

TECHNICAL REPORT

# Harnessing Talent: Alliance for Recruiting and Retaining Canadians with Disabilities

ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS RESEARCH PROJECT



Employment and  
Social Development Canada

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## Academic Community Partnership Team

### **Marc I. White, PhD, Principal Investigator**

Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Family Practice, University of British Columbia  
Past CEO & President, Work Wellness and Disability Prevention Institute (Work Wellness Institute)

### **Research Team:**

**Arla Day PhD**, Professor in Occupational Health Psychology:  
Director, CN Centre for Occupational Health & Safety; Saint  
Mary's University, NS

**Susanne Marie Bruyère PhD, CRC**, Professor of Disability  
Studies, Academic Director, Yang-Tan Institute on  
Employment and Disability, Industrial and Labour Relations  
(IRL) School, NY

**Diane Lacaille MDCM, MHSc, FRCPC**, Professor, Division of  
Rheumatology, University of British Columbia, and Scientific  
Director and Senior Scientist at Arthritis Research Canada;

**Christine Maheu RN, PhD**, Professor, Ingram  
School of Nursing at McGill University, PQ

**Shannon Wagner MSc, PhD**, Professor, School of Health  
Sciences, University of Northern British Columbia

**Rebecca Gewurtz PhD, BHSc (OT)**,  
Associate Professor, School of Rehabilitation Science,  
McMaster University, ON

**Fergal O'Hagan BSc, MSc, PhD**, Senior Lecturer, Trent  
University, ON

**Kelly Williams-Whitt MBA, PhD**, Associate Dean, Dhillon  
School of Business, University of Lethbridge, AB

**Cameron Stockdale EdD**, CEO & President,  
Work Wellness Institute

**Eric Damecour BSc, MSc**, Doctoral Student,  
Saint Mary's University

### **Partnership Organization Representatives**

**Maureen Haan**, Canadian Council for Rehabilitation and Work

**Dan Boucher**, Chartered Professional in Human Resources, Alberta

**Neha Mohan**, Chartered Professional in Human Resources, BC & Yukon

**Maureen Parkinson**, Cancer and Work Network

**Matthew Gallina**, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

**Nicole Diatke**, Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society

**Tammy Yates**, Realize

**Diane Vissers & Val Loughheed**, Vocational Rehabilitation Association Canada

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## Key Findings from Research Activities

This section describes the major highlights arising from research activities to assist Chartered Professionals in Human Resources (CPHR) associations and project partners to develop relevant, research-informed, and practical educational resources and services to enhance organizational readiness in hiring employees with mental health and physical disabilities and to address the needs of current employees with physical and mental health challenges.

Important objectives of the research activities were to: (a) identify current attitudes, knowledge, policies, and practices, (b) define potential gaps in programs and services, and (c) collaboratively plan opportunities to address gaps in knowledge, policies, programs, and services.

The highlights and the detailed results are discussed using the following six major topics:

1. Role of Human Resources (HR) Professionals and Work Context (Demographics)
2. Recruitment of People with Physical and Mental Disabilities
  - a. Barriers to Recruitment
  - b. Enablers of Recruitment
  - c. Organizational Readiness Status
3. Retention of People with Physical and Mental Disabilities
  - a. Barriers to Retention
  - b. Enablers of Retention
  - c. Organizational Readiness Status
4. Educational Opportunities and Interests
5. Potential Program and Services Gaps
6. Recommendations

To inform this research, we utilized data from two primary sources: (1) responses to an Organizational Readiness (OR) Survey<sup>1</sup> from participating CPHR provincial/ territories associations and (2) secondary data analysis arising from one provincial CPHR Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Survey. We thank the participation of the four provincial associations of the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources, including CPHR Alberta (NWT and Nunavut), British Columbia and Yukon, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

Results are based on the population that responded to the surveys. Given the volunteer nature of choosing to participate in a survey, it may not be possible to infer that the findings can be

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<sup>1</sup> The Organizational Readiness Survey was adapted from the work of Susanne Marie Bruyère (Bruyere, 2000), a member of our research team, with input from CPHR Alberta research committee and the Harnessing Talent Academic Community Partnership Team.

generalized or represent all HR professionals or their employers. We invite you to consider the findings of the research as an opportunity to reflect on your own organizational context and interests.

## **Demographics and Role of HR Professionals**

### *Organizational Demographic Variation*

Respondents to the surveys came from a variety of organizations and industries, with differences based on organization size, labour/union status, public versus private sectors, industry sectors, and years of experience with an organization or career phase (early, middle, late). Based on the interests of stakeholders, we analyzed results to consider possible implications of differences in organizational demographics across different questions. For instance, does labour representation or organization size have a relationship to ease of accommodation, or are there differences between public and private sectors in their recruitment or retention policies? We discuss our analyses of these questions in the detailed report.

### *Multiple Roles and Responsibilities*

HR professionals typically have multiple roles and responsibilities within their organization. The most common roles identified by more than 50% of the responders to the OR Survey and CPD survey were: employee relations, recruiting, training and development, generalist, disability management, organizational development, management/planning, compensation, benefits, health and safety, human resource information systems (HRIS), and diversity. In the Organizational Readiness Survey, over half of the respondents reported having 10 more roles (out of list of 17 roles), with the average being 9.4 roles. HR professionals in smaller organizations have a greater number of roles than those in larger organizations.

Many HR professionals play an important role in the recruitment of people with disabilities and retention of employees with chronic health issues, in that they:

- play a central role in establishing work conditions that contribute to safe, healthy, inclusive, and productive workplaces
- have an interest in enhancing their skills and competencies to both contribute to and influence their organization's strategic, human resources, and business objectives
- aspire to be recognized by leadership for their knowledge and competencies across different domains (Engagement, HR Metrics, etc.)
- are interested in the application of high-quality research evidence to inform HR policies and practices
- seek a larger role (contribute /participate) in leadership discussions of HR factors relevant to business outcomes

- often have a higher interest than do leadership to facilitate diversity and inclusivity in their workplace

*Given the different work roles that HR professionals play, it may be useful to create cross-cutting educational training that integrates specialized knowledge and its implications across a broader range of HR roles and responsibilities when designing professional development offerings.*

## **Recruitment of People with Physical and Mental Disabilities**

### *Barriers to Recruitment*

- HR professionals identified a number of barriers for both recruitment and advancement in their organizations, which were thematically grouped into the following major issues: (i) physical environment, location, and safety, (ii) high psychological or physical demands, (iii) stigma and bias, (iv) challenging health conditions, (v) budget, costs, and resources, (vi) lack of education, knowledge, training, and communication, (vii) perceived lack of skills/competencies, (viii) confidentiality and self-disclosure issues, (ix) leadership and other organizational factors.
- Respondents reported having significantly less knowledge and experience about how to address the needs of people with mental health conditions than of people with physical and chronic illness conditions.
- Both in public and private sectors, the majority of respondents noted a lack of proactive recruitment policies and practices, although there are exemplary organizations in both sectors.
- Both qualitative and quantitative data suggest that there is a need for greater leadership commitment and visible demonstratable championship across sectors.
- Responses suggest a lack of awareness, or use by employers, of government or non-profit organizations' programs or services to support onboarding people with disabilities and retention support.

### *Enablers of Recruitment*

- HR professionals were asked to identify, by level of effectiveness, what strategies would facilitate recruitment in their organization. Based on order of perceived effectiveness the top five strategies were:
  - visible top leadership commitment
  - staff training
  - onsite consultation
  - technical support

- mentoring
- In an open-ended question, HR professionals identified a number of enablers for both recruitment and advancement in their organizations, which we categorized into three groups: (i) recruitment practices, (ii) recruitment policies, and (iii) education and training.
  - i. **Recruitment practices** (beyond advertising as an equal opportunity employer or using multiple recruitment formats) included use of recruiters to assess prospective interviewee needs to address prior to hiring interviews, Person(s) with Disabilities (PWD) Hotlines, PWD Ambassadors, Union – Employer group collaboration, proactive employment (equity weighting), flexible job descriptions, and internships.
  - ii. **Innovative policies** included creation of internships, proactive employment with equity weighting, specific outreach, remote/telecommute opportunities, and budget for specialized equipment and resources.
  - iii. **Education, training, and support** included training of recruiters, managers, and supervisors, engagement of community organizations, internal or external job coaching services, utilization of Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) disability support services, provision of onsite health services.

#### *Recruitment Organizational Readiness Status*

- Only a few HR professionals reported strong leadership commitment or noted their CEOs active involvement in the promotion of hiring people with disabilities, typically in partnership with community organizations providing supported services.
- There was a significant association between inclusive recruitment practices and type of sector (private vs. public)<sup>2</sup>:
  - In the public sector, just under 10% of HR professionals reported that their organization sets reasonable diversity and inclusion employment goals and makes “a great deal of” effort to achieve them, and 28.2% reported “a moderate effort”.
  - In the private sector, 18.1% reported that their organization proactively seeks to recruit job applicants who are people with physical or mental health disabilities.
  - The majority of organizations that proactively recruit people with disabilities utilize community organizations.
- We identified that CPHR Associations have members who are champions that utilize best practices in recruitment strategies. These champions could be utilized as potential

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<sup>2</sup> To calculate difference, we rescored in the public sector “Not at All” to “0”, “A little” to “A great deal” as 1, and removed “Unknown.”

mentors or trainers within the broader business community. Examples of reported strategies include:

*“We offer multiple ways to apply for positions as well as posting through a variety of mediums. We offer a welcoming environment and have a diverse group of employees.”*

*“[We use] online application questionnaires and phone screening with recruiters to help assess any issues and options prior to interview. Most of those conversations are not involving the hiring manager in the initial conversation to avoid bias.”*

*“We change the location of our interviews for people who use a wheelchair .... We adapt our assessments to accommodate people with learning disabilities or who are visually/hearing impaired.”*

*“We offer customized work arrangements where needed and ensure that our hiring managers are equipped to effectively interview and evaluate a candidate who discloses a disability.”*

*Some HR professionals are champions of inclusivity and use evidence-based practices in recruitment. They could be invited to become mentors or trainers for other organizations sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues.*

- We identified that HR professionals in some organizations have a strong interest in inclusive recruitment practices and could be influencers in supporting leadership understanding of the benefits of enhancing recruitment and retention practices.
- HR professionals identified a number of barriers for both recruitment and advancement in their organizations, which were thematically grouped into the following major issues: (i) physical environment, location, and safety, (ii) high psychological or physical demands, (iii) stigma and bias, (iv) challenging health conditions, (v) budget, costs, and resources, (vi) lack of education, knowledge, training, and communication, (vii) perceived lack of skills/competencies, (viii) confidentiality and self-disclosure issues, (ix) leadership and other organizational factors.

## Retention of People with Physical and Mental Disabilities

### *Barriers to Job Retention*

Respondents were asked to identify the top barriers for the recruitment and advancement of workers with disabilities from a list of factors. The most frequent perceived barriers for recruitment for people with disabilities and advancement were “lack of supervisor knowledge of which accommodation to make and lack of related experience.” This was closely followed by attitudes/stereotypes, cost of accommodation, and lack of requisite skills and training. The perception of additional cost of supervision or cost of training was identified by less than 50% of the respondents.

*A targeted education program directed to HR professionals, managers, and supervisors may be helpful in increasing knowledge about types accommodation available within the organization, and policies and practices that facilitate recruitment for people with disabilities and advancement.*

There were 247 responses to an open-ended question of barriers to job retention. The most often cited barriers were:

- physical requirements of work/manual labour (e.g., construction, oil and gas, production)
- need for physical adaptability to different environments, including remote locations and often linked to safety concerns
- manager/recruiter stigma/bias (e.g., perception of competence, refusal to hire)
- physical environment (lack of full accessibility at workplace)
- limited meaningful or suitable work alternatives, including lack of part-time work, particularly in small organizations
- lack of applicants applying, including limitations of online recruitment only
- employee stigma (e.g., lack of disclosure)
- fears about budget, training costs, or cascading requests for accommodation
- co-worker or client acceptance
- limited recruitment time
- unclear medical information on limitations and difficulty differentiating functional limitations versus individual preferences
- Other barriers mentioned were: lack of leadership education, lack of principles, policies, and practices, and a lack of communication

### *Enablers of Retention*

HR professionals' responses to an open-end question regarding facilitating job retention for people with disabilities were categorized into three themes:

- (i) removal of barriers (e.g., making physical environment more accessible, fostering conversations on mental health)
  - (ii) policies and practices (e.g., utilization of a disability co-ordinator, provision of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)/Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP)/extended health benefits, greater flexibility with hours, offer of remote work, cross-departmental accommodation, timely start of accommodation, and regular policies review)
  - (iii) Education and training (e.g., HR training, training recruiters, managers, and supervisors on disability-related topics, online/classroom education, utilization of internal/external job coaching or other professional services, onsite health services, and regular communication with workers)
- Organizations that have formal disability management programs that support job retention, and are also invested in HR and manager training, were perceived to have

more comprehensive approaches to addressing organizational change and experienced greater ease in making accommodation changes.

- HR professionals from organizations that were rated highly for team functioning and organizational support, where employees feel valued and where leadership uses more comprehensive and accountable approaches to facilitating organization change, were also reported to have stronger policies and practices conducive to recruitment and retention of people with physical and mental disabilities. These leading organizations also tended to invest in both HR training and manager training on a broad range of topics relevant to non-discriminatory policies and practices.
- Respondents provided examples of evidence-based accommodation processes, such as:
  - “Exploring more options with supervisors on how to find creative solutions for accommodations.”*
  - “Defining requirements more broadly.”*
  - “[Providing] above standard EFAP and benefits provisions, flexible work hours, Earned Day off Programs, above standard vacation and family days offered, return to work programs, flexibility in regard to policy when required.”*
  - “Disability management light duties, training, education through online/classroom courses, gradual return to work as per doctor recommendation, provide some flexibility.”*

*Some HR professionals are employing evidence-informed policies and practices to support job retention. They could be invited to become mentors, trainers, panelists sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues.*

#### *Job Retention Organizational Readiness Status*

- The most common HR accommodation practice (90%, n=~300) was the provision of modified work hours and flexibility of HR policies, such as the extension of leave of absence. This was followed by the provision of counselling or employee/family assistance plans, modified work environment, and provision of extra rest breaks.
- In unionized workplaces, the more the union was involved in the accommodation process, the more disability-related training both HR professionals and managers received. This result suggests that having more engaged unions may be a factor that contributes to an increase in disability-related training to various work groups.
- Respondents who reported greater uncertainty as to how to accommodate employees or respond to accommodation related issues also noted more barriers to employment and advancement of persons with disabilities, reported greater difficulty in making changes in policies and accommodations, and faced greater uncertainty of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)-related issues pertaining to accommodation.

- Respondents who reported that it was easy to accommodate workers with disabilities also reported being better able to reduce barriers, having recruiters who were more familiar with accommodation strategies, and being more likely to provide access to meetings, promotional, and social opportunities.
- Organizational size was related to training, such that larger organizations tended to provide more disability-related training to their HR professionals. Surprisingly, however, there was no relationship between organizational size and training for managers. HR Staff were recorded as having completed on average 11 of the 16 training topics of interest relevant to workplace accommodations, whereas managerial staff were recorded as having completed on average 6 of the 16 training topics.

### **Educational Interests**

The majority of HR professionals who responded to the 2019 CPD survey selected the following five competency areas from a list of 15 competencies that they would likely register for professional development offerings or courses:

- (i) HR strategy
- (ii) Engagement
- (iii) Change management and cultural transformation
- (iv) Workforce planning and talent management
- (v) Communication, conflict resolution, and relationship management

The bottom three competencies were (i) risk management, (ii) health, wellness, and safe workplaces, and (iii) diversity, inclusion, and equity.

*Given the lower likelihood of HR professionals attending specific courses in risk management, health and wellness, inclusion and diversity, or disability management, the creation of cross-cutting educational training that integrates specialized knowledge into other high interest topic areas could also be considered (HR Strategy, Engagement, Communications, etc.)*

In the CPD survey we asked HR professionals to rank a list of eight HR research topics that they would be interested in learning more about. In the list below, the top five items selected when comparing means were rated similarly, however, the bottom three topic areas were significantly lower in ranking:

- (i) Improving communication: effectiveness of communication methods and processes on performance and job satisfaction
- (ii) Leadership development: current research on leadership and implications for work productivity
- (iii) Planning, implementation, and evaluation of organizational change processes to enhance work wellness

- (iv) Data analytics: Identifying workplace risk factors contributing to prolonged work absence, turn-over, unnecessary workplace stress, and low productivity
- (v) New research on problem-solving and conflict resolution methods and its impact on teamwork and performance
- (vi) Stress management: what programs are effective and how to measure
- (vii) Absence management: Current research on monitoring and successful interventions
- (viii) Disability management: current evidence on policies and practices to support employees with chronic or episodic health conditions returning to work.

*Connecting dots between higher rated HR Research Topics with those in lower rated topics may increase greater interest addressing underlying psychosocial issues and improving collection of HR metrics that would help to better monitor factors contributing to poorer outcomes related to work absence, disability management, and workplace stress.*

However, when HR professionals were asked specifically about disability-related educational topics, the top five disability-related educational topics (i.e., the ones that respondents wanted more information on) were:

- (i) Best practices for supporting employees with mental health disabilities
- (ii) Best practices for creating safe, healthy, productive, and inclusive workplaces
- (iii) Practical tips for the successful retention of employees with chronic health and episodic health conditions (e.g., migraines, arthritis, Crohn's disease, HIV, cancer, chronic pain)
- (iv) Legal issues concerning disability and work
- (v) Creating supportive environments for disclosure of invisible disabilities

HR professionals were asked in the CPD survey to briefly describe (i) the most pressing issue facing HR professionals in their organization, (ii) the most important current strategic HR focus at your organization, and (iii) the top three skills they would like to learn in 2020.

The most pressing issue facing HR professionals in their organization was the desire for HR professionals' knowledge, expertise, and data be better recognized and valued by leadership, noting that there are some employers that include HR representation at the board/executive level.

Across all three questions "change management" was identified in the top five responses. Employee engagement and retention were identified as both pressing and strategic issues in the top five responses. Expanding knowledge and utilization of Human Resource Information

Systems and data analytics were seen as an important vehicle to add value to business discussions at the executive/leadership level.

*Typically, to make changes in employee engagement and retention recognition involves making meaningful changes in the organizational culture. We found significant correlations across team functioning, change planning processes, and ease of accommodation. This suggests that it would be useful to measure the impact of programs targeting employee engagement, team functioning and change management policies and practice when considering factors contributing to organizational readiness to recruit people with disabilities and retain current staff with chronic health conditions.*

### Potential Program and Services Gaps

There are many factors that appear to have some correlations with organizations that have more successful recruitment and retention policies and practices. Although this study was not designed to investigate causal relationships, the research suggests some possible directions regarding potential program and service gaps and opportunities to evaluate their impact.

- Internships provide an opportunity for organizations to gain knowledge and experience with government support programs, support services delivered by community organizations, and the process of onboarding and opportunities for ongoing support. An internship program does not place the expectation of permanent employment or commitment by either party. Internships provides benefits for both interns and employers to gain experience with each other.
- Many employers appear to be unaware of access to government programs that can support employers interested in hiring people with disabilities, nor are they aware of the support that community organization, or other professional organizations, can provide with onboarding people with disabilities or providing support for job retention for current employees.

*Governments could potentially support the creation of internship programs utilizing community-based organizations. This could help increase opportunities for employers and people with disabilities to gain knowledge and experience and provide an avenue for employers to become aware of supportive services provided by community-based organizations. Community service organizations, in collaboration with government, could enhance marketing of government programs.*

- As many organizations appear not to collect or integrate HR metrics that would help organizations understand the impact of programs and services on recruitment and retention of people with disabilities, or other programs relevant to creating safe,

healthy and productive workplaces, there is an urgent need to create and disseminate evaluation methods and tools.

## Executive Summary

HR professionals, in collaboration with leadership, managers, and supervisors, play an important role in establishing or facilitating work conditions that contribute to safe, healthy, inclusive, and productive workplaces. There is strong correlational evidence that “organizational readiness” to recruit and retain people with mental and physical disabilities is associated with underlying values and operational policies and practices closely related to factors that contribute to employee engagement.

HR professionals who rated their organization highly for team functioning and organizational support, where employees feel valued, and where leadership uses more comprehensive and accountable approaches to facilitating organization change, were also reported to have stronger policies and practices conducive to recruitment and retention of people with physical and mental disabilities. These leading organizations also tended to invest in both HR training, and manager training on a broad range of topics relevant to non-discriminatory policies and practices. Given the multiple roles and responsibilities HR professionals play, and the recognition that decision-making concerning recruitment and retention (including accommodation) often involves others (including executives, managers, and supervisors), there is a need to expand training targets to leadership and other team members.

HR professionals identified multiple high priority topics that may be foundational to creating a more supportive and inclusive work environment. Higher priority topics concerning leadership development, employee engagement, communication, change management, strategic planning, and retention of valued employees provide opportunities to connect the dots on changes to organizational culture, including addressing accommodation needs for workers with and without disabilities.

Strengthening HR professionals’ knowledge and skills in strategic planning, leadership development, change management, and competencies in tracking and interpreting key performance metrics (job turn-over, work absence, claims, work productivity, job satisfaction, and employee engagement) are potential building blocks to cultivate both leadership and management buy-in on the benefits of recruiting people with disabilities and retention of workers with chronic health conditions.

## Recommendations

### *Recommendations to Employment and Social Development Canada*

1. Given strong enablers identified in this research and supported by external research, in terms of (i) visible leadership and commitment, (ii) utilization of internship programs

linked to community and professional organizations, and (iii) existence of champions in organizations (including HR professionals, CEOs and other leadership), creating national and provincial recognitions programs at the sector level may be an important avenue to develop with government or sector leaders.

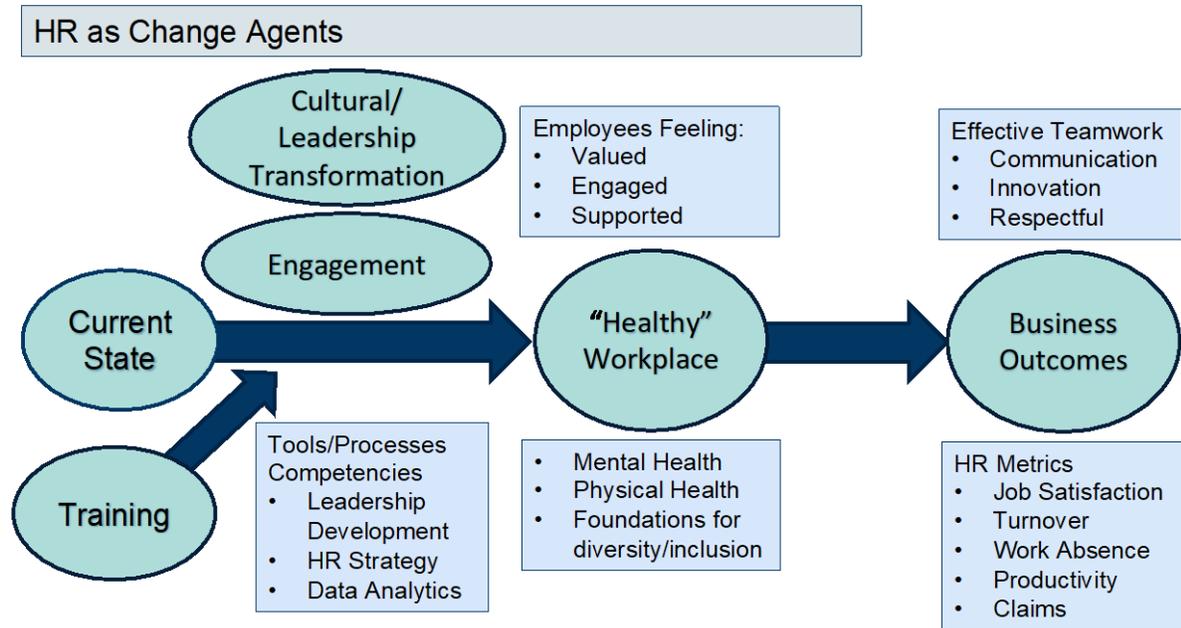
2. A major barrier identified in our research is the lack of experience many HR professionals, supervisors, and employers have with recruitment of persons with disabilities, as well as lack of knowledge of existing government and community supports. Based on input from this research and review of current best practices research, the creation of funded internship programs linked to community organization support can provide an opportunity for employers to gain some experience and understand additional support programs offered by government and community organizations. In comparative research with HR Associations in the USA and UK, the utilization of internship programs is a strong predictor to successful future recruitment (Bruyere, 2000; Erickson, Schrader, Bruyère, VanLooy, & Matteson, 2014; Schur et al., 2014).
3. Most organizations do not track or integrate important metrics when evaluating business performance and practices, or the effectiveness of intervention/change programs, or evaluating the impact of internal or external services on their impact on work absence, staff turnover, claims data at a department or whole organization level, or organizational culture. Funding educational grants that support curricular development and instructional courses targeting COO, CEO, financial managers, HR professionals, and non-profit community organizations may be helpful in creating a stronger understanding of the importance of a broader spectrum of variables relevant to creating safe, psychologically healthy, inclusive, and diverse workplaces on employee engagement and work productivity.
4. There is an association between organizations where employees feel valued and rate their organization highly on team functioning and team support with their organizational readiness to hire and retain people with disabilities, which suggests that educational programming and services could include leadership and management training in creating transformational workplaces, thus, connecting the dots between worker engagement, workforce planning, HR Metrics, participatory practices, feeling valued, and team support that can also result in support for employees with health challenges.
5. Given the multiple roles and responsibilities of HR professionals (more than half of the OR survey respondents reported having ten or more roles), and based on their broader educational interests, it may be advantageous for federal and provincial governments to consider establishing targeted educational grants to support academic and community partnerships. These partnerships provide opportunities to facilitate evidence-informed, cross-cutting curriculum development focused on creating safe, healthy, inclusive, and productive workplaces. The academic partnerships not only support knowledge translation and mobilization but also engage community partners in the research

planning and development process (in terms of problem identification, clarification, and resolution) to develop meaningful research agendas.

6. The creation and maintenance of Canadian-based online job accommodation resources, similar to the Job Accommodation Network (<https://askjan.org/>) in the USA, may be helpful for HR professionals, managers, and supervisors as well as service providers.
7. A challenge facing both public and private sector employers is the need for building capacity, mentorship, and succession planning for managers responsible for addressing accommodation needs of employees. There may be some opportunities to incentivize and support the delivery of programs and services to help companies build capacity as well as to establish policies and practices that address succession planning relevant to job accommodation.

*Recommendations for HR Professionals*

*Figure 1. Conceptual Mapping of HR Key Recommendations (Day & White, 2020)*



1. Given the multiple roles and responsibilities of HR professionals (more than half the Organizational Readiness respondents report having ten or more roles), and based on their broader educational interests, it may be advantageous to work with researchers to create cross-cutting curriculum development to create safe, healthy, inclusive, and productive workplaces – workplaces where people with health challenges want to work.
2. HR professionals are well-positioned and interested in becoming change agents in their organizations. Educational training in high priority interest areas and linking to key HR Metrics provides an opportunity to establish a strong foundation for supporting organizational readiness for recruiting people with disabilities and supporting employees with chronic health conditions.
3. Strengthening educational training in leadership development, HR strategy, and data analytics may add greater confidence and competence to better fulfill HR professionals' aspirations to be a valued part of the executive-level managers within an organization, recognizing the importance of HR factors contributing to strategic business outcomes.
4. Keeping abreast of current HR research, including research on diversity and inclusion and improvements in tracking accommodation requests and outcomes for all workers, may help to address misconceptions regarding accommodation practices and costs associated with employees with disabilities, compared to employees without disabilities.

5. The creation of government-supported internships in partnership with non-profit organizations and in collaboration with HR provides an opportunity for employers to gain some experience onboarding and supporting people with disabilities through the utilization of community and professional service providers.
6. HR professionals working in collaboration with managers and leadership have an opportunity to facilitate the creation of metrics, key performance indicators, policies, and practices to establish and meet diversity and inclusion targets.
7. Expanding educational training opportunities for managers and supervisors on topics related to recruitment and job accommodation may enhance other key organizational outcomes. Further research may be warranted.
8. The participation of HR organizations in academic community partnerships has led to deepening the understanding of both academics and HR participants and has resulted in keeping abreast of current research knowledge and collaborative approaches to considering implications and expansion of educational programming. It also has developed relationships and collaboration across different HT partners.

*Recommendations for Knowledge Brokers and Non-Profit Service Providers*

1. Given the multiple roles and responsibilities of HR professionals (more than half the respondents report having ten or more roles), there is a need to consider the very limited time HR professionals have to address accommodation issues. Clear and succinct resources that are focused on the mechanics of recruitment and retention are needed, and they should be integrated with other organizational priorities and needs (e.g., job satisfaction, employee engagement).
2. Given the strong enablers identified in this research, as well as those supported by external research, in terms of (i) visible leadership and commitment, (ii) utilization of internship programs linked to community and professional organizations, and (iii) existence of champions in organizations (including HR professionals, CEOs, and other leadership), creating national and provincial recognition programs at the sector level may be an important avenue to develop with government or sector leaders.
3. There are several examples of recruitment and retention strategies discussed in the report that could be embedded in a range of educational materials as strategies utilized by their peers.
4. A major barrier is that many organizations do not collect or utilize an integrated approach to data analytics to better track the impact of interventions on key business outcomes. Developing some level of data analytics could support organizations to track the past and current situation, analyze, and plan for the future.
5. There appears to be a disconnect with employers using non-profit organizations or professional services but not knowing the impact of their services. There may be opportunities to work with organizations to highlight the successes associated with their relationship using the organization's communication vehicles.
6. There is a need to support succession planning for management and leaders through education to ensure continuity across this group to preserve and renew best practices in recruitment and retention.

## Harnessing Talent Partnership Feedback and Knowledge Mobilization

Partnership Feedback: *Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Alberta (includes Northwest Territories and Nunavut)*

The report provides a robust overview of current practices with respect to recruiting and retaining persons with disabilities in Western Canadian workplaces. Through the identification of both barriers and enablers, this report provides a basis for HR professionals to conduct an assessment of the practices within their own organizations and facilitate evidence-based conversations with senior leaders who are committed to making meaningful progress in this area.

The report underscores the importance of senior leaders as key stakeholders, whose buy-in is essential to reduce barriers to employment and improve outcomes. It also suggests that government support for the development and delivery of training for and by HR professionals, as well as for hiring managers, would be beneficial.

CPHR Alberta is pleased to have contributed to the shaping of the survey questionnaire, facilitated the participation of our members in this research, and to have the opportunity to disseminate this report and its findings to our membership through our communication channels and webinars with the hope that it will contribute to equipping HR professionals with benchmarking data as they seek to continue to be champions of healthy, diverse, inclusive, and productive workplaces.

Our involvement with the Harnessing Talent Alliance has helped to establish more robust relationships with the research community that will positively contribute to our goal of being the resource for knowledge and data for the HR profession. We look forward to building on these relationships to keep abreast of current research to inform HR related professional training, policies, and practices, and to explore further avenues of research.

Partnership Feedback: *Canadian Council of Rehabilitation and Work*

The report is an excellent snapshot of current practices and areas identified for improvement. I feel this document should be used provincially for employment strategies for people with disabilities using the Workforce Development Agreements.

Ongoing support for managers of all types (hiring, supervising, HR) is essential and this report supports the work CCRW already undertakes in this area. For retention, the statistics on accommodation are very interesting and can be used in our Job Accommodation Services department to further understand and support our clients. It also sparks the need for tracking accommodation within businesses, and that may be an additional service provided by CCRW.

Sustainability is critical. As shown in your report, it is clear that disability confidence is really based on individuals. Therefore, succession of disability confidence and supporting organizations through programs and services would be ideal.

CCRW would be extremely interested in working to create an internship program for people with disabilities. Our connection with unions and corporations has shown this need as well, and working collaboratively is always better than alone!

The report also reinforces the need for government programs to create and reward collaboration across service providers for the benefit of employers, rather than metrics focused solely on placement. Successful placement requires communication, co-ordination of services, and collaboration across service providers to identify workers with specific workforce skills desired by an employer. Grant programs could recognize and reward successful placement due to successful collaboration (initial employer contact, seeking suitable applicant with desired skillset, service provider with identified skillset, onboarding and, in some cases, ongoing maintenance support for employee with significant challenges).

We look forward to next steps with the Harnessing Talent Alliance!

*Partnership Feedback: Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada*

The entire report is very impactful and will help inform VRA Canada's strategic planning process and across the continuum of professional training. Given the knowledge and skill sets of VRA members, there are opportunities to expand our services to better support HR professionals and those smaller organizations who do not have dedicated HR personnel, or in-house capacity to support a more evidence-based approach to workplace accommodation for people with physical or mental health challenges.

A segment of our membership has a specific focus on recruitment of people with disabilities, whereas others are focused on return to work. VRA could expand their programs and services to ensure that employers are aware of government programs to hire and retain people with disabilities, and to help employers interested to develop and utilize policies and practices to enhance employee engagement (feeling supported and valued) and to show them how including recruitment and retention of their own people would help them achieve that.

The report provides insights that could better inform funding programs and insurers to create a more integrated approach to co-funding and premium discounts to incentivize the use of professional and community services to support successful recruitment of people with disabilities and workplace accommodation.

VRA Canada is interested in working with the Harnessing Talent Alliance to support marketing campaigns to connect the dots linking business outcomes to employee engagement to disability retention/inclusion. There are also other partnership opportunities that could be explored. For instance, VRA has recently established a mentorship program and the creation of a cross-disciplinary mentorship program with CPHR and other HT partners may be an opportunity to share experience and expertise within the HT Alliance as well as creation of potential services with private and public sector employers. The expansion of online evidence-based educational programming and cross-disciplinary accreditation will continue to build knowledge and capacity.

The report also illustrates the need to address recruitment and retention across different industry sectors. There are opportunities to work with industry sector councils to develop industry-specific training programs. This reinforces the need for a more integrated approach across funders, insurers, community service organizations, and professional services that could benefit those industries that are having difficulties hiring.

The report provides an opportunity for the Harnessing Talent Alliance and partners to engage and collaborate with program funders, insurers, and public and private sector employers to improve programs and services dedicated to ensure that all Canadians can meaningfully participate in work.

### Partnership Feedback: *Congress of Aboriginal Peoples*

The most important finding is the affirmation of the need for greater education/resources for employers wanting to change the workplace structure for their employees with disabilities as well as employees from underrepresented populations (e.g., Indigenous).

As a National Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) funded agreement holder, our mandate is to provide financial support to approved candidates for their tuition, textbooks, and living costs during their post-secondary training program. We also work to connect students to potential employers in their field of study after graduation. We evaluate potential partnerships with employers based on their supports for Indigenous employees, including Indigenous employees with disabilities.

One recommendation for the research report called for Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to create targeted education programs directed to HR professionals, managers, and supervisors to increase their knowledge about types of accommodation available within the organization and policies and practices that facilitate recruitment for people with disabilities and advancement. This type of program, in conjunction with cultural awareness training, would greatly help our evaluation process in determining potential partnerships with employers.

The report also notes that some HR professionals are unaware of the potential use of government or not-profit organizations' programs or services to support onboarding people with disabilities and retention support. This indicates a growing need for National Indigenous Organizations to engage with HR professionals through programs such as Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) to help minimize these service gaps.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) publishes *The Indigenous Voice* magazine each quarter. This magazine serves to highlight the advocacy work done for our constituents and demonstrates the activities of the CAP ISET program. We create a rapport with our students through the application process and, after graduation and employment, invite them to be featured as a "success story" for our program. Highlighting success stories is an excellent way to increase awareness for the employer.

We suggest that government funders could expand networks to include job developers and provide funding for organizations willing to create jobs with multiple accommodations.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, in collaboration with the HT Alliance, would be very interested in exploring the creation of and promotion of internship programs to our Provincial and Territorial Organizations in each province with ESDC and other government funders. We would also assist with recruiting candidates for internship positions and possibly replace funded wage subsidy interventions with internship opportunities, should ESDC wish to offer an internship program as one of their intervention programs.

*Partnership Feedback: Cancer and Work: A project of BC Cancer, McGill University and Canadian Partnership Against Cancer*

The Harnessing Talent Alliance Organizational Readiness Research Project, Technical Report underscores the need for training, information, and resources for workplace representatives to enable, foster, and facilitate obtaining and sustaining employment for those with disabilities. The report identifies multiple organizational factors that may influence organizational readiness, such as organizational culture (in terms of supportiveness of teams, organizational support), comprehensiveness of organizational change planning, the range and types of educational training for non-HR staff (e.g., managers, supervisors), and the level of involvement of unions in the accommodation process.

Another relevant organizational factor is organizational size. Results from the ORS Report are similar to some of the findings from the 'Research Related to Workplace Support for Cancer Survivors: Employer Perspective 2012 Cancer Journey Advisory Group, Canadian Partnership Against Cancer 2012' (<https://www.cancerandwork.ca/research-related-to-workplace-support-for-cancer-survivors-employer-perspective/>), which found that those in large organizations were more likely to have disability expertise and management, policy, and programs compared to smaller organizations. The Cancer and Work Research Study found that particularly small employers may not have the resources or access to such expertise, nor have experts available, to help guide accommodations.

Similarly, the Cancer and Work Research Study found that there was a knowledge gap for front-line managers and supervisors, and the ORS Report found a training gap between HR professionals and supervisors/managers (although this gap was not related to size of organizations).

These results highlight the benefit of academic and community partnerships to support knowledge exchange and dissemination and the creation of mentorship programs across industry sectors.

The Report also identified the challenges for organizations to address the need for accommodations for mental health, highlighting the need for specialized training and support for organizations. Again, these results are important to the area of oncology because supporting oncology patients with mental health challenges requires additional understanding of the implications of their treatment and the length and intensity of how they may be affected mentally.

We agree that the creation of a Canadian online resource, like the Job Accommodations Network in the USA, would assist employers with up-to-date accommodation information.

The Harnessing Talent Alliance is ideally positioned to foster education and mentorship programs given their established collaboration and partnerships with organizations servicing and advocating for those with disabilities and employer representatives.

Partnership Feedback: *Realize Canada*

This report paints an important picture of the levels of organizational readiness of those surveyed (primarily HR Professionals) at this juncture and the gaps that need to be addressed across the country to increase awareness of the barriers – as well as the enablers - to recruiting and retaining people living with disabilities in the workplace with the end goal of greater inclusion and, dare I say, a sense of belonging. This will be even more important in a post COVID-19 job market, since people living with disabilities in Canada have been some of the most heavily impacted by unemployment, due to the public health measures mandated as part of the pandemic response, especially racialized communities.

Of particular interest to Realize were the findings on experiences in Accommodation, with respondents reporting higher knowledge and experience with employees who had physical and chronic illness conditions versus experience with employees who had mental health conditions (which are episodic in nature). In our capacity as the Secretariat for the National Episodic Disabilities Forum, this finding aligns with research that Realize has conducted in the area of episodic disabilities. Additionally, it highlights an area that will need even greater capacity building, due to the mental health impact that the pandemic has had both on those already living with mental health conditions, as well as people who may have developed mental health conditions due to social isolation, repeated lockdowns, anxiety, and/or depression due to unemployment.

The three broad areas with recommendations that are outlined in this report, firstly, to ESDC, secondly to HR Professionals and finally, to Knowledge Brokers and Non-Profit Service Providers can serve as key action items in the roadmap to the successful implementation of the National Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities named in the October 2020 Throne Speech by the Government of Canada.

Realize, as one of the founding members of the Harnessing Talent Alliance, remains firmly committed to building the momentum around the work done to date, along with fellow Alliance Members and Partners, and turning the research and evidence into policy and practice change that will benefit everyone in Canada, especially those living with disability.

## DETAILED REPORT

### BACKGROUND

This research project is associated with a three-year project entitled: *Harnessing Talent: Alliance for Recruiting and Retaining Canadians with Disabilities*. The primary goal of this collaborative three-year project is to develop, implement, evaluate, and scale-up innovative, evidence-informed solutions to foster job recruitment and job retention for people with mental health challenges and physical disabilities.

The project specifically engaged employers' HR professionals to address several objectives:

1. to understand general current practice within organizations with respect to recruitment and retention of workers with disabilities
2. to identify key challenges around the recruitment and retention of workers with disabilities
3. to help employers prepare the workplace for the integration of persons with disabilities
4. to support current employees with chronic health challenges that could limit work participation.

### Research Data Collection

We collected data from two primary sources (see Table 1):

1. Chartered Professionals in Human Resources (CPHR) Organizational Readiness (OR) Survey
2. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Survey conducted by CPHR Alberta (includes members from Northwest Territories and Nunavut) between August 26 – September 15 2019

We thank the participation of four provincial associations of the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources: CPHR Alberta (NWT and Nunavut), British Columbia and Yukon, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

Data collection of the OR Survey started in October 2019 and continued until March 2020 (when it was stopped due to Covid-19). Data are based on the sample that responded to OR and CPD surveys. We are presenting demographic data of the HR professionals who participated in the surveys. There may be some HR professionals who responded to both surveys. Given the voluntary nature of participation in this survey, it is not possible to infer that these findings can be generalized to all HR professionals or to their employers. These research findings are intended as an opportunity to reflect on your own organizational context and interests.

**Table 1. Regional Representation of Respondents for OR and CPD Surveys**

	Respondents	%	Respondents without recruitment/ retention responsibilities	Missing	Final Sample Size
<b>OR Survey</b>					
Alberta—Northwest Territories—Nunavut	238	46%	28	8	202
British Columbia—Yukon	176	34%	21	7	148
Manitoba	57	11%	4	1	52
Saskatchewan	46	9%	4	10	32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>434</b>
<b>CPD Survey</b>					
Alberta—Northwest Territories—Nunavut	750		0	0	750
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1267</b>		<b>57</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1184</b>

*Note: Covid-19 disrupted the data-collection process, such that the full series of email reminders to participate were not sent to CPHR Manitoba and Saskatchewan members.*

### Respondent and Organizational Demographic Data

The demographics of respondents to the CPHR Alberta CPD Survey were more varied than were the demographics of respondents to the OR survey because the inclusion criteria differed for each survey. The OR Survey required respondents to have responsibilities related to recruitment, retention, absence, and/or disability management. The CPHR Alberta CPD Survey represented a broader base of members of the association. Because the CPHR Alberta CPD Survey data is solely derived from one provincial body, the results of this survey may not be generalizable across other regions. However, HR Associations and their members could reflect on possible similarities and differences. Given the large sample size ( $N= 750$  HR professionals) and the range of organization sizes (from under 50 employees to over 10,000 employees), this report is a valuable resource as a means of examining potential trends and issues.

When examining the roles and responsibilities of respondents in the OR Survey and CPD Survey, there was an inverse relationship to the size of the organization. HR professionals in smaller organizations had a greater number of roles and responsibilities than HR professionals in larger organizations. The median number of roles for respondents in the OR Survey was 10, indicating that 50% of the respondents had 10 or more roles. The average overall for all respondents was 9.4 roles (ranging from 1 to 17, inclusive of ‘other roles’). The CPD survey listed only 13 roles: The median number of roles was 7 roles, and the average was 6.4 roles (ranging from 1 to 13).

Most HR professionals reported multiple roles and responsibilities. In fact, the majority of HR professionals indicated that they were responsible for Employee Relations and Recruiting (89%

and 86%, respectively, in the OR Survey and 69% and 60%, respectively, in the CPD Survey), in addition to their other roles and responsibilities (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Comparison of Roles and Responsibilities of HR Professional Respondents to the OR Survey and CPD Survey**

<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<b>OR Survey</b>	<b>CPD Survey</b>
Number of Respondents	N=308	N=744
Employee Relations	89%	69%
Recruiting	86%	60%
Training & Development	72%	62%
Generalist	69%	61%
Disability Management	69%	45%
Organizational Development	68%	53%
Management /Planning	66%	56%
Compensation	65%	50%
Benefits	61%	48%
Health and Safety	58%	35%
Human Resource Information System (HRIS)	54%	44%
Diversity	53%	N/A
Labour/Industrial Relations	43%	32%
Legal	40%	N/A
Payroll	33%	29%
Equity Officer	14%	NA
OR Other/CPD None of the Roles	0.5%	3.5%
<b># of Roles Listed in Survey</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Median # of Roles</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Average # of Roles</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>

*Given the variety of different work roles that HR professionals play, it may be useful to create cross-cutting educational training that integrates specialized knowledge and its implications across a broader range of HR roles and responsibilities when planning CPD.*

The distribution of jobs of respondents for both surveys was similar. However, more of the respondents in the OR survey compared to the CPD survey (53% vs. 43%, respectively) held more senior roles with their organization, with job titles including company owner, senior executive, director, HR manager, HR senior manager, and HR supervisor (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Comparison of Job Titles of Respondents to the OR Survey and CPD Survey**

Job Titles	OR Survey	CPD Survey
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>N=422</b>	<b>N=744</b>
HR Manager, HR Senior Manager, HR Supervisor	32%	27%
Company owner, CEO, Senior Executive, Director	21%	16%
HR Advisor, HR Business Partner, HR Generalist, Independent Consultant	27%	33%
HR Coordinator, HR Administrator, HR Clerk, HR Assistant	10%	7%
Specialists (e.g., Benefit/Pension Administrator)	4%	6%
Other	6%	10%

There were differences among respondents in the OR and the CPD Surveys in relation to the size of the organization. The OR Survey had proportionally more respondents from smaller and moderate size employers than from larger employers. The CPD survey had a greater number of respondents from very large organizations (i.e., organizations with more than 5,000 employees), with 15% of the 22% having over 10,000 employees (see Table 4).

For sub-analysis purposes related to organization size, we focused on the results from the OR Survey because it addressed more of the Organizational Readiness variables, whereas the CPD survey provided additional data on educational interests and delivery method preferences (timing, event type, format).

**Table 4. Organization Size of HR Professional Respondents to the OR Survey and CPD Survey**

Organizational Size	OR Survey	CPD Survey
	<b>N=422</b>	<b>N=655</b>
Organizations with 50 or less employees	17%	9%
51 to 249 employees	27%	21%
250 to 499 employees	15%	12%
500 to 4,999 employees	23.5%	32%
5,000 plus employees	11%	22%

In the OR Survey, in addition to organization size, we also gathered demographic data to consider possible differences between private and public sectors. The majority of respondents (62.9%;  $n=268$ ) were in the private sector, 30% ( $n=128$ ) were in the public sector, and 7% ( $n=30$ ) were consultants for multiple organizations. For the purpose of our analyses, we collapsed consultants into the private sector because they were directed to private sector questions, thus, resulting in 30% ( $n=128$ ) being Public Sector and 70% ( $n=298$ ) being Private Sector. Of the 104 who responded to being in the Public Sector, 89.4% ( $n=93$ ) worked for the Provincial Sector and 8.7% ( $n=9$ ) worked for the Federal Sector (see Table 5).

In further analysis, we found that private organizations tended to have higher perceived organizational support and team functioning than do public organizations. These factors may help facilitate accommodation and inclusion initiatives.

**Table 5. OR Survey Respondents Organizational Sector**

Organizational Sector	% of Respondents	# of Respondents
Private Sector	62.9%	268
Public Sector	30%	128
Consultants for Multiple Organizations	7%	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>N=426</b>

### Years of Employment with Organization and Career Path

The OR Survey respondents were asked to indicate the number of years they had been working at their current organization. Of the 341 HR professionals who provided years of employment with the organization, respondents were employed on average for 6 years, with 28.2% ( $n=96$ ) having less than two years experience, 29.3% ( $n=100$ ) having 2–4 years of experience, 16.4% ( $n=70$ ) having 5–9 years of experience, and 22% ( $n=75$ ) having 10 or more years of experience with their current organization. Tenure at a current location may not be representative of years of experience practicing HR.

The CPD Survey respondents were asked to report on where they were situated on their career path. The majority (60.3%) of respondents reported that they were mid-career, 13.7% were early career, 19.5% were late career, and 5.4% were nearing retirement. The results from the OR Survey may be more representative of HR professionals who are either earlier in the career path (early or mid-career) or newer employee in their current organization versus those later in their career path or with greater tenure within their current organization.

**Note: The following questions were only asked in the OR Survey**

### Industry Sector Representation

Two hundred and sixty-six respondents to the OR Survey indicated the industry sector in which they worked. The majority of respondents (35.7%) were in sectors involving more physical labour than professional industries (20.7%), followed by service, healthcare, sales, and transportation (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Industry Sector Representation**

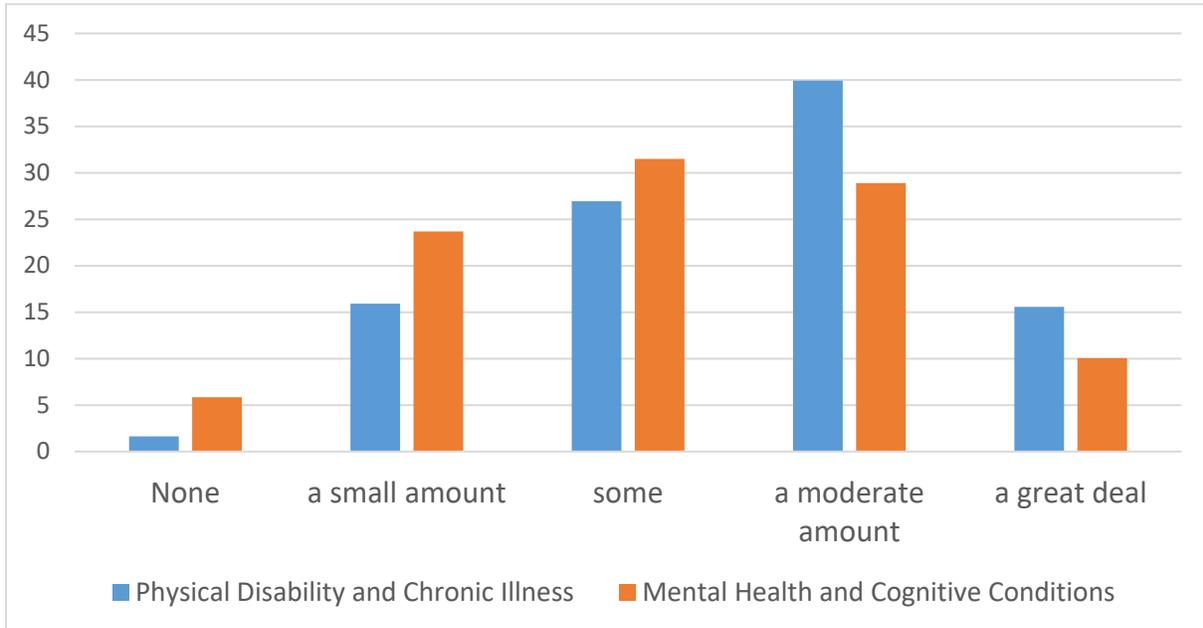
Industry Sector	Examples	%	N
Natural resources, agriculture, manufacturing, utilities occupations	Manufacturing, mining, agriculture, construction, oil/gas, and utilities	35.7%	95
Professional Industries (non-healthcare)	Professional, scientific, and technical services, finance, insurance, information, real estate, and management companies	20.7%	55
Service	Service	12%	32
Healthcare	Healthcare, non-profit, social services, and education sectors	9.8%	26
Sales Industry	Sales	9%	24
Transportation	Transportation	6%	16
Other	Miscellaneous industries	6.7%	18
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>266</b>

### Experience in Accommodation

There were 308 respondents who reported their knowledge and experience level regarding accommodating people with physical disabilities versus mental health and cognitive conditions (see Figure 2). Respondents reported higher knowledge and experience with employees who had physical and chronic illness conditions ( $M=2.5$ ,  $SD=.99$ ) versus experience with employees who had mental health conditions ( $M=2.14$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ;  $t(307)=-7.60$ ,  $p<.001$ ):

- 17% of respondents reported having “no or a small amount” of experience with employees with physical disabilities versus 30% who reported having “no or a small amount” of experience with employees with mental health conditions.
- 16% indicated that they had a great deal experience accommodating workers with physical injuries versus 10% who indicated they had experience accommodating workers with mental health conditions.
- These data may reflect the evolution of the workers compensation system, where the focus has traditionally been on traumatic and/or physical injuries, and where it has only more recently started to focus on mental health issues. It also may reflect that the research based on how best to accommodate people with mental conditions is less developed. That is, there are emerging mental health interventions and best practices but not strong evidence of their effectiveness.

**Figure 2. Comparison in HR Professional Respondents Accommodation Knowledge Between Physical/Chronic Illness and Mental Disabilities**

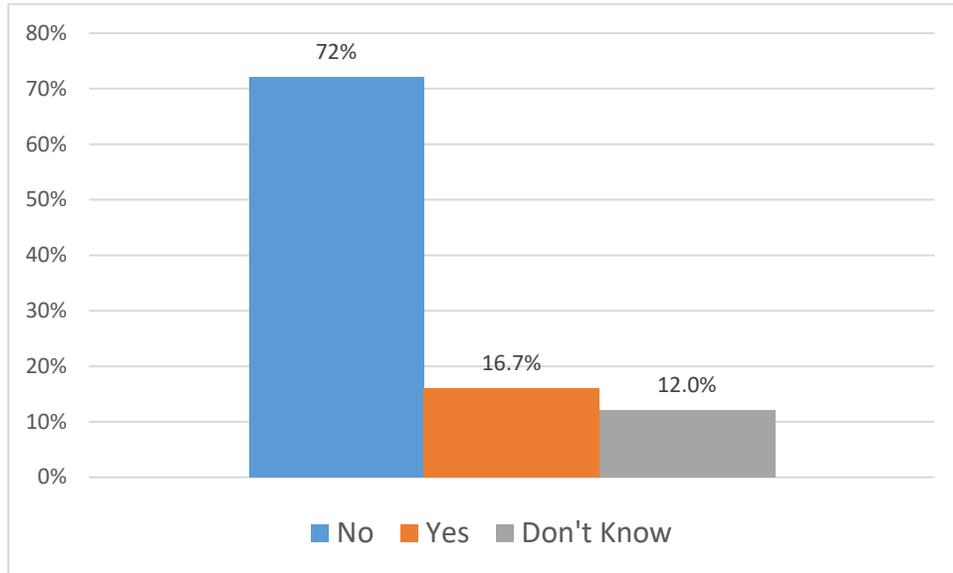


### Recruitment Practices

Private sector respondents were asked whether their organization proactively seeks to recruit job applicants with physical or mental disabilities. Of the 182 responses, 72% reported that they did not use proactive recruitment practices, whereas only 16.7% answered that they did use proactive recruitment practices (and a further 12% indicated that they did not know).

In other words, only one in six (i.e., 16.7%) of the private sector respondents noted that they were proactive in their recruitment of persons with disabilities. Moreover, it is possible that the 16.7% figure may be an overestimate of organizations that practice proactive approaches. Because the survey was focused on recruitment and retention of people with disabilities and because it was voluntary, it may have attracted more HR professionals from organizations with interests in diversity and inclusion (see Figure 2 above).

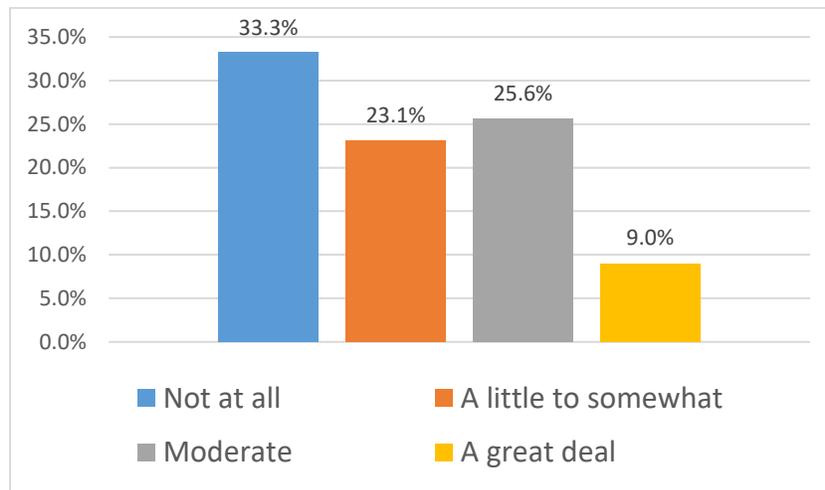
**Figure 3. Percentages of Private Sector Respondents Who Reported Proactive Recruitment Practices (n=182)**



HR professionals working in the public sector were asked about their organization’s diversity and inclusion goals. The public sector faces a high expectation from the federal government under the Employment Equity Act (and similar provincial legislation for public service employers) to be more proactive with more progressively diverse and inclusive recruitment and retention policies and practices. In the OR survey, we asked HR professionals in the public sector to report the extent to which their organizations set reasonable diversity and inclusion employment goals and makes an effort to achieve them (see Figure 3 above).

Just over half (56%) of the HR professionals reported that their organization either did not set diversity and inclusion employment goals (i.e., 33.3% indicated “Not at all”), or set few goals (i.e., 23.1% indicated “a little to somewhat”). Only 25.6% reported setting a moderate amount of goals, and 9% reported setting “A great deal” of goals.

**Figure 4. Percentage of Public Sector Respondents who are Establishing Diversity and Inclusion Goals (Public Sector n=78)**



*Qualitative Responses on Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities*

There were 240 respondents from both public and private sectors that responded to an open-ended question seeking information on what their organization does to facilitate the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. Just over 1 in 4 respondents (26.3%) noted that they did not do anything on the recruitment side. One respondent noted that their company had affirmative recruitment programs in the USA, but not in Canada. Approximately 20% reported that they work with community organizations or other agencies that support recruitment of people of disabilities. Just over 1 in 6 (17.9%) noted that they were equal opportunity employers, and 12.5% specifically commented that they advertise that they are equal opportunity employers in their postings.

One respondent noted that they did everything required to ensure that they were “legally” compliant. In practice, however, they do not hire people with disabilities. Another respondent noted that their organizational recruitment practices with employees in Canada and USA are different. In the USA, the employer was compliant with legislative requirements under the Americans With Disabilities Act, whereas, in Canada, there is no similar legislation, so the organization did not have a similar proactive recruitment program.

*It is possible that legislative requirements may influence private sector policies and practices and may have a positive impact on proactive recruitment in the public sector. More work is needed to understand the effects of legislation on recruitment of workers with disabilities.*

Twenty respondents described enhanced recruitment strategies. For example:

*"...online application questionnaires and phone screening with recruiters to help assess any issues and options prior to interview. Most of those conversations are not involving the hiring manager in the initial conversation to avoid bias."*

*"We change the location of our interviews for people who use a wheelchair .... We adapt our assessments to accommodate people with learning disabilities or who are visually/hearing impaired. We negotiate with clients to modify job duties or work schedules for employees with disabilities."*

*"Accommodations take place from the moment someone applies and discloses their disability. Sometimes they share their disability, but, if one has been disclosed, I will ask how we can accommodate. For example, are e-mails and text messages better for you; how can we accommodate the schedule of an interpreter; do I need to travel to you? We have had our orientation instructor drive to the location of the new driver in order to facilitate orientation; prepared visual documents and subtitles for a hearing-impaired candidate."*

*"we offer customized work arrangements where needed and ensure that our hiring managers are equipped to effectively interview and evaluate a candidate who discloses a disability."*

*"We offer multiple ways to apply for positions as well as posting through a variety of mediums. We offer a welcoming environment and have a diverse group of employees."*

Two respondents mentioned affirmative action programs and leadership engagement:

*"Have developed and implemented a formal policy and management training regarding employment equality, which is endorsed and modeled/upheld by all management."*

*"Employment equity weighting in selection criteria."*

*Some HR professionals appeared to be champions of recruiting people with disabilities, using evidence-based best practice. They also may be mentors to others in the workplace, by sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues.*

## Recruiter Knowledge About Hiring People with Disabilities

When asked about familiarity with the following practices for staff who are responsible for applicant interviewing, the majority (75-80%) of the 263 HR professionals from both public and private sector respondents noted that their organization was either familiar or very familiar with appropriate practices regarding human rights and discriminatory practices in the hiring process. The exception was a lack of knowledge or experience with the specific list of practices pertaining to recruitment of people with visual, hearing, or learning disabilities (see Table 7).

*These results suggest that other barriers – beyond those involving a lack of familiarity with legal and regulatory requirements (e.g., organizational support) – may be more important in facilitating organizational readiness to employ people with disabilities.*

**Table 7. Level of Familiarity with Best Practices Congruent with Recruitment of People with Disabilities**

Familiarity with practices congruent with recruitment of people with disabilities	N	Very unfamiliar	Unfamiliar	Neither familiar nor unfamiliar	Familiar	Very familiar	Don't know
Framing questions to applicants about the ability to perform specific job tasks rather than about disability	263	3.4%	2.3%	10.6%	37.6%	40.7%	5.3%
Restrictions on obtaining medical examinations and medical history information	263	3.4%	5.3%	9.9%	34.2%	40.3%	6.8%
Knowing when drug testing is/is not permissible	263	6.1%	7.2%	6.8%	33.1%	38.0%	8.7%
Restrictions on eliciting information about medical issues affecting applicants' health and safety on the job	263	3.0%	4.2%	9.5%	41.1%	37.3%	4.9%
Knowing when to ask an applicant about how s/he would perform specific job tasks	263	3.0%	5.7%	11.4%	43.0%	33.1%	3.8%
Adapting print materials used in the interview to digital format, large print, diskette, or Braille	261	22.6%	24.1%	17.2%	14.9%	7.3%	13.8%
Accessing sign language interpreters	263	27.8%	25.9%	16.0%	9.9%	6.1%	14.4%
Using a reader to assist a person with a learning disability or vision impairment	263	26.2%	27.0%	15.6%	9.9%	5.3%	16.0%
Using a teletypewriter (TTY) or relay service to set up interviews	263	31.2%	28.9%	12.2%	8.0%	3.0%	16.7%

## Experience with Disability Related Complaints or Grievances Process

Over one in five respondents (22.7%) indicated that they had experience with complaints of disability-related wrongful/unjust dismissal, harassment, or unfair discipline (see Table 8). Just over 16% had experienced a complaint of failure to provide reasonable accommodation, and just over 11.4% had experience with employee suspension.

Experience with disability-related complaints may be useful to explore in more detail. For instance, unionized environments have formal grievance processes in place and may be considered a safer environment to report a grievance or to seek some resolution. Experience with disability-related complaints may be a motivating factor to increasing education of HR professionals, supervisors, and managers to better address workplace factors that may contribute to future grievances and complaints.

**Table 8. Types of Disability-Related Complaints Through Grievance Processes**

Experience with Disability-Related Complaints	N	No	Yes	Don't know
Wrongful/unjust dismissal	229	61.1%	22.7%	16.2%
Harassment	229	65.1%	21.0%	14.0%
Unfair discipline	230	67.4%	20.0%	12.6%
Failure to provide reasonable accommodation	230	69.6%	16.1%	14.3%
Suspension	228	73.7%	11.4%	14.9%
Denied or Reduced benefits	229	76.4%	7.9%	15.7%
Layoff	229	76.4%	7.0%	16.6%
Failure to hire	229	78.2%	6.1%	15.7%
Wage dispute	229	79.9%	6.1%	14.0%
Failure to rehire	229	79.5%	5.2%	15.3%
Failure to promote	229	78.6%	5.2%	16.2%

## Experience of Increased Health-Related Duty to Accommodate People with Disabilities

Just under half of the respondents 48% ( $n=159$ ) were not aware of any additional health-related costs as a result of the duty to accommodate persons with disabilities. One quarter (25%) of the respondents indicated that there were no additional costs as a result of the duty to accommodate. Approximately 6% ( $N$  ranged from 9-14) indicated added costs for health insurance, short-term/long-term disability, and life insurance. One respondent noted increased Employee Assistance Program costs in the comment section. Although a number of HR professionals perceived increased costs to be a barrier to accommodation, there was little evidence of actual increased costs, which is congruent with secondary research.

## Accommodation Practices

### *Decision Maker on Provision of Accommodation*

There were 308 HR professionals who responded to the question regarding the final decision-maker for providing accommodation when a request for accommodation was made. One-third of respondents indicated that the decision was a joint or team decision, typically involving HR with various departments or managers or CEO; 23.1% indicated that the decision involved other managers or directors or the executive team; 17.5% of respondents reported that they were the final decision maker; and 7.8% of respondents indicated that the final decision maker was the immediate supervisor of the employee. Other decision-makers on the provision of accommodation (range 4.9% to 1.3%) included occupational health therapists, safety/ergonomic staff, legal counsel (internal/external), disability management/benefit staff (see Table 9).

*HR professionals play an important role (up to 50%) in the decision-making process regarding accommodation requests. Other important educational targets include CEO, COO, other executives, managers, and supervisors. Together, they participate individually or collectively in 80% of the decision-making processes regarding accommodations. Expanding education activities to upper management, that directly addresses their roles and responsibilities, may be useful to improving recruitment and retention practices.*

**Table 9. Who is the Final Decision on Accommodation Requests (n=308)**

<b>Final Decision-Maker(s) for Accommodation Requests</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Joint decision making, typically including HR staff	103	33.4%
Other manager/director/Executive	71	23.1%
HR staff	54	17.5%
Immediate supervisor of the employee requesting accommodation	24	7.8%
Occupational health therapist/medical clinic staff	15	4.9%
Disability management/benefits staff	11	3.6%
CEO/ED/Owner	10	3.2%
Depends on level of accommodation	5	1.6%
Legal counsel (internal/external)	4	1.3%
Other	4	1.3%
Unknown	7	2.3%

*Types of Accommodation*

Approximately 300 respondents reported on the types of accommodation practices that they used. The most common HR accommodation practices (over 90%) were the provision of modified work hours, flexibility of HR policies, provision of counselling or employee/family assistance plans. Between 80%-90% noted that they modified work environments or provided extra rest breaks. Between 70%-80% indicated that they provided additional supervision, training, and mentoring, restructured jobs, or made existing facilities physically accessible. Between 60%-70% reported that they acquired or modified equipment, provided written job instructions, made reassignments to a vacant position, and made parking and transportation accessible. Less common practices involved the provisions of special training or vocational rehabilitation services, changing the supervisor, acquiring or modifying training, providing a job coach, or providing readers for people with visual or cognitive impairments (see Table 10).

**Table 10. Types of Accommodation Offered to Employees with Physical or Mental Disabilities**

<b>Accommodation Practices</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No, never needed to make accommodations</b>	<b>No, not able to</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Modified work hours	294	90.8%	9.2%	2.0%	2.7%
Been flexible in HR policies (e.g., extension of leave of absence, when appropriate)	295	90.5%	9.5%	1.4%	3.1%
Provided access to counselling or employee/family assistance plans	303	90.4%	9.6%	0.7%	1.0%
Modified work environment (e.g., orthopedic chair, lower desk, etc.)	299	84.6%	15.4%	0.3%	2.7%
Provided extra rest breaks	278	82.0%	18.0%	4.7%	6.1%
Provided additional supervision, training, and mentoring	287	78.7%	21.3%	1.4%	5.9%
Restructured jobs	276	74.3%	25.7%	6.2%	5.4%
Made existing facilities physically accessible	272	70.6%	29.4%	9.6%	3.7%
Acquired or modified equipment	271	69.7%	30.3%	5.5%	8.1%
Provided written job instructions	277	67.5%	32.5%	1.4%	9.4%
Made reassignment to vacant position	254	61.4%	38.6%	10.2%	11.0%
Made parking and transportation accessible	279	61.3%	38.7%	4.7%	5.7%

Provided training or vocational rehabilitation services	265	52.5%	47.5%	4.2%	12.1%
Changed supervision	255	49.8%	50.2%	4.7%	15.7%
Acquired or modified training	245	40.0%	60.0%	6.1%	19.2%
Provided job coach	247	30.4%	69.6%	6.9%	17.8%
Provided readers	251	26.3%	73.7%	6.8%	15.9%

*Some HR professionals reported not utilizing some services or strategies. This lack of use of some of the strategies or services may be because they haven't had a need for such services, or, possibly, because they haven't considered or been aware of the potential benefits of utilizing vocational rehabilitation services, changing supervisors, or providing job coaching in their accommodation processes.*

**NOTE: Related Research Results**

*It is interesting to note that other research investigating what types of accommodation are offered to employees with disabilities versus employees without disability noted that there is little difference in the type of accommodation provided (Schur et al., 2014). For instance, employees without disabilities have a variety of needs requiring modified work hours and flexibility such as addressing children's needs, caregiving roles they have with aging parents, addressing the needs of children with disabilities, or family illness, etc.*

**NOTE: Related Research Results**

*In a recent systematic review, the researchers found a trend across several studies that improved inclusion, workplace culture, and ability awareness were associated with a company's ability to provide proper accommodations or disability training for all employees (Lindsay et al., 2018).*

### *Formal and Informal Accommodation Processes – Qualitative Data*

Just under a quarter of the respondents (22.5%) provided examples of formal and informal accommodation processes that they used to increase retention of people with disabilities, ranging from comments like “accommodation if possible” to providing more comprehensive return to work policies and practices. The most common accommodations mentioned were modified work and time flexibility.

Some examples of other accommodation comments include:

*“Exploring more options with supervisors on how to find creative solutions for accommodations.”*

*“Defining requirements more broadly.”*

*“Above standard EFAP and benefits provisions, flexible work hours, Earned Day off Programs, above standard vacation and family days offered, return to work programs, flexibility in regards to policy when required.”*

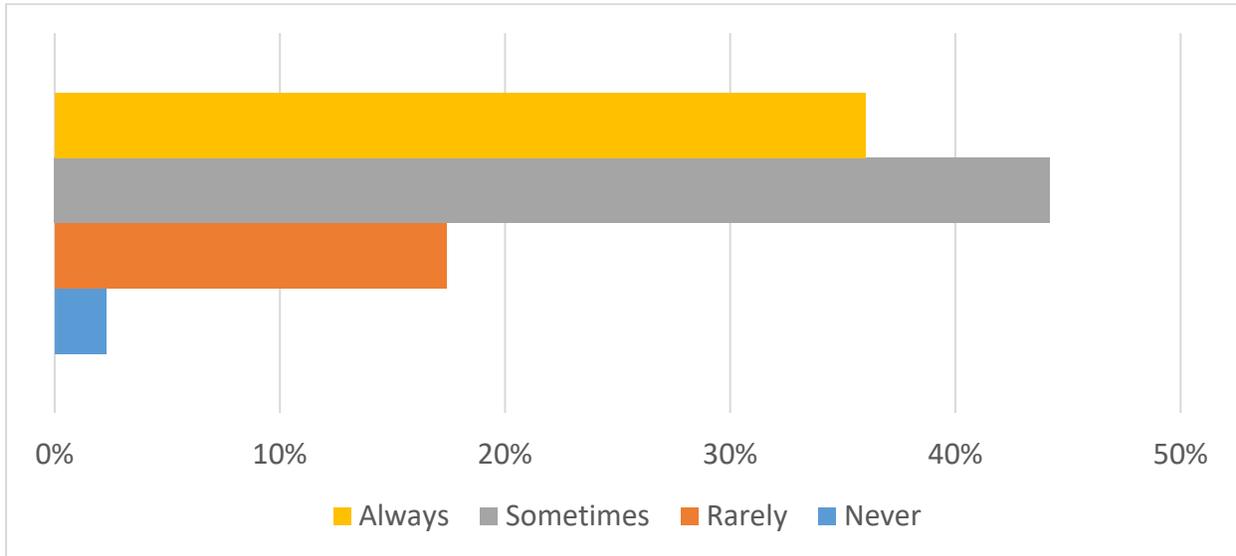
*“We have on-site physiotherapy, twice a week, available to all employees. We also have an on-site gym, free for use to all employees to encourage fitness and good health.”*

*“Disability management light duties, training, education through online/classroom courses, gradual return to work as per doctor recommendation, provide some flexibility.”*

### *Union Involvement with Accommodation Process*

Of the 229 who responded whether their employees were covered by a collective agreement, 56.8% (n=130) answered “No”, and 43.2% (n=99) responded “Yes.” Of the 86 respondents who provided information about both the frequency and type of union involvement in the accommodation process, 36% noted that union representation occurred “always”, 44.2% noted that this occurred “sometimes”, 17.4% noted that this occurred “rarely”, and 2.3% respondents indicated that they did not know the extent to which union representatives were involved (see Figure 5).

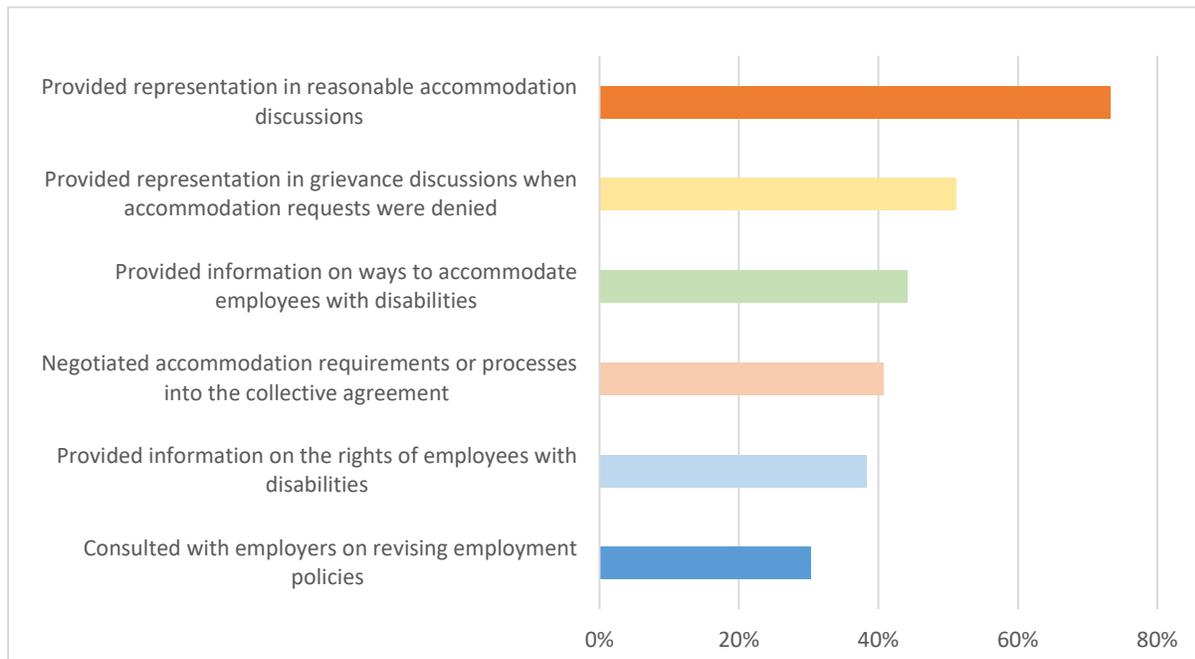
**Figure 5. Level of Participation of Union Representative Involvement in the Accommodation Process (n=86)**



Over 80% of the respondents noted that unions played a role in the accommodation process (“always” and “sometimes”), suggesting that it is important that educational efforts should involve and engage labour representatives.

Union representatives have different types of involvement in the accommodation process in organizations, ranging from active consultation with employers on employment policies to providing representation in accommodation discussions (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Types of Involvement that the Unions Provide in the Accommodation Process (n=86)**



About 75% of these 86 respondents noted that the union provided representation in reasonable accommodation discussions. Just over half (51.2%; n=44) provided representation in grievance discussions when accommodation requests were denied; 44.2% (n=38) provided information on ways to accommodate employees with disabilities; 40.7% (n=35) negotiated accommodation requirements or processes into the collective agreement; and just under one third (30.2%; n=26) consulted with employers on revising employment policies.

### *Implications of Collective Bargaining Agreements on Accommodation*

In unionized workplaces, the more the union was involved in the accommodation process, the more disability-related training both HR professionals and managers received. This result suggests that having more engaged unions may be a factor that contributes to an increase in disability-related training to various work groups. In addition, the more that the union was involved in accommodation, the greater the number of disability-related claims ( $r=.43$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Larger workplaces tend to be unionized and would, therefore, tend to have more claims. However, after controlling for size of organization, union involvement was still found to be related to a higher number of claims ( $\Delta R^2= .17$ ,  $p<.001$ ). These larger (and unionized) organizations also may have more policies or procedures that provide a clear process and greater security for employees to report a claim. Furthermore, supportive unions may help educate and facilitate the claims process, such that employees may better understand their rights and how to go through the accommodation process.

*Implications of Collective Bargaining Agreements on Educational Training*

We explored the relationship between unionization and educational training. Of the respondents from unionized workplaces, who also responded to questions concerning educational training (N= 67), we found that the more that the union was involved in accommodation processes, the more disability-related training both HR professionals and managers received ( $r=-.26, p<.05$ ;  $r=.30, p<.05$ , respectively). In unionized workplaces, the more the union was involved in the accommodation process, the more disability-related training both HR professionals and managers received. This result suggests that having more engaged unions may be a factor that contributes to an increase in disability-related training to various work groups.

*Accommodation Practices Concerning Access to Meetings, Promotions, Social Opportunities, and/or Training*

We asked respondents about the actions that their organization had taken to ensure that people with disabilities have access to meetings, promotions, social opportunities, and/or training. Over half of the 230 respondents stated that they have provided wheelchair access and removed volatile or scented substances, and one-third provided time flexibility with test taking. Very few of the respondents (i.e., under 5%) indicated that they were not able to provide these types of accommodation. Many respondents (ranging from 28.7%-65.2%) noted that they never needed to provide these types of accommodation (see Table 11). This could be due to a number of factors including possibly the lack of self-disclosure or organizational factors that may hinder self-disclosure.

**Table 11. Actions Taken by Organization to Ensure that People with Disabilities have Access to Meetings, Promotions, Social Opportunities, and Training**

	N	Yes	No, not able to provide	No, never needed to provide	Don't know
Wheelchair access	231	57.1%	4.8%	33.3%	4.8%
Communication access for a hearing-impaired person	230	19.1%	3.9%	63.5%	13.5%
Communication access for a person with a visual or learning impairment	230	18.7%	3.9%	65.2%	12.2%
Time flexibility in test taking	230	33.0%	1.7%	53.0%	12.2%
Removing volatile or scented substances	230	57.4%	4.8%	28.7%	9.1%

## Perceived Barriers for Recruitment and Advancement

Respondents were asked to identify the top barriers for recruitment and advancement for workers with disabilities from a list of factors (selecting all that apply). The most frequently perceived barriers for recruitment for people with disabilities and advancement were the lack of supervisor knowledge of which accommodation to make and lack of related experience. These barriers were closely followed by attitudes/stereotypes, cost of accommodations, and lack of requisite skills and training. Cost was also highly rated as a perceived barrier, which is consistent with other investigating barriers to recruiting people with studies (see Table 12).

**Table 12. HR Professionals Perceived Barriers to Employment or Advancement for Persons with Disabilities in their Organization?**

Perceived Barriers	N
Lack of supervisor knowledge of which accommodation to make	120
Lack of related experience	101
Attitudes/stereotypes	97
Cost of accommodations	93
Lack of requisite skills and training	86
Additional cost of supervision	53
Cost of training	52

Of the respondents who indicated that their organization had tried to make changes to accommodate workers with disabilities, they felt that it was significantly easier to change policies and benefits than to change attitudes of workers towards workers with disabilities.

**NOTE: Related Research Results**

*Although there is a perception that cost is a common concern among HR professionals, several large studies investigating recruitment and advancement of people with disabilities has found that the majority of accommodation requests for people with disabilities, as well as workers without disabilities, have zero or small monetary costs, according to both employees and managers (Schur et al., 2014).*

**Themes: Barriers for Recruitment and Advancement**

We reviewed the responses to the open-ended question on barriers for recruitment and advancement. We identified several major themes based on respondents' comments (see Table 13):

1. Physical environment, location, and safety
2. High psychological or physical demands,
3. Stigma and bias
4. Challenging health conditions
5. Budget, costs, and resources
6. Lack of education, knowledge, training, and communication
7. Perceived lack of skills/competencies
8. Confidentiality and self-disclosure issues
9. Leadership and other organizational factors.

## Qualitative Analysis of Barriers to Recruitment or Advancement

**Table 13. Perceived HR Barriers to Recruitment (Qualitative Data)**

<b>Physical Environment</b>	<b>Lack of Education, Knowledge, Training</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety concerns/considerations (nature of work)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of time/resources to provide needed customization of training or job demands, accommodation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remote location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of knowledge, training in accommodation, managers are not trained how to supervise or accommodate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work environment is not accessible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of communication and awareness training</li> </ul>
<b>Psychological/Physical Demands</b>	<b>Confidentiality and Self Disclosure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too stressful workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear in disability self-disclosure</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical demands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceptions, understanding, and concerns of the employee requesting accommodation</li> </ul>
<b>Stigma and Bias</b>	<b>Leadership and Other Organizational Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager's personal bias/refusal to hire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwillingness to change managerial leadership styles</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stigma about abilities by co-workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of policies in place</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived prejudices of customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union and collective bargaining agreement may pose a problem</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived entitlement of applicant/employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwillingness to change recruitment process/ unaccommodating (e.g., pre-screening/ testing)</li> </ul>
<b>Challenging Health Conditions</b>	<b>Perceived Competencies/Lack of Skills</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drug addictions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of qualified applicants</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severe mental health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of skills training in applicants</li> </ul>
<b>Budget/Costs/Resources</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget to provide accommodation</li> </ul>	

**Uncertainty on Issues Concerning Accommodation**

We asked OR survey respondents several questions regarding how often their organization was uncertain about handling specific issues concerning accommodation and workers' compensation (see Table 14).

**Table 14. Frequency of Uncertainty about Workers' Compensation Accommodation Requirements**

Accommodation Uncertainty	N	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	Don't know	Not applicable
How long the organization and injured worker must search for modified or alternate work before beginning vocational rehabilitation	223	19.7%	25.6%	22.0%	10.3%	12.1%	10.3%
Whether an injured worker who cannot return to full duties can be terminated	223	28.7%	26.0%	25.1%	4.9%	7.6%	7.6%
Safety issues involved in returning an injured worker to the job	223	30.9%	31.4%	18.4%	7.6%	5.8%	5.8%
Whether transitional, light duty work can be considered	223	34.5%	32.3%	17.0%	4.9%	5.8%	5.4%
Drug Whether an employee who is currently using cannabis should be accommodated	172	27.3%	26.7%	20.9%	5.2%	9.3%	10.5%
OHS Whether work site modifications or ergonomic changes constitute reasonable accommodations	172	21.5%	37.8%	26.2%	4.1%	4.7%	5.8%
Whether it is permissible to offer extra breaks, flexible scheduling or mentoring if others do not receive it.	223	43.5%	26.0%	15.2%	4.5%	6.7%	4.0%
Drug Whether it is permissible to suspend or fire an employee whose alcohol or drug use impairs job performance	172	30.2%	25.0%	22.1%	5.8%	5.8%	11.0%
When an injured worker returning to work following a work-related injury is entitled to reasonable accommodation	223	30.0%	39.9%	15.7%	3.6%	5.8%	4.9%
Drug Whether a past drug user should be accommodated	172	27.3%	29.1%	16.3%	4.7%	11.0%	11.6%
Drug Whether an employee who is currently using alcohol should be accommodated	172	23.8%	36.6%	20.9%	3.5%	7.0%	8.1%
OHS Whether it is permissible to discipline an employee who is a risk to self or others	172	23.8%	39.0%	19.2%	5.8%	5.8%	6.4%
How often has your organization been uncertain about how to handle coordination of leave under Workers' Compensation, STD/LTD, sick leave or other statutory leave benefits?	172	23.8%	43.0%	21.5%	4.1%	4.7%	2.9%
Drug Whether an employee who is currently using illegal drugs, other than cannabis, should be accommodated	172	31.4%	28.5%	18.0%	5.8%	5.8%	10.5%
Whether it is permissible to modify job duties	223	43.0%	30.9%	12.1%	4.0%	6.3%	3.6%
Drug Whether it is permissible to suspend or fire an employee whose alcohol or drug use impairs job performance	39	33.3%	33.3%	12.8%	5.1%	7.7%	7.7%

These requirements included issues related to the coordination of leave under workers' compensation, Short Term Disability/Long Term Disability (STD/LTD), sick leave, or other statutory leave benefits, issues related to accommodation and occupational health and safety (OHS), or issues concerning disability accommodation and drug and alcohol use. Table 14 (see above) has been sorted in order of uncertainty, which has been calculated by adding together categories of "Don't Know", "Always" and "Sometimes." "Don't know" may be indicative of the respondent not feeling knowledgeable enough to state what is their organization's frequency of uncertainty.

We explored correlations across different factors and found that respondents who reported having greater uncertainty regarding accommodating employees or responding to accommodation-related issues also noted more barriers to employment and advancement of persons with disabilities ( $r = .21, p < .01$ ), reported greater difficulty in making changes in policies ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ) and accommodations ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ), and faced greater uncertainty of OHS-related issues pertaining to accommodation ( $r = .56, p < .001$ ).

## Enablers

Respondents were asked how effective or ineffective several conditions would be in reducing barriers to employment or advancement for persons with disabilities within their organization. The most effective enabler was having visible top management commitment. Over 80% of respondents indicated that staff training was "somewhat effective" or "very effective" in reducing barriers to employment or advancement, whereas, approximately 70% considered on-site consultation, mentoring, and short-term assistance as being useful strategies to reduce barriers to employment or advancement (see Table 15).

**Table 15. Perceived Effectiveness of Strategies to Reduce Barriers to Employment or Advancement**

	N	Very ineffective	Somewhat ineffective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	Not used	Don't know
Visible top management commitment	231	1.3%	3.9%	13.4%	32.0%	46.3%	0.0%	3.0%
Staff training	231	3.0%	1.3%	11.7%	53.7%	26.4%	0.0%	3.9%
On-site consultation or technical assistance	217	2.3%	3.7%	19.8%	47.0%	26.7%	0.0%	0.5%
Mentoring	231	2.6%	3.5%	19.5%	45.0%	24.2%	0.0%	5.2%
Short-term outside assistance with job supervision	231	3.9%	6.9%	18.6%	39.0%	17.3%	2.2%	12.1%
Special budget allocation	231	4.8%	5.2%	25.5%	35.9%	14.3%	1.3%	13.0%

**NOTE: Related Research Results**

*This visible top management commitment to diversity and inclusion is consistent with other studies investigating predictors for successful disability recruiting (Karpur, VanLooy, & Bruyère, 2014).*

With regard to staff training, a series of questions were asked to identify which staff have received training addressing human rights, cultural diversity, employment legislation, discrimination, conflict resolution, non-discriminating recruitment practices, and the accommodations process within their organization (see Table 16).

**Table 16. Identification of Which Staff People Have Training in Disability-Related Issues.**

Staff Training on Disability-Related Issues (N=157)	HR	Managerial	OHS	Other	None	Don't know
Confidentiality requirements of medical information	97.5%	62.7%	41.2%	24.2%	3.9%	2.6%
The accommodation process	94.3%	59.5%	37.8%	14.2%	4.7%	4.1%
Non-discrimination in the disciplinary process or termination	94.3%	58.8%	15.5%	19.6%	4.7%	6.1%
Non-discriminatory recruitment and hiring practices HR Staff	94.3%	58.1%	11.5%	12.8%	6.1%	5.4%
Cultural sensitivity training (vulnerable /underrepresented populations)	78.3%	60.2%	21.1%	30.9%	23.6%	13.0%
Human Rights legislation requirements	100.0%	45.9%	31.2%	17.2%	1.9%	2.5%
Bone Fide Occupational Requirements	82.2%	54.3%	25.6%	12.4%	14.0%	7.0%
Conflict resolution in the accommodation process	77.7%	56.6%	23.0%	16.4%	21.3%	12.3%
Accommodation for mental health disabilities	84.7%	51.1%	36.8%	17.3%	12.0%	12.0%
Disability awareness and/or sensitivity training	79.6%	52.0%	26.4%	24.0%	18.4%	9.6%
Equal access in promotional opportunities and training	76.4%	50.8%	15.0%	13.3%	18.3%	18.3%
Employee Training -Interaction with other employment legislation HR Staff	87.9%	37.0%	21.7%	15.9%	4.3%	12.3%
Available print or organizational resources to assist in the accommodation process	56.7%	46.1%	33.7%	21.3%	51.7%	29.2%
Federal Employment Equity legislation requirements	61.8%	30.9%	16.5%	15.5%	40.2%	27.8%
Limitations and exclusions health plans may be able to impose	61.1%	29.2%	25.0%	17.7%	29.2%	29.2%

We also explored whether other demographic factors were associated with staff training. We found that organizational size was related to training, such that larger organizations tended to provide more disability-related training to their HR professionals ( $r=.26, p<.001$ ). Surprisingly, however, there was no relationship between organizational size and training for managers ( $r=.03, ns$ ). We would expect larger organizations (compared to smaller organizations) to have more training available, not only for HR staff but also other groups, including managers, but we did not find this. This suggests that accommodation may still be seen as an 'HR issue' only, and,

thus, managers aren't getting the required training they need. Indeed, HR staff were recorded as having completed, on average, 11 of the 16 training topics (15 topics listed above plus "other") of interest as relevant to workplace accommodations, whereas managerial staff were recorded as having completed, on average, 6 of the 16 training topics, inclusive of "other." We explored potential associations between manager training and outcomes of interest and found that organizations that extended the types of educational topics for managers had significant positive correlations with the following outcomes: formal accommodation process (.436\*\*), employee accommodations (.419\*\*), greater union involvement (.361\*\*), less accommodation (-.200\*) and OHS uncertainty (-.200\*), more comprehensive organizational change procedures (.380\*\*), team support and effectiveness (.198\*), organization support (.234\*\*), disability management program impact (.433\*\*), greater knowledge of accommodations (.324\*\*), recruiter familiarity (.245\*\*) and better data tracking (.375\*\*). It is important to note that positive correlations do not indicate causality, rather, it indicates that there is an association along the same linear direction between variables. Further research may be warranted to investigate causal linkages. The findings suggest that expanding manager training opportunities may potentially contribute to better organizational outcomes. Note \*\* correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), whereas \* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Enablers to Recruitment (Qualitative Responses)*

We asked HR professionals to list what their organization does to facilitate the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. In our analysis of 236 qualitative responses, we sorted them into distinct ideas, and two researchers categorized and listed strategies arising from the responses. There were 44 respondents that noted no strategies by responding "nothing", "no active strategies", "no special effort", with three respondents noting "unknown." Two researchers first categorized responses to those that were relevant to recruitment versus those relevant to retention and then identified subcategories. In Table 17, below, we summarized HR responses regarding enabling recruitment strategies, whereas, in Table 18, we summarized HR responses regarding enabling job retention strategies.

**Table 17. Enabling Recruitment Strategies Reported by HR Professionals**

Recruitment Practices	
• Advertising equal opportunity	• PWD Hotline
• Multiple recruitment formats	• PWD Ambassador
• Open/equal consideration	• Flexible job descriptions
• Use of recruiters to assess prospective interviewee needs to address needs prior to hiring manager	• Engagement with community organization/professional PWD recruitment services
• Proactive employment (equity weighting, specific outreach)	• Reinforcement of accommodation services in recruitment process

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized engaged PWD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Union/Employee groups collaboration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate other barriers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making physical environment more accessible</li> </ul>	
<b>Policy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy review (Scheduled (e.g., bi-annual) review)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of EAP/EAFP/Health benefits</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive employment (equity weighting, specific outreach)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget for specialized equipment/resources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remote/telecommunicate opportunities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flex hours/flex schedules, lenient benefits</li> </ul>	
<b>Education/Training/Support</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability co-ordinators</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training recruiters, managers, supervisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal/External job coaching</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Organization/Professional PWD recruitment Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Onsite health services</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilization of WCB disability support services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fitness facilities</li> </ul>

**NOTE: Related Research Results**

*Many of the approaches mentioned above are consistent with current research on recruitment practices that have shown to have predictive value. Factors with high predictive value are demonstratable commitment from leadership; government support to employers in the form of internship programs, information, resources and recognition; credible and reliable sources of information and awareness training to share best practice; engagement of community organizations and other networks for recruitment and support. Workplaces where managers have personal experience of disabilities are the most accommodating towards recruiting people with disabilities (Gustafsson, Peralta, & Danermark, 2014). Initiatives to change coworkers' attitudes include information, contact, and training (Krahé & Altwasser, 2006; Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, & Nijhuis, 2013). In a 2014, USA study, the authors found strong predictive evidence that employers who used internship programs were 5.7 times more likely to hire people with disabilities (Erickson et al., 2014)*

*Enablers for Job Retention (Qualitative Responses)*

In Table 18, below, we report on enabling job retention strategies.

**Table 18. Enabling Job Retention Strategies Reported by HR Professionals**

Removal of Physical and Environmental Barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making physical environment more accessible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate other environmental barriers</li> </ul>
Education/ Training /Support	Policies/ Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EAP/EAFP/Health Benefits</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training recruiters, managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STD/LTD</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisors' disability-related topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flex Hours/flex schedule</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education-online/classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lenient benefits</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Onsite health services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer remote work/telecommute</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer remote/telecommute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary/permanent cross-department accommodation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal/external job coach training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely start</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilization of professional services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy review (e.g., scheduled or bi-annual review)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular communication with worker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light duties/modified duties</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a Disability Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduated RTW</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering conversations on mental health</li> </ul>	

## HR Metrics – Tracking Accommodation Practices

Because of the importance of tracking accommodation-related data in order to create baseline measurements, to evaluate the effectiveness of current practices, and to develop future initiatives, we examined the extent to which organizations tracked data for various purposes (see Table 19). Interestingly, the majority of respondents (58%-76%) indicated that their organization does not keep accommodation data for these purposes. Additional analyses showed 70.9% of those who responded to data tracking items kept data for at least one of the purposes, whereas, 8.5% kept track for all these purposes.

**Table 19. Tracking Accommodation Practices for Planning and Reporting Purposes**

Purposes for Tracking Accommodation Practices	N	Yes	No
Future accommodations in similar situations	306	41.8	58.2
Tracking accommodation costs	306	23.9	76.1
Dispute resolution/settlement	306	33.3	66.7
Regulatory requirements	306	29.7	70.3

Organizations collecting tracking accommodation metrics may be better equipped to assess the effectiveness of practices related to employing people with disabilities or retention practices. Therefore, respondents were asked to indicate how helpful several resources were to help resolve accommodation issues (see Table 20). The top four resources considered either “helpful” or “very helpful” by approximately more than half of the 141 respondents were external legal counsel, disability management and benefits staff, safety and ergonomic staff, and health-care providers. Please note that less than one-third of the survey respondents answered this section, which may indicate an unfamiliarity with this issue, or that the resource was not available in their organization, or that the respondents simply skipped this section.

*Tracking accommodation-related data can assist organizations in directing attention towards and evaluating the impacts of specific practices and policies on accommodation and in planning similar accommodation requirements in the future. Collecting HR Metrics can provide an opportunity to reflect on accommodation practices at a departmental and organizational level. Linking datasets related to claims and work absence (frequency/duration) can provide insights into the need for modifying work conditions, job requirements, or other workplace factors contributing to requests for accommodation.*

**Table 20. Level of Helpfulness of the Use of Internal or External Resources in Resolving Accommodation Issues.**

Helpfulness of Internal or External Resources in Resolving Accommodation Issues	N	Not helpful at all	Somewhat helpful	Helpful	Very helpful	Don't know
Legal counsel (external)	141	0.7%	9.9%	28.4%	37.6%	23.4%
Disability management/benefits staff	143	0.7%	18.9%	31.5%	26.6%	22.4%
Your safety/ergonomics staff	139	0.7%	25.2%	28.8%	24.5%	20.9%
Occupational therapist, psychologist, doctor, nurse, occupational health professional, ergonomist	136	0.7%	17.6%	35.3%	22.8%	23.5%
Legal counsel (internal)	138	0.7%	8.7%	20.3%	13.8%	56.5%
Your organization's equity/diversity	141	1.4%	9.9%	17.7%	8.5%	62.4%
Vocational rehabilitation organizations	134	0.7%	26.9%	15.7%	6.0%	49.3%
Local independent living centres or other disability organizations	138	2.2%	13.0%	10.9%	5.1%	68.8%
Other Federal organizations or professional society or business	127	1.6%	13.4%	18.9%	3.9%	62.2%
Dispute resolution center/mediator	132	1.5%	9.1%	15.2%	3.8%	70.5%
Union representative	129	7.8%	17.8%	11.6%	3.1%	59.7%

The majority of respondents (68% n=138) indicated that they did not know the level of helpfulness that community organizations provided in resolving accommodation issues, and close to 50% were not aware of the impact of vocational rehabilitation professionals (in Table 20) in accommodation.

There may be multiple possible contributing factors to this knowledge gap. It is possible that many HR professionals have little experience with the services of disability-related community organizations or vocational rehabilitation, or that HR professionals may not be directly involved in working with community organizations. For instance, this work may be managed by internal or external disability management coordinators. Based on other questions asked, there is also a lack of central tracking of metrics associated with accommodation.

*It may be useful for organizations working with employers to highlight examples of how their programs and services have led to successful resolution through the organization's communication vehicles.*

In response to a question on how easy or difficult was it for their organization to adjust policies to facilitate accommodation to meet the needs of employees with disabilities, respondents noted that the most difficult issue is changing co-worker or supervisor attitudes towards employees with disabilities and the need to create greater flexibility within the performance management system (see Table 21).

**Table 21. Level of Difficulty to Adjust Policies to Facilitate Accommodation.**

Ease of making the following changes	N	Very difficult	Difficult	Neither easy nor difficult	Easy	Very easy	Didn't make this change	Didn't need to make this change
Ensuring equal pay and benefits for employees with disabilities	152	2.0%	11.8%	25.7%	39.5%	21.1%	14.5%	36.2%
Adjusting policies regarding medical questions and medical examinations of employees	143	3.5%	8.4%	34.3%	32.9%	21.0%	18.9%	42.7%
Change in leave policy	153	3.3%	15.0%	30.7%	30.1%	20.9%	13.1%	36.6%
Modifying the return to work or transitional employment policy	229	0.4%	6.1%	23.6%	33.2%	13.5%	7.4%	15.7%
Creating flexibility within the performance management system	163	3.7%	14.1%	36.8%	38.0%	7.4%	15.3%	26.4%
Changing co-worker or supervisor attitudes towards employees with disabilities	190	8.4%	29.5%	41.6%	14.7%	5.8%	8.9%	12.6%

Respondents who reported that it was easy to accommodate workers with disabilities also reported being better able to reduce barriers, having recruiters who were more familiar with accommodation strategies, and being more likely to provide access to meetings, and promotional and social opportunities.

We found that for respondents who indicated that their organization had tried to make changes to accommodate workers with disabilities, they felt that it was significantly easier to change policies and benefits than to change attitudes of workers towards workers with disabilities.

### Impact of Disability Management Program

One of the key issues that we wanted to understand was the extent to which organizations' disability management program influenced accommodation practices (See Table 22). As part of our analysis, we examined whether organizational factors influenced the success of their disability management program. Indicators of success for the organizations' disability management program were HR staff training ( $\beta=.18, p=.02$ ), manager training ( $\beta=.21, p=.01$ ), organizational change process ( $\beta=.40, p<.001$ ), and ease of making accommodation changes ( $\beta=.14, p=.05$ ). Together, these indicators predict a significant proportion of the variance of disability management program success,  $R^2 = .38, F(5, 137) = 17, p < .001$ .

**Table 22. Perception of Organizations’ Disability Management Program on Accommodation Practices**

Impact of organization’s disability management program	N	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Moderate	A great deal	Total	Don’t know
Supervisor awareness of the accommodation process	160	4.4	13.8	20.6	33.1	28.1	100	2.60
An organizational structure for providing accommodations	157	9.6	12.1	18.5	28.0	31.8	100	3.30
Recognition of the importance of confidentiality of medical information	161	1.9	3.1	16.1	25.5	53.4	100	2.30
Raising the acceptance of employees with disabilities by other employees	155	5.8	14.2	26.5	26.5	27.1	100	3.80

## Readiness for Organizational Change

### *Organization Assessment*

We sought information on whether organizations had used any formal or informal processes to assess the state of their organization’s culture/climate issues in the past two years. There were 78 respondents who provided qualitative information on the types of activities or processes that they have used. Over 50% specifically mentioned employee engagement surveys with different frequencies (bi-annual, annual, quarterly). Other surveys included organizational culture/development surveys, pulse surveys, satisfaction surveys, and total health surveys.

Several HR professionals specifically mentioned actions arising from their own surveys, including one-to-one meetings with CEO or action plans at the manager level with team engagement. HR professionals also noted that their organizations used monthly engagement meetings, annual or quarterly listening sessions with employees.

Some organizations used formal targeted committees including Union-Management Committees, Diversity/Inclusion Committees, Culture Committees, and Wellness committees.

At the board and leadership level, there were several innovative practices, including engaging employees in strategic planning, inclusion of diversity and inclusion as part of their strategic plan, benchmarking strategic operational effectiveness, leadership effectiveness, innovative process effectiveness, and use of formal skills planning and skills development systems. Several organizations held specific training programs including cultural sensitivity training, diversity and inclusion, indigenous cultural sensitivity training, accommodation and human rights, safety culture training, respectful workplace training, and mental health. Several organizations engaged external consultants to assist with planning strategies or conducting organization culture surveys.

Based on our conceptual framework for “organizational readiness” to hire and retain employees with disabilities, we also considered how different organizations plan and implement changes in their organization and whether organizations that employed more comprehensive planning and implementation processes were associated with a greater likelihood of successful recruitment and retention practices.

To explore this concept, we asked respondents about their perceptions of planning processes at their workplace when considering an organizational change initiative, as well as their perceptions of their organization’s implementation processes in actualizing policy and practice changes (see Table 23). We asked: “To what extent does your organization consider the following factors when planning organization change initiatives?” Over half of respondents indicated that their organization considered all of these factors either a “moderate” amount or “a great deal.”

**Table 23. The Extent Organizations Utilize Best Practices When Planning Organization Change Initiatives.**

	N	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Moderate	A great deal	Don't know
Identify and reflect on the extent to which individuals hold key beliefs regarding the potential change	169	9.5%	9.5%	21.3%	22.5%	21.3%	16.0%
Create awareness and collective recognition that a problem needs to be addressed	169	4.1%	10.7%	23.7%	26.6%	29.6%	5.3%
Build agreement on changes required by individuals and the organization	169	4.7%	14.2%	22.5%	26.0%	26.0%	6.5%
Consider relevant beliefs related to the organizational members' collective commitment to work together to achieve change implementation	169	5.9%	10.1%	18.9%	26.6%	26.6%	11.8%
Address human and material resources, communication channels, and formal policy to support the change	169	3.6%	10.1%	19.5%	27.2%	32.0%	7.7%

## Employee Support

We also sought information about the overall psychosocial culture in the organization as perceived by the HR professionals. We used several questions that considered management and employee relationships, as well as team functioning.

We first sought to understand whether respondents felt that their employees felt valued and supported (i.e., “In your opinion, to what extent do you think employees at your organization feel valued and supported by management?”; See Table 24).

In general, most HR professionals reported that management treat their employees fairly (either “to a great extent” or “to a moderate extent”).

**Table 24. The Extent HR Professionals Perceive Their Employees Feel Valued and Supported by Management**

Management	N	No extent	To a little extent	To some extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent
treats all employees with respect	169	1.8%	5.9%	20.7%	38.5%	33.1%
really cares about employees' well being	169	1.2%	7.7%	26.6%	33.7%	30.8%
values the contributions of its employees	169	2.4%	5.3%	21.9%	44.4%	26.0%
is responsive to ideas or suggestions from employees	169	2.4%	12.4%	31.4%	32.0%	21.9%
cares about employees' opinions	169	2.4%	11.8%	28.4%	36.1%	21.3%

**NOTE: Related Research Results**

*The benefits of increased ability awareness included improved performance of employees, increased psychological safety and trust in the workplace, and a positive effect on company products and services by making them more inclusive to customers/clients.*

For Team Functioning we asked: “In your opinion, to what extent do you think your work environment supports teamwork?”

**Table 25. The Extent HR Professionals Perceive Their Work Environment Supports Teamwork**

Team Support & Effectiveness	N	No extent	To a little extent	To some extent	Moderate extent	To a great extent
we are quick to help one another when needed	169	0	3.6%	22.5%	35.5%	38.5%
we work together effectively as a team	169	0	7.7%	23.1%	43.8%	25.4%
there is mutual trust and cooperation	169	5	9.5%	24.9%	39.6%	23.1%
employees feel free to express their opinions	169	3	11.2%	32.0%	36.1%	18.9%

Organizations that were rated as being more supportive and having supportive and high functioning teams tended to have fewer disability-related claims ( $r = -.31, p < .001$ ;  $r = -.25, p < .01$ , respectively).

## Education and Training

When asked whether their organization would be interested in educational resources for specific groups, the majority of respondents selected supervisor training as the highest ( $n=148$ ), closely followed by training for staff members who are involved in recruitment or retention ( $n=141$ ), general employees ( $n=94$ ), employees with disabilities ( $n=70$ ), and clients with disabilities ( $n=24$ ).

Organizational size was related to training, such that larger organizations tended to provide more disability-related training to their HR professionals ( $r=.26, p<.001$ ). Surprisingly, however, there was no relationship between organizational size and training for managers ( $r=.03, ns$ ). We would expect larger organizations (compared to smaller organizations) to have more training available, not only for HR professionals but also other groups, including managers. Because larger organizations did not have more training for managers suggests that accommodation may still be seen as an 'HR issue' only, and, thus, managers are not getting the required training. HR Staff were recorded as having completed on average 11 of the 16 training topics of interest as relevant to workplace accommodations, whereas managerial staff were recorded as having completed on average 6 of the 16 training modules.

We also provided a list of educational topics and asked respondents what topics from the list would be useful to them (see Table 26). The top five topics were:

1. Best practices for supporting employees with mental disabilities
2. Best practices for creating safe, healthy, productive, and inclusive workplaces
3. Practical tips for the successful retention of employees with chronic health and episodic health conditions (e.g., migraines, arthritis, Crohn's disease, HIV, cancer, chronic pain)
4. Legal issues concerning disability and work
5. Creating supportive environments for disclosure of invisible disabilities

**Table 26. HR Professionals List of Useful Educational Topics Relevant to Their Organization.**

Useful Educational Resources	N	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	Don't know
Best practices for supporting employees with mental health disabilities	172	0.0%	16.3%	82.0%	1.7%
Best practices for creating a safe, healthy, productive and inclusive workplaces	172	2.9%	16.9%	78.5%	1.7%
Practical tips for the successful retention of employees with chronic health and episodic health conditions (e.g., migraines, arthritis, Crohn's disease, HIV, cancer, chronic pain)	172	1.7%	18.0%	77.9%	2.3%
Legal issues concerning disability and work	172	3.5%	19.2%	74.4%	2.9%
Creating supportive environments for disclosure of invisible disabilities	172	1.2%	23.3%	72.7%	2.9%
Useful resources Disability management best practices	172	2.9%	23.8%	70.9%	2.3%
Creating a supportive work environment for those who are returning to work after injury, illness or disability	172	4.1%	23.3%	70.9%	1.7%
Workplace accommodation for people with physical disabilities	172	5.2%	24.4%	68.0%	2.3%
Cultural sensitivity in recruitment and retention of people with mental health disabilities related to inter-generational trauma.	172	2.3%	26.2%	67.4%	4.1%
Practical tips for the successful recruitment of employees with disabilities	172	3.5%	33.7%	57.6%	5.2%
Useful resources Government programs and services to help you recruit and retain people living with disabilities	172	8.1%	33.1%	52.3%	6.4%
Useful resources Service providers who can assist onboarding new employees with disabilities and retaining employees who became injured or ill on the job	172	9.3%	34.9%	50.0%	5.8%
<b>Manitoba</b>					
Evidence-based training resources and tools to address legal requirements under the Manitoba Accessibility Standard for Employment	24	4.2%	25.0%	66.7%	4.2%

In the CPD survey, HR professionals were asked to rank a list of eight HR research topics that they would be interested in learning more about. The top five items selected when comparing means were rated similarly:

1. Improving communication: effectiveness of communication methods and processes on performance and job satisfaction
2. Leadership development: current research on leadership and implications for work productivity
3. New research on problem-solving and conflict resolution methods and impact on teamwork and performance
4. Planning, implementation, and evaluation of organizational change processes to enhance work wellness
5. Data analytics: Identifying workplace risk factors contributing to prolonged work absence, turn- over, unnecessary workplace stress, and low productivity

Similar to other topic questions asked in the survey, disability management was significantly lower than other topics when other choices were offered.

CPD Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of interest in registering for courses related to the HR Competency Framework major topic areas (see Table 27) based on a scale of “Very likely”, “Likely”, “Neither likely nor unlikely”, “Unlikely”, “Very unlikely”.

Interestingly, the topics of “Risk Management”, “Health Wellness and Safe Workplaces”, and “Diversity, Inclusion and Equity” were ranked at the bottom of other HR Topics. This reinforces the potential need to integrate issues of disability recruitment and retention into higher rated topics, rather than to focus on them as distinct topic areas.

**Table 27. Likelihood of Registering for a HR Competency Core Area**

1. HR Strategy	9. Labour & Employee Relations
2. Engagement	10. Critical program-solving & analytical decision-making
3. Change management & cultural transformation	11. Learning and development
4. Workforce Planning & Talent Management	12. Total Rewards
5. Communication, conflict resolution, & relationship management	13. Risk Management
6. Professional Practice	14. Health, wellness, and safe workplaces
7. Leadership development	15. Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity
8. Human Resource Metric, Reporting and Financial Management	

Within each HR competency core area, CPD respondents were given four subtopics and asked to rank them in order of preference for professional development offerings. We calculated scores within and across competencies and listed the subtopics in descending order (see Table 28). Ranking reflects the level of likelihood of registering for a particular HR subtopic.

**Table 28. Listing of HR Subtopic Areas by Likelihood to Register**

Rank	Ranking of HR Topics (Across Sets of Topic Areas)	Scale
1	Speaking to power: difficult conversations with leaders	1219
2	People Analytics	1210
3	Strategic Reporting for HR	1210
4	Shifting your organization's corporate culture	1191
5	Building an adaptive culture	1093
6	Fundamentals of change management	1088
7	Cultural transformation > business transformation	1078
8	Difficult conversations training	1048
9	Conducting cost-benefits analysis	1013
10	Conflict resolution	993
11	Accessibility and accommodations in the workplace	976
12	Supporting mental health in the workplace	948
13	Finance and accounting fundamentals for HR Professionals	925
14	Conducting HR audits	925
15	Supporting employees who identify as LGBTQ2A+	873

Rank	Ranking of HR Topics (Across Sets of Topic Areas)	Scale
16	Neurodiversity in the workplace	870
17	Effective communication	850
18	Supporting employees who are indigenous	809
19	SWOT analysis	792
20	Introduction to risk management	791
21	Recruiting persons with disabilities	774
22	HRIS selection and best practices for a successful implementation	746
23	Conducting and writing risk assessments	706
24	Successfully managing human capital risks	682
25	Managing an effective Joint Health & Safety Committee	654
26	RFPs and RFQs	645
27	Conducting Joint Health & Safety investigations	638
28	The Workers Compensation Board (WCB)	620
29	Global mobility risk management	381

It is interesting to consider the top-ranking HR topics identified in Table 28 (i.e., “Speaking to power: difficult conversations with leaders”, “People Analytics”, “Strategic Reporting for HR” and “Shifting your organization’s corporate culture”) in the context of Table 29: Top Priority Issues, with the strong interest in leadership and change management and the pressing HR issue concerning increasing credibility and participating in leadership discussions and decisions discussed below.

The CPD Survey asked respondents three open-ended questions to assess their organizational priorities and the top three competency skills they were interested in learning in 2020. The questions were: (i) What do you think is the most pressing issue facing HR professionals in their organizations today? (ii) Briefly describe the most important current strategic HR focus at your organization? and, (iii) Please list three professional skills you would you like to develop in the next year (see Table 29).

The highest rated pressing HR issue was to have increased credibility and leadership that was supportive of HR professionals’ activities. That is, they indicated that they wanted their knowledge, expertise, and data be better recognized and valued by leadership, noting that there are some employers that include HR at the board/executive level. Change management was in the top five for each question, and employee engagement and retention were considered as both HR pressing issues and strategic issues. Expanding knowledge and utilization of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) and data analytics were also seen as a vehicle to add value and expertise to business discussions at the executive/leadership level.

**Table 29. Top 5 Priority Issues and Skill Development**

Pressing Issue Facing HR Professionals

Top 5 Pressing HR Issues		N	564
1	Credibility/HR Supportive Leadership	83	14.7%
2	Change Management	45	8.0%
3	Employee Engagement	44	7.8%
4	Retention	44	7.8%
5	Strategic Focus	32	5.7%
Top 5 HR Strategic Issues		N	528
1	Employee Engagement	69	12.2%
2	Change Management	44	7.8%
3	Recruitment/Onboarding	39	6.9%
4	Retention	37	6.6%
5	Culture	35	6.2%
Top 5 Priority Skills Development		Total Responses	1780
1	Leadership Development	191	10.7%
2	Conflict Management/Resolution	105	5.9%
3	Data Analytics/ HRIS/ Interpretation	102	5.7%
4	Change Management	100	5.6%
5	Strategic Thinking/Planning/Critical Thinking	95	5.3%

The CPD survey asked respondents to rank their interest in learning more about HR research topics listed below. In our analysis, we found that the three lower rated topics: stress management, absence management, and disability management were significantly lower than the top five topics. The CPD survey included all HR professionals, including some who may not have roles and responsibilities related to absence management and disability management, which may contribute to the lower rating. It is however important to consider what topics were more highly rated and what opportunities there are to broaden their potential impact on recruitment and retention issues. The top-rated HR research topic was “improving communication”, with an interest in learning about what communication methods are more effective in addressing performance and job satisfaction.

**Table 30. Ranking of HR Research Topics Based on Learning Interests**

Ranking of HR Research Topics	Mean
Improving communication: effectiveness of communication methods and processes on performance and job satisfaction	4.9336
Leadership development: current research on leadership and implications for work productivity	4.8383
New research on problem-solving and conflict resolution methods and impact on teamwork and performance	4.8097
Planning, implementation, and evaluation of organizational change processes to enhance work wellness	4.7828
Data analytics: Identifying workplace risk factors contributing to prolonged work absence, turn- over, unnecessary workplace stress, and low productivity	4.7235
Stress management: what programs are effective and how to measure	4.5673
Absence management: Current research on monitoring and successful interventions	3.8977
Disability management: current evidence on policies and practices to support employees returning to work for employees with chronic or episodic health conditions.	3.4470

## Summary

HR professionals in collaboration with leadership, managers, and supervisors play an important role in establishing or facilitating work conditions that contribute to safe, healthy, inclusive, and productive workplaces. There is strong correlational evidence that ‘organizational readiness’ to recruit and retain people with mental and physical disabilities is associated with underlying values and operational policies and practices closely related to factors that contribute to employee engagement.

Organizations that were rated highly for team functioning and organizational support, where employees feel valued, and where leadership uses more comprehensive and accountable approaches to facilitating organization change, were also reported to have stronger policies and practices conducive to recruitment and retention of people with physical and mental disabilities. These leading organizations also tended to invest in both HR training, and manager training on a broad range of topics relevant to non-discriminatory policies and practices. Given the multiple roles and responsibilities HR professionals play, and the recognition that decision-making concerning recruitment and retention, including accommodation, often involves others (including executives, managers and supervisors), there is a need to expand training targets to leadership and other team members.

HR professionals identified multiple high priority topics that may be foundational to creating a more supportive and inclusive work environment. Higher priority topics concerning leadership development, employee engagement, communication, change management, strategic planning, and retention of valued employees provide opportunities to connect the dots on changes to organizational culture, including addressing accommodation needs for workers with and without disabilities.

Strengthening HR professionals’ knowledge and skills in strategic planning, leadership development, change management, and competencies in tracking and interpreting key performance metrics (e.g., job turn-over, work absence, claims, work productivity, job satisfaction, employee engagement) are potential building blocks to cultivate both leadership and management buy-in on the benefits of recruiting people with disabilities and retention of workers with chronic health conditions.

Both HR professionals and researchers recognize the importance of visible leadership support for job recruitment and retention. Expansion and evaluation of government recognition initiatives and engagement with community service organizations with, and across, industry sectors could be fruitful. One vehicle may be the creation of internship programs, which was rated as an enabler in our research and has been shown to have consistent predictive value in related research.

Based on our findings, we made several recommendations to different stakeholders participating in this research project – funders, HR professionals, knowledge brokers, non-profit, and professional organizations that provide direct services to employers.

## Glossary

**Disability** is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors) (*International classification of functioning, disability and health : ICF 2001*).

**Disability Management** involves the coordinated efforts, including workplace policies, processes, and procedures, designed to facilitate the employment and work performance of persons with a disability by taking into account individual needs, work environment, enterprise needs, and legal responsibilities (Canadian Society of Professionals in Disability Management).

**Healthy Workplaces** are ones that protect and promote the health, safety, well-being, and effective functioning of workers and the overall workplace (Day & Randell, 2014). Several factors are critical to fostering healthy workplaces, including the physical and psychological health, safety, and wellbeing, the organization of work; interpersonal treatment, support, and workplace culture of respect, the balance between work and life, and personal health resources in the workplace (Kelloway & Day, 2005).

**Impairments** are problems in body function or structure as a significant deviation or loss.

**Job Control** refers to the level of autonomy that one has in deciding how to meet job demands or how to perform tasks, what tasks to perform, and where and when to perform these tasks (Dwyer & Ganster, 1991). It includes several related psychosocial working conditions, including skill discretion and decision authority (Theorell, 2013). It was conceptualized that the opportunity to use skills and make decisions would reduce possible adverse effects of heavy psychological demands. According to the Job Demands-Control-Support model, the highest risk of poor psychological well-being and ill-health occurs in jobs with high demands, low control, and low social support (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

**Job Demands:** Job demands refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained effort or coping skills (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). Examples include cognitive demands, emotional demands, time demands, or repetitive work. Similar to the Transactional Model of Stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984), job demands (or stressors) are not necessarily perceived to be negative. However, they can create stress, strain, and burnout when there are insufficient individual, social, and organizational resources for the employee to recover adequately.

**Job Design:** Job design refers to the outcome of the work design process. It is focused on the tasks required and methods of accomplishing the tasks. It may include analysis of job demands, interaction with other job categories, reporting structure, skill requirements, and work context (e.g., physical environment). Other terms often used as synonymous for job design include 'work design' and 'job' or 'work structuring.'

**Job Retention** is the act of reducing turnover by retaining valuable employees in the organization. It may include a return after a period of paid or unpaid absence. Job retention interventions include at least one of three primary factors: job fit, job linkage, and sacrifice. Job fit refers to how well the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes of a worker fit with the demands of any job. The psychosocial fit with the work group or organization improves retention. Interventions may include recruiting methods, job design, development opportunities, and training to improve job fit. Linkage refers to how many ties the employee has to the work group and organization. Interventions may include mentoring schemes, team-based work designs, career development, emphasis on organizational communication and consultation. Sacrifice refers to losses an employee may incur if they were to leave a position or organization. Retention incentives are linked to length of service, work-based community activities, workplace facilities (e.g., childcare, gym, provision of health services, opportunity for succession planning) (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001).

**Psychosocial Work Environment** includes the organization of work and the organizational culture, in terms of the attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices that are demonstrated on a daily basis in the enterprise/organization, and , which effect the mental and physical well-being of employees (World Health & Burton, 2010) These non-physical (psychosocial) hazards include, but are not limited to: poor work organization (e.g., problems with work demands, time pressure, decision latitude, reward and recognition, workloads, support from supervisors, job clarity, job design, job training, poor communication); organizational culture (e.g., lack of policies and practice related to dignity or respect for all workers; harassment and bullying; discrimination on the basis of HIV status; intolerance for diversity of sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion; lack of support for healthy lifestyles); command and control management style (e.g., lack of consultation, negotiation, two-way communication, constructive feedback, respectful performance management); inconsistent application and protection of basic worker rights (e.g., legislated employment standards for contracts, maternity leave, non-discriminatory hiring practices, hours of work, time off, vacation time, OSH rights, etc.); shiftwork issues; lack of support for work-life balance; lack of awareness of and competence in dealing with mental health/illness issues; fear of job loss related to mergers, acquisitions, reorganizations, or the labour market/economy (World Health & Burton, 2010).

**Recruitment:** Recruitment is the process of attracting applicants to create a pool of qualified candidates for a job as part of a selection or promotion program (Catano, Wiesner, & Hackett, 2019). The goal of recruitment is to attract candidates who have the best mix of skills and abilities for the job, while meeting organizational objectives and legal requirements (e.g., human rights, employment equity, labour law, and other legislation), in order to ensure that all qualified individuals—including those with disabilities—can participate in the recruitment process (Catano et al., 2019; Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion).

**Reasonable Accommodation:** Reasonable accommodation involves accommodating employees without putting an 'undue hardship' on the operation of the business. Undue hardship is determined on a case-by-case basis, and the degree of burden to the employer is based on several factors such as organizational size, financial cost to the employer, impact on collective

agreements, employee morale, flexibility of work or environment, and level of risk (Cantano, 2010). Practices to ensure reasonable accommodation include: (i) performing a job and work analysis to identify all possible accommodations, (ii) making a concerted effort to find a position compatible with the worker's limitations (e.g., evaluate other available positions that could potentially be compatible with the identified functional limitations), (iii) creating and updating an ergonomic analysis of the requirements for each position in order to be able to provide alternatives or to anticipate undue hardship situations, and (iv) involving the union in the search for alternative working arrangements.

**Stay at Work/Return to Work Programs** help supervisors manage employee injury, illness, and disability and ensure that employees are able to return to the workplace as quickly and safely as possible. Programs that allow employees to resume working in an appropriate and timely manner, with or without work restrictions, are essential for minimizing health-related absences and optimizing productivity (Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion).

**Systematic Review** is a literature review of a single issue or question that attempts to identify, select, and synthesize all high-quality research evidence relevant to that question. Systematic reviews of high-quality randomized controlled trials are the 'gold standard' for evidence-based medicine (World Health Organization & Burton, 2010).

**Transformational Leadership** is a style of leadership that includes idealized influence (making decisions based on ethical determinants), inspirational motivation (motivating workers by inspiring them rather than demeaning them), intellectual stimulation (encouraging workers to grow and develop), and individualized consideration (allowing flexibility in how situations are handled) (Bass, 1999).

**Workplace Accommodations** are adjustments or modifications that enable people with disabilities to perform the essential functions of a job efficiently and productively. Accommodations vary depending upon the nature of the job and the needs of the individual applicant or employee. Not all people with disabilities (or all people with the same disability) will require the same accommodation or any accommodation. Current research has found that more than half of accommodations require no capital or operating costs (Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion).

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**Work Wellness Institute**  
**L'institut de bien-être au travail**

## CONTACT US



103-3991 Henning Drive,  
Burnaby, BC, V5C 6N5



1-604-684-4148 | 1-800-872-3105



[admin@workwellnessinstitute.org](mailto:admin@workwellnessinstitute.org)



[workwellnessinstitute.org](http://workwellnessinstitute.org)

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