



[About Us](#)

[Education](#)

[Employment](#)

[Resources](#)

[Events](#)

Quick Question:

[What are my rights to post-secondary education as a person with a disability?](#)



Upcoming Events

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Job Prospects Favorable for Recent Canadian College and University Graduates with Disabilities: Preliminary Results of an Adaptech Research Network Cross-Canada Study

Catherine Fichten, Mai Nhu Nguyen, Mary Jorgensen, Maria Barile, Jillian Budd, Jennison Asuncion, Natalie Martiniello, Anthony Tibbs -

Adaptech Research Network, Montreal -

A recent SSHRC-funded study found that employment and salary statistics are better than feared for recent Canadian college and university graduates in this time of relatively high unemployment.

The Adaptech Research Network recently completed a study of employment among recent (past 2 years) Canadian college and university graduates and those who left their studies without completing their program. In 2011 we administered an online questionnaire to a convenience sample (i.e., a non-random sample of NEADS members and others on our mailing list) of 133 graduates and 39 individuals who had abandoned their studies prior to graduation.

Fourteen participants were "not in the labor force" (i.e., neither employed nor looking for work). The reasons for this, in rank order, were: health (43%), one's disability (43%), potential loss of benefits (36%), and being discouraged with looking (21%).

Of those "in the labour force" (i.e., everyone else), 67% were employed, mainly full-time. Graduates were more likely to be employed than those who left their program of studies before graduation. Seventy-five percent of those who were employed were satisfied with their employment. Although there was considerable variability (\$17,000 to \$84,000), the average salary for those with a college diploma who were employed full-time was \$31,000. The average salary for those with a Bachelor's degree was \$43,000. Those with post-graduate degrees earned an average of \$53,000.

Is this good news about employment for students with disabilities? Yes! Is it good enough? Absolutely not.

Internships seemed to confer a small advantage in helping to find a job. There were no significant differences in employment between French and English speaking participants, between men and women, or among those whose highest credential was a college diploma, a Bachelor's degree or a graduate degree. Of interest is the finding that there were no significant differences between those who rated themselves as being in the top, middle or bottom third academically. Indeed, a degree or diploma lacking the "Dean's Honour Roll" designation seems not to have hurt graduates' employment prospects.

For further information on the study, contact Dr. Catherine Fichten at catherine.fichten@mcgill.ca

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[Top](#)

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