



Background

It has been well-documented that COVID-19 is having a major impact on employment, particularly among populations that are more vulnerable due to pre-existing conditions, low skills, or working in sectors that have been hardest hit by the shutdown.

BC Partners in Workforce Innovation (BC WiN) is a research-based initiative that is connecting employers primarily in the BC Lower Mainland to job seekers with diverse abilities through an employer-focused approach. The BC WiN team has observed a significant decline in referrals from our service and social enterprise partners as opportunities started being circulated in the spring. This trend continued into the summer, and through conversations with our partners, we heard that they were having challenges re-engaging clients due to a variety of reasons.

The team launched this survey to fill a gap in timely data to understand the particular employment-related challenges that people with diverse abilities may be experiencing as a result of the pandemic. The survey results are informing how our initiative is supporting employers and job seekers to address these challenges both now and into the future when hiring is expected to fully resume.

We share these results to provide some insight into the specific issues that are preventing people with diverse abilities from being willing or able to engage in employment at the present time.

Survey Response



20 service providers and social enterprises in BC, reporting on their clients with diverse abilities for a total of:



556 clients

Average of 35 clients per service provider (range of 11–85 clients)

Survey notes

- Responses were collected from September – October 2020.
- This research is a qualitative study of current experiences and should not be considered representative of all clients or job seekers in BC.
- Main results are reported in terms of number of clients as the focus is on client experiences.
- The results are weighted to more accurately reflect the number of clients impacted.
- Full survey results are available at www.bcpartnerswin.org



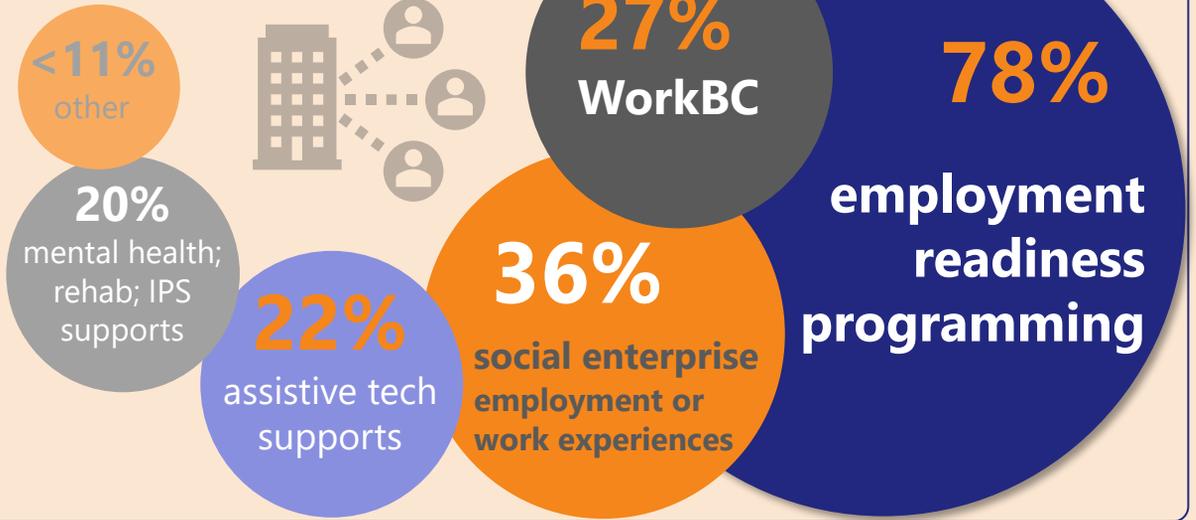
95%

of service providers indicated clients with diverse abilities have been impacted by COVID-19



Results

Services Provided



What We Heard from Service Providers

"The shifting labour market which has added a complex layer to most businesses - the physical distancing, PPE, having to think about another layer of accommodation is very challenging for employers."

"Clients who already face multiple barriers seemed to demonstrate less resilience and more anxiety around COVID."

"With the shift to an employer's labour market, the incentive to hire new workers, and those of diversity who may need extra supports likely diminishes."

Safety

Anxiety

**Uncertainty
in the labour
market**

Vulnerability



Results

Type of Disengagement



93% not wanting to accept or return to employment opportunities



89% not currently seeking employment



52% no longer engaging with service organization

Top 5 Reasons for Disengagement

45%

Decreased motivation (stresses + anxieties due to COVID-19)



41%

Personal health concerns



41%

COVID-19 Exposure: Workplace



38%

COVID-19 Exposure: Public Transit



28%

Family Concerns





Lessons Learned

COVID-19: It's not just business as usual.

- Employers require further supports to adjust their approaches to engaging people with diverse abilities during the pandemic.
- Persistence of the pandemic requires supports for employers and job seekers to shift to longer-term preparation for future job opportunities.



Concerns about personal safety and job security represent real barriers to employment for vulnerable job seekers.

- There is a need to take extra steps to address deeper, underlying concerns of job seekers with disabilities.



While the pandemic presents real challenges, it also offers an opportunity to change approaches and prepare job seekers for in-demand positions when recruitment resumes, and they are ready and able to work.

Next Steps for BC WiN



Determine which employment opportunities are suitable for remote work arrangements;



Identify and facilitate technical requirements and capacity to ensure that people with diverse abilities will be well-prepared and supported to perform their tasks safely and effectively;



Conduct accessibility reviews of employers' current recruitment practices to build current and future capacity to attract job seekers with diverse abilities during (and following) the pandemic;



Work with employers to determine how to attract people with diverse abilities over the coming months when there is concern about heightened risk to personal and workplace safety; and



Develop customized online training for cohorts of people with diverse abilities to prepare for jobs that are expected to be in demand as recruitment resumes.