



Report summary
**Postsecondary Graduates with
Disabilities**





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PDF

Cat. Em20-219/2026E-PDF

ISBN 978-0-660-98843-6



Title of the report: Postsecondary Graduates with Disabilities: Transition to the Labour Market, Employment Characteristics, and Student Debt

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Why this study

This study looks at how young Canadians with disabilities are doing in the labour market after completing college or university. The focus is on their school-to-work transitions and employment outcomes. The study uses data from Statistics Canada's 2018 National Graduates Survey. The 2018 survey was the first time data was collected on the experiences of graduates with disabilities.

What we did

The research focuses on persons with disabilities aged 18 to 35 years who graduated in 2015 from public postsecondary schools (i.e., colleges and universities). It compares their transition into the workforce with those who do not have disabilities. The goal is to better understand the challenges persons with disabilities face and help improve the policies that support them.

What we found

This study highlights differences in school-to-work transitions and labour market outcomes of postsecondary graduates with disabilities compared to those without. It presents findings across several key areas.

First, disability prevalence was significant. In 2018, about 1 in 4 young postsecondary graduates (around 75,790 people) had a disability that affected their daily lives. Most had mild disabilities. The most common types were:

- mental health-related (58%)
- pain-related (41%)
- learning-related (17%)

Second, demographics differences were observed. Graduates with disabilities were more likely to be female and less likely to be immigrants or from racialized groups compared to those without disabilities.

Third, employment outcomes varied. Fewer graduates with disabilities had jobs (86%) compared to those without disabilities (90%). Graduates with disabilities were:

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- less likely to work in management or science-related jobs
 - more likely to work in sales, service, arts, and culture

Fourth, job quality was lower for graduates with disabilities. Graduates with disabilities were more likely to:

- work part-time or in temporary jobs
- have jobs unrelated to their field of study
- be overqualified for their jobs
- feel dissatisfied with their work

Fifth, earnings were lower. In 2018, the median annual income for graduates with disabilities was \$44,991, compared to \$49,988 for graduates without disabilities.

Finally, student debt was a greater burden. More graduates with disabilities had student loans (63% vs. 51%). Three years after graduation, fewer had paid off their debt, and their average remaining debt was still over \$20,000.

What it means

Overall, the study highlights persistent disparities in employment outcomes between postsecondary graduates with and without disabilities. The results may potentially reflect broader challenges and barriers to achieving equitable access to quality employment and financial stability for persons with disabilities. The study supports ESDC's strategic priorities by informing policies aimed at improving employment opportunities and financial well-being for persons with disabilities.

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