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Reports on Disability and Accessibility in Canada

Changes in the population and employment rates of persons with disabilities, 2017 to 2022

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Changes in the population and employment rates of persons with disabilities, 2017 to 2022

by **Olivia Watkin-McClurg**

Introduction

According to the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), the employment rate increased among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years between 2017 and 2022. The reasons behind the increase in employment remain unclear.

The population of persons with disabilities and the workplace experiences of employed persons with disabilities in Canada changed in several ways between 2017 and 2022. For example, the disability rate increased among those aged 25 to 64 years.[1] During the same time period, while there was no significant change in the need for workplace accommodations among employed persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, there was a significant decrease in unmet needs for workplace accommodations, primarily driven by a decrease in unmet needs for working from home arrangements (Schimmele, Jeon & Arim, 2024). Working from home arrangements became more prevalent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and remained more common than the pre-pandemic baseline in November 2023 (Morissette, 2024; Pianosi et al., 2023). Subsequently, according to the Labour Force Survey, the increased number of persons with disabilities and increase in employment among persons with disabilities were roughly equal from 2022 to 2023, resulting in a stable employment rate among persons with disabilities during this period, although the increase in the population of persons with and without disabilities exceeded the increase in employment among those with and without disabilities from 2023 to 2024 (Vergara & Hardy, 2024; Vergara & Hardy, 2025).[2]

There were changes to the legal landscape as well. The *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) was brought into force in 2019, which along with its regulations[3] and related standards,[4] aims to make Canada barrier-free by 2040, and provides a framework for making progress towards more inclusive communities, workplaces, programs and services through the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to accessibility.[5] Within the Act, there is a specific priority area related to accessible employment, which aims for a barrier-free experience for persons with disabilities in all phases of the employment journey.

The CSD has a cross-sectional design, and it is not possible to directly assess the experiences of individual persons with disabilities over time. However, it is possible to analyze trends in the population of persons with disabilities between CSD cycles.

This report explores various population characteristics, workplace experiences and employment rates of persons with disabilities in 2017 and 2022 to investigate the changes that occurred during this period, and how these changes impacted various subgroups of persons with disabilities. It will examine changes in the employment rate in the context of different disability characteristics, educational attainment, workplace accommodations and labour force discrimination. Additionally, this analysis will use the lens of age of onset of activity limitations to compare the experiences of those whose onset of limitations occurred entirely before age 15 years, partially before age 15 years, and entirely at age 15 years or over. This analysis allows for isolation of the experiences of persons whose limitations predate their working years in order to better understand the subpopulations that are impacted by the employment rate changes.

Understanding the relationship between the timing of disability and labour market opportunities can inform effective strategies for the recruitment, retention and development of workers with disabilities. While population-level trends cannot provide conclusive evidence for patterns in individual experiences between 2017 and 2022, this analysis is a useful starting point for this inquiry and informs future research on the topic.

1. The Daily — Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022
2. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) collected 12 months of data using the Disability Screening Questions (DSQ) for the first time in 2022, allowing for the measurement of annual trends using this data to begin in 2023.
3. Employment and Social Development Canada. 2022. Summary of guidance on accessibility plans.
4. Accessibility Standards Canada. 2023. Accessibility Standards Canada and CSA Group collaborate to publish three new accessibility standards.
5. The ACA defines a barrier as "anything physical, architectural, technological, or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation."

Methods

The Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) definition of disability is based on the social model of disability and includes anyone who reported being "sometimes", "often" or "always" limited in their daily activities due to a long-term condition or health problem, and those who reported being "rarely" limited and were unable to do certain tasks or only able to do them with a lot of difficulty (Pianosi et al., 2023).[6,7]

The CSD identifies persons with disabilities using the Disability Screening Questions (DSQ). The DSQ measures the degree to which difficulties are experienced across 10 domains of functioning, as well as a catch-all question about other health problems or conditions not already captured in the 10 previous disability types, which is associated with an 11th "unknown" disability type. The DSQ collect data about the age of onset of activity limitations in various domains corresponding to the 10 disability types.

The following key concepts are used within the analysis:

Age of onset:[8] The self-reported age, measured in years, at which a person first began to have activity limitations associated with a specific disability type.

Early onset: Persons who experienced the onset of activity limitations corresponding to every disability type they have before the age of 15 years.

Mixed onset:[9] Persons who experienced the onset of activity limitations corresponding to one or more disability types they have before the age of 15 years and also experienced the onset of activity limitations corresponding to one or more other disability types they have at age 15 years or over.

Later onset:[10] Persons who experienced the onset of activity limitations corresponding to every disability type they have at age 15 years or above.

Some survey respondents did not provide the age of onset of their activity limitations. These persons are included in totals and figures that are not disaggregated by age of onset of activity limitations. They are included in calculations of the proportion of persons who comprise each age of onset category, though subtotals for this population are not presented in disaggregated analysis of additional variables by age of onset.[11]

Section one will explore general trends in the population of persons with disabilities and employment rates for various subgroups of this population between 2017 and 2022. In section two, individuals will be categorized according to whether the onset of all, some, or none of the activity limitations that correspond to disability types they have occurred prior to age 15 years. Onset of activity limitations before age 15, or early onset of activity limitations, was chosen as a proxy measure for individuals whose earliest activity limitations likely predated their participation in the labour force.[12] As more than 6 in 10 persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years (62.3% of persons aged 25 to 44 years and 72.4% of persons aged 45 to 64 years) have two or more co-occurring disability types (Hébert et al., 2024), it is important to look at the effects of multiple disability types in combination.

6. The survey population for the CSD is comprised of Canadians aged 15 years and over as of the date of the preceding Census of the Population who were living in private dwellings. It excludes those living in institutions, on Canadian Armed Forces bases, on First Nations reserves and those living in collective dwellings. As the institutionalized population is excluded, the data should be interpreted accordingly.
7. An exception is persons with a developmental disability, who are identified as disabled if the respondent has been diagnosed with a developmental condition, regardless of the level of difficulty or the frequency of the activity limitation reported.
8. Respondents may experience activity limitations in a particular domain of functioning that do not meet the definition for the corresponding disability type. The age of onset for these limitations, if provided, are not considered when assigning the categories of early, mixed or later onset of activity limitations.
9. As defined, persons with mixed onset of activity limitations must have two or more disability types. This may be a confounding variable in the properties of this group.
10. This category label is chosen for simplicity, as limitation onset for this group occurs later than for the early onset group, but it is important to remember limitation onset may occur as early as age 15 years for persons in this category.
11. These individuals are represented in the category labelled "Not stated" in chart 3.
12. This paper does not assume that participation in the labour force predated the onset of activity limitations among persons whose onset of activity limitations occurred at age 15 or over.

Text Box 1

The recency of disability onset can also shed light on the underlying dynamics within the change in the employment rate. Looking at the employment rate among persons whose earliest activity limitations began five or more years prior to the relevant survey cycle versus those whose limitations began less than five years prior to the relevant survey cycle represents another analytical approach. Using this methodology, there was a significant increase in the employment rate between 2017 and 2022 for those who experienced their earliest limitations five years or more prior to the survey cycle (+6.1 percentage points from 53.1% to 59.2%) and no significant change among those whose limitations began less than five years prior to the relevant survey cycle (+4.6 percentage points from 60.8% to 65.4%). This result is difficult to interpret due to differences in sample size between groups, which is also a complicating factor in the present analysis. More research is needed to better understand these findings.

Section 1: Changes in the population and employment rate of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, 2017 to 2022

To better contextualize employment among persons with disabilities in Canada between 2017 and 2022, it is useful to understand the ways this population changed during this time and the ways the employment rate changed during the same period.

Changes in the population

Disability-related characteristics

The proportion of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years belonging to each severity class remained largely unchanged from 2017 to 2022. The percentage of persons with very severe disabilities decreased from 20.9% to 18.9%, but there were no significant changes to the percentage with mild, moderate or severe disabilities (Table 1).[13] The proportion of persons by number of disability types, whether one type, two to three types, or four or more types, did not change significantly from 2017 to 2022.

Educational and employment experiences

Between 2017 and 2022, the proportion of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 with a bachelor's degree or above increased from 20.3% to 26.3%. During the same period, the proportion with a high school education or below decreased from 41.4% to 33.4% (Table 1). According to the Labour Force Survey, the gap in employment between persons with and without disabilities was smaller among those with higher educational attainment in 2023 (Vergara & Hardy, 2024). While various factors may contribute to this association, these findings are noteworthy when considering the increased employment rate among persons with disabilities occurring alongside an average increase in educational attainment.

13. A global severity score is calculated using the number of disability types that a person has, the level of difficulty experienced in performing certain tasks, and the frequency of activity limitations. To simplify the concept of severity, four severity classes were established: mild, moderate, severe, and very severe. The name assigned to each class is simply intended to facilitate use of the severity score and is not a label or judgment concerning the person's level of disability.

Table 1
Persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics, 2017 to 2022

	2017			2022		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
Select characteristics	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit
Disability severity class						
Mild	40.2	38.7	41.7	42.1	40.6	43.6
Moderate	19.2	18.0	20.5	20.1	18.8	21.4
Severe	19.7	18.5	20.9	19.0	17.8	20.2
Very severe	20.9	19.8	22.1	18.9*	17.7	20.1
Number of disability types						
One disability type	31.7	30.3	33.1	31.9	30.4	33.4
Two to three disability types	36.4	35.0	37.9	36.3	34.8	37.9
Four or more disability types	31.9	30.6	33.2	31.8	30.4	33.2
Educational attainment						
High school or less	41.4	39.8	43.0	33.4*	31.9	35.0
Post secondary below bachelor level	36.5	35.0	38.1	38.2	36.6	39.8
Bachelor or above	20.3	19.0	21.6	26.3*	24.9	27.7
Requirements for workplace accommodations						
Needs one or more accommodations	42.1	40.4	43.9	39.3*	37.5	41.0
Unmet needs	62.2	57.9	66.3	54.4*	49.5	59.2
Needs met	37.3	33.2	41.6	44.4*	39.7	49.2
Does not require accommodations	56.2	54.4	57.9	59.1*	57.4	60.8
Not stated	1.7	1.3	2.3	1.6	1.3	2.1
Type of labour discrimination						
Persons refused a job interview due to their condition	8.0	7.3	8.9	6.7*	6.0	7.6
Persons refused a job due to their condition	11.7	10.7	12.7	9.7*	8.8	10.7
Persons refused a promotion due to their condition	9.8	8.8	10.9	9.2	8.3	10.2
Persons who consider themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition	40.6	39.1	42.1	36.7*	35.2	38.2
Persons who believe that their employer considers them disadvantaged in employment due to their condition	40.9	39.3	42.4	34.6*	33.1	36.1

* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

Between 2017 and 2022, the proportion of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 who required workplace accommodations decreased (42.1% to 39.3%). During the same period, the proportion of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years requiring workplace accommodations who did not receive all the accommodations they required decreased as well (62.2% to 54.4%).

In 2022, 6.7% of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 believed that they had been refused an interview in the past five years due to their condition, and 9.7% believed that they had been refused a job in the past five years due to their condition. These figures represent a decrease since 2017 (8.0% and 11.7%, respectively). Between 2017 and 2022, there was a decrease in the proportion of persons with disabilities who felt disadvantaged in employment due to their condition (40.6% to 36.7%) and persons who felt that a current or potential employer would consider them disadvantaged in employment due to their condition (40.9% to 34.6%).

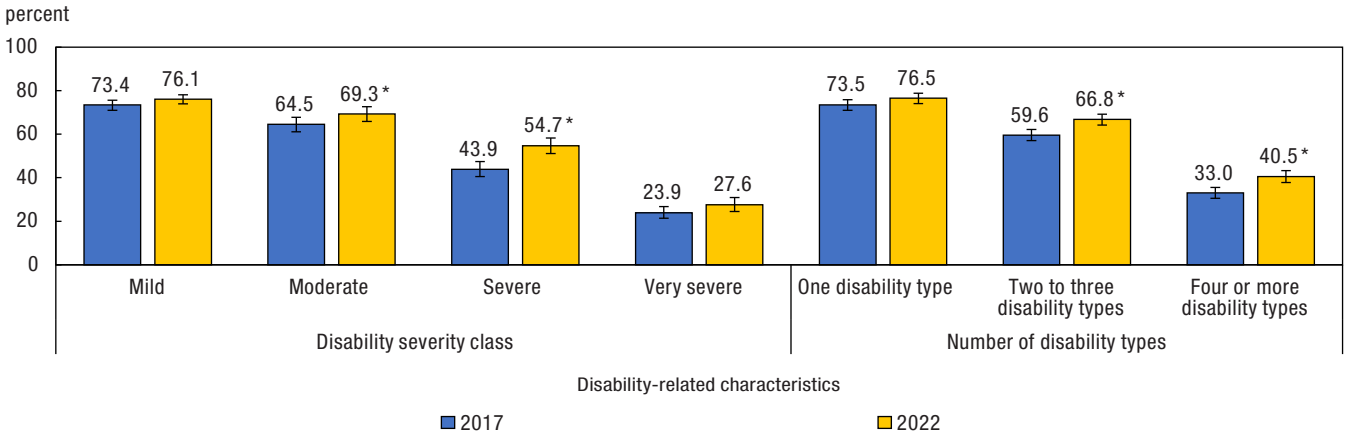
Changes in employment rate

Disability-related characteristics

Between 2017 and 2022, the employment rate[14] rose significantly among those with moderate (64.5% to 69.3%) and severe (43.9% to 54.7%) disabilities, while no significant changes occurred among those with mild or very severe disabilities. The employment rate increased significantly among persons with two to three disability types (59.6% to 66.8%) and those with four or more disability types (33.0% to 40.5%), but not among those with one disability type (Chart 1).

14. This analysis derives the employment rate from labour force status information collected for the Canadian Survey on Disability in 2017 and 2022. Other sources may derive employment rate from labour force status data collected for persons with and without disabilities during the Census and linked to the CSD.

Chart 1
Employment rate among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by disability severity class and number of disability types, 2017 to 2022



* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

Educational and employment experiences

The employment rate increased among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years with a high school diploma or less (44.0% to 48.1%) and among those with a bachelor degree or above (71.5% to 78.1%). Increases in the employment rate among persons with a similar education level in both cases suggests that the impact of increased education among persons with disabilities noted earlier does not entirely explain the increased employment rate observed between 2017 and 2022 (Table 2).

Table 2
Employment rate among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics, 2017 to 2022

	2017			2022		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
Select characteristics	**Percent**	**Lower limit**	**Upper limit**	**Percent**	**Lower limit**	**Upper limit**
Total, persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years	55.5	54.0	57.0	61.5*	60.0	63.0
Disability severity class						
Mild	73.4	71.0	75.6	76.1	73.9	78.1
Moderate	64.5	61.1	67.8	69.3*	65.9	72.6
Severe	43.9	40.5	47.4	54.7*	51.1	58.2
Very severe	23.9	21.4	26.7	27.6	24.5	30.9
Number of disability types						
One disability type	73.5	70.9	75.8	76.5	74.0	78.8
Two to three disability types	59.6	57.0	62.2	66.8*	64.2	69.2
Four or more disability types	33.0	30.5	35.5	40.5*	37.8	43.2
Educational attainment						
High school or less	44.0	41.5	46.5	48.1*	45.4	50.8
Post secondary below bachelor level	61.5	59.1	63.9	64.6	62.2	67.0
Bachelor or above	71.5	68.0	74.7	78.1*	75.3	80.6
Requirements for workplace accommodations						
Needs one or more accommodations	62.7	60.1	65.3	72.4*	69.7	74.8
Unmet needs	59.8	55.6	63.8	66.1	61.5	70.4
Needs met	64.9	61.5	68.2	76.2*	72.9	79.2
Does not require accommodations	77.0	74.9	79.0	86.3*	84.6	87.8
Not stated	61.5[E]	47.8	73.6	72.6[E]	59.2	82.8

Table 2
Employment rate among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics, 2017 to 2022

	2017			2022		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
Select characteristics	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit
Type of labour discrimination						
Persons refused a job interview due to their condition	45.4	40.4	50.4	52.0	45.7	58.4
Persons refused a job due to their condition	44.4	40.2	48.7	51.5	46.3	56.6
Persons refused a promotion due to their condition	70.7	65.7	75.2	73.1	68.2	77.5
Persons who consider themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition	37.8	35.3	40.3	44.6*	42.0	47.1
Persons who believe that their employer consider them disadvantaged in employment due to their condition	38.2	35.8	40.7	43.1*	40.5	45.8

[E] use with caution

* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)

Note: Estimates flagged with the letter [E] should be used with caution. In these cases, data users should use the 95% confidence interval to assess whether the quality of the estimate is sufficient.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

The employment rate increased significantly among those who required workplace accommodations overall (62.7% to 72.4%) and among those who required workplace accommodations and had those needs met (64.9% to 76.2%), as well as those who did not require workplace accommodations (77.0% to 86.3%). However, there was no significant increase in employment among those who required workplace accommodations and did not have their needs met. There was an increase in employment among persons who consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment due to their condition (37.8% to 44.6%) and those who believe that a current or potential employer would consider them to be disadvantaged in employment due to their condition (38.2% to 43.1%).

Section 2: Earliest and latest onset of activity limitations and employment from 2017 to 2022

This section considers trends among those who experienced early onset of limitations, mixed onset of limitations, and later onset of limitations related to the disability types they have.[15] Examining the changes by these subgroups can provide information on the interaction between trends in the employment rate and age of onset, which is of importance as previous research has demonstrated that there is a relationship between labour market and earning outcomes and timing of onset of limitations (Asuman et al., 2024; Jeon, Park & Kohen, 2023; Smith, 2009). Findings related to age of onset of limitations provides additional context when evaluating changes in the employment rate. Additionally, this research is a first step towards understanding how changes in the employment rate of persons with disabilities may be impacted by changes in the population of persons with disabilities, including the age of onset of limitations.

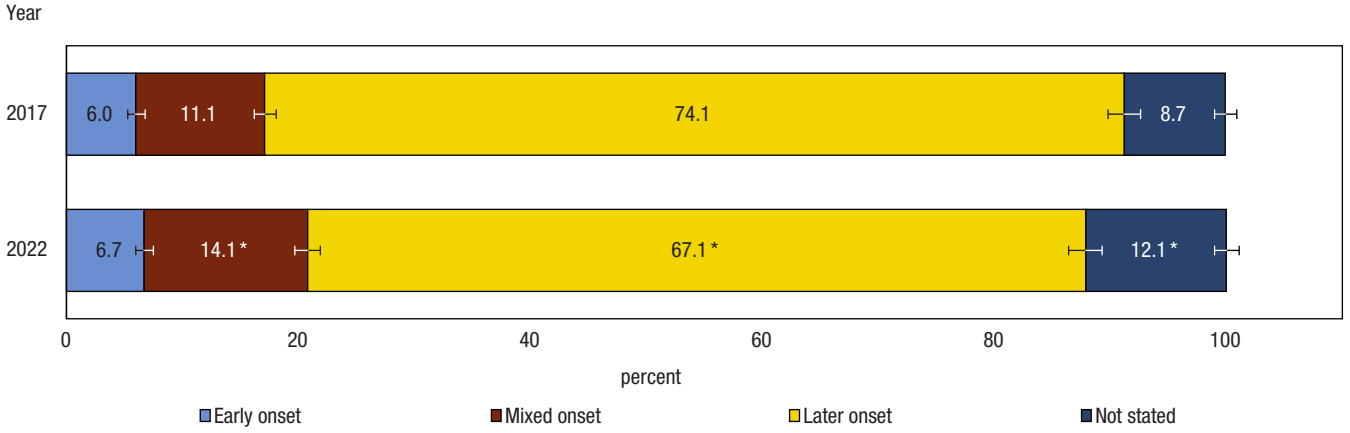
Changes in the population

Disability-related characteristics

In 2022, 6.7% of persons with a disability aged 25 to 64 years reported early onset of activity limitations, and 14.1% reported mixed onset of activity limitations, with 67.1% reporting later onset of activity limitations. The proportion of persons who experienced early onset of activity limitations did not change significantly from 2017 to 2022, while the proportion of persons with mixed onset of limitations increased during this period (+3.0 percentage points from 11.1%). The proportion of persons with later onset of activity limitations decreased from 2017 (-7.0 percentage points from 74.1%), which is partly attributable to a significant increase in persons whose onset of activity limitations is categorized as 'not stated' (8.7% to 12.1%) (Chart 2).

15. See definition of terms in Methods section.

Chart 2
Onset of activity limitations among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, 2017 to 2022



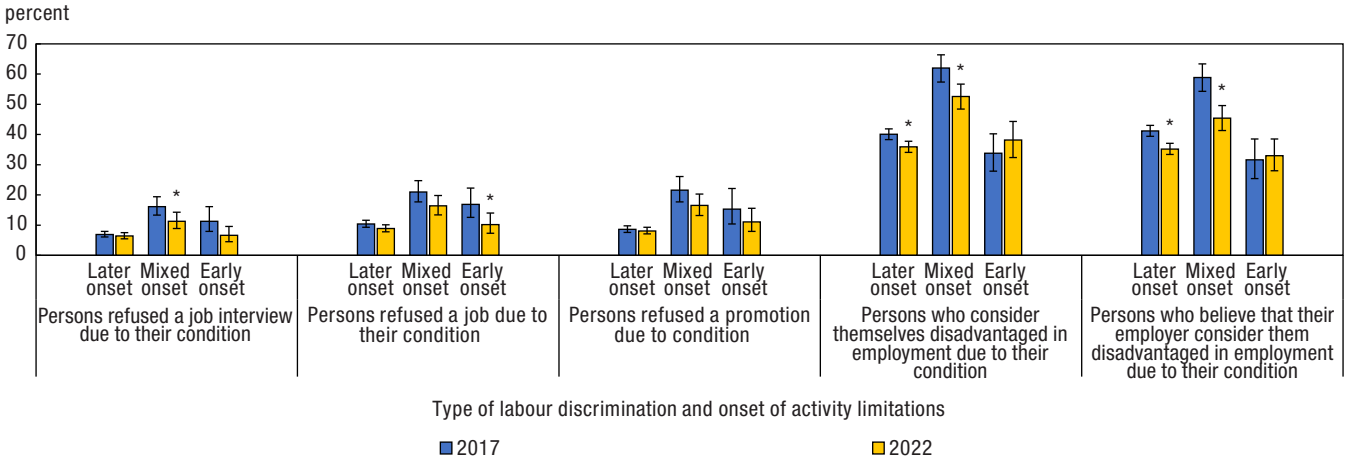
* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

Employment experiences

Among persons with a disability aged 25 to 64 years, there was a significant decrease in being refused a job interview due to a condition between 2017 and 2022 among those with mixed onset of limitations (16.1% to 11.3%) and no change in those with early or later onset of limitations.[16] During this period, a smaller proportion of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years with early onset of activity limitations reported being refused a job in 2022 as compared to 2017 (16.9% to 10.2%) and no significant change was observed among persons with mixed or later onset of limitations. As compared to 2017, a smaller proportion of persons with a disability aged 25 to 64 years with mixed (62.0% to 52.6%) or later (40.1% to 35.9%) onset of limitations considered themselves to be disadvantaged in employment due to their condition, and a smaller proportion with mixed (58.9% to 45.4%) or later (41.2% to 35.2%) limitation onset believed an employer would consider them disadvantaged in employment due to their condition. In both cases, there was no significant change among those with early onset of activity limitations (Chart 3).[17, 18]

16. The difference in estimates of persons with early onset of limitations who were refused a job interview due to their condition between 2017 and 2022 may be nonsignificant as a result of this group's smaller sample size.
17. The difference in estimates of persons with early onset of limitations who considered themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition may lack significance as a result of this group's smaller sample size. However, the difference in estimates observed for this group represents a nonsignificant increase, rather than a decrease.
18. There was no significant change among those with early, mixed, or later onset of activity limitations who were refused a job promotion (See Table A.1).

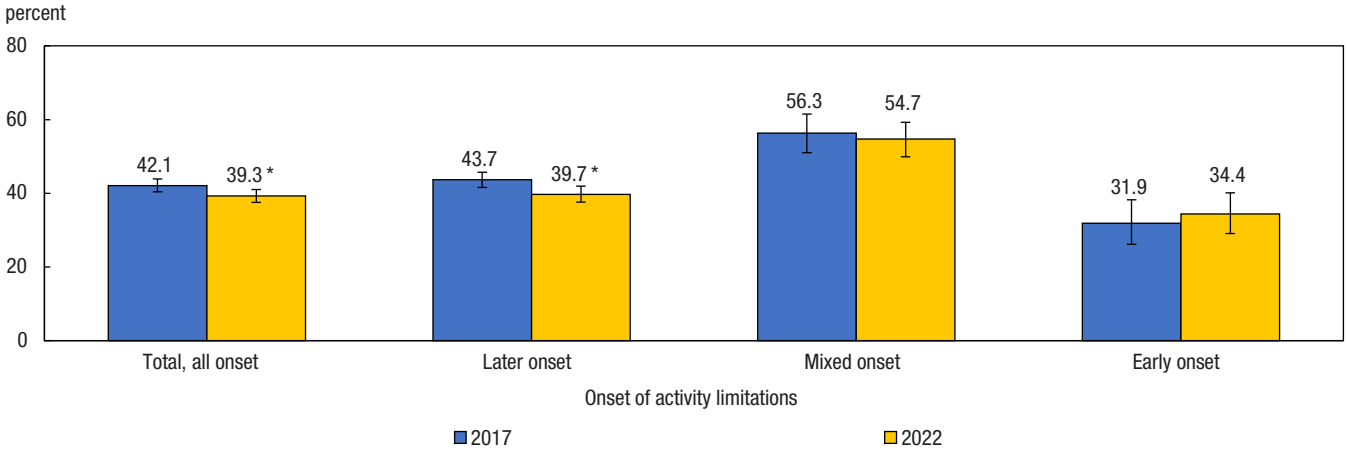
Chart 3
Reported experiences of labour force discrimination among persons with disabilities, aged 25 to 64 years, by onset of activity limitations and type of labour discrimination, 2017 to 2022



* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

Among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years with later onset of activity limitations, the rate of persons requiring workplace accommodations decreased between 2017 and 2022 (43.7% to 39.7%), but no significant change was observed among their counterparts with early or mixed onset of activity limitations (Chart 4).[19]

Chart 4
Persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years who require workplace accommodations, 2017 to 2022



* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)
Note: 'Total, all onset' category includes persons with disabilities whose age of onset is not stated.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

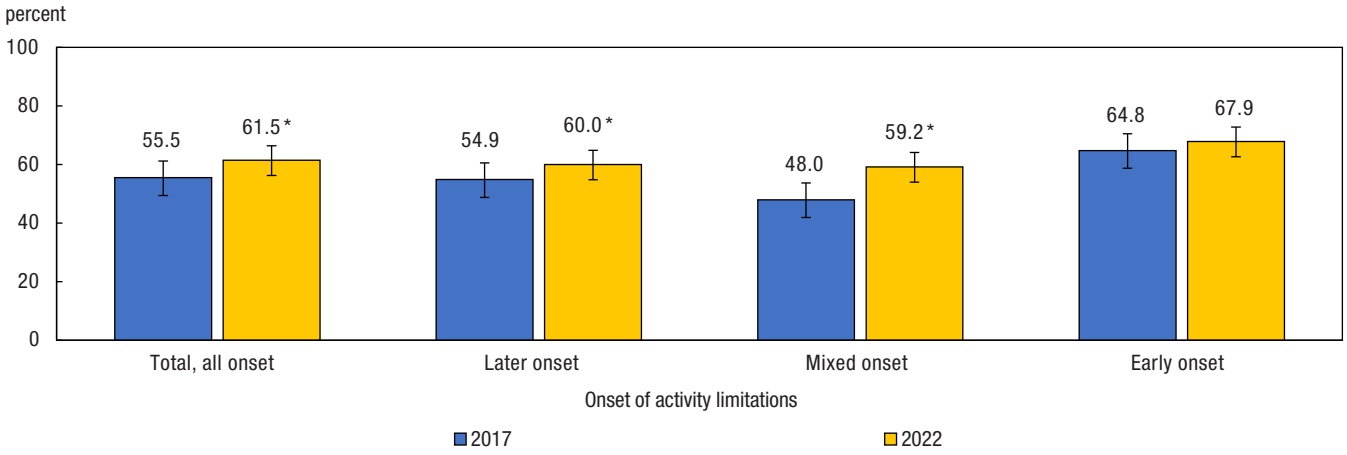
19. There was not an adequate sample size to analyze persons with early limitation onset by unmet needs for workplace accommodations. There was no significant change in the rate of unmet needs for workplace accommodations among persons with mixed onset of limitations, and there was a decrease among those with later onset of limitations (See Table A.1).

Changes in employment rate

Disability-related characteristics

Between 2017 and 2022, the employment rate increased significantly among persons with disabilities with later onset of limitations (54.9% to 60.0%), and among those with mixed onset of limitations (48.0% to 59.2%) (Chart 5). There was no significant change in the employment rate among persons with disabilities with early onset of activity limitations.

Chart 5
Employment rate among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by onset of activity limitations, 2017 to 2022



* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

Some differences emerged when looking at changes in employment rate by disability severity in relation to the timing of onset of activity limitations.[20] From 2017 to 2022, the employment rate increased among persons with severe disabilities with mixed onset (53.6% to 64.0%) and later onset (42.2% to 51.6%) of activity limitations, but not among those with severe disabilities and early onset of activity limitations (Table 3).

Between 2017 and 2022, the employment rate increased significantly among persons with two to three disability types with later onset of activity limitations (58.5% to 65.1%) and among persons with four or more disability types and mixed (35.6% to 46.0%) or later (32.8% to 38.9%) onset of activity limitations.[21,22]

20. Disability severity class refers to the severity of disability at the time of CSD collection. The severity of disability at the time of limitation onset is unknown.
21. By definition, persons who experienced some but not all activity limitations before age 15 must have multiple disability types, as the onset of activity limitations corresponding to one or more type occurred before age 15 and the onset of activity limitations corresponding to one or more additional types occurred at age 15 or over.
22. The difference in estimated employment rate among persons with two to three disability types with early and mixed onset may be insignificant as a result of small sample size. The difference among persons with four or more disability types and early onset of limitations represents a nonsignificant decrease rather than an increase.

Table 3
Employment rate among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics and onset of activity limitations, 2017 to 2022

	2017			2022		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
Select characteristics and onset of activity limitations	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit
Disability severity class						
Mild						
Later onset	73.4	70.6	76.0	75.3	72.5	77.9
Mixed onset	74.4[E]	60.4	84.8	82.7[E]	71.2	90.2
Early onset	80.9	73.3	86.7	83.0	76.3	88.1
Moderate						
Later onset	64.4	60.7	68.0	69.1	64.9	73.0
Mixed onset	69.8[E]	60.3	77.8	76.4[E]	68.1	83.1
Early onset	59.0[E]	44.1	72.4	62.9[E]	50.9	73.5
Severe						
Later onset	42.2	38.3	46.1	51.6*	47.3	55.8
Mixed onset	53.6[E]	45.5	61.5	64.0*	56.7	70.6
Early onset	50.4[E]	36.3	64.4	58.7[E]	46.3	70.2
Very severe						
Later onset	23.7	20.8	27.0	26.5	22.9	30.4
Mixed onset	24.7	19.3	31.1	31.9	25.8	38.7
Early onset	25.5[E]	15.2	39.6	21.1[E]	11.7	35.2
Number of disability types						
One disability type						
Later onset	73.4	70.4	76.3	76.5	73.4	79.5
Mixed onset	F	F	F	F	F	F
Early onset	79.5	71.7	85.6	81.9	74.8	87.3
Two to three disability types						
Later onset	58.5	55.4	61.4	65.1*	62.0	68.1
Mixed onset	68.0	61.2	74.1	75.1	69.0	80.3
Early onset	55.5[E]	45.4	65.2	65.3[E]	56.8	72.9
Four or more disability types						
Later onset	32.8	29.9	35.8	38.9*	35.7	42.2
Mixed onset	35.6	30.4	41.1	46.0*	40.7	51.4
Early onset	32.8[E]	18.7	51.0	30.9[E]	20.8	43.2
Educational attainment						
High school or less						
Later onset	45.3	42.3	48.2	46.5	43.1	49.8
Mixed onset	29.3	23.9	35.3	48.3*	41.7	55.0
Early onset	46.3[E]	36.6	56.3	47.7[E]	38.7	56.8
Post secondary below bachelor level						
Later onset	59.4	56.6	62.1	63.1	60.1	66.0
Mixed onset	63.8[E]	56.4	70.5	64.6	57.7	71.0
Early onset	76.0[E]	65.8	83.8	77.4[E]	68.2	84.6
Bachelor or above						
Later onset	69.5	65.3	73.4	76.2*	72.6	79.3
Mixed onset	68.4[E]	57.4	77.7	76.2[E]	67.7	83.0
Early onset	89.7[E]	81.0	94.6	87.1[E]	78.5	92.6
Requirements for workplace accommodations						
Requires one or more accommodations						
Later onset	63.5	60.5	66.5	72.2*	68.8	75.4
Mixed onset	58.9	52.1	65.3	73.5*	67.8	78.6
Early onset	57.6[E]	46.0	68.4	68.6[E]	59.1	76.8
Needs met						
Later onset	67.5	63.5	71.3	76.2*	71.9	80.0
Mixed onset	56.5[E]	47.3	65.2	79.7*	72.6	85.3
Early onset	52.5[E]	39.7	65.0	72.2[E]*	61.5	80.8
Unmet needs						
Later onset	58.3	53.5	63.0	65.1	59.3	70.5
Mixed onset	62.5[E]	53.1	71.0	67.8[E]	58.1	76.2
Early onset	F	F	F	F	F	F
Does not require accommodations						
Later onset	77.2	74.6	79.5	86.5*	84.3	88.4
Mixed onset	75.6[E]	67.7	82.1	86.5*	81.1	90.5
Early onset	84.2	77.8	88.9	84.4	78.0	89.2

Table 3
Employment rate among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics and onset of activity limitations, 2017 to 2022

	2017			2022		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
Select characteristics and onset of activity limitations	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit
Type of labour discrimination						
Persons refused a job interview due to their condition						
Later onset	42.7	36.4	49.3	52.0 E	43.7	60.2
Mixed onset	45.9 E	36.1	56.1	51.1 E	39.1	63.0
Early onset	F	F	F	F	F	F
Persons refused a job due to their condition						
Later onset	44.6	39.3	49.9	48.6	41.9	55.4
Mixed onset	41.7 E	33.4	50.4	52.8 E	42.9	62.5
Early onset	52.4 E	36.7	67.7	58.8 E	41.9	73.8
Persons refused a promotion due to their condition						
Later onset	69.1	63.0	74.6	72.1	65.5	77.9
Mixed onset	68.2 E	57.8	77.1	67.5 E	56.1	77.2
Early onset	F	F	F	F	F	F
Persons who consider themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition						
Later onset	36.1	33.2	39.0	41.2 *	38.1	44.4
Mixed onset	40.0	34.1	46.2	48.1	42.4	53.8
Early onset	57.7 E	46.9	67.8	61.4 E	51.3	70.6
Persons who believe that their employer consider them disadvantaged in employment due to their condition						
Later onset	36.9	34.2	39.7	41.5 *	38.3	44.8
Mixed onset	39.4	33.5	45.8	43.3	37.5	49.2
Early onset	61.2 E	47.7	73.2	59.2 E	49.5	68.2

E use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)
Note: Estimates flagged with the letter E should be used with caution. In these cases, data users should use the 95% confidence interval to assess whether the quality of the estimate is sufficient.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

Education and employment experiences

Among persons with a disability aged 25 to 64 years who had attained a bachelor's degree or above, the employment rate increased significantly between 2017 and 2022 among those who experienced later onset of activity limitations (69.5% to 76.2%), and no significant changes were observed among those with early or mixed onset of limitations.[23] Among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years who had a high school education or less, the employment rate increased among those with mixed onset of activity limitations (29.3% to 48.3%), with no significant change observed among those with early or later onset of activity limitations.

Between 2017 and 2022, the employment rate increased significantly among persons who considered themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition and experienced later onset of activity limitations (36.1% to 41.2%). Similarly, the employment rate increased significantly among those who believed that a current or potential employer would consider them disadvantaged in employment and experienced later onset of limitations (36.9% to 41.5%). In both cases, there was no significant change in the employment rate among their counterparts with early or mixed onset of limitations.[24]

Between 2017 and 2022, there was an increase in the employment rate among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years who required workplace accommodations and had mixed (58.9% to 73.5%) or later (63.5% to 72.2%) limitation onset and did not change significantly among those with early limitation onset.[25] The employment rate did not change significantly among persons with unmet needs for workplace accommodations regardless of activity limitation onset, but did increase significantly among persons who required workplace accommodations and had their needs met with early, mixed or later limitation onset.

23. The difference in estimates among persons with a bachelor degree or above and mixed onset of limitations may be nonsignificant due to sample size relative to persons with later onset.
24. The difference in estimates of the employment rate from 2017 to 2022 among persons with mixed onset of limitations who considered themselves to be disadvantaged in employment due to their condition may be nonsignificant due to small sample size relative to persons with later onset.
25. The change in estimates of the employment rate among persons with early onset of limitations who require workplace accommodations may be nonsignificant due to small sample size.

Conclusion

Between 2017 and 2022, changes were observed among the population of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, including trends in educational attainment and employment experiences.

For example, the overall educational attainment increased among persons with disabilities. In 2022, a larger proportion had a bachelor's degree or above as their highest educational attainment (20.3% to 26.3%) and a smaller proportion had a high school education or less (41.4% to 33.4%), as compared to 2017. Additionally, between 2017 and 2022, there was a reduction in requirements for workplace accommodations observed among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years (42.1% to 39.3%), and among those who required accommodations, there was a reduction in unmet needs for workplace accommodations (62.2% to 54.4%).

A smaller proportion of persons with disabilities reported being refused a job interview (8.0% in 2017 compared to 6.7% in 2022) or being refused a job (11.7% in 2017 compared to 9.7% in 2022) in the past five years due to their condition. The decreased rate of reporting being refused a job interview was observed among persons with mixed limitation onset (16.1% in 2017 compared with 11.3% in 2022) and not those with early or later onset, and the decreased rate of being refused a job was observed among persons with early onset of activity limitations (16.9% in 2017 compared with 10.2% in 2022) and not among those with mixed or later onset of limitations.

The rate at which persons with disabilities considered themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition decreased significantly among persons with mixed (21.6% to 16.5%) and later (40.1% to 35.9%) limitation onset, with no significant change observed among persons with early limitation onset. Similarly, the rate at which persons with disabilities believed an employer would consider them disadvantaged in employment due to their condition decreased significantly among persons with mixed (62.0% to 52.6%) or later (41.2% to 35.2%) activity limitation onset, and not among those with early limitation onset. These changes in experiences of labour force discrimination provide some evidence for a changing workplace environment that may have impacted people differently depending on when they experienced the onset of activity limitations. Further research is needed to better understand the effects of these trends in labour force experiences on persons with disabilities.

While the employment rate among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years increased from 2017 to 2022 (55.5% to 61.5%), changes in the employment rate vary by disability-related characteristics, requiring and receiving workplace accommodations, experiences of labour force discrimination such as being refused a job, and by onset of activity limitations.

The employment rate increased among persons with moderate (64.5% to 69.3%) and severe (43.9% to 54.7%) disabilities, and among those with two to three disability types (59.6% to 66.8%) or four or more disability types (33.0% to 40.5%). Between 2017 and 2022, the employment rate increased among persons with severe disabilities who experienced mixed (53.6% to 64.0%) or later (42.2% to 51.6%) onset of activity limitations, and no significant change was observed among persons with severe disabilities and early onset of activity limitations. During this period, the employment rate increased among persons with two to three disability types who experienced later onset of activity limitations (58.5% to 65.1%), and among those with four or more disability types who experienced mixed (35.6% to 46.0%) or later (32.8% to 38.9%) onset of activity limitations.

When looking at employment in conjunction with experiences of labour force discrimination, the employment rate increased among persons who considered themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition (37.8% to 44.6%) and those who believe a current or potential employer would consider them to be disadvantaged in employment due to their condition (38.2% to 43.1%). Among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years who considered themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition, the employment rate increased significantly from 2017 to 2022 among those with later onset of activity limitations (36.1% to 41.2%) and not among those with early or mixed onset of activity limitations. Similarly, the employment rate increased significantly among those who believed a current or potential employer would consider them disadvantaged in employment due to their condition and had later onset of activity limitations (36.9% to 41.5%) and not among their counterparts with early or mixed onset of limitations.

Overall, examining changes to the employment rate and employment experiences observed among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years from 2017 to 2022 by the age of onset of activity limitations reveals that these trends were not observed among persons with early onset of activity limitations to the same degree observed among persons with mixed or later onset of limitations. Specifically, the employment rate did not change significantly overall for those with early onset, or for many subsets of this population, whereas the employment rate did increase significantly for their counterparts with mixed or later activity limitation onset. Furthermore, several changes in experiences of labour market discrimination and in requiring and receiving workplace accommodations observed among persons with disabilities from 2017 to 2022 were observed among persons with later or mixed onset of activity limitations and not among persons with early onset of limitations, with the notable exception of trends observed in reporting being refused a job in the past five years.

A limitation to this study is that the categorization of activity limitation onset chosen for analysis in part two introduces confounding variables. As persons with mixed onset of activity limitations must have more than one disability type, this category may differ from the others in ways that do not reflect the effects of activity limitation onset. The characteristics of persons with early onset, mixed onset and later onset of activity limitations can be found in Table A.1. An additional limitation is that data on activity limitation onset is retrospective, while other data from the 2017 and 2022 CSD cycles reflects the time of survey collection. As activity limitations and disabilities change over time, the characteristics of a person's activity limitations at the time of survey collection, such as the frequency of limitations, may differ as compared to the time of initial onset of these limitations.

An additional limitation to this study is that some analysis can lead to small sample sizes, particularly when these populations are divided into smaller sub-groups. Even where sample sizes are sufficient to protect confidentiality and produce high quality estimates, these estimates are less likely to obtain significant results than similar estimates with larger sample sizes. Differences in sample sizes between subgroups are particularly relevant when noting significant changes observed among persons with later or mixed onset of activity limitations in cases where there is no significant change observed among those with early onset of limitations. For example, it is difficult to interpret the lack of significant change from 2017 to 2022 observed in the proportion of persons with early onset of activity limitations who reported being refused a job interview due to their condition or the employment rate of persons with early onset of limitations who had severe disabilities or two to three disability types, or who required workplace accommodations.

The use of longitudinal data would allow for more direct measurement of changes occurring over time at an individual level and regression analysis would allow for a better understanding of potential drivers of the increase in employment rates from 2017 to 2022. Additionally, future analysis may consider other changes observed in the population of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 over time.

Annex

Table A.1
Persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics and onset of activity limitations, 2017 to 2022

	2017			2022		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
Select characteristics and onset of activity limitations	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit
Total						
Later onset	74.1	72.7	75.5	67.1*	65.6	68.5
Mixed onset	11.1	10.2	12.1	14.1*	13.0	15.2
Early onset	6.0	5.3	6.8	6.7	6.0	7.5
Not stated	8.7	7.8	9.7	12.1*	11.1	13.2
Disability severity class						
Mild						
Later onset	39.2	37.5	41.0	40.9	39.1	42.8
Mixed onset	11.3	8.7	14.7	13.7	10.9	17.1
Early onset	51.1	44.8	57.3	49.2	43.7	54.8
Moderate						
Later onset	19.6	18.1	21.1	20.7	19.1	22.3
Mixed onset	21.2	17.6	25.4	22.3	19.2	25.8
Early onset	20.2	15.3	26.2	24.6	19.9	29.9
Severe						
Later onset	20.2	18.8	21.7	18.6	17.2	20.1
Mixed onset	28.0	24.1	32.2	32.4	28.6	36.4
Early onset	17.1	12.9	22.3	16.2	12.7	20.3
Very severe						
Later onset	20.9	19.6	22.4	19.8	18.3	21.3
Mixed onset	39.5	35.2	43.9	31.6*	28.0	35.4
Early onset	11.6	8.7	15.3	10.0	7.3	13.6
Number of disability types						
One disability type						
Later onset	30.3	28.6	31.9	29.7	28.0	31.5
Mixed onset	F	F	F	F	F	F
Early onset	51.9	45.7	58.0	47.8	42.0	53.6
Two to three disability types						
Later onset	38.3	36.6	40.0	37.7	35.8	39.6
Mixed onset	38.3	34.0	42.8	45.3*	41.0	49.7
Early onset	34.1	28.6	40.2	36.9	31.5	42.5
Four or more disability types						
Later onset	31.4	29.9	33.0	32.6	30.9	34.4
Mixed onset	61.7	57.2	66.0	54.7*	50.3	59.0
Early onset	14.0	10.4	18.6	15.3	11.8	19.6
Educational attainment						
High school or less						
Later onset	41.1	39.2	43.0	32.8*	30.9	34.7
Mixed onset	45.2	40.6	49.7	39.3	35.1	43.8
Early onset	43.9	37.7	50.3	34.4*	29.2	40.0
Post secondary below bachelor level						
Later onset	37.4	35.6	39.3	39.2	37.3	41.2
Mixed onset	36.2	31.8	40.8	36.6	32.4	40.9
Early onset	31.7	26.0	38.0	33.1	27.9	38.8
Bachelor or above						
Later onset	20.1	18.6	21.6	26.3*	24.6	28.0
Mixed onset	17.3	13.9	21.2	21.5	18.3	25.1
Early onset	21.9	17.0	27.7	30.3*	25.3	35.7
Not stated						
Later onset	1.4	1.0	2.2	1.7	1.3	2.4
Mixed onset	1.4	0.7	2.7	2.6	1.4	4.9
Early onset	2.5	1.3	4.9	2.2	1.2	4.0

Table A.1
Persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics and onset of activity limitations, 2017 to 2022

	2017			2022		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
Select characteristics and onset of activity limitations	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit	Percent	Lower limit	Upper limit
Requirements for workplace accommodations						
Requires one or more accommodations						
Later onset	43.7	41.6	45.7	39.7*	37.6	41.9
Mixed onset	56.3	51.0	61.5	54.7	49.9	59.3
Early onset	31.9	26.1	38.2	34.4	29.1	40.1
Needs met						
Later onset	37.4	32.7	42.3	46.9*	40.9	53.0
Mixed onset	32.8[E]	24.3	42.5	37.1[E]	28.2	46.9
Early onset	F	F	F	F	F	F
Unmet needs						
Later onset	61.9	57.0	66.6	51.9*	45.9	58.0
Mixed onset	67.2[E]	57.5	75.7	62.9[E]	53.1	71.8
Early onset	F	F	F	F	F	F
Does not require accommodations						
Later onset	54.7	52.6	56.8	58.8*	56.6	61.0
Mixed onset	42.7	37.6	48.0	43.5	38.9	48.3
Early onset	66.8	60.4	72.6	63.2	57.5	68.5
Not stated						
Later onset	1.6	1.1	2.3	1.5	1.0	2.1
Mixed onset	1.0	0.4	2.3	1.8	1.0	3.3
Early onset	F	F	F	2.4	1.2	4.8
Type of labour discrimination						
Persons refused a job interview due to their condition						
Later onset	6.9	6.1	7.9	6.4	5.5	7.5
Mixed onset	16.1	13.3	19.4	11.3*	8.9	14.3
Early onset	11.3	7.9	16.1	6.6	4.5	9.6
Persons refused a job due to their condition						
Later onset	10.4	9.3	11.6	8.9	7.8	10.1
Mixed onset	58.9	54.3	63.4	45.4	41.3	49.6
Early onset	16.9	12.6	22.3	10.2*	7.3	14.0
Persons refused a promotion due to their condition						
Later onset	8.6	7.6	9.8	8.1	7.1	9.3
Mixed onset	21.0	17.7	24.7	16.4	13.4	19.8
Early onset	15.3	10.4	22.1	11.1	7.9	15.6
Persons who consider themselves disadvantaged in employment due to their condition						
Later onset	40.1	38.3	41.9	35.9*	34.1	37.8
Mixed onset	21.6	17.7	26.1	16.5*	13.2	20.3
Early onset	33.8	27.9	40.2	38.2	32.4	44.3
Persons who believe that their employer considers them disadvantaged in employment due to their condition						
Later onset	41.2	39.4	43.0	35.2*	33.4	37.1
Mixed onset	62.0	57.4	66.4	52.6*	48.4	56.7
Early onset	31.6	25.4	38.5	33.0	28.0	38.5

[E] use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from estimate for 2017 ($p < 0.05$)

Note: Estimates flagged with the letter [E] should be used with caution. In these cases, data users should use the 95% confidence interval to assess whether the quality of the estimate is sufficient.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2022.

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