Deloitte Access Economics

Disability Employment Investments

Disability Employment
The State of the Nation



Progress to Opportunity — 2026



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Further thanks are extended for the valuable contributions of those with lived experience of disability.

Of special note:

- Employee focus groups were convened by *Down Syndrome Australia, La Trobe Valley Enterprises, Jigsaw and Inclusion Australia*. We thank the employees whose specific voices are included in this research, and the teams who helped convene these sessions.
- Senior HR leaders, supervisors and employees at *Marriott Hotels, Eurella Community Services, Fleet Plant Hire Solutions, Down Syndrome Australia, Insurance Australia Group, McDonald's Australia* and *Disability Employment Australia*, who provided input to the case studies included.
- The range of Australian employers, service providers and business networks involved, ensuring the broad reach of the worker and employer surveys.

This report uses data from the *Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia* (HILDA) Wave 24 dataset and the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC). HILDA was made available to Deloitte Access Economics on DEInvestments' behalf. The SDAC is publicly available via the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Foreword

We are pleased to present the inaugural *State of the Nation Report* for Disability Employment in Australia.

This report provides the first annual national accounting of Australia's disability employment status. It brings together four pillars of information: workforce participation; job quality; employer engagement and capability; and employee motivation and experience of work.

Increasing the presence and participation of people with disability in work is good for society and the economy. Through the lens of employers, this report brings light to the significant opportunity to improve national workforce participation and productivity. Employers can address labour shortages and gain growth through better accessing skilled and capable workers that can work and want to work more.

The theme of this first report is '*Progress to Opportunity*', chosen for three compelling reasons:

- → **As a nation, we are not at the start.** Of 2.7 million working-age Australians with disability, 1.5 million are employed. We have made progress. Yet, Australia is not maximising the opportunity of the skills and capacity of this workforce, even when employers face labour shortages.
- → **One-third of organisations report employing people with disability.** These organisations have made progress. The opportunity is to obtain the full benefits of this workforce by further developing organisational capability and work practices that enable people with disability to make their best contributions.
- → **Two-thirds of organisations report not currently employing people with disability.** These organisations are yet to progress. To avoid the risk of being left behind, the opportunity is to draw lessons from organisations already realising the benefits of employing people with disability.

There are 892,000 people with disability who face barriers to work who are not working. *Facing barriers doesn't mean people can't work.* Societal and environmental barriers, like attitudes, policies and the design of workplaces and roles, often limit contribution, as does the lack of creative thought given to removing these barriers. Achieving employment parity would mean 637,000 more people working for Australian employers.

This report is based on analysis of longitudinal datasets as well as new research findings from nearly 1,300 employers and more than 5,100 workers, including 15% who report having disability.

Our intent is to support a sustained national conversation. We commend this report to businesses, governments, people with disability and broader society. It recognises that employment presents opportunity for people with disability to gain greater economic security and belonging – outcomes that all Australians seek from work.

The organisations represented by the Steering Committee encourage businesses and employers to lean in to progress this opportunity, and we are available to provide support.

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Executive Summary

Disability employment in Australia is not at a standing start.

Of the 2.7 million working-age Australians with disability, over half (1.5 million) are employed.

This includes 780,000 people who face barriers to work relating to their disability, where adjustments and matching have helped link capability with role. Indeed, around one-third of organisations presently employ at least one person with disability.

This report also highlights positive trends:

- → the employment and participation of Australians with disability has *risen*, and
- → the proportion of Australians facing significant barriers to work has *fallen*.

Taken together, it's clear the work to improve employment outcomes for people with disability is underway. Flexibility, work experience programs and access to assistive technology are enabling participation for more people, and access to skilled workers for more employers.

What remains is the substantial *unrealised share* of this opportunity.

There are 892,000 working-age Australians with disability who face barriers to work and are not working.[1] And 2 in 3 businesses do not currently employ a person with disability.

The task is therefore twofold:

1. support employers already employing people with disability to strengthen and expand their practices, and
2. encourage the remaining two-thirds of employers to renew their efforts or get started in earnest.

For employers seeking their next worker, this pathway could be opportune.

In light of the opportunity, this report adds new insights on the attitudes and experiences of employers and workers.

This report takes an evidence-led approach, drawing on national datasets and new research with employers and workers, designed and fielded in 2026.

The new research includes:

- → A survey of 1,289 employers across six business types, including large and small commercial enterprises, government organisations, Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and other not-for-profit organisations. The survey covered business characteristics, employer attitudes to employing people with disability, and the associated benefits and barriers.
- → A survey of 5,145 Australian workers (including 15 per cent who reported that they experience disability), which asked about work intentions and experiences.
- → Six focus groups with 31 workers with significant disabilities employed in ADEs, commercial businesses and not-for-profit organisations around Australia, who reflected on their current and previous jobs and experiences of looking for work.

This analysis of employer and workforce attitudes, actions and behaviours has been designed with reference to the internationally recognised ProSci ADKAR® behavioural change model.[2]

This acronym describes five elements of change: **awareness** of the need to change, **desire** to change, **knowledge** of how to change, **ability** to implement change, and **reinforcement** of change through external influence or through realised benefits.

Views differ sharply depending on whether an employer currently employs a person with disability.

75 per cent of employers of people with disability see benefits from doing so, compared with 36 per cent of those who do not presently employ (and may never have employed) a person with disability.

The same divide runs through each measure of attitude in the survey. That is, those employers with current experience are more likely to say that:

- → the benefits of hiring people with disability outweigh any risk (61 per cent relative to 33 per cent), and
- → any complexity can be managed (81 per cent relative to 62 per cent).

The findings reinforce the idea that experience matters for an employer's dispositions.

For the 1 in 3 employers that do employ, many report commercial returns.

55 per cent of businesses that employ staff with disability report a commercial benefit (broadly defined) associated with doing so.

The employer case studies in the report also highlight that organisations that have learned from their experiences hiring staff with disability have taken lessons for more inclusive practice across their workforce. These businesses report that they have filled critical skills gaps, strengthened workplace culture and improved accessibility for other workers and for customers.

Businesses that employ people with disability are also more than twice as likely to have a growing workforce (34 per cent, relative to 15 per cent), which may be suggestive of when this opportunity is typically considered by employers.

For these businesses, the next step is to keep scaling their practice.

For employing businesses, knowledge of good practice is not the gap: 72+ per cent of these organisations report knowing how to **(1)** adjust recruitment and onboarding, **(2)** offer adjustments, **(3)** design inclusive systems, and **(4)** support retention and career progression.

Instead, the gap they report is that of knowledge translating to consistent practice, particularly when it comes to embedding inclusive design across the organisation, where only:

- → 47 per cent have initiatives and accountability mechanisms in place,
- → 45 per cent track their performance on disability employment, and
- → 61 per cent mention disability in key systems or business practices.

The employer case studies point to the role of intermediary organisations in helping to broker job matches that meet the needs of the employer and the worker – so that employment makes sense and lasts long term – and in supporting businesses to build capability and more inclusive practice across their workforce.

For the two-thirds of businesses that do not presently employ, assumptions may be holding them back.

Just 36 per cent of these businesses presently see a business benefit from hiring people with disability, and only 33 per cent believe that the benefits outweigh any risk. Similarly, only 24 per cent believe others in their industry are realising commercial benefits.

The same pattern extends into practice: only 30 per cent of these businesses report that they mention disability in key systems or business practices and only 13 per cent track performance.

Despite this, 41 per cent want to learn more, reflecting the opportunity to challenge assumptions by sharing practical examples from those having success.

The barriers to disability employment appear to be largely on the employer side.

Among surveyed businesses, 42 per cent said the business had faced at least one barrier to hiring people with disability in the last two years.

In terms of the types of barriers, they tended to cite: **(1)** their expectations of increased supervision or support, **(2)** a lack of knowledge about managing the process, and/or **(3)** perceived work health and safety risk.

The least-reported barrier among employers (regardless of their hiring experience and business type) is "*difficulty finding jobseekers with disability*", with fewer than 1 in 10 businesses reporting this barrier.

People with disability who most want to work name the same challenge: they cannot find employers that want to hire.

Difficulty finding employers willing to hire people with disability is the most frequently reported barrier, cited by 56 per cent of survey respondents with disability.

Focus group participants indicated that the challenge is often securing an initial opportunity, rather than succeeding once in work. Those who gained employment described a greater sense of confidence, independence and social connection.

Many also reported that a first role helped open pathways to further employment, skills development and career progression.

Those with disability who are working reinforce that their disability does not affect their experience at work. Context does.

This report highlights that 62 per cent of people with disability say they face barriers in the nature or amount of work they do.

These workers feel they need to trade off job quality to access work, and among those working, there is a 24-percentage-point gap between the median wages of people who have disability and face barriers, and those without disability.

These employees are also less likely to feel their employer values their skills or that they are respected at work, and less likely to identify an employer that offers quality conditions. They are also more likely to hold roles offering flexibility but less security.

For people with disability who do not report barriers, the differences in their employment experience relative to those without disability are minimal.

It suggests the difference is in the barriers presented by the context.

This report reinforces what the opportunity looks like for those employers yet to embrace it.

Employers experiencing the opportunity tend to report commercial benefits, workforce growth and employees who can do the work.

So, while workforce participation for Australians with disability has risen significantly in recent decades, a large gap persists for many, leaving valuable skills and experience underutilised.

In the face of skills shortages and workforce disruption, the imperative for employers to design roles and to consider people with disability as part of any productive, resilient and future-ready workforce is growing.

This report also provides the framework to monitor and drive the uptake of the opportunity.

This research provides the platform and annual opportunity to track progress and prioritise action. This is particularly the case given the framework is unique in its equal focus on the demand (employer) side and the supply (worker) side of the labour market.

On the pages that follow, a dashboard presents the KPIs on the state of disability employment, covering the quantity and quality of jobs held by people with disability, as well as employer and workforce perspectives and experiences.

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Disability employment: State of the Nation

This dashboard provides a summary of the key quantity and quality results presented throughout the report (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Quantity of jobs: Increasing participation represents the largest opportunity, with employers playing a key role in reducing barriers to work.

	With disability, reporting barriers (%)	With disability, not reporting barriers (%)	Without disability (%)
Employed	46.1	79.8	83.6
In the labour force	50.5	83.6	86.7
Unemployed	8.7	4.5	3.6
Long-term unemployed	1.9	0.5	0.4
Wants to work more hours	18.3	16.2	15.1
Feels current job does not make use of skills and abilities	12.5	10.0	9.9

Note: Employment and labour force participation are measured as a share of the working-age population; unemployment is measured as a share of the labour force; long-term unemployment refers to those unemployed for an extended duration.

Among Australians with disability

1.5m already working

1.2m not working, of which

892,000 have the potential to work, but report barriers

Parity in **employment rates*** would mean:

+637,000 more people working

Parity in **utilisation of skills*** would mean:

At least **+37,900** who are currently working are employed to their full capability (in terms of skill level)

**These figures are calculated from survey data. They show the change if people with disability who report barriers had the same employment and utilisation rates as people without disability, meaning an uplift in outcomes for a proportion of the 1.7 million who face barriers. These are illustrative scenario estimates, not projections, and assume everyone can or wants to work.*

Quality of jobs: Access to work must be paired with positive experiences at work that unlock engagement and productivity.

Among Australians with disability

There is a 24-percentage-point earnings gap between people who have disability and face barriers, and those without disability. That difference in median earnings - which may reflect the profile of employment across seniority and pay, as well as hours worked - is equivalent to more than **$300 per week.**

	With disability, reporting barriers (%)	With disability, not reporting barriers (%)	Without disability (%)
Satisfaction			
With job opportunities	63.9	85.2	88.6
With job security	87.0	90.5	91.1
With weekly working hours	81.4	84.0	86.8
Experiences at work			
Agree they experience high job stress	32.4	27.3	27.4
Agree they have choice at work	32.7	27.3	34.8

Employer perspectives and actions: For the 1 in 3 that already employ people with disability, the next step is to embed good practice at scale. The 2 in 3 businesses yet to employ may be held back by assumptions, and could find that the experience of hiring people with disability changes their outlook.

The survey of 1,289 businesses reveals significant differences depending on whether they currently employ people with disability:	1 in 3 businesses employ people with disability	2 in 3 businesses do not employ people with disability
Awareness	**% Agree or strongly agree**	
The business benefits (or would benefit) from employing people with disability	75	36
The business has encountered barriers to employing people with disability	54	37
Aware of at least one disability employment support program	80	66
Desire		
The benefits of employing people with disability outweigh the risks	61	33
The risks of employing people with disability can be managed	84	61
The complexity of employing people with disability can be managed	81	62
Want to learn more about employing people with disability	69	41
Knowledge		
Know how to adjust recruitment and onboarding	81	62
Know how to offer adjustments	83	61
Know how to design inclusive systems and policies	84	66
Know how to ensure retention and equal progression	83	58
Ability		
Mentions disability in at least one key organisational strategy	61	30
Measures own performance on disability employment	45	13
Benchmarks their performance against other businesses*	19	8
Has initiatives in place to improve employment practice	47	23
Actively seeks feedback from employees with disability	75	45
Reinforcement		
Report commercial benefit from disability employment	55	-
Believe that other organisations in their industry are realising commercial benefit from disability employment	51	24

*Note: This report's theory of change uses the ProSci ADKAR® framework, which describes five outcomes that must be achieved for change to be successful: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement. Responses to questions about 'knowledge' are an average proportion that agreed or strongly agreed across 3-5 sub-questions (for example, five questions about specific aspects of recruitment or onboarding). Colour coding has been applied so that darker green shading represents more favourable outcomes. *Only those that track their own disability employment performance were asked if they benchmark against other organisations.*

Worker perspectives and actions: Analysis of job quality suggests some workers with disability trade off quality with access to flexible work. Survey results highlight a key reason for this is difficulty finding employers that are willing to hire. Once employed, these workers are also less likely than workers without disability to feel respected and supported in their teams. These findings are before this research meaningfully captures the experiences of people with disability who are not currently in work.

The survey of 5,145 workers, including 15% with disability, reveals that there are interesting differences and similarities across employees with and without disability:

	With disability, reporting barriers *14% of workers*	With disability, not reporting barriers *1% of workers*	Without disability *85% of workers*
	% Agree or strongly agree		
Awareness			
Can identify employers that offer quality conditions	55	71	68
Are aware of supports available to them at work	89	79	77
Understand their rights and responsibilities at work	69	81	79
Desire			
Say that "*Even if I didn't need money, I'd like to work*"	65	66	59
Would take any job on offer, regardless of quality	25	53	25
Feel confident asking for adjustments	76	76	71
Knowledge			
Have relevant skills to do the work	81	88	90
Have enough experience	83	81	81
Know how to access support programs to help their ongoing employment	84	60	-
Ability			
To find roles that suit skills	72	82	82
Feel their employer values their skills	70	79	78
Feel respected at work	74	80	81
Received training, mentoring or access to support network	56	58	56
Reinforcement			
Feel supported to be productive at work	70	74	79
Can work efficiently and deliver own work to a good standard	86	88	90
Can collaborate and work effectively with others	88	92	89
Feel supported to contribute new ideas	62	81	70

Note: Lower levels of agreement with the statement, 'I would take any job on offer, regardless of quality' represent a more favourable outcome. Accordingly, the colour scale for this component has been reversed. As the survey does not capture the experiences of people who have been unable to find work or who have left employment following negative workplace experiences, the reported findings may be more positive than those of the broader population of people with disability.

Key terms used in this report

The social model of disability recognises that disability does not automatically result from an impairment or medical condition, but from societal and environmental barriers (including attitudes and policies) that fail to accommodate human diversity.[3] The report focuses on barriers to getting and keeping work, and how workplaces, job design, supports and systems can reduce them.

Not everyone with disability experiences barriers at work.

In 2022, 2.7 million working age Australians reported experiencing disability. The analysis also considers the extent to which people say their disability (and their social context) affects their experience at work.

The data sources in this report (Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA), Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), and our survey) define people with disability based on a self-reported response, using slightly different variables (see Appendix).

The analysis compares outcomes for three working age groups:

- Those with disability who face barriers to work (an estimated 1.7 million people, as of 2022).
- Those with disability who report no employment barriers (an estimated 1 million people, as of 2022).
- Those who do not have disability (the rest of the working age population, estimated at 13.9 million in 2022).

It consistently shows that the main difference in outcomes is not whether people have disability, but whether they face barriers. Barriers may arise from the interaction between a person's disability and workplace, environmental or systemic factors, and the extent of barriers can change depending on their work context. This report shows the proportion of Australians facing the most significant barriers at work has fallen, even as the proportion of people with significant disability has risen.

For the technical analysis in this report:

- **Disability** refers to any limitation, restriction or impairment(s) (including long-term health conditions) which last, or are likely to last, for at least 6 months and which restrict an individual's core activities. According to the SDAC, an estimated 2.7 million working age Australians (16 per cent) reported having disability in 2022 (latest estimate).
- This report identifies **people with disability as facing work barriers** if they report that their condition(s) limit the type or amount of work they can do. According to the SDAC, 63 per cent of working age Australians with disability are in that group. This term is used interchangeably with "employment barriers".
- This report considers the **severity of those work barriers** in three levels. These levels are defined using different survey questions. In the case of HILDA, respondents are asked about the extent to which their condition/s limit the amount of work they can do, on a scale of 1-10. This is used as the basis for analysis included in Chapters 2 and 3. This report classifies severity of barriers based on those responses to align with SDAC. The following levels of severity are defined:

  Mild barriers *(a score of 1-3)*

  Moderate barriers *(a score of 4-6)*

  Severe barriers *(a score of 7-9)*

- Respondents who select 10 (profound barriers) report being unable to do any work, after accounting for workplace aids and adjustments, and are often not asked about work experiences or intentions.
- The new survey of employers and workers deployed by this research follows the approach taken by the HILDA survey to categorise severity of work barriers faced by people with disability.

Disability employment refers to the employers, workers, services, supports, policies and institutions that shape access to work and its quality for people with disability. This report considers all types of employment, not just within the supported wage system or in Australian Disability Enterprises.

With reference to the job market, this report uses the term **demand side** to mean employers (organisations that demand labour). The demand side includes large commercial businesses, small and medium enterprises (SME), government organisations, and not-for-profit organisations. Likewise, the **supply side** refers to the workforce of people with and without disability, who are employed, seeking employment or are not seeking work (those who do, or could, supply labour to meet employer needs).

Social enterprises are businesses whose operations are designed to achieve a social mission; often that mission is to employ marginalised groups, with some providing a transition to commercial or 'open' employment.

Australian Disability Enterprises are not-for-profit organisations, with charitable status, which provide employment for people with disability in a supportive working environment.

An **Inclusive Employment Australia** provider is an approved organisation delivering the Australian Government's specialist disability employment program. Providers deliver tailored support to people with disability, as well as helping employers to support employees with disability in the workplace.

To describe employment outcomes, this report uses the terms **employed people** and **workers** to describe people of working age (15 to 64 years old) who receive a wage, salary, or other income to produce goods or provide services. This includes people who are self-employed.

Full-time employment refers to people who usually work 35 or more hours per week, whereas **part-time employment** refers to people who work fewer than 35 hours per week.

Unemployed people are people of working age (15-64) who are not in employment, who are actively seeking work and are available to take up work given a job opportunity.

People in long-term unemployment have been looking for work for 12 months or more.

Underemployed workers are employed people who want and are available for more hours of work than they currently have.

The **labour force** (also the 'workforce') is the number of people who are either employed or unemployed.

The **participation rate** refers to the labour force expressed as a percentage of the working-age population (15-64).

This report's definition of **job quality** is developed with reference to the International Labour Organisation's **Decent Work** Framework, (see Appendix B). The key domains of **job quality** are employment standards, employment creation, social protection, and social dialogue and tripartism.

Real household disposable income is household income after taxes and other deductions, adjusted for inflation to show the household's actual purchasing power.

When discussing system change and evaluation, this report refers to a **theory of change**, which outlines how interventions in a system lead to change (in this case, more and better outcomes for people with disability).

This report's theory of change uses the ProSci **ADKAR® framework**, which describes five outcomes that must be achieved for change to be successful: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement.

A monitoring framework is a tool used to track progress against the theory of change in a system.

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AI	Artificial intelligence
ADE	Australian Disability Enterprise
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AusDN	Australian Disability Network
DEInvestments	Disability Employment Investments
DES	Disability Employment Services
DRO	Disability Representative Organisation
DSS	Department of Social Services
DSP	Disability Support Pension
HILDA	Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey
IEA	Inclusive Employment Australia
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JSA	Jobs and Skills Australia
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NFP	Not-for-profit
SDAC	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
SME	Small and medium enterprises

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CHAPTER

01

Introduction

This is the first edition of an annual report on the employment of Australians with disability.

1.5 million Australians with disability are already in work - and close to one million have the potential to work, or work more.

Australia's disability employment story is already one of progress, and that progress makes the opportunity credible. Of the 2.7 million working-age Australians with disability, over half – 1.5 million – are already employed, including close to 780,000 who report barriers to employment.[4] Around one-third of organisations employ a person with disability. This demonstrates that some employer capability already exists.

What remains is the unrealised share of the opportunity, and it is substantial. Close to one million working-age Australians with disability who face barriers are not in work or would like to work more hours, and two-thirds of organisations are yet to employ a person with disability. Realising this opportunity depends on what happens in workplaces: how employers recruit, design jobs, provide support and create the conditions for people to succeed - deepening practice where it exists, and extending it to those yet to start.

The State of the Nation Report will measure and monitor disability employment outcomes over time.

This first edition of the State of the Nation establishes a baseline for both the quantity and quality of employment for people with disability. It examines both the access to work and whether work provides fair pay, security, flexibility, support and opportunities to progress.

By bringing together worker and employer perspectives, the report reveals the scale and nature of the gaps that remain – and where employers gain economic advantage through disability employment.

This report measures and observes outcomes rather than attributing causes, noting where findings move together without claiming the strength or direction of that relationship. Future editions will track progress and build the evidence on under-represented groups, including people not in work and organisations yet to employ people with disability.

This report was developed in collaboration with the sector and people with disability.

This research was commissioned by Disability Employment Investments (DEInvestments), a philanthropic funding collective supporting social change to increase good employment of people with disability. The research was undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics in partnership with Wallis Social Research.

The analysis was developed in close collaboration with a Steering Committee of leaders from disability advocacy organisations and industry bodies committed to improving disability employment outcomes. They provided strategic guidance and expertise, and connected the project with employers, disability communities and networks across Australia.

Through ongoing consultation and engagement, disability advocacy organisations provided feedback on the research approach, assisted in reaching diverse disability communities, and helped ensure the findings reflect the experiences, priorities and aspirations of people with disability.

Recognising that disability is experienced in many ways, the project sought input from a range of people with disability, spanning different types of disability, support needs, ages, employment experiences and locations. As the research is repeated, the intent is to broaden this representation further.

This report considers the quantity and quality of jobs for people with disability, and the actions and attitudes of employers and workers.

The Monitoring Framework for Disability Employment Figure 1.1 combines established principles from labour market economics with internationally recognised concepts of decent work, including those developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

It examines both the quantity of employment - through measures such as participation, employment, unemployment and underemployment - and the quality of work, including earnings, security, flexibility, working conditions and opportunities to progress. These measures are considered alongside two other domains: the perspectives and actions of employers and the workforce.

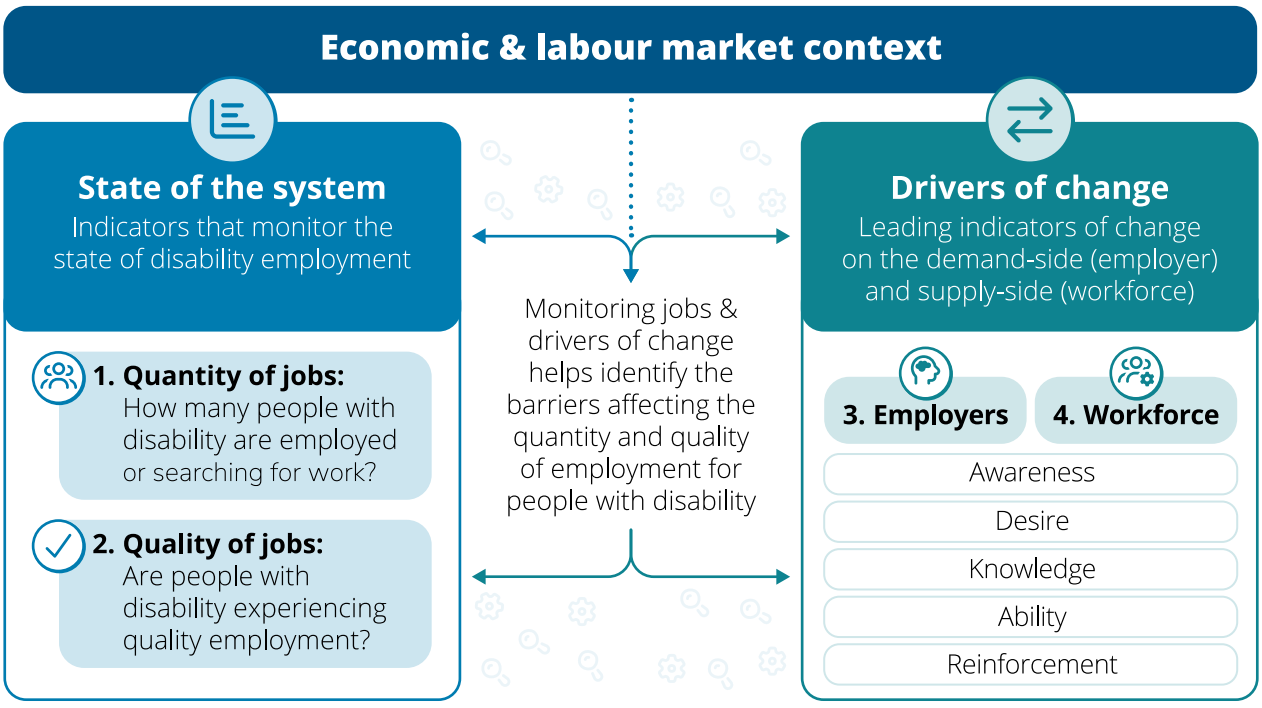
This whole-of-system approach recognises that sustainable progress depends on both workforce participation and employer demand, as well as the attitudes, behaviours and structural barriers that shape employment outcomes.

It also recognises the role of intermediary organisations in brokering job matches, even where it cannot be separately attributed or monitored.

Together, these perspectives provide a rigorous baseline for identifying gaps, setting priorities and tracking progress over time.

Developed by Deloitte Access Economics in partnership with DEInvestments, the framework includes a stylised system map and an indicator framework designed to track progress towards creating more, higher-quality jobs for people with disability in Australia. See (Appendix F) for further detail.

Figure 1.1: Overview of Monitoring Framework for Disability Employment



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026)

This report presents new evidence from employers and workers, to understand the action needed to improve outcomes and generate commercial returns.

This report draws insights from new research, designed and fielded in 2026, collecting data from employers and workers.

Data sources used in this report include:

- **Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey 2024 (Wave 24)**, made available to Deloitte Access Economics on DEInvestments' behalf. HILDA provides a more contemporary view (2024) of labour market outcomes for people with disability.
- **The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) 2022**, publicly available via the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). This remains the most reliable source for estimating disability prevalence.
- **A survey of 1,289 employers**, fielded by Wallis Social Research and distributed through organisations connected to the Steering Committee, across July and August 2026. Responses were provided by senior and middle management staff, HR teams, operational, professional and technical staff across Australian businesses. Appendix C provides more information on the profile of respondents, including the approach to weighting responses.
- **A survey of 5,145 Australians**, including 779 Australians with disability, fielded by Wallis Social Research across July and August 2026. The survey asked about experiences at work and intentions. Appendix D provides more information on the profile of respondents. The data were weighted by detailed age groups (5-year categories), gender and state.
- **A series of six focus groups** was facilitated by Wallis Social Research, with support from Australian Disability Enterprises and Disability Representative Organisations to identify participants. The comments in this report are drawn from 31 participants who have intellectual disabilities and other significant barriers to work, and who discussed their experiences working and looking for work.
- **A collection of employer case studies**, which highlight the experiences of businesses at different stages of their disability employment journey and across different workplace contexts, and present opportunities for other businesses to take similar action. These case studies are intended to provide practical examples of what disability employment can look like in practice across a spectrum of employer types, rather than represent a definitive set of best practice employers.

Relative to other publicly available research, this report's distinct contributions to understanding the opportunity associated with lifting disability employment in Australia are:

- A rigorous organising framework that enables the *State of the Nation* to be monitored over time.
- New evidence from employer and workforce surveys about attitudes, behaviours and sentiment.
- A current labour market perspective that provides essential context for interpreting the evidence.
- A focus on the opportunity for commercial employers, translating the findings into practical implications and bringing the conversation about disability employment into the mainstream.

This report is set against a changing context of rising disability prevalence and system reform.

Whether a person experiences barriers at work, and how significant those barriers are, depends on the job they hold or want to hold and the conditions attached to it.

Barriers can vary because of:

- access to **assistive technology** that supports job performance
- the **role and requirements** (physical and cognitive) of the job
- **work arrangements**, including hours, tasks and access to flexibility around location and leave
- whether people feel **psychologically safe and supported** to be productive at work (including feeling empowered to ask for adjustments).

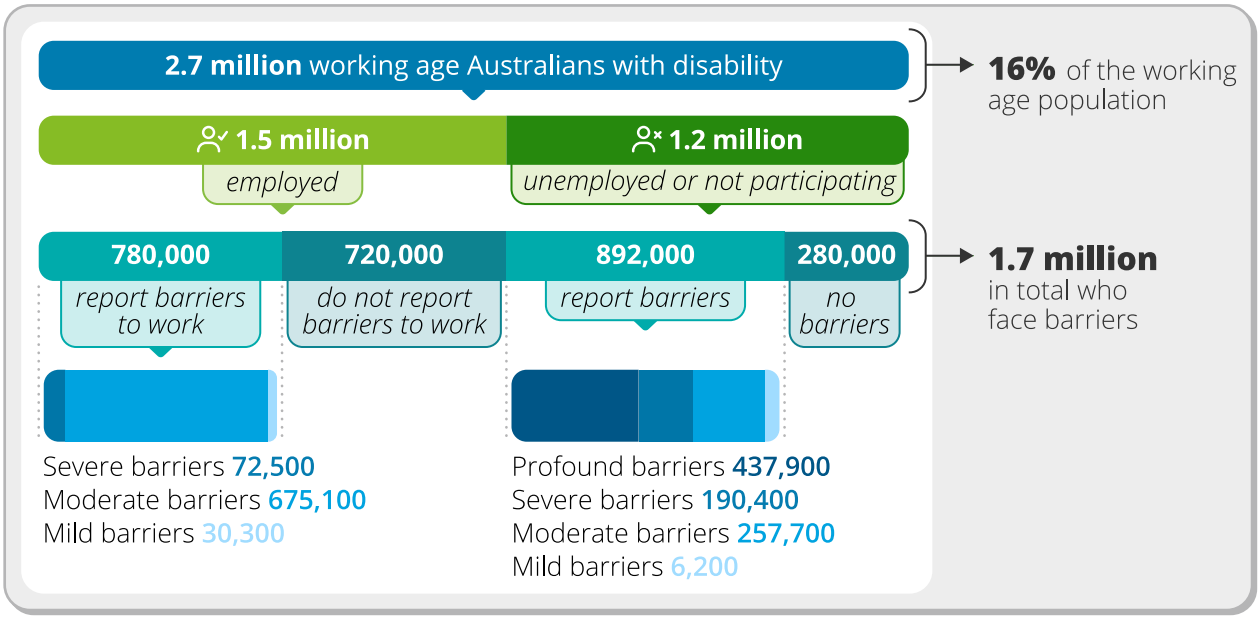
These factors are often features of a job or work environment, not necessarily a person's impairment or health condition. In doing so, this suggests employers have the power to address the barriers people with disability experience at work.

Against this context, this report focuses on three groups:

- People with disability, who report barriers to work – around 1.7 million working age Australians (or 63 per cent of people with disability, see Figure 1.2)
- People with disability, who do not report barriers to work – just under 1 million (or 37 per cent of people with disability)
- People without disability – 13.9 million working-age Australians

This report also considers the severity of those barriers (defined in the Key Terms), primarily reporting for those who experience mild, moderate or severe barriers. Those with profound barriers are self-reporting they are "unable to do any work at all", even with access to aids or adjustments, and are therefore excluded from some analysis.

Figure 1.2: Approach to identifying the group who report barriers to work



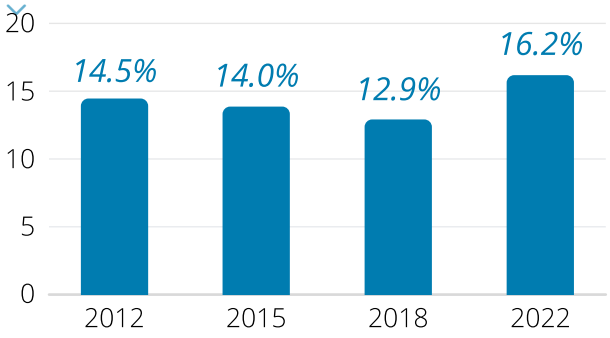
Source: Deloitte Access Economics using Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2022).

Note: Unless otherwise stated, analysis in this report covers the 1.7 million working-age Australians with disability who report barriers to work. Measures of job quality reflect the characteristics of employment only for those currently in work, which is a population of 1.5 million. All figures rounded to the nearest hundred.

The number of people who identify as experiencing disability is rising.

The proportion of working-age Australians identifying as having a disability, impairment or long-term health condition has increased from 14.5 per cent in 2012 to 16.2 per cent in 2022 (see Chart 1.1).[5]

Chart 1.1: Proportion of Australians who report disability, impairment or long-term health condition



Source: Deloitte Access Economics using Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2022).

This growth may reflect:

1. An increased prevalence of certain conditions, particularly chronic illness among working age Australians (and possibly reflecting that the working age population is, on average, older and more likely to experience chronic ill-health).
2. Increased reporting, potentially influenced by the change to an online SDAC option in 2022 which may have affected people's willingness to report their condition.
3. An increased rate of diagnosis (and the extent to which diagnoses are pursued).

These dynamics may be influenced by several forces: growing awareness and understanding of psychosocial conditions, reduced stigma, and changes in how disability is defined and recognised, including through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The rising rates of disability identification could mean that employers may not be aware that some of their employees have disability. And while latest estimates suggest 16 per cent of Australians have disability (Chart 1.1) , the survey of Australian workers fielded for this report finds that 61 per cent of people do not personally know people with disability who do paid work.

Alongside rising reporting rates, an ageing working population may suggest that the number of Australians with disability who are working – and the number of businesses that they work for - is likely to grow. This strengthens the imperative for Australian businesses to support people across their employee lifecycle.

This report is set against reforms to the disability and employment services systems.

In 2023, the Royal Commission highlighted areas for reform, including segregated employment, introducing public sector targets, increasing open employment options and ensuring fair wages for people with disability.[6]

The introduction of the Inclusive Employment Australia (IEA) program represents the most substantial redesign of Commonwealth disability employment support in many years.

Alongside this, ongoing changes to the NDIS are reshaping how people with disability access assistance and what kind of support is available to them. These reforms may ultimately improve outcomes, but transitions of this scale take time.

This report does not intend to evaluate these reforms, nor attribute changes in job outcomes. Rather, it provides an understanding of the labour market and social context in which people with disability seek and enter work, and the context in which employers and intermediary organisations operate.

While funded supports exist for employers, the system of supports primarily targets jobseekers.

For jobseekers and workers:



Inclusive Employment Australia providers help individuals with disability prepare for, find and retain work, and can also support employers with recruitment.



Disability Representative Organisations (DROs) advocate for the interests of people with disability.



Education providers are an important part of the employment pipeline, through school-to-work transition supports, vocational training, work placements and internships.



Personal supports, including through the NDIS, allied health professionals, carers and informal supports, can be essential to enabling participation.

To support employers:



Practical guidance and training are available through organisations such as Australian Disability Network (AusDN) and the Australian Human Rights Commission.



Employer and industry peak bodies often collaborate to improve workplace practices, for example by developing employer toolkits, and supporting sector-wide commitments to accessibility.



Funding and practical assistance are available through mechanisms such as JobAccess, Employment Assistance Fund, wage subsidies and workplace assessment.

In the job market – where matches are made between employers and job-seekers:



Job matching services (from mainstream job search platforms to employment service providers) are key to connecting workers and employers and ensuring a shared expectation of roles.



Transitional employers, including social enterprises and some Australian Disability Enterprises, can provide structured work environments where people build skills, confidence and experience while moving towards open or mainstream employment if this is their goal.

Even so, there are gaps in awareness of these supports.

These organisations and institutions provide a mechanism for representation, consultation and collective problem-solving across the disability employment system. But only when they are *utilised*.

The survey of Australian employers fielded for this report finds that 32 per cent of businesses that don't hire any staff with disability report being unaware of support available through organisations such as JobAccess, AusDN, or as part of jobseekers' NDIS arrangements.

The remainder of this report sets out the State of the Nation across four domains.

This report is organised into six chapters, moving from the quantity and quality of jobs for people with disability to attitudes that can support disability employment.

The structure of this report is as follows:

- → **Chapter 2** focuses on the quantity of jobs, including employment and participation rates for Australians with disability, and differences in outcomes between groups.
- → **Chapter 3** considers the quality of jobs held by Australians with disability.
- → **Chapter 4** presents survey findings about the experiences, attitudes and actions of employers when making workforce decisions that affect people with disability.
- → **Chapter 5** includes findings from a survey of Australian workers and jobseekers (with and without disability) and focus groups with people with disability. It explores their experiences, attitudes toward work, and actions to find and retain employment.
- → **Chapter 6** summarises the findings and their implications. It recognises that progress has been made and identifies areas where further action is needed.

This report brings to light the significant opportunity to improve national workforce participation and productivity by increasing quality employment among people with disability.

The report compiles evidence in a structured way to support a sustained conversation about the State of the Nation, and the opportunities it presents for businesses and employers, governments, people with disability, and the Australian economy.

CHAPTER

02

Employment and participation among Australians with disability

Participation has risen significantly, but a gap persists for people with disability.

Economy-wide workforce participation rates have risen considerably in recent decades.

Since the pandemic, the share of the population who are working or looking for work has remained relatively steady at 67 per cent (with the 3-year average higher than at any point in the country's history).[7]

This long-run trend reflects structural shifts in the economic and social landscape – the expansion of service industries, rising educational attainment, deliberate policy efforts and cost-of-living pressures, which bring more people into the workforce, particularly women.

Despite national growth in participation, people with disability who report barriers to work are half as likely to be in work.

As a share of the working age population without disability, 84 per cent of Australians are employed. Similarly, 80 per cent of those with disability who do not face barriers to work are employed.

The employment rate falls to 46 per cent among the group with disability who say they do face barriers to work.

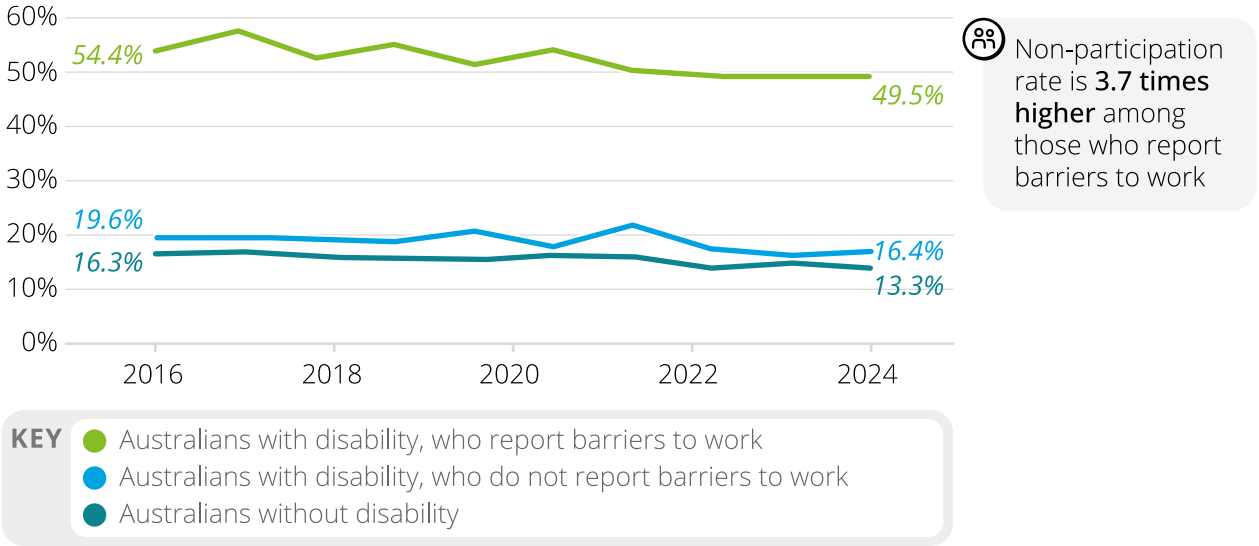
This gap in employment is a function of both lower participation rates (the number of people with disability working or who are looking for work) and a higher unemployment rate (the share of people looking who cannot find work). As seen in (Chart 2.1), just around half (49.5 per cent) of people experiencing employment barriers were not participating in the labour market, a rate 3.7 times higher than those without any disability (13.3 per cent).

Progress has stalled.

The rate of non-participation has plateaued at around 50 per cent for people reporting employment barriers, suggesting that gains have stabilised in recent years.

Looking ahead, because young people with disability remain disproportionately represented among those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), this could be an early warning sign for future outcomes.[8]

Chart 2.1: *Non-participation rates*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) using Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) data (Wave 24).

For people with disability, unemployment and underemployment are more common.

There is a gap in outcomes on every measure of access to work.

People with disability who report employment barriers are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as those without disability (8.7 per cent, compared with 3.6 per cent).

The gap in participation between those reporting employment barriers and those without disability is also large, with a 36.3 percentage point gap (50.4 per cent relative to 86.7 per cent, see Chart 2.2).

Employment follows the same pattern, sitting at 46.1 per cent for those reporting employment barriers, compared with 83.6 per cent for those without disability.

Underemployment (a measure of the proportion of people who want to work more hours than they currently do) suggests that reduced hours are not always a matter of choice: 18.3 per cent of people reporting employment barriers would like to work more hours.

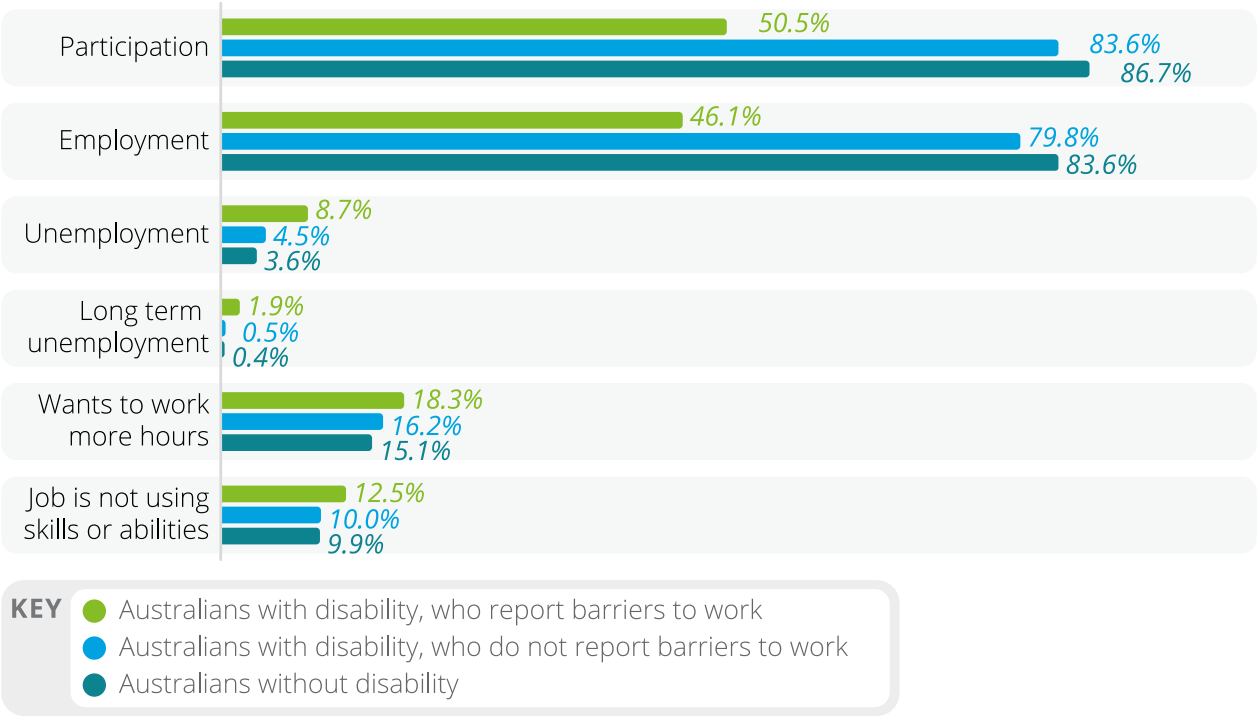
It is more common for people with disability to spend over a year looking for work.

1.9 per cent of unemployed people who have disability and report barriers have been looking for work for 12 months or more. This compares to 0.4 per cent of people without disability (Chart 2.2).

When they do find work, their skills are more likely to be underutilised.

A gap in skills underutilisation (whether people feel their current job is not making use of their skills and abilities) could reflect challenges in job-skill matching, as well as differences in perceptions between groups about the extent to which their skills should be utilised, and the roles they have historically been able to access.

Chart 2.2: *Measures of labour market participation and employment outcomes, 2024*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) using HILDA data (Wave 24).

People reporting the greatest employment barriers are furthest from the labour market.

The proportion of people not in the labour force increases with the severity of the barriers they report, from 27 per cent for those who report mild barriers to 70 per cent for those reporting severe barriers (Chart 2.3). The unemployment rate for people with severe employment barriers (10 per cent) is around two times as high as among those reporting mild barriers (5.2 per cent, Chart 2.4).

Among employed people, underemployment increases with the severity of employment barriers (Chart 2.5).

However, skills underutilisation does not follow the same pattern: it is highest among people who report mild barriers and lowest among those reporting severe barriers (Chart 2.6).

People who report profound barriers to work are excluded from these charts because the underlying data classify them as permanently unable to work. However, (Charts 2.3-2.6) include people who report a profound core activity limitation, and severe, moderate or mild barriers to work. The intersection between core activity limitation and barriers to work is described in (Appendix A).

Chart 2.3: *Rate of non-participation, by severity of employment barriers reported*
Share of the working age population



Chart 2.4: Rate of unemployment, by severity of employment barriers reported
Share of the people who are looking for work



Chart 2.5: *Rate of underemployment, by severity of employment barriers reported*
Share of people who agree that 'I would like to work more hours' than they currently do



Chart 2.6: *Rate of skills underutilisation, by severity of employment barriers reported*
Share of people who disagree that 'my job makes use of my skills and abilities'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics using HILDA data (Wave 24).
Note: People who report profound barriers say that they are unable to work and are therefore not included.

A weakening economy may exacerbate barriers to employment for people with disability.

Strong labour market conditions have supported employment opportunities across the workforce.

In aggregate, Australia's labour market has delivered some of its strongest results on record in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic.[9] Unemployment fell to historic lows (3.4 per cent), and participation rates - the share of people either working or actively looking for work - reached levels not seen before. In addition, restricted access to migrant workers meant that employers were required to look for local labour and embrace greater workplace flexibility.

For many Australians, this environment created opportunity: jobs were easier to find, and, in a period where skills shortages were common, employers were focused on retaining staff.

Much of the employment growth in recent years was concentrated in public services and community sectors, supported by the expansion of the health and social care sector across Australia.

People with disability shared in this growth over the decade. The unemployment rate for people reporting barriers to work halved over the decade, from 14 per cent to 9 per cent in 2024. The rate also fell among those without barriers, reaching 4.5 per cent in 2024 (see Chart 2.7). Despite a decade of improvement, a gap in unemployment remains compared to those without disability.

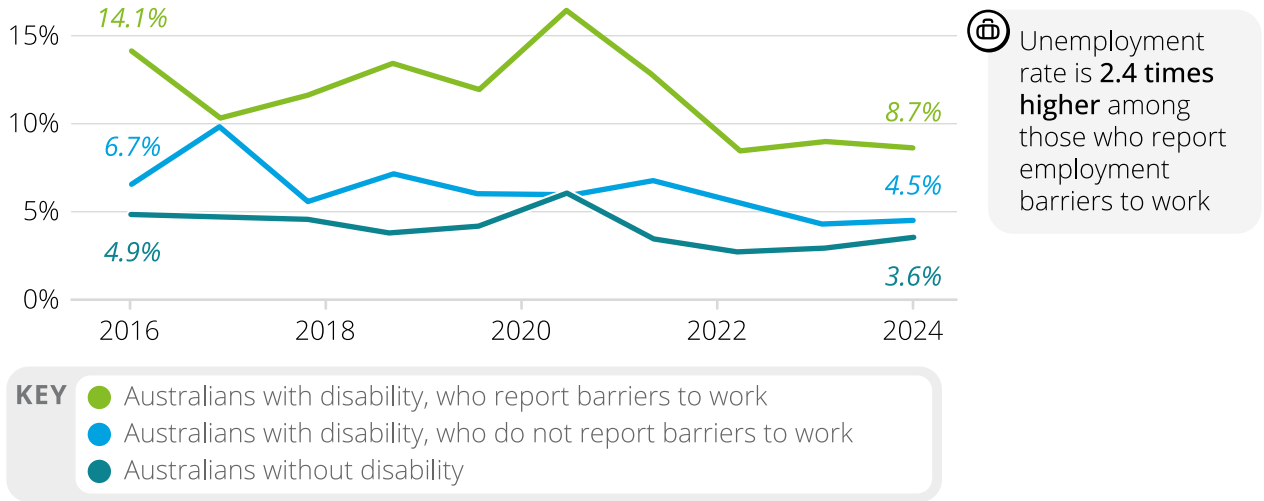
However, unemployment has increased in recent years and is rising.

The tight labour market conditions that can play a role in incentivising employers to redesign jobs and offer flexibility to attract staff are easing.

Nationally, the unemployment rate has been increasing since 2024, from around 4.0 per cent to 4.5 per cent in 2026.

People with disability may be disproportionately likely to feel the effects of rising unemployment, meaning the recent narrowing in the gap could reverse.

Chart 2.7: *Unemployment rate, by disability status*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) analysis of HILDA data (Wave 24).

Artificial Intelligence presents opportunities to customise roles and address some barriers.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being embedded across workplaces, reshaping how tasks are performed and what's needed from workers.

In many roles, AI is likely to complement workers by automating routine tasks such as research, reporting, budgeting and administration, allowing more time for higher-value activities. In others, particularly those centred on routine cognitive work, AI may reduce demand for certain tasks and reshape job requirements. Deloitte Access Economics has identified 82 occupations as particularly exposed to disruption ('AI-disrupted'), concentrated in knowledge-intensive industries such as finance, professional services and information media.[10]

As is the case across the labour force, the impact on people with disability will depend on the type of work they are doing. In 2021, 7.8 per cent of employed people with disability were employed in AI-disrupted occupations, compared to 15.7 per cent among all working Australians.[11] This does not necessarily mean people with disability are less at risk of job loss, but it indicates that AI could reshape the tasks, skills and opportunities available to them differently from the wider workforce. Jobs and Skills Australia notes that automation of standardised, repetitive and entry-level tasks may disproportionately affect people with disability.[12]

At the same time, AI may complement workers by increasing the relative value of capabilities that are harder to replicate, including judgement, creativity, empathy and interpersonal skills.[13] For some people with disability, AI-enabled support may reduce barriers that previously prevented them from applying these capabilities fully. Much like the rest of the workforce, the impact of AI on disability employment is unlikely to be uniform.

AI is powering assistive technology, which could remove barriers to work for some.

Advancements in workplace technology – from screen readers and speech recognition to emerging AI tools – are expanding what is possible for people with disability in employment and are becoming commonplace in many workplaces across Australia.

Generative AI is becoming increasingly integrated into workplaces, creating new opportunities to improve the work experiences of people with disability. A 2024 survey found that 91 per cent of employees with disability and/or who are neurodivergent viewed Microsoft Copilot as a helpful assistive technology, while 76 per cent believed it helps them to thrive at work.[14]

AI is also expanding the reach of assistive technologies by enabling more personalised support, from improving communication through voice recognition and eye tracking to helping people navigate environments through accessible route planning.[15]

Among businesses that currently employ people with disability and were surveyed for this report, 64 per cent of employers provide assistive technology or equipment accommodations for people with disability, which include software, equipment, ergonomic support, or process modification.[16] Of those businesses that provide assistive technology or equipment accommodations, 69 per cent use AI software, and 32 per cent use AI to support system/process modification.[17,18]

There is also a risk that AI displaces employment or exacerbates bias.

As AI advances, assistive technologies are expected to become more adaptive and respond to individual needs in real time.

However, access to these technologies remains uneven, and evidence on their impact on employment is still emerging.

The risk of algorithmic bias must also be acknowledged. AI systems may not adequately represent the diversity of people with disability if AI training data, objectives or evaluation processes insufficiently capture disability-related variation. This may lead to discriminatory or less effective processes unless systems are designed with and tested by people with disability.[19]



CHAPTER

03

The state of job quality for Australians with disability

This report presents a framework to understand job quality.

Australia has strong social and economic protections for its workers.

Quality work is defined in this report with reference to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Decent Work framework.[20]

That framework considers:

1. **Employment standards** – whether workers have appropriate workplace rights and standards, including adequate earnings and decent working hours.
2. **Employment creation** – whether there is equal employment opportunity and treatment of different groups, and whether that work is stable and secure.
3. **Social protection** – the extent to which workers have access to social security, a safe work environment, and flexibility in how and when they work.
4. **Social dialogue and tripartism** – the extent to which there is cooperation between government, employers and workers about work conditions.

To define a set of decent work indicators for a given economy, an index of indicators is used to understand differences in national circumstances.[21] With this variation in the measures that reflect 'quality' in each context, Appendix B highlights the indicators selected to describe employment quality in Australia and to compare outcomes among those with and without disability.

Given a focus on employers, indicators in this chapter place relatively less focus on legal measures of social protection, given the Australian Government's overarching policy settings including the Fair Work Act and Disability Discrimination Act. Rather, the measures under this domain focus on workers' experience within that context.

This chapter highlights differences in the experience and satisfaction of Australians with and without disability on some measures.

The indicators used in this chapter include:

- → **Earnings** among employed Australians, a measure of the combined impact of wages and work hours.
- → **Working time**, measured by tracking satisfaction with hours worked (and the flexibility of those hours).
- → **Measures of equal opportunity**, including workers' satisfaction with access to employment opportunities, their sense of choice at work, and whether they hold supervisor roles.
- → **Measures of stability and security of work**, measured through satisfaction with job security.
- → **Exposure to job stress or high job intensity**, as indicators of a safe work environment.

Findings from the worker survey and focus groups also reflect individuals' access to social security and the extent of social dialogue between government, employers and employees to improve work outcomes.

Some comparisons demonstrate equal experiences, while others suggest that more must be done to enable consistent access to quality work.

This chapter presents findings across these measures for people with and without disability. They highlight instances where people with disability experience poorer outcomes in terms of earnings and working conditions which may limit their productivity at work and prevent their employers from making the most of their skills and experience.

When people are employed in quality work, businesses and society also benefit.

The economic and social benefits of employment – including individuals' productivity at work – depend not only on access to a job, but also on the *quality of experience* in that job.

Job quality is the foundation of a strong business sector.

In 2023, Deloitte Access Economics found that by uplifting social inclusion for people with disability to a level (equal to the rest of the population), Australia could unlock more than $84 billion per annum in collective economic and social benefits.[22]

While that research focused on social inclusion beyond employment parity (which is the focus of this report), it is instructive that $25.6 billion of the modelled benefit reflects the impact of increased employment among people with disability. In that report, the uplift considers a scenario where 1 in 5 people with disability who are unemployed move into work and 1 in 6 move out of underemployment. Those parameters reflect an uplift of 241,000 more people working, which is more conservative than the employment parity figure presented in this report, which would see 637,000 additional people with disability in work. This suggests that the potential economic uplift associated with achieving employment parity could well exceed these estimates.

This estimate reflects the impact of improvements in the quantity and quality of work experiences for people with disability – that is, an uplift in participation and productivity (achieved through equal access to tertiary education and the labour market outcomes connected to this).

For employers, worker engagement is key to productivity and retention.

When people have the conditions to contribute, develop and remain in work, employers benefit from a more productive, capable and sustainable workforce. OECD research finds that higher job quality is associated with stronger wellbeing and therefore productivity outcomes.[23]

This report's survey of Australian employers finds that 49 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that their organisations benefit (or would benefit) from employing people with disability.

The benefits of access to quality work are felt beyond the individual workers.

Jobs that provide fair pay, security, flexibility, safe working conditions and opportunities to progress can help organisations attract and retain talent, strengthen engagement and support a productive and sustainable workforce.

Survey responses suggest that workers who feel supported are more likely to report positive workplace outcomes.

In a survey of 5,145 people, including 779 people with disability (undertaken for this report), people with disability who agreed that they felt supported at work were more likely to agree that they could be productive at work (83 per cent agree) and contribute equally to their workplace (75 per cent agree). Among those who strongly agreed that they felt supported, these proportions increased to 94 per cent and 87 per cent, respectively.

The same dynamic holds true for people without disability, suggesting that there are team-wide benefits of a supportive workplace environment on productivity, contribution and workplace experience.

There is an earnings gap for people with disability in both full-time and part-time work.

Earnings have not kept up with the cost of living.

After adjusting for inflation, disposable income per person has increased by 0.6 per cent per annum over the past decade, compared to 2.3 per cent per annum growth over the prior 20 years.[24] Rising housing and other essential costs have placed additional pressure on lower-income households and increased the risk of in-work poverty.

Cost-of-living pressures increase the importance of quality work.

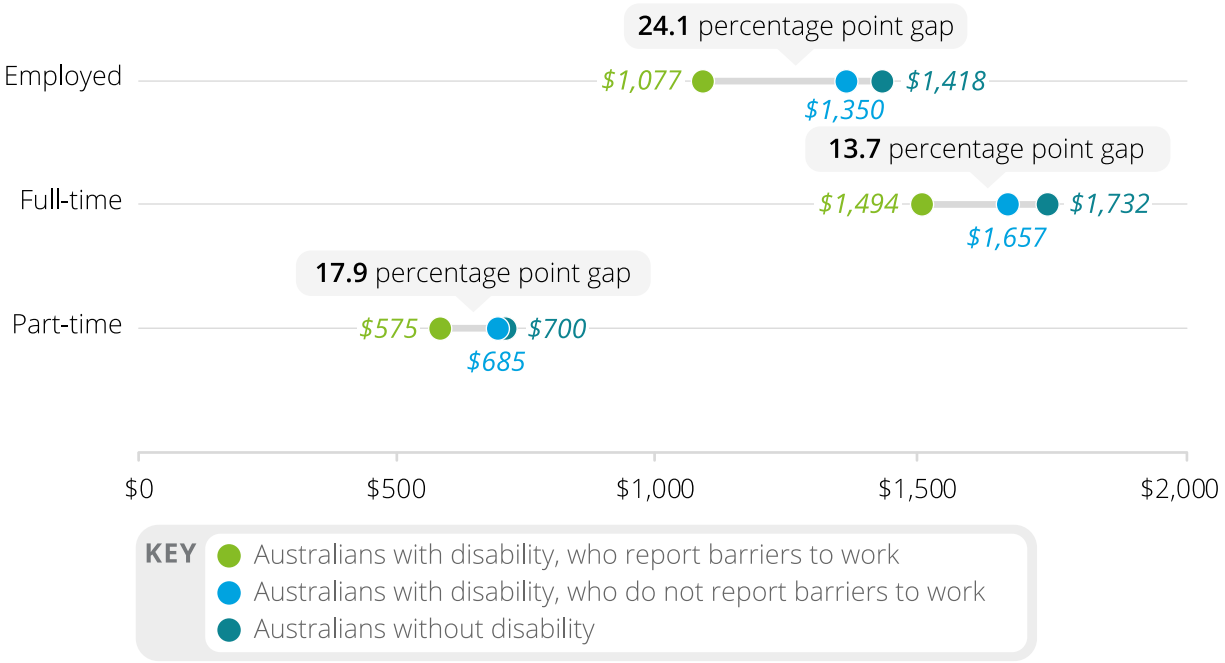
Closing a gap in employment rates does not guarantee financial security or sustainable work. Across the workforce, cost-of-living pressures, persistent underemployment and changing access to flexible work have increased the importance of job quality.

Comparing median earnings, people with disability earn 24 per cent less than the rest of the population.

In 2024, median weekly earnings for employed Australians with disability who report barriers to work were just under $1,100 per week, $274 less than workers with disability who do not report barriers ($1,350) and $300 less than workers without disability ($1,418). The gap is evident across both full-time and part-time work (Chart 3.1), and may partly reflect differences in seniority, pay and hours worked.

Among full-time workers, those without disability earned almost 14 percentage points more than those with disability who report barriers to work. Among part-time workers, the gap was 18 per cent, likely because people with disability work fewer hours on average (Chart 3.1). Differences in occupation, work experience and the concentration of people with disability in lower-skilled roles may also contribute.

Chart 3.1: *Disability earnings gap, by employment status*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) analysis of HILDA data (2024).
Note: The data in the chart use current weekly gross wages and salary, main job (imputed).

Some people with disability are unable to find employment that offers the hours needed to fulfil their potential.

Employment does not always provide enough hours.

Increasing participation rates without addressing access to suitable hours may not deliver economic security for many Australians. In June 2026, 11 in every 100 working Australians reported they want to work more hours.[25] While this is below the pre-pandemic average, the rate of underutilisation is expected to continue increasing in the near-term, suggesting that more people may be underutilised as economic conditions worsen.

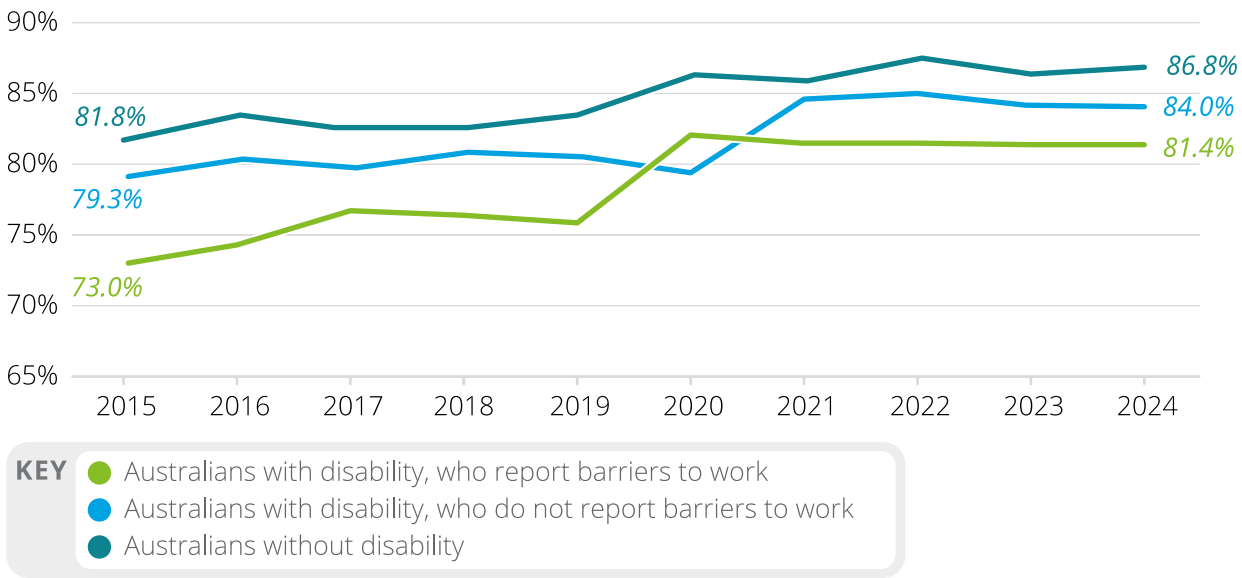
While most are satisfied with their hours, underemployment remains more common for people with disability.

In 2024, 81.4 per cent of people who report employment barriers were satisfied with their weekly working hours, compared with 86.8 per cent of people without disability, a gap that widens as the extent of barriers to work increases.

Satisfaction with working hours has improved for all Australians since the pandemic (Chart 3.2). However, people who report employment barriers have remained consistently less satisfied.

While the source of dissatisfaction with hours (Chart 3.2) is unknown, lower satisfaction among people who report barriers to work may reflect underemployment (see Chapter 2), overwork relative to preferred hours or capacity, limited flexibility in working hours, or other mismatches between working arrangements and individual preferences.

Chart 3.2: *Satisfaction with weekly hours worked*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) analysis of HILDA data (2024).

Note: Satisfaction is the sum of response options of 'totally satisfied' and 'satisfied' (equivalent to a score of ≥ 6 on a 10-point scale) to the question: "to what extent are you satisfied with the hours you work?"

Flexible work arrangements can reduce barriers to employment, but access to flexibility is not guaranteed and may involve trade-offs.

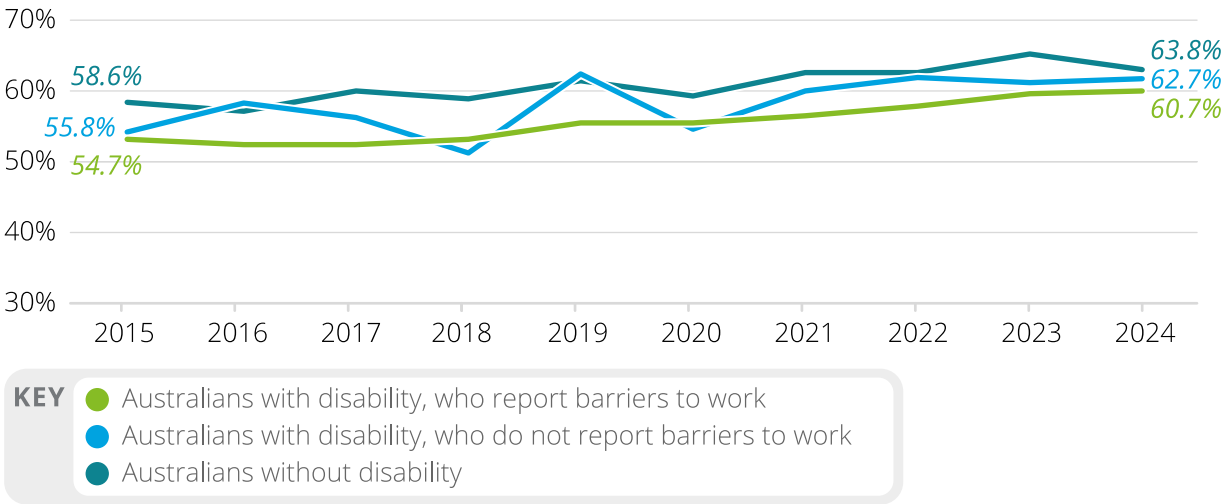
Flexible work arrangements, including remote work and adaptable hours, can help employers attract and retain all types of workers.

For people with disability, those arrangements can reduce barriers associated with commuting, fatigue management and caring responsibilities.[26] While fully remote work has declined from its pandemic peak, hybrid work remains common: in 2025, 36 per cent of Australians reported regularly working from home, up from 8 per cent who worked from home 'most of the time' in 2005.[27] However, access to flexible work is not guaranteed and can be less secure. In 2023, a survey of CEOs across Australian employers highlighted intentions to re-introduce attendance requirements.[28]

Most workers have access to some flexibility with their hours, and that rate has risen slightly in the last decade: 63.8 per cent of people without disability report that their working arrangements offer the possibility to have flexible working hours (noting that not everyone may utilise this flexibility). A comparable 62.7 per cent of people with disability who report no barriers say they have access to flexible work, a slightly higher rate than the 60.7 per cent with disability who report work barriers (Chart 3.3).

Alternative forms of work, such as self-employment, can offer greater autonomy, but this often comes with trade-offs, including less job security (see Chart 3.6), less predictable income and fewer entitlements.

Chart 3.3: *Proportion of employees who report that their working arrangements offer the possibility to have flexible working hours*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) analysis of HILDA data (2024).

People with disability also report lower satisfaction, choice and progression at work.

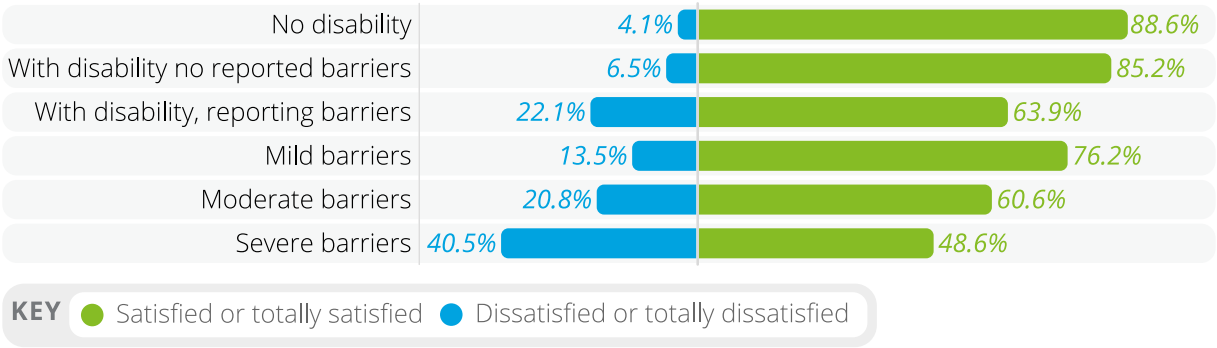
People with disability reporting greater barriers to work are much less likely to be satisfied with their work.

In 2024, 63.9 per cent of people who report barriers were satisfied with their employment opportunities, compared with 85.2 per cent of those without barriers and 88.6 per cent of people without disability (Chart 3.4). Only around one-third of people reporting barriers to employment agreed that they have a lot of choice in deciding what they do at work (Chart 3.5).

Rates of job-related training are comparable.

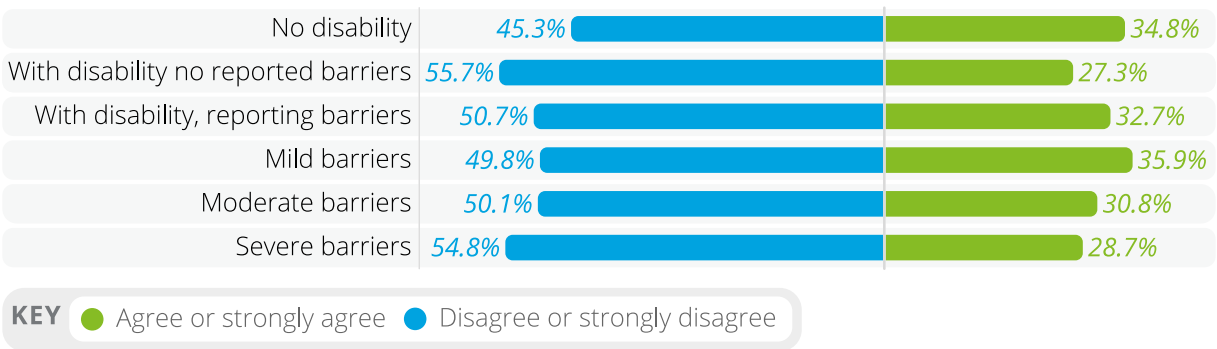
In 2024, 35.3 per cent of people reporting barriers to work took part in training, slightly more than the 32 per cent recorded among people without disability. However, those reporting barriers to work are less likely to be in roles which involve supervising others. In 2024, 39.4 per cent reported supervising others, compared with 43 per cent of people without disability. While this may indicate more limited opportunities for progression (including that comparable access to training does not always translate into equivalent opportunities for advancement or workplace influence), career progression takes many forms. Opportunities to supervise others may not be consistent across workplaces or jobs and may not be a priority for all workers.

Chart 3.4: *Satisfaction with opportunities at work, by severity of employment barriers reported*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) analysis of HILDA data (2024). Note: Satisfaction is the sum of response options of 'totally satisfied' and 'satisfied' to the question: "to what extent are you satisfied with employment opportunities?"

Chart 3.5: *Share of employed Australians who say they have choice at work, by severity of employment barriers reported*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) analysis of HILDA data (2024). Note: Agreement is the sum of response options of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the statement "I have a lot of choice in deciding what I do at work"

CASE STUDY

At IAG, a disability internship offers early-career experience and strengthens the organisation's talent pipeline.

IAG partners with Australian Disability Network's Stepping Into Internship Program to provide paid, meaningful work experience for students and recent graduates with disability.

Since 2017, Technology & Operations (T&O) has embedded the program within its broader early-career strategy, offering real work across areas such as security, data, engineering, architecture and operations. Candidates benefit from inclusive recruitment, structured interviews, workplace adjustments, clear onboarding, trained leaders, buddies and regular check-ins. The aim is not simply to offer an internship, but to create a supported pathway into graduate and ongoing roles while building IAG's future workforce capability.

AusDN's support with candidate attraction, screening and shortlisting gives IAG access to a skilled, often overlooked talent pool, and takes pressure off internal recruitment processes.

Eleven former interns have gone on to graduate programs and permanent roles at IAG, converting a fixed-term placement into an ongoing talent pipeline rather than a one-off arrangement. This includes four who will join the 2027 graduate cohort, including the organisation's first-ever part-time graduate hire. Like other internship programs, the 6-month period presents an opportunity to understand the intern's objectives and alignment to the team's needs – many who do not move into IAG have skills specific to other industries, and leave with the experience to gain roles elsewhere, supporting other businesses.

> *"What drew me to apply for the internship is the opportunity to gain experience within a professional workplace …*
> *It's been helpful to connect with other interns and it's really developed my genuine sense of belonging within IAG."*

Han, IAG's fiftieth intern through the program with AusDN.[29]

Those who support interns gain hands-on development through mentoring and problem-solving in real time, sharpening how they lead more broadly, not just how they support one team member.

Leaders also become more deliberate about designing meaningful, outcome-based work and accessible ways of working. These are skills that carry over into how they manage teams day to day.

One intern, Delvina, worked with her supervisor, Alvin, through the internship. Alvin reflected on what he had learned from the experience and what other businesses might take from it:

> *"For me, it's about looking past the disability and focusing on the person and what they can bring.*
>
> *When I interviewed Delvina, I knew straight away she would bring positive energy and fit well within the IAG culture.*
>
> *Delvina is self-driven, comfortable asking for help when she needed it, but also had a great ability to find answers for herself.*
>
> *Give people the opportunity and the right support and let their ability speak for itself."*

Alvin, a manager who supervised Delvina during the internship and first graduate rotation.

At IAG, the experience of participating in AusDN's Internship program has led to broader work across the organisation, to consider the accessibility of systems and processes across the workplace. This accessibility audit informed changes to the physical workplaces to improve accessibility, changes to ways of communicating across the organisation, and changes to the graduate recruitment process, to ensure scaled digital tools do not unfairly screen out talented people with disability.

> *"When we create accessible pathways and remove barriers, we attract, develop and retain talented people who bring wider perspectives and lived experience."*

Neil Morgan
IAG's Chief Operating Officer, Chair of the DE&I Council.

Supporting diverse teams to work effectively has been a focus of IAG's recently launched Managing Early and Diverse Workforces training, a program with 100 per cent uptake among staff who manage new graduates or those who join through the organisation's workforce diversity initiatives.

The internship program has also earned strong support from senior leadership, who see value as central to the business:

> *"Accessibility is not just an inclusion priority; it's a people priority, it's a customer priority, and it's an organisational priority."*

Gill Folkes
IAG's Executive General Manager, Talent, Culture and Inclusion.[30]

IAG's advice to others? To start now.

The organisation's talent team reflected on the impact of the first time they hired a worker with disability into a paid role that was central to the business. This set the organisation on a path to prove what was possible, and scale up hiring based on this initial success.

> *"Needing support doesn't mean someone is less capable. The right support helps them perform at their best."*

Delvina,
IAG Graduate.



People with disability are also more likely to experience job stress and insecurity.

Among Australians with disability who report employment barriers, 87 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they are satisfied with their job security in 2024. This compares to 91 per cent of Australian workers without disability (Chart 3.6).

Although satisfaction with job security has improved over the past decade for all workers, it is consistently lower for people reporting barriers to work.

Some workers face a trade-off between flexibility and security.

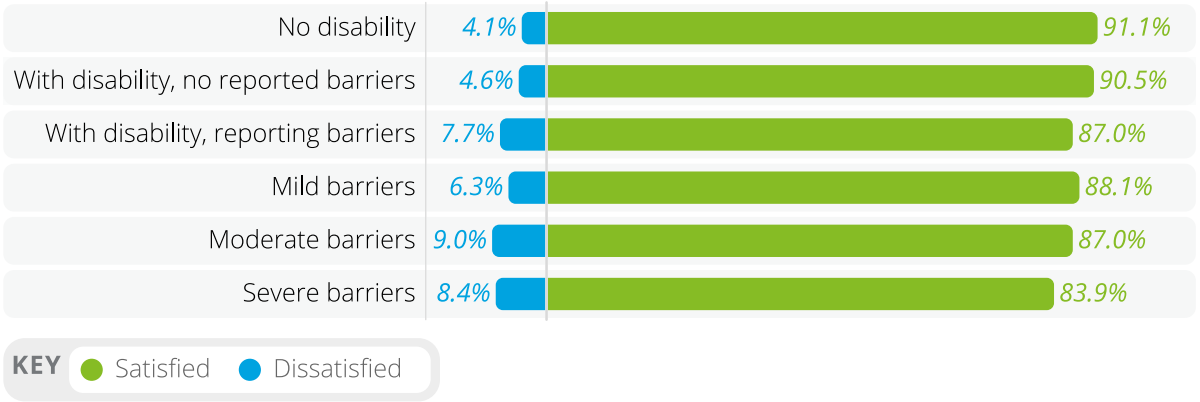
In 2024, 29 per cent of people who report barriers to work were employed on a casual basis, compared to 21 per cent of those without disability. While casual work can provide flexibility for people with changing capacity to work, it may also offer less security (given it is rare for these arrangements to include guaranteed hours or paid leave).[31]

The finding that people who report barriers to work are less satisfied with workplace flexibility compared to those without disability may reflect challenges accessing jobs that balance flexibility and security.

People with disability who report barriers to work are more likely to report high job stress.

While rates of job stress are relatively low, those experiencing employment barriers reported higher rates of job stress (32.4 per cent) than people without disability (27.4 per cent). Stress was highest among those who have severe employment barriers (see Chart 3.7), with this gap consistent over the last decade.

Chart 3.6: *Satisfaction with job security, by severity of employment barriers reported*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) analysis of HILDA data (2024)
Note: Participants respond to the question "to what extent are you satisfied with job security on a scale of 0 to 10?" In this chart, 'satisfied' indicates a response ≥ 6 and 'dissatisfied' ≤ 4.

Chart 3.7: *Share of Australians who report 'job stress', by severity of employment barriers reported*



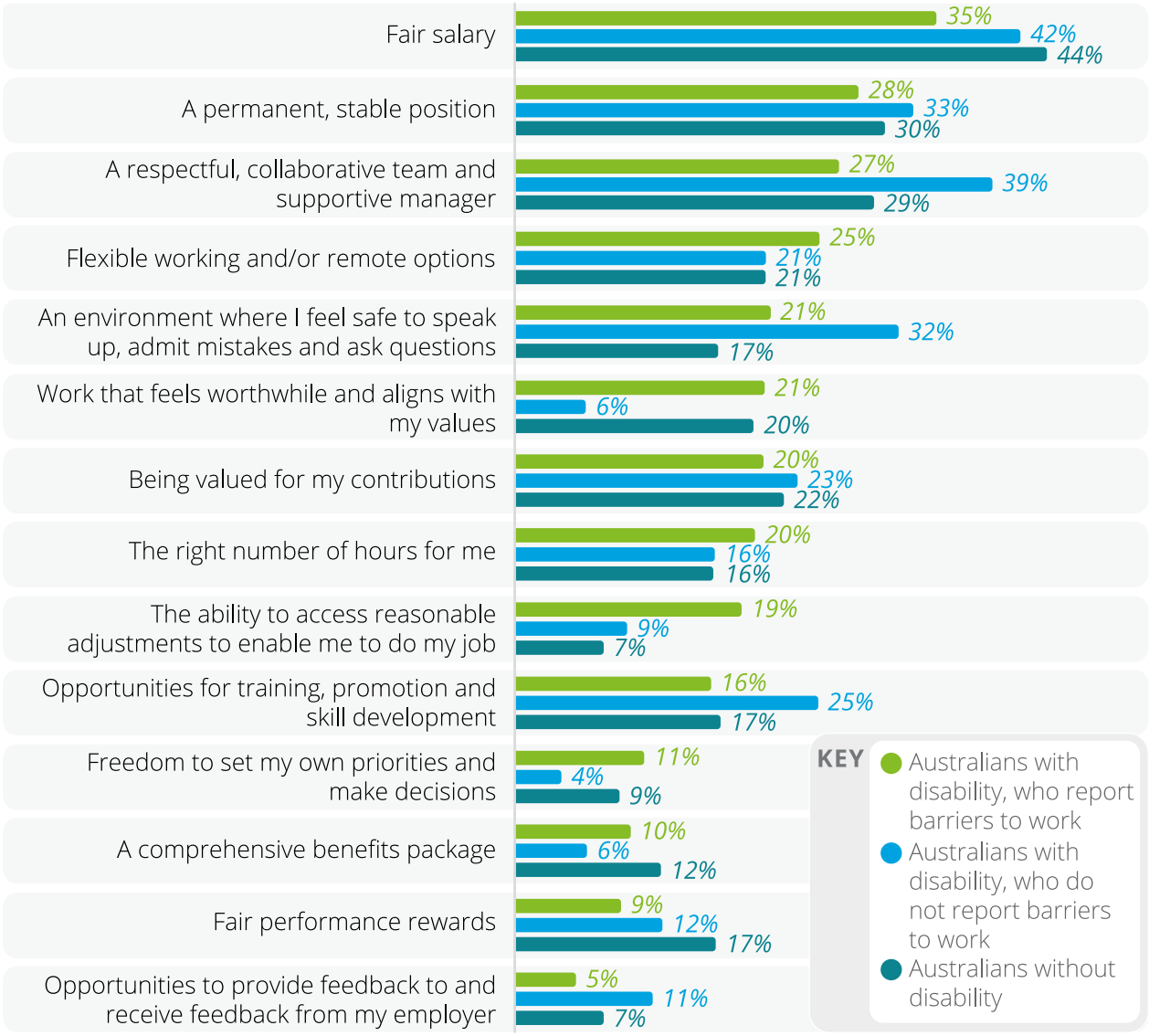
Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) analysis of HILDA data (2024).
Note: Agreement is the sum of response options of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the statement "my job is more stressful than I had ever imagined".

Workers with disability have the same priorities for work: fair pay, stable work, and respectful teams.

Among survey respondents, the top three most commonly reported attributes of a quality job were consistent across Australians with and without disability. These were a fair salary, a stable and permanent position, and a respectful, collaborative team and supportive manager (Chart 3.8). Per the job quality framework, each response option in the chart is an essential component of decent work. Responses highlight which domains are among the most important to some groups more than others – including those that people with disability might be most accustomed to focusing on, to ensure their workplaces are accessible.

People without disability placed slightly more importance on remuneration and performance rewards. This may reflect that people with disability who reported barriers to work placed greater importance on non-financial aspects of work, including access to workplace adjustments, flexible and remote working options, and whether they work in an environment in which they feel psychologically safe.

Chart 3.8: *Attributes of quality jobs, by disability status and barriers reported at work*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=5,008. Responses weighted by age, gender and state. Note: unlabelled data are less than 5%. Respondents were asked to select up to three attributes that apply.

LIVED EXPERIENCE INSIGHTS

Access to meaningful work can unlock independence and career growth.

To complement the findings of the worker survey, and reflecting potential limits to the accessibility of an online survey for some participants, six focus groups were undertaken with 31 workers with significant disabilities.

Comments made in these focus groups – included throughout this report – serve as a reminder that many Australians with disability want to work, can contribute meaningfully to the economy and must at times overcome significant barriers including the discrimination of low expectations.

Employment provides a pathway to greater confidence and self-determination. For many employees, the value of work extends beyond income. Employment provides purpose, routine and the opportunity to contribute, helping individuals feel productive, valued and connected to their communities. Several workers described their jobs as providing a sense of identity and fulfilment:

> *"I feel a lot happier when I'm employed… I've always had a strong work ethic since I was a teenager, I love working in a team and working towards the same goal."*
>
> Woman, currently in open employment

While this sense of social satisfaction from work is not unique to Australians with disability, this benefit may be stronger for those who have been systemically excluded. The worker survey highlights that 64% of people with disability agreed or strongly agreed they would still like to work if they did not require income, compared to 59% of people without disability.

Employment also creates opportunities for growth that many employees are proud of. Workers in focus groups often talked about taking on responsibilities that expanded their horizons. Other workers highlighted the satisfaction of gaining formal qualifications. Often, this certification also provides a mechanism for career progression:

> *"I've been in childcare for about 8 years, which is an amazing achievement. I do have a certificate for it. I just passed my first aid course, and I got my certificate as well, so I'm really happy with that."*
>
> Woman, currently in open employment

Access to meaningful work is most transformative when employers focus on workers' strengths. Inclusive workplaces enable workers with disability to work more independently, contribute meaningfully and develop confidence in their capabilities.

> *"They make sure that they include me in work meetings… They talk to me like any other colleague."*
>
> Woman with experience in supported and open employment

Workers' experiences demonstrate that employment enables individuals with disability to build confidence, contribute meaningfully and pursue their goals. Employees' stories reinforce the value of workplaces that enable workers with disability to reach their full potential.

CHAPTER

04

Employer attitudes, experiences and actions

Employer views differ depending on whether they are currently employing staff with disability.

This chapter provides a current view of employers' experiences and perceptions when it comes to disability employment. It draws findings from a survey of more than 1,280 Australian employers, the profile of which is detailed in Appendix C.

The survey highlights that employers with firsthand experience see a stronger business case for disability employment.

This report's survey of Australian employers estimates that 32 per cent of businesses currently employ at least one staff member with disability. 3 in 4 (75 per cent) of those businesses reported that they think there are commercial benefits associated with that decision for their own organisation, and others in their industry (51 per cent).

Employers without direct experience hiring people with disability were only half as likely to agree (24 per cent) and five times more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that other organisations in their industry benefit from employing people with disability (25 per cent, relative to 5 per cent).

This supports the 'contact theory', that exposure to a group of workers such as those with disability changes people's assumptions about the workers' capability, and their own businesses' capacity to engage these workers.[32]

Employers that hire people with disability highlight the workforce benefits, not just the social impact.

Businesses that already hire people with disability are more likely to identify benefits relating to talent, workplace culture and employee reliability (Chart 4.1).

Access to a skilled and capable talent pool is the most commonly identified benefit among businesses that currently employ people with disability. Among employers that recognise benefits from disability employment, 53 per cent of those employing people with disability rank access to this talent pool among their top three benefits, compared with 39 per cent of those who do not.

There is less difference between organisations that do and do not currently hire people with disability when it comes to whether they align disability employment with their social objectives. Employers often note the social benefits of hiring people with disability among the top outcomes, including 'supporting the livelihood of workers with disability (52 per cent)'.

Businesses that don't currently employ people with disability are slightly more likely to identify enhanced diversity and inclusion as a benefit than to see disability employment as a workforce opportunity. As highlighted later in this chapter, most employers have yet to make this shift.

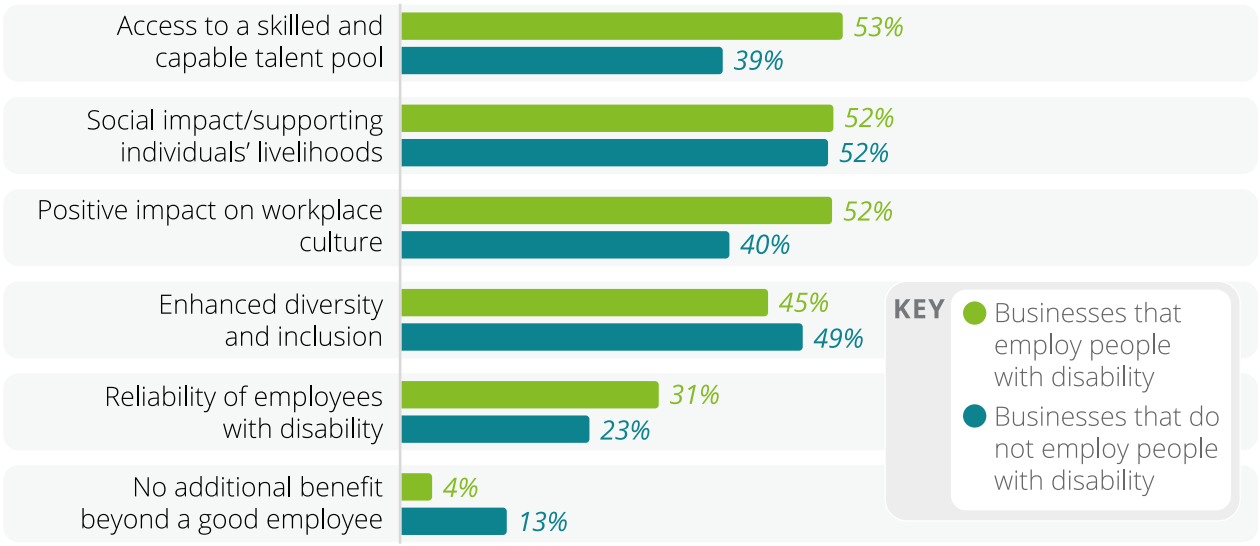
As revealed across this chapter, employers without direct experience hiring people with disability are less likely to perceive benefits – perhaps because they underestimate the workforce, or because they underestimate the adjustments they can make or the support they can receive, to do so.

The average employer does not, to their knowledge, hire any people with disability.

This two-thirds majority of Australian businesses may be constrained by assumptions about the capability of the workforce with disability, or the capability of their existing staff or workplace systems to adjust and learn from workers with disability.

These employers may also not know that some of their staff have disability because they are not tracking it – and so, in turn, they are not observing the benefits. These employers are not yet seeing the benefit across their organisation of adopting more inclusive practice.

Chart 4.1: *Share of employers that believe in the benefits of hiring people with disability and listed these benefits among their 'top 3'*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=867. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

Growing businesses are employing workers with disability, and the majority report they have realised commercial return.

As well as asking about the perceived or theoretical benefits of hiring people with disability (Chart 4.2), the survey also asked about the extent to which businesses felt those benefits had been realised by their own organisation.

55 per cent of businesses that currently employ people with disability report receiving a commercial benefit.

These businesses are also more likely to feel that other organisations in their industry are benefiting from hiring people with disability (Chart 4.2) and are more likely to say they are aware of support programs to enable hiring people with disability (87 per cent of these businesses, relative to 67 per cent of others).

Businesses that report commercial benefits are also more likely to report having encountered barriers and overcoming them.

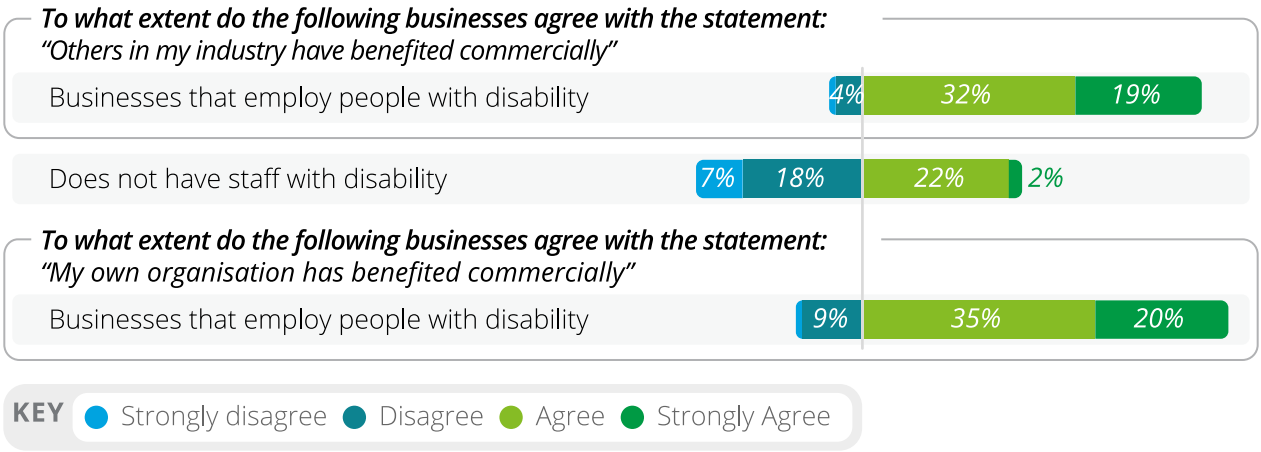
These businesses are twice as likely to say the benefits outweigh the risks (73 per cent, as compared to 36 per cent).

This reinforces the hypothesis that experience changes employers' beliefs about what's possible and improves businesses' capacity and capability to design work effectively for workers with disability. As described in more detail on the following page, this is also reflected in the fact that businesses that currently employ people with disability report stronger knowledge of best practice approaches and are more likely to have demonstrated ability when it comes to embedding inclusive workplace practice.

The evaluation of the WorkAbility Expo program, designed to help people with disability find meaningful employment, found that organisations actively seeking to employ people with disability report greater knowledge of inclusive employment.[33]

This finding is reinforced by the survey fielded for this report, which found that employers are also more likely to say the benefits outweigh the risks, with 61 per cent reporting this compared to 33 per cent of those yet to employ people with disability. This suggests that experience goes hand in hand with greater capability and confidence.

Chart 4.2: *Share of employers that have benefited commercially from employing people with disability, or believe others in their industry have*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry. Note: unlabelled values are less than 3%. Chart excludes respondents who answered "neither agree nor disagree" and "don't know".

Among employers of people with disability, awareness, desire and knowledge of good practice approaches are generally strong.

Most businesses that currently employ people with disability recognise the value of doing so and report knowing how to support employees in practice.

Around 80 per cent or more are aware of disability employment support programs, believe the risks and complexity can be managed, and report knowing how to make workplace adjustments, design inclusive systems and support retention and career progression.

Experience employing people with disability goes hand in hand with greater knowledge and confidence in embedding good workplace practices. For example, 81 per cent say they know how to adjust recruitment and onboarding, compared with 62 per cent of organisations who don't currently employ people with disability.

The largest overall knowledge gap relates to retention and equal career progression, at approximately 24 percentage points. This suggests those who don't employ a person with disability may be particularly uncertain about how disability inclusion can be sustained beyond recruitment and onboarding.

This may suggest that, for existing employers, the central challenge is not building awareness of the case for disability employment or basic knowledge of what to do. Rather, the biggest challenge facing these employers is to translate their intent and knowledge into consistent, business-as-usual practices.

Businesses that have reported commercial benefits outperform those that have not across every component of the change framework.

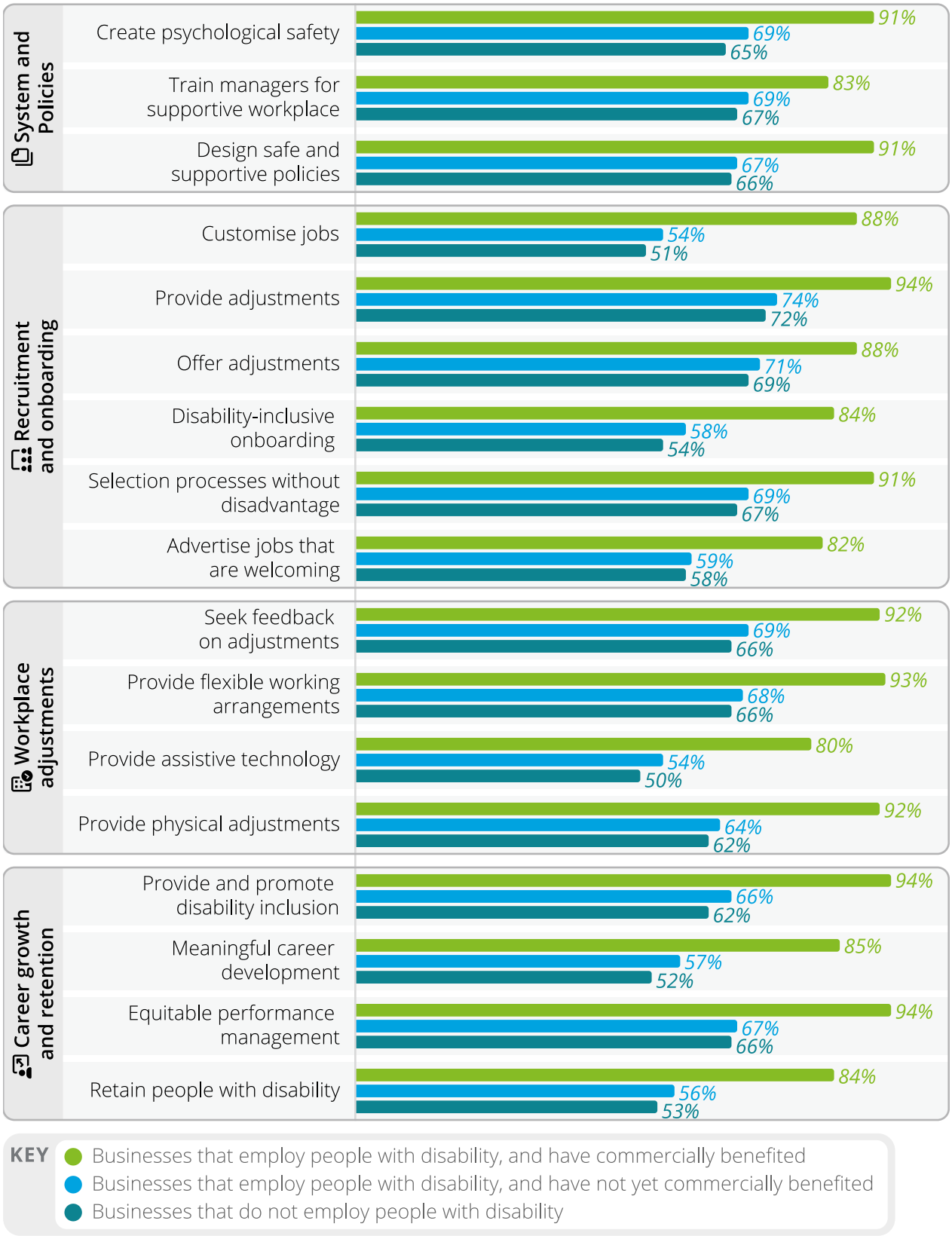
Among businesses that currently employ people with disability, measures of awareness, desire, knowledge and ability exceed those of other businesses – and there are clearly reinforcing effects. Businesses that report commercial benefits from disability hiring have the strongest knowledge in equitable performance management, providing and promoting disability inclusion, and providing adjustments, with around 94 per cent reporting knowledge in each area (Chart 4.3, over page). Providing adjustments is also the strongest knowledge area among employers that have not yet realised commercial benefits, although the share reporting this knowledge is lower, at 74 per cent compared with 94 per cent among those that have.

The largest knowledge gap between employers that have and have not yet realised commercial benefits relates to customising jobs. Around 88 per cent of employers that report commercial benefits say they know how to customise jobs, compared with 54 per cent of those that have not yet realised benefits. This gap is wider still when compared with businesses that do not currently employ people with disability, of which only 51 per cent report this knowledge, a 38 percentage point gap.

Both groups report stronger knowledge of providing adjustments and flexible working arrangements, and weaker knowledge of assistive technology. Employers that report commercial benefits have greater knowledge across these areas, suggesting that inclusive workplace practices may help improve productivity across the workforce.

Chart 4.3: *Share of employers reporting knowledge to support the employment and recruitment of people with disability*

Read as: 91% of businesses agreed or strongly agreed that they have the knowledge to...



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

For employers that do employ people with disability already, the next step is ensuring consistent practice, at scale.

Businesses that have realised commercial benefit are also more likely to have translated that knowledge into consistent action across their business processes.

This group of employers is more than twice as likely as businesses that have not realised benefits to embed disability employment in key systems and practices, at 75 per cent compared with 32 per cent. They are also more than three times as likely to track their own organisations' disability employment performance (56 per cent compared with 17 per cent), more than twice as likely to have initiatives and accountability mechanisms in place (62 per cent compared with 24 per cent) and to seek feedback from employees with disability about their experiences (83 per cent compared with 48 per cent).

Disability inclusion frameworks and systems can help employers recruit and retain people with disability.[34] This dynamic is likely occurring in both directions – that is, that organisations that already employ people with disability have built stronger systems, practices and confidence, and that those practices support organisations to attract and retain talent within the disability workforce. Across the board, roughly a quarter (24 per cent) of businesses track their organisation's disability metrics, and only half of those (51 per cent) benchmark their performance against industry standards or against their peers.

Chart 4.4: *Share of employers that mention disability in their organisations' policies and practices*

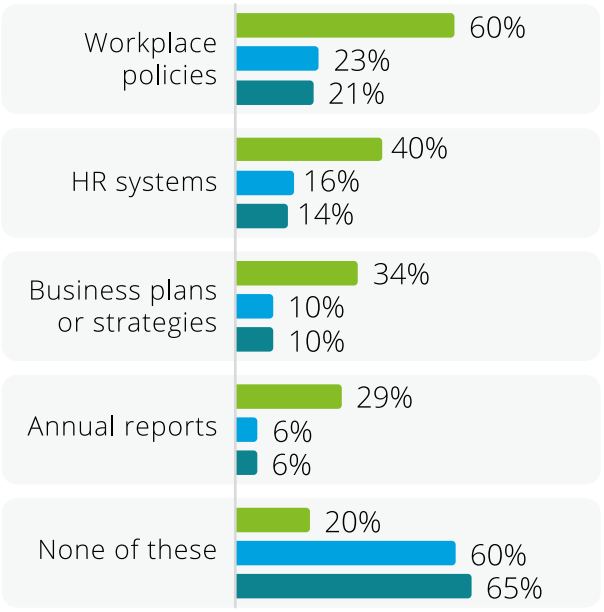
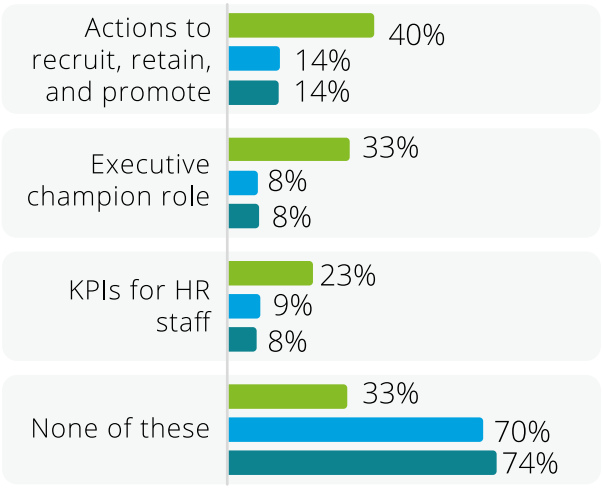
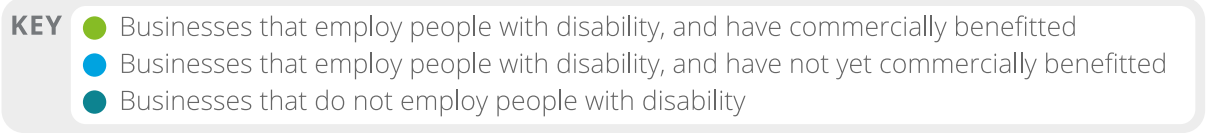


Chart 4.5: *Share of employers with actions in place to support people with disability*





Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

Employers' experience and capability vary by size and type of organisation.

Large for-profit businesses report strong employee engagement.

93 per cent of large for-profit businesses that hire people with disability report seeking employee feedback, the highest share of any group. Most also mention disability in business practices (85 per cent) and have initiatives and mechanisms in place (79 per cent), but fewer track performance (60 per cent) or benchmark it (34 per cent). This likely reflects large organisations' capacity to establish and maintain disability employment processes and practices.

Small for-profit businesses show the clearest gap between seeking feedback and taking action.

While 75 per cent seek employee feedback, only 44 per cent have initiatives and mechanisms in place. This may reflect that small for-profit organisations have less in-house capability to turn employee feedback into formal practices. Support from intermediary organisations, such as AusDN and IEA providers, could help bridge this gap by helping businesses put inclusive employment practices in place.

NFPs and ADEs report strong disability employment practices, but performance monitoring is less consistent.

Among disability employers, disability features in business practices are present in 97 per cent of small NFPs, 95 per cent of ADEs and 89 per cent of large NFPs. Yet only 41 per cent of ADEs keep records of their organisations' disability employment, compared with 60 per cent of small NFPs and 82 per cent of large NFPs (Table 4.1).

Small NFPs show a strong commitment to disability employment but, like small for-profit organisations, may lack the capacity to put formal practices in place and track progress.

Government employers show a more even spread of practices.

Practices to support disability employment range from 47 to 76 per cent among government agencies that hire people with disability. Government employers are the most likely to benchmark performance (47 per cent). They are, however, the least likely to seek employee feedback (65 per cent).

Table 4.1: Share of employers that currently hire people with disability and have actions in place to support disability employment

	Large for-profit	Small for-profit	Large NPFs	Small NPFs	Govt.	ADEs
Mention disability in business practices	85	57	89	97	76	95
Track own organisation's performance	60	45	82	60	69	41
Compare performance to industry benchmarks*	34	18	26	30	47	25
Have initiatives and mechanisms in place	79	44	80	68	74	82
Seek employee feedback to improve practices	93	75	89	84	65	91

*Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=817, by business types: large for-profit (n=193), small for-profit (n=336), large NFPs (n=52), small NFPs (n=69), government (n=142), and ADEs (n=25). Responses weighted by business size and industry. *Only those that track their own disability employment performance were asked if they benchmark.*

CASE STUDY

Partnerships and practical flexibility are helping Marriott to build a sustainable and engaged workforce.

Marriott International, the world's largest hotel company with 30 hotels in Australia, is committed to providing people with disability employment opportunities and career advancement.

Marriott's current target is to double the number of employees with disability by the end of 2027. Its aim is to achieve workforce representation that reflects the Australian population, where approximately one in five people have a disability.

Underlying this strong progress at the national level are the varied experiences of individual hotels, with some making larger strides than others. These differences provide insights into what enables successful disability employment, and what limits it.

> *"There is no single HR leader out there who doesn't want to do this. But it's about the time, resources and knowing where to start."*

Natasha Rasheed
Senior Director of Human Resources; Australia, New Zealand & Pacific Islands

In Marriott's experience, direct cost is not the main barrier to employing people with disability, but the time, confidence and support required to find suitable candidates.

Strong partnerships with employment agencies have helped manage those barriers. And the flexibility offered by these agencies has enabled Marriott to find the right talent with disability.

Successful partnerships have enabled Marriott to create pathways to long-term employment. Through these partnerships, agencies and organisations connect hotels with suitable candidates and help identify practical workplace adjustments, which are often simpler and less costly than employers might expect. Strong partners play an important role in the matching process, as they understand both the needs of job seekers and the operational realities of hospitality.

Australian Disability Network (AusDN) disability awareness training and a workplace adjustments policy have also helped build confidence across teams and improved rates of people sharing their disability status among staff.

Employee retention is one of the biggest challenges in hospitality.

Marriott has found that employees with disability are often highly loyal and committed team members, providing significant value beyond the initial recruitment effort.

One employee, who initially faced obstacles as a new hire, progressed from an intern to a permanent employee with the support of AusDN, and was recognised as Employee of the Month within four months. He is still employed in the team over 3 years on.

Another employee, Sazsha, credits workplace adjustments and an inclusive, supportive team culture with building her confidence as a wait staffer and barista, so that she feels she belongs.

> *"I wasn't able to work for a long time, because of my disability, so, I was ready to put myself out there and provide for myself."*
>
> *"We're very supportive of each other… [my colleagues] allow me to have a bit of space to myself to recuperate and then get back to work."*

This support has made it possible for Sazsha to work at her best – with benefit to her employer. The leadership team who oversee Sazsha's hotel highlight her commitment to the role, reflect on what they've learned from the experience of working with her, and recognise her performance.

> *"You just need to spend some time and listen – that's the most important thing, so then you can make some adjustments to make their work smooth… and show gratitude that they've chosen us to be a member of our team."*
>
> *"It was more about making [her] feel comfortable to step into the role, and then just let her have a go… with confidence comes power and she's a powerhouse now."*
>
> *"Sazsha has been a fantastic hire… she lives out our values towards our guests and our other staff, every day."*

David West
Director Human Resources
W Hotel Melbourne

Image: Sazsha serves customers coffee at the hotel where she works in Melbourne.
Marriott Hotels



For the majority of businesses not employing people with disability, assumptions may be holding them back from attracting and retaining talent.

Every hiring decision involves some uncertainty, cost, and risk. The experiences of businesses that currently employ people with disability suggest these risks can be managed – just as they are with other hiring decisions – and that employers' experiences doing so may build their confidence, including their understanding of the available support systems.

As seen in Chart 4.6, employers with direct experience are much more likely to strongly agree with the statements, suggesting the difference is not just in their views, but in how firmly they hold them.

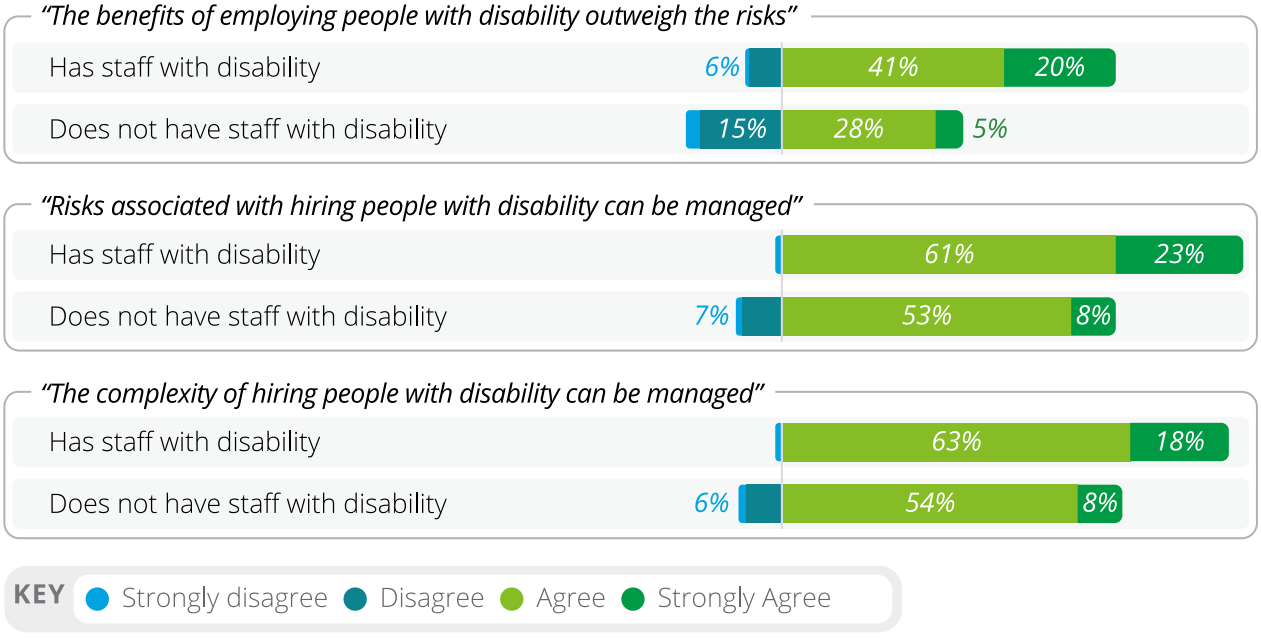
Caution about risk is not the same as unwillingness to act. Very few businesses strongly disagreed with the statements in Chart 4.6 and recent *Jobs and Skills Australia* research finds that 59 per cent of businesses that had not hired people with disability were 'open to it'.[35]

For employers new to disability hiring, intermediary organisations can support them to find the right staff member and build the employer's understanding, so the job match works.

Among businesses surveyed for this report, 41 per cent of employers that do not currently hire people with disability want to learn more about doing so.

The case studies on the following page demonstrate the ways in which intermediary organisations can help employers find the right person for the job.

Chart 4.6: *Share of employers' responses to statements regarding disability employment*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

Note: Unlabelled values are less than 4%. Chart excludes respondents who answered "neither agree nor disagree" and "don't know".

CASE STUDIES

Intermediary organisations help connect employers with skilled candidates, and then ensure the employee is confident in their role.



Employer success stories also demonstrate how partnerships can support employers in tailoring adjustments to different needs.

Jess' role in equipment preparation with the Western Bulldogs has been shaped through collaboration between the employer, employee and employment service provider.[36] Jess' supervisor reflected that the Western Bulldogs has:

> *"...really valued getting to know Jess and, with CVGT's support, partnering to shape a role that enables him to grow and contribute meaningfully within our workplace."*

Sophie Porra
General Manager People and Culture, Western Bulldogs

Taking a flexible approach to job design, with the support and advice of an intermediary such as CVGT, can create opportunities for employees with disability while enabling employers to benefit from their skills and contributions.

An employment service provider also helped a small community legal centre find a receptionist who combined relevant skills with lived experience of the challenges faced by clients.

They also helped the right candidate, Jantelle, feel ready and comfortable to commence her new role.

Jantelle was referred to the role through employment services provider MatchWorks, because she brought both the administrative skills required for the position and had lived experience that aligned with the organisation's needs.[37]

The employer described seeking "someone who could bring warmth and lived experience to the role".

Jantelle's current role is to deliver empathetic and inclusive service delivery for clients – a perfect fit.

> *"[MatchWorks' staff] support meant everything during a really tough time. I was struggling to find the right opportunities and feeling stuck. She helped me feel more prepared, more confident and ready to re-enter the workforce."*

Jantelle
Receptionist, Gosnells Community Legal Centre

For Sydney Airport, hiring people with disability expanded access to talent.

Suhail's employment in security screening at Sydney Airport revealed that being open to hiring people with disability can help an employer overcome persistent challenges in attracting capable staff.[38]

Support from employment services provider SSI helped Suhail (pictured) secure this role. SSI assists refugees living with injury, illness or disability to continue their careers. It provides tailored, culturally sensitive support to individuals, connecting them with employment opportunities through its longstanding employer networks.

Through these connections, SSI also helps employers access job candidates that they may not otherwise reach. Giulia, Suhail's supervisor, noted that hiring from non-traditional talent pools had:

> *"...broadened the scope to retain and attract really amazing people."*

For WA Health, employees with disability strengthened team capability and engagement.

When four employees with disability joined the organisation in administrative roles, WA Health's Manager for Information Services, Helen Frantom, highlighted the value they brought to the organisation.[39]

One employee was recognised for his sharp eye for detail and high-quality delivery in a data entry role, and Helen reflected that the new colleagues brought

> *"...energy, connection and a great sense of purpose to the workplace."*



Image: Refugee Suhail aspired to work in aviation security back in Pakistan. He is pictured here at work in Sydney Airport, via ABC News

Employers understand that they have the power to influence the experience of people with disability in the workplace.

40 per cent of businesses that currently employ people with disability reported no barriers to disability employment in the past two years. Among businesses that do not currently employ people with disability, 60 per cent reported no barriers (Chart 4.7).

The likelihood of encountering barriers may reflect whether businesses have recruited in the past two years, including whether they have hired people with disability. Differences in awareness and use of available support programs may also play a role.

Large for-profit businesses and government employers that currently hire people with disability were particularly likely to report barriers (79 per cent and 73 per cent, respectively). This compares with 51 per cent and 44 per cent of those that do not employ people with disability, which may reflect greater firsthand experience of the hiring process of people with disability.

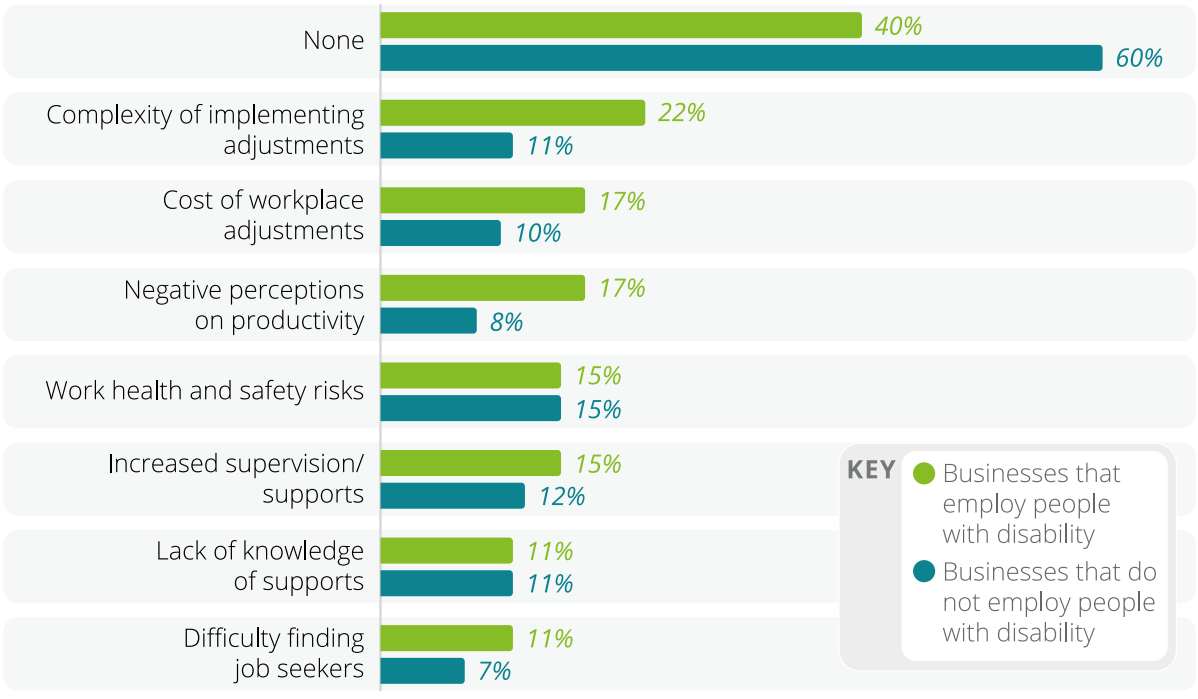
As noted in the introduction, Australia has a complex support system to enable workers with disability to prepare for work and find employers, but it tends to focus on the supply side of the system (workers' job readiness) over the demand side (employer intent and capability).

Still, employers understand that the challenge is primarily on the demand side.

The least-reported barrier among employers (regardless of their hiring experience) is "*difficulty finding jobseekers with disability*". Only 8 per cent of all businesses report an issue with worker supply.*

Notably, when employers were asked about their perceptions of the barriers faced by jobseekers with disability, the top barrier they expected was that people with disability face "*difficulty finding an employer who is willing to hire*" (69 per cent). This was also the most commonly cited barrier among people in the workforce themselves.

Chart 4.7: *Share of employers that report barriers to employing people with disability*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

*Notes: *This figure differs from Chart 4.7 because it accounts for the proportion of all businesses, not just those who reporting employing people with disability.*

CASE STUDY

By recognising Jack's strengths, Fleet Plant Hire Solutions has enhanced their business' capability.

Jack joined Fleet Plant Hire Solutions in a role that was designed around his strengths with people and computers. Jack and his employer were matched through Down Syndrome Australia's *Employment Connections service*.[40] The service is run by State and Territory member and partner organisations to support people with Down Syndrome to find meaningful paid employment and help employers build inclusive workplaces.

Fleet's experience demonstrates that employing people with disability is not about having lower expectations or tokenistic roles, but instead about matching individual strengths with business opportunities.

While Fleet initially engaged Jack as a general Office Assistant, the business invested time when Jack started to understand where his strengths could best be applied in their team.

By tailoring Jack's role to include responsibilities that aligned with his attention to detail and his interpersonal skills, Fleet was able to build capability in an area of the business that relied on strong contractor interactions and administrative support. This allowed Jack to thrive while also creating value for the business: they have gained a dedicated team member whose skills are aligned with his role.

Fleet's supervisors focused on developing Jack's skills in areas that aligned with the parts of the business he was interested in, particularly interacting with contractors.

> *"We felt that [Jack's] passion was [being] around people, so we just focused on those areas and tried to build them."*

Jade West
Group Operations Manager
Fleet Plant Hire & Pacific Islands



Image: Jack at work, speaking on the phone to contractors at Fleet Plant Hire Solutions. Image supplied by Down Syndrome Australia

Fleet's experience demonstrates that inclusive employment can be achieved through tailored support, in a way that creates value across the business.

By fostering an environment where Jack could learn and take on responsibilities, Fleet integrated him as a valued member of the team rather than viewing his disability as a barrier to employment.

Jack now works at Fleet Plant Hire Solutions as a Compliance Assistant, engaging directly with Fleet's contractors to help ensure their trucks and drivers have the required compliance documentation in place to meet site and regulatory requirements. Employment has helped Jack build confidence, make friends, learn new skills and work towards his goal of living independently in the future.

> *"Having a job is good for my confidence and it's good for my independence."*

Jack
Compliance Assistant
Fleet Plant Hire

For Fleet, the experience has resulted in a dedicated employee who contributes positively to workplace culture and business operations.

> *"He has the ability to do this role, and it is not an easy role. It requires a lot of attention to detail."*

Jade West
Group Operations Manager
Fleet Plant Hire

By matching responsibilities to Jack's strengths and investing in his development, Fleet has demonstrated how inclusive employment can create positive outcomes for employees and businesses.

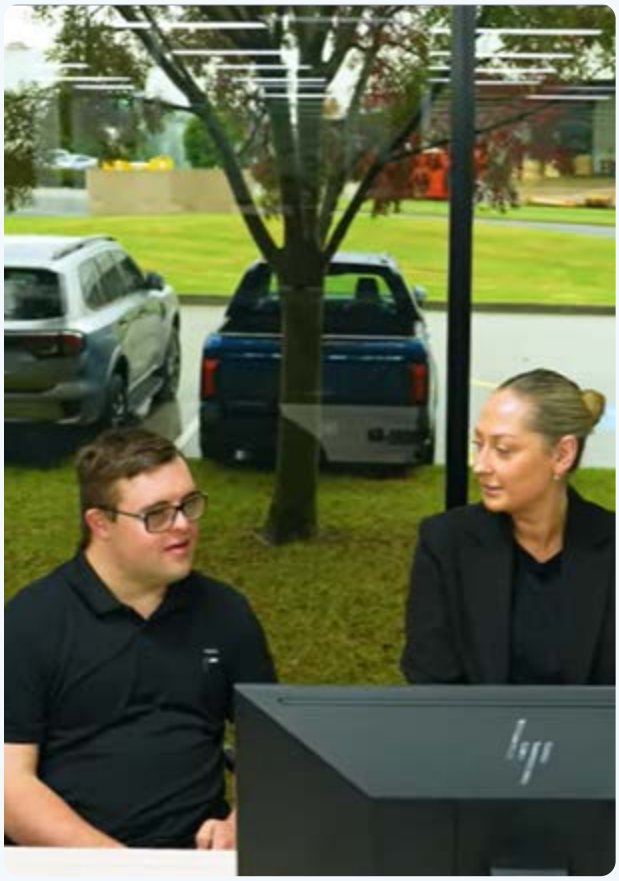


Image: Jack and his manager, Jade, having a meeting at their workplace, Fleet Plant Hire Solutions. Image supplied by Down Syndrome Australia.

CHAPTER

05

Workforce attitudes, experiences and actions

People with disability who want to work cite a consistent challenge: finding employers that are willing to hire.

This chapter presents findings about work intentions and experiences of more than 5,000 workers, including 15 per cent with disability (see Appendix D). The survey of workers primarily captures the experiences of people with disability who are in work and not the experiences of people who have been unable to find work or who have left employment following negative experiences. As a result, the reported findings may be more positive than those of the broader population with disability.

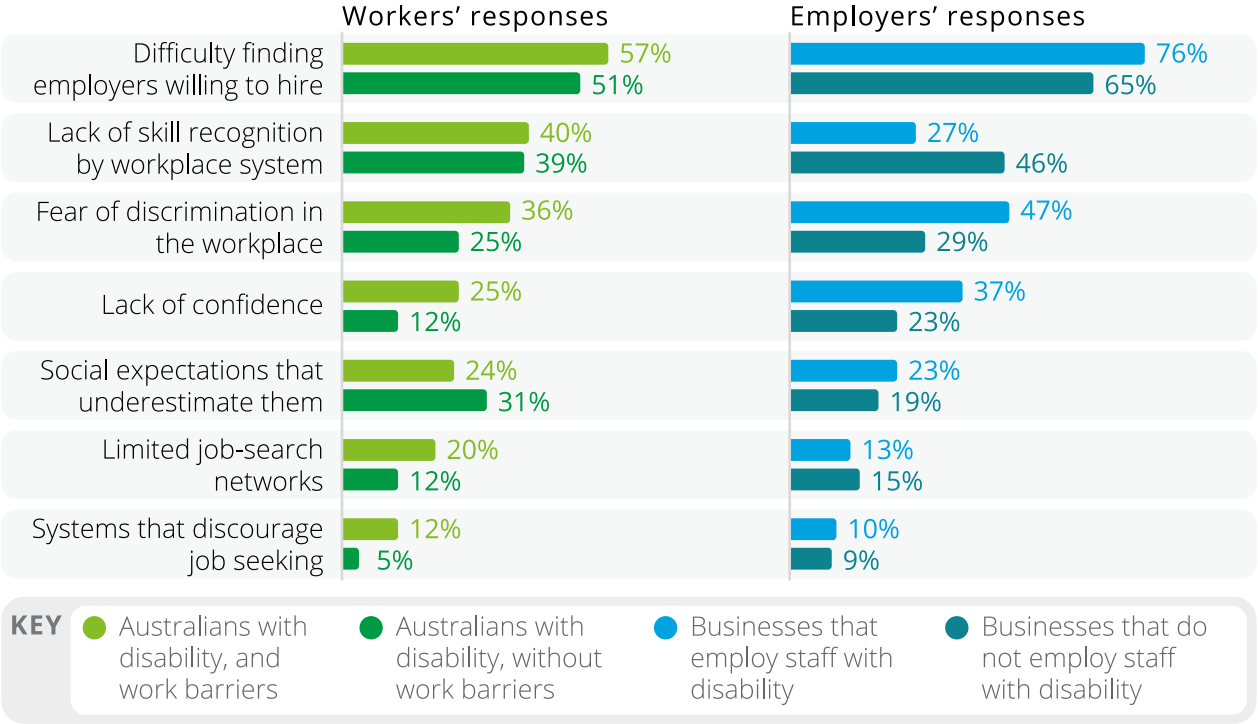
The top barrier workers reported was difficulty finding employers willing to hire, followed by barriers created by workplace systems that do not recognise or that underestimate their skills.

These results are highlighted in Chart 5.1, which also shows that around one in three workers with disability who report barriers to work say they fear discrimination and that one in four say that social expectations can limit the contributions of people with disability in the workplace.

The employer survey also asked about employers' perceptions of the barriers faced by people with disability when looking for work. The most common response among employers – regardless of their direct experience of recruiting people with disability – was to reflect that it is challenging for workers to find employers willing to hire.

Other barriers which related more to the demand side (workplace systems, fear of discrimination at work) tended to be more prominent in the minds of employers than barriers on the supply side (such as workers' limited networks).

Chart 5.1: Reports and perceptions of the barriers people with disability face when looking for work



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=779. Responses weighted by age, gender and state, and Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

CASE STUDY

Employing 100 activated the demand side of the employment system – and supported the practices of major employers, like McDonald's Australia.

Developed and led by Australian Disability Network (AusDN), the Employing 100 initiative was designed to help major employers address workforce needs and create sustainable employment opportunities for suitably skilled job seekers living with disability.

The two-year program ran from 2023 to 2025 with support from the Australian Government Department of Social Services.[41]

Unlike most disability employment programs, Employing 100 used a demand-led approach centred on employers, sought-after skills, and their identified vacancies. McDonald's Australia was one of four participating employers, alongside CSL Limited, Marriott International and The Salvation Army. Across the initiative, 240 suitably skilled job seekers with disability were placed into roles – well above the original target of 100 – with a combined retention rate of 83%.[42]

AusDN supported participating employers across four complementary areas:

Engage: Employers set priorities and secure leadership commitment; the partner organisation assesses current practice and builds the business case.

Equip: Employers remove barriers and strengthen adjustment policies; the partner organisation provides tools and guidance.

Deliver: Employers recruit candidates and make adjustments; the partner organisation connects them with talent and provides ongoing support.

Review: Employers review retention, feedback and practices; the partner organisation measures progress and identifies next steps.

McDonald's Australia and its franchisees used their involvement in Employing 100 to further strengthen inclusive employment practices across the business.

Over the program period, McDonald's Australia consulted with Inclusive Employment Australia providers, corporate business, franchisees and its employees, to review and further develop the frameworks, processes, and procedures that support an inclusive workplace.

> *"One of the ways we live our Macca's values is by creating workplaces that represent the incredible diversity of our employees and the communities we serve....*
>
> *...As part of this, we continue to review and enhance the frameworks, processes, and procedures in place that support meaningful and rewarding careers for people with disability at McDonald's.*
>
> *We want our employees to continue to feel empowered to bring their authentic selves to work, and to know we will support them wherever we can to ensure they can perform at their best in their role."*
>
> **Emma Napoli-Hala**
> Chief People Officer
> McDonald's Australia

McDonald's Australia and its franchisees were the leading contributor to the Employing 100 Program, recruiting over 80 new crew members across its restaurants (well above the program's original target of 25).[43]

Together, these activities demonstrate McDonald's Australia's practical commitment to building a more inclusive workplace and improving access to employment for people with disability.

An external evaluation of **Employing 100** reflected on what other organisations could learn about 'what works' to build employer capability and jobseeker readiness in other businesses.[44]

The study highlighted four key elements that contributed to the program's success:

1. Focusing on the employer environment
2. Providing a conduit between employers and talent pipelines
3. Making jobseekers and disability visible to employers
4. Knowledgeable and committed Employing 100 staff acting as intermediaries.

In addition to the **Employing 100** Program, McDonald's Australia and its franchisees partner with numerous Inclusive Employment Australia providers opening their doors to everyone and creating meaningful, rewarding career opportunities.

Since 1986, McDonald's Australia and its franchisees have partnered with Inclusive Employment Australia provider, Jobsupport.

Today, nearly a hundred of McDonald's talented crew members across Australia have been recruited through this partnership.

At the 2025 Jobsupport Award presentations, McDonald's Australia, franchisees, and crew received service awards, including recognition for the organisation's work in disability workforce inclusion. One such recipient was Rabab from McDonald's Broadmeadows, who has been with McDonald's for 14 years. Rabab's success in her role also drives the customer and crew experience.

> *"I love interacting with customers and meeting new people every day. Helping new crew members feel at home at Macca's and putting smiles on their faces makes me happy too!"*

Rabab is one of many crew members employed by McDonald's Australia and its franchisees in partnership with Jobsupport who bring energy, warmth, and dedication to Macca's restaurants across the country.



A quality job can be hard for some people with disability to find, despite feeling that they hold relevant skills.

As set out in Chapter 2 of this report, a key challenge facing people with disability is access to work. Despite national growth in labour force participation, people with disability who experience barriers to work are half as likely to be in work.

This gap in the number of jobs held by people with disability is reflected in survey responses from both workers and businesses.

The top barrier reported by workers is finding employers willing to hire people with disability, while few employers report difficulty finding workers with disability. This suggests that the key challenge is activating employer demand at scale.

The characteristics of jobs people with disability tend to be employed in, discussed in Chapter 3, reinforce this finding. Workers with disability, particularly those who face barriers to work, are less likely to be employed in jobs that provide satisfaction in areas such as access to opportunity, job security, or preferred working hours.

This section of the report focuses on the experiences of people with disability once they are in work. People's experiences may be connected to, or distinct from, the actual characteristics of their job depending on the culture and operations of their workplace, and their own preferences and needs.

Chapter 3 highlights differences in job quality between people with and without disability. Supporting this, the worker survey found that 55 per cent of people with disability who face barriers at work say they can identify employers that offer quality conditions, compared to 68 per cent of people without disability. This is consistent with the broader job quality findings which indicate that people with disability report lower levels of job satisfaction.

The survey findings indicate that some workers with disability may feel they need to trade off job quality to access work at all, reflecting the more limited options available to them.

One-quarter of those with disability who face barriers say they would "take any job on offer, regardless of quality". While this is not materially different from that for people without disability, it could reflect factors such as job search experiences and access to employment opportunities.

An important consideration in this context is workers' understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. Around 69 per cent of people with disability who experience work barriers report understanding their workplace rights and responsibilities, compared to 81 per cent of people with disability who do not experience work barriers, and 80 per cent of people without disability.

The survey responses also highlight that some workplaces and social systems underestimate their capacity (Chart 5.1).

This is despite evidence that workers with disability report similar levels of preparedness for work, compared to people without disability.

People with disability report that they have 'relevant skills to do the work' at a similar rate to that of other workers and are more likely to be aware of workplace supports available to them.

One area where differences persist is work experience. Around 72 per cent of people with disability who experience work barriers report having enough experience in the workplace, compared to 81 per cent of both people with disability who do not experience barriers, and people without disability. As highlighted by those with lived experience of disability (see next page), the quality of initial work experience can significantly affect jobseekers' confidence and career trajectory.

LIVED EXPERIENCE INSIGHTS

People with disability can experience the discrimination of low expectations when employers underestimate their capabilities.

A consistent message across the focus groups was that employer assumptions (and in some cases, experiences of explicit discrimination) can be a barrier to work – and sometimes discourage people from pursuing work opportunities.

People with intellectual disability said that they encountered stereotypes that they might be less productive, slower or unable to perform certain roles. Some felt these perceptions limited their access to employment opportunities before employers had properly assessed their skills and potential:

> *"When you apply for a lot of places and they find out you've got a disability, they might think you might not be good enough for the job."*

Man in open employment

Many felt that employers formed views about what they could do based on assumptions, rather than evidence of their performance. As one participant explained:

> *"Some employers don't understand how good [people with] disability can be at helping their company out."*

Woman in supported employment

Several workers also described instances where employers assumed they were incapable of completing tasks without first giving them the opportunity to try. In some cases, workers said that this resulted in exclusion from work or training, even if they believed they had the skills to succeed.

> *"They said that because you have a disability, you're not capable of doing these tasks when I was very capable to do it, I just wasn't given the opportunity."*

Woman in open employment

Some reported frustration at being overlooked for new tasks or denied chances to build skills, despite wanting greater responsibility. One participant noted that they became discouraged in a previous role because they were not given chances to learn new skills, while others stressed the importance of employers providing opportunities to demonstrate capability:

> *"[When they give] you a chance, like giving you tests and new tasks, you improve on new skills."*

Man in open employment

Positive workplace experiences also emerged when employers focused on workers' strengths rather than limitations. Employees thrived when managers trusted them with responsibilities and treated them as equal members of the team. One explained:

> *"They respect me, notice my strengths, treat me equally, and don't talk down to me."*

Woman with experience in supported and open employment

Low expectations can become a form of discrimination when employers withhold opportunities. However, as highlighted in Chapter 3, workers with disability show they can learn new skills and take on diverse responsibilities when supported appropriately.

Adjustments to the working environment, including job design, can benefit both workers and employers.

As highlighted in the introduction of this report, the most significant differences in workplace experiences do not arise from whether someone has disability. Rather, the differences emerge when the intersection between someone's condition and their work environment (physical or social) creates barriers that prevent them from contributing to their full potential.

The findings from the worker survey support this. Across various components of the research, people with disability who do not report barriers to work report work experiences very similar to those of workers without disability. This includes similar proportions reporting that they can find roles suited to their skills, feel their skills are valued, and feel respected in their workplace.

Differences in reported workplace contributions are also relatively small between these groups. Among workers with disability who do not report barriers, 92 per cent say they can collaborate and work effectively with others, compared with 89 per cent of workers without disability. The equivalent figures for delivering work to a good standard are 88 per cent and 90 per cent (Chart 5.2).

The psychological safety to share disability status in the workplace also appears to influence outcomes.

In the worker survey, 70 per cent of respondents with disability reported having shared their disability status with their employer. Workers who have shared reported more positive workplace experiences across several measures. For example, 73 per cent reported feeling supported to be productive at work, compared to 64 per cent of those who had not shared their disability status, and 79 per cent of workers without disability.

These findings also highlight the potential productivity uplift that could be achieved by addressing challenges faced by workers whose disability currently affects their experience of work.

In the survey, 85 per cent of those with disability indicated they can work efficiently and deliver work to a good standard, compared to 90 per cent of workers without disability (Chart 5.2). However, gaps remain in areas relating to support and participation. Around 70 per cent of people with disability reported feeling supported to be productive at work, compared to 79 per cent of people without disability.

Approximately 62 per cent of people with disability who face barriers feel supported to contribute new ideas, compared to 70 per cent of workers without disability.

While access to training and mentoring is similar for workers with and without disability, fewer people with disability feel respected and supported in their teams.

The survey results suggest cultural change is needed in workplaces, including to ensure people with disability have fair opportunities for career development and progression.

There is little difference between people with and without disability when it comes to accessing workplace development opportunities such as training, mentoring or accessing support networks (Chart 5.3).

Around 56 per cent of people with disability who report barriers say they have received training, compared with 58 per cent of people with disability who did not report barriers and 58 per cent of people without disability. Similarly, responses were broadly consistent across groups when asked whether they are able to "collaborate and work effectively with others".

This suggests that differences in workplace experience and career development may be less about capability and access to development opportunities, and more about attitudes towards people with disability, and how workers' skills and potential are recognised in the workplace.

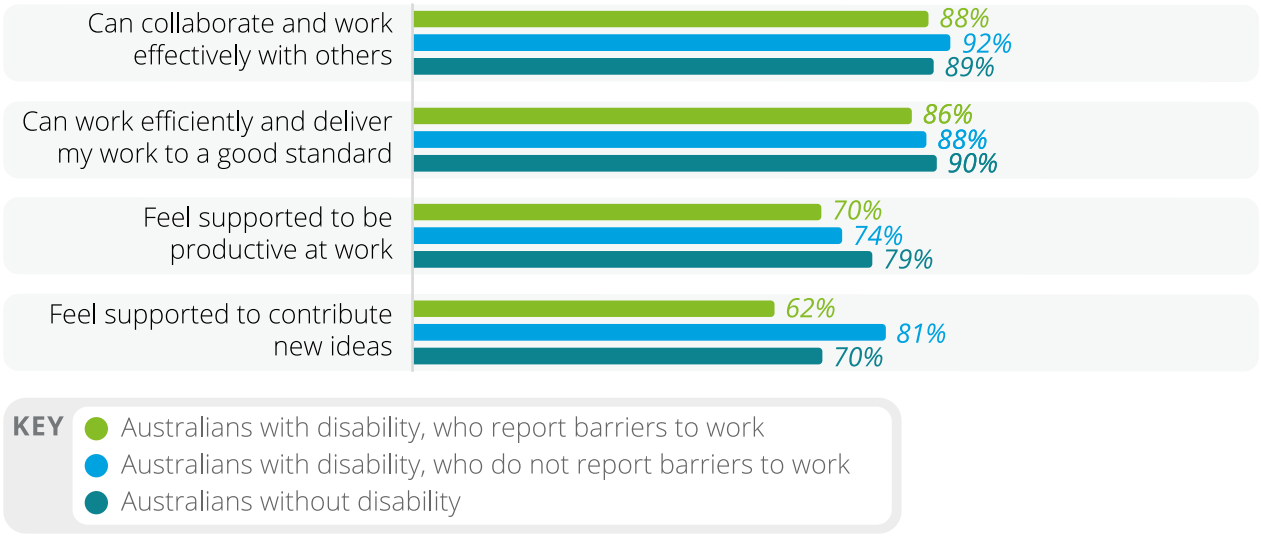
There is an eight-percentage-point gap in whether workers feel supported to contribute new ideas, and a nine-percentage-point gap in whether workers feel supported to be productive, depending on disability status and workplace barriers experienced (see prior page). This suggests that while people with disability may have similar skills and capabilities, and access to development opportunities, they may not always experience the same levels of workplace inclusion or confidence that their contributions are valued.

This is supported by the employer survey, which found a substantial gap between employers that currently employ people with disability and those that do not, in their knowledge of how to support retention and equal progression.

Evidence beyond the survey reinforces this finding. People with disability are over-represented in entry-level roles and face barriers in career advancement. These challenges extend to the highest levels: people with disability are underrepresented on company boards, particularly at for-profit organisations.[45]

The importance of career progression is increasingly recognised by disability employment organisations and advocates and is reflected in initiatives such as Australian Disability Network's Career Pathways pilot, and resources developed by JobAccess.[46, 47]

Chart 5.2: Responses regarding workplace experiences, for those without disability, with disability and those with disability facing work barriers



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=4,802, Responses weighted by age, gender and state.

Chart 5.3: Responses regarding skills, experience and support in the workplace, for those without disability, with disability and those with disability facing work barriers



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=4,802 to 5,013, depending on survey question and respondent group asked. Responses weighted by age, gender and state. Note: The question, 'how to access support programs', was not asked of respondents without disability.

LIVED EXPERIENCE INSIGHTS

A supportive environment allows people to work at their best.

Workplace supports and appropriate adjustments are a key factor in employment success for individuals with disability. Positive work experiences were often associated with managers and colleagues who took time to understand individuals' needs, provided encouragement and created inclusive workplace cultures.

Effective managers communicated clearly, provided practical guidance and created environments where employees felt comfortable asking for help. Employees particularly valued managers who checked in regularly, provided structured task lists and supported them to work independently. One employee shared:

> *"My manager sends me all the work tasks that I need to do in the week... and that helps me do my work well."*

Woman in open employment

Relatively simple adjustments significantly improved performance. Examples included quiet workspaces, repeated instructions, Easy Read materials and assistive technology to enable greater independence. However, it was often said that there was a need for more education for employers on how to provide practical workplace supports. For instance, one individual in focus group discussions reflected that:

> *"One thing I really wish all workplaces could learn about is Easy Read."*

Man in open employment

Many agreed that employers should start by having open conversations with employees about their preferred ways of working, rather than making assumptions about what supports may be required.

As one participant reflected:

> *"Sit down and talk to the person with a disability, then work around those ideas."*

Man with experience in supported and open employment

Employees in focus group discussions also stressed that they learned best when shown how to complete tasks rather than being given verbal instructions alone. One explained:

> *"I need someone to show me what to do several times at work when I'm at a new job."*

Man in open employment

Flexibility was also an important feature of supportive workplaces. Workers in focus groups valued environments where workloads, work pace and responsibilities could be adapted to suit their needs. Some described thriving in workplaces that allowed them to work at their own pace, while others appreciated flexibility to manage anxiety or accessibility needs. As one worker explained:

> *"You can sort of work at your own pace. There's no pressure and they are just so easy going."*

Man in supported employment

Overall, the experiences of workers in focus group discussions suggest that supportive workplaces are defined less by major accommodations and more by understanding, flexibility and open communication. When employers tailored support to individual needs, workers with disability felt confident, capable and able to perform at their best.

The design of the Disability Support Pension may create disincentives for some people who want to work more hours.

While the Disability Support Pension (DSP) provides critical income support for those unable to work, there is emerging evidence that its design may create work disincentives for some people with disability.[48]

Income thresholds, taper rates and hours thresholds create financial disincentives to earning or working more, as DSP payments are withdrawn. Some workers also have concerns about losing eligibility for the payment when increasing work hours, or face administrative burden associated with complex reporting requirements.

In the worker survey conducted for this report, 169 respondents with disability reported receiving the DSP. A majority (77 per cent) of DSP recipients were aware of the trade-offs associated with working more hours or earning more and losing some or all of their DSP payment. As shown in Chart 5.4, many agreed that taking on additional hours required careful planning to ensure that benefits and allowances received were not negatively affected (66 per cent) or were mindful of how their earnings might affect their payment levels (78 per cent).

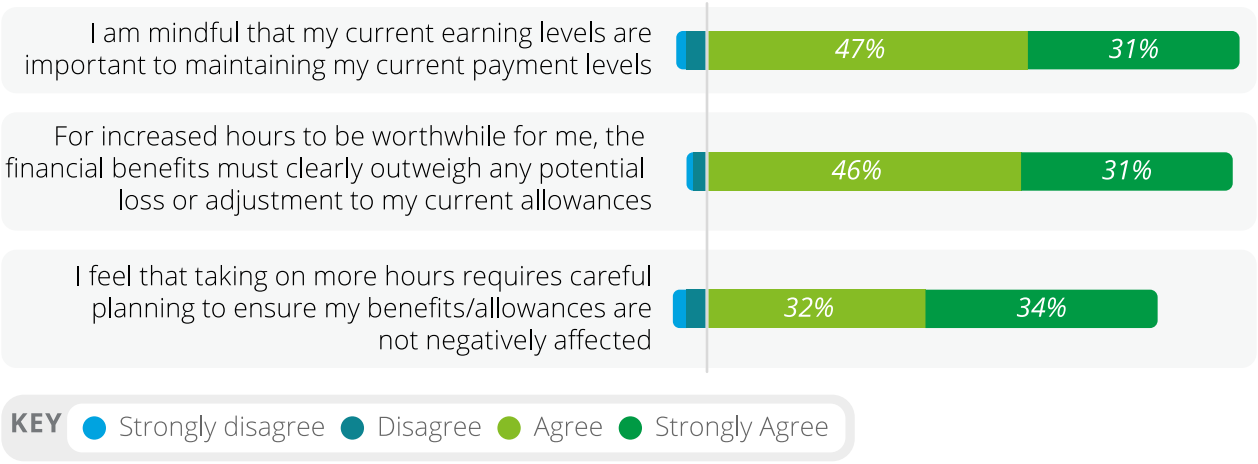
In focus group discussions, some workers living with significant disabilities described challenges associated with the DSP. Workers noted that the DSP can be difficult to understand, particularly how earnings and hours worked affect payments. Some relied on family members to help them navigate the DSP system. One woman in part-time open employment shared:

> *"My pay has gone up. We have to go back to Centrelink to talk with them as I should receive less. I don't really understand."*

Others noted that they limited their hours or declined additional work to avoid triggering a reduction in their DSP payments. Some employees viewed the system as penalising people who wanted to increase work and become independent. A man in open employment shared:

> *"It's kind of a bit unfair for those who are trying to be independent and move out. It reduces their ability to be able to do it."*

Chart 5.4: Worker views on the impact of receiving the DSP on work participation



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=261. Responses weighted by age, gender and state.Note: unlabelled values are less than 5%. Chart excludes respondents who answered "neither agree nor disagree" and "don't know".

And the administrative complexities and uncertainty associated with the DSP can affect employers' access to labour.

The survey of employers fielded for this report found that 30 per cent of those that currently hire people with disability are aware that at least some of their employees receive the DSP.

Among employers with staff receiving the DSP, the findings point to a tension between the scheme's income rules and employees' capacity to work more hours. This can constrain labour supply for businesses.

As shown in Chart 5.5, 85 per cent of businesses that employ people in receipt of the DSP agreed or strongly agreed that the 'rules can make it difficult for employees to take on additional hours, even when they would like to'. Most also reported that some employees are cautious about earning above the DSP threshold.

Surveyed employers were asked an open-ended question about the effects of the DSP. The most common theme, cited by 40 per cent of surveyed businesses with staff receiving the DSP, was that the pension's settings affect employees' availability to work.

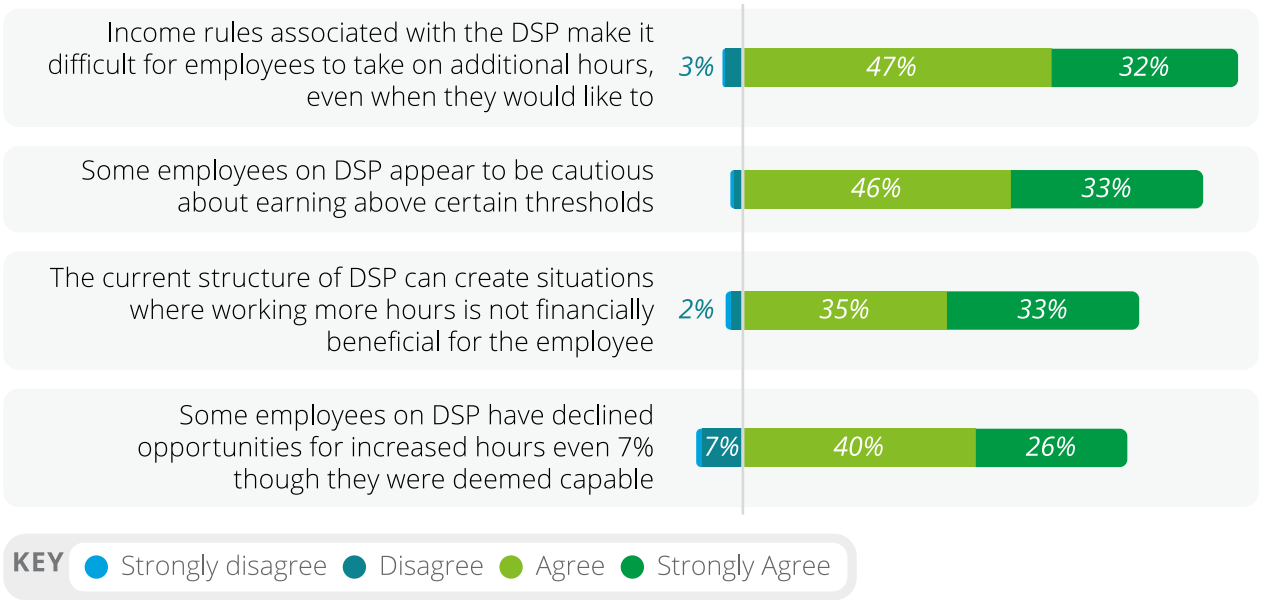
A further 12 per cent reported impacts on workforce planning or recruitment, while 2 per cent cited the administrative burden associated with navigating the rules.

Comments from employers illustrate these challenges:

> *"[The DSP] can make it difficult for us to translate capability development into increased hours, earnings and responsibility. It can also affect workforce planning, as employees may reasonably choose to limit their hours even when they are capable of and interested in doing more."*

> *"[concerns about the suspension period] have made it more difficult to offer extra shifts, support career progression, and meet staffing needs... clearer and more flexible DSP income settings would encourage greater workforce participation while providing employers with a more stable workforce."*

Chart 5.5: Employer responses to statements about employees receiving the DSP



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=309, using employers with staff on the DSP open-text responses aggregated into core themes. Responses weighted by business size and industry. Note: unlabelled values are less than 2%. Chart excludes respondents who answered "neither agree nor disagree" and "don't know".

CASE STUDY

Inclusive Employment: Recognising potential, creating career pathways for talent, growth and opportunity.

Since 1953, Eurella Community Services has supported people with disability to participate meaningfully in their communities and pursue opportunities that reflect their strengths, aspirations and potential.

While its established Packaging and Assembly service provides supported employment opportunities, Eurella's commitment to inclusive employment extends throughout the organisation. People with disability contribute to professional and operational functions, bringing opportunities to develop their skills, assume new responsibilities and progress in their careers.

At the heart of Eurella's approach is meaningful inclusion, which is not achieved through recruitment alone. It requires a workplace culture in which people are recognised for their abilities, supported in their professional development and afforded genuine opportunities for advancement.

Two highly regarded employees with lived experience of disability, including physical disability, learning disability and neurodiversity, contribute their skills and expertise across Eurella's finance, administration and program coordination functions. Their professionalism and commitment are deeply valued throughout the organisation.

One employee joined Eurella in an administrative role, bringing strong capabilities and a clear commitment to her work. Eurella recognised her potential from the outset and provided opportunities to apply her strengths in roles requiring precision and sound judgement.

Her exceptional attention to detail, reliability and consistent performance proved particularly valuable in quality assurance and administration.

Her contribution reflects Eurella's belief that recognising talent and supporting professional growth enriches the entire organisation.

Their supervisor highlights the value of this job match, describing the employee as having:

> *"a tremendous work ethic…exceptional dedication, reliability and meticulous attention to detail."*

One employee holds a role in finance, while another has progressed through quality assurance, assisting with reviewing policies and procedures, maintaining registers and supporting planning processes. After expressing an interest in further development, she later moved into support coordination and now contributes to the broader service delivery team.

> *"It's important that people with lived experience are recognised for their strengths and capabilities. Both employees are highly valued and their contributions demonstrate the importance of matching individual talents with the right roles across the organisation."*

For some businesses, employing people with disability in governance and compliance-focused roles may challenge traditional assumptions, particularly in highly regulated sectors such as disability services.

At Eurella, confidence grew through experience, as managers and employees worked collaboratively, developed their understanding and recognised each other's professional strengths.

> *"When inclusion becomes intrinsic to the workplace, it almost feels effortless. As leaders, we cultivate that culture by developing our team's capabilities, encouraging collaboration and recognising everyone's strengths."*

Patricia Abraham

CEO, Eurella Community Services

As a disability service provider, the organisation had strong existing capability to customise roles, set up mentoring and ensure employees can access the right supports.

Patricia Abraham, CEO of Eurella Community Services, emphasises the value of workplaces where all employees have choice, autonomy and genuine opportunities to succeed and develop professionally.

For Patricia, employee retention is a reflection of effective leadership and organisational culture. Lasting commitment is built through recognising professional capability, trusting employees with meaningful responsibilities and investing in their development.

These principles apply to every employee, including people with disability who may have previously encountered barriers to employment and career progression.

> *"Loyalty is earned. It comes from the employer."*

Positive workplace experiences strengthen employees' confidence in their capabilities, foster meaningful relationships and promote autonomy.

While Eurella's experience as a disability service provider has informed its approach, Patricia believes these principles are relevant to employers in all industries.

The organisation's success has come from embedding inclusive employment within its broader culture rather than a standalone initiative. As Patricia reflects, no single initiative can achieve inclusive employment outcomes on its own.

> *"Nothing sits in isolation to make disability employment work. For it to succeed, it must become intrinsic to the workplace and part of the ethos."*



Image: Eurella Community Services

CHAPTER

06

Conclusions and next steps

This report set out to understand current outcomes, the perspectives of employers and workers, and to identify areas to accelerate action.

Australia is navigating transitions that will significantly affect the labour force: an ageing population, AI disruption, skills shortages in critical care roles, a growing services sector, and intergenerational equity issues that are increasing pressure on working-age Australians' contributions to the tax base.[49] At the same time, productivity growth is stalling.[50]

Businesses can benefit from the engagement and capability of the 637,000 people with disability who could be in work if their employment rate matched that of the rest of the population.

This report is set against a backdrop of unmet demand and continuing reform across Australia's disability and employment services systems. It highlights the opportunity for employers of all types and sizes to strengthen their workforce by hiring people with disability.

While programs designed to improve employment outcomes for people with disability often focus on the supply side – *preparing jobseekers for work* – this report shifts attention to employers' perceptions, motivations and actions.

In its first year, the *State of the Nation* report highlights both areas of progress and where further work will help release opportunity.

It highlights that:

1. Businesses that have hired people with disability are confident that their investment has been worthwhile.

2 in 3 say the benefits exceeded any risk or complexity associated with the hiring decision, 8 in 10 say complexity can be managed, and half report that they have already realised commercial benefits.

2. Employment parity would benefit individuals, their employers, and the national economy.

Parity in the employment rate of Australians with disability to match that of people without disability would equate to 637,000 more people working. That group is part of a larger potential workforce: 1.2 million people with disability not yet working. Supporting more people into work would lift Australia's productive capacity, help employers address skills shortages, and strengthen the budget position through increased tax revenue and reduced income support.

3. The biggest challenge appears to be employer demand, not the supply of willing workers.

When asked about the top barriers to employment, 57 per cent of workers with disability identified *'finding employers willing to hire'*. Employers also perceive that limited employer demand is the biggest barrier for jobseekers. Meanwhile, fewer than 10 per cent of Australian employers report having had any difficulty finding jobseekers with disability in the past two years.

4. Knowledge and experience help build employer demand and confidence.

Improving employers' understanding of their workforce's experiences may shift behaviour. Some businesses may not be aware that some of their staff have disability because they are not tracking it – and so, in turn, they are not observing the benefits, not considering the way in which these workers have already adapted to their work context, and not considering the opportunity to adopt more inclusive practice across their organisation that could improve business performance for all their employees.

As the case studies in this report highlight, intermediary organisations can provide a mechanism for collective problem-solving across the disability employment system.

These businesses can only provide support when they are utilised – and this report highlights that some businesses lack awareness or understanding of the support available.

The report's survey findings also identify targeted opportunities and actions for employers at different stages of realising the opportunity.

For businesses that already employ people with disability, the opportunity is to improve consistency and scale, and to ensure that good practice at the hiring stage continues through the employee's journey in the organisation.

For businesses that do not currently hire people with disability, this report offers two key suggestions. The first is to consider the prevalence of disability among their customer base and their workforce. People with disability may not always share their disability, and businesses may be unaware of the benefits already being delivered by people with disability in their workforce. The second is to consider what needs to be in place to build organisational confidence and capability.

Across all business contexts, progress on disability employment can be enabled by organisation-level leadership. Data collection and benchmarking can also help leaders better understand the diversity of their existing workforce.

Progress is also enabled – and accelerated – when staff at all levels of an organisation have the knowledge and understanding to work effectively together. As the case studies in this report show, a single hiring decision or initiative has often prompted businesses to consider the broader accessibility of their systems, workplaces and approaches to job design. The benefits may extend well beyond employees with disability.

The findings of this inaugural report highlight dynamics that can be understood in more detail in future research.

Reflecting on the evidence included in this report and the hypotheses that it might inform, priorities include considering:

- → **the perspectives of people with disability who are not currently working**, including their current work intention, the nature and extent of any prior work experiences and what might influence their employment in future.
- → **variation in the experience and intention of those employers that do not currently report employing people with disability**, including their prior hiring experiences, the conditions and perspectives that drive their current practice, and the actions that could change their behaviour.
- → **the positioning of disability employment within the organisations that are currently hiring**, to understand the extent to which good practice is positioned as a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative, relative to a commercial opportunity that is embedded across a whole business.
- → **the role of economic and labour market conditions on hiring decisions and employment outcomes**, with an opportunity to analyse outcomes by industry and region as the data builds over time.
- → **the differences in employment opportunities and barriers across locations**, to understand how local conditions, industries, networks and support services impact disability employment across Australia.

In building evidence about the drivers of employer and workforce decision-making, and the quantity and quality of job matches, this next report will continue to contribute to a shared understanding of the opportunity and support the momentum for change.

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Appendices

A. Identifying workers with disability, across datasets
B. How this report measures job quality
C. Profile of employer survey responses
D. Profile of worker survey responses
E. Overview of discussion questions in focus groups
F. The Monitoring Framework for disability employment

Appendix A: Identifying workers with disability, across datasets

People with the same disability and level of severity might face different types of barriers at work.

In Table A.1, two approaches to understanding the severity of disability are compared. This presentation of the approaches shows that not everyone who is 'limited in their core activities' (a more medical way of understanding disability) faces barriers in employment. In the same way, it also shows that many people report work barriers that are less than their limitation in 'core activities'.

For example, while 52 per cent of people who are 'profoundly limited' in core activities also report the most significant barriers at work, the remaining 39 per cent of people report less severe barriers, while 7 per cent who face no barriers at all. Similarly, 41 per cent of people who are severely limited in core activities report moderate or mild (less severe) barriers to work.

These differences could reflect people's access to support at work, and the nature of their job.

For someone limited in core activities, assistive technology and workplace adjustments can significantly reduce barriers at work.

Replicating this table for prior years of the SDAC (2015 and 2018) shows that the proportion of people reporting profound or severe barriers has fallen, even as the proportion with a profound or severe core activity limitation has risen. This could suggest that greater access to assistive technology could be a contributing factor in enabling participation for more people.

The focus of this research is barriers at work.

In the SDAC survey, the variable 'employment restriction' is interpreted based on several survey questions about someone's experience at work and the types of support they need. Some people aged 15 to 20 instead have a 'schooling restriction', which captures barriers to education rather than work, because any potential employment barriers have not yet been assessed or realised.

HILDA asks respondents to rate how much their condition limits the amount of work they can do from 0 ('not at all') to 10 ('unable to do any work'). The surveys fielded for this report use the same question, and responses are mapped to the same severity scale (profound, severe, moderate, mild) as in the HILDA analysis.

Table A.1: Share of people with each severity of core activity limitation who experience each severity of employment restriction (2022)

Barriers at work (rows)	Profoundly limited	Severely limited	Moderately limited	Mildly limited	Not limited	Total
Profound	52%	24%	16%	10%	6%	**437,900**
Severe	24%	19%	7%	5%	8%	**262,900**
Moderate	15%	40%	47%	37%	75%	**932,800**
Mild	0%	1%	2%	1%	4%	**36,500**
No barriers	7%	16%	27%	46%	7%	**997,100**
Total	**309,600**	**460,600**	**402,200**	**723,700**	**325,200**	

Source: Deloitte Access Economics analysis of ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2022). Notes: Percentages add to 100% vertically, except in the first column where 2% of respondents were recorded as not applicable.

Appendix B: How this report measures job quality

This report's analysis of job quality is grounded in the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) pillars of *Decent Work.*

The ILO links each of its four pillars to 10 measures of decent work. For each measure, the ILO sets out a broad range of possible metrics, many of which are typically applied in different contexts (e.g. gender equity, economic development).

To define a set of indicators for a given economy, countries are encouraged to select from an overall list of statistical and legal framework indicators and add additional indicators to reflect their national circumstances.

With this guidance in mind, Table B.1 highlights the indicators selected to describe employment quality in Australia and to compare outcomes among those with and without disability.

This table was developed with reference to the measures available in the SDAC and HILDA datasets (see Chapter 3) and informed the design of survey questions to consider the specific factors that can impact job quality for people with disability.

Table B.1: Mapping the ILO pillars of decent work to the metrics used in this report

Components of Decent Work	Metrics used in this report
1. Employment standards	
Adequate earnings	→ Median weekly earnings (Chart 3.1)
Decent working time	→ Satisfaction with weekly hours worked (Chart 3.2)
2. Employment creation	
Equal opportunity and treatment	→ Satisfaction with employment opportunities (Chart 3.4) → Agreement with having a lot of choice at work (Chart 3.5) → Share of workers with supervising responsibilities → Share of workers receiving job-related training
Stability and security of work	→ Agreement with having high job stress (Chart 3.7) → Share of workers who report their working arrangements offer the possibility to have flexible working hours (Chart 3.3) → Employee and employer experiences of the DSP (Chapter 5)
3. Social protection	
Safe work environment	→ Agreement with having high job stress (Chart 3.7)
Flexibility	→ Share of workers who report their working arrangements offer the possibility to have flexible working hours (Chart 3.3)
Social security	→ Employee and employer experiences of the DSP (Chapter 5)
4. Social dialogue and tripartism	
Cooperation between government, employers and workers in disability employment policy	→ Extent to which employers report seeking feedback from workers (Table 4.1) → Employers' knowledge of and access to supports available (Chart 4.4) → Workers' knowledge of and access to supports available (Chart 5.3)

Source: Deloitte Access Economics using the ILO Manual of Decent Work Indicators.

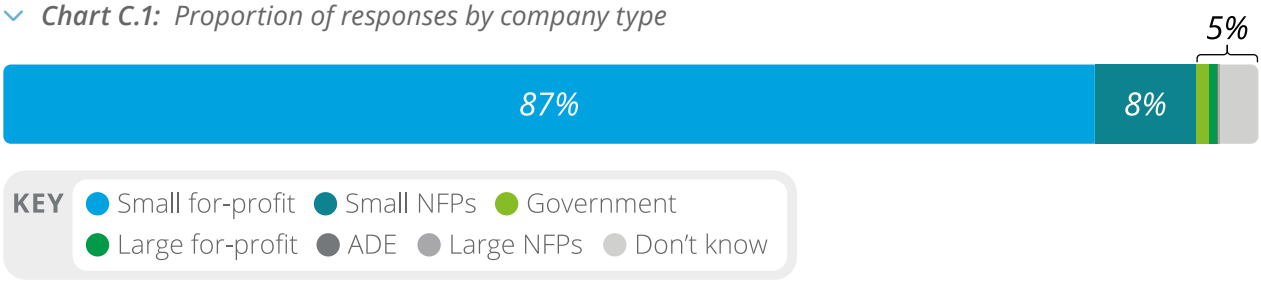
Appendix C: Profile of employer survey responses (1/3)

The survey was fielded to respondents sourced through the market research firm Wallis Social Research to collect a sample size representative of the Australian business landscape. The employer survey was fielded between July and August 2026, receiving 1,289 responses in total, which represent a diverse range of business characteristics and employer perspectives.

The unweighted sample describes the businesses that responded to the survey, with each response counted equally. The weighted results – used for all analysis included in this report – adjust each response's contribution by business size and industry to reflect the Australian business population.

- Small for-profit businesses accounted for the largest share of weighted responses (87 per cent), followed by small not-for-profit organisations (8 per cent). Government employers, large businesses and Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) each accounted for around 1 per cent or less (Chart C.1).
- Approximately one-third of businesses reported employing people with disability (32 per cent), while 66 per cent did not. A further 1 per cent did not know whether they employed anyone with disability (Chart C.2).

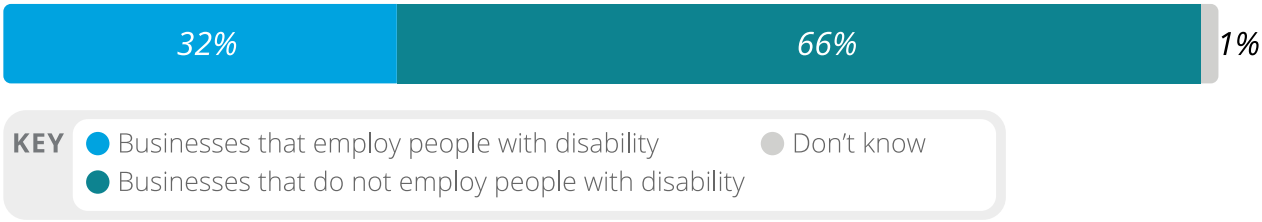
Chart C.1: *Proportion of responses by company type*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

Note: Large employers have more than 200 employees and small employers have fewer than 200 employees.

Chart C.2: *Proportion of responses by whether businesses employ staff with disability*



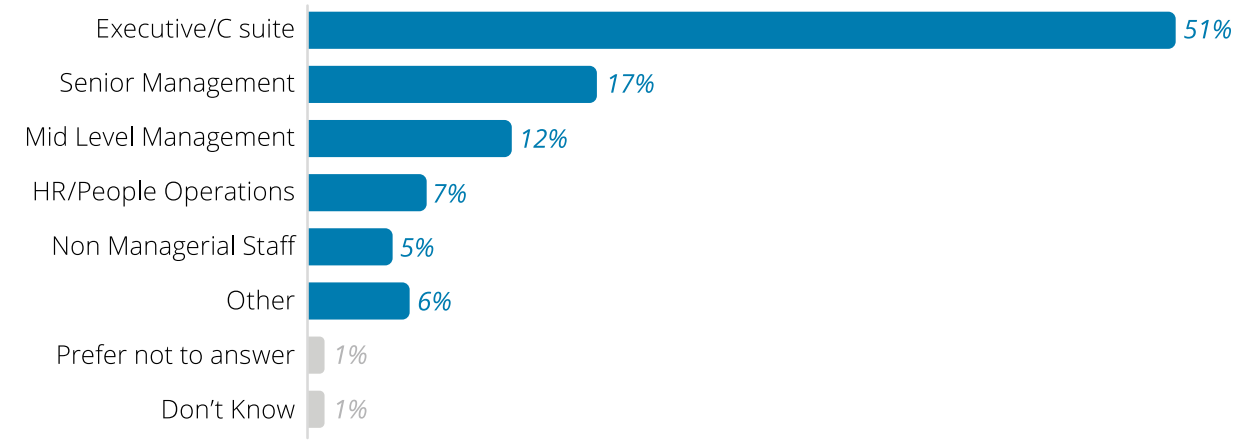
Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

Appendix C: Profile of employer survey responses (2/3)

Respondents were most commonly executives or C-suite leaders (51 per cent), followed by senior managers (17 per cent) and mid-level managers (12 per cent). HR and people operations staff accounted for a further 7 per cent of weighted responses (Chart C.3).

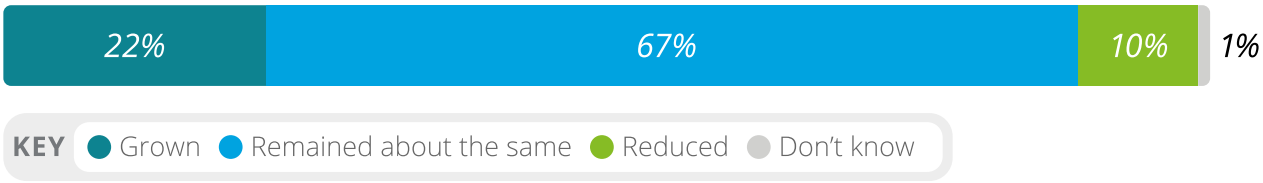
Most businesses reported that their workforce had remained about the same size over the past 12 months (67 per cent). Around one in five reported workforce growth (22 per cent), while 10 per cent reported a reduction (Chart C.4).

Chart C.3: *Proportion of responses by respondent role*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

Chart C.4: *Proportion of responses by workforce growth in the last 12 months*



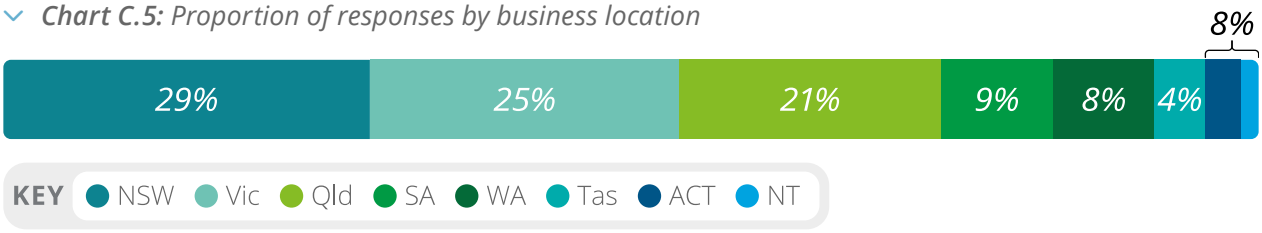
Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

Appendix C: Profile of employer survey responses (3/3)

The survey included businesses across all states and territories. New South Wales accounted for the largest share of weighted responses (29 per cent), followed by Victoria (25 per cent) and Queensland (21 per cent). Together, these states accounted for around three-quarters of responses (Chart C.5).

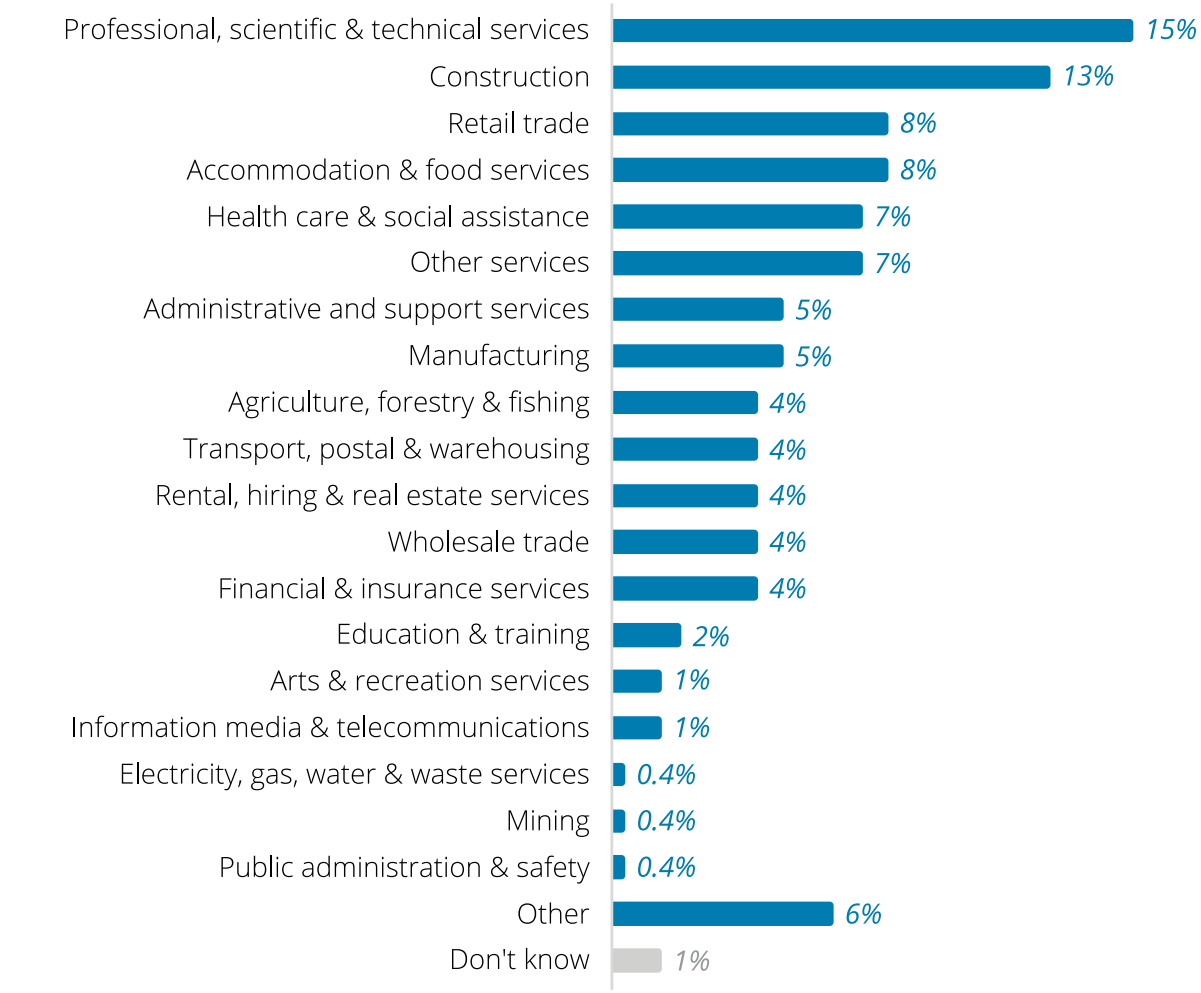
Business respondents represented a broad range of industries. Professional, scientific and technical services accounted for the largest share of weighted responses (15 per cent), followed by construction (13 per cent) (Chart C.6).

Chart C.5: *Proportion of responses by business location*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289, responses weighted by business size and industry.

Chart C.6: *Proportion of responses by industry (ANZSIC)*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australian businesses (2026), n=1,289. Responses weighted by business size and industry.

Appendix D: Profile of worker survey responses (1/2)

The worker survey was fielded to respondents sourced through the market research firm Wallis Social Research to obtain a sample size broadly representative of the Australian population. The worker survey was fielded between July and August 2026, receiving 5,145 responses in total, which represent a diverse range of Australian characteristics and perspectives.

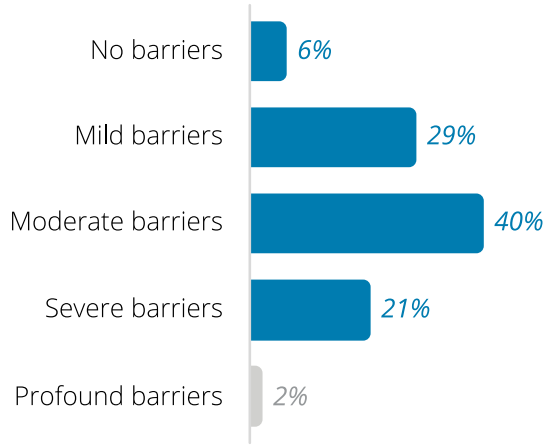
Some questions were only asked to:

- People with disability **(n=779)**
- People who were employed **(n=4,830)**
- People with disability who were employed **(n=693)**.

Approximately 15 per cent of survey respondents reported having disability. Of those with disability, 6 per cent reported having no restrictions, while 92 per cent reported having either a mild, moderate or severe restriction (Chart D.1). The 2% who reported both having profound barriers and being employed were excluded from the analysis, as a profound restriction is technically defined (and presented in the survey question) as indicating that someone is 'unable to work' even with available supports.

Approximately 21 per cent of workers reported being neurodivergent, with half of these respondents reporting that they considered this a disability.

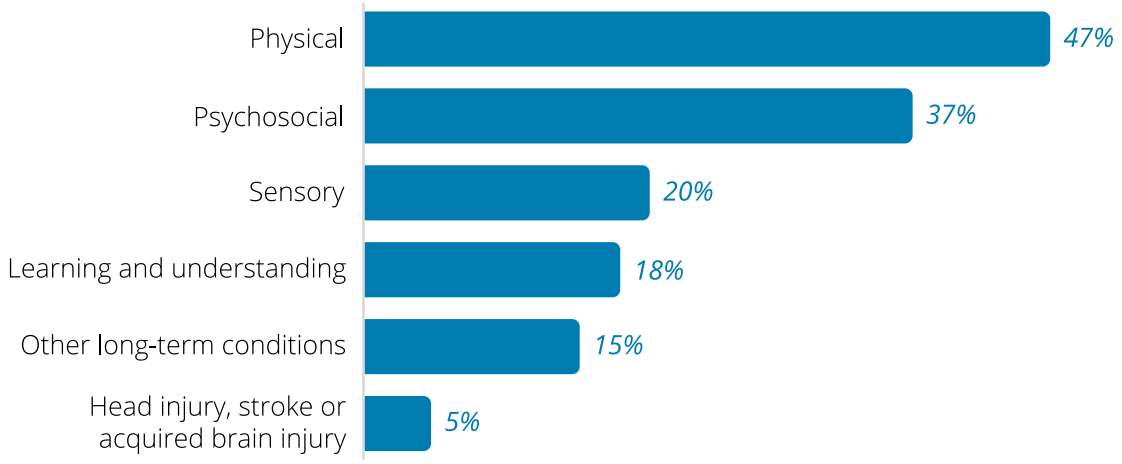
Chart D.1: *Share of respondents with disability by extent of barriers to work*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=779. Responses weighted by age, gender and state.

Survey respondents also reported a range of disability, impairment or long-term health condition categories. Almost half of respondents with disability reported having a physical disability (47 per cent), while 37 per cent reported having a psychosocial disability and 20 per cent having a sensory disability (Chart D.2).

Chart D.2: *Share of respondents by category of disability*



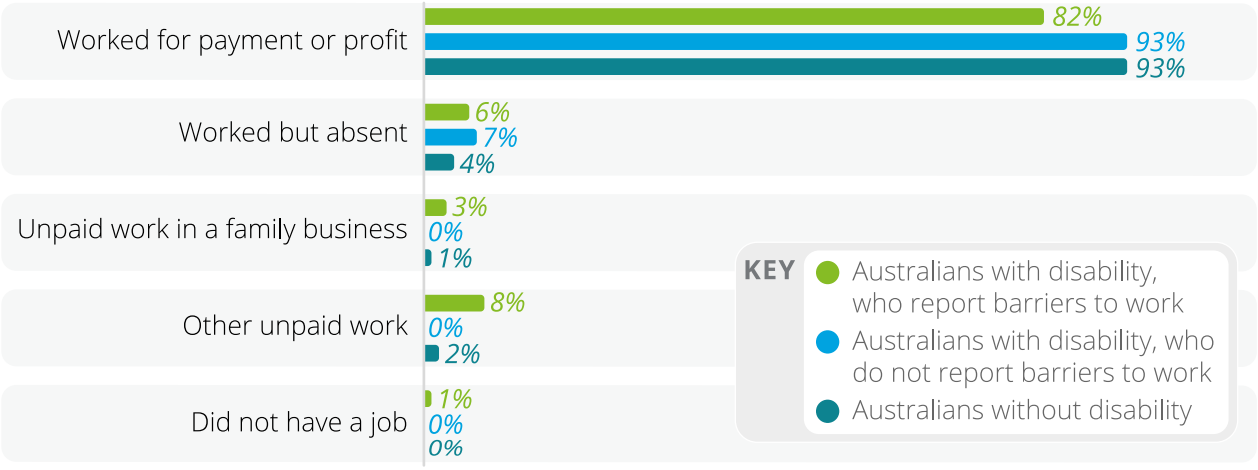
Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=779. Responses weighted by age, gender and state.Note: Respondents were asked to select all that apply. Percentages may exceed 100%.

Appendix D: Profile of worker survey responses (2/2)

The sample focuses on people with disability who are employed (relative to the broader population), with 88 per cent of respondents with disability employed. Approximately 93 per cent of respondents without disability in the sample are working (Chart D.3). As the survey does not capture the experiences of people who have been unable to find work or who have left employment following negative workplace experiences, the reported findings may be more positive than those of the broader population of people with disability.

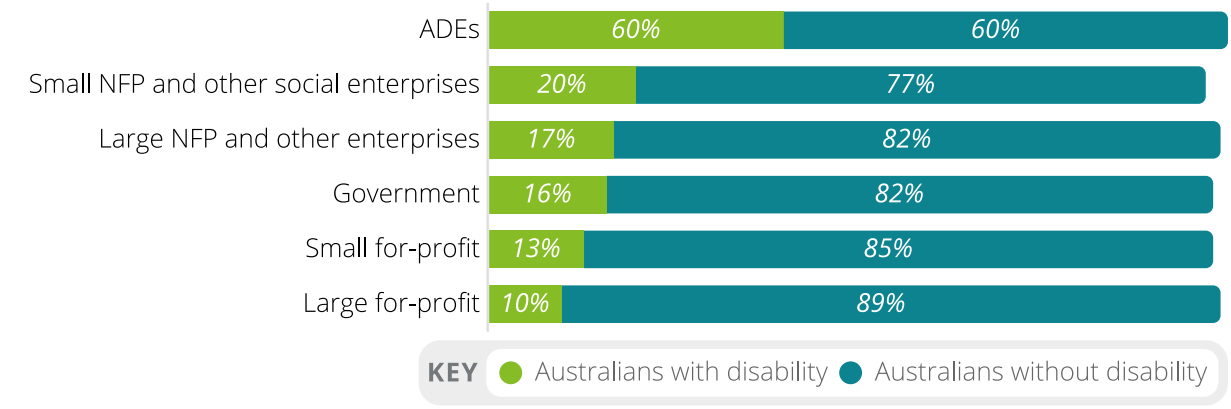
People with disability are more likely to be employed in not-for-profits and ADEs and less likely to work for for-profit businesses, particularly larger firms, than those without disability (Chart D.4).

***Chart D.3:** Share of respondents by employment status*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=5,145. Responses weighted by age, gender and state.
Note: Unlabelled data are less than 1%.

Chart D.4: Share of respondents by employer type and size



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Wallis Social Research survey of Australians (2026), n=4,910. Responses weighted by age, gender and state.
Note: Large employers have more than 200 employees and small employers have fewer than 200 employees.

Appendix E: Focus group structure, participants and discussion questions

To complement the workforce survey, a series of focus groups were undertaken, involving 31 participants from organisations that included Inclusion Australia, Down Syndrome Australia, Jigsaw and Latrobe Valley Enterprises.

Sessions were delivered both online and in person, with group sizes ranging from four to six participants, supported by one or two staff observers. Participants were remunerated for their time.

Participants represented a range of employment experiences. This included working in open employment, disability-focused organisations and supported employment settings. Participants worked across a variety of roles and industries and tenure in current roles ranged from a few months to more than 30 years. The participant group comprised 31 individuals, including 17 men and 14 women.

1. The focus group discussion questions were organised around six key themes:

- → Finding a job
- → How did you find your current job?
- → What helped you find your job?
- → How did you identify jobs you were interested in or suited to?
- → How easy or difficult was it to find work?
- → What barriers did you encounter when looking for a job and what support did you receive?

2. Motivations to work

- → Why do you want to work?
- → What do you value most about work, such as earning money, learning new skills, helping others, social connection or having a sense of purpose?

3. Disability Support Pension (where relevant)

- → Whether participants received the Disability Support Pension (DSP).
- → Whether concerns about the DSP had influenced decisions about working additional hours.
- → How well participants understood the interaction between income from work and DSP payments.

4. Workplace enablers and barriers

- → What helps you do your job well?
- → What makes it difficult to do your job or remain in employment?
- → What workplace supports, adjustments or practices have been most useful?
- → What concerns or worries have you experienced in relation to work?
- → Have you experienced unfair treatment or discrimination when seeking employment or while at work?

5. Job quality and workplace safety

- → What makes you feel safe, supported and valued at work?
- → What role do managers, colleagues, workplace culture and fair treatment play in creating positive work experiences?
- → Do you know where to seek support or raise concerns if something goes wrong at work?

6. Improving employment outcomes

- → What could employers do to help people with disability find and keep good jobs?
- → What changes would make workplaces more inclusive and supportive?

Appendix F: The Monitoring Framework for disability employment (1/2)

The State of the Nation report on disability employment in Australia is underpinned by a Monitoring Framework, developed by Deloitte Access Economics in partnership with DEInvestments. The Monitoring Framework provides a structured way to understand and track progress towards increasing the quantity and quality of employment for Australians with disability.

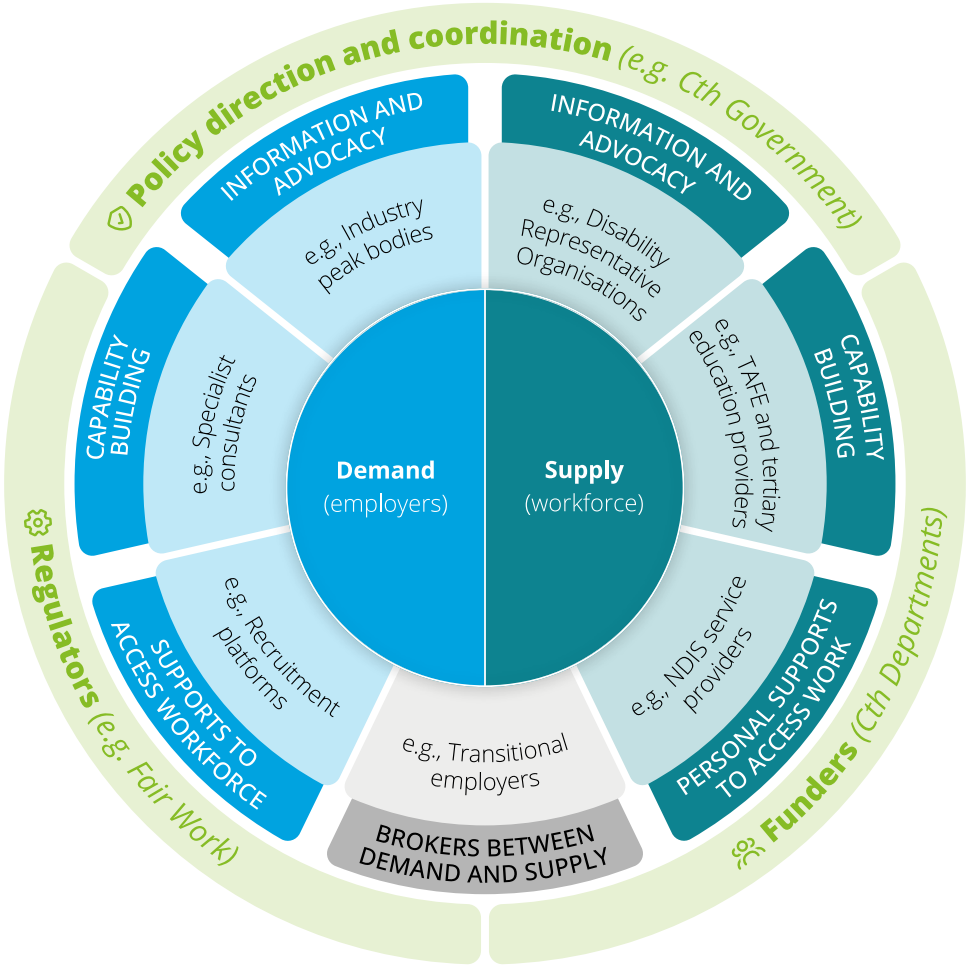
Grounded in economic concepts, the framework provides the foundation for system-level monitoring by:

1. Mapping how change should occur across the system, focusing on employer demand and workforce supply (Figure F.1: System Map for disability employment).
2. Defining a framework of economic and behavioural indicators that can be used to monitor the status of the system and track key changes (Figure F.2: Indicator framework).

1. Stylised system map for disability employment

The System Map applies an economic lens to identify different functions influencing the job match, and the stakeholders who tend to hold that influence. It provides a foundation for the theory of change but can also be used as an organising framework for annual State of the Nation reporting, highlighting the level of activity in each section of the system – including where gaps are opening and closing.

Figure F.1: Stylised system map for disability employment



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and DEInvestments (2026)

Appendix F: The Monitoring Framework for disability employment (2/2)

2. Monitoring and indicator framework

The primary purpose of the indicator framework is to provide a structured way to understand and track progress towards creating more and better jobs for people with disability. The framework achieves this through two complementary components, which work in tandem to diagnose strengths and weaknesses across the system and reveal the mechanisms driving change.

Across both sets of indicators, each measure can be benchmarked to highlight where employment outcomes for people with disability change over time, compare to Australian and international averages, and vary by industry and region.

Figure F.2: Monitoring and indicator framework

Economic and labour market context: key measures of the broader economic and labour market context within which employment outcomes are observed.

System status: The state of disability employment as measured in the number of jobs and the quality of those roles.

Quantity: Are people with disability participating in the Australian labour market?	Quality: Are people with disability experiencing quality employment?
Based on internationally recognised definitions of labour force status:	Based on the International Labour Organisation's 'decent work' principles:
1. Not in the labour force	**1. Standards**
• Participation rates • Intent to work	• Adequate earnings • Decent working time
2. Unemployed	**2. Employment creation**
• Unemployment rate • Long term unemployment rate	• Equal employment opportunity and treatment • Stability and security of work
3. Underemployed	**3. Social protection**
• Underemployment (hours) • Underutilisation (skills mismatch)	• Social security • Safe work environment • Flexibility
4. Employed	**4. Social dialogue and tripartism**
• Full time employment rate • Part time employment rate	• Cooperation between government, employers and workers in disability employment policy

Drivers of change: leading indicators of change on the demand (employer) and supply side (workforce)

Demand: Are employers progressing through the change journey?	Supply: Is the workforce progressing through the change journey?
Based on the domains of the ProSci ADKAR® change framework:	
1. Awareness	
of challenges in the quality and quantity of jobs for people with disability and how current practices create barriers	of my value to an employer, the demand for my skills and the pathways and supports available to me
2. Desire	
to invest time and effort to change current practices and overcome barriers	to enter or remain in the workforce, access and advocate for workforce support
3. Knowledge	
of how to implement changes in practice and where to go to for support	of which employers offer employment opportunities that align with my capabilities and how to navigate recruitment processes
4. Ability	
to implement change under current organisational conditions and access any support required to reduce barriers	to navigate workplace processes and develop and apply my skills and capabilities in a job role
5. Reinforcement	
through ongoing benefits to sustain change and consistently repeating improved practices over time	through positive experiences and opportunities to progress that reinforce confidence to stay in work

Source: Deloitte Access Economics and DEInvestments (2026), using International Labour Organisation, ProSci ADKAR ®

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Limitations of our Work

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