



Improving Disability Employment Study (IDES)

Participant Report

End of Study - 2022

Acknowledgements

Thank you first and foremost to you, the participants who offered their time and shared their experiences with us.

This work was funded by the Australian Research Council (project grant number: LP150100077). We would like to thank all of the Disability Employment Service providers that we partnered with and were generous with their time and expertise and, most importantly, the jobseekers who participated in this study.

We honour the memory of chief investigator Associate Professor Allison Milner whose intellect, quirk, drive and vitality will never be forgotten.

Contact us

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Employment for people with disability have numerous social, health and economic benefits including greater likelihood of secure housing, reduced poverty, social inclusion as well as better physical and mental health.

Previous research also demonstrates that the mental health benefits of employment are greater for those with disability than those without (1).

Furthermore, there is a clear economic incentive to helping more people with disability find and maintain work (3).

Yet, just over half (53%) of the working age population of Australians with disability are in the labour force, compared to 84% of those without disability (4).

What we did

The IDES project aimed to identify:

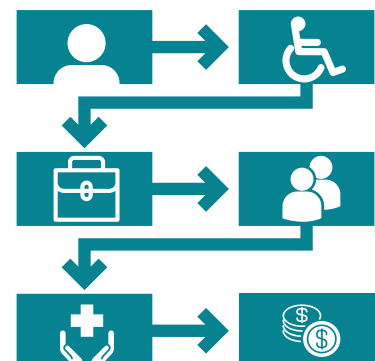
1. Jobseekers' aspirations and expectations of employment services and workplaces
2. Individual and service-related characteristics supporting jobseekers in gaining and maintaining employment
3. The characteristics of workplaces, jobs and employment services that contribute to sustained and meaningful employment

We asked DES participants about their experiences in the labour market. Participants were asked to complete two surveys, 12 months apart.

The survey

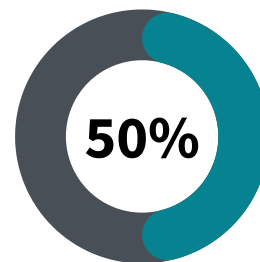
The survey was developed by the research team and asked questions about:

1. Demographics
2. Disability
3. Employment
4. Experiences of DES
5. Health
6. Finances, housing and transport

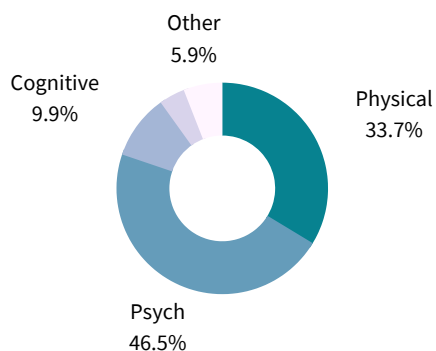


Findings

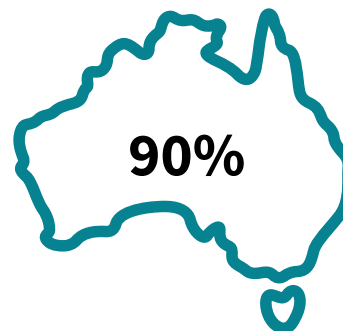
Who participated



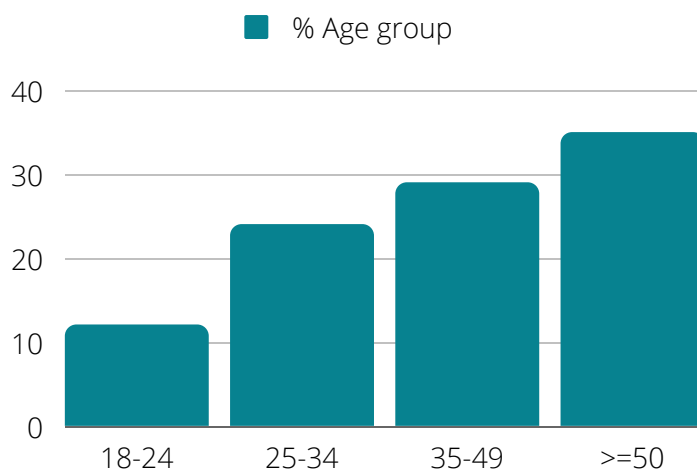
50% had completed high school



The majority of participants had psychosocial disability (34%)



90% were born in Australia



The majority of participants were older than 50 years of age.

What people said about work



Over **80%** said the main reason they wanted to work was to be able to contribute to household costs.



Around a third (**28%**) said DES helped them find a job.



Just over a quarter of people (**26%**) said they had got a new job since the first survey.



The majority of people (**41%**) said they had got their job from applying when they saw a job advertisement.

What people said about DES



At the time of the first survey, the majority of people (**58%**) said they wanted 'suggestions about suitable work' from their DES.



More people who were employed at follow-up said their DES had provided 'good' or 'very good' services compared to those who were not employed.

While many participants felt DES were helping them to find work, many participants wanted more support to build their confidence and skills, engage with employers, and more on-the-job support to help them stay employed.

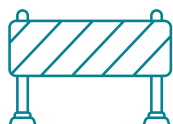
Other factors that impact work



Over **three quarters** of people said they experienced at least one financial stressors at both timepoints.



People that were employed at both timepoints had **better** mental health than people who were not employed.



The **most common** barrier to employment people spoke about was 'having a health condition or disability', as well as 'lack of confidence' and 'no jobs'.



Most participants said they experienced workplace **discrimination** 'when applying for a job' compared to at the job interview or when looking for a job.



Impact

These findings have been shared in lots of different formats with the aim to inform other researchers, service providers and government bodies.

Presentations

We have shared the findings from our study at the Disability Employment Australia (DEA) conferences which are attended by the CEOs of Disability Employment Services and employment consultants.

Disability Royal Commission

The IDES findings were shared at the Disability Royal Commission – Public Hearing 9 on pathways and barriers to open employment for people with disability.

<https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/centres-institutes/centre-for-health-equity/news-and-events/disability-royal-commission-employment-hearing>

Conclusions

Although there were challenges in recruiting participants for IDES, this project is a unique resource as it is the first follow-up study of jobseekers using DES in Australia. IDES will provide new insight as to the barriers and facilitators of gaining and maintaining employment for jobseekers using DES. It will provide insight into how jobseekers experience seeking work, and how their workplace experiences influence their mental health and wellbeing. In addition, the learnings from IDES with respect to how to improve study design are important for future studies.

Reports

Reports on the IDES study have been published which have lots of detail on each survey we conducted. The reports are published here:

<https://credh.org.au/projects/improving-disability-employment-services/>

Journal Articles

Journal articles have been published using findings from the IDES study. These articles have focused on choice and control, housing and effectiveness of DES. You can download the articles here:

<https://credh.org.au/projects/improving-disability-employment-services/>



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