed a ride every day or other transportation.” - Manufacturing (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We're working towards including persons with disabilities right now. In Calgary we have a small branch of 22 people, so we are unsure if it will work. We are proactively recruiting persons with disabilities more in our Edmonton office, where we employ over 1,000 people.” - Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing (Small-sized employer)

## **Proactively Recruiting Persons with Disabilities**

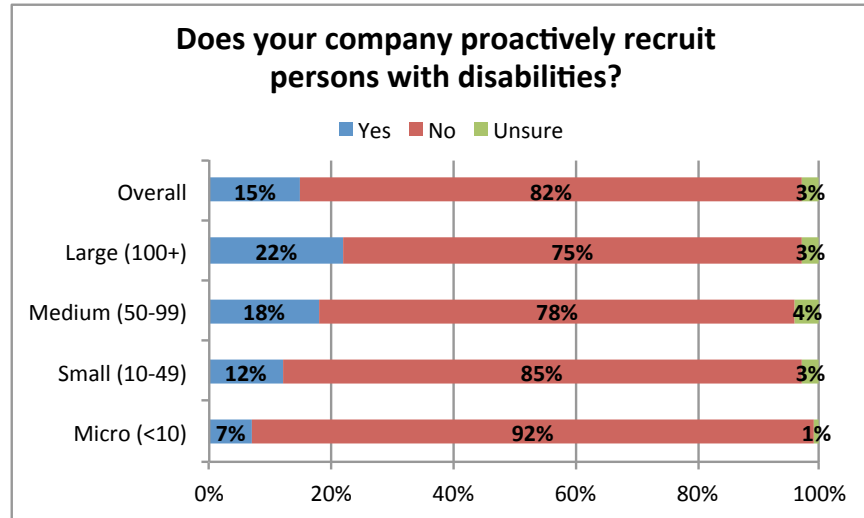
**Fifteen per cent of the employers said they proactively recruit persons with disabilities. The larger the employer, the more likely they are to proactively recruit persons with disabilities.**

Employers were asked, “Does your company proactively recruit individuals with disabilities?” The following charts show the percentage of companies overall that proactively recruit persons with disabilities, along with results by company size and industry.

Overall, 15 per cent (119 employers) reported they proactively recruit persons with disabilities, 82 per cent said they do not, and 3 per cent were unsure. The larger the employer, the more likely they are to proactively recruit persons with disabilities. Twenty-two per cent of the large-sized employers (44 employers) proactively recruit persons with disabilities, compared to 18 per cent of the medium-sized employers (36 employers), 12 per cent of the small-sized employers (25 employers) and 7 per cent of the micro-sized employers (14 employers).

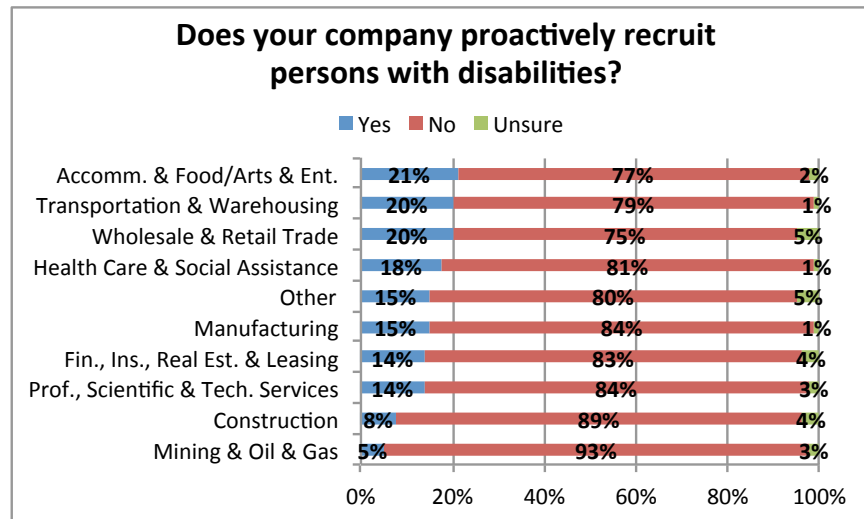
# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

## Results: Overall and by Company Size



About one-fifth of the accommodation and food services/arts and entertainment, transportation and warehousing and wholesale and retail trade employers reported they proactively recruit persons with disabilities. In contrast, fewer than 10 per cent of the construction and mining and oil and gas employers proactively recruit persons with disabilities.

## Results: By Industry

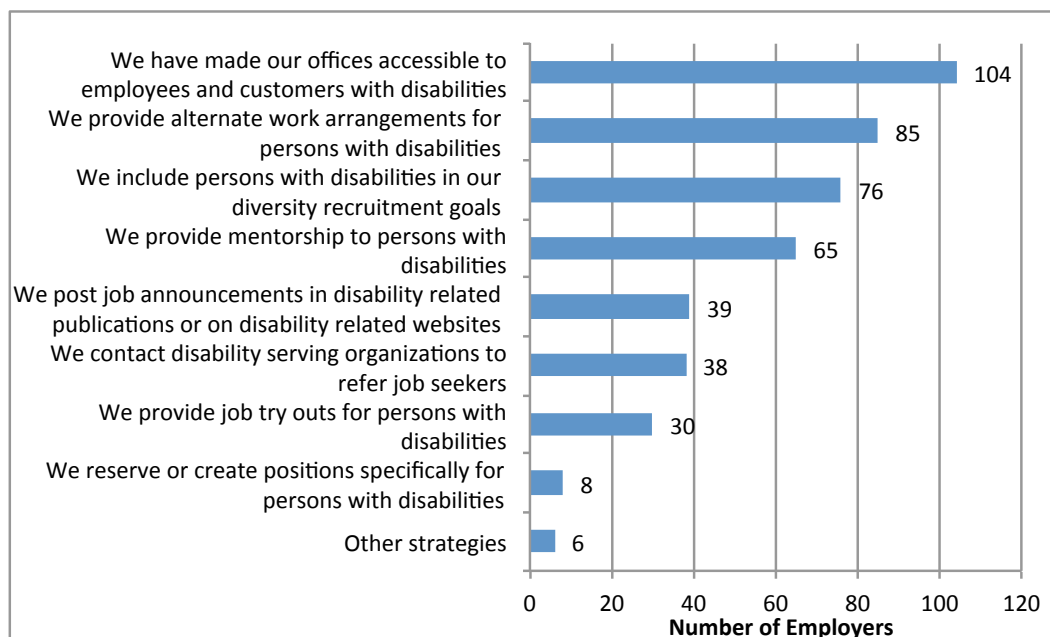


## Proactive Recruiting Strategies

The 119 employers that proactively recruit persons with disabilities were then asked, “What strategies does your company use to proactively recruit persons with disabilities?” The following charts rank the strategies reported by all the employers, along with results by company size and industry for the top four strategies mentioned.

Overall, the top strategy used to proactively recruit persons with disabilities is: *we have made our offices accessible to employees and customers with disabilities* (104 employers), followed by *we provide alternate work arrangements for persons with disabilities* (85 employers), *we include persons with disabilities in our diversity recruitment goals* (76 employers) and *we provide mentorship to persons with disabilities* (65 employers).

**Strategies Used to Proactively Recruit Persons with Disabilities  
Overall Results**



**We have made our offices accessible to employees and customers with disabilities** was the top strategy used to proactively recruit persons with disabilities, reported by 104 employers overall. More large-sized employers (38 employers) and more employers from the transportation and warehousing industry (16 employers) cited this as a strategy.

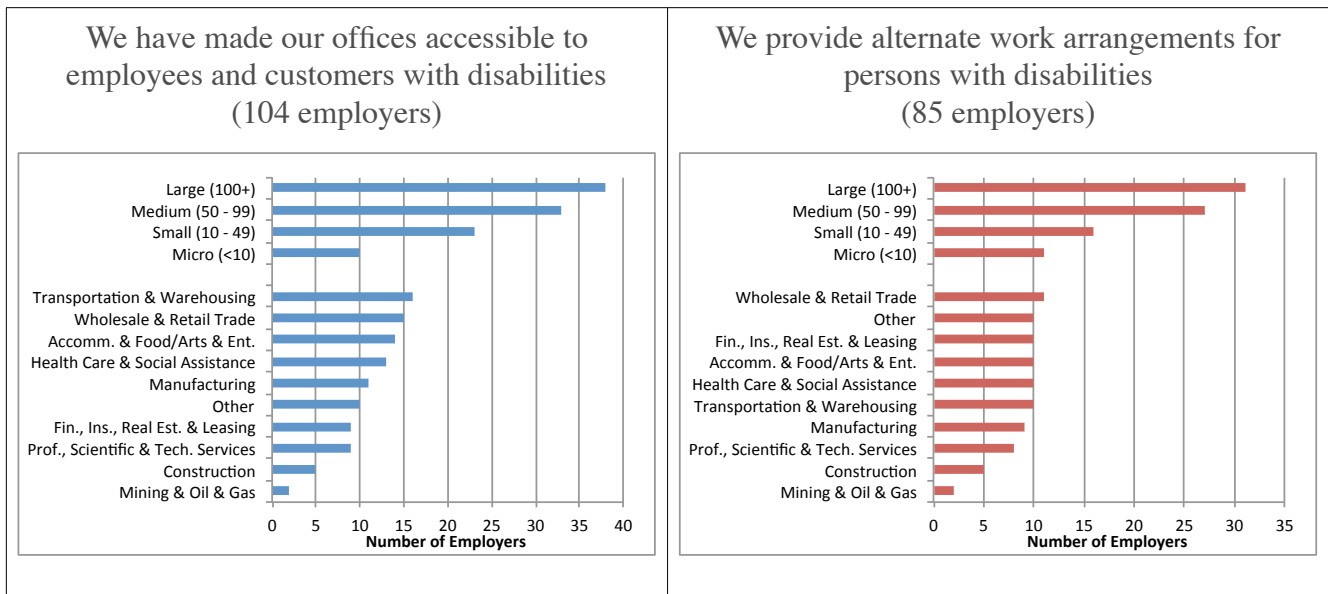
**We provide alternate work arrangements for persons with disabilities** was a strategy mentioned by 85 employers overall. More large-sized employers (31 employers) said they provide alternate work arrangements to proactively recruit persons with disabilities. Results were fairly evenly distributed among industries, with the exception of construction (5 employers) and mining and oil and gas (2 employers).

# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

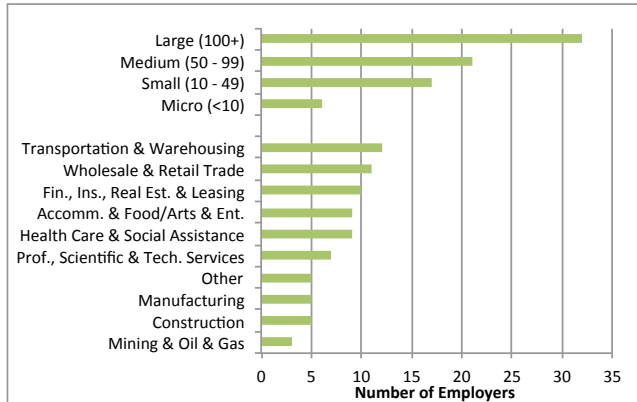
**We include persons with disabilities in our diversity recruitment goals** was reported by 76 employers overall. Again, more large-sized employers (32 employers) said they use this strategy. Among industries, more employers from transportation and warehousing (12 employers), wholesale and retail trade (11 employers) and finance, insurance, real estate and leasing (10 employers) reported they include persons with disabilities in their diversity recruitment goals.

**We provide mentorship to persons with disabilities** was a proactive recruitment strategy reported by 65 employers overall. More large-sized employers (22 employers) and more employers from the health care and social assistance and wholesale and retail trade industries (10 employers each) said they use this strategy to proactively recruit persons with disabilities.

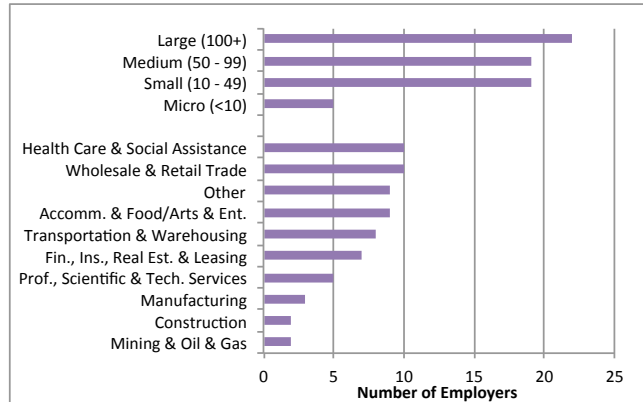
**Top Recruitment Strategies by Company Size and Industry**



We include persons with disabilities in our diversity recruitment goals  
(76 employers)



We provide mentorship to persons with disabilities  
(65 employers)



## Employer Comments: Proactive Recruitment Strategies

- ▶ “I’m working on a diversity inclusion portfolio right now. It’s not up but I anticipate it will be this year.” - Construction (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “This proactively recruiting persons with disabilities is a new venture for us. We have contacted a charitable organization that places disabled people and we’re just making our foray into that.” - Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We partner with various government agencies and groups to penetrate that particular market. We have a lead individual in Toronto specifically for diversity recruitment across the country.” - Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “There’s a section of the programs we offer where we take young adults with disabilities and train them to work. We are in the process of starting a pilot project for disabled persons in paid cleaning and greeting jobs.” - Health Care & Social Assistance (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We have a program with the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University to bring in disabled persons to work in different departments.” - Health Care & Social Assistance (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We have provided modified desks, special equipment, communication devices, modification of premises and modified work arrangements. We will redesign job duties and offer special counseling, specialized training and interpreting services.” - Other (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “In some of our more rural areas, we partner with AISH and other local organizations. Specifically here in Calgary we use Prospect and we’ve definitely hired people out of there.” - Wholesale & Retail Trade (Large-sized employer)

- ▶ “We go to Prospect looking for handicapped employees, be it mentally, physically or both. The Prospect organization has a mentor working with that person.” - Wholesale & Retail Trade (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “I would say there are approximately five major disability serving agencies just in Calgary and area and we work with all of them. We cater positions specifically for a person's abilities and disabilities.” - Wholesale & Retail Trade (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We have a few deaf people working here and they can communicate with each other, so we will look to have a few on staff. We are actively involved with translators for the deaf and sometimes hear about potential candidates through them.” - Construction (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ “We have employees with mental health issues. We do have a partnership with Champions Career Centre.” - Other (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ “We have invested in some technology for the hearing impaired individual, which is being implemented as we speak. We have assisted the person with mobility needs in finding a walker. We have a flat building, so that is accessible for that person. We post our jobs with Champions, Prospect, and other organizations that help hire non-visible or visible disabilities.” - Wholesale & Retail Trade (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ “We have a fully functional, accessible facility and we offer training modules for staff.” - Health Care & Social Assistance (Small-sized employer)

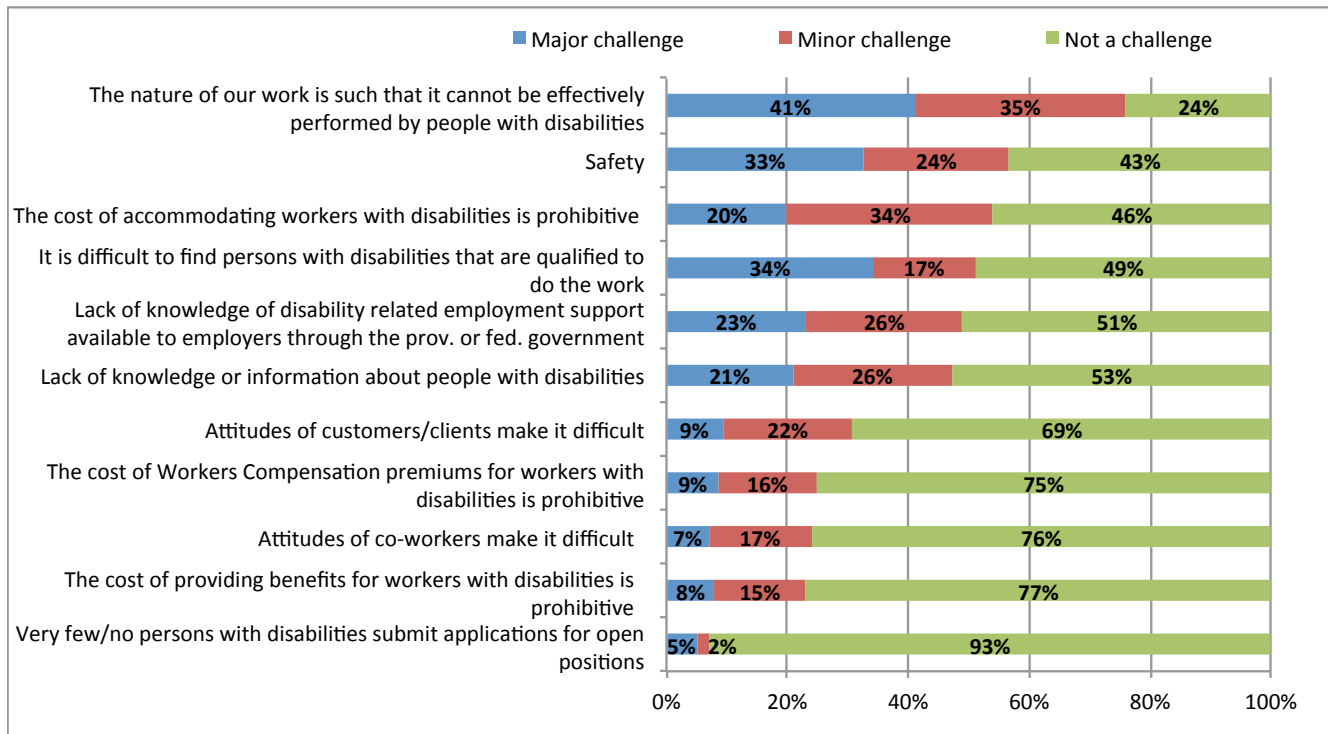
## Recruiting Challenges

Finally, all employers were asked, “How much of a challenge are the following factors to your company in recruiting persons with disabilities? Please indicate whether it is a major challenge, a minor challenge or not a challenge.” The following charts rank the challenges reported by all the employers, along with results by company size and industry for the top six challenges mentioned.

### **The top challenge employers face when it comes to recruiting persons with disabilities relates to the nature of their work.**

Overall, 76 per cent of the employers (606 employers) indicated that *the nature of our work is such that it cannot be effectively performed by people with disabilities* is a challenge when it comes to recruiting persons with disabilities. Forty-one per cent of the employers reported it is a major challenge and 35 per cent of the employers said it is a minor challenge. *Safety* is the next biggest challenge, reported by 57 per cent of the employers (454 employers). Thirty-three per cent said *safety* is a major challenge and 24 per cent said it is a minor challenge. In addition, 54 per cent said *the cost of accommodating workers with disabilities is prohibitive* (major challenge: 20 per cent; minor challenge 34 per cent) and 51 per cent reported *it is difficult to find persons with disabilities that are qualified to do the work* (major challenge: 34 per cent; minor challenge 17 per cent).

## Challenges Recruiting Persons with Disabilities



**The nature of our work is such that it cannot be effectively performed by people with disabilities** was reported as a challenge by 76 per cent of the employers overall. More small-sized employers (85 per cent) and more employers from the construction (86 per cent) and manufacturing (84 per cent) industries cited this as a challenge. Comments from employers in these two industries pointed to the extreme physical demands of many of the jobs as the reason.

**Safety** was reported as a challenge by 57 per cent of the employers overall. More small and medium-sized employers (62 per cent) and more employers from the construction (80 per cent) and manufacturing (84 per cent) industries said safety was a challenge.

**The cost of accommodating workers with disabilities** was reported as a challenge by 54 per cent of the employers overall, however fewer large-sized employers (45 per cent) reported this as a challenge. When looking at the results by industry, more employees from the health care and social assistance (64 per cent) and construction (61 per cent) industries cited the cost of accommodating workers with disabilities was a challenge.

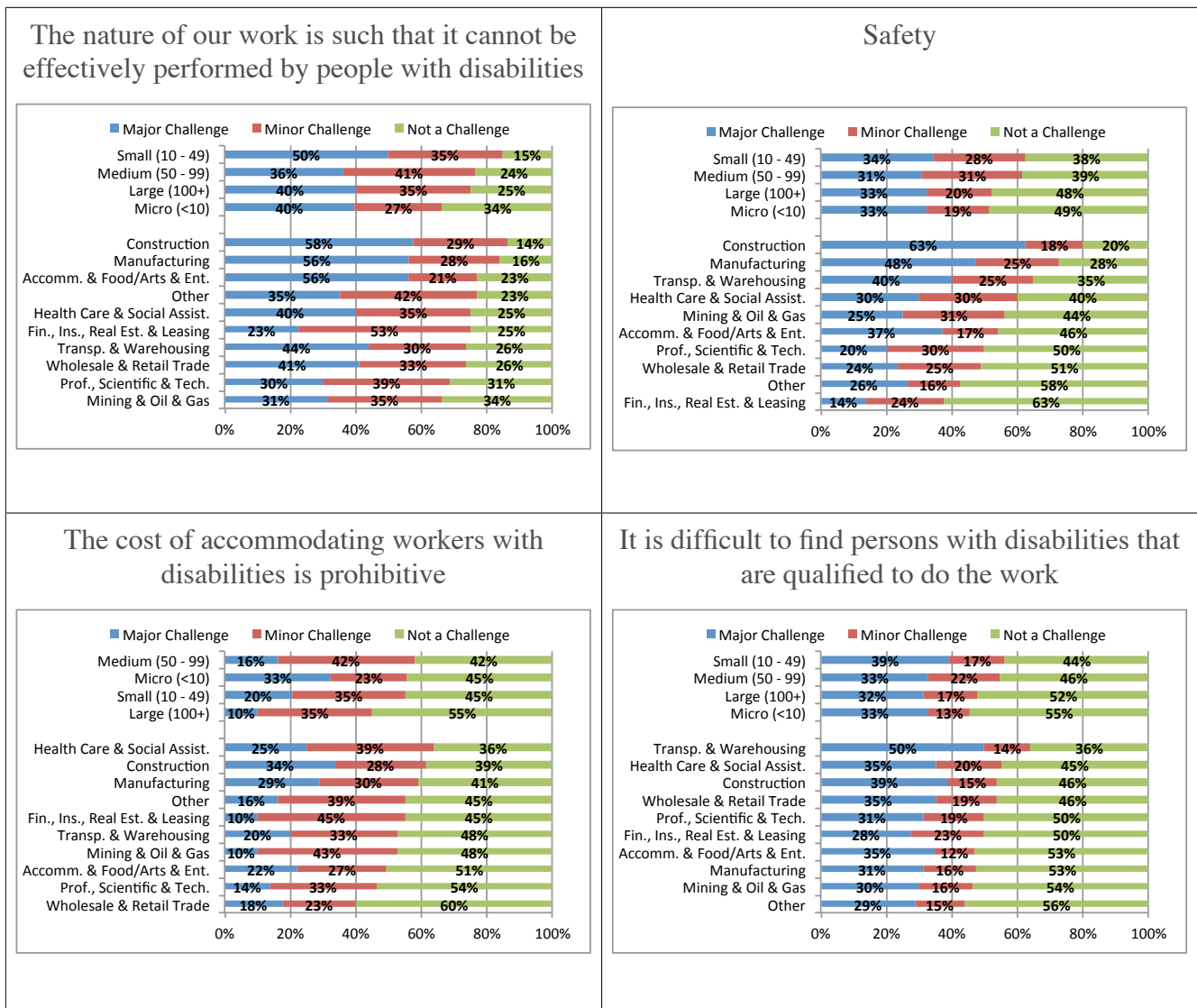
**It is difficult to find persons with disabilities that are qualified to do the work** was reported as a challenge by 51 per cent of the employers overall. More small (56 per cent) and medium-sized employers (55 per cent) and more employers from the transportation and warehousing industry (64 per cent) reported this as a challenge.

# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Lack of knowledge of disability related employment support** was cited as a challenge by 49 per cent of the employers overall. Results were fairly similar among company sizes, however more employers from the accommodation and food services/arts and entertainment industry (62 per cent) said a lack of knowledge of disability related employment support was a challenge.

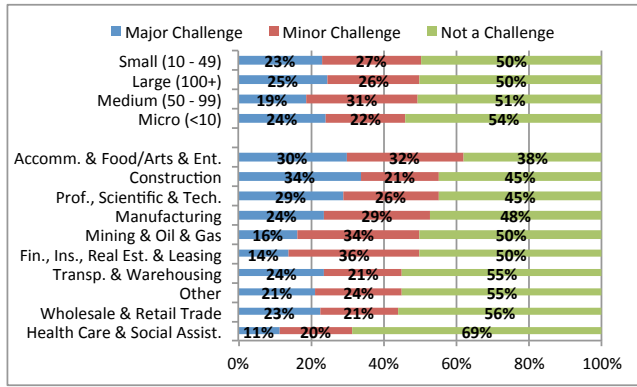
**Lack of knowledge or information about people with disabilities** was reported as a challenge by 47 per cent of the employers overall. Again, results were fairly similar among company sizes, however more employers from the accommodation and food services/arts and entertainment industry (62 per cent) cited this as a challenge.

## Top Challenges by Company Size and Industry

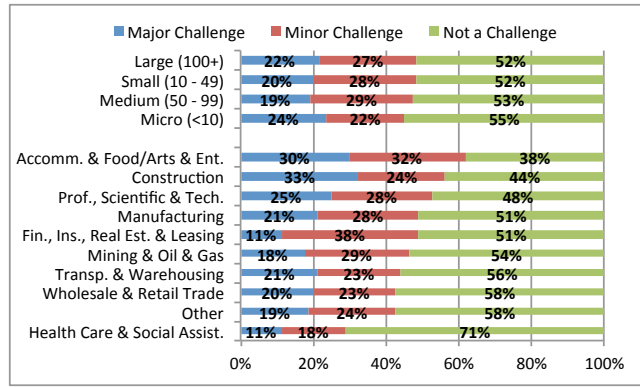




## Lack of knowledge of disability related employment support



## Lack of knowledge of or information about people with disabilities



## Employer Comments: Challenges recruiting persons with disabilities

- ▶ “Absolutely, some of our work may not be easily performed by persons with disabilities. We aren't aware of any employment supports, so certainly that's a surprise. I don't think anyone on our staff would be that harsh, but attitudes of customers may make it difficult.” - Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “Some of our work requires operating lifts or teaching sports. Food services is very, very busy. It's pretty tough because we don't have many sit down jobs, even at the ticket windows. We have thought about it, but it's a pretty tough go here for persons with disabilities.” - Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “It's so hard working in construction because most of the people have to be able to see, hear and climb or lift. I don't know in the field what disabilities we could work with besides emotional or some mental disabilities. Safety is a huge factor in our decision.” - Construction (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “I would say that across all industries there needs to be more information in how employers can help people with disabilities go into the workplace.” - Wholesale & Retail Trade (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “The major challenge is that we're already dealing with a vulnerable client: Seniors. I have been approached by agencies funded by provincial government in the past, but the fact is we're already dealing with a compromised client. Our employees are responsible for the care of another human being, so that makes it hard to employ people with disabilities.” - Health Care & Social Assistance (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ Attitudes of customers and clients in the office is not a challenge, but it is in the field.” - Mining & Oil & Gas (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ “The biggest limitation for us is the physical nature of the job. For example, you have to have good eyesight for driving, warehouse, or shop positions so you can be aware of the sometimes dangerous

surroundings. A person in a wheelchair would have to be in the office and we don't have a large staff there or very many open positions to put them into.” - Transportation & Warehousing (Medium-sized employer)

- ▶ “I think the issue in our Calgary office is that we're located on the second floor of a building with no elevator. There is limited access for persons with certain disabilities.” - Health Care & Social Assistance (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ “The nature of our work is that we work with individuals with developmental disabilities. It's really difficult for someone with a physical disability to work here, depending on what the disability is. Our clients require physical support and have a limited cognitive capacity. Staff need to be well in-tuned to who they're supporting.” - Health Care & Social Assistance (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ “I think coworkers here would be very supportive, but customers and clients would not be.” - Mining & Oil & Gas (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ “It depends on the type of disability and what those limitations are. We can design tasks around certain disabilities. There's a broad spectrum of disabilities, and certain jobs take certain physical or mental capabilities. We have both warehouse and office jobs, so as long as they can fit in somewhere without affecting productivity it wouldn't be a problem. Information about persons with disabilities, I don't even know where to go to find that by myself.” - Transportation & Warehousing (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ “The nature of the work is the essence of the challenge. The jobs are outdoor labour with horses, so anyone with limited mobility just is not going to work out. We're such a small enterprise that cost is a factor, so it really hasn't served us to explore hiring persons with disabilities.” - Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment (Micro-sized employer)
- ▶ “I think it's going to be a major challenge in all aspects. It's too difficult for a person with a disability to work in our field, in construction. It's just not feasible. It's very demanding work to be in the flooring installation business. I've never even had a person with a disability approach me to work in this field.” - Construction (Micro-sized employer)
- ▶ “Real estate is a people business, so we can't have people with disabilities.” - Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing (Micro-sized employer)
- ▶ “We are an accounting company, so it's going to be major challenge in every aspect. I don't see how a person with a disability could fit into my company for bookkeeping or accounting.” - Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (Micro-sized employer)

Encouragingly, several of the challenges outlined above were not a challenge for many employers.

- ▶ “We did an entire year long campaign to educate leaders on the real cost of accommodation and it is not prohibitive for the size of company that we are. We are fully participating in provincial and federal government programs. We are quite accommodating for all diversity initiatives throughout the company. We're not experiencing any push back from our hiring managers. The cost of workers comp

is not prohibitive unless they get hurt on the job, and then we'd have full accountability for it if they did get hurt.” - Construction (Large-sized employer)

- ▶ “One of the focuses here is on mental health and how it's relating to safety. We are working on an awareness program for supervisors and management related to the duty to comply. We are focusing on that more with an engaged workforce. I would say there's a lack of knowledge and lack of exposure in terms of disabilities, but not attitudes of not wanting to deal with it. We're working on educating colleagues more.” - Construction (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “One person who comes to mind that works for us is completely blind and works in our IT department. Certainly the company had to make accommodations because when he's typing his computer speaks to him. That might seem like that software is expensive, but in the grand scheme (in terms of what the company spends on benefits, salary and overall budget for employees) \$3-5K on software is a mere rounding error for our company. The cost of accommodations like that are negligible.” - Mining & Oil & Gas (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We are quite involved with disability recruitment, so we have that knowledge. The attitudes of co-workers would not be a challenge. It's really an issue of educating our leaders that persons with disabilities can perform the jobs well.” - Mining & Oil & Gas (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “We're a very progressive organization. We're an organization with over 120 countries represented here and many disabled students. We work very hard at accommodating our very diverse population. We have a very good facility, so safety is not a concern either.” - Other (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “What we try to do is fit people based on their abilities or disabilities into certain roles. For example, the nature of work in our retail stores means we usually can't employ people in a wheelchair but we can hire them for office positions. In the warehouse we specifically look to hire persons who are hard of hearing and have put the tools in place to assist them in there. Based on how we hire persons with disabilities, meaning we find opportunities that would suit them, the nature of the work becomes less of an issue. We have quite a number of persons with mental disabilities working for us as courtesy clerks or baggers. They can't handle transactions or cash, but work well in other positions. Attitudes are not a challenge at all. In fact, I would say the opposite for people in our stores. Customers appreciate the fact that we employ persons with disabilities. In many cases, it makes the experience for our customers even better. We have a store in Calgary where a gentleman has worked there for 20 years and customers will wait in his till line to see him. That's just one example and there would be a number of examples like that throughout the province. We wouldn't put a person into a position that there would be safety concerns for their specific disability.” - Wholesale & Retail Trade (Large-sized employer)
- ▶ “No issues at all with hearing impaired employees. With clients, we will just make them aware of the disability and bring in a translator or one of our other employees if need be.” - Construction (Medium-sized employer)

- ▶ “The people here who have disabilities, it doesn't impact their work at all. There's not any lack of information within the company.” - Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ “All of our offices are set up for persons with disabilities, even the shower. That's just part of doing business nowadays. We haven't had a lot of people with disabilities apply, so I suppose that is a challenge.” - Manufacturing (Medium-sized employer)
- ▶ “We will provide the right environment. We are part of a large company, so accommodations are possible for us. If they have the general talents we're looking for, we don't have any problem. We haven't received any applications from persons with disabilities to our knowledge. We have a large HR group, so we have a lot of knowledge as a whole.” - Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (Small-sized employer)
- ▶ I've never had anyone who applied. Everyone is very accommodating and realizes it's important to integrate everyone into the workforce because we need everyone. Someone with a disability might try harder than someone without one in my opinion. Somebody who comes into a workplace that knows they have a disability and is conscious of that I think would work harder to overcome that. I don't see it as an issue at all. Our work environment is safe for everybody, with or without a disability. I think the least safe employee is not a person with a disability at all, it's someone who thinks they already know everything about safety.” - Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment (Micro-sized employer)
- ▶ “There are no challenges. The only challenge we have is that the back door is up a couple of stairs. However, I could definitely change it to a ramp if we hired someone who needed that. We have no problems hiring persons with disabilities.” - Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing (Micro-sized employer)

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## Conclusion

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Alberta employers are facing projected labour shortages over the next 10 years and need to begin looking to underrepresented groups to find the workforce of tomorrow. The Alberta Employment First Strategy calls on governments, employers, agencies, and Albertans to work together to welcome more people with disabilities into our workplaces.

“In Alberta, everyone who wants to work, and is able to work, should have the opportunity to build a rewarding career.”<sup>40</sup>

According to the Canadian Survey on Disability, in 2012 approximately 12.5 per cent of Albertans aged 15 years and older lived with a disability. In addition:

- ▶ 9.4 per cent of working-age Albertans (aged 15 - 64) had a disability.

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<sup>40</sup> Alberta Human Services, Alberta Employment First Strategy, p.3. <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/alberta-employment-first-strategy.pdf>

- ▶ The three most prevalent disability types reported by working-age Albertans were pain, flexibility and mobility.
- ▶ Compared with men, working-age women in Alberta had a higher prevalence of all types of disabilities, except hearing.
- ▶ The unemployment rate for working-age Albertans with disabilities was 8.9 per cent compared to 5.5 per cent for Albertans aged 15 - 64 without disabilities.
- ▶ The employment rate of Albertans aged 15 - 64 years with disabilities was 58.9 per cent. This was far below the employment rate of Albertans without disabilities at 78.4 per cent. Among provinces, however, Alberta had the second highest employment rate for persons with disabilities, after Saskatchewan at 60.5 per cent.
- ▶ Over half of working-age Albertans with disabilities have a post-secondary education (SLID, 2011).
- ▶ The median employment income for Albertans with disabilities was approximately \$14,000 lower than for Albertans without disabilities.
- ▶ About one-quarter of working-age Albertans with disabilities encountered barriers which discouraged them from looking for work.

Over 800 Calgary and area employers shared their opinions and experiences on recruiting and employing persons with disabilities. The strength of this survey is the ability to examine results specific to Calgary and area by company size and industry. Encouragingly, many employers have embraced diversity (41 per cent overall) with 60 per cent of the large-sized employers (100+ employees) and over half of the medium-sized employers (50 - 99 employees) currently employing persons with disabilities. The vast array of employer comments from Calgary and area employers that hire people with disabilities clearly supports the results of other research that recruiting and employing people with disabilities makes good business sense.

However, the fact still remains that the majority of employers overall (53 per cent) do not currently employ persons with disabilities. The proportion of employers that do not currently employ persons with disabilities is higher among small-sized employers with 10 - 49 employees (59 per cent) and micro-sized employers with less than 10 employees (84 per cent). This suggests that much more can be done to understand employers' concerns (particularly among smaller sized employers), dispel myths, provide more information and encourage employers to consider recruiting persons with disabilities.

Somewhat discouraging is the fact that overall, only 15 per cent of the 801 Calgary and area employers proactively recruit persons with disabilities. This proportion is higher among large-sized (22 per cent) and medium-sized employers (18 per cent), but is still low. Many employers are missing out on a valuable pool of capable employees.

Over three-quarters of the 801 employers cited nature of the work as a challenge and 57 per cent reported safety as a challenge when recruiting people with disabilities. These concerns were more prevalent among small and medium-sized employers and among employers in industries such as construction and manufacturing that require physically demanding work or work with machinery and

equipment. At the same time, many employers in these industries said they have no challenges recruiting and employing persons with disabilities. Employers would benefit from information and best practices on how physically demanding jobs or jobs requiring the use of heavy machinery or equipment are not necessarily a barrier for persons with disabilities.

It is clear that employers need to look to new and non-traditional sources for skilled employees - and that includes persons with disabilities. As the population ages and disability rates increase, employers cannot afford to exclude this group of working-age adults from the labour force. According to the 2014 Calgary & Area Annual Employer Survey, 47 per cent of the 801 employers had difficulty recruiting qualified employees. In addition, 55 per cent of the employers had approximately 2,990 vacant positions that needed to be filled at the time of their survey.

An important part of considering, planning, recruiting and employing persons with disabilities is being aware of the resources available to employers and persons with disabilities. A lack of knowledge or information on disability related employment supports and on persons with disabilities in general was cited by close to half of the employers as a challenge. Many resources and supports are available to employers - employers just need to make a commitment to informing themselves.

Community partners are an excellent resource as they understand business's talent needs and can help employers recruit and support talented people with disabilities. The Employment First Strategy page on the Alberta Human Services website also provides valuable information:

<http://humanservices.alberta.ca/disability-services/employment-first.html>

- ▶ Calgary Alternative Support Services: [www.c-a-s-s.org](http://www.c-a-s-s.org)
- ▶ Calgary Employment First Network: [www.calgaryemploymentfirst.ca](http://www.calgaryemploymentfirst.ca)
- ▶ Champions Career Centre: [www.championscareercentre.org](http://www.championscareercentre.org)
- ▶ Columbia College: [www.columbia.ab.ca/programs-cources/pre-career-programs/community-support-services-department/](http://www.columbia.ab.ca/programs-cources/pre-career-programs/community-support-services-department/)
- ▶ Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary: [www.ddrc.ca](http://www.ddrc.ca) and [www.everyonebelongs.com](http://www.everyonebelongs.com)
- ▶ Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society: [www.faims.org](http://www.faims.org)
- ▶ Inclusion Alberta (formerly Alberta Association of Community Living): [www.inclusionalberta.org](http://www.inclusionalberta.org)
- ▶ Progressive Alternatives Society of Calgary: [www.pasc-calgary.org](http://www.pasc-calgary.org)
- ▶ Prospect: [www.prospectnow.ca](http://www.prospectnow.ca)
- ▶ Supported Lifestyles: [www.supportedlifestyles.com](http://www.supportedlifestyles.com)
- ▶ Talent Pool: [www.talentpoolhub.com](http://www.talentpoolhub.com)
- ▶ Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research: [www.vecova.ca](http://www.vecova.ca)
- ▶ Viable: [www.breakbarriers.ca](http://www.breakbarriers.ca)

All employers can learn from the 41 per cent of organizations in the Calgary region that employ persons with disabilities and the 15 per cent that proactively recruit persons with disabilities. Many of these employers, across all company sizes and industries, have formalized their commitment to hiring people with disabilities in their company policies and guidelines. In addition, they have made their workplaces accessible to employees and customers with disabilities, provided alternate work arrangements, mentorship and job try-outs to people with disabilities. Because they understand that there are skill sets they can draw from and that people with disabilities are an asset to their organizations, many have reserved positions in their companies and have formed partnerships and collaborated with community partners and educational institutions in order to increase the number of persons with disabilities in the workplace. It is clear that companies that employ and proactively recruit people with disabilities focus on ability, rather than disability.

## Appendix A: Survey Methodology

In 2014, telephone surveys were conducted with over 800 Calgary and area employers. Results are published in the 2014 Quarterly and Annual Calgary and Area Labour Market Reports on the Alberta Human Services website. <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/services-near-you/2395.html>

The purpose of the quarterly survey is to gather information from Calgary and area employers on their recruitment and retention practices, as well as various other employment issues they are facing. In 2014, employers were asked questions about company expansions and downsizes, layoffs, vacant positions, future employment, recruitment methods, recruiting difficulties, employee turnover and retention strategies. Over the course of the year, employers were divided into four categories based on the number of employees in the company and results of the survey were reported on as follows:

- ▶ Q1 2014 Calgary and Area Labour Market Report: 200 large-sized companies with 100+ employees
- ▶ Q2 2014 Calgary and Area Labour Market Report: 200 medium-sized companies with 50 – 99 employees
- ▶ Q3 2014 Calgary and Area Labour Market Report: 201 small-sized companies with 10 – 49 employees
- ▶ Q4 2014 Calgary and Area Labour Market Report: 200 micro-sized companies with <10 employees
- ▶ 2014 Annual Calgary and Area Labour Market Report: Summary of Results of 801 companies

In addition to the general questions about recruitment and retention practices, employers were asked the following specific questions about persons with disabilities:

1. People with disabilities identify a variety of types of disability including those that affect the senses (such as sight, hearing and speaking); those involving movement (such as mobility, agility and pain); and those involving mental capacity (such as learning, memory, developmental limitations, and emotional and psychological conditions). To the best of your knowledge, does your company currently employ individuals with a disability?
2. Does your company proactively recruit individuals with disabilities? If yes, what strategies does your company use to proactively recruit persons with disabilities?
3. How much of a challenge are the following factors to your company in recruiting persons with disabilities? Please indicate whether it is a major challenge, a minor challenge or not a challenge. (Employers were given a list of factors)



# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Q1 2014 Calgary and Area Employer Survey is based on responses to a telephone questionnaire conducted in January, February and March 2014 of Calgary and area employers with 100+ employees (large-sized employers). Following are the number of respondents from each industry sector:

## Q1 2014 Survey Respondents

Industry	Total Employees	Number of Companies
Mining & Oil & Gas	23,167	20
Construction	8,968	20
Manufacturing	4,195	20
Wholesale & Retail Trade	16,249	20
Transportation & Warehousing	9,386	20
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	12,090	20
Health Care & Social Assistance	6,439	20
Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment	6,290	20
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	6,641	20
Other	12,543	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>105,968</b>	<b>200</b>

The Q2 2014 Calgary and Area Employer Survey is based on responses to a telephone questionnaire conducted in April, May and June 2014 of Calgary and area employers with 50 - 99 employees (medium-sized employers). Following are the number of respondents from each industry sector:

## Q2 2014 Survey Respondents

Industry	Total Employees	Number of Companies
Mining & Oil & Gas	1,351	20
Construction	1,407	20
Manufacturing	1,349	20
Wholesale & Retail Trade	1,554	20
Transportation & Warehousing	1,379	20
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	1,384	20
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,588	20
Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment	1,278	20
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	1,364	20
Other	1,413	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,067</b>	<b>200</b>

# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Q3 2014 Calgary and Area Employer Survey is based on responses to a telephone questionnaire conducted in July, August and September 2014 of Calgary and area employers with 10 - 49 employees (small-sized employers). Following are the number of respondents from each industry sector:

## Q3 2014 Survey Respondents

Industry	Total Employees	Number of Companies
Mining & Oil & Gas	591	20
Construction	472	20
Manufacturing	501	20
Wholesale & Retail Trade	434	20
Transportation & Warehousing	478	20
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	441	20
Health Care & Social Assistance	501	20
Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment	641	21
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	460	20
Other	397	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,916</b>	<b>201</b>

The Q4 2014 Calgary and Area Employer Survey is based on responses to a telephone questionnaire conducted in October, November and December 2014 of Calgary and area employers with <10 employees (micro-sized employers). Following are the number of respondents from each industry sector:

## Q4 2014 Survey Respondents

Industry	Total Employees	Number of Companies
Mining & Oil & Gas	97	20
Construction	121	20
Manufacturing	104	20
Wholesale & Retail Trade	100	20
Transportation & Warehousing	96	20
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	93	20
Health Care & Social Assistance	98	20
Accommodation & Food Services/Arts & Entertainment	93	20
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	124	20
Other	88	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,014</b>	<b>200</b>

The 'Other' industry category includes a variety of companies from the remainder of the industry categories: Agriculture, Utilities, Information & Culture, Management of Companies, Administrative & Support Services, Educational Services, Other Services and Public Administration.