



Workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities in Canada, 2017



CENTRE FOR GENDER, DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION STATISTICS

by Stuart Morris

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 STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.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 |

Depository Services Program

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| • Inquiries line | 1-800-635-7943 |
| • Fax line | 1-800-565-7757 |

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.

Release date: September 25, 2019

Catalogue number 89-654-X2019001

ISBN 978-0-660-32013-7

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada as represented by the Minister of Industry, 2019

All rights reserved. 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.

Workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities in Canada, 2017

by Stuart Morris

Abstract

Workplace accommodations such as flexible work schedules or workstation modifications can play an important role in creating an inclusive and accessible work environment for many employees with disabilities. This fact sheet presents findings from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) on requirements and access to workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years. It explores: the different types and number of accommodations commonly required in the workplace; whether those needs were met; and, the reasons why, in some instances, needs for accommodations went unmet. The key findings are:

- Of employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, more than 1 in 3 (37%) required at least one workplace accommodation to be able to work. This represented just over 772,000 Canadians.
- The most commonly required type of workplace accommodations were flexible work arrangements (27%), workstation modifications (15%), and human or technical supports (6%).
- Employees with “more severe” disabilities (62%) were twice as likely to require workplace accommodations compared to those with “less severe” disabilities (29%).
- Of those who required workplace accommodations: 59% had all of their needs met, 19% had some of their needs met, and 21% had none of their needs met.
- The more workplace accommodations required, the less likely all needs were met. Of those who required only one accommodation, 75% had their need met; however, this drops to 36% when they required three or more.
- Of those with at least one unmet need for workplace accommodations: 69% said that they did not make the request for them to their employer or supervisor. Of these, 36% said their employer or supervisor was already aware they needed them.
- Of those with at least one unmet need for workplace accommodations: 25% said they did make a request for them to their employer or supervisor. However, 40% were refused their request.

Types of Workplace Accommodations

Three out of the five top required WPA were related to flexible work arrangements

Workplace accommodations (WPA) such as flexible work schedules, assistive devices, or ergonomic workstations can play an important role for employees with disabilities by helping mitigate some of the barriers they may face in the workplace (e.g., Lindsay et al. 2018, Padkapayeva et al. 2017, Soloveiva et al. 2011). While not all employees with disabilities will require WPA to be able to do their work, a sizeable number do. According to the 2017 CSD, just over 772,000 employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years required at least one WPA to be able to work (see Table 1). This represented 37% of employed persons with disabilities in Canada. The most frequently required WPA was flexible work schedules in the form of modified hours or days or reduced work hours (19%), and it was made available or the need was met for 74% of employees who required it. A computer or tablet with specialized software, on the other hand, was one of the least likely WPA to be made available to employees who required it where the need was met in less than half of the cases (45%).

Table 1
Requirements and needs met for workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, 2017

Type of workplace accommodation	Require		Needs met
	number	percent	
One or more workplace accommodations	772,110	37.3	...
Modified hours or days or reduced work hours	393,410	19.0	73.7
Modified or different duties	278,870	13.5	66.1
Special chair or back support	232,470	11.2	61.0
Modified or ergonomic workstation	215,720	10.4	60.3
Working from home	171,850	8.3	69.6
Computer, laptop or tablet with specialized software	65,280	3.2	45.4
Human support	55,280	2.7	56.6
Adapted or accessible parking	51,440	2.5	58.0
Technical aids	35,070 ^E	1.7 ^E	44.5 ^E
Accessible elevators	34,520	1.7	62.3
Handrails, ramps, widened doorways or hallways	23,690	1.1	63.4
Communication aids	23,240 ^E	1.1 ^E	41.3 ^E
Adapted washroom	17,760 ^E	0.9 ^E	74.6
Specialized transportation	12,170 ^E	0.6 ^E	46.8 ^E
Other equipment, help, or work arrangement	47,960	2.3	57.6

...not applicable

^E use with caution

Notes: Requirements for workplace accommodations are represented as a percentage of the total population of employees with disabilities and employees may require more than one type. A need is met if the workplace accommodation required by employees with disabilities to be able to do their work was also made available to them.

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

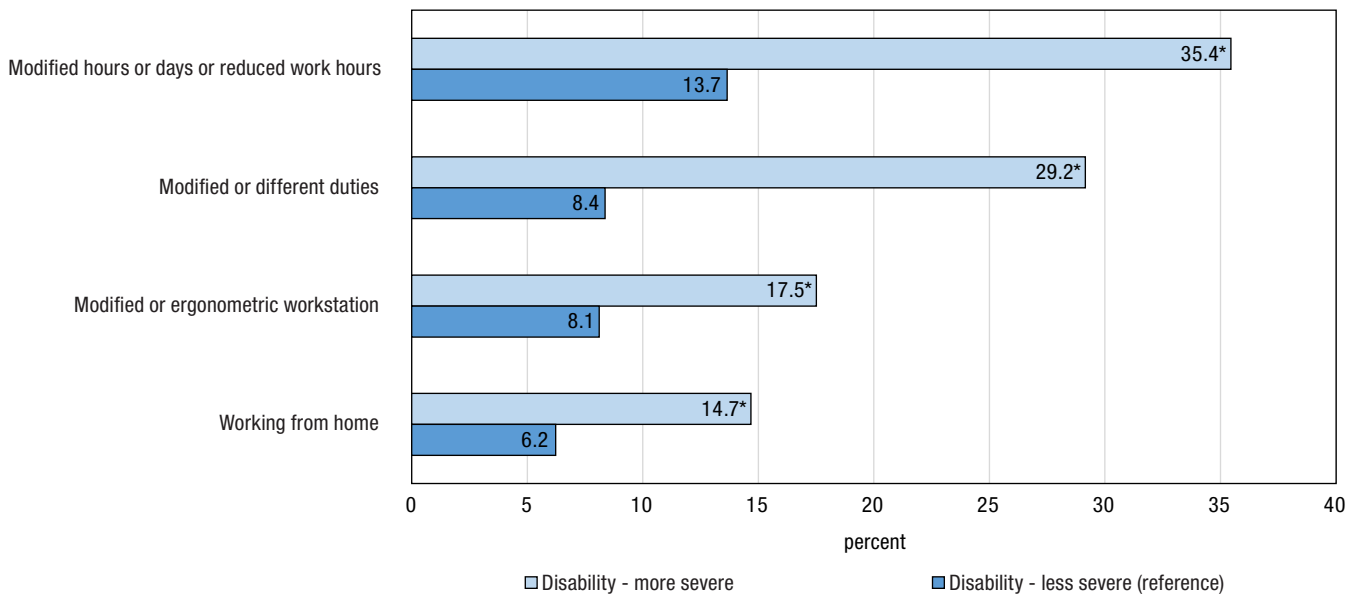
Global Severity Class

A global severity score was developed for the CSD, which took into account 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. It is important to understand, however, that the name assigned to each class is simply intended to facilitate use of the severity score and is not a label or judgement concerning the person's level of disability. In this fact sheet, mild and moderate classes were collapsed into "**less severe**" and severe and very severe classes were collapsed into "**more severe**".

The severity of employees' disabilities affects the likelihood of requiring WPA. As can be seen in the top most frequently required WPA presented in Chart 1, employees with "more severe" disabilities were significantly more likely to require them in each instance compared to those with "less severe" disabilities. For example, employees with "more severe" disabilities (29%) were 3.5 times more likely to require modified or different duties compared to those with "less severe" disabilities (8%).

Despite variations in requirements by severity of disability, as presented in Chart 1, there were no statistically significant differences found by severity of disability when it comes to percentage with needs met for WPA. The exception to this was "working from home". In this instance, employees with "more severe" disabilities (61%) were less likely to have their need met compared to employees with "less severe" disabilities (76%).

Chart 1
Top required workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by severity of disability, 2017



* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017.

Defining level of needs met for workplace accommodations

A 'need' is considered 'met' if the WPA required by employees with disabilities to be able to do their job was made available to them. Since employees vary in terms of the number of WPA they required as well as how many of those were actually made available to them, a three level classification system was developed for "needs met". This classification is based on questions EMO_Q05 (**Because of your condition, do you require any of the following to be able to work...?**) and EMO_Q10 (**Which of the following have been made available to you...?**), where each lists the same 15 WPA options.

Provided that at least one WPA was required, respondents were classified into one of three levels of needs met. Respondents were classified as having "**all of their needs met**" if all required WPA options selected in EMO_Q05 were also all selected as being made available to them in EMO_Q10. Respondents were classified as having "**some of their needs met**" if some, but not all, of the required WPA options selected in EMO_Q05 were selected as being made available to them in EMO_Q10. To be eligible for this classification, respondents needed to have selected at least two required WPA in EMO_Q05. And finally, respondents were classified as having "**none of their needs met**" if none of the 15 WPA options selected as required in EMO_Q05 were selected as being made available to them in EMO_Q10.

Employees were almost twice as likely to have no WPA made available to them for human or technical supports (44%) compared to flexible work arrangements (23%)

As a group,¹ the most commonly required WPA were flexible work arrangements (27%), workstation modifications (15%), and human or technical supports (6%) – see Table 2. When it comes to flexible work arrangements: 69% had all of their needs met, 8% had some of their needs met, and 23% had none of their needs met. Women and those with “more severe” disabilities were more likely to require flexible work arrangements relative to their counterparts. However, in terms of level of needs met, there were no statistically significant differences by sex or severity of disability for either “none” or “all” of their needs met relative to their counterparts. Women and those with “more severe” disabilities were, however, more likely to have “some” of their needs met relative to their counterparts.

When it comes to workstation modifications: 57% had all of their needs met, 6%^E had some of their needs met, and 37% had none of their needs met. Women and those with “more severe” disabilities were more likely to require workstation modifications relative to their counterparts. However no statistically significant differences were found with regards to their level of needs being met.

And finally, in the case of WPA related to human or technical supports:² 50% had all of their needs met, 6%^E had some of their needs met, and 44% had none of their needs met.

Table 2
Requirements and level of needs met for workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by sex and severity of disability, 2017

	Require	Level of needs met		
		All	Some	None
percent				
Grouped workplace accommodations				
Flexible work arrangements				
Total - aged 25 to 64 years	27.1	68.8	7.7	23.2
Sex				
Men (reference)	22.7	69.9	5.0 ^F	24.6
Women	31.0*	68.2	9.5*	22.3
Severity of disability				
Less severe (reference)	20.1	71.8	3.9 ^F	24.0
More severe	48.5*	65.1	12.6*	22.2
Workstation modifications				
Total - aged 25 to 64 years	14.8	57.1	6.3 ^F	36.5
Sex				
Men (reference)	10.3	58.6	F	37.4
Women	18.7*	56.3	7.5 ^F	36.1
Severity of disability				
Less severe (reference)	11.4	60.9	5.7 ^F	33.4
More severe	25.3*	51.9	7.2 ^F	40.8
Human or technical supports				
Total - aged 25 to 64 years	6.1	49.9	5.6 ^F	43.8

^E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

Notes: Level of needs met do not sum to 100% because it excluded those who required a workplace accommodation but did not state whether it was made available.

Flexible work arrangements includes: a) modified or different duties, b) working from home, and/or c) modified hours or days or reduced work hours. Workstation modifications includes: a) modified or ergonomic workstation and/or b) special chair or back support. Human or technical support includes: a) human support such as reader or sign language interpreter, b) technical aids such as infrared system or portable note-taker, c) computer, laptop or tablet with specialized software or other adaptations, and/or d) communication aids such as Braille or recording equipment.

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

^E use with caution

1. To increase sample size and enable further in-depth comparisons, different WPA sharing similar features from the list of 15 options in Table 1 were grouped into broader categories. Although not all WPA options could be meaningfully collapsed due to insufficient sample sizes, three groups of WPA were created for this fact sheet: flexible work arrangements, workstation modifications, and human or technical supports.

2. Due to its small sample size, in-depth analyses of WPA for human or technical supports by sex and severity of disability were not performed.

Number of Workplace Accommodations

Of employees who required WPA: 45% required one, 28% required two and 27% required three or more

In addition to requiring different types of WPA, employees with disabilities also varied in terms of the number of WPA they required to be able to do their job. Employees were more likely to require only one WPA if they: a) were men, b) had a “less severe” disability, c) had just one disability type, or d) were in trades and manufacturing or sales and customer service occupations (see Table 3). Age did not have a significant effect, with requirements for one, two, or three or more WPA being similarly distributed for younger (25 to 44 years) and older (45 to 64 years) employees. Women were more likely to require three or more WPA as were those with “more severe” or four or more disability types relative to their respective counterparts.

Table 3
Number of workplace accommodations required for employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics, 2017

Select characteristics	Require		
	One	Two	Three or more
	percent		
Total - aged 25 to 64 years	44.9	27.9	27.2
25 to 44 years (reference)	45.6	28.0	26.4
45 to 64 years	44.3	27.9	27.8
Sex			
Men (reference)	51.8	25.8	22.4
Women	40.4*	29.3	30.3*
Severity of disability			
Less severe (reference)	52.3	28.1	19.6
More severe	34.1*	27.7	38.2*
Number of disability types			
1 (reference)	56.3	27.2	16.5
2 or 3	49.4	28.1	22.5
4 or more	30.0*	28.3	41.7*
Occupation			
Management and finance	37.9*	32.5*	29.6
Professional occupations in applied sciences, health, education, law, and sport	41.0*	28.6	30.4
Sales and customer service	50.4	26.8	22.8
Trades, transportation, natural resources, manufacturing, utilities, and related (reference)	57.7	20.6 ^E	21.7 ^E

^E use with caution

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

Note: Occupation is derived from variable DOCC16_1. Management and finance includes a) management occupations and b) business, finance, and administration; Professional occupations in applied sciences, health, education, law, and sport includes a) natural and applied sciences and related, b) health occupations, c) occupations in education, law, social, and community, and d) occupations in art, culture, recreation; Trades, transportation, natural resources, manufacturing, utilities, and related includes a) trades, transport and equipment operators and related, b) natural resources, agriculture and related production, and c) occupations in manufacturing and utilities.

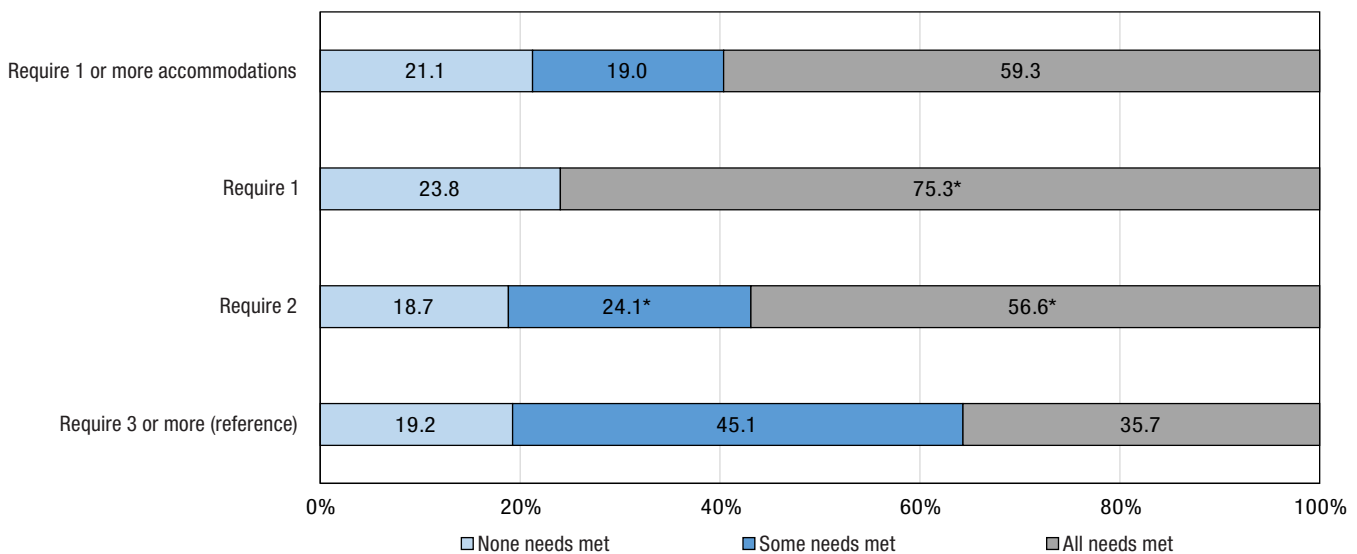
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017.

Of employees who required two or more WPA, eight in ten had at least some of their needs met

The finding that certain subgroups of employees with disabilities were likely to require more WPA compared to their counterparts is important because, as can be seen in Chart 2, the number of WPA impacted the likelihood of having all their needs met. When looking at the overall picture of those who required at least one WPA: 59% had all of their needs met, 19% had some of their needs met, and 21% had none of their needs met. However, when broken down by the actual number of WPA required by employees, the percent who had all of their needs met goes down from 75% for those with one need, to 57% for those with two needs, and to 36% for those with three or more needs. No statistically significant differences were found among the percent of employees who had none of their needs met, which remained somewhat stable at around 20% - regardless of the number of WPA they required.

Chart 2

Level of needs met for employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by number of workplace accommodations required, 2017



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

Note: The percentages do not sum to 100% because it excluded those who required workplace accommodations but did not state whether it was made available to them.

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

Requirements and Needs Met for Workplace Accommodations: By Select Characteristics

22% of employees with one disability type required WPA versus 63% with four or more disability types

Table 4 shows that requirements for WPA were highest among those who: a) had “more severe” disabilities, b) had multiple or co-occurring disability types, c) were women, or d) were in management or professional occupations. No statistically significant differences were found in WPA requirements either by size of company or by “years spent in the same company”. However, significant differences were found when it comes to the percentage of employees having all of their needs met for WPA. Employees in small size companies (less than 20 people) were more likely to have all of their needs met for WPA compared to those in large companies (100 or more people). This may be due, in part, to the finding that they were also more likely to require only one WPA, which tends to increase the likelihood of having those needs met. Employees who were new to a company (2 years or less) were less likely to have all of their needs met for WPA compared to those who have been with the company longer (3 years or more). No significant differences were found between employees with one versus two or three disability types in terms of percent with all of their needs met (around 64%); but it was significantly lower for employees with four or more disability types (49%). And finally, employees in trades and manufacturing occupations were more likely to have none of their needs met compared to those in management or professional occupations. This finding is noteworthy because those in trades and manufacturing were also more likely to require only one WPA.

Table 4
Requirements and level of needs met for workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by select characteristics, 2017

Select characteristics	Require	Level of needs met		
		All	Some	None
		percent		
Sex				
Men (reference)	31.6	62.4	14.6	22.6
Women	42.3*	57.3	21.9*	20.2
Severity of disability				
Less severe (reference)	29.2	63.2	14.9	21.6
More severe	62.0*	53.7*	24.8*	20.5
Number of disability types				
1 (reference)	21.9	64.8	12.3 ^f	22.9
2 or 3	41.3*	64.1	16.9	17.8
4 or more	63.2*	48.6*	27.0*	24.3
Occupation				
Management and finance	43.8*	63.6	17.4	18.9*
Professional occupations in applied sciences, health, education, law, and sport	39.4*	54.8	26.8*	18.3*
Sales and customer service	34.0	60.3	14.7	22.8
Trades, transportation, natural resources, manufacturing, utilities, and related (reference)	30.7	59.6	12.0 ^f	28.3
Size of company or organization				
Less than 20 people (reference)	32.4	64.7	16.5	18.7
100 or more people	36.7	53.9*	23.3	22.3
Years at same company or organization				
0-2 years (reference)	34.2	47.1	20.6	32.2
3 or more years	36.3	60.5*	20.8	17.9*

^f use with caution

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

Notes: Level of needs met do not sum to 100% because it excludes those who required a workplace accommodation but did not state whether it was made available. Occupation is derived from variable DOCC16_1. Management and finance includes a) management occupations and b) business, finance, and administration; Professional occupations in applied sciences, health, education, law, and sport includes a) natural and applied sciences and related, b) health occupations, c) occupations in education, law, social, and community, and d) occupations in art, culture, recreation; Trades, transportation, natural resources, manufacturing, utilities, and related includes a) trades, transport and equipment operators and related, b) natural resources, agriculture and related production, and c) occupations in manufacturing and utilities.

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

Reasons for Unmet Needs for Workplace Accommodations

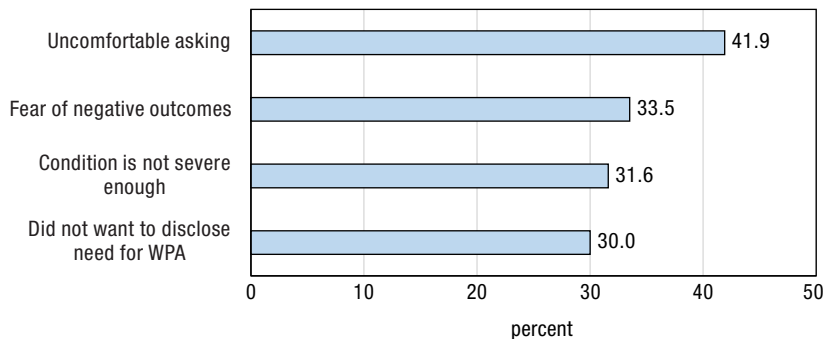
Of employees who did not make a WPA request, 36% said their employer or supervisor was already aware they need them

Two in five (40%) employees with disabilities who required WPA had at least one unmet need. Of these, half had no WPA made available them. With so many employees not receiving all the work supports they required, it is important to gain a better understanding of the possible reasons why needs may go unmet for WPA.

The findings show that only one in four (25%)³ employees with disabilities who have an unmet need for WPA actually made the request to their employer or supervisor for it, with women (29%) being more likely to ask than men (17%)⁵. The severity of employees' disabilities did not significantly affect the likelihood of making a request for an unmet WPA. However, of those who did ask their employer or supervisor, 40% were refused their request.⁴

Of the 69%⁵ who said they did not ask their employer or supervisor for the WPA they required, 36% said their employer or supervisor was already aware they needed it. However, 41% believed that their employer or supervisor was, in fact, unaware they required a WPA, while 22% said that they didn't know if their employer or supervisor knew. The most common reasons given for not making the employer or supervisor aware of their needs revolved around the employees' levels of comfort with asking for the WPA (42%) as well as fear of negative outcomes (34%) – see Chart 3.⁶

Chart 3
Top reasons why requests are not made for workplace accommodations required by employees with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, 2017



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

3. Excluded proxy interviews since the question was not asked.

4. Other top reasons provided included "too expensive" (23%) and "on waiting list" (14%).

5. Excluded proxy interviews since the question was not asked.

6. Other reasons included "Did not want to cause difficulty for the employer" (28%), "Did not think employer could afford or find proper WPA" (24%), "Concerned about reaction of co-workers" (24%), and "Lack of awareness or understanding by employer with respect to WPA" (14%).

Conclusion

For employees with disabilities, WPA can help mitigate some of the barriers they may face in the workplace. Research shows that there are a number of benefits to both the employee and employer including increased employability and income (Padkapayeva et al. 2017), greater productivity and company loyalty (Soloveiva et al. 2011), and creation of a more inclusive work culture and environment (Lindsay et al. 2018).

The findings from this fact sheet show that 37% of employees with disabilities required at least one WPA to be able to do their work. While 59% of those employees had all their needs met, 40% still had at least one unmet need for WPA and half of those had none of their needs met. Variations in level of needs met for WPA is multifaceted and, as shown in this fact sheet, influenced by the: a) severity and number of disabilities an employee had, b) type and number of WPA required, c) nature of the work itself, d) degree of support provided by the employer or supervisor, and e) willingness of the employees themselves to ask for what they need. While a large majority did not require any WPA to be able to do their work (63%) and many who had all their needs met if they required WPA, there remains a large number of at-risk employees with disabilities who had none or, at best, only some of the prerequisite support(s) they required for a fully accessible workplace.

References

Lindsay, Sally, Elaine Cagliostro, Mikhaela Albarico, Neda Mortaji, Leora Karon. 2018. *A Systematic Review of the Benefits of Hiring People with Disabilities*. Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation.

Solovieva I., Tatiana, Denetta L. Dowler, Richard T. Wall. 2011. *Employer benefits from making workplace accommodations*. Disability and Health Journal.

Padkapayeva, Kathy, Andrew Posen, Amin Yazdani, Quenby Mahood, Emile Tompa. 2017. *Workplace accommodations for persons with physical disabilities: evidence synthesis of the peer-reviewed literature*. Disability and Rehabilitation.