



About Diversity *within* the Disability Population

Canadians with disabilities comprise **about 27%** of the population, and within that 27%, the level of support required to access the labour market and experience workplace inclusion varies dramatically. Some require little or no help to advance in a lifelong career, while **others face long odds** against achieving any level of employment at all. It is with this context in mind that we seek to bring attention to the reality that the disability population is very diverse, with some disability sub-populations experiencing more severe levels of exclusion than others.

Why focus on people with intellectual disabilities and autistic persons?

- This subgroup within the broader disability population is underserved across all systems; they get left out of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) conversations and the development of policies designed for the broader disability community.
- In the context of employment equity, this issue is very acute, as the experience of people with intellectual disabilities and autistic persons shows them to be much **further from the labour market** than most any other group experiencing exclusion and marginalization from employment.

Why don't cross-disability initiatives work well for all persons with disabilities?

- There is merit to creating policies and setting targets and tracking results for employment inclusion initiatives focused on disabilities, but when those targets are generalized to all persons with disabilities, this approach ensures that existing disparities within the broader disability community are continued.
- By setting targets that reference only “persons with disabilities” this means that employers in any sector (including large private sector corporations or government employers who are trying to meet those targets) are likely to be repeating the same discriminatory patterns of the past – that is, excluding jobseekers with intellectual disabilities and autistic persons at a much higher rate than any other disability population.

What can you do?

- Failure to consider “diversity within disability” is unintentional and corrected by learning more about jobseekers with intellectual disabilities and autistic persons.
- Understand your own hiring patterns and learn how hiring processes could be adapted to be more inclusive of this population.
- Learn from other employers have experienced success employing people with intellectual disabilities and autistic persons.
- Make sure your HR team is prioritizing diversity within disability by implementing changes, monitoring progress, and adapting as needed.
- Reach out to LiveWorkPlay to organize a meeting or presentation. We are always happy discuss our Employment Supports Model[®] and how we can help you. Anna Nelson anna@liveworkplay.ca or (613) 702-0324.