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# Advancing Disability Inclusive Employment

## IDEA SIL Webinar Series

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INCLUSIVE DESIGN FOR  
EMPLOYMENT ACCESS  
VISION RADICALE POUR  
L'ACCÈS INCLUSIF À L'EMPLOI

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Canada

# Agenda

- **Labour Market**
- **Employee Needs**
- **Employer Needs**
- **Strategies to Advance Opportunities**
- **The Way Forward**

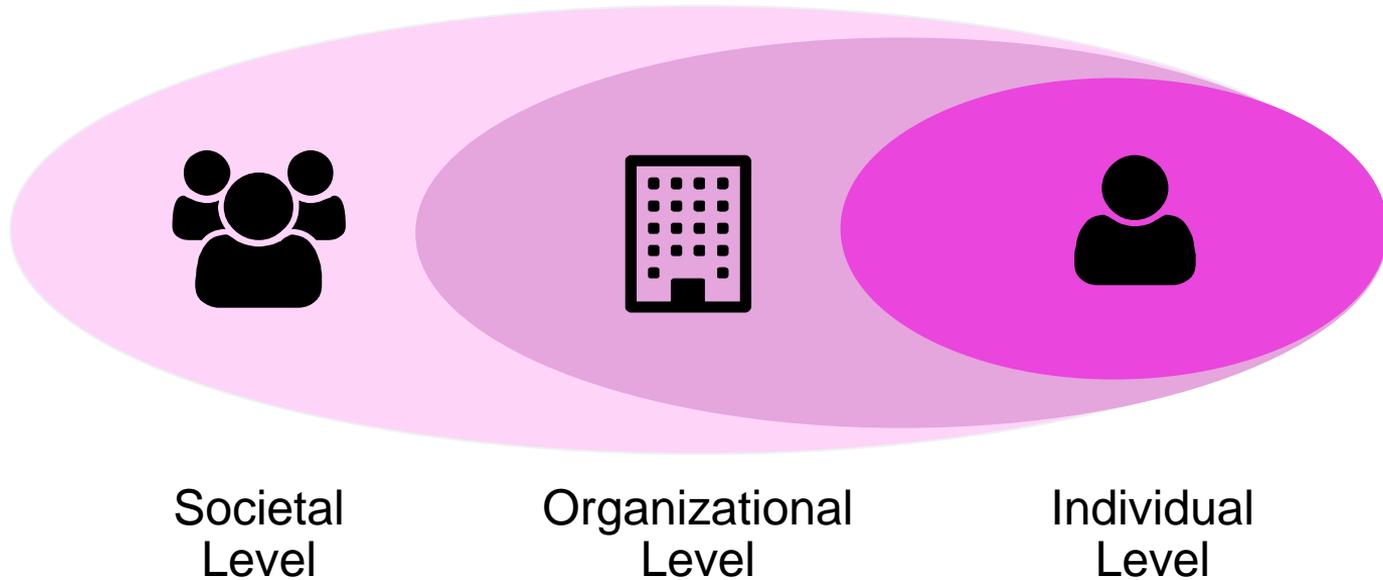


# Labour Market

**Hiring persons living with disabilities could increase Canadian GDP by \$16.9 billion and labour force by 550,000 by the year 2030:**

- The disability rate has been rising in all provinces (+4.7%, up to 27%) affecting 8 million Canadians
- Disability is a strong predictor of labour market earnings and economic status (poverty rate ~40% higher for mild & ~200% higher for severe)
- 47.1% of persons with disabilities are employed compared to 66.9% of those without disabilities (narrower for 25-54 years, 73.4% vs 87.8%)
- Unemployment rate nearly twice as high than counterparts (7.6% vs 4.6%)
- Median hourly wages - 5.5% lower | 79 cents for every dollar
- Persons living with disabilities commonly work in sales and service occupations; business, finance and administration occupations; and trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations
- Employment levels for mild disabilities (76%), moderate disabilities (67%), and severe disabilities (49%) all lower than those without disabilities

# Strategies for Change: Ecosystem Approach



# Skills & education

## High School Diploma

Nearly a third lower (28.6%) employment rate between core-aged persons living with and without disabilities

## Below Bachelor's Degree

13% lower employment rate between core-aged (25 to 54) persons with and without disabilities with post-secondary education below a bachelor's degree

## Bachelor Degree +

Lower employment rate gap (3.1%) between persons living with and without disabilities with a bachelor's degree or higher

- 32.4% of persons living with disabilities with a bachelor's degree or higher report that they do not have the opportunities to use their skills, education, and experience in the workplace
- Even with a post-secondary education, university graduates with severe disabilities have poorer employment outcomes than high school dropouts without disabilities

# Barriers

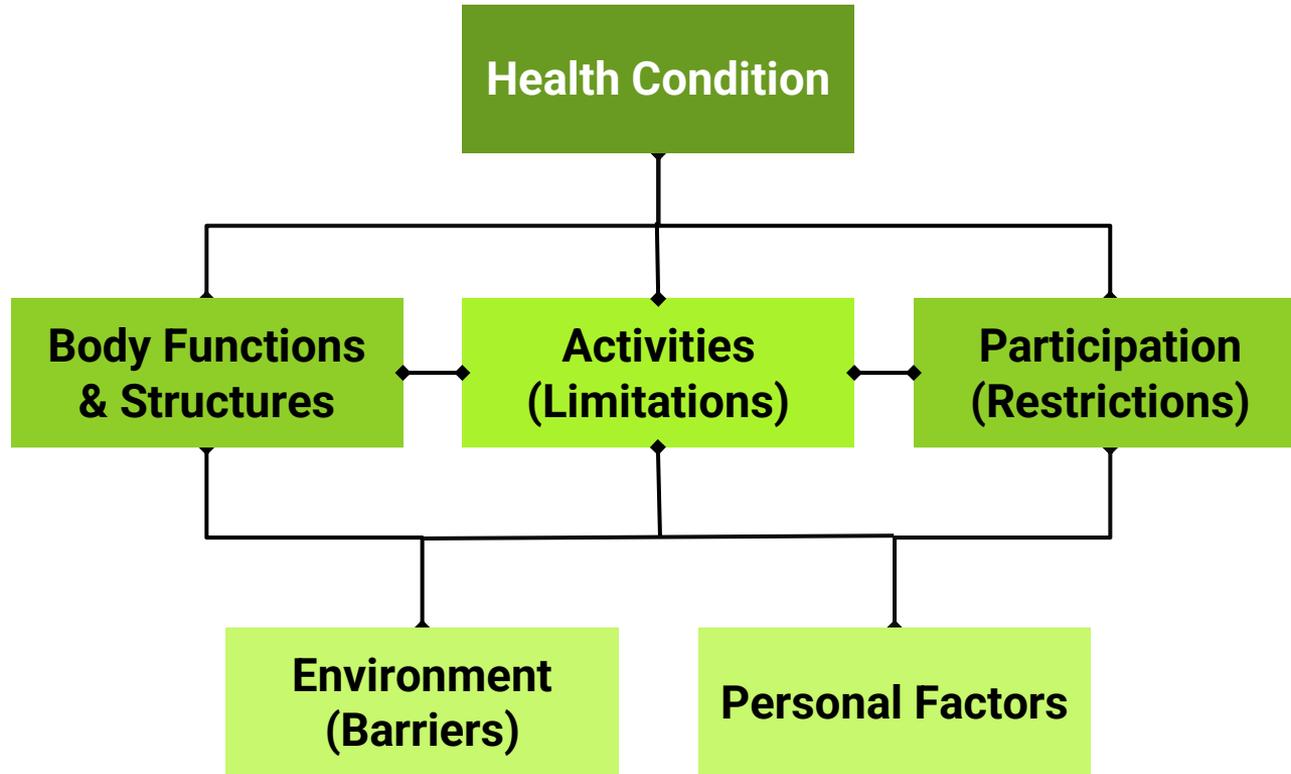
## **Despite policy efforts, significant barriers persist:**

- Close to 3 in 5 persons living with disabilities or long-term conditions experience a barrier when navigating the labour market
  - Includes during the hiring process and while working, or those discouraged or prevented one from working due to their conditions
  - Likelihood of facing a work-related barrier increases with the severity of impairment as well as lower employment rates compared to milder disabilities (81% vs 66%, respectively)
- Physical barriers are the most common accessibility work-related barrier
  - 49% indicated such, 41% cited barriers related to communication, 35% reported transportation, and 35% experienced difficulty with technology
- 68% experienced a barrier to accessibility during a hiring process or one that discouraged or prevented them from working or seeking employment
- Often trapped in low-skill jobs at high risk of automation and find themselves underrepresented in job categories projected to grow

# Definition and self-identification

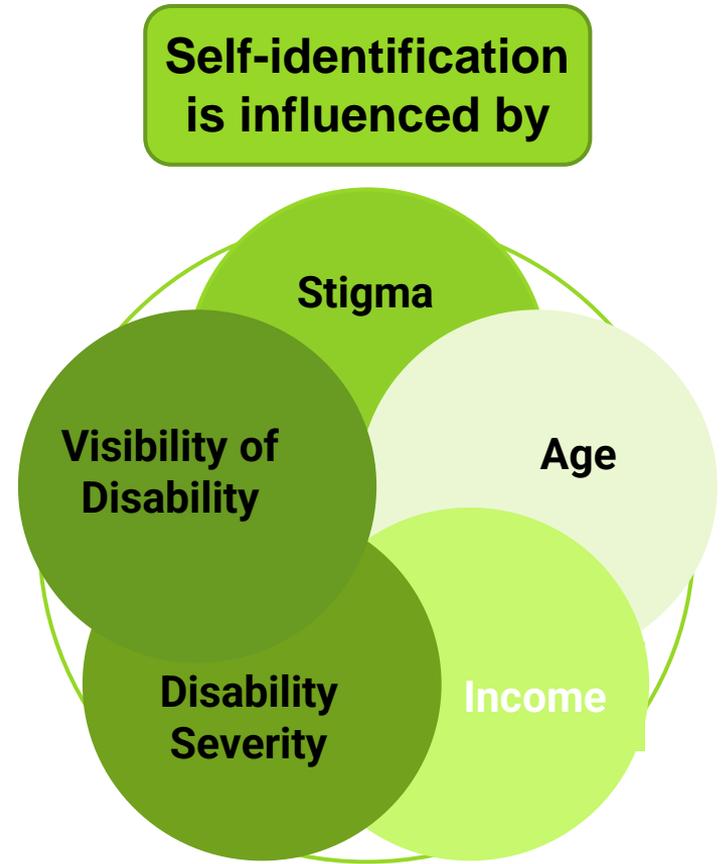
- Disability is a multidimensional interaction between conditions (physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory) and contextual factors (environmental and social barriers), rather than inherent impairments
  - The International Classification of Functioning (ICF) emphasizes that disability results from this interaction rather than solely from conditions
  - Over-simplified definitions risk perpetuating ableism and exclusion by reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices
- Medical vs. Social Models
- Inclusive definitions that account for the specific unique needs depending on an individual's condition and interaction with societal barriers are imperative to tailor interventions
  - Reduce stigma, foster equity and help develop positive disability identities

# Integrated biopsychosocial model of functioning, disability and health



# Self-identification

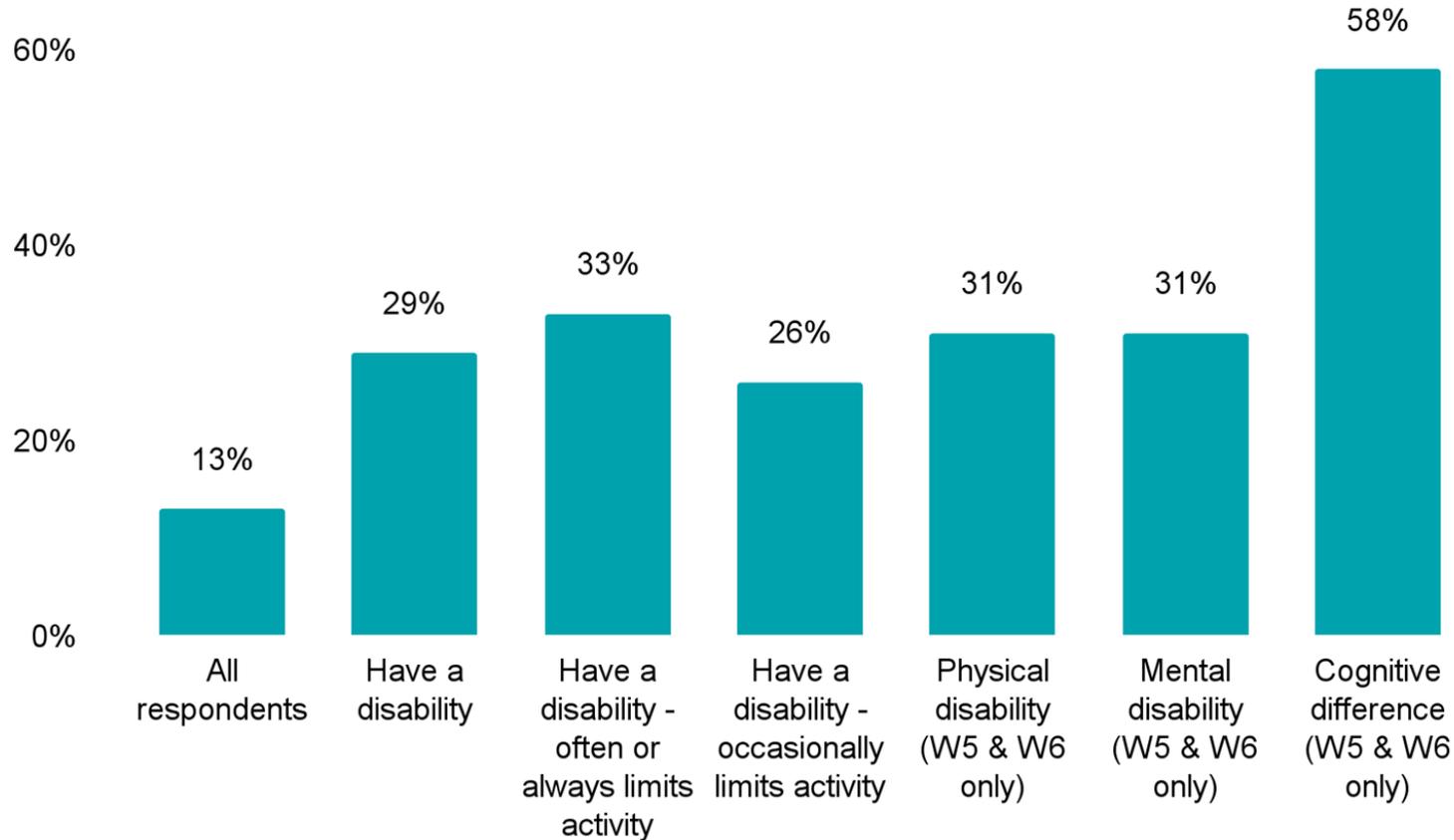
- Stigma influences decisions to disclose or attempt to “pass” as non-disabled
  - Some identify only when encountering a barrier or upon formal diagnosis
- Dynamic nature produces inconsistencies
  - ~59% of students who initially self-identify later withdraw their identification
- Societal exclusion often immobilizes identify formation
  - Many individuals construct their identity based on how they perceive societal attitudes and access to accommodations



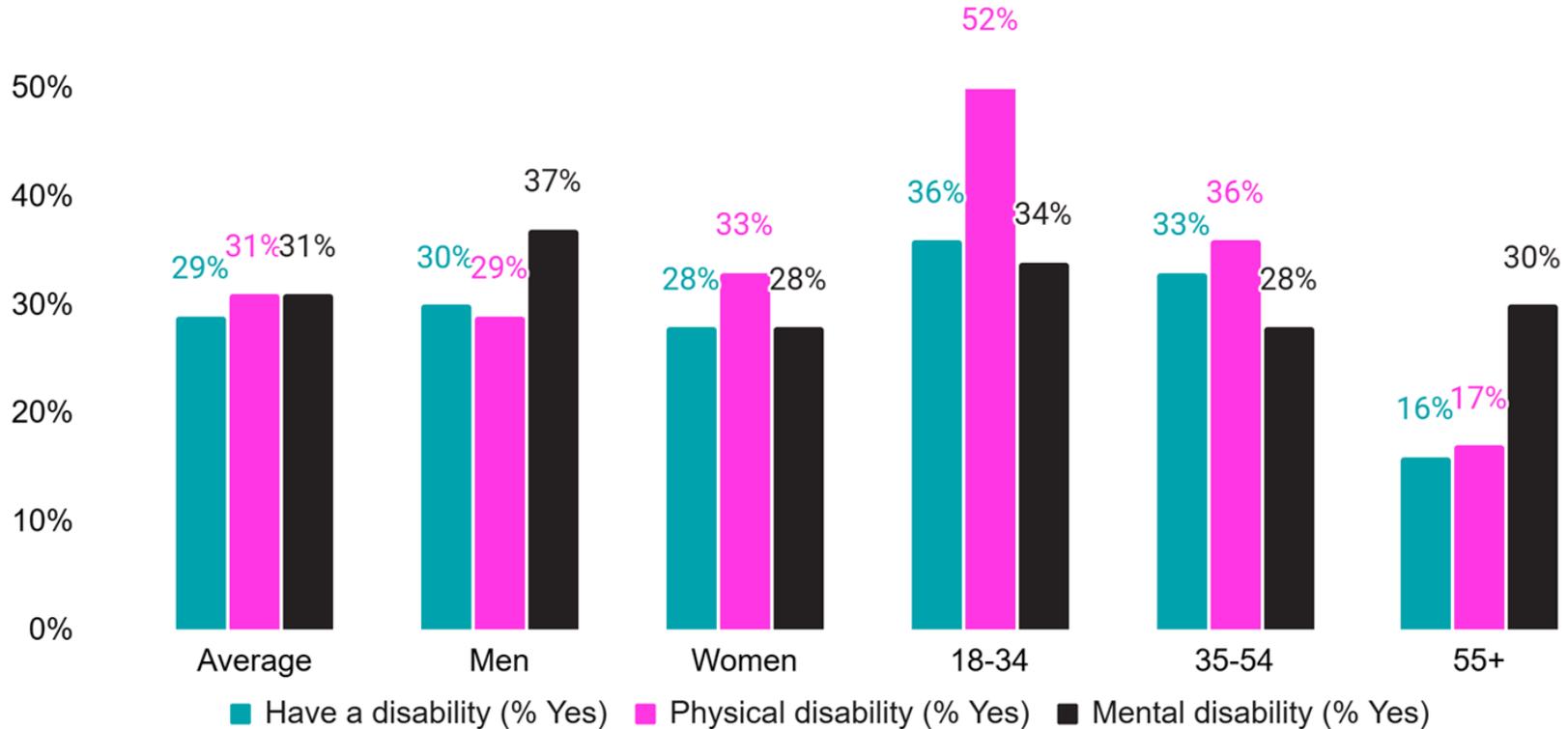
# Discrimination

- Persons living with disabilities are at an increased risk of experiencing workplace harassment and discrimination due to their disability
- Those with intersecting identities - i.e. Indigenous Peoples or racialized people with disabilities - often face multiple layers of discrimination
- Persons living with invisible disabilities - i.e. chronic pain and mental or neurological conditions - are less likely to be recruited or hired if they disclose their disabilities to prospective employers
  - Fear of stigmatization lowers self-declaration of disability during the employment process
- Biases resulting in pessimistic views and stigmatization regarding their work-related abilities & misperceived accommodation cost-benefit analysis

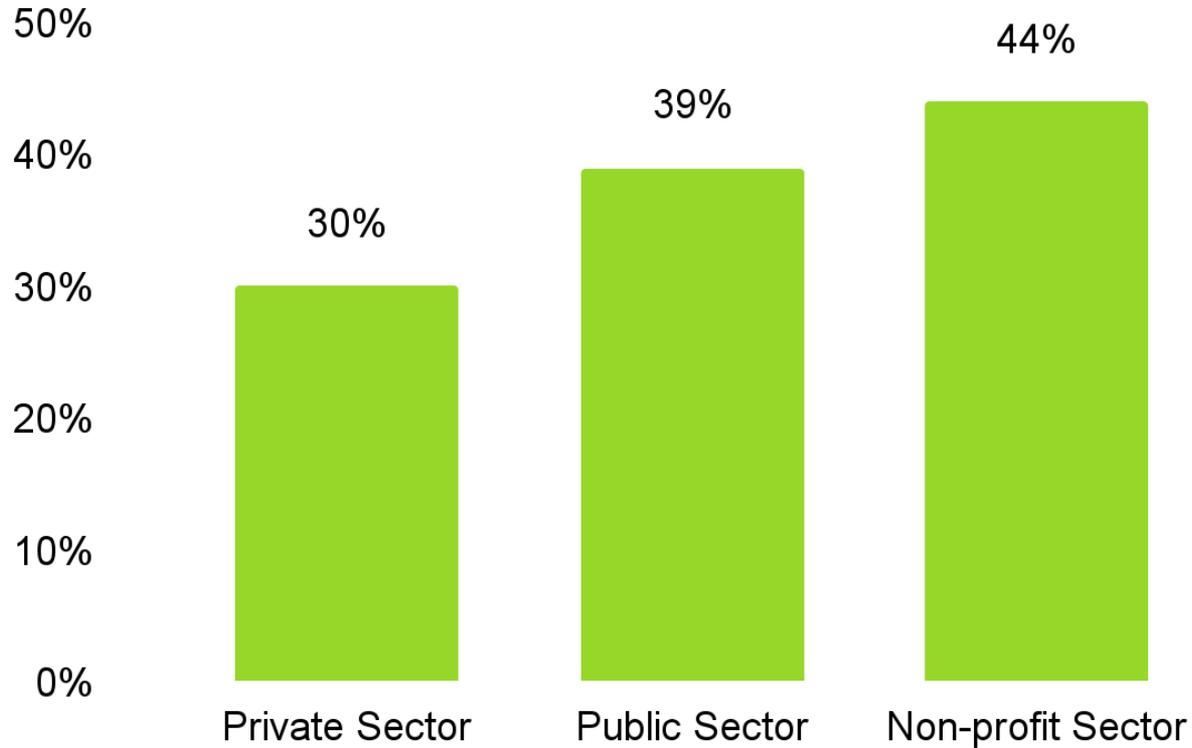
# Discrimination by disability status



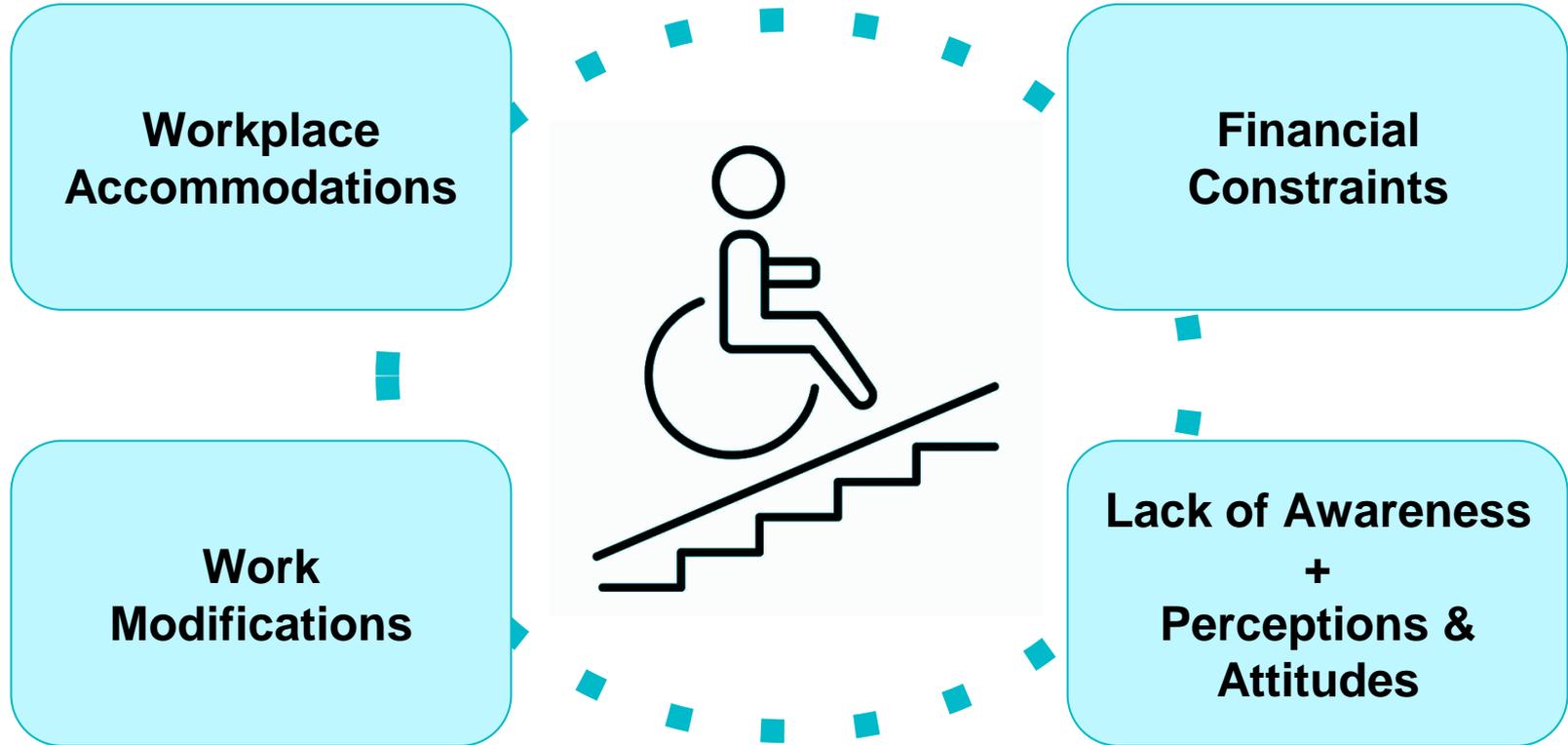
# Disability-based discrimination by demographic group



# Disability-based discrimination by sector



# Persons with Disabilities: Employee Unmet Needs



# Disability dynamics

- The nature of disabilities may not follow a stable pattern
  - Persons living with disabilities experience periods of good health that are interrupted by periods of worsening health
- Disability dynamics affect over 3.8 million persons living with disabilities
  - 37% experience limitations that have worsened overtime
- Some disabilities can fluctuate in severity and impact over time, with periods of remission or exacerbation, posing challenges for individuals in managing their symptoms
- Just over half of employed persons with progressive (56%) or fluctuating limitations (49%) were the most likely to require workplace accommodations
  - In comparison, 31% of those with recurrent or continuous limitations required workplace accommodations
- Accomodation for one individual may not work for another, even if they have the same diagnosis

# Employers

- Prospective employers are often who lack education and awareness about fostering an inclusive and accessible work environment are less willing and able to hire or accommodate persons living with disabilities
- Often result in hiring from default talent pools without considering additional pipelines, overlooking segments of the population
- Employers may carry prejudices in incorrectly assuming that persons living with disabilities do not want to engage in challenging roles, tasks, or work in general permeating decisions in all phases of their employment cycle
  - Some employers hold beliefs that persons with disabilities are less productive or less capable of handling a work schedule
- Common misconceptions of perceived costs and burden of accommodations

# Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

- SMEs are the backbone of the Canadian economy (99.7% of businesses & employ 63.8% of the workforce)
- Need to develop strategies that are tailored to their specific organizational context, size, industry, and workforce
- SMEs perceive cost and lack of internal organizational infrastructure as barriers to accommodation and accessibility
  - Often lack funding, resources, and knowledge to effectively integrate
  - Lack dedicated staff or teams to focus on developing and implementing initiatives
- Interested but do not know where or how to start
- Focus on day-to-day operations and postponing planning accessibility strategies
- Potential to facilitate disability disclosure during the hiring process due to smaller company size and closer working relationships

# Encouraging employers

## Financial Incentives & Support Mechanisms

Funding, tax credits, reimbursement, financial support for recruitment and onboarding support

## Tools & Resources

Toolkits, Training Programs, Assessment Frameworks, Universal Design Principles, Standards

## Fill Labour & Skills Shortages

Persons with disabilities are an untapped talent pool that can help fill labour shortages

## Voluntary Codes & Initiatives

Proactive approach and non-legislative means for adherence to standards and best practice sharing

# The case for equity, diversity and inclusion



Broaden the talent pool and overcome skills gaps



Respond to increasingly diverse communities and gain support from diverse stakeholders



Foster innovation, creativity, and diverse thought



Mitigate legal and reputational costs



Increase employee satisfaction and reduce turnover

# Strategies to Advance Opportunities

## **Accessibility Policies & Multi-Year Accessibility Plans**

Structured internal supports and implementation strategy to ensure equal access and participation of persons living with disabilities in the workplace through accessibility goals

## **Employee Training (Disability & Accessibility Awareness)**

Educate employees by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to interact respectfully and effectively with colleagues who have disabilities

## **Employment Processes (Recruitment & Retention)**

Equal opportunities in accessible recruitment, hiring, and workplace environments through enabling conditions that empower persons living with disabilities to succeed

# The Accessibility Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT)

Designed to help employers, particularly SMEs, advance employment opportunities and accommodations for persons living with disabilities across six core organizational structure and business operation domains



Governance,  
Leadership  
& Strategy



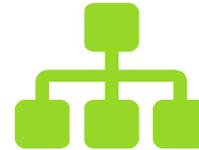
Human  
Resources  
Processes



Values &  
Culture



Measuring &  
Tracking  
EDI



Diversity  
across the  
Value  
Chain



Outreach &  
Expanding  
the Pool

# Governance, leadership and strategy



- Set tone from the top: promoting persons living with disabilities into leadership roles can significantly improve accommodations and employer inclusivity
  - Ensures diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making
- Naturally increases disability awareness throughout the workplace, leading to improve implementation of accessibility through processes and organizational culture
- Signals to the rest of the organization that accessibility and inclusion of persons living with disabilities is a strategic priority, activating employees to recognize, engage and support policies
- A study of 33 global C-suite leaders found that 78% of disability inclusive executives had personal connections to disability

**Create leadership development tracks to harness the potential of PwDs and bolster talent pipelines for promotional opportunities**

# Leading the way



## THE 50 - 30 CHALLENGE

**Increase diversity of persons living with disabilities (and other equity-deserving groups) on boards and/or in senior leadership roles with over 2000 signatories to date**

## Johnson & Johnson

**Executive-sponsored (ERGs) and CEO-led EDI council to ensure that perspectives of employee living with disabilities directly shape business strategy**



## Policy commitments

- Develop policies such as Accessibility Policy, Individual Accommodation Plans (IAPs), individualized workplace emergency response plans
- Policies to meet AODA physical and digital accessibility requirements
- Form accessibility committees or employee resource groups to support persons living with disabilities
- Easy to use “pulse” and engagement surveys can help track inclusion and engagement



# Human resources processes

- Redesign human resource processes from an accessibility perspective:
  - recruitment, selection, training, retention, promotion, and departure
- Ensure HR processes accommodate diverse needs and promote equitable opportunities
- Shown to reduce biases and enhance professional development of Persons living with disabilities
- A meta-analysis of studies found that HR professionals were less likely to hire applicants with disabilities compared to those without
  - Once employed, they received more favourable performance evaluations, suggesting paternalistic biases that underestimate their competence during recruitment

**Develop standardized and structured selection processes, individualized training/coaching/mentoring, unconscious bias training, and inclusive appraisal systems that recognize contributions of PwDs**

# Multi-pronged HR approach

- Toronto-based tech firm BenchSci developed a multi-year accessibility plan that commits to highlighting accessibility accommodations in every job posting
- Embraces remote-first practices to provide flexible work options
- Focuses on unconscious bias training for managers



**70/20/10 learning model to integrate EDI principles:**

**70% of the learning focuses on everyday experiences, 20% through interactions with others, and 10% through courses**



# Values and culture

- Embed inclusion and accessibility as a core value in organizational culture to create a workplace environment where authentic dialogue, learning, and empathy for persons living with disabilities becomes widely adopted and practiced
- A study by Accenture found that organizations and employers leading in disability inclusion earned 1.6x more revenue and 2.6x more net income compared to their peers
- Organizations employing PwDs report 72% higher retention rates among employees with disabilities, attributed to inclusive cultures and tailored accommodations

**Emphasize and implement comprehensive accessibility policies, long-term plans, standards, adaptive accessibility solutions, and support groups (ERGs)**

# Reverse mentorship



- Procter & Gamble's Disability Confident culture applies to all employees including recruits during interview phases
- Fosters allyship through ERGs
- Interactive process for accommodations to identify new ways to ensure the needs of the employee and business are met



**Empowers employees living with disabilities to share and teach business leaders and senior management on how to assist and remove barriers**

# Measuring and tracking EDI



- “What gets measured gets done” and setting targets and measuring progress is critical to guiding and implementing accessibility strategies
  - Workforce analytics are necessary to ensure compliance and generates valuable insights to drive firm competitiveness
- Firms collecting disaggregated data and analyzing disability-specific retention rates are better positioned to identify attrition drivers
- Regularly monitor workplace experiences of persons living with disabilities to ensure continuous condition improvements and establish a feedback loop
- Essential for legal and regulatory compliance

**Leverage data-driven assessments and adaptive practice and policy formulation to identify gaps, evaluate effectiveness of initiatives, and inform decision-making as well as enhance accountability**

# Benchmarking



- Kaiser Permanente, an integrated healthcare system, participates in the Disability Equality Index
- Benchmarking index created by Disability:IN and the American Association of People with Disabilities
- Benchmarks companies based on culture, leadership, accessibility, employment practices, community engagement and supplier diversity



**KAISER PERMANENTE**

**Kaiser Permanente scored  
100% on the Disability  
Equality Index for the seventh  
year in a row**



# Diversify across the value chain

- Untapped market segments and diverse suppliers can improve procurement, product design, marketing, and sales to engage with the disability community and market
- Disability:IN's certification of Disability-Owned Business Enterprises (DOBEs) and IWSCC (Canada's national certifying body for disability-owned businesses) enables businesses to benchmark supplier diversity through cross-sharing of disability analytics
  - Certified firms saw a 133% increase in ROI on procurement operations
- Limiting supply chain flexibility and diversity places firms at risk of poor performance and potential supply disruptions

**Diversifying supply chain supports businesses run by PwDs leading to potential partnerships that can help transfer and create actionable strategies by cross-sharing of values, practices and policies**

# Diverse Supplier Development Program



- Accenture has developed programs that pair senior executives with diverse supplier proteges, fostering knowledge transfer and skill development over 12-18 month period
- Offers one-on-one mentoring partnerships and quarterly symposiums
- Graduates of the program have seen increased revenue, expanded client bases, and business growth



**As of November 2023, 256 suppliers have graduated from the program supporting disability-owned businesses access commercial opportunities**

# Outreach and expanding the pool



- Engage with the employment ecosystem to create bridging opportunities for persons living with disabilities and collaborate with various support organizations that cater to persons living with disabilities to contribute and invest in training initiatives
- Improve the critical transition from school or training to employment opportunities
- Recruitment needs to be proactive to mitigate systemic barriers that prevent persons living with disabilities to apply in the first place
- Connect with workforce training programs and job-readiness initiatives
  - Programs matching youth living with disabilities seeking work with employers saw an +18% in hiring outcomes post internship

**Work with stakeholders (advocacy groups, government, educational institutions, training and employment support orgs) and build partnerships to unlock the potential of PwD talent pool**

# Developing the talent pipeline

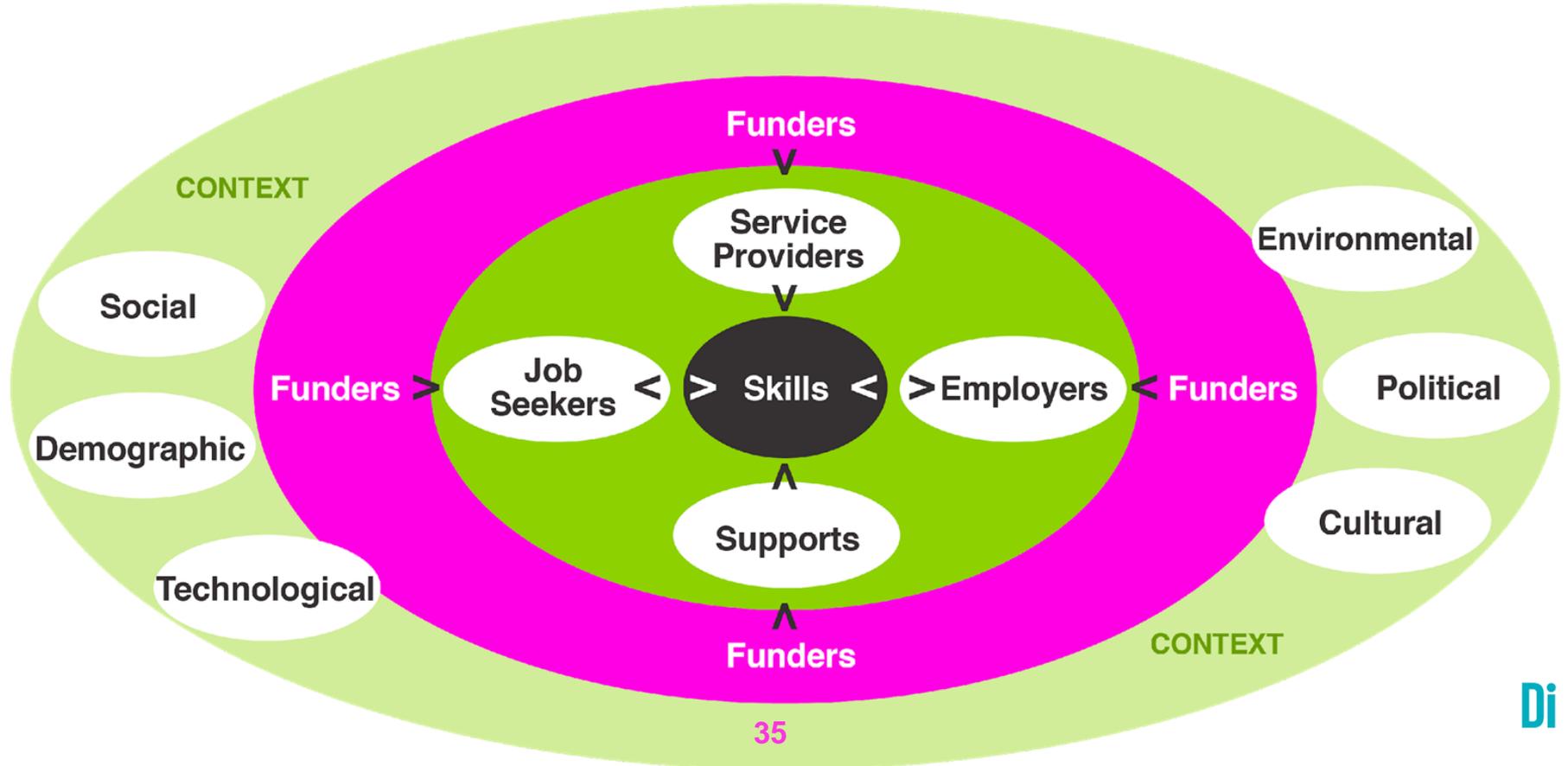


**Ontario Disability  
Employment Network (ODEN)  
is the largest professional  
network of employment  
service providers in the  
province with 140+ member  
agencies**

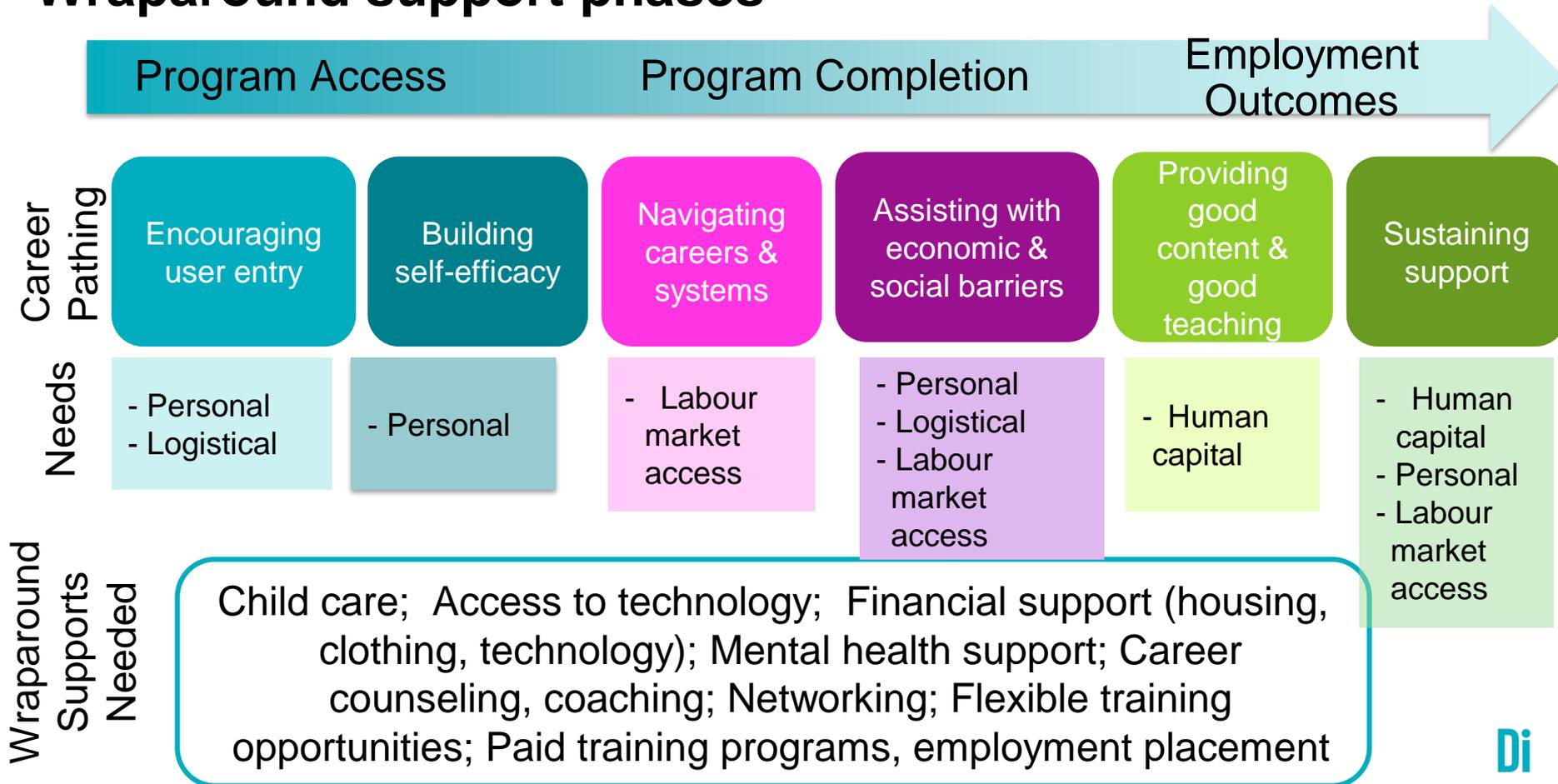


**The Canadian Association  
for Supported Employment  
(CASE) works with  
employment service  
providers, employers,  
community allies, and  
stakeholders to strengthen  
employment inclusion**

# The Way Forward



# Wraparound support phases



# Diversity assessment tools and resources

- **Diversity Assessment Tool Application**: A digital tool to dynamically assess organization's EDI policies and practices and create actionable next steps based on where an organization is on their EDI journey.
- **DI Best Practices Playbook**: a knowledge base for best practices to provide organizations with actionable resources to build more inclusive workplaces.
- **Micropedia of Microaggressions**: Tool for unlearning unintentional biases or microaggressions
- **50 - 30 Calculator**: A digital tool to calculate if an organization is meeting the 50 - 30 Challenge goals.
- **50-30tools.ca Website**: Access tools and workshops geared towards different sectors and types of organizations

# Thank You

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