

# 2025

## HAN Survey Report

# Pathways to Inclusion:

## Managing Health Conditions in Canadian Workplaces

A call to action for employers, patient groups and policymakers

A unique collective representing Canada's top 20 health charities, HealthPartners empowers Canadian workplaces to host fundraising campaigns to advance research, deliver programs, and lead advocacy efforts around health conditions affecting 9 in 10 Canadians.

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Cost of Inaction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Survey Responses</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Survey Goals and Objectives</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Key Findings Statistics</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Culture of Silence</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Disclosure Dilemma</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Daily Challenges, Chronic Strain</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Manager is the System</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>What Employees Actually Need</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Opportunities for Employers</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Final Call to Action</b>	<b>11</b>

The HealthPartners Health Advisory Network (HAN) is an online community that empowers people with health conditions and caregivers to share their lived experiences through surveys and consultations with the objectives of producing valuable insights that can help shape more inclusive workplaces and improve Canada's healthcare ecosystem. Learn more about how you can join the Network and share your story today: <https://healthpartners.ca/network/>.



# Executive Summary

## A Call to Action for Employers, Patient Groups, and Policymakers

A new survey of people who have lived with a health condition or cared for someone with a health condition while working in Canada reveals a stark disconnect between employee needs and organizational capacity and a clear call to action for employers. This survey collected responses from 160 members of the Canadian workforce who identify as patient or caregiver to understand their health-related experiences in the workplace.

### The Cost of Inaction

Health conditions can negatively affect both the productivity of employees and their finances. In fact, **more than 2 respondents out of 5** experienced lost income and reduced productivity due to their situation, while **more than one fifth** of respondents were compelled to change jobs or careers because of their condition or caregiving responsibility. These results highlight that without meaningful support, health issues silently erode productivity, morale, and retention. But the health conditions that affect employees also have a significant impact on workplaces: employers lose talent, time, and trust when they fail to act.

“**Support comes from the top down. Having a supportive and understanding management team is crucial to supporting employees with different needs.**”

With nearly [half of Canadians](#) affected by a chronic disease, [45% likely to develop cancer](#) and [one in five dealing with a mental health challenge](#) in their lifetime, there is no question that serious illness affects many people in the workplace. And it hits employers– and our economy– hard, too, costing Canadian employers [\\$122 billion in indirect income and productivity losses](#). To keep employees engaged and productive in the workplace, employers must put in place supports for their employees who face significant health challenges, yet, according to the lived experience of respondents, most employers do not.

But the investment is worth it. A Deloitte Insights report published in 2019 found that companies with effective mental health programs, for example, see a return on investment (ROI) of \$1.62 for every \$1 invested, driven by increased productivity, and fewer days of work missed for mental health reasons.

This survey reveals the biggest challenges Canadians face when balancing work and health, and the actions that can make a difference. From fear of disclosure to the impact of poor support on productivity and wellbeing, the findings point to proven solutions that benefit employees and employers alike.

# Survey Responses Showed:

## 1. Most employees are affected, but many fear disclosure

- **Fact:** 79% have a health condition or caregiving role; 59% feared career harm before disclosure; only 48% felt comfortable sharing.
- **Call-to-Action:** Create a psychologically safe workplace by adopting anti-retaliation policies, protecting privacy, and having leadership model openness about health challenges.

## 2. Negative consequences are common after disclosure

- **Fact:** 31% of those who disclosed experienced bias, unmet accommodations, or reduced career opportunities- rates higher for women, Indigenous workers, and those with chronic or mental health conditions.
- **Call-to-Action:** Implement manager training and accountability measures to ensure accommodations are handled fairly and without discrimination.

## 3. Poor support damages productivity and health

- **Fact:** 43% experienced income loss, 42% reduced productivity, and 49% said workplace stress worsened their health.
- **Call-to-Action:** Offer flexible work arrangements, paid medical leave, and supportive policies as standard- not exception-based- measures.

## 4. Managers are the first line of response but often unprepared

- **Fact:** Over 75% disclosed to their direct manager, yet only 19% said accommodations improved productivity.
- **Call-to-Action:** Equip managers with clear policies, health literacy training, and resources for handling disclosures effectively.

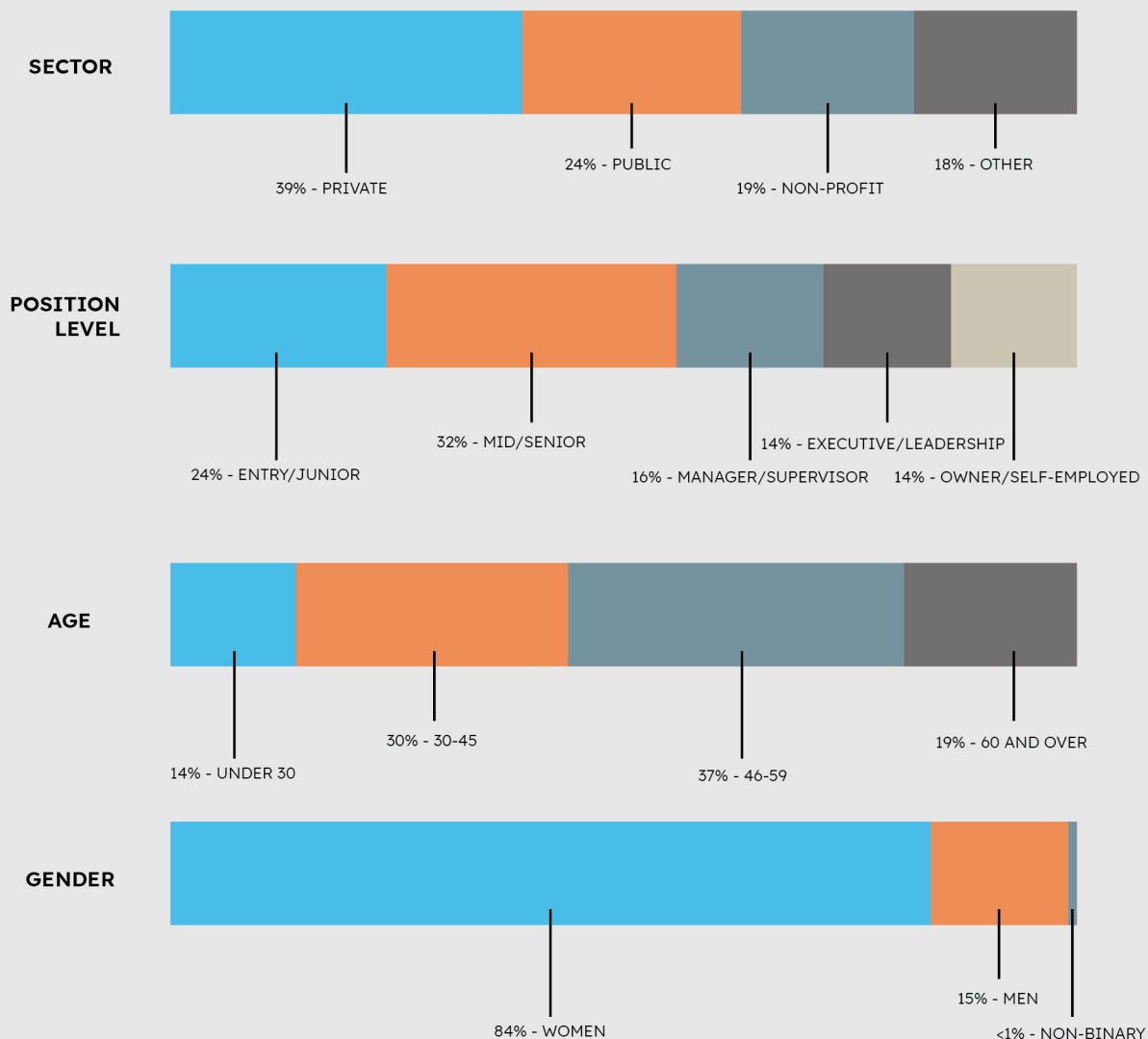
## 5. The cost of inaction is high- and the ROI of action is proved

- **Fact:** Chronic illness and mental health issues cost Canadian employers \$122B annually; mental health programs can return \$1.62 for every \$1 invested.
- **Call-to-Action:** Treat workplace health as a strategic business investment by tracking key metrics (absenteeism, accommodation success) and continuously improving policies.



# Survey Responses:

These findings highlight an urgent need in workplace health support and important gaps for those affected by health conditions. They also point to key measures that can combat the erosion of morale, while improving productivity and retention—such as flexible work, paid medical leave and non-discrimination policies.



## Respondent Profile

Survey respondents are broadly representative of the geographic and ethnic distribution of people in Canada and reflect a cross-section of the Canadian workforce, with most respondents (67%) in their prime working years (30 to 59 years old).

## Survey Goals and Objectives

Most employees in Canada are living with a health condition or caring for someone who does. HealthPartners surveyed hundreds of members of the Health Advisory Network (HAN) in mid-2025 to gain valuable insights from real people in Canada into the quality of workplace supports for those affected by a serious health condition. The survey findings are being shared publicly to empower employers to build more inclusive and supportive workplace cultures and to highlight opportunities for patient groups and policymakers to shape more synergic health ecosystems in Canada.

**“I am in fact self-employed because I was unfairly dismissed following disclosure of a health-related condition.”**



## Key Findings Statistics

- 79% disclosed a health condition or caregiving responsibility
- 59% feared career impacts before disclosing
- 68% received a supportive response, but 31% experienced negative consequences
  - 43% experienced income loss
  - 42% reported reduced productivity
- 53% requested accommodations, but 23% faced rejection

According to respondents, the top supports needed in the workplace are flexibility (89%), supportive managers (88%), and paid leave (85%).

**“Work from home options are being phased out [but] are incredibly important for those with chronic conditions and disabilities.”**

## The Culture of Silence

Even though most employees in Canada are living with a health condition or caring for someone who does, many people are afraid to disclose that to their employer. Over 20% of respondents had a condition they chose not to disclose, driven by fears that were repeatedly validated by the experiences of others. **Among those who stayed silent, 74% feared breaches of privacy, 74% career consequences and 69% stigma.**

Did you know?



Health conditions or caregiving responsibilities related to mental health remain undisclosed most often. Organizations like the Mental Health Commission of Canada provide valuable tools and resources to Canadian workplaces, empowering them to create more safe and inclusive environments for employees.

“As a senior knowledge worker in the private sector, disclosure of any mental health condition comes with high risk because you are expected to be able to cope under high stress and work long hours.”

## The Disclosure Dilemma

For those affected by health conditions, disclosure was not a choice but a necessity- to explain absences, seek accommodations, or access benefits.

**One third** of respondents said they felt uncomfortable sharing their situation in the workplace, and **1 in 3** who shared their situation with management did so fearing that it may result in job loss.

- **59%** feared negative effects on their career, including the possibility of income loss
- **56%** cited stigma with **53%** fearing discrimination or bias
- **44%** had concerns over breaches of privacy or confidentiality
- **40%** worried about facing rejection or not receiving adequate support

Only **48%** of the full sample felt comfortable disclosing health information at work, and only **37%** disclosed all relevant information, statistics that underscore a lack of psychological safety in workplaces in Canada.

“Being infantilized can feel as bad as legitimate discrimination at times.”

What's more, **31%** of those who disclosed their situation report having experienced negative repercussions- including unmet accommodations, bias, or reduced career opportunities, and women were more likely to experience negative repercussions than men. This impact was even more pronounced for respondents who identify as Indigenous. **60%** of those who disclosed their health condition experienced negative repercussions. Employees who disclosed conditions like cognitive or developmental issues, physical disabilities, mental health, chronic pain, and autoimmune disorders were more likely to experience negative repercussions than those with other conditions with **nearly half** reporting adverse effects.

Interestingly, **31%** of respondents disclosed their condition because they felt comfortable sharing their situation in the workplace, while **37%** did so with the intent and purpose of fostering a more supportive and inclusive culture.

#### Did you know?



HealthPartners believes that companies in Canada supporting Canadian health charities deserve recognition. That's why we've created the Certified Health Partner designation. To find out how you can boost your corporate reputation and culture by becoming a Certified Health Partner, email us at [info@healthpartners.ca](mailto:info@healthpartners.ca)!

“I had one of the highest employee ratings in the company... they called me on a Friday and told me I had to come back to work on the following Monday or I would be fired.”

“I was left out of board meetings that I would normally have been involved in.”

“I thought disclosing would lift the veil and people would be more understanding! Complete opposite! Working 24 years and am still in a junior position!”

## Daily Challenges, Chronic Strain

Beyond the stress associated with disclosure, employees face relentless pressure navigating health challenges while working. The most common daily struggles were managing fatigue and symptoms (63%), mental strain (57%), and work-care balance (55%).

Most concerning, **almost half** of respondents (49%) reported that their workplace stress worsened their health. This chronic strain damages well-being, productivity, and retention.



#### Did you know?

Canadian health charities can be wonderful partners to workplaces seeking to shape more inclusive environments for people affected by chronic or acute illness. The websites of organizations like the Canadian Cancer Society, Heart & Stroke Foundation or Diabetes Canada contain a wealth of information, tips and tricks that can make all the difference for affected individuals.

## The Manager Is the System

**More than three quarters** of those who disclosed a health condition or caregiving role did so to their direct manager, not Human Resources. This places a disproportionate burden on managers to handle sensitive health issues, despite most lacking formal training or clear organizational policies. In fact, only **19%** of survey respondents said accommodations that were provided effectively helped improve productivity, which illustrates how often employer responses fall short.

“In my own workplace experience, the policies and supports are only as good as the people in the leadership roles.”

“My previous supervisor made degrading comments about me in front of my colleagues.”

“I have experienced the worst year imaginable health-wise, and my employer made things worse at every turn.”

**Manager responses are pivotal**

: They can either create a pathway to support or reinforce a culture of silence and fear.

Did you know? —



Workplaces that host giving campaigns for Canadian health charities through HealthPartners receive tools and resources that empower their teams to adequately address health conditions and related stress in the workplace.

## What Employees Actually Need

The roadmap to improvement is clear: over **88%** of respondents felt that non-traditional working arrangements, including remote work and flexible schedules, as well as supportive managers and coworkers, have the biggest positive impact on the workplace experience of people affected by health conditions.

Policies for medical leave with pay (85%), non-discrimination assurances (74%) and trainings on inclusion for managers (69%) are other measures that effectively build more cultivating, inclusive, supportive and resilient workplaces.

Beyond contributing to the wellbeing of those affected by health conditions, these measures increase morale, foster productivity, and represent substantial financial savings for employers; they are essential infrastructures for the modern workforce and workplace.

“It helps [for] the higher-ups [to] acknowledge that they also go through tough times and that's okay.”



# Opportunities for Employers

1. **Train and empower managers.** Your managers are your support system. Equip them with tools to handle disclosure, accommodation, and stigma.
2. **Normalize flexible work.** Shift from exception-based accommodations to built-in flexibility.
3. **Guarantee paid medical leave.** Employees should never have to choose between health and income.
4. **Build a "Safe to Disclose" culture.** Launch anti-retaliation policies and leadership messaging that reinforces psychological safety.
5. **Track and act on workplace health metrics.** Measure absenteeism, turnover, and disclosure outcomes to evaluate ROI and culture.



# Final Call to Action

The health of Canadian workers and the health of Canadian workplaces are inseparable. This survey reveals a clear and solvable crisis- one that demands immediate, strategic, and collaborative action.

- **Employers:** Audit your policies. Invest in your people.
- **Patient Groups:** Leverage this data to advocate for inclusive workplaces.
- **Policymakers:** Address the economic and human cost of workplace health gaps.

It's time to move from accommodation as an afterthought to inclusion as a default. Through the Health Advisory Network, HealthPartners will continue to amplify these voices, share actionable insights, and collaborate with stakeholders to close these gaps.

To date, HealthPartners has empowered over 600,000 employees to donate over \$230 million to health charities across Canada. Adding purpose to your workplace with HealthPartners is a free way to make a proven investment in the well-being of your staff and the reputation of your organization. Your employees will be twice as happy, twice as likely to stay and twice as likely to recommend your workplace to others. Learn more about hosting your own workplace giving campaign today:

<https://healthpartners.ca/>.

