



Understanding the changing world of work

IWH evidence on implications for worker health in the future of work

The Institute for Work & Health (IWH) is an independent, not-for-profit research organization based in Toronto, Canada. Our goal is to protect and improve the health and safety of working people by providing useful, relevant research in two key areas: (1) preventing work-related injury and illness, and (2) promoting recovery and work functioning following injury and illness.

Our research examines the ways work and the labour force are changing and the implications for worker health and safety. It also explores emerging and challenging societal issues, how they affect work, the potential problems they bring, and the policies and programs to help address them and keep workers healthy and safe.

Anticipating challenges in the future of work for vulnerable workers

In the next two decades, the world of work will look very different than it does today. Major forces are driving change: digital technologies, artificial intelligence, climate change, demographic shifts, and more. The coming changes hold opportunities, but they may also adversely affect work outcomes for many—especially vulnerable groups who are already facing labour market barriers. A research project at IWH is focused on identifying policy and workplace supports that will help vulnerable youth and young adults, especially those with disabilities, navigate challenges in the future of work.

[Learn more](#)

Understanding the work-related implications of legalizing recreational use of cannabis

In October 2018, the recreational use of cannabis became legal in Canada—and policy-makers and workplace parties have had questions about potential implications ever since. Will cannabis use increase at work? Will workplace health, safety and productivity be affected and, if so, how? The research literature at the time of legalization was scant and inconsistent. IWH is among the few research centres examining patterns of cannabis use at work, as well as potential associations between cannabis use and workplace injuries, work-related fatalities and return-to-work outcomes.

[Get the research](#)



Building OHS awareness into the work integration of newcomers to Canada

Immigrant workers account for much of the labour force growth in Canada. IWH research seeks to understand the work experiences of recent immigrants and newcomers to Canada, the barriers they face in understanding and accessing their occupational health and safety (OHS) and workers' compensation rights and responsibilities, and the tools and programs needed to help ensure they can be safe and productive members of the Canadian workforce. Resources developed by IWH include training content that settlement agencies, other support organizations and employers can use to raise newcomers' awareness about OHS and workers' compensation.

[Find out more](#)

Supporting workers with depression and other mental health conditions

It's estimated that mental illness results in nearly 500,000 employed Canadians missing some work each week. Workplaces are eager for solutions to help workers with mental illness, especially depression, remain at and return to work. Drawing on systematic reviews of the research literature, integrated with stakeholder input on current practices, IWH has produced an evidence-informed guide on strategies to support employees with depressive symptoms. The guide is designed for anyone in the workplace who supports workers with depression as they cope with their symptoms while working, or when they are returning to work following an episode of depression.

[Download the guide](#)

Measuring the costs and benefits of employing people with mental health disabilities

Anticipated labour shortages in Canada, along with rising rates of absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover, means employers are looking for ways to broaden their pool of candidates in order to recruit and retain a qualified labour force. A business case can be made for including people living with a mental illness in that pool. A study conducted by the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy, a research initiative headquartered at IWH, analyzed the costs and benefits for workplaces that accommodate people with mental health disabilities. It found economic benefits for employers ranged from two to seven times the costs incurred. For the accommodated workers, benefits ranged from four to 12 times the costs.

[Read about the study](#)