

# ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT IN CHATHAM-KENT

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## Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to investigate the circumstances of under-represented groups in the Chatham-Kent labour force and to propose recommendations to help improve their labour market outcomes.

### **Several activities were undertaken to carry out these objectives:**

- Data analysis to profile these under-represented groups
- Consultations with key stakeholders to identify priority populations and their respective labour market challenges
- Consultations with under-represented populations to learn directly about their job expectations and work experiences
- Engagement with employers to understand their labour market needs and their readiness to recruit job candidates from under-represented population categories

### **The six under-represented populations which were examined were:**

1. Indigenous population
2. Immigrants
3. Older adults
4. Persons with low income
5. NEET youth (not in education, employment or training)
6. Persons with disabilities

Estimates were made of the sizes of each of these populations using the 2021 Census numbers as well as proportions derived from the 2022 Canadian Survey of Disability. By far, the single largest category was persons with disabilities, both among youth (15 to 24 years old) and working age adults (25 to 64 years old). Persons with low-income were the next largest group. Among youth, the third largest category was Indigenous people, while among adults it was immigrants.





Each of these population groups faces distinct labour market barriers which require tailored responses. In addition, key informants identified broader systemic issues which add an additional layer of challenges. These included limited public transit in Chatham-Kent, the continuing lack of available and affordable child care, and the impact that the Employment Ontario transformation has had on certain under-represented groups (notably, those seeking only part-time work, those requiring extended job retention support, and youth in general).

Following this review of the issues encountered by different under-represented populations, it was decided to focus on one category so that a deeper investigation of challenges and solutions could be explored. The proposed target population category was persons with disabilities with especial attention to mental health issues. Not only are persons with disabilities the largest under-represented category but they also make up a proportion of all the other under-represented population categories examined as part of this report.

Key informants consistently maintained that persons with disabilities should not be seen exclusively through the prism of their disability. To do so turns that prism into an individual's prison. All persons with disabilities have their own unique abilities, talents and aspirations which can be put to use with proper support. Employment of persons with disabilities relies on appropriate accommodations but employers seem to misunderstand the nature of the kinds of accommodations needed and believe they might be too expensive or difficult.

**Accommodations cited by both key informants and persons with disabilities include:**

- Flexibility for break times
- Quiet spaces to withdraw to
- Gradually increasing work hours
- Less interaction with customers
- Routine tasks
- Explicit list of written instructions

With support from employment services agencies

- Job trials
- job coaches
- Job carving
- Job sharing

Interviews with employer associations highlighted that employers could be made better informed about the potential benefits of hiring persons with disabilities, which include the recruitment of a highly motivated employee, lower absenteeism, higher retention rates, and the opportunity to enhance one's brand image.

Focus groups with persons with disabilities identified a very wide range of work histories among participants. In addition to accommodations, many participants desire an employer who communicated and listened to them, having a job where they were treated as an equal, and having an opportunity to get job training and career advancement. Some felt a job coach could help facilitate the transition into employment. Many sought primarily part-time work. Students, meanwhile, were looking for experiential learning opportunities to acquire relevant work experience.

Additional data from the Canadian Survey on Disability shows that many persons with disabilities feel their disability impedes their career outcomes, and many also feel uncomfortable seeking accommodations for their disability. The survey shows that the most frequently cited forms of workplace accommodations involve flexibility relating to job functions (job carving and job sharing) or with respect to hours of work or the ability to work remotely.

As well, the literature shows that by taking a diverse approach to hiring, employers increase their pool of available candidates and their chances of hiring the best person for the job. The business benefits for employers also include appealing to a wider customer base as well as higher workplace efficiency, productivity and better problem-solving.

The report concludes that in order to enlist more employers in job recruitment for under-represented populations, it is necessary to undertake a more intentional, community-wide employer engagement strategy. The report cites several components to this strategy:

- The mechanics of employer engagement: the pragmatic ways of cultivating stronger connections with employers
- The message for employer engagement: a focus on the monetary benefits of hiring from a broader talent pool
- The timing of employer engagement: meeting employers' needs first, namely, approaching employers when they are hard-pressed to find enough suitable job candidates

**The recommendations arising from this report are:**

**Recommendation #1: That the Chatham-Kent community develop an employer engagement strategy.**

**Recommendation #2: Reconstitute the employment service providers' table.**

**Recommendation #3: Continue awareness and engagement activities as an employer engagement strategy is being developed.**

**Recommendation #4: Build on the data foundation of this report to monitor labour market trends for under-represented populations in the Chatham-Kent labour force.**





# Overview of project

## Purpose

The scope of this assignment was set out in a Request for Proposals published by the Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board, which sought to identify the unique barriers faced by under-represented demographic groups in the Chatham-Kent labour force and to develop recommendations to reduce these barriers. The RFP identified several activities that would form the basis of this work:

- Identifying and analyzing relevant data describing these populations
- Identifying employer talent needs
- Engaging with under-represented groups and identifying the barriers they encountered in accessing and sustaining employment
- Connecting with and fostering partnerships among employers, educators and employment agencies
- Building connections between unemployed/under-employed individuals from under-represented groups and employers

## Methodology

To meet the expectations of this assignment, the work was organized into three parts, with the accompanying activities proposed for each part:

- **Initial scoping:** There are many categories of under-represented populations and during this stage the goal was to describe and quantify these populations in Chatham-Kent, identify their employment barriers and probe the perspective of employers, through data analysis, a review of the literature and interviews with key informants, primarily community service providers and representatives of employers. The objective was to narrow the focus to one or two population groups, so as to be able to probe more deeply into employment challenges and strategies to improve labour market outcomes for the selected population categories.



- **Consultations with under-represented populations:** A series of focus groups were proposed to learn directly from under-represented groups regarding their work skills, employment aspirations, job experiences and their views on what can contribute to their successful labour market outcomes.
- **Engagement with employers:** The final stage of this assignment anticipated an event involving under-represented populations, community services providers and employers, to increase awareness about how to successfully employ under-represented populations, in a way that would benefit both the employer and the employee. This would include illustrating the strategies and approaches employers could use when seeking to recruit and retain these employees, and to provide an opportunity for face-to-face conversations between job seekers and employers in a facilitated way.

## Outline of report

### The rest of this report is organized as follows:

- Describing under-represented populations in the Chatham-Kent labour market
  - A data-based description of six under-represented populations in Chatham-Kent
- Narrowing the focus to persons with disabilities
  - The rationale for focusing on persons with disabilities, together with findings from interviews with key informants, employer representatives, focus groups with persons with disabilities, and with additional insights from the Canadian Survey on Disability and relevant literature
- Focus on employer engagement strategies
  - Describing why an employer engagement strategy is necessary and the steps needed to achieve it
- Conclusions and recommendations





## Describing under-represented populations in the Chatham-Kent labour market

The definition of under-represented populations in the labour market is more often an ambiguous term rather than a precise calculation. The concept is based on the idea that certain population groups are present in the labour market in smaller proportions than their share of the resident population, such that these under-represented populations could offer an untapped pool of job candidates. This approach has grown as an option as the baby-boom generation has begun to retire in larger numbers, sparking concerns about labour shortages, and as in recent years greater attention has been paid to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts. By being intentional in taking a diverse approach to hiring, employers increase their pool of available candidates and their chances of hiring the best person for the job.

### The business case for adopting DEI includes the following benefits:

- **Recruitment/talent:** By adopting diversity as a corporate strategy, businesses can widen the search when it comes to finding talent. Companies that implement diversity goals will be more attractive to job candidates from diverse backgrounds, and they will be able to access informal networks not previously available to them
- **Customers/marketing:** A more diverse firm will benefit from customers feeling more comfortable seeing themselves reflected in the staff serving them. A diverse workforce will better understand the local customer base. The adoption of a diversity strategy can also appeal to a wider audience, who see their own values reflected by the company in this way, contributing to a positive public image
- **Efficiency/productivity/costs:** There are several direct cost consequences from adopting DEI: the recruitment outcomes are better, and the workplace is more welcoming, which leads to less turnover, less absenteeism and lower future recruitment costs. Removing potential impediments to participation and contribution in workplace processes results in higher overall effort, less interpersonal misunderstandings and/or conflict, and better teamwork. All this leads to better problem-solving, more employee engagement and a more positive corporate environment
- **Creativity/innovation/adaptability:** A more heterogeneous group is likely to be more creative and innovative because such a group has a wider set of perspectives and experiences. That mix of views means there is a greater capacity to respond to different ideas and that there is greater flexibility to adapt to new circumstances

**There is also a broader community-wide impact:** because a wider proportion of people from the local population can access employment, raising their purchasing power means there is a more robust consumer base.

This latter point merits further elaboration because it speaks to improving the ecosystem within which employers operate. If an employer's approach is exclusively transactional (only "how can I benefit"), then the employer loses the wider benefits caused by uplifting the community. For example, hosting interns and co-op students increases the pool of better qualified workers in the community and even provides the employer with a talent pipeline, even though not all the students will eventually end up working for that same employer. In areas where many employers are delivering the same goods and services, they are more likely to benefit indirectly because they might end up hiring someone who was trained elsewhere. Similarly, should multiple employers hire people from under-represented populations in the community, the income level of the entire community will be raised, enabling employers to increase their business.

This report investigated the following, most frequently cited under-represented populations to profile their presence in Chatham-Kent and to describe their demographic features:

1. Indigenous population
2. Immigrants
3. Older adults
4. Persons with low income
5. NEET youth (not in education, employment or training)
6. Persons with disabilities

The next subsections summarize the findings,<sup>1</sup> as well as provide a summary of the employment challenges faced by each population group. In most instances, the data source being relied upon is the Statistics Canada 2021 Census. While the actual numbers for any given category will not precisely reflect the figures for 2025, the data is still relevant; in most instances, the percentage share of a given population category will not have changed all that much, so it remains useful to be able to show the relative sizes of these population categories by using these slightly older statistics.

## Indigenous population

An Indigenous person is someone who identifies with the Indigenous peoples of Canada, and/or reports being a Registered or Treaty Indian under the Indian Act of Canada, and/or is a member in a First Nation or Indian band. Indigenous peoples of Canada include those who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis, Inuk (Inuit) or who have multiple Indigenous responses.<sup>2</sup>

More so than other population groups, the Indigenous population has a very large proportion of very young people (0 to 14 years old), a large share of youth (15 to 24 years old) and a smaller proportion of older people (65 years and older), in Chatham-Kent and in Ontario. The very large proportion of those aged 0 to 14 years means that the number of Indigenous youths will continue to represent a larger share of the working age category.

In 2021, among those aged 15 to 64 years old, there were 2,855 Indigenous persons in Chatham-Kent, representing 4.6% of the total population in this age range. Slightly over half (56%) of these Indigenous persons are First Nations and most of the rest (40%) are Métis.

Table 1 provides the participation rate for a number of working-age (15 to 64 years old) Indigenous categories and compares the figures to the entire population and to non-Indigenous populations. The participation rate measures the proportion of the population participating in the labour force (either employed or actively looking for work). The participation rates for all these groups are also compared to those same groups living in the Toronto Economic Region (roughly the Greater Toronto Area) and the Rest of Ontario (Ontario minus the Toronto Economic Region figures).<sup>3</sup>

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1 These subsections provide the highlights of a series of longer data profiles prepared for each of these population groups. These profiles are made available in an Appendix at the end of this report, as the data provided could be of value to others beyond the purposes of this report.

2 This definition is drawn from Statistics Canada, *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.

3 Throughout this report, comparisons of the Chatham-Kent numbers or proportions are made not to the Ontario figures, but to each of the Toronto Region and Ontario minus the Toronto Region (Rest of Ontario), because of the very different demographics present in the Toronto area and the rest of the province. Comparisons to only the Ontario data misses the significant differences between the Toronto area and the Rest of Ontario.



**Table 1: Labour force participation rate for working-age (15 to 64 years old) Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Chatham-Kent, Toronto Region and Rest of Ontario, 2021**

	Chatham-Kent	Rest of Ontario	Toronto Region
<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>	72.8%	75.7%	75.5%
<b>Indigenous population</b>	63.6%	66.2%	69.9%
<b>First Nations (North American Indian)</b>	57.9%	63.0%	68.1%
<b>Métis</b>	71.2%	72.0%	72.6%
<b>Non-Indigenous identity</b>	73.2%	76.2%	75.5%

Except for the Métis population, the Indigenous population has a lower participation rate. The participation rate for the Métis population is much closer to that of the non-Indigenous population, and that is particularly the case in Chatham-Kent (71.2%), while the participation rate for the First Nations population in Chatham-Kent (57.7%) is notably lower than the figures for the Rest of Ontario and the Toronto Economic Region.

The Indigenous population has a much higher incidence of low-income individuals and the proportions of low-income individuals among both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Chatham-Kent are slightly higher than the provincial averages.

In Chatham-Kent, the distribution of educational attainment among the Indigenous population is relatively similar to that of the non-Indigenous population. Whereas in the rest of Ontario, there is a much higher proportion of individuals with no educational certificate and a much lower proportion of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

**Employment challenges.** The labour market outcomes of Indigenous peoples in Canada are the result of a complex set of factors which have affected the lives of Indigenous peoples for generations. A recent federal government report summarizes this history:

Indigenous Peoples in Canada face significant and long-standing socio-economic gaps when compared to the non-Indigenous population. These gaps have been shaped by a long history of colonialism, discrimination and marginalization, which have had a profound impact on Indigenous people and continue to affect their lives today.<sup>4</sup>

That being said, Indigenous people have in recent years made important gains in achievement of higher education which have advanced their labour market outcomes.<sup>5</sup> The gaps which persist in educational attainment and labour market outcomes are more pronounced among Indigenous people living in remote areas. Nevertheless, the labour force participation rates, for First Nations individuals in Chatham-Kent, are notably behind those experienced by First Nations people living in the Rest of Ontario and the Toronto Economic Region.

<sup>4</sup> "An update on the socio-economic gaps between Indigenous Peoples and the non-Indigenous population in Canada: Highlights from the 2021 Census," A Compendium Report to the Department's 2023 Annual Report to Parliament, Indigenous Services Canada, from the Executive Summary.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada, "Postsecondary educational attainment and labour market outcomes of Indigenous peoples, 2021," Insights on Canadian Society (75-006-X), October 27, 2023.

## Working-age immigrants

Working-age immigrants are persons not born in Canada but currently permanent residents in Canada, aged 15 to 64 years old.

Among working-age (15 to 64 years old) residents of Chatham-Kent, immigrants account for 8.4% of the population. Table 2 shows the number of Canadian-born and immigrant residents (including by period of immigration) aged 15 to 64 years and their respective labour force participation rates. The table provides a comparison of these rates for similar populations in the Rest of Ontario and the Toronto Economic Region.

The participation rate of working-age Canadian-born residents in Chatham-Kent is roughly similar to that of the Toronto Region and only slightly lower than that of the Rest of Ontario. On the other hand, the participation rate of immigrants in Chatham-Kent shows that they have a considerably lower rate compared to immigrants in the Toronto Region and the Rest of Ontario, except for the most recent newcomers in Chatham-Kent. In short, the under-representation of immigrants in the Chatham-Kent labour market is a consequence of the lower participation rate of non-newcomer immigrants, that is, those who arrived before 2016, and not because of a significantly lower participation rate among those who arrived to Canada after 2016.

**Table 2: Number of and participation rate for working-age (15 to 64 years old) Canadian-born and immigrants by period of immigration in the labour force, Chatham-Kent, Toronto Region and Rest of Ontario, 2021**

	Canadian-born	Period of immigration			
		Prior to 2001	2001-2010	2011-2016	2016-2021
CHATHAM-KENT					
Number	41,860	1,810	965	335	475
Participation rate	73.2%	67.7%	69.2%	69.1%	72.0%
REST OF ONTARIO					
Participation rate	75.7%	76.6%	76.9%	73.1%	71.7%
TORONTO REGION					
Participation rate	74.1%	78.5%	76.5%	73.6%	76.0%

**Employment challenges.** Generally, the labour market challenges faced by immigrants are a consequence of four factors (these are not always objective and can also be a matter of people's perception):

- Poorer English language skills
- Less familiarity with the customs and norms expected in Canadian workplaces
- Difficulties in assessing and comparing educational credentials (or, in the case of many refugees, not having access to their own educational credentials in this first place) or work experiences acquired in a foreign country
- Limited social integration (networks) which reduce their access to jobs, as much hiring is still dependent on word-of-mouth and connections



## Older adults

For the purposes of this report, older adults are persons aged 55 years and older.

Table 3 shows the participation rate of males and females in Chatham-Kent, the Toronto Economic Region and the Rest of Ontario, highlighting the participation of the entire labour force (15 years and older), as well as for different age categories of older adults.

Except for males aged 70 years and older, males in Chatham-Kent have a lower participation rate compared to either the Rest of Ontario or the Toronto Region. On the other hand, females in Chatham-Kent generally have a similar participation rate as females in the Rest of Ontario. However, both areas have a lower participation rate than females in the Toronto Region. Like with males, the only exception is females aged 70 years and older, where the Chatham-Kent figures are equal to the numbers in the Toronto Region.

**Table 3: Participation rates, male and female residents by select age categories, Chatham-Kent, Toronto Region and Rest of Ontario, 2021**

	MALES			FEMALES		
	Chatham-Kent	Rest of Ontario	Toronto Region	Chatham-Kent	Rest of Ontario	Toronto Region
<b>15 years and older</b>	64.6%	66.4%	72.5%	56.0%	56.5%	61.4%
<b>55 to 59 years old</b>	74.5%	77.2%	82.1%	66.8%	68.6%	71.4%
<b>60 to 64 years old</b>	54.6%	59.7%	69.1%	48.6%	48.5%	54.1%
<b>65 to 69 years old</b>	31.0%	33.3%	40.9%	22.3%	22.2%	26.2%
<b>70 to 74 years old</b>	20.2%	17.9%	21.6%	11.3%	9.2%	11.2%
<b>75 years and older</b>	9.8%	7.4%	8.2%	3.2%	3.0%	3.2%

*Statistics Canada, 2021 Census*

The higher participation rate for those aged 70 years and older in Chatham-Kent is caused by the higher proportion of older individuals working on their land as farmers into their old age.<sup>6</sup>

The lower participation rate of males aged 55 to 69 years in Chatham-Kent is likely the result of a higher proportion of these males working in industries such as construction, transportation, and manufacturing that often rely on physical activity, which may lead to some individuals retiring earlier. By comparison, the Toronto Region's far higher participation rates in these age ranges is a consequence of the far larger proportion of the labour force working in knowledge sector industries.

There certainly has been a trend towards increasing participation rates among older adults in Canada, as improvements in health, longevity and increasing levels of educational attainment contribute to more individuals being able to work longer in jobs that are not physically demanding. For others, concerns about their retirement income causes them to work later in age. For those aged 60 years and older in Canada, the reason for working is almost evenly split between those working out of choice (51%) and those working out of financial necessity (49%). But as individuals age into their late sixties and early seventies, fewer work out of financial necessity as they begin to access public pension support.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> More detailed analysis is provided in the data profile on Older Adults in the Appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada, "Reasons for working at 60 and beyond," Labour Statistics at a Glance, December 14, 2018. Catalogue no: 71-222-X.

## **Employment challenges: key barriers to employment faced by older workers include:<sup>8</sup>**

- Discrimination based on age
- Lower levels of education or lack of access to training
- Difficulties in finding and applying for jobs
- Health issues, work-life balance issues and lack of workplace accommodations
- The retirement system causing disincentives or lack of incentives to continue working

The situation for older adult females in Chatham-Kent who are not in the labour force is roughly similar to that of females in the Toronto Economic Region and the Rest of Ontario, so the chances of increasing their participation rate is probably lower than for males. While older males in Chatham-Kent do have lower participation rates, it might be more difficult to entice them to continue working in their previous occupations, if their challenge is, indeed, physical. The more likely option would be to explore their appetite for work in other occupations, such as the service sector.

## **Persons with low income**

In this report, persons with low income are defined as individuals whose income is 50% or less than the median after-tax income of the population (known as LIM-AT) or who are in receipt of income support, such as Employment Insurance, Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program.

In every category, Chatham-Kent residents have a higher incidence of low income compared to Ontario, and the difference is especially pronounced among those aged 50 to 64 years old. Low-income individuals are less likely to be married and more likely to be living alone. If there are children present, low-income persons are more likely to be in a single-parent family.

Low-income individuals are more likely to have no certificate and less likely to have a post-secondary education, especially a college diploma or a university degree, compared to those not in the low-income category. Persons with low income are almost twice as likely not to be participating in the labour force. If they are working, they are much more likely to be self-employed, be employed in a temporary position or be working part-time.

The number of Employment Insurance claimants in Chatham-Kent rose for a period last year but then declined again. EI claimants make up a slightly higher proportion of employment services clients in Chatham-Kent than at the regional or provincial levels.

Singles without children make up the largest proportion of Ontario Works cases in Chatham-Kent and this is the only family category that has grown since 2019. OW recipients have lower levels of educational attainment on average compared to the general population.

Under the old Employment Services system, Chatham-Kent had a proportion of OW claimants among its employment services clients which was around half that compared to the regional and provincial levels. But with the new Integrated Employment Services system, the proportion of OW clients are now around 50% higher than those for the region and the province (it is not clear why this shift has occurred). Chatham-Kent has consistently had a much higher proportion of ODSP beneficiaries among its employment services clientele, always double or more the proportion at the regional or provincial level. This was true under the

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<sup>8</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, Promoting the Labour Force Participation of Older Canadians, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors, 2018.

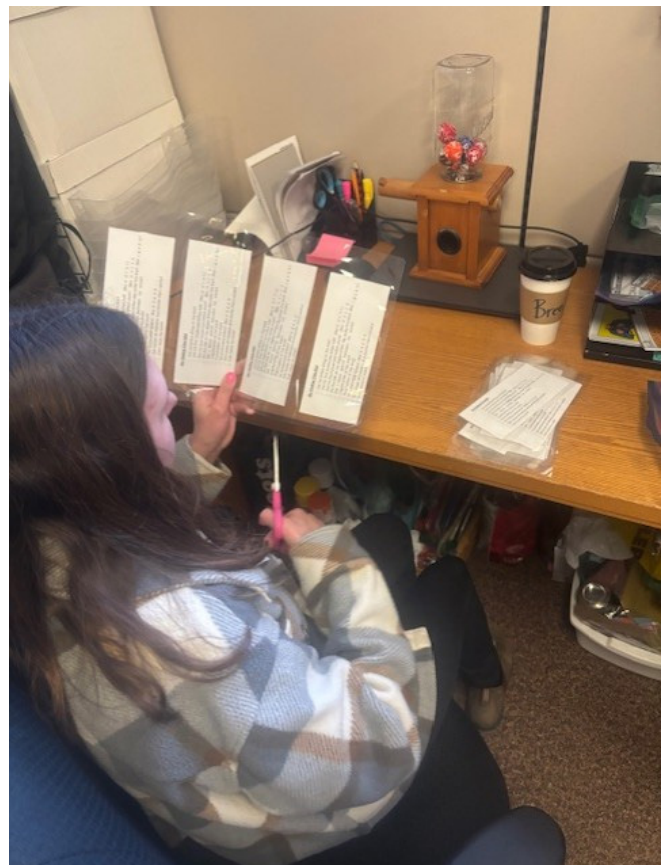
old Employment Services system and remains true under the new Integrated Employment Services system.

**Employment challenges.** The relationship between people with low income and the labour market essentially defines why they are in low income; it is their limited ability to participate in employment which causes their low income or their reliance on income support. The reason for their limited employment varies significantly and can include mental or physical disabilities, caregiver responsibilities, limited job skills, limited job experience and/or educational attainment. These circumstances, combined with extended periods of unemployment, make matters worse, especially for singles with limited social support. This is because their reduced levels of income support relegate them to constantly engage in survival strategies simply to combat potential homelessness and food insecurity. These living conditions in themselves contribute to poorer mental and physical health, further exacerbating their plight and making it less likely that they can successfully transition to the labour market.<sup>9</sup>

### NEET youth (not in education, employment or training)

NEET refers to Not in Education, Employment or Training, and is calculated as a percentage of all youth who are not in the labour force and not attending school. The NEET youth calculation is made for a more expansive age range of youth, from 15 to 29 years old.

The number of NEET youth (aged 15 to 29 years old) in Chatham-Kent in 2021 is estimated at 2,055 (945 males and 1,120 females). The percentage estimates of NEET youth for Chatham-Kent and for Ontario are provided in Table 4 by age categories and by gender. In almost all instances, Chatham-Kent has a higher proportion of NEET youth than Ontario, and in almost all instances for both Chatham-Kent and Ontario, the percentage of NEET youth increased between 2016 and 2021.



<sup>9</sup> Nick Falvo, Lifting Singles Out of Deep Poverty: The Case for Increasing Social Assistance Benefits, Institute for Research on Public Policy Insight, December 2020.



**Table 4: Percentage of NEET youth, by age and by gender, Chatham-Kent and Ontario, 2016 and 2021**

	CHATHAM-KENT			ONTARIO		
2021	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
15 to 19 years old	6.1%	4.4%	5.2%	5.8%	5.0%	5.4%
20 to 24 years old	11.7%	15.0%	13.2%	9.3%	8.5%	8.9%
25 to 29 years old	15.3%	22.6%	18.9%	10.0%	12.9%	11.4%
<b>TOTAL: 15 to 29 years old</b>	10.9%	13.9%	12.3%	8.5%	9.1%	8.8%
2016	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
15 to 19 years old	6.9%	5.9%	6.4%	5.2%	4.4%	4.8%
20 to 24 years old	10.5%	13.8%	12.3%	6.9%	7.5%	7.2%
25 to 29 years old	11.9%	18.4%	15.0%	7.5%	12.4%	10.0%
<b>TOTAL: 15 to 29 years old</b>	9.6%	12.3%	11.0%	6.5%	8.2%	7.4%

A rough calculation (extrapolating proportions from the Canadian Survey of Disability) suggests that almost a third (32%) of NEET youth in Chatham-Kent have a disability.<sup>10</sup>

The incidence of NEET youth increases among females at a faster rate than males as youth get older; mothers with young children have lower labour force participation rates, and this could also be the case with these NEET females.

## Persons with disabilities

A person with a disability is someone who reports a limitation in their day-to-day activities. Disability Screening Questions measure the degree to which difficulties are experienced across 10 domains of functioning, as well as how often daily activities are limited by these difficulties.<sup>11</sup> There are five major categories of disability:

- Cognitive disability
- Sensory disability
- Physical disability
- Pain-related disability
- Mental health-related disability

Several of these major categories have multiple sub-categories.

The estimated incidence of disability is listed in Table 5 by age ranges and gender, comparing the 2017 and 2022 results of the Canadian Survey of Disability.

<sup>10</sup> A person with a disability is someone who reports a limitation in their day-to-day activities. The way this is assessed is through Disability Screening Questions, which measure the degree to which difficulties are experienced across 10 domains of functioning, as well as how often daily activities are limited by these difficulties.

<sup>11</sup> Canadian Survey on Disability.

**Table 5: Percentage of population with a disability, by age and gender, Ontario, 2022 and 2017**

	2022		2017	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>15-24 years old</b>	16%	25%	11%	17%
<b>25-64 years old</b>	22%	28%	20%	22%
<b>65 years and older</b>	42%	45%	40%	45%

If one applies these Ontario percentages of the incidence of disability to the Chatham-Kent population, then one can estimate the following number of persons with a disability in Chatham-Kent (Table 6).

**Table 6: Estimate of the number of persons with a disability, by age and gender, Chatham-Kent, 2022**

	TOTAL POPULATION		Persons with a disability	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>15-24 years old</b>	5,875	5,400	934	1,339
<b>25-64 years old</b>	25,020	26,120	5,529	7,183
<b>65 years and older</b>	10,935	12,140	4,604	5,402

In terms of various disability sub-categories, the following concentrations can be noted:<sup>12</sup>

- Youth have a higher incidence of mental health-related disabilities than adults (which is also higher among females)
- Youth have a higher incidence than adults of developmental disabilities (and much higher among males)
- Adults have much higher incidences of pain-related disabilities and physical disabilities
- The proportion of disabilities which are severe or very severe increases with age

Among all residents in Canada aged 15 to 64 years in 2021,<sup>13</sup> persons with disabilities had a labour force participation rate of 68% compared to 80% for persons without a disability. The participation rate for males and females with a disability has been steadily increasing over the last three disability survey years (2012, 2017 and 2022).

Individuals with a sensory disability have the highest participation rate among persons with disabilities, followed by persons with pain-related disabilities, then those with mental health-related disabilities. The lowest participation rate is found among two categories, those with physical disabilities and those with cognitive disabilities. Persons with cognitive disabilities have the highest unemployment rate.

Among persons with a disability who are not working, the incidence of not having the potential to work increases considerably with age, from around 10% among youth, to 60% among those aged 25 to 64 years, and 95% among those aged over 65 years old.

<sup>12</sup> These bullet points summarize the detailed data found the Appendix regarding persons with disabilities.

<sup>13</sup> Some of the Canadian Survey of Disability is only available at the level of all Canada, as opposed to Ontario.

## **Employment challenges. The barriers to employment for persons with disabilities have several dimensions:** <sup>14</sup>

- **Social barriers:** Society has often viewed persons with disabilities as individuals with limited abilities, as opposed to being differently abled and having their own unique strengths. Employers often presume that accommodations would be too onerous or costly; this causes limitations for job opportunities for persons with disabilities, and also creates the stigma associated with being disabled which discourages persons with disabilities from identifying and seeking support when needed
- **Systemic barriers:** Lack of awareness about what workplace accommodations might look like, lack of knowledge about the rights of persons with disabilities, lack of human resources planning and policies to promote disability inclusion in the recruitment and onboarding stages, and uncertainty about how to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace results in under-representation of persons with disabilities in the workforce
- **Limited work experience:** Youth with disabilities often lack opportunities to gain exposure to the workplace, through internships, apprenticeship or entry-level jobs, which imposes an additional burden on them when they complete their schooling and embark on pursuing a career

## **Comparison of population estimates for population sub-categories for Chatham-Kent**

Table 7 presents the estimated population size of the various under-represented populations in Chatham-Kent using either 2021 Census data or income support client data (EI, OW, ODSP), or applying Canadian proportions from the Canadian Survey on Disability to the Chatham-Kent population. For the sake of context, the 2023-2024 client data for various Employment Ontario programs is also provided. In all instances, in addition to providing an estimated number, the share represented by that group of the total resident population is expressed as a percentage. There are separate calculations for those aged 15 to 24 (youth) and 25 to 64 years old (for brevity, this group will be called adults).



<sup>14</sup> This is drawn from BDO Canada, Top 10 barriers to accessible employment in Canada, November 2023; and Durham Workforce Authority, Overcoming Barriers to Employment for People with Disabilities in Durham Region, October 2024.



**Table 7: Estimated number and percentage share of various categories among those aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 64 years old, Chatham-Kent**

	NUMBER		PERCENT	
	15-24	25-64	15-24	25-64
TOTAL POPULATION (2021 Census)	11,275	51,140	100%	100%
Indigenous population (2021 Census)				
Indigenous population	685	1,975	6%	4%
Immigrants				
All immigrants (2021 Census)	480	4,735	4%	9%
Newcomers (arrived between 2016 to 2021)	110	550	1%	1%
NEET youth				
NEET youth (2021 Census)	1,030		9%	
Disability (applying 2022 Canada proportions)				
With disability	2,273	12,712	20%	25%
Severity: mild	1,089	5,352	10%	11%
Severity: moderate	455	2,555	4%	5%
Severity: severe or very severe	730	4,805	7%	9%
Mental health disability	1,534	5,873	14%	12%
Pain-related disability	761	8,034	7%	16%
Low income, EI, OW and ODSP beneficiaries				
Low-income (2021 Census)	1,115	5,985	10%	12%
Employment income beneficiaries (June 2024)	200	1,720	2%	3%
OW singles (2024 monthly average)	1,505		No breakdown by age	
OW lone parents (2024 monthly average)	690		No breakdown by age	
ODSP Adults with disabilities (2022-23)	4,669		No breakdown by age	
Low income, EI, OW and ODSP client numbers				
EO Assisted clients	106	304	0.9%	0.6%
IES clients	140	482	1.2%	0.9%
LBS clients	74	96	0.7%	0.2%
Apprenticeship	91	79	0.8%	0.2%
COJG	25	33	0.2%	0.1%
Better Jobs Ontario	<6	25		0.1%

By far, the largest sub-population among all these categories, regardless of age, is persons with disabilities. Among youth with disabilities, almost half (48%) have a mild disability, which means that around 10% of all youth have a mild disability. Among adults with disabilities, the proportion of those with a mild disability is closer to four out of ten (42%), which translates into 11% of the adult population. The proportion of those with disabilities that are severe or very severe is a third – 32% among youth with disabilities (so, 7% of the youth population) and 38% among adults with disabilities (9% of the adult population). By type of disability, among youth one in seven have a mental health disability, whereas among the adults, one in six have a pain-related disability.

The next largest category is among persons with low income, representing 10% of youth and 12% of adults. The third largest group among youth is NEET youth (9%), while among adults it is all immigrants (9%). Newcomers (those who arrived in Canada in the last five years) make up a small share (1%) of the total population.

## Additional systemic barriers

Each under-represented population faces their own unique challenges in their efforts to secure employment. During interviews with key informants, as well as through focus groups with job seekers, several systemic barriers in Chatham-Kent were noted which exacerbated the difficulties these populations encountered.

**Transportation.** Like many small town and rural communities in Ontario, Chatham-Kent poses difficulties for individuals who do not have access to a vehicle to get from place to place. The geographic expanse of Chatham-Kent, the dispersal of residents among many smaller communities, the distances between population centres, and the lack of a concentrated commuting direction all result in significant challenges for the local public transit system to offer services that meet the needs of residents. The public transit system has a limited schedule, and the uneven reliability of the service makes it less dependable for commuting to jobs in a timely way.

**Child care.** It is known that the lack of available and affordable child care prevents parents with young children from participating in the labour force, especially women. Over the last few years, the federal government has been rolling out its Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) initiative through individual agreements with the province, including Ontario. The goals of this initiative are to improve affordability, accessibility, quality and inclusiveness of child care services. The initial emphasis is on affordability, where child care fees for parents are reduced with the help of federal funding. Ontario, for its part, has introduced wage enhancement for child care workers.

However, the expansion of child care spaces has been very slow in relation to the demand. This is particularly problematic for single parents 77% of whom are female (in Chatham-Kent, close to the Ontario average of 79%) who are unable to work without child care services. It is noteworthy that the second largest category of households in receipt of Ontario Works are singles with children. With the increased emphasis of Ontario's employment services system on transitioning OW claimants into the labour market, it is also worth noting that 30% of Chatham-Kent's OW clients not being referred to employment services were not referred because they lacked child care.

The beneficial impact of widely available, affordable child care is demonstrated by the experience of Quebec. That province pioneered the introduction of universal low fee child care in 1997 and as result employment rates dramatically increased among women, especially among those who were never married. Studies have shown that the financial return to government because parents were able to work (increased tax contributions and decreased social assistance payments) exceeded the cost of the child care subsidies.<sup>15</sup> This represents strong policy evidence for the economic benefit of child care. Thus, while affordability is now being addressed, the issue of child care space availability causes a systemics barrier. This is made worse by a shortage of early childhood educators (ECEs) and early childhood assistants (ECAs), a result of the comparatively lower wages and the relative difficulty of the work.

**Employment Ontario transformation.** Over the last several years, the Employment Ontario services system has undergone a transformation involving several key elements: the creation of Service System Managers for prescribed areas of the province, the application of a common assessment tool for intake, which creates three client categories; the elimination of OW and ODSP employment services, now folded into Employment Ontario, and a performance management framework, which makes some funding tied to quantifiable outcomes that are tracked over a longer period of time.

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<sup>15</sup> Pierre Fortin, Luc Godbout and Suzie St-Cerny, Impact of Quebec's Universal Low Fee Childcare Program on Female Labour Force Participation, Domestic Income, and Government Budgets, Université de Sherbrooke Research Chair in Taxation and Public Finance, 2012.

Any large-scale administrative and programmatic changes can result in disruption during the transition period. However, two recent studies point to more concerning consequences:<sup>16</sup>

- Administrative tasks and red tape have ballooned under the new model (at least doubled)
- As a result, time available to work directly with job seekers has substantially declined
- The amount of funding for front-line staff helping people find work has declined, while caseload requirements have increased to unsustainable levels
- Working conditions across the sector have deteriorated, and staff turnover has been rampant

Other changes arising from the EO transformation have especially affected some of the under-represented populations:

- The placement of a client in a job now only counts for the purposes of the performance outcomes if the job involves more than 20 hours per week; some people, particularly persons with disabilities, prefer slowly easing into a job starting at less than 20 hours per week and also benefit from more flexible work arrangements; the 20 hours of work per week rule becomes a financial disincentive to offering employment services for people who need that kind of approach
- Individuals with barriers to employment often need on-going job retention support, but according to these studies there is not enough money for agencies to support job retention, especially after one year
- The lack of dedicated youth programming in the new model has diminished targeted funding and supports for youth; youth respond better to programs that are customized to their needs, rather than being lumped in with adults

Some key informants also noted that carrying out an assessment at the moment of intake, which cannot later be changed, prevents the service provider from getting to know the client and establishing trust, so that some of a client's challenges might not be initially revealed. This results in an assessment that prevents the client from getting the level of support that they need.



<sup>16</sup> Community Living and Ontario Disability Employment Network, *Tangled in Red Tape: Ontario's Transformation is Leaving Too Many Job Seekers Behind* (2024); First Work, *Making It Work: Delivering the Transformative Promise in Ontario* (2024).



## Narrowing the focus to persons with disabilities

### Identifying a priority population

The focus of this study was to examine the circumstances of under-represented populations in the Chatham-Kent labour market. In tackling this topic, the first part of this work involved engaging with local key informants to gain their views of the landscape and to learn who the under-represented populations are and what their labour market challenges are like. These informants were also asked which of these groups warranted prioritizing, in the belief that taking a deep dive into one population would provide a more detailed understanding of how best to assist them.

For the most part, the key informants were reluctant to identify one priority population mostly because they felt each group had distinct needs that deserved attention or because they felt that each individual required a personalized approach to their specific needs undefined by any category. That being said, when these key informants were asked to describe the most common issues faced by the populations they served, there were certain categories that were mentioned often. The following are the actual quotes of the most prominent issues cited by the service providers among the key informants:

- “Addiction and mental health issues, especially anxiety and depression”
- “Lots of learning disabilities, mental health issues are a big component, and challenges faced by individuals living in remote or rural communities”
- “Physical, developmental and communications issues”
- “Anxiety and mental health issues”
- “Youth, especially after COVID and their remote schooling, are struggling with customer-facing roles; mental health issues are more prevalent”
- “Child care, unmet health issues and untreated mental health challenges and addictions”
- “Mental health issues have moved to the top in recent years, surpassing intellectual disabilities”
- Clearly, mental health issues are seen as a major challenge, mentioned by all but one service provider.



## Selecting the category of persons with disabilities, with additional attention to mental health issues

The argument in favour of prioritizing one population category is that it allows for digging deeper into the challenges faced by one group and the specific strategies that can help them access and retain employment. Each specific group of persons with barriers to employment has their own unique needs and solutions to those needs. Some needs require very personalized solutions, while other needs require community-level or systemic-based solutions. In the case of persons with disabilities, solutions include both personalized and systemic approaches. A deeper understanding of how to identify and address the needs of a particular group also illustrates the kind of approach that is needed in the case of every under-represented population.

Therefore, the proposed target population category is persons with disabilities, with especial attention to mental health issues. The following are the specific reasons for this selection:

- Persons with disabilities are present in all the under-represented population categories examined in this report (Indigenous persons, immigrants, older adults, persons with low income, NEET youth)
- Persons with disabilities is the largest under-represented category for both youth (15 to 24 years) and adults (25 to 64 years), and is growing
- Highlighting mental health issues within this category may additionally attract the interest of employers, who would acquire lessons and best practices which could also be applied to their incumbent workforce and also be applied to their hiring and onboarding practices. The incidence of mental health issues has been increasing, especially since COVID, while the conversation surrounding mental health issues has been opening up. The relevance of mental health issues applies to job seekers and current employees, as well as to employers, and to their families and friends

It bears emphasizing that the kind of awareness and attention to a person's needs which would apply in undertaking outreach to, hiring and on-boarding of, and continuing job retention of persons with all kinds of disabilities are relevant skills to engaging with any other under-represented population. Therefore, prioritizing persons with disabilities can be considered a first step towards promoting strategies to enhance employment outcomes for all under-represented populations.

### Insights regarding persons with disabilities – perspective of key informants

Many of the key informants interviewed<sup>17</sup> had direct experience working with persons with disabilities, oftentimes in terms of assisting them with access to employment. They were able to speak directly to the practical circumstances of persons with disabilities as well as the challenges faced when engaging with employers.

Most importantly, the key informants consistently maintained that persons with disabilities should not be seen exclusively through the prism of their disability; to do so turns that prism into an individual's prison. All persons with disabilities have distinct abilities, talents and aspirations which should not be discounted because of a disability, but which can be put to use with appropriate support.

The challenge for employers is that they seek certainty because uncertainty requires problem-solving that could involve unexpected costs in money, time or human resource adjustments. Given just how unfamiliar the general population, including employers, is with disability, many employers might want to stay away from a circumstance in which they have little or no experience.

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<sup>17</sup> Interviews were held with fourteen organizations, oftentimes involving multiple participants.

Because living with disability is often a very restrictive experience in our society, it is often the case that when given the opportunity, persons with disabilities perform as ideal employees. The work provides validation. And, as a result, they often put in effort beyond what is expected, are less likely to be absent or sick, and are less likely to leave a job.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act establishes mandatory accessibility standards for identifying, removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living, including employment. The legislation was passed in 2005, but its implementation has been staged, including the creation of regulations for five areas of daily life (customer service, information and communications, transportation, employment and design of public spaces), with the goal of making Ontario more accessible and inclusive by 2025. These initiatives to overcome barriers (termed “accommodations”) have been a work in progress, which explains why many employers are uncertain about what is required of them in practical terms.

## **Promising practices**

The key informants shared that employment of persons with physical or cognitive disabilities is often feasible with the appropriate accommodations, but employers lack the information needed to alleviate their concerns that these accommodations might be too expensive or difficult. Individuals with mental health disabilities, such as anxiety or depression, may experience episodic periods of disability, which makes their condition more unpredictable. Yet here too, accommodations may be less daunting than imagined; key informants cited many examples, each of which applies to different circumstances:

- Flexibility for break times
- Quiet spaces to withdraw to
- Gradually increasing work hours
- Less interaction with customers
- Routine tasks
- Explicit list of written instructions
- Job trials
- Job coaches
- Job carving
- Job sharing

To elaborate: the employer could allow for break time flexibility, thus giving the individual opportunities to interrupt feeling overwhelmed in the workplace. Some individuals might do better with a quiet space to which to retreat during breaks. Also, the onboarding process could be done through gradually increasing work hours to, again, prevent the new employee from feeling too overwhelmed all at once.

Some individuals might require less interaction with customers, quieter workspaces, permission for more work from home days, and so on. Depending on the disability, the ideal work situation could involve a very routine set of tasks that has predictability and consistency or that they be given a detailed written list of tasks for which they are responsible.

Several key informants noted that offering job trials provides an opportunity to test out how these accommodations work in practice. Some agencies are able to provide a job coach for the new employee to help them navigate their new environment, to help them learn their new responsibilities during onboarding, and, most importantly, to figure out what accommodations will support the employee and communicate them



to the employer. Many also mentioned the value of detailed instructions, including a sequence of tasks, as ways to ensure that a new employee is both clear about what is expected of them and has a roadmap for organizing their work.

Job carving approaches hiring in the opposite way. The employer begins with the job candidate, creating a job around their strengths in a way that works for their business. Job carving is particularly effective for job seekers who are seeking to only work part-time. A concept related to this is job sharing, whereby two individuals may share a job, each working part-time to fulfil the expectations of one full-time role.

## **The role of employment services providers**

The function of employment service providers is to communicate to employers about the specific needs of each individual. The services do this because employers otherwise can feel too pressed for time to learn about the differences involved in hiring a person with disabilities and how to address those differences. Yet, the investment into learning how to access the disability talent pool opens up a wider range of job candidates for the employer. And by applying the appropriate accommodations, employers might be more successful in filling job vacancies and retaining these employees. In this respect, there is need for broader advocacy with employers, so that their concerns can be resolved.

In all these respects, employment services are not only representing their client but also acting as an advocate on their behalf, explaining the circumstances of their client but at the same time offering solutions to the employer. This is something that the clients themselves may be hesitant to do, concerned that expressing these issues may jeopardize their employment chances.

There are certainly employers willing to provide opportunities for people with challenges. Incentive dollars also help, but some employers do not require an incentive. At the same time, some employers, who otherwise would be open to hiring a person with a disability, might be reluctant to do so. Should the arrangement not work out, not only would they have the unpleasant prospect of laying off a worker, but, worse in their view, laying off someone with a disability.

So many of these issues and concerns can be alleviated through proper communication between the employer and the job seekers, with the employment service provider acting as an intermediary.

## **Insights regarding persons with disabilities – perspective of employers**

In addition to the views of service providers who engage with employers, interviews were held with the two local chambers of commerce, to learn the views of employers directly.

The employers' perspectives largely corresponded with those of the service provider key informants: employers are uncertain about which accommodations are needed when hiring a person with a disability. They are also uncertain of the cost and what additional training might be required for supervisors and other co-workers. In the aftermath of COVID, followed by a period of higher inflation, and a tentative economy, business owners (especially smaller firms) are preoccupied with keeping their operations afloat and containing their costs. Many have been limiting the number of staff. This makes the landscape more challenging in terms of proposing new approaches toward hiring.

Employers could be made better informed about the potential benefits of targeting persons with disabilities when hiring, including, in the view of these employers' representatives, securing a highly motivated employee,

likely lower absenteeism, higher retention rates, and an opportunity to enhance one’s brand image.

The Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board administers the EmployerOne Survey each year which provides insight into employer practices relating to hiring, including the hiring of persons with disabilities.

Survey respondents were asked if their organization had hired any employees between November 1, 2023, and October 31, 2024. Eighty percent (117 respondents) indicated that they had, representing 2,504 hires during that period. Of these 117 employers who had hired during this period, 10 indicated they had hired between one and five persons with disabilities, and one indicated they hired between six and ten persons with disabilities. Thus, around 9% of employers who hired during this period had hired persons with disabilities.

Another question focused on the broader topic of under-represented groups in the labour market, as follows:

Under-represented groups are those categories of Chatham-Kent residents who may participate at lower proportions in the labour market compared to the overall average, for example, persons with disabilities or immigrants who have only recently arrived in Canada. Which of the following pose challenges for your organization when considering recruiting job candidates from under-represented groups (please check those reasons which pose a challenge in your view)

Table 8 lists the challenges offered in the survey question and the percentage of respondents answering that question who selected each challenge.

**Table 8: Percentage of respondents affirming that the challenge applied in the case of recruiting job candidates from under-represented groups**

Proposed challenge	Percent
Assessing their skills or their certification/education	41%
How best to find and recruit these individuals	38%
Not knowing what resources we can access to better receive these employees	23%
Uncertain about the skills of our managers and supervisors, including cultural understanding, to manage these new workers	17%
How best to provide accommodations or meet their needs	16%

The two biggest challenges that employers identified when considering recruiting from under-represented groups were (1) assessing their skills or their certification/education and (2) how best to find and recruit these individuals. In both instances, it was a challenge for around four out of ten employers.

Given that key informants and representatives of employers’ associations felt that providing appropriate accommodations was a confounding challenge for employers, it is surprising that only 16% of employer respondents cited this as an issue. The proportions were roughly the same for employers in the previous year who had hired persons with disabilities and for those who had not. In the case of employers who had hired persons with disabilities, their response represented their actual experience. This might explain the lower percentage who felt it was a challenge. Their lived experience was different. In the case of those who had not hired persons with disabilities, it might be that this issue was a remote consideration, as the option of hiring a person with disabilities was not on their radar screen.

## Perspective of persons with disabilities

During October 2024, six focus groups were held with 21 participants (14 youth, 7 adults), all of whom had been recruited by agencies serving persons with disabilities. These participants generously gave their time to represent not only themselves but also their peers. Individuals were not asked about their disability, but rather about their employment aspirations, their experiences in looking for work, being employed and participating in a work placement, as well as what kind of accommodations would best assist their employment.

All were interested in finding employment. Some were about to graduate from high school and were seeking a work placement to get job experience. Others had a history of employment and were currently out of work. In almost every case, the desire to work was very palpable; more than once, participants said they just wanted to contribute in any way they could.

Table 9 lists the range of work experience these participants had acquired. The information was gathered during the focus groups and from their resumes. Many of these positions are entry-level jobs, spanning a broad spectrum of industries, from agriculture and manufacturing to retail trade and food services, to office work and a mix of various service sectors.

**Table 9: List of work experiences of focus group participants**

<u>Food</u> Food Handler Kitchen Helper Food Counter Attendant Food Service Helper Assistant Baker Dishwasher	<u>Retail and Distribution</u> Retail Salesperson Customer Service Representative Cashier Shelf Stocker Warehouse Order Picker	<u>Cleaning</u> Light Duty Cleaner Heavy Duty Cleaner Janitor Sanitation Worker Vehicle Cleaner
<u>Manufacturing</u> Computer Assembler Quality Controller Inventory Control Technician General Operator	<u>Agriculture and Food Processing</u> Order Filler Inventory Control Technician Corn Detasseler Corn Sorter	<u>Office Work</u> Accounting Clerk Administrative Assistant IT Administrator
<u>Children and Youth</u> Camp Counsellor Early Childhood Assistant	<u>Health Care Aid</u> Senior Support Worker	<u>Other</u> Mechanic's Assistant Museum Attendant

There were many similarities between the accommodations needs expressed by these focus group participants and those identified by key informants. These included:

- *Clarity about tasks* – by far, the most frequently mentioned item was having clear, explicit instructions, preferably detailed and laid out in sequence; several mentioned that a graphic or a written list of tasks would help
- *Physical accommodations* – for some with physical disabilities, physically demanding work was not an option; others required physical accessibility, while the ability to alternate between sitting and standing was mentioned by a few
- *Time* – several participants noted that they sometimes needed additional time to complete a task;



more frequent and more flexible arrangements for break times were also mentioned; a few sought the ability to withdraw to a quiet place to prevent themselves from becoming overwhelmed

- *Work arrangements* – while a small number preferred to work by themselves, there were also those who were not comfortable working alone or at night (for safety reasons); job carving was also raised as an approach by participants as a way to facilitate a better fit between the disabled employee and the job

Quite apart from accommodations, there were other elements of a job that were important:

- *“Ideal employer”* – many placed considerable emphasis on open, interpersonal dynamics, a boss who communicated and listened, who was understanding, patient and kind; it does not help to have a supervisor who says, “figure it out”
- *Equal treatment* – a common theme was being treated as an equal and wishing to be able to learn about and apply themselves to more tasks, not just menial work
- *Training* – receiving training, both at the start but also to then have opportunities to assume additional responsibilities
- *Job coach* – some felt that having access to a job coach during the early stages of employment could help facilitate communications and iron over any misunderstandings
- *Employment arrangements* – several desired more flexibility with scheduling; among the younger youth, a priority was finding job placements to help them acquire work experience; some also mentioned job-shadowing
- *Part-time work* – several job seekers were looking only for part-time work, either because they were social assistance recipients (there are ceilings on earned income before it affects one’s benefits) or because they wished to limit the pressure that work can bring to their lives, or to have the opportunity to ramp up their hours over time



Further insights from Canadian Survey on Disability

In light of the observations from key informants, employers and persons with disabilities, it is worthwhile to draw on additional findings from the Canadian Survey on Disability, to reinforce and elaborate upon some the identified themes.

In terms of the incidence of part-time work among employed persons with disabilities, only a slightly larger proportion of those aged 25 to 64 years work part-time compared to the entire employed population of that age, which is 15% versus 12%. Among those persons with disabilities working part-time, around a third (34%) are doing so involuntarily compared to the one-fifth (21%) working part-time involuntarily among all persons employed part-time aged 25 to 64 years.<sup>18</sup>

Of greater consequence are survey results which demonstrate how persons with disabilities feel that their disability impedes their career outcomes as well as the degree to which they feel uncomfortable seeking accommodations for their disability.

Among all employed persons with a disability aged 25 to 64 years in Canada, four out of ten (41%) consider that a job change or advancement in their job is made difficult due to their disability.<sup>19</sup>

As illustrated in Table 10, between three and four out of ten employed persons with a disability aged 25 to 64 years hold back in seeking or disclosing their need for an accommodation at work.

Table 10: Reasons for not asking for required workplace accommodations, Canada, 2022

Reason	Percent
Uncomfortable asking	42%
Did not want to disclose the need for accommodation	35%
Did not want to cause difficulty for employer	33%
Fear of negative outcomes	33%

Statistics Canada, 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, Table 13-10-0887-01

In Ontario, these accommodations are, in principle, a mandatory requirement, to allow persons with disabilities to participate in the labour market. However, a significant proportion of persons with disabilities feel that seeking such accommodations may be a detriment to their employment.<sup>20</sup>

The nature and incidence of these accommodations are also explored in the Canadian Survey on Disability, although the data is only available from the 2017 survey. Nevertheless, these responses provide an illustration of what is being contemplated and how frequently such accommodations may arise (Table 11).

The most frequently cited forms of workplace accommodations involve flexibility relating to job functions

18 The data for persons with disabilities comes from the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, Table 13-10-0882-01 and Table 13-10-0821-01), while the data for the general population comes from the 2022 Labour Force Survey (Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0051-01 and Table 14-10-0029-01); in both cases, the figures are for all Canada.

19 Statistics Canada, 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, Table 13-10-0886-01.

20 These apprehensions are hardly unique to Canada; a survey of 10,000 people with disabilities across 20 countries shows that even with high workplace disclosure rates, workplace accommodations are not the norm. Deloitte, Disability Inclusion @ Work 2024: A Global Outlook (2024).

(job carving and job sharing) or with respect to hours of work or place of work. These involve matters relating to human resources management, which require managers and supervisors to modify tasks and schedules, but do not involve much in the way of financial cost for special arrangements. Indeed, many of these accommodations, such as flexible work schedules, ergonomic desk setups and large monitors, are features which all employees, disabled or not, would find beneficial.<sup>21</sup>

The kinds of accommodations which may raise financial concerns for employers (modified workstations or special equipment or other forms of assistance) arise for only between one out of six (15%) to one out of nine (11%) disabled workers.

**Table 11: Type and incidence of accommodations being sought, all employed persons with a disability aged 25 to 64 years old, Canada, 2017**

Type of accommodation	Percent seeking accommodation
<b>All who required one or more workplace accommodations</b> (Some require more than one)	42%
<b>Required one or more workplace accommodations</b> Flexible work arrangements include: a) modified or different duties, b) working from home, and/or c) modified hours or days or reduced work hours	27%
<b>Required workstation modifications</b> Workstation modifications include: a) modified or ergonomic workstation and/or b) special chair or back support	15%
<b>Required other equipment, help or work arrangement</b> Other equipment, help or work arrangement include: 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, d) communication aids such as Braille or recording equipment, e) handrails, ramps, widened doorways or hallways, f) adapted or accessible parking, g) accessible elevators, h) adapted washrooms, i) specialized transportation and/or j) other equipment, help or work arrangement	11%

Statistics Canada, 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, Table 13-10-0749-01



A later report from Statistics Canada<sup>22</sup> itemized the most common types of workplace accommodations sought by persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years old in Canada:

- Modified work hours (sought by 16.3% of employed disabled persons)
- Modified or different duties (11.6%)
- Working from home (10.9%)
- Modified or ergonomic workstation (10.7%)
- Special chair or back support (10.3%)

This data confirms the earlier observation that a larger proportion of accommodations involve flexible work arrangements, from scheduling to job carving.

## The view from the literature

This report is not intended to provide a detailed roadmap for making workplaces more accessible to persons with disabilities. Rather, the purpose is to describe the landscape leading to under-representation of populations in the Chatham-Kent labour force and then to suggest ways to improve the outcomes of these populations. The relevance of the literature on persons with disabilities and their workplace experiences and needs is that it offers a context for understanding how these issues are currently framed and addressed in Canada. In that respect, the recent report<sup>23</sup> of the Disability Inclusion Business Council is both representative of the literature in this field and offers recommendations relevant to this assignment.

For one, the council, appointed by the federal government, is a body made up of corporate leaders, whose focus is on the business benefits of disability inclusion. The following is how they define their mission:

Diversity and inclusion are a competitive advantage. Diverse teams are the most effective and productive. Different people, perspectives, and ways of thinking are critical to drive innovation. Organizations should be representative of the customer base and broader society. It just makes business sense to invest in staff and ensure they feel that they belong, are valued, and are equipped to succeed.



<sup>22</sup> Statistics Canada, Christoph Schimmele, Sung-Hee Jeon and Rubab Arim, Changes in workplace accommodations among employed Canadians with disabilities, 2017 to 2022 (2024).

<sup>23</sup> Disability Inclusion Business Council, Bridging the Gap: Report on Disability Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces (2024).



Secondly, the council's recommendations for employers aim to influence workplace culture and promote proactive measures, including:

- Championing a culture of inclusion and providing training opportunities regarding disability to all employees, particularly people managers
- Adopting inclusive design approaches to meet and exceed accessibility standards
- Adopting accommodations approaches that result in offering accommodations and adjustments to employees by default, rather than relying upon disclosure
- Ensuring fully inclusive environments throughout the full employee life cycle, from work experience programs to job descriptions and recruitment practices, as well as through training and career advancement

Finally, in its brief listing of tools and resources available from council members, it is clear that much effort has been invested in promoting accessibility for persons with disabilities, as evidenced by guides and reports issued by such organizations as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Council of Canada, TD Bank Group, IBM Canada, SAP Canada and EY Canada.



## Focus on employer engagement strategies

### Proposed engagement event with employers

One of the tasks of this assignment was to hold an engagement event with employers, involving the following:

- Provide an overview of the project, including learnings
- Host a panel discussion whereby agencies serving persons with disabilities would describe their services, the employability of their clients, and share successful workplace accommodation strategies
- Provide an opportunity for job seekers with disabilities to network with attending employers

The purpose of the event was to familiarize employers with another talent pool, to raise their awareness about the variety of skills and work experiences of the disabled population, and to inform employers what accommodations may look like in practice. The goal was to demonstrate that persons with disabilities are very employable and eager to work. The intention was to provide an intimate setting where some 20 to 25 employers could hold conversations with some 15 to 20 job seekers, facilitated by presentations and support from some 10 to 15 service providers.

Although many partners contributed significant time and effort to make this gathering happen, due to limited registration it was eventually decided to cancel this event.

More than one person observed that the challenge in attracting employers was itself a finding of this project. This is certainly true. But the challenge is likely caused by manifold reasons. It is important to make sure that the right lesson is drawn.



The rest of this section focuses on approaches to employer engagement, focusing on three elements:

- The mechanics of employer engagement
- The messaging for employer engagement
- Meeting employers' needs first



## The mechanics of employer engagement

Employer engagement is about employment services building relationships with employers to achieve better employment outcomes for their job seeking clients. In the early decades of employment services, the primary focus was to provide job seekers with the skills and tools to be more successful in their job search. This included better information about the labour market, personalized career guidance, advice on preparing more compelling resumes and cover letters, and performing better in job interviews. So much of the attention of employment service providers used to be solely on the client.

The first change to this approach was the “dual customer” notion, whereby employment services began to consider employers equally as also their clients, since meeting employer needs was the path to connecting job seekers to employment. This approach required more attention paid to what various employers are seeking and learning about their workplace culture. Still, this remained largely a transactional encounter, done on an as needed basis as part of the job matching function.

Employer engagement is a further evolutionary step, which seeks a deeper connection between services and employers, whose purpose is to establish continuous, lasting and mutually rewarding relationships, supporting employers in meeting their labour market needs by providing a talent pool, while also assisting a wide range of job seekers in accessing sustainable employment.

While seeming ideal, this approach has its own challenges. Employers might not see the value in partnering with employment services because to them the cost of participation could appear to outweigh the potential benefits. To employers, it might represent too much investment of time, that many meetings feel less productive, and they might doubt the ability of employment services to deliver what they need. Also, businesses and community agencies have different cultures and ways of communicating which can generate misunderstanding and frustration.



The literature on employer engagement focuses on the pragmatic and proposes a strategic approach to cultivating the desired relationships with employers. These insights include the following:<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> These learnings are drawn from the following sources: Randall Wilson, *A Resource Guide to Engaging with Employers*, Jobs for the Future (2015); Shayne Spaulding and Ananda Martin-Caughey, *The Goals and Dimensions of Employer Engagement in Workforce Development Programs*, Urban Institute (2015); Steven Dawson, *Employer Engagement and the Myth of the Dual Customer*, The Pinkerton Foundation (2016); *New Ways to Work, Employer Engagement Quick Guide* (2019); Margaret Patterson and Michelle Carson, *What the Evidence Says About Employer Engagement*, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Policy Development and Research (2021).

1. Cultivating employer engagement takes time; it is neither instantaneous nor easy
2. Pursuing employer engagement starts with meeting the needs of an employer, in that way building the confidence that employers can get what they need while over time developing trust
3. In short, the strategy relies on first meeting the transactional expectations, so that then one can eventually start developing a relationship
4. To meet that transactional expectation, one must address a need that the employer currently has
5. To understand the employer's need, one needs to hear the employer, not suggest what the employer needs
6. Sometimes, given the time constraints that so many employers contend with, simply helping them connect to the right resources is a welcome benefit
7. Exploring that need requires listening, going to the employer in their workplace, and supplementing that knowledge with labour market data and insights from industry experts
8. When seeking to develop insights into the needs of employers, one is more likely to be successful if one focuses on separate industry categories, because the occupational requirements and the dynamics of each industry are very distinct; the accumulation of knowledge by industry is how to acquire the expertise to assist employers in a way that is relevant to their needs
9. Events that convene employers need to provide employers with information that is relevant to them; this includes having presenters who speak to industry issues beyond employment concerns, which could include other human resources questions or industry trends and challenges, such as supply chain matters (or, in the current environment, the impact of tariffs)
10. Employers also like to hear from other employers, so events need to include opportunities for employers to interact, to share views and to network
11. Given the value employers place on hearing other employers, it is important to identify some employer champions who have benefitted from their reliance on employment services and who can speak to the benefits they experienced; they can also help in recruiting other employers to events and to the services being offered
12. As employers start seeing the value of what is being proposed, they can be recruited as advisors to services, to help make those services relevant to other employers; these advisory roles need to be substantive and meaningful, not token participation





## Refining the message for employer engagement

As the previous section makes clear, the proposed approach places the priority on the employer's perspective, starting with understanding and addressing their needs first. This same orientation applies to the content of how one frames the discussion: in using the language of employers, what is the value proposition to employers (how will they benefit)?

In many cases, one can refer to the monetary benefits of relying on employment services (predicated on the successful placement of job candidates):

- Reduced recruitment costs
- Higher retention rates, reducing reliance on recruitment
- Less staff absenteeism
- Enhancement of one's brand (of particular value to younger clients/customers)

It is possible to place a dollar figure to a number of these benefits. The longer a position remains vacant, the more likely the employer is incurring costs for not being able to hire an employee: it may mean paying overtime wages to current staff, requiring supervisors to fill in, contracting temp agency staff, and/or turning away business. The recruitment process represents costs as well, such as placing advertisements or assigning staff to review applications and conduct interviews, taking them away from their regular duties. Turnover also incurs the cost of on boarding a new employee, such as training, as well as the time it takes for them to be able to fully carry out their functions.

There are studies which provide estimates for these various costs, which can provide a dollar range and a sense of the order of magnitude of these costs (not hundreds of dollars but often thousands of dollars).<sup>25</sup> It is also possible to customize the estimates with data from employers. Surprisingly, employers often incur these costs as part of the expense of doing business, but they are less likely to analyze the numbers themselves. They can be surprised by how much they are spending when those calculations are made and how much they stand to save if those costs can be reduced.

As part of connecting with employers it is important to track the impact of the services one provides, not only for the clients one serves (outcomes such as employment, wages and so on), but also with respect to the employer, such as what their business gains have been in monetary terms.

This is also where reliance on other employers is helpful. Employers are more likely to believe evidence, even anecdotal testimonials, coming from their peers more than from a community agency that could have a vested interest in inflating their impact.

As discussed in the beginning of this report, the benefit to the community of inclusive hiring practices speaks to the need for an employer strategy based on a community-wide approach, where employers can feel that their individual actions are amplified by an aggregate effort. Such a message will only have an impact if employers can see that the initiative is broadly based and is being driven by an alliance of multiple stakeholders. This requires moving away from one-off, transactional exchanges to building relationships where all participants can see the broader benefits of their cumulative efforts.

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<sup>25</sup> There is an entire field of analyses covering the topic of HR ROI (Human Resources Return on Investment.)



This is where recognition of employer actions, such as through employer-of-the-year awards or other designations, can reinforce the message because the employer's contribution to the community would be acknowledged. Awards would also signal to the rest of the business community the values held by their customers.

## Meeting employers' needs first

One still cannot escape beginning with a transactional approach. In seeking to meet employers' needs, the needs must be there first and foremost. It will be harder to engage employers on the idea of widening the range of who they might consider for job recruitment when they are not hiring.

The timing of the employer engagement event for this project coincided with a relatively weak labour market: the job vacancy rate in the Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region (which includes Chatham-Kent) had been dropping since its post-COVID peak in second quarter of 2022 and by the third quarter of 2024 was at its lowest level since this data first started being collected in 2015. The decline in the number of vacant jobs since the post-COVID peak was especially pronounced among entry-level occupations, where the number of job vacancies in the third quarter of 2024 was lower than it had been before COVID. Similarly, the unemployment rate in the Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region, after declining considerably in the months following COVID, started increasing again. In the last six months, the local unemployment rate has risen to levels not seen since 2021. In short, currently there are fewer job openings, especially among entry-level occupations, while at the same time more unemployed individuals are looking for work. Employers may not be so hard-pressed finding enough job candidates to fill what vacancies they may have.

Employers are busy all the time: when business is good, they are scrambling to meet the demand for their goods and services; when business is poor, they are working hard to keep their operations afloat. There is something to be said about the most opportune time to deliver a message to employers.

A down period like now, however, is a good time to start the relationship building, to establish the foundation for conversations about broadening the pool of job candidates when the labour market is tight and employers are hard-pressed to find suitable job candidates.



## Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this assignment was to examine the labour market circumstances of populations under-represented in the Chatham-Kent labour market and to propose strategies for improving their outcomes. As a first step, several under-represented populations were investigated, through stakeholder interviews and data analysis.

Eventually, it was proposed that a single population group be focused on, so that a more intensive exploration could be undertaken of their needs and circumstances. The category of persons with disabilities was chosen for several reasons: they represent a large proportion of the community, they are present among all the other populations that were being considered, and because one category of disability in particular, mental health issues, cross-cut the entire population and employers would likely find that learning about how best to support individuals in this category would also help their current workforce.

None of this is to suggest that persons with disabilities should be the only under-represented population needing attention. The sensitivity acquired about how to identify an individual's needs and how to accommodate those needs in the workplace is a human resource management skill relevant when employing any under-represented population and would also benefit all employees. What is being proposed is that one starts with persons with disabilities, then broaden the scope.

But in carrying out the assignment, another learning emerged when the proposed engagement event with employers had to be cancelled because it proved too difficult to recruit a sufficient number of employers. This led to further research into the issue of employer engagement, resulting in observations about employer engagement best practices.

In seeking to advance the labour market prospects of under-represented populations, there needs to be a stronger relationship with employers; using the language of this report, it is not sufficient to approach this as a transactional exchange. It is a conclusion of this report that building a more intensive engagement with employers requires a strategy, one which will be more effective if it is a broadly-based initiative.

The primary recommendation of this report is:

### **Recommendation #1: That the Chatham-Kent community develop an employer engagement strategy.**

This recommendation is purposely wide-open because several elements will need to be decided as part of the process of developing this employer engagement strategy:

- **Steering group:** To begin with, a small initial group will need to convene to guide this undertaking
- **Membership:** The impetus for this initiative has been employment-related, so the core group should consist of employment services organizations. However, consideration should be given to broadening the range of participating sectors, such as educational institutions (school boards and post-secondary) economic development entities, and possibly other categories who also have a vested interest in deepening their connection with employers (could include chambers of commerce and other business or industry associations)
- **Resources:** More than one stakeholder noted that any recommendation proposing next steps cannot rely simply on “partnerships” and staff taking on functions to be performed working off the side of their desk. Funding is so constrained and demand for services is so high that staff in all organizations

would be hard-pressed to take on additional tasks next to the ones they have. Different stages of this initiative will require different resources:

- **Initial convening and secretariat role:** To get the ball rolling, someone needs to take the lead, to organize the first few meetings and perform the function of secretariat (scheduling, inviting, recording and distributing information). This should not be too onerous an undertaking for this limited time. Someone will need to volunteer to take on this role to get this initiative started. The goal will be to secure funding for designing and following through on an employer engagement strategy
- **Framing a project:** A project will need to be developed for funding applications possibly to the province, the Trillium Foundation or funding at the federal level. It might be possible to find some seed funding locally from public and private sources to hire someone to do this work
- **Carrying out a project:** The purpose of securing external funding is to design the employment engagement strategy and for the initial steps of its implementation (perhaps for a year or two). This would involve a dedicated position (likely full-time), a person who would be the point-of-contact and organizer for the community-wide strategy
- **Output:** Some of the outputs of this work will include:
  - Mapping out employer engagement activities already being undertaken in Chatham-Kent
  - Develop the categories of employers to be approached
  - Identify champions among civic leaders, community leaders or employers for this initiative
  - Develop messaging content to be shared
  - Develop an employer outreach strategy, e.g. target places of work, via LinkedIn, service clubs and so on
  - Develop a communications strategy
  - Set output targets:
    - » Year One: number of contacts made, number of events held or attended, number of awards handed out to employers, number of employers asked to act as advisors to community agencies, and so on
    - » Year Two or Three: number of employers engaged, number of work experience placements, number of job placements, starting wages, retention rates, level of employer satisfaction
  - Design indicators to monitor employer outcomes, notably their return on investment, including reduced recruitment costs, less absenteeism, less turnover and so on

There will likely be additional outputs and outcomes developed for this project. One further thing to consider for the initiative would be to identify ways to enhance job coach support. It is clear from job seekers and from employment service providers that job coaches are a valuable aid in ensuring job success and retention for some. Even with existing job retention support from employment services and the availability of job coaching assistance from several community-based services, the need for this help exceeds the capacity of what is currently available.

Finally, three further recommendations:

### **Recommendation #2: Reconstitute the employment service providers' table.**

Several key informants mentioned that in the past there had existed a table of employment service providers which met periodically, where agencies could provide updates on their own services and initiatives, as well



as share other information, including observations about current labour market trends and challenges. While the presence of the EO service system manager (Windsor Regional Employment Network) provides a platform for Employment Ontario employment service providers, there are several other agencies which are funded by other programs or which serve specific populations, and it would be useful for them to meet regularly.

**Recommendation #3: Continue awareness and engagement activities as an employer engagement strategy is being developed.**

While this report strongly recommends the development of an employer engagement strategy, the absence of such a strategy should not in the meantime prevent continuing employer outreach and engagement activities. The employer engagement strategy is not a replacement for the work that individual agencies do. The purpose of such a strategy is to enhance the current work agencies are doing by bringing in new employers. But all stakeholders should continue to raise awareness about the available talent pool of under-represented groups in the Chatham-Kent labour market and the broader benefits accruing to employers when hiring from diverse populations. Employer engagement events of the sort that had been planned for this project should not only be pursued but could be used as a vehicle for obtaining employer input into what an employer engagement strategy could look like.

**Recommendation #4: Build on the data foundation of this report to monitor labour market trends for under-represented populations in the Chatham-Kent labour force.**

The data in this report provides some benchmarks for labour market outcomes of under-represented populations in the Chatham-Kent labour force. These benchmarks could be refined, and in some cases could be made to better reflect actual figures, as opposed to estimated percentages, for Chatham-Kent. Such work could be combined with subsequent data analysis and comparison of trends in several years, after data for the next census (2026 Census) and the next disability survey (2027 Canadian Survey on Disability) are made available.



## **APPENDIX: DATA PROFILES OF UNDER-REPRESENTED POPULATIONS IN CHATHAM-KENT LABOUR MARKET**

This report reviews a number of population categories with barriers to employment and/or who are under-represented in the Chatham-Kent labour market. In the description of these population groups, the report provides a data profile of these groups. This Appendix provides the longer data profiles which were prepared for this report and that are summarized in the section describing these populations.

### **These data profiles are sequenced as follows:**

1. Indigenous population
2. Immigrants
3. Older adults
4. Persons with low income
5. NEET youth (not in education, employment or training)
6. Persons with disabilities

# 1. Data regarding Indigenous persons

## Primary sources

Census 2021

## Definition: Indigenous person

An Indigenous person is someone who identifies with the Indigenous peoples of Canada, which includes those who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit), and/or those who report being Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada), or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band.<sup>26</sup>

## Age profile

More so than other population groups, the Indigenous population has a very large proportion of very young people (0 to 14 years old), a large share of youth (15 to 24 years old) and a smaller proportion of older people (65 years and older), in Ontario as well as in Chatham-Kent. Table 1 shows the distribution of the Indigenous population by four age categories, comparing the figures between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, for Chatham-Kent and for Ontario.

**Table 1: Age profile comparisons, Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Chatham-Kent and Ontario, 2021**

	CHATHAM-KENT		ONTARIO	
Ages	Indigenous	Non-indigenous	Indigenous	Non-indigenous
0-14	26.1%	15.8%	22.3%	15.8%
15-24	15.0%	10.9%	15.6%	11.9%
25-64	47.6%	50.2%	51.7%	54.1%
65+	11.4%	23.1%	10.4%	18.1%

The proportion of working-age residents is very similar between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, but the share of young people (0 to 14, 15 to 24 years old) is much higher among the Indigenous population, and the proportion of those aged 65 years and older is much lower. The very large proportion of those aged 0 to 14 years of age means that the number of Indigenous youths will continue to constitute a larger share as this younger cohort ages into the working age category.

## Number of Indigenous persons in Chatham-Kent

Table 2 provides the total number of working-age (15 to 64 years old) Indigenous persons in Chatham-Kent by three age categories, as well as by sub-categories of Indigenous persons.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> This definition is drawn from Statistics Canada, Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the response rate to the Census on the part of Indigenous persons is generally lower than that for non-Indigenous persons and for the 2021 Census it was even lower (overall response rate: 98%, 85% for Indigenous communities). Part of the speculated reason is that the

**Table 2: Total number of working-age (15 to 64 years old) Indigenous persons by age and by Indigenous sub-category, Chatham-Kent, 2021**

	TOTAL INDIGENOUS	FIRST NATIONS	MÉTIS	OTHER
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	685	415	250	25
<b>25 to 44 years</b>	1,065	630	405	30
<b>45 to 64 years</b>	1,105	565	505	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,855	1,610	1,160	95

*OTHER includes Inuk and multiple Indigenous responses*

The 2,855 working-age Indigenous population represents 4.6% of the working-age population in Chatham-Kent in 2021. Slightly over half (56%) are First Nations and most of the rest (40%) are Métis.

### **Participation in the labour force of working-age Indigenous persons, Chatham-Kent**

Table 3 provides the participation rate for a number of working-age (15 to 64 years old) Indigenous categories and compares the figures to the entire population and to non-Indigenous populations. The participation rate measures the proportion of a population who are in the labour force (either employed or actively looking for work). The participation rates for all these groups are also compared to those same groups living in the Toronto Economic Region (roughly the Greater Toronto Area) and the Rest of Ontario (Ontario minus the Toronto Economic Region figures).

**Table 3: Labour force participation rate for working-age (15 to 64 years old) Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Chatham-Kent, Toronto Region and Rest of Ontario, 2021**

	Chatham-Kent	Rest of Ontario	Toronto Region
<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>	72.8%	75.7%	75.5%
<b>Indigenous population</b>	63.6%	66.2%	69.9%
<b>First Nations (North American Indian)</b>	57.9%	63.0%	68.1%
<b>Métis</b>	71.2%	72.0%	72.6%
<b>Non-Indigenous identity</b>	73.2%	76.2%	75.5%

The Indigenous population has a lower participation rate than the non-Indigenous population in all three areas, and it is largely the result of a much lower participation rate among First Nations people. The participation rate for the Métis population is much closer to that of the non-Indigenous population, and that is particularly the case in Chatham-Kent, while the participation rate for the First Nations population in Chatham-Kent is notably lower than the figures for the Rest of Ontario and the Toronto Economic Region.

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discovery of unmarked residential school graves lowered the willingness of Indigenous communities to cooperate with the federal government census. "Federal department questioned quality of 2021 Indigenous census data: documents," CBC, April 13, 2022.



## Proportion of population with low-income in Chatham-Kent based on LIM-AT, Indigenous and non-Indigenous

Table 4 displays the proportion of the total population living in low-income based on the low-income cut-offs, after tax (LICO-AT),<sup>28</sup> comparing the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population in Chatham-Kent and providing the provincial percentages for context.

**Table 4: Percentage of population with low-income based in LIM-AT, Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Chatham-Kent and Ontario, 2021**

CHATHAM-KENT		ONTARIO	
Indigenous	Non-indigenous	Indigenous	Non-indigenous
20.6%	11.6%	17.0%	9.9%

The Indigenous population has a much higher incidence of low-income in both areas and the proportions for both populations in Chatham-Kent are slightly higher than the provincial averages.

## Educational attainment of Chatham-Kent population aged 15 years and older, Indigenous and non-Indigenous

Table 5 shows the percentage distribution by educational attainment for the population aged 15 years and older, comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents, for both Chatham-Kent and Ontario.

**Table 5: Percentage distribution by educational attainment, residents aged 15 years and older, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Chatham-Kent and Ontario, 2021**

	CHATHAM-KENT		ONTARIO	
	Indigenous	Non-indigenous	Indigenous	Non-indigenous
<b>No certificate</b>	24%	21%	25%	15%
<b>High school</b>	31%	32%	30%	27%
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	7%	6%	6%	5%
<b>College</b>	28%	27%	26%	23%
<b>Bachelor+</b>	10%	13%	12%	30%

*College includes college diploma and university certificate below bachelor level*

*Bachelor+ stands for bachelor's degree or higher*

Starting with the Ontario data, the Indigenous population has a higher proportion of residents with no certificate and a much lower percentage of those with a bachelor's degree or higher, and with slightly higher proportions of those with a high school diploma or a college diploma. In Chatham-Kent, this discrepancy is much reduced, with all figures being within three percentage points of each other, with just a slightly higher proportion of Indigenous persons with no certificate and a slightly lower proportion with a bachelor's degree or higher.

In terms of employment, Indigenous persons in Ontario are more likely to be employed in occupations in education, law and social, community and government services, while less likely to be employed in business, finance and administration occupations, and that is even more so the case in Chatham-Kent. In terms of industries, Indigenous persons in Ontario as well as in Chatham-Kent are more likely to be employed in Health Care and Social Assistance and in Public Administration, and less likely to be employed in Professional,

<sup>28</sup> Individuals whose income is 50% or less than the median after-tax income of the population.

## Summary

### Highlights of this analysis:

- The Indigenous population has a much higher proportion of younger individuals, both those aged 0 to 14 and 15 to 24 years old
- Among working-age persons (15 to 64 years old) in Chatham-Kent, 4.6% are Indigenous; slightly over half (56%) are First Nations, followed by Métis at 40%
- The Indigenous population has a lower participation rate than the non-Indigenous population and it is largely the result of a much lower participation rate among First Nations people compared to Métis individuals
- The Indigenous population has a much higher incidence of low-income individuals and the proportions of low-income individuals among both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Chatham-Kent are slightly higher than the provincial averages
- In Chatham-Kent, the distribution of educational attainment among the Indigenous population is relatively similar to that of the non-Indigenous population, unlike the Ontario figures, where there is a much higher proportion of individuals with no certificate and a much lower proportion of those with a bachelor's degree or higher

## 2. Data regarding working-age immigrants

### Primary sources

Census 2021

### Definition: Working-age immigrant

A person not born in Canada but currently a permanent resident in Canada, aged 15 to 64 years old.

### Number of working-age immigrants in Chatham-Kent

Table 1 provides the number of working-age immigrants in Chatham-Kent, by three age categories and by period of immigration.

**Table 1: Total number of working-age immigrants by age and by period of immigration, Chatham-Kent, 2021**

	Prior to 2001	2001-2010	2011-2016	2016-2021	TOTAL
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	20	250	100	110	480
<b>25 to 44 years</b>	620	655	240	435	1,950
<b>45 to 64 years</b>	2,035	490	145	115	2,785
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,675	1,395	485	660	5,215

### Participation in the labour force of working-age immigrants, Chatham-Kent

Table 2 provides the number of working-age immigrants in Chatham-Kent who are in the labour force (either employed or actively looking for work), by period of immigration and provides their participation rate, comparing it to Canadian-born residents in Chatham-Kent. The participation rates for all these groups are also compared to those same groups living in the Toronto Economic Region (roughly the Greater Toronto Area) and the Rest of Ontario (Ontario minus the Toronto Economic Region figures).



**Table 2: Number of and participation rate for working-age (15 to 64 years old) Canadian-born and immigrants by period of immigration in the labour force, Chatham-Kent, Toronto Region and Rest of Ontario, 2021**

	Canadian-born	Period of immigration			
		Prior to 2001	2001-2010	2011-2016	2016-2021
CHATHAM-KENT					
Number	41,860	1,810	965	335	475
Participation rate	73.2%	67.7%	69.2%	69.1%	72.0%
REST OF ONTARIO					
Participation rate	75.7%	76.6%	76.9%	73.1%	71.7%
TORONTO REGION					
Participation rate	74.1%	78.5%	76.5%	73.6%	76.0%

The participation rate of working-age Canadian-born residents in Chatham-Kent is roughly similar to that for the Toronto Region and only slightly lower than that for the Rest of Ontario. On the other hand, the participation rate of immigrants in Chatham-Kent shows that they have a considerably lower rate compared to those in the Toronto Region and the Rest of Ontario, except for recent newcomers in Chatham-Kent and the Rest of Ontario.

### Estimating the under-representation of immigrants in the Chatham-Kent labour force

There could be several reasons for why the participation rate for immigrants is lower in Chatham-Kent. One possibility may be that immigrants with their higher levels of educational attainment are more able to find employment commensurate with their education in the Toronto Region and the Rest of Ontario, and perhaps less so in Chatham-Kent.

One way to estimate the shortfall in labour force participation would be to calculate how many more immigrants would be participating in the Chatham-Kent labour force if their participation rate matched that for the Rest of Ontario. Table 3 shows the results of that calculation by period of immigration.

**Table 3: Potential additional participants in the Chatham-Kent labour force from working-age immigrants, Chatham-Kent, 2021**

Prior to 2001	2001-2010	2011-2016	2016-2021	TOTAL
235	104	16	0	355

The figure for 2016 to 2021 is zero because the participation rate of Chatham-Kent recent newcomers is slightly higher than for those living in the Rest of Ontario. Overall, if this is an appropriate comparison, then it suggests that the target population among Chatham-Kent immigrants are those who arrived in Canada before 2011.

## Summary

Highlights of this analysis:

- Among working-age (15 to 64 years old) residents of Chatham-Kent, immigrants account for 8.4% of the population; in the Toronto Economic Region, immigrants represent 48.0% of the working-age population, and in the Rest of Ontario, the proportion is 17.2%, slightly more than twice that for Chatham-Kent
- Immigrants in Chatham-Kent have a considerably lower participation rate compared to those in the Toronto Region and the Rest of Ontario, except for recent newcomers in Chatham-Kent and the Rest of Ontario
- If immigrants in Chatham-Kent participated in the labour force in 2021 at the same rate as those in the Rest of Ontario, there would have been an additional 355 persons in the labour force

### 3. Data regarding older adults

#### Primary sources

Census 2021

#### Definition: older adults

For the purposes of this analysis, older adults are persons aged 55 years and older.

#### Participation rate by age

The participation rate refers to the percentage of a given population who are either working or actively looking for work. Table 1 provides the participation rate at the time of the 2021 Census (May 2021) for both males and females for all residents, for Chatham-Kent, the Toronto Economic Region (roughly the Greater Toronto Area) and the Rest of Ontario (Ontario minus the Toronto Economic Region figures).

**Table 1: Participation rates, all male and female residents, Chatham-Kent, Toronto Region and Rest of Ontario, 2021**

	Males	Females
Chatham-Kent	64.6%	56.0%
Rest of Ontario	66.4%	56.5%
Toronto Region	72.5%	61.4%

*Statistics Canada, 2021 Census*

The participation rate in Chatham-Kent is slightly lower than that for the Rest of Ontario, especially for males, and the rate for both areas is much lower than that for the Toronto Region. The Toronto Region is home to a younger population, thanks to immigration, and that would be one reason why the participation rate is lower. However, when comparing participation rates by age categories of older adults, Chatham-Kent's figures are still lower (Table 2).

For males aged 55 to 59, 60 to 64 and 65 to 69 years old, Chatham-Kent's participation rates are lower than those for the Rest of Ontario, and both are considerably lower than those for the Toronto Region. For females, the Chatham-Kent participation rate for these three age groups is very similar to that for the Rest of Ontario, and both are somewhat below the rate for the Toronto Region.

For males aged 70 to 74 years old, the Chatham-Kent rate is greater than that for the Rest of Ontario and just slightly below that for the Toronto Region; for males aged 75 years and older, the Chatham-Kent rate is higher than both the Rest of Ontario and Toronto Region. For females aged 70 to 74 years old and 75 years and older, the rates are relatively the same across all three areas, except that it is lower for Rest of Ontario females aged 70 to 74 years old.



**Table 2: Participation rates, male and female residents aged 55 years and older, Chatham-Kent, Toronto Region and Rest of Ontario, 2021**

	MALES			FEMALES		
	Chatham-Kent	Rest of Ontario	Toronto Region	Chatham-Kent	Rest of Ontario	Toronto Region
<b>55 to 59 years old</b>	74.5%	77.2%	82.1%	66.8%	68.6%	71.4%
<b>60 to 64 years old</b>	54.6%	59.7%	69.1%	48.6%	48.5%	54.1%
<b>65 to 69 years old</b>	31.0%	33.3%	40.9%	22.3%	22.2%	26.2%
<b>70 to 74 years old</b>	20.2%	17.9%	21.6%	11.3%	9.2%	11.2%
<b>75 years and older</b>	9.8%	7.4%	8.2%	3.2%	3.0%	3.2%

*Statistics Canada, 2021 Census*

The likely reason for the considerable difference in participation rates for the same age, especially among males, is because of the different concentrations by occupation that males are employed in. In particular, three occupational categories account for labour that relies more on physical activity, namely:

- NOC 7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations
- NOC 8 Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations
- NOC 9 Occupations in manufacturing and utilities

If one takes all employed males aged 15 years and older, 58% of all males in Chatham-Kent work in one of these three occupations. In the Rest of Ontario, the percentage is 38% and, in the Toronto Region, it is 31%. These are occupations where individuals are more likely to retire earlier, which would be why the Chatham-Kent participation rate among older males is lower. The exception is among NOC 80020 Managers in agriculture (farmers): being either self-employed or managing a farm, they are more likely to continue working at an older age. In Chatham-Kent, among employed males aged 15 to 54 years old, 2% work as farmers. For males aged 55 to 64 years old, 6% work as farmers, and for those aged 65 years and older, 20% work as farmers.

## Summary

The highlights of the analysis:

- Among older adults, Chatham-Kent has a lower participation rate compared to the Toronto Region and the Rest of Ontario, particularly among males
- The lower participation rate is largely due to the much higher proportion of males working in occupations requiring more physical activity, which likely results in earlier retirement
- There may be less opportunity to entice older females in Chatham-Kent who are not in the labour force to seek employment, as their participation rate is roughly similar to that of females in the Toronto Region and the Rest of Ontario
- While older males in Chatham-Kent have lower participation rates, it may be more difficult to entice them to continue working in their previous occupations, if part of the challenge resides in the reduced ability to carry out physical activity; the more likely option would be to explore their appetite for work in other occupations, likely in the service sector

## 4. Data regarding persons with low income

### Primary sources

Census 2021

Ontario Works client data

### Definition: Person with low income

This analysis will approach this category in several ways:

- Persons with low income based on LIM-AT, which is the low-income measure (50% or less of median after-tax income)
- Persons in receipt of income support (Employment Insurance, Ontario Works, ODSP)

### Population with low-income in Chatham-Kent based on LIM-AT

Table 1 presents the data for individuals with low income in Chatham-Kent, based on the 2021 Census, and compares the proportions to the Ontario figures.

**Table 1: Residents with low income in Chatham-Kent, 2021**

	Total	Males	Females
<b>NUMBER</b>			
<b>15 to 49 years old</b>	4,000	1,915	2,100
<b>50 to 64 years old</b>	3,100	1,560	1,540
<b>65 years and older</b>	2,965	1,115	1,850
<b>TOTAL (15 YEARS AND OLDER)</b>	10,065	4,575	5,490
<b>PERCENT OF THAT AGE GROUP – CHATHAM-KENT</b>			
<b>15 to 49 years old</b>	10.0%	9.5%	10.6%
<b>50 to 64 years old</b>	13.4%	13.8%	12.9%
<b>65 years and older</b>	12.1%	9.8%	14.0%
<b>TOTAL (15 YEARS AND OLDER)</b>	11.5%	10.7%	12.2%
<b>PERCENT OF THAT AGE GROUP – ONTARIO</b>			
<b>15 to 49 years old</b>	8.9%	8.5%	9.2%
<b>50 to 64 years old</b>	9.6%	9.7%	9.6%
<b>65 years and older</b>	11.6%	9.9%	12.9%
<b>TOTAL (15 YEARS AND OLDER)</b>	9.6%	9.1%	10.2%

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

### Several observations regarding Table 1:

- Overall, females have a higher incidence of low income compared to males, except in the 50 to 64 years old category; the difference between low-income rates is especially large among females aged 65 years and older
- In every category, Chatham-Kent residents have a higher incidence of low income compared to Ontario, and the difference is especially pronounced among those aged 50 to 64 years old

## Demographic characteristics of population with low-income in Chatham-Kent

The low-income population has several demographic characteristics which are different from the average and/or from the population that is not low income:

- Low-income individuals are less likely to be married and more likely to be living alone
- If there are children present, persons living in low-income are more likely to be in a one-parent family as opposed to a two-parent family
- Persons living in low income rely on government transfers for around 80% of their total income, and around 10% comes from employment income
- Immigrants make up a fractionally larger share of persons in low-income (around 10%) than their share of persons not in low-income (around 9%)
- Persons of Indigenous identity make up a much larger share of persons in low-income (around 8%) than their share of persons not in low-income (around 1%)
- Racialized persons make up a slightly larger share of persons in low-income (around 8%) than their share of persons not in low-income (around 6%)

## Educational attainment of population with low-income in Chatham-Kent

Table 2 compares the educational attainment of the population aged 15 years and older with low-income in Chatham-Kent and compares the proportions with the same age group not in low-income.

**Table 2: Educational attainment of Chatham-Kent residents aged 15 years and older, with and without low-income, 2021**

	WITH LOW INCOME		WITHOUT LOW INCOME	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
No certificate	39%	34%	22%	17%
High school diploma	35%	36%	33%	31%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate	8%	4%	10%	3%
College diploma	12%	21%	22%	31%
University degree (bachelor or above)	6%	4%	12%	16%

*Statistics Canada, 2021 Census*

The difference between the two groups shows up at the two ends of the educational attainment scale: those individuals with low-income are more likely to have no certificate and less likely to have a postsecondary education, especially a college diploma or a university degree, compared to those not in the low-income category.

## Labour market characteristics of population with low-income in Chatham-Kent

Table 3 compares various labour market characteristics of persons with low-income and those not with low-income. Most of these indicators reflect circumstances at the time when the census was administered (May 20210, but the last several rows highlight activity in the reference year of 2020.



**Table 3: Labour market characteristics of Chatham-Kent residents aged 15 years and older, with and without low-income, 2021**

	WITH LOW INCOME		WITHOUT LOW INCOME	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>Not in the labour force</b>	65.5%	76.0%	35.1%	42.5%
<b>In the labour force</b>	34.5%	24.0%	64.9%	57.5%
<b>Employed</b>	25.8%	18.3%	59.0%	51.4%
<b>Not employed</b>	8.7%	5.6%	5.9%	6.1%
<b>Employee</b>	52.7%	65.6%	83.5%	89.0%
<b>Permanent</b>	40.7%	51.9%	73.2%	77.1%
<b>Temporary</b>	12.0%	14.1%	10.3%	11.8%
<b>Self-employed</b>	37.2%	26.3%	15.0%	9.5%
<b>WORK ACTIVITY DURING 2020</b>				
<b>Did not work</b>	69.6%	77.2%	34.0%	41.2%
<b>Worked</b>	30.5%	22.7%	66.0%	58.8%
<b>Worked full year full-time</b>	10.3%	4.8%	38.0%	27.7%
<b>Worked part year and/or part time</b>	20.2%	17.9%	28.0%	31.0%

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

Persons with low income are:

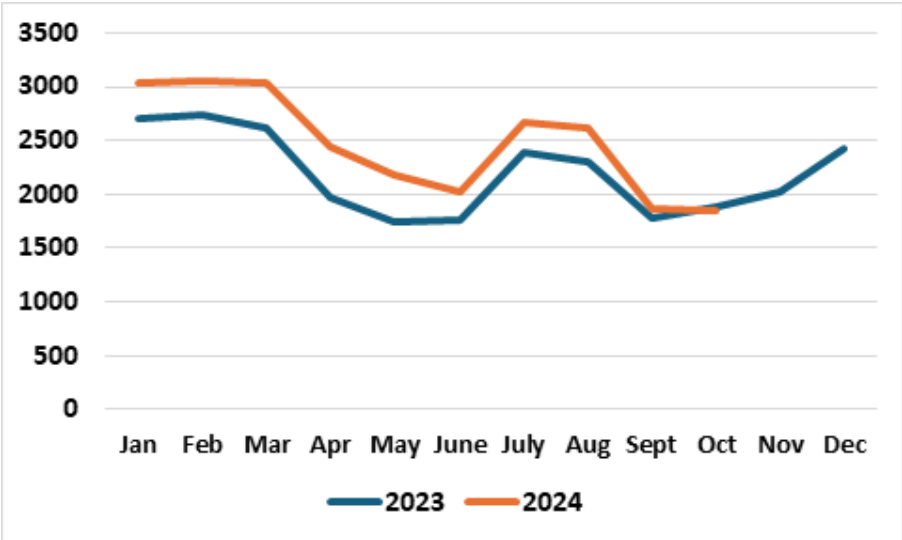
- Almost twice as likely not to be participating in the labour force
- If working, are much more likely to be self-employed, much more likely to be employed in a temporary position and more likely to be working part-time

Among males with low income who are employed, they are slightly more likely to be employed in Construction or Agriculture, and slightly less likely to be employed in Manufacturing. Among females with low income who are employed, they are much more likely to be employed in Sales and Services Occupations (in particular, in the Accommodation and Food Services industry), and less likely to be working in Business, Finance and Administration Occupations. Both males and females with low incomes who are employed are more likely to be employed in the Administrative and Support Services industry.

### **Persons in receipt of Employment Insurance in Chatham-Kent**

Chart 1 shows the trend relating to Employment Insurance beneficiaries in Chatham-Kent, between January 2023 and June 2024.

Chart 1: Number of Employment Insurance beneficiaries in Chatham-Kent, January 2023 to October 2024



Statistics Canada, EI monthly claimants

The number of monthly claimants varies over the course of a year, with the number of claimants usually falling between 2,000 and 3,000. In 2024, the number of claimants has been around 300 to 400 greater than the same time last year, an increase of 12% to 24%, depending on the month. An increase in EI claimants often precedes an increase in Ontario Works claimants at a later date. In the late summer and early fall of 2024, the number of receipts dropped to the point where that increase over 2023 was no longer there.

Over this time period, the distribution of EI claimants by age category was as follows:

- 15 to 29 years old: around 30%
- 30 to 54 years old: around 50%
- 55 years and older: around 20%

Table 4 shows the percentage of employment services clients who are Employment Insurance beneficiaries (in the case of the previous system called EO in the table, this refers to Assisted Clients, whereas under the Service System Manager model – IES, it refers to all clients).

Table 4: Percentage of employment services clients who are Employment Insurance claimants, Chatham-Kent, Western/Central-West and Ontario, 2021-22 to 2023-24

	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
	EO	IES	EO	IES	EO	IES
Chatham-Kent	21%		15%		14%	10%
Western; Central-West	23%	14%	10%	6%	8%	6%
Ontario	21%	12%	9%	5%	7%	7%

Over the last two years, EI claimants have made up between 5% and 10% of employment services clients in the Western/Central-West Region and Ontario, and a higher 10% to 15% of the clients in Chatham-Kent. The proportions in 2021-22 were much higher because of the larger number of individuals who qualified for EI because of the lockdowns experienced during COVID.

Persons in receipt of Ontario Works in Chatham-Kent

The number of Ontario Works cases<sup>29</sup> had dropped during COVID but has been slowly increasing again, although the number has not yet returned to the 2019 level (Table 5).

Table 5: Number of OW cases, Chatham-Kent, monthly average, 2019 to 2024 (up to June 2024)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number	2,422	2,264	1,936	2,171	2,222	2,329
As a percent of 2019	100%	93%	80%	90%	92%	96%

The family structure of these cases is profiled in Table 6.

Table 6: Family structure of OW cases (monthly average), Chatham-Kent, June 2024 and change since 2019

Family structure	Percentage composition		Percentage change since 2019
	2019	2024	
Singles without children	59%	65%	5%
Singles with children	33%	30%	-13%
Couples without children	3%	1%	-52%
Couple with children	6%	4%	-24%

Singles without children make up the largest proportion of OW cases in Chatham-Kent and that family composition is the only one that has grown since 2019; indeed, the proportion of couples, with or without children, constitute the smallest share of cases and have declined considerably. Singles with children are the second largest category and while it has declined somewhat, it still accounts for three out of ten cases.

The distribution of levels of educational attainment in 2024 for all Chatham-Kent adult beneficiaries (which include primary applicants, spouses and dependent adults) is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Distribution by levels of educational attainment, adult OW beneficiaries, Chatham-Kent, 2024

Grade 1-8	Grade 9-11	Grade 12-13	Post-secondary
4%	41%	38%	17%

The proportion of OW adult beneficiaries with a post-secondary education (17%) is just slightly more than a third of the proportion for the total Chatham-Kent population aged 15 years and older (45%). The proportion of OW adult beneficiaries with no certificate (45%) is more than double the rate for the general population (21%).

29 A case refers to a single individual or a family unit on social assistance. The number of beneficiaries refers to the total number of single individuals and heads of family units on social assistance plus all their dependents (that is, spouses, dependent children and dependent adults).



Table 8 shows the percentage of employment services clients who rely on Ontario Works as a source of income.

**Table 8: Percentage of employment services clients who rely on Ontario Works as a source of income, Chatham-Kent, Western/Central-West and Ontario, 2021-22 to 2023-24**

	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
	EO	IES	EO	IES	EO	IES
<b>Chatham-Kent</b>	7%		9%		13%	49%
<b>Western; Central-West</b>	15%	39%	17%	30%	15%	31%
<b>Ontario</b>	12%	36%	14%	28%	18%	33%

OW clients had typically represented about 15% of Assisted clients under the previous system; with the Service System Manager model, the proportion of OW clients has basically doubled. Under the EO system, Chatham-Kent had a proportion of OW claimants among its EO clients which was around half of that at the regional and provincial levels; but with the IES, the proportion of OW clients is now around 50% higher than the proportions for the region and the province.

### Persons in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program in Chatham-Kent

Table 9 shows the recent Ontario Disability Support Program client data for Chatham-Kent. The categories are as follows:

- **Case:** A single individual or a family unit on social assistance
- **Child:** A person who is considered to be a dependent child (under 18 years old, lives in same home as parent(s), parent is an ODSP recipient or his/her spouse, and parent is primary caregiver)
- **Adult:** Person 18 years or older (for ODSP, the total number of adults is the sum of PWD and NDA)
- **PWD (person with disabilities):** Adults including primary applicant or spouse adjudicated as a person with disabilities
- **NDA:** (an adult who has not been adjudicated as a person with disabilities)

**Table 9: Ontario Disability Support Program client data, Chatham-Kent, 2018-19 to 2022-23**

	CASE	ADULT	PWD	NDA	CHILD
<b>2018-2019</b>	4,517	5,373	4,666	708	992
<b>2019-2020</b>	4,557	5,397	4,712	684	1,016
<b>2020-2021</b>	4,553	5,379	4,711	668	1,041
<b>2021-2022</b>	4,478	5,276	4,631	645	1,014
<b>2022-2023</b>	4,508	5,263	4,669	593	1,024

Generally, the ODSP numbers have been relatively stable, with a slight dip in 2021-22. The only figure which has truly changed is the number of non-disabled adults, which has dropped by 16% from 2018-19.

Table 10 shows the percentage of employment services clients who rely on Ontario Disability Support Program as a source of income.

**Table 10: Percentage of employment services clients who rely on Ontario Disability Support Program as a source of income, Chatham-Kent, Western/Central-West and Ontario, 2021-22 to 2023-24**

	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
	EO	IES	EO	IES	EO	IES
<b>Chatham-Kent</b>	14%		11%		10%	13%
<b>Western; Central-West</b>	5%	10%	5%	10%	5%	5%
<b>Ontario</b>	4%	8%	5%	8%	5%	7%

Chatham-Kent has consistently had a much higher proportion of ODSP beneficiaries among its employment services clientele, always double or more the proportion at the regional or provincial level, both under EO as well as the new IES.

## Summary

Highlights of this analysis:

- In every category, Chatham-Kent residents have a higher incidence of low income compared to Ontario, and the difference is especially pronounced among those aged 50 to 64 years old
- Low-income individuals are less likely to be married and more likely to be living alone; if there are children present, persons living in low-income are more likely to be in a one-parent family
- Individuals with low-income are more likely to have no certificate and less likely to have a postsecondary education, especially a college diploma or a university degree, compared to those not in the low-income category
- Persons with low income are almost twice as likely not to be participating in the labour force; if they are working, they are much more likely to be self-employed, much more likely to be employed in a temporary position and more likely to be working part-time
- The number of Employment Insurance claimants in Chatham-Kent had risen over the same period last year but has since declined; EI claimants make up a slightly higher proportion of employment services clients in Chatham-Kent than at the regional or provincial levels
- Singles without children make up the largest proportion of Ontario Works cases in Chatham-Kent and that family composition is the only one that has grown since 2019
- The proportion of OW adult beneficiaries with a post-secondary education is just slightly more than a third of the proportion for the total Chatham-Kent population aged 15 years and older; the proportion of OW adult beneficiaries with no certificate is more than double the rate for the general population
- Under the EO system, Chatham-Kent had a proportion of OW claimants among its EO clients which was around half of that at the regional and provincial levels; but with the IES, the proportion of OW clients is now around 50% higher than the proportions for the region and the province; it is not clear why this shift has occurred
- Chatham-Kent has consistently had a much higher proportion of ODSP beneficiaries among its employment services clientele, always double or more the proportion at the regional or provincial level, both under EO as well as the new IES

## 5. Data regarding NEET youth

### Primary sources

Canadian Survey on Disability; 2022, 2017

Census 2021

### Definition: NEET youth

NEET refers to Not in Education, Employment or Training, and is calculated as a percentage of all youth who are not in the labour force and not attending school.

### Incidence of NEET youth

Table 1 provides the percentage of NEET youth, by gender and by four age categories: 15 to 19 years old, 20 to 24 years old, 25 to 29 years old, and 15 to 29 years old, for Chatham-Kent and for Ontario (as a comparison), for 2016 and 2021.

**Table 1: Percentage of NEET youth, by age and by gender, Chatham-Kent and Ontario, 2016 and 2021**

	CHATHAM-KENT			ONTARIO		
2021	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
15 to 19 years old	6.1%	4.4%	5.2%	5.8%	5.0%	5.4%
20 to 24 years old	11.7%	15.0%	13.2%	9.3%	8.5%	8.9%
25 to 29 years old	15.3%	22.6%	18.9%	10.0%	12.9%	11.4%
TOTAL: 15 to 29 years old	10.9%	13.9%	12.3%	8.5%	9.1%	8.8%
2016	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
15 to 19 years old	6.9%	5.9%	6.4%	5.2%	4.4%	4.8%
20 to 24 years old	10.5%	13.8%	12.3%	6.9%	7.5%	7.2%
25 to 29 years old	11.9%	18.4%	15.0%	7.5%	12.4%	10.0%
TOTAL: 15 to 29 years old	9.6%	12.3%	11.0%	6.5%	8.2%	7.4%

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (custom purchase for workforce planning boards)

A few observations about the data in Table 1:

- In almost all instances, Chatham-Kent has a higher proportion of NEET youth than Ontario (except Chatham-Kent females aged 15 to 19 years old in 2021)
- In almost all instances in Chatham-Kent and Ontario, the percentage of NEET youth increased between 2016 and 2021 (except for Chatham-Kent youth aged 15 to 19 years old)
- The incidence of NEET youth increases among females at a faster rate than males as youth get older; this may well be because more females drop out of the labour force as they become mothers of young children

## Estimate of number of NEET youths with and without disabilities

It is possible to calculate a rough estimate of the number of NEET youth in Chatham-Kent, with and without disabilities.<sup>30</sup> It requires several assumptions to be made, which is why it is a rough estimate, but the value of this calculation is that it provides a sense of the orders of magnitude within these categories.

The assumptions are as follows:

- The data for total population and for the NEET youth is based on 2021 Census data
- The percentages for youth with disabilities and for youth with disabilities who are NEET youth is based on the Canadian Survey of Disability 2022
- The total number of youths aged 15 to 29 years old in Chatham-Kent is a known quantity
- The number of youths in Chatham-Kent who have a disability can be estimated using the percentage of youth in Canada who are disabled; for this calculation, the percentage for those aged 15 to 24 years old is based on the figure for that age group, the percentage for youth aged 25 to 29 years old is based on the percentage for those aged 25 to 44 years old in Canada
- The number of NEET youth in Chatham-Kent is a known quality
- The number of youths who are NEET youth with a disability in Chatham-Kent is based on the percentage of youth with a disability who are NEET in Canada

The numbers which result from these assumptions and calculations are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Number of youths aged 15 to 29 years old, by gender, by NEET and with or without a disability, Chatham-Kent, 2021/2022**

	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
<b># ALL YOUTH</b>	8,370	8,320	16,685
<b># Youth with disabilities</b>	1,353	2,036	3,374
<b>% youth with disabilities</b>	16%	25%	20%
<b># All NEET youth</b>	945	1,120	2,055
<b># NEET youth with disability</b>	350	309	661
<b># NEET youth without disability</b>	595	811	1,394
<b>% NEET youth with disability</b>	37%	28%	32%

*BOLDED numbers are actual; estimated numbers are not bolded; estimated numbers across a row do not perfectly add up because of rounding errors when applying percentages*

*Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (custom purchase for workforce planning boards) and Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022 Table 13-10-0893-01*

<sup>30</sup> A person with a disability is someone who reports a limitation in their day-to-day activities. The way this is assessed is through Disability Screening Questions, which measure the degree to which difficulties are experienced across 10 domains of functioning, as well as how often daily activities are limited by these difficulties.



## Summary

### Highlights of the analysis:

- In almost all instances, Chatham-Kent has a higher proportion of NEET youth than Ontario
- In almost all instances in Chatham-Kent and Ontario, the percentage of NEET youth increased between 2016 and 2021
- The incidence of NEET youth increases among females at a faster rate than males as youth get older; this may well be because more females drop out of the labour force as they become mothers of young children
- Around a third of NEET youth (37% of males and 28% of females) have a disability
- The estimated number of NEET youth (aged 15 to 29 years old) is 2,055 (945 males and 1,120 females)

## 6. Data regarding persons with disabilities

### Primary sources

Canadian Survey on Disability; 2022, 2017, 2012

Census 2021

### Definition: Person with a disability

A person with a disability is someone who reports a limitation in their day-to-day activities. Disability Screening Questions measure the degree to which difficulties are experienced across 10 domains of functioning, as well as how often daily activities are limited by these difficulties.<sup>31</sup>

### Incidence of disability in Ontario population

**Table 1: Percentage of population with a disability, by age and gender, Ontario, 2022 and 2017**

	2022		2017	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>15-24 years old</b>	16%	25%	11%	17%
<b>25-64 years old</b>	22%	28%	20%	22%
<b>65 years and older</b>	42%	45%	40%	45%

Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey of Disability, Table 13-10-0374-01

In almost every category, the proportion of persons with a disability has increased between 2017 and 2022. In all age categories, females have a slightly higher rate of persons with a disability than males.

### Estimated number of persons with a disability in Chatham-Kent

Estimates are calculated by applying the proportions for persons with a disability in Ontario (Table 1) to the Chatham-Kent population.

**Table 2: Estimate of the number of persons with a disability, by age and gender, Chatham-Kent, 2022**

	TOTAL POPULATION		Persons with a disability	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>15-24 years old</b>	5,875	5,400	934	1,339
<b>25-64 years old</b>	25,020	26,120	5,529	7,183
<b>65 years and older</b>	10,935	12,140	4,604	5,402

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (custom purchase for workforce planning boards)

<sup>31</sup> Canadian Survey on Disability.

## Types of disability

There are five major categories of disability, several of which have multiple subcategories. Table 3 shows the percentage distribution in Canada of these subcategories by age (youth and working-age adults) and by gender and compares the figures for 2017 and 2022. The figures in each column add up to more than 100% because an individual can have more than one disability.

**Table 3: Types of disability, by age and by gender, Canada, 2017 and 2022**

	2022		2017	
15-24 YEARS OLD	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>COGNITIVE DISABILITY</b>				
Learning	53.1%	40.8%	52.1%	33.9%
Developmental	30.0%	10.9%	30.0%	10.0%
Memory	22.6%	17.7%	19.6%	18.4%
<b>SENSORY DISABILITY</b>				
Seeing	18.1%	23.5%	14.0%	20.8%
Hearing	6.6%	7.7%	7.1%	6.2%
<b>PHYSICAL DISABILITY</b>				
Mobility	9.9%	10.0%	9.2%	13.9%
Flexibility	10.1%	10.0%	13.1%	13.2%
Dexterity	7.9%	4.4%	10.5%	6.7%
<b>PAIN-RELATED DISABILITY</b>				
Pain-related	25.5%	39.0%	26.2%	38.1%
<b>MENTAL HEALTH-RELATED DISABILITY</b>				
Mental health-related	53.4%	77.3%	48.6%	67.6%
25-64 YEARS OLD	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>COGNITIVE DISABILITY</b>				
Learning	23.3%	21.0%	20.6%	17.6%
Developmental	7.1%	4.7%	6.6%	3.8%
Memory	18.5%	19.2%	18.2%	17.5%
<b>SENSORY DISABILITY</b>				
Seeing	25.8%	29.7%	23.1%	25.6%
Hearing	18.0%	14.8%	22.3%	14.1%
<b>PHYSICAL DISABILITY</b>				
Mobility	30.0%	32.7%	33.1%	39.0%
Flexibility	37.4%	34.5%	41.3%	41.1%
Dexterity	14.9%	15.8%	15.3%	19.7%
<b>PAIN-RELATED DISABILITY</b>				
Pain-related	59.7%	65.9%	64.6%	69.7%
<b>MENTAL HEALTH-RELATED DISABILITY</b>				
Mental health-related	39.7%	51.1%	31.7%	43.3%

Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey of Disability, Table 13-10-0376-01

There are significant differences by age and by gender in terms of the incidence of different disabilities. Several observations arising from Table 3:

- Youth have a higher incidence of mental health-related disability than adults, females have a higher incidence than males (more pronounced among youth), and the incidence has increased at a higher-than-average rate for both youth and adult
- Youth have a much higher incidence of learning disabilities compared to adults, and males have a higher incidence than females, especially among youth, and the incidence has increased at a higher-than-average rate among females
- Youth have a much higher incidence of developmental disability, and it is much higher among males; it has increased at a higher-than-average rate among females and male adults
- Adults have a much higher incidence of pain-related disability, with adult females having a slightly higher rate, while female youth have a notably higher rate than youth males; the incidence has not changed much
- Adults have much higher incidences of physical disabilities, with limited differences between males and females and the rate of change has declined for all categories, except for male youth, which is slightly above average
- Seeing disability has increased for all categories and has increased at a greater rate among youth
- Female youth have experienced a slight increase in the hearing disability category

### **Severity of disability**

The Canadian Survey of Disability calculates the severity of a person's disability based on the number of disability types, the level of difficulty associated with the disability and the frequency of the activity limitation. The scores are then grouped in four severity classes: mild; moderate; severe; and very severe.

Table 4 shows the results of the severity of a disability among persons with a disability for Canada, by age categories and gender.

The results for those aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 44 years old are very similar: around 50% of persons with a disability appear to have a mild disability, around 20% have a moderate disability, around 20% have a severe disability, and around 10% have a very severe disability.

At age 45 to 64 years old, those with a mild disability drops down to 35% to 40%, those with a moderate disability stands around 20%, those with a severe disability also stays around 20%, while those with a very severe disability rises to around 25%.

At age 65 years or older, the mild disability is around 30%, those with a moderate disability is around 20%, those with a severe disability is around 20%, and those with a very severe disability is around 25% (for males) to around 30% (for females).

As women get older, the incidence of having a very severe disability surpasses that of men. Among the older population, the incidence of the severity of a disability has declined very slightly.



**Table 4: Severity of disability, by age categories and by gender, Canada, 2017 and 2022**

	MALES		FEMALES	
	2017	2022	2017	2022
<b>15-24 YEARS OLD</b>				
<b>Mild</b>	47%	50%	50%	46%
<b>Moderate</b>	20%	19%	22%	21%
<b>Severe</b>	20%	17%	18%	21%
<b>Very severe</b>	13%	15%	10%	12%
<b>25-44 YEARS OLD</b>				
<b>Mild</b>	48%	50%	49%	48%
<b>Moderate</b>	21%	19%	18%	20%
<b>Severe</b>	18%	17%	19%	19%
<b>Very severe</b>	13%	14%	14%	13%
<b>45-64 YEARS OLD</b>				
<b>Mild</b>	39%	40%	32%	35%
<b>Moderate</b>	19%	21%	19%	20%
<b>Severe</b>	18%	18%	23%	21%
<b>Very severe</b>	24%	21%	26%	24%
<b>65 YEARS AND OLDER</b>				
<b>Mild</b>	31%	33%	27%	29%
<b>Moderate</b>	22%	22%	20%	17%
<b>Severe</b>	23%	21%	24%	23%
<b>Very severe</b>	25%	24%	30%	31%

Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey of Disability, Table 13-10-0375-01

## Labour force status

Table 5 shows the labour force status of population groups by age, gender and disability status, for all Canada. Of course, actual unemployment rates and participation rates change, but what is important are the relative outcomes when compared between population groups.

In all instances, persons with a disability have a lower participation rate than those without a disability (although for females aged 15 to 24 years old it is almost the same). Females always have a lower participation rate than males, except among youth aged 15 to 24 years old.

Persons with a disability have a higher unemployment rate than those without (though this does not apply to those aged 65 years and older). As a result of both a lower participation rate and a higher unemployment rate, persons with a disability have a considerably lower employment rate.

**Table 5: Labour force status by age, gender and disability status, Canada, 2022**

15-24 YEARS OLD	WITHOUT DISABILITY		WITH DISABILITY	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Participation rate	60.8%	62.7%	52.1%	60.9%
Employment rate	49.5%	51.7%	37.4%	44.8%
Unemployment rate	11.2%	10.9%	14.7%	16.0%
25-64 YEARS OLD	WITHOUT DISABILITY		WITH DISABILITY	
	MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
Participation rate	88.4%	79.9%	71.7%	68.1%
Employment rate	82.0%	73.4%	62.8%	61.1%
Unemployment rate	6.5%	6.5%	9.0%	7.0%
65 YEARS and OLDER	WITHOUT DISABILITY		WITH DISABILITY	
	MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
Participation rate	25.9%	14.4%	16.3%	8.8%
Employment rate	22.8%	12.4%	14.2%	7.0%
Unemployment rate	3.1%	2.0%	2.1%	1.7%

Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey of Disability, Table 13-10-0377-01

Table 6 shows this same data, but this time only for those aged 25 to 64 years old and compares the results from three Canadian Survey of Disability results (2022, 2017 and 2012). Once again, the relevance of this data is not the actual numbers but the relative positioning.

What is very noteworthy is that across the three time frames, the participation rate for males and females without a disability stayed around the same, within a narrow bandwidth of no more than one-and-a-half percentage points. Meanwhile, the participation rate for males and females with a disability has increased significantly during each time period:

- For males it increased by 7.7 percentile points from 2012 to 2017 and by 3.3 percentile points from 2017 to 2022
- For females it increased by 6.4 percentile points between both 2012 to 2017 and 2017 to 2022

Over these three time periods, the difference between the unemployment rate for persons with and without disabilities has narrowed, especially for females.

The results of these two trends have meant that the employment rate has improved considerably for persons with disabilities between 2012 and 2022. In 2012, the employment rate for those with disabilities was around 60% of the rate for those not disabled; in 2017, it was around 75% and in 2022, it was around 80%. The improvement for disabled females (an increase of 48%) was greater than that for disabled males (33%).

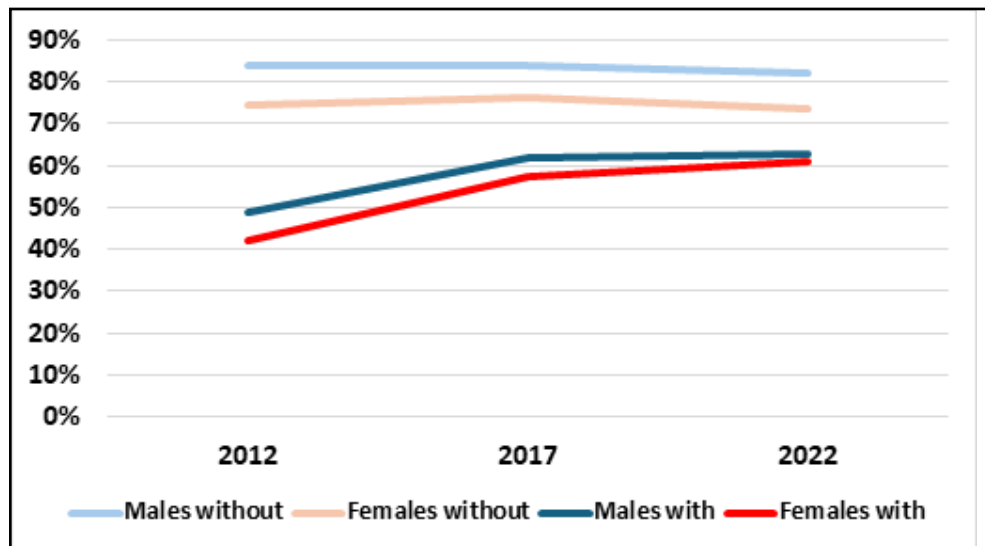
**Table 6: Labour force status for those aged 25 to 64 years old, by gender and disability status, Canada, 2012, 2017 and 2022**

2022	WITHOUT DISABILITY		WITH DISABILITY	
	MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
Participation rate	88.4%	79.9%	71.7%	68.1%
Employment rate	82.0%	73.4%	62.8%	61.1%
Unemployment rate	6.5%	6.5%	9.0%	7.0%
2017	WITHOUT DISABILITY		WITH DISABILITY	
	MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
Participation rate	89.4%	80.3%	68.4%	61.7%
Employment rate	84.0%	76.3%	61.8%	57.4%
Unemployment rate	5.4%	4.0%	6.6%	4.3%
2012	WITHOUT DISABILITY		WITH DISABILITY	
	MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
Participation rate	89.0%	78.9%	60.7%	55.3%
Employment rate	83.9%	74.4%	48.8%	42.0%
Unemployment rate	5.6%	5.6%	9.0%	9.8%

Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey of Disability, Tables 13-10-0347-01 and 13-10-0377-01

Chart 1 illustrates the trends in employment rates among these populations.

**Chart 1: Employment rates for males and females aged 25 to 64 years old, with and without disabilities, Canada, 2012, 2017 and 2022**



Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey of Disability, Tables 13-10-0347-01 and 13-10-0377-01

There is also data available showing labour force status by disability category (only the larger categories, not the subcategories). This data is only available from the 2017 survey, but as before, its relevance is the relative comparisons between the various categories. Table 7 shows the data for total populations aged 25 to 64 years old.

**Table 7: Labour force status for persons with a disability aged 25 to 64 years old, by disability category, Canada, 2017**

	Sensory disability	Physical disability	Pain-related disability	Mental health-related disability	Cognitive disability
Participation rate	60.6%	47.6%	56.9%	53.1%	48.0%
Employment rate	55.0%	41.9%	50.8%	46.1%	40.4%
Unemployment rate	9.2%	11.9%	10.8%	13.2%	15.9%

Ranking the labour force outcomes from best to worst:

- Sensory disability
- Pain-related disability
- Mental health-related disability
- Physical disability
- Cognitive disability

The participation rates and employment rates are all within a narrower range, while there is a greater spread across the unemployment rates, with unemployment rates for those with cognitive disability being particularly higher.

**Persons with disabilities with no work potential**

Potential to work refers to those disabled persons who are not working but are able to have a job and to do the expected work. In the Canadian Survey on Disability, persons without work potential have a very specific meaning, as follows:

A person with a disability who is unemployed and who is either:

- Not in the labour force and not expected to look for work in the next 12 months
- Prevented from working due to their condition and there are no existing workplace accommodations which could enable them to work
- Are completely retired

Table 8 shows the percentage of persons with a disability who are unemployed and who lack the potential to work, by age and gender, for 2017 and 2022.

**Table 8: Percentage of persons with a disability who are unemployed and who are without work potential, by age and gender, Canada, 2017 and 2022**

	2022		2017	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
15-24 years old	14%	9%	12%	12%
25-64 years old	57%	59%	58%	62%
65 years and older	93%	95%	94%	97%

Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey of Disability, Table 13-10-0895-01



Among youth with a disability, only around 10% are unemployed and without work potential, whereas among those aged 65 years and older, almost all (93% to 97%) are without work potential. While many of these would be retired, it would appear, given the figures for those aged 25 to 64 years old, that the other factors also contribute to this number, given that adults of working age with a disability have quite a high proportion who are without work potential (around 60%). By and large, these proportions have declined very slightly for each category, except for male youth.

**Persons with a disability and usage of employment services and literacy and basic skills services**

Employment services have been undergoing a transformation in Ontario over the last few years, which has been implemented in a geographically sequenced manner. The new system (Integrated Employment Services – IES) places a greater emphasis on providing more intensive services for those at greater risk on long-term unemployment. Using a common assessment tool, individuals are more likely to be assigned a higher intensity of support where they are in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), or where they have a disability.

Table 9 shows the proportion of employment services clients with a disability, compared under the old system (in the table identified as EO) and for IES, for Chatham-Kent, for the Region level (for 2021-22 and 2022-23: Western; for 2023-24: Central-West), and for Ontario, for a three-year period.

**Table 9: Percentage of employment services clients with a disability, Chatham-Kent, Western/Central-West and Ontario, 2021-22 to 2023-24**

	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
	EO	IES	EO	IES	EO	IES
Chatham-Kent	33%		34%		30%	54%
Western; Central-West	18%	50%	19%	44%	20%	33%
Ontario	13%	43%	15%	39%	16%	38%

With the transformation to IES, the proportion of clients with a disability has more than doubled. Yet in Chatham-Kent, the proportion of clients with a disability under EO was already much higher, so that with the advent of IES, their share reached over half (54%).

Table 10 provides the same data regarding the proportion of persons with a disability among learners in the Literacy and Basic Skills program.

**Table 10: Percentage of Literacy and Basic Skills clients with a disability, Chatham-Kent, Western/Central-West and Ontario, 2021-22 to 2023-24**

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Chatham-Kent	51%	38%	38%
Western; Central-West	31%	32%	24%
Ontario	25%	26%	32%

Once again, Chatham-Kent has a higher proportion of clients with a disability in its Literacy and Basic Skills program, although, apart from 2021-2022, not nearly as large a difference in relation to the other two areas as was present in the employment services data in Table 9.

## Summary

### Highlights of this analysis:

- Roughly one quarter of all Ontario residents aged 15 to 64 years old report a disability
- Applying the Ontario percentages for persons with a disability by gender and by youth and adults to the Chatham-Kent 2021 population figures for those aged 15 to 64 years old means there are approximately 15,000 residents in that age bracket who report a disability
- Females have a slightly higher incidence of disability than males, especially among youth
- Youth have a much higher incidence of learning and developmental disabilities than adults, and these disabilities are more pronounced among male youth
- Youth also have a considerably higher incidence of mental health-related disabilities than adults, and these disabilities are more pronounced among female youth
- Adults have a much higher incidence of pain-related disability and physical disability (mobility, flexibility and dexterity)
- Among youth (15 to 24 years old) and younger adults (25 to 44 years old) with a disability, around 50% have a mild disability and around 30% have a severe or very severe disability; among older adults (45 to 64 years old), around 40% have a mild disability and 40% have a severe or very severe disability; among seniors (65 years and older), around 30% have a mild disability and around 50% have a severe or very severe disability; as women get older, the incidence of having a very severe disability surpasses that of men
- Among all residents in Canada aged 15 to 64 years old in 2021, persons with a disability had a labour force participation rate of 68% compared to 80% for persons without a disability; males with a disability have a greater gap in their participation rate compared to males without a disability than do comparisons between females with and without a disability
- The participation rate for males and females with a disability has been steadily increasing between 2012, 2017 and 2022
- Ranking participation rates by type of disability shows the following order (from highest to lowest):
  - Sensory disability (seeing, hearing)
  - Pain-related disability
  - Mental health-related disability
  - A tie between physical disability (mobility, flexibility and dexterity) and cognitive disability (learning, developmental and memory); those with a cognitive disability have the highest unemployment rate
- Among persons with a disability who are not working, the incidence of not having the potential to work increases considerably by age, from around 10% among youth to 60% of those aged 25 to 64 years old, and 95% among those aged over 65 years old
- Chatham-Kent has higher proportions of persons with a disability among EO services

