Catalogue no. 36-28-0001
ISSN 2563-8955

Economic and Social Reports

Uptake of the disability tax credit and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefits among persons with disabilities in Canada

by Allison Leanage, Sung-Hee Jeon and Rubab Arim

Release date: February 26, 2025

Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

Canada

How to obtain more information

For information about this product or the wide range of services and data available from Statistics Canada, visit our website, www.statcan.gc.ca.

You can also contact us by

Email at infostats@statcan.gc.ca

Telephone, from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the following numbers:

- Statistical Information Service 1-800-263-1136
- National telecommunications device for the hearing impaired 1-800-363-7629
- Fax line 1-514-283-9350

Standards of service to the public

Statistics Canada is committed to serving its clients in a prompt, reliable and courteous manner. To this end, Statistics Canada has developed standards of service that its employees observe. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact Statistics Canada toll-free at 1-800-263-1136. The service standards are also published on www.statcan.gc.ca under "Contact us" > "Standards of service to the public."

Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued co-operation and goodwill.

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Industry, 2025

Use of this publication is governed by the Statistics Canada Open Licence Agreement.

An HTML version is also available.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

Research article

Uptake of the disability tax credit and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefits among persons with disabilities in Canada

by Allison Leanage, Sung-Hee Jeon and Rubab Arim

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202500200001-eng

Abstract

Using the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) linked to the 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File, this study explored the uptake of the disability tax credit (DTC) and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan (CPP/QPP) disability benefits among persons with disabilities, with a particular focus on their disability and sociodemographic characteristics. The linkage of survey data to administrative records allowed for an examination of persons with disabilities identified in the CSD who may be eligible to claim the DTC or receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits. As expected, results revealed that a higher proportion of persons with disabilities claimed the DTC (about 13%) or received the CPP/QPP disability benefits (about 9%), compared with persons without disabilities (less than 1%). However, a low uptake was observed among persons with disabilities identified in the CSD, with a majority (about 84%) not claiming the DTC or receiving the CPP/QPP disability benefits. These proportions varied by disability severity and type. Persons with severe or very severe disabilities had a higher share of uptake of the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits. Nonetheless, three-fifths to four-fifths of persons with severe or very severe disabilities did not take up these supports, and further analysis revealed that about one-third applied for a DTC Certificate. Persons with developmental disabilities had the highest uptake of the DTC, while those with dexterity disabilities had the highest uptake of the CPP/QPP disability benefits. Lastly, the results also showed that uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits varied across sociodemographic groups, even after controlling for disability characteristics.

Keywords: Persons with disabilities, Disability tax credit, Canada Pension Plan disability benefit

Authors

Allison Leanage, Sung-Hee Jeon and Rubab Arim are with the Social Analysis and Modelling Division, Analytical Studies and Modelling Branch, at Statistics Canada.

Acknowledgements

This study was funded by the Analytical Project Initiative at Statistics Canada. The authors would like to thank the reviewers from the Canada Revenue Agency and the Centre for Income and Socioeconomic Well-being Statistics, Diversity and Sociocultural Statistics, and the Social Analysis and Modelling Division at Statistics Canada for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Introduction

In 2022, 8 million Canadians aged 15 and older (or 27%) were identified as having a disability, according to the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), and about 41% of them had a severe or very severe disability (Statistics Canada, 2023). Compared with persons without disabilities, persons with disabilities are more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment, experience barriers to participate in the labour force, be unemployed, and have lower income, with differences becoming larger as the severity of the disability increases (Arim, 2015; Schimmele et al., 2021; Till et al., 2015; Turcotte, 2014). Persons with disabilities, particularly those with severe disabilities, may be at an increased risk of living in poverty as a result of the cumulative socioeconomic disadvantages (Hébert et al., 2024).

Poverty reduction is a priority for the Government of Canada, and several government-funded programs are designed to support Canadians with disabilities. However, research has shown that these programs were generally underutilized across Canada (Dunn & Zwicker, 2018; Finlay et al., 2023), particularly among persons with severe disabilities who need them the most (Baker & Milligan, 2012; Simpson & Stevens, 2016). In a similar vein, the Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG, 2022) emphasized that the government did not have a clear and complete picture of the persons with disabilities who were not receiving benefits for which they were potentially eligible. Indeed, relatively little is known about how many persons with disabilities claim or receive the major disability supports, namely the disability tax credit (DTC) and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan (CPP/QPP) disability benefits, and whether the uptake of these supports varies among persons with disabilities in different sociodemographic groups. The present study aims to address these knowledge gaps and contribute to improving the measurement of the uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits among persons with disabilities by making better use of survey data linked to administrative datasets.

The DTC is a non-refundable tax credit that assists persons with disabilities, or their family members who support them, by reducing their income tax and offsetting some of the extra costs associated with the impairment (Government of Canada, 2024a). Eligibility for the DTC is determined using the T2201 Disability Tax Credit Certificate (DTCC)—a form completed by persons with a severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions (Government of Canada, 2024b) and submitted to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for approval.

The CPP/QPP disability benefits are for persons younger than 65 years who meet a certain contribution threshold to the CPP and have a mental or physical disability that regularly stops them from doing any type of substantially gainful work. The disability must be either long term, of indefinite duration or likely to result in death (Government of Canada, 2024c).

A well-known challenge in the field of disability studies is that definitions and measures of disability vary depending on the specific aim. Within the framework of this study, persons with disabilities were identified in the CSD as Canadians aged 15 years and older whose everyday activities are limited because of a long-term condition or health problem (Pianosi et al., 2023). In contrast, persons with a severe and prolonged impairment resulting in a marked restriction in one category[1] or significant limitations in two or more categories, or who are receiving therapy to support a vital function, may be eligible for the DTC in the tax system. Persons with a mental or physical disability that regularly stops them from doing any type of substantially gainful work and whose disability is long term, of indefinite duration or likely to result in death may be eligible for the CPP/QPP disability benefits. Acknowledging the differences in these definitions, the present study aims to shed light on whether and to what extent persons with disabilities identified in a national survey claim and receive the major disability supports available through the tax

1. The categories include walking, mental functions, dressing, feeding, eliminating, hearing, speaking, vision and life-sustaining therapy.

system and income security programs. The study will focus particularly on the global (disability) severity classes within the CSD given that the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefit program require that conditions be severe and prolonged. Overall, this study demonstrates the necessity of leveraging information from survey and administrative data to improve the identification of persons with disabilities and to further the understanding of the extent to which potentially eligible persons with disabilities access the benefits that are meant to support them.

The following section provides information on the data sources. This is followed by the methodology used in this study, a presentation of the results, a discussion of the findings and directions for future research.

Data

This study uses the 2017 CSD linked to the 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File (T1FF) because more recent data from the 2022 CSD linked to the T1FF were not available at the time of the analysis. The analytical sample includes persons aged 15 years and older with and without disabilities in the CSD and their uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits available in the T1FF across three tax years, from 2015 to 2017 (see Appendix Table A for sample sizes across each tax year). The percentage of persons matched between the 2017 CSD and the 2015 to 2017 T1FF was 95.2%, and the remaining persons (about 5% across all three tax years)[2] were excluded from the study sample.

The 2017 CSD, conducted from March 1 to August 31, 2017, was developed by Statistics Canada in collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and in consultation with ESDC's Persons with Disabilities Technical Advisory Group, a group of experts in the field of disabilities. The CSD population sample consisted of all persons aged 15 years and older who responded that they had difficulty "sometimes," "often" or "always" on six questions related to activities of daily living in the long-form census questionnaire from May 10, 2016. The Disability Screening Questions (Grondin, 2016), a new self-report survey measure of disability based on a social model of disability, considers the interaction between a person's functional limitations and environmental barriers that make day-to-day functioning more difficult. This measure was used in the CSD to identify persons with disabilities. For more information about the concepts and methodological details of the 2017 CSD, please see Cloutier et al. (2018).

Within the 2017 CSD data, a disability flag was used to capture the disability status of persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities. A person was identified as having a disability if they had one or more of the following 10 types of disabilities in the CSD, plus an unknown type: seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain-related, learning, developmental, memory and mental health-related. Disability severity was determined by using the four severity classes based on a person's global severity score within the CSD. The global severity score *was calculated by considering the number of disability types, the level of difficulty associated with each disability type and the frequency of the activity limitation.* Thus, persons who had more than one type of disability had a higher global severity score. Four severity classes were established using the global severity scores: mild disability (class 1), moderate disability (class 2), severe disability (class 3) and very severe disability (class 4). All disability-related characteristics were derived from self-reported data in the CSD. Sociodemographic characteristics, including sex, age, province or territory, marital status, immigrant status, education, population centre, employment status, and income, were also taken from the 2017 CSD data file. The income variable was

2. Persons who were not matched may be missing information or may not have filed taxes. Of those 5% who were excluded from the study sample, 41% were female and 20% were persons with disabilities identified in the CSD (7% with mild disabilities, 5% with severe and very severe disabilities, and 4% with moderate disabilities), with an average age of 28 years.

derived from the 2016 T1FF. The age of respondents was based on their age in the 2016 Census of Population (as of May 10, 2016).

The 2015 to 2017 T1FF is an administrative data file that provides the tax information of persons in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The T1FF used in this study was a custom data record linkage file created by Statistics Canada in partnership with ESDC, containing selected income-related data from the 2015 to 2017 T1FF and the 2017 CSD population groups for persons with and without disabilities. This custom linkage must be used in conjunction with the 2017 CSD analytical data files. The variables for the DTCC, the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits were all derived from the 2015 to 2017 T1FF analytical file, and a flag was created separately for each of the variables to indicate whether a person applied for the DTCC, claimed the DTC or received the CPP/QPP disability benefits. A person with a DTCC flag either claimed the DTC for themselves, transferred the DTC to their spouse (where the spouse claimed the DTC or it was shared)[3] or applied[4] for a DTCC by submitting a T2201 form.[5] Conversely, the DTC flag identifies only persons who claimed the DTC for themselves or transferred it to their spouse. The key difference between the DTCC and the DTC flags is that the DTC flag indicates whether the person or their spouse claimed the DTC, while DTCC flag may include the person, their spouse or a dependant (such as a child or a parent)[6] who applied for the DTCC but did not claim the DTC for reasons beyond the scope of this study. Persons with a CPP/QPP disability benefit flag had the CPP/QPP disability benefits included in their income. As the age eligibility requirement for the CPP/QPP disability benefits is younger than 65 years, this study considered this age requirement throughout the analysis.

Methods

The results were examined using all three tax years to indicate whether a flag for the DTCC, the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits was present in any of the three years among two groups: persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities (Table 1 and Appendix Table A). For validity purposes, this study examined persons without disabilities (considered only in Table 1) to show that persons with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to take up these disability supports. All analyses included the DTCC, the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits, but the results of the uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits were the focus of this paper (except for Table 3), as the DTCC pattern of results was largely similar to that of the DTC (with a few exceptions in Table 4). Appendix B shows the number of persons by age group who applied for a DTCC by submitting a T2201 form, subject to approval from the CRA, but did not claim the DTC. Persons who were 24 or younger had the largest proportion (about 5%) of applying for a DTCC and not claiming the DTC. This finding shows that the tax filers did not claim the DTC or transfer it to their spouses and that it may have been claimed by another person (e.g., their parents); however, this cannot be observed in the data. Subsequent analyses (Tables 2 to 5) focused on persons with disabilities identified in the CSD because of the small sample size of persons without disabilities who took up the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits. Descriptive statistics explored the uptake of the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits by disability severity class, DTCC application status (accepted, rejected or other) and various sociodemographic characteristics. Finally, separate logistic analyses were conducted to examine the likelihood of uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits among persons with disabilities, controlling for the effects of the disability

3. As the DTC is a non-refundable tax credit, persons with disabilities or their spouses can claim the DTC or transfer the amount to their spouses to minimize the tax amount they pay.
4. A person's application for a DTCC using the T2201 form includes all possible application statuses: accepted, rejected, reviewed and undetermined. See Table 3 of the status of DTCC applications.
5. The DTCC applicant is the person with the disability. However, if the person who intends to claim the disability amount is different from the person with the disability, it must be specified on the T2201 form.
6. However, this information cannot be observed in the available data.

(i.e., severity and type) and sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., sex, age and income). All analyses were weighted using person and bootstrap survey weights.

Results

Table 1 shows the percentage of persons with and without disabilities and their uptake of the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits across all three combined tax years. About 22.5% of the study sample was identified as having disabilities in the CSD. As expected, while the uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits was relatively low—under 1%—among persons without disabilities, the percentages were significantly higher among persons with disabilities, with approximately 13% claiming the DTC and 9% receiving the CPP/QPP disability benefits. Despite the higher uptake among persons with disabilities, about 84% did not take up the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits, which may reflect differences between the eligibility criteria and the definition of disability in the CSD but also barriers to access (Dunn & Zwicker, 2018). Subsequent analyses provide more in-depth insights of the uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits among persons with disabilities.

Table 1
Uptake of the disability tax credit and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefits among persons with and without disabilities

	Uptake of the DTC or CPP/QPP disability benefits			
	DTCC	DTC	CPP/QPP disability benefits	None
			percent	
Persons with disabilities (22.5%)	15.6 *	12.6 *	8.7 *	83.7 *
Persons without disabilities (77.5%) (reference category)	0.8	0.6	0.3	99.2

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

Notes: CPP/QPP = Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan, DTC = disability tax credit, and DTCC = Disability Tax Credit Certificate. The term "none" refers to persons who neither claimed the DTC nor received the CPP/QPP disability benefits. The total number across all ages is n=26,669,250, while the number of those younger than 65 years is n=21,529,590. The proportions for the DTCC and the DTC are shown for all age groups, while the proportions for the CPP/QPP disability benefits are shown only for individuals younger than 65 years because of the age eligibility requirements.

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File.

Table 2 presents the percentages of persons with disabilities who took up the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits, or did not, based on disability characteristics. As expected, as the disability severity class increased, so did the uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits—approximately doubling (or more) by severity class—particularly among those with severe to very severe disabilities. For instance, among persons with severe disabilities, approximately 14% claimed the DTC, compared with a figure twice as high, at about 29%, among those with very severe disabilities. Similarly, about 11% of persons with severe disabilities received the CPP/QPP disability benefits, while this figure was over two times higher, at 24%, among persons with very severe disabilities. Overall, a higher proportion of persons with more severe disabilities claimed the DTC or received the CPP/QPP disability benefits. This is consistent with the eligibility requirements of these supports, which stipulate a severe or prolonged impairment.

Furthermore, the results revealed that persons with disabilities who took up the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits, or did not, varied by disability type. In relation to all other disability types, persons with developmental disabilities (32%) had the highest proportion claiming the DTC, while persons with pain-related disabilities (13%) had the lowest proportion. In contrast, the uptake of the CPP/QPP disability benefits was largest among persons with dexterity disabilities (21%) and lowest among those with development disabilities (9%). The majority (about 60%) of those with developmental disabilities were not in the labour force, about 10% were not employed, and the remaining 30% were employed. Therefore, this lower uptake of the CPP/QPP disability benefits among persons with developmental disabilities may be attributable to their lower likelihood of having ever worked (a requirement to receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits). These findings suggest that the uptake of the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits varies by disability type and by the severity of the disability. Additionally, the results also reveal that about 8 in 10 persons with severe disabilities and about 6 in 10 persons with very severe disabilities had neither claimed the DTC nor received the CPP/QPP disability benefits.

Table 2
Uptake of the disability tax credit and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefits among persons with disabilities, by disability characteristics

	DTCC	DTC	CPP/QPP disability benefits	None
Disability characteristics		percent		
Disability severity class				
Mild (reference category)	5.2	3.8	1.9	95.1
Moderate	11.2 *	8.8 *	5.6 *	88.8 *
Severe	17.5 *	13.9 *	11.1 *	80.8 *
Very severe	35.6 *	29.3 *	23.6 *	62.4 *
Disability type[1]				
Seeing	18.1 *	14.3 *	10.8 *	81.1 *
Hearing	17.7 *	15.0 *	11.0 *	81.0 *
Mobility	24.6 *	20.6 *	18.4 *	73.6 *
Flexibility	22.8 *	18.9 *	16.2 *	75.3 *
Dexterity	28.4 *	23.9 *	21.1 *	69.5 *
Pain-related	16.4 *	13.4 *	11.2 *	81.9 *
Learning	26.3 *	19.4 *	12.5 *	74.6 *
Developmental	47.3 *	32.0 *	8.9	63.0 *
Mental health-related	16.6 *	12.6	11.0 *	81.2 *
Memory	25.4 *	20.0 *	12.8 *	72.4 *

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

1. Significantly different between disability type of interest and all other disability types ($p < 0.05$).

Notes: CPP/QPP = Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan, DTC = disability tax credit, and DTCC = Disability Tax Credit Certificate. The term "none" refers to persons who neither claimed the DTC nor received the CPP/QPP disability benefits. The proportions for the DTCC and the DTC are shown for all age groups, while the proportions for the CPP/QPP disability benefits are shown only for individuals younger than 65 years because of the age eligibility requirements.

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File.

Table 3 provides a more in-depth analysis, showing the percentage of persons with disabilities who applied for a DTCC and their corresponding application status (accepted or rejected) by disability severity class. Notably, at least 9 in 10 persons regardless of their disability severity, had their DTCC application accepted. Conversely, the proportions of rejected applications varied, ranging from 7% to 8% among persons with mild or moderate disabilities to 5% to 3% among those with severe or very severe disabilities, albeit not statistically significant. Therefore, these findings show a high acceptance rate, irrespective of the disability severity classes calculated in the CSD.

Table 3
Status of application for the Disability Tax Credit Certificate among persons with disabilities, by disability severity class

	Accepted	Rejected
	percent	
Disability severity class		
Mild (reference category)	93.4	6.6
Moderate	91.6	8.4
Severe	94.6	5.4
Very severe	97.1	2.9

Notes: Percentages are shown only for those who applied for a Disability Tax Credit Certificate and their application status. Applications with a status of reviewed or undetermined were not included because of low sample size.

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File.

Table 4 presents the percentage of persons with disabilities who claimed the DTC or received the CPP/QPP disability benefits by sociodemographic characteristics. Females were less likely than males to claim the DTC (about 11% versus 14%). Compared with Canadian-born individuals (13%), a lower percentage of non-Canadian-born individuals (including immigrants and non-permanent residents) (11%) claimed the DTC. In Manitoba and the Atlantic provinces, larger proportions of persons claimed the DTC (16% to 22%), and the highest percentages of those receiving the CPP/QPP disability benefits were found in the Atlantic provinces (13% to 16%).

Considering educational qualifications, those with at least a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree (12%) and those with a bachelor's degree or higher (9%) had lower percentage of claiming DTC compared with persons without a high school diploma (15%). Additionally, persons with part-time employment (9% for the DTC and 5% for the CPP/QPP disability benefits), those who were unemployed (2% for the CPP/QPP disability benefits) and those who were not in the labour force (18% for the DTC and 20% for the CPP/QPP disability benefits) had higher proportions claiming the DTC or receiving the CPP/QPP disability benefits, compared with those with full-time employment (4% for the DTC and 1% for the CPP/QPP disability benefits). These results demonstrate that the uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits varies among persons with disabilities in different sociodemographic groups.

Table 4

Uptake of the disability tax credit and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefits among persons with disabilities, by sociodemographic characteristics

	All ages		Younger than 65 years	
	DTCC	DTC	None	CPP/QPP disability benefits
			percent	
Sociodemographic characteristics				
Sex				
Male (reference category)	18.2	14.3	81.9	9.0
Female	13.7 *	11.2 *	85.0 *	8.4
Age group				
15 to 24 years	15.4 *	10.3 *	89.7	F
25 to 34 years	11.6 *	8.4	90.7	1.5 *
35 to 44 years (reference category)	8.8	6.6	90.5	4.7
45 to 54 years	13.4 *	9.8 *	85.5 *	9.7 *
55 to 64 years	15.4 *	12.4 *	77.0 *	16.6 *
65 to 74 years	17.9 *	15.3 *	82.7 *	...
75 to 84 years	23.1 *	20.4 *	79.6 *	...
85 years or older	25.8 *	22.2 *	77.8 *	...
Province or territory				
Newfoundland and Labrador	22.1 *	16.8 *	78.0 *	12.5 *
Prince Edward Island	21.8 *	18.3 *	77.2 *	13.6 *
Nova Scotia	20.1 *	16.6 *	77.3 *	16.1 *
New Brunswick	18.9	15.7 *	79.6 *	12.7 *
Quebec	10.3 *	8.1 *	87.4 *	8.0
Ontario (reference category)	17.3	13.5	82.9	8.3
Manitoba	24.3 *	21.8 *	76.5 *	8.0
Saskatchewan	14.3 *	12.2	84.8	7.5
Alberta	12.3 *	10.1 *	86.6 *	7.5
British Columbia	15.3	12.5	83.9	8.6
Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon	8.0 *	6.7 *	91.3 *	4.8 *
Marital status				
Not married or common law	17.8 *	13.1	83.1	7.8
Married or common law (reference category)	13.9	12.1	84.1	9.4
Immigrant status				
Canadian-born individuals (reference category)	16.1	13.0	83.2	8.7
Non-Canadian-born individuals	14.0 *	11.0 *	85.1	8.6
Education				
No high school (reference category)	20.0	14.9	81.1	9.3
High school diploma	16.6 *	13.9 *	83.2 *	8.6 *
Below a bachelor's degree but completed high school	14.0 *	11.5 *	84.0 *	9.3
Bachelor's degree or higher	10.7 *	9.1 *	87.5 *	7.0
Population centre				
Rural area	16.3	13.5	82.9	9.3
Small population centre	17.2 *	13.9 *	81.3 *	10.1 *
Medium population centre	17.1	13.5	82.0	10.1
Large urban population centre (reference category)	14.7	11.7	84.8	7.8
Employment status				
Full-time employment (reference category)	5.0	4.3	95.4	0.6
Part-time employment	11.7 *	9.0 *	88.6 *	5.1 *
Unemployed	10.3 *	6.3	93.3 *	1.5 *
Not in the labour force	22.5 *	18.1 *	75.7 *	20.3 *
Total income quintile				
First quintile (lowest)	17.3	12.6 *	82.4	9.1
Second quintile	19.0	13.6 *	78.7	18.8 *
Third quintile (reference category)	19.3	16.4	80.9	10.1
Fourth quintile	14.7 *	12.8 *	84.6 *	6.0 *
Fifth quintile (highest)	9.1 *	7.9 *	90.5 *	3.3 *

... not applicable

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Notes: CPP/QPP = Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan, DTC = disability tax credit, and DTCC = Disability Tax Credit Certificate. The term "none" refers to persons who neither claimed the DTC nor received the CPP/QPP disability benefits. The proportions for the DTCC and the DTC are shown for all age groups, while the proportions for the CPP/QPP disability benefits are shown only for individuals younger than 65 years because of the age eligibility requirements.

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File.

Logistic regression analyses with selected sociodemographic and disability variables were conducted to predict the probability of taking up the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits (Table 5). These analyses aimed to further investigate the uptake of the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits. The marginal effects revealed a similar pattern of results as those shown in Table 4. Females were 3 percentage points less likely to claim the DTC than males, but no differences were observed in the uptake of the CPP/QPP disability benefits between the groups. Persons aged 15 to 24 years were 4 percentage points more likely to claim the DTC than persons aged 35 to 44 years. For the CPP/QPP disability benefits, persons aged 45 to 64 were 4 to 6 percentage points more likely to receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits than persons aged 35 to 44 years. Additionally, those who were not married or common law were 2 to 3 percentage points less likely to claim the DTC or receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits, while non-Canadian-born individuals were 4 percentage points less likely to claim the DTC than Canadian-born individuals.

There were also differences by location of residence. Specifically, compared with persons in Ontario, persons in the Atlantic provinces (except for New Brunswick) were 2 to 4 percentage points more likely to claim the DTC, while those in Manitoba were 7 percentage points more likely. Persons in Quebec were 5 percentage points less likely than persons in Ontario to claim it, and those in Alberta were 2 percentage points less likely. Similarly, those in Alberta and the Atlantic provinces were 2 to 7 percentage points more likely to receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits than persons in Ontario.

When examining education and labour market outcomes, persons with at least a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree or higher were 3 to 4 percentage points more likely to claim the DTC and 2 to 7 percentage points more likely to receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits than persons without a high school diploma. Persons with part-time employment or who were not in the labour force were 4 to 15 percentage points more likely to claim the DTC or receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits than those with full-time employment. Persons who were in the first, second and fifth income quintiles were 4 to 5 percentage points less likely to claim the DTC or receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits than those in the third quintile, suggesting that those with the lowest and the highest incomes were less likely to claim the DTC or receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits. As the DTC is a non-refundable tax credit, persons with low incomes may have little tax liability and therefore may be less likely to claim it.

There were also disparities by disability severity class. Persons with severe or very severe disabilities were 9 percentage points more likely than those with mild or moderate disabilities to claim the DTC and, to a lesser extent, 4 percentage points more likely to receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits. Compared with all other disability types, persons with developmental disabilities were 12 percentage points more likely to claim the DTC, while persons with dexterity or mobility disabilities were 3 percentage points more likely to receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits. As with the previous results, these findings align with the eligibility criteria for claiming the DTC and receiving the CPP/QPP disability benefits. Overall, after controlling for all sociodemographic and disability characteristics, variations in claiming the DTC or receiving the CPP/QPP disability benefits persisted between different sociodemographic groups.

Table 5

Predicting the uptake of the disability tax credit and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefits among persons with disabilities

	All ages				Younger than 65 years	
	DTCC model		DTC model		CPP/QPP disability benefits model	
	partial effects	standard error	partial effects	standard error	partial effects	standard error
Sex						
Female	-0.05 *	0.01	-0.03 *	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Male (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
Age group						
15 to 24 years	0.05 *	0.02	0.04 *	0.02	-0.21 *	0.05
25 to 34 years	0.04 *	0.02	0.03	0.01	-0.06 *	0.02
35 to 44 years (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
45 to 54 years	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.04 *	0.01
55 to 64 years	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.06 *	0.01
65 to 74 years	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	...	...
75 to 84 years	0.03 *	0.02	0.04 *	0.01	...	...
85 years or older	0.05 *	0.02	0.05 *	0.02	...	...
Province or territory						
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.03 *	0.01	0.02 *	0.01	0.03 *	0.01
Prince Edward Island	0.04 *	0.01	0.04 *	0.01	0.06 *	0.01
Nova Scotia	0.02 *	0.01	0.03 *	0.01	0.07 *	0.01
New Brunswick	0.06	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.04 *	0.01
Quebec	-0.07 *	0.01	-0.05 *	0.01	0.00	0.01
Ontario (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
Manitoba	0.07 *	0.01	0.07 *	0.01	0.02	0.01
Saskatchewan	0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Alberta	-0.03 *	0.01	-0.02 *	0.01	0.02 *	0.01
British Columbia	-0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.01
Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon	-0.05 *	0.02	-0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01
Marital status						
Not married or common law	0.00	0.01	-0.02 *	0.01	-0.03 *	0.01
Married or common law (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
Immigrant status						
Canadian-born individuals (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
Non-Canadian-born individuals	-0.04 *	0.01	-0.04 *	0.01	0.00	0.01
Education						
No high school (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
High school diploma	0.02 *	0.01	0.03 *	0.01	0.02 *	0.01
Below a bachelor's degree but completed high school	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.04 *	0.01
Bachelor's degree or higher	0.04 *	0.01	0.04 *	0.01	0.07 *	0.01
Population centre						
Rural area	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01
Small population centre	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01 *	0.01
Medium population centre	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01 *	0.01
Large urban population centre (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

1. Significantly different between disability type of interest and all other disability types ($p < 0.05$).

Notes: CPP/QPP = Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan, DTC = disability tax credit, and DTCC = Disability Tax Credit Certificate. The proportions for the DTCC and the DTC are shown for all age groups, while the proportions for the CPP/QPP disability benefits are shown only for individuals younger than 65 years because of the age eligibility requirements.

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File.

Table 5

Predicting the uptake of the disability tax credit and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefits among persons with disabilities (continued)

	All ages				Younger than 65 years	
	DTCC model		DTC model		CPP/QPP disability benefits model	
	partial effects	standard error	partial effects	standard error	partial effects	standard error
Employment status						
Full-time employment (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
Part-time employment	0.06 *	0.02	0.04 *	0.02	0.08 *	0.02
Unemployed	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02
Not in the labour force	0.11 *	0.01	0.08 *	0.01	0.15 *	0.02
Total income quintile						
First quintile (lowest)	-0.03 *	0.01	-0.04 *	0.01	-0.05 *	0.01
Second quintile	-0.03 *	0.01	-0.04 *	0.01	0.02	0.01
Third quintile (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
Fourth quintile	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.04 *	0.01
Fifth quintile (highest)	-0.05 *	0.01	-0.04 *	0.01	-0.05 *	0.01
Disability characteristics						
Disability severity class						
Mild or moderate (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...
Severe or very severe	0.11 *	0.01	0.09 *	0.01	0.04 *	0.01
Disability type[1]						
Seeing	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Hearing	-0.02 *	0.01	-0.02	0.01	-0.02	0.01
Mobility	0.06 *	0.01	0.07 *	0.01	0.03 *	0.01
Flexibility	0.02 *	0.01	0.02 *	0.01	0.01	0.01
Dexterity	0.04 *	0.01	0.04 *	0.01	0.03 *	0.01
Pain-related	-0.06 *	0.01	-0.05 *	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Learning	0.03 *	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01
Developmental	0.17 *	0.01	0.12 *	0.01	0.01	0.01
Mental health-related	-0.03 *	0.01	-0.03 *	0.01	0.01	0.01
Memory	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02 *	0.01

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

1. Significantly different between disability type of interest and all other disability types ($p < 0.05$).

Notes: CPP/QPP = Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan, DTC = disability tax credit, and DTCC = Disability Tax Credit Certificate. The proportions for the DTCC and the DTC are shown for all age groups, while the proportions for the CPP/QPP disability benefits are shown only for individuals younger than 65 years because of the age eligibility requirements.

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File.

Conclusion

The Report of the OAG (2022) noted that the Government of Canada did not have a clear and complete portrait of the persons with disabilities who were eligible for and not receiving disability supports. In addition, little is known about whether the uptake of these supports varies among persons with disabilities in different sociodemographic groups. The results of this study addressed knowledge gaps related to poverty reduction for a specific hard-to-reach population and helped identify specific groups that may require support in accessing benefits. As expected, persons with disabilities had higher uptake of the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits than persons without disabilities. The uptake varied by disability severity and type. A higher proportion of those with more severe disabilities (severe or very severe) claimed the DTC or received the CPP/QPP disability benefits, compared with those with milder (mild or moderate) disabilities. Compared with persons with other disability types, persons with developmental disabilities were more likely to claim the DTC, while persons with dexterity or mobility disabilities were more likely to receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits. These results align with the eligibility criteria for claiming the DTC (i.e., persons have a severe and prolonged impairment and acquire a DTCC) and receiving the CPP/QPP disability benefits (i.e., person's disability regularly stops them from participating in substantially gainful work in the labour force).

Nevertheless, over 60% of persons with very severe disabilities did not claim the DTC. This implies that the estimated total unclaimed non-refundable tax credit amount was over $300 million in the 2017 tax year.[7] When the DTC for persons with severe disabilities was also considered, the total estimated amount was approximately $800 million. Examining reasons for not claiming the DTC is beyond the scope of this study. However, previous work by Dunn and Zwicker (2018) highlighted several possible reasons for the low uptake of the DTC in Canada, including "cost versus (perceived) benefits" considerations, low awareness of the DTC and the complexity of the application process.

Overall, the findings are consistent with previous research (e.g., O'Reilly et al., 2021; Perhoniemi, 2020), as sociodemographic factors, including sex, age, immigrant status, location of residence and others, have been associated with the uptake of disability supports before and after controlling for covariates. Similar to the study by O'Reilly et al. (2021), persons with more severe disabilities had a higher uptake of the DTC or the CPP/QPP disability benefits, while the uptake of claiming a DTC was lower among non-Canadian-born individuals. In contrast, the present study found that females were less likely to claim the DTC and persons who were not married or common-law were also less likely to claim the DTC or receive the CPP/QPP disability benefits. These differences could be attributed to the different country contexts, as the study by O'Reilly et al. (2021) was conducted in the United Kingdom, and different policies, regulations and population sociodemographic characteristics of the country may play a role. Altogether, the results from this study can inform research and modelling activities, as well as targeted outreach activities, for the new Canada Disability Benefit that is expected to launch in July 2025.

This analytical study also serves as an exploration to demonstrate the necessity and the utility of using survey data linked to administrative data to identify persons with disabilities who may be eligible for disability supports. Previous research has shown that linking multiple databases rather than using a single data source allowed a larger cohort of persons with disabilities to be identified and enabled the creation of a more accurate sociodemographic and health profile of this population (Lin et al., 2015).

7. For persons with severe or very severe disabilities in the sample, the total unclaimed DTC amount was estimated using information from the 2016 Census about the net federal income tax paid in 2015 because the federal income tax information for 2017 was unavailable. The maximum 2017 DTC amount ($1,216.95) was computed as the disability amount for 2017 ($8,113) multiplied by 0.15. For persons with severe or very severe disabilities whose total federal income tax obligation was below $1,216.95, the total DTC amount was computed as the sum of a person's net federal tax amounts. For those whose net federal tax amount was greater than or equal to $1,216.95, the total DTC amount was computed as $1,216.95 multiplied by the number of those pe.

Future research on the uptake of disability supports should continue by making better use of survey data linked to administrative datasets.

Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, it relied on self-reported data in a national survey to identify persons with disabilities, which involved a different definition of disability than the one in the eligibility criteria for the DTC and the CPP/QPP disability benefits. Second, this study did not address concerns in the OAG report about Indigenous populations, as persons living on a First Nations reserve were excluded from the CSD data. Persons living in collective dwellings, such as institutional residences and Canadian Armed Forces bases, and persons younger than 15 years were also excluded from the survey (Statistics Canada, 2018). Third, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon were collapsed into a single category because of the low sample size. Despite these limitations, this study contributed to the scarce research on the uptake of disability supports. Future research may replicate this study using more recent data or by exploring the new Canada Disability Benefit. Future research could also focus on the role of disability supports in education and labour market outcomes among youth with disabilities, as a high proportion of them applied for a DTCC without claiming the DTC.

Appendices

Appendix Table A
Uptake of the disability tax credit and the Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefits among persons with and without disabilities across three tax years, 2015 to 2017

	Tax year					
	2015		2016		2017	
	PWD	PWOD	PWD	PWOD	PWD	PWOD
Tax merged						
Total, N	5,735,310	19,577,410	5,768,960	19,847,600	5,786,810	19,890,050
Average age	55.4	45.8	55.1	45.4	54.9	45.2
Rate of match to tax records (%)	91.8	90.0	92.4	91.2	92.6	91.4
			percent			
Identified in the CSD	22.7	77.3	22.5	77.5	22.5	77.5
DTCC	13.7	0.7	14.9	0.7	15.6	0.8
DTC	9.5	0.4	10.4	0.4	11.4	0.5
CPP/QPP disability benefits (younger than 65 years)	7.4	0.3	8.1	0.3	8.3	0.3

Notes: PWD = persons with disabilities, PWOD = persons without disabilities, CSD = Canadian Survey on Disability, CPP/QPP = Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan, DTC = disability tax credit, and DTCC = Disability Tax Credit Certificate. The proportions for the DTCC and the DTC are shown for all age groups, while the proportions for the CPP/QPP disability benefits are shown only for individuals younger than 65 years because of the age eligibility requirements.

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File.

Appendix Table B
Percentage of persons with disabilities who applied for a T2201 Disability Tax Credit Certificate and did not claim the disability tax credit, by age group

	Percent
Age (two categories)	
Younger than 65 years	3.2
65 years and older	2.8
Age group	
24 years or younger	5.0
25 to 34 years	3.2
35 to 44 years	2.2
45 to 54 years	3.6
55 to 64 years	2.9
65 to 74 years	2.6
75 to 84 years	2.6
85 years or older	3.6

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and 2015 to 2017 T1 Family File.

References

Arim, R. (2015). A profile of persons with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years or older, 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability. Statistics Canada. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/statcan/89-654-x2015001-eng.pdf.

Baker, M., & Milligan, K. (2012). Disability insurance programs in Canada. In Social security programs and retirement around the world: Historical trends in mortality and health, employment, and disability insurance participation and reforms (pp. 327-358). University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226921952.001.0001

Cloutier, E., Grondin, C., & Lévesque, A. (2018). Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017: Concepts and Methods Guide. Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2018001-eng.htm.

Dunn, S., & Zwicker, J. (2018, January 11). Policy Brief – Why is uptake of the Disability Tax Credit low in Canada? Exploring possible barriers to access. *The School of Public Policy Publications*. https://cjc-rcc.ucalgary.ca/index.php/sppp/article/download/43187/30949.

Finlay, B., Wittevrongel, K., Materula, D., Hébert, M. L., O'Grady, K., Lach, L. M., Nicholas, D., & Zwicker, J. D. (2023). Pan-Canadian caregiver experiences in accessing government disability programs: A mixed methods study. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 134*, 104420. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2022.104420

Government of Canada. (2024a, January 23). *Disability tax credit*. https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/segments/tax-credits-deductions-persons-disabilities/disability-tax-credit.html

Government of Canada. (2024b, January 23). *T2201 Disability Tax Credit Certificate*. https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/forms/t2201.html

Government of Canada. (2024c, February 27). *Canada Pension Plan disability benefit toolkit*. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/pension-plan-disability-benefits/reports/toolkit.html

Grondin, C. (2016). A new survey measure of disability: The Disability Screening Questions (DSQ). Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2016003-eng.htm

Hébert, B-P., Kevins, C., Mofidi, A., Morris, S., Simionescu, D., & Thicke, M. (2024). A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022. Reports on Disability and Accessibility in Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm

Lin, E., Balogh, R., Isaacs, B., Ouellette-Kuntz, H., Selick, A., Wilton, A. S., Cobigo, V., & Lunsky, Y. (2015). Strengths and limitations of health and disability support administrative databases for population-based health research in intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, *11*(4), 235-244.

OAG (Office of the Auditor General of Canada) (2022). Report 1 – Access to benefits for hard-to-reach populations. https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_202205_01_e_44033.html#p31.

O'Reilly, D., Rosato, M., Wright, D. M., Millar, A. C., Tseliou, F., & Maguire, A. (2021). Social variations in uptake of disability benefits: A census-based record linkage study. *Social Science & Medicine (1982)*, *276*, 113821–113821. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.113821

Perhoniemi, R., Blomgren, J. &, Laaksonen, M. (2020). Determinants of disability pension applications and awarded disability pensions in Finland, 2009 and 2014. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*. 2020;48(2):172-180. doi:10.1177/1403494819843778

Pianosi, R., Presley, L., Buchanan, J., Lévesque, A., Savard, S.-A., & Lam, J. (2023). *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022: Concepts and Methods Guide*. Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2023004-eng.htm

Schimmele, C., Jeon, S.H., Arim, R. (2021). Work experiences of women with disabilities. *Economic and Social Reports 1*(10). https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2021010/article/00004-eng.htm.

Simpson, W., & Stevens, H. (2016). The Disability Tax Credit: Why it fails and how to fix it. *The School of Public Policy Publications*. https://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/disability-tax-credits-simpson-stevens.pdf.

Statistics Canada (2023, December 1). Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231201/dq231201b-eng.htm.

Statistics Canada. (2018). Canadian Survey on Disability. https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&Id=321555

Till, M., Leonard, T., Yeung, S., & Nicholls, G. (2015). Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012: A profile of the labour market experiences of adults with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years and older, 2012. Statistics Canada https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2015005-eng.htm.

Turcotte, M. (2014). Persons with disabilities and employment. *Insights on Canadian Society*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.