

# AUTISTIC VOICES PROJECT NARRATIVE SUMMARY

*"Instead of going back to normal, going back to something that's a little better for everyone..."*

Led by the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance (CASDA), and delivered in partnership with the Employment Recovery Project, the purpose of the **Autistic Voices Project (AVP)** was to bring **the experiences of Autistic Canadians** to the forefront and highlight the criticality of their **employment-related experiences** during **COVID-19** through the format of **lived experience testimonial videos**. This document includes a **summary and report** of the findings.

## LIVED EXPERIENCES



Participating **Canadians** on the autism spectrum provided experiences from:

**7** provinces

Ranging in **age** from:

**18 - 48**

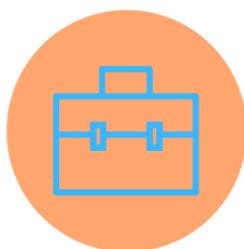
Videos were **developed** and **edited** in **collaboration** with a person **on the autism spectrum**.

## INTRODUCTION

This video has **background information** collected from our **diverse range of participants**.



**Educational backgrounds**



**Past job roles**



**Province of residence**

## JOB-ROLE CHANGES

This video showcases **pandemic-related changes** to **job roles and tasks**.

**"I used to do six hours – two, three-hour shifts – now I'm doing one, four-hour shift."**



## CHALLENGES

This video includes **challenges and barriers** due to the pandemic related to...

- **Job searching** 
- **Unemployment** 
- **Remote work** 
- **In-person work** 



**"People expect you to turn on your video and it's really hard for me as an autistic person because there's uh a lot of social masking you have to do, but not only that, you also have to be able to decipher what the other person is saying just by looking at their face."**

**"Now it's making it harder for neurotypicals as well, so that's automatically going to make it even harder than it was before for us."**



## BENEFITS/OPPORTUNITIES

This video explores the **benefits experienced**, and **emerging opportunities** related to working during the pandemic, both **in-person and remotely**.



“ I don't have like people coming by and just wanting to socialize... I love working from home. ”

“ This is the first time I've seen a lot of public support for just the, the stressful um experience that is COVID and particularly for the people looking for work or struggling to work to the same level of productivity that they had before the pandemic... And it's been really helpful to see that, because it's helped me give myself permission when I need to, to kind of take time and step back ”



## SUPPORTS

This video looks at **supports received** throughout the pandemic, such as from...

- ✓ **Employment support agencies**
- ✓ **Family & friends**
- ✓ **Work supervisors & colleagues**
- ✓ **External professionals**



“ My manager has been talking to me every week, he really like makes time even if we don't do Zoom, he eats lunch with me on his lunch break once-a-week... And he really explains things to me when I have any questions. ”

“ There's my mother who helps me with like reviewing resumes, preparing for interviews, etc. ”



## MENTAL HEALTH

In this video, participants shared their **fears** and **worries** related to **COVID-19**.



“ I'm usually happy uh staying at home during this difficult time because I feel safe, but sometimes, yeah the worry about the uncertainty of the future kind of gets to you. ”

“ It's just a lot of uh kind of like repetitive, monotonous uh days. Keeping up with the pandemic is very emotionally draining. ”



## CLOSING REMARKS

This video contains **key takeaways** and **advice** for **other people** on the autism spectrum and **employers**.

“ I would love to see employers take COVID as an opportunity to be more compassionate workplaces, to be more accessible workplaces for employees with autism... So, you know, I would just like to encourage employers to recognize that, you know, that stress that you're feeling, that anxiety, the feelings of helplessness or you know, that you're not doing enough, you're not doing good enough, that's what a lot of your employees might be feeling all the time, in what you consider normal work circumstances. So maybe instead of going back to normal, going back to something that's a little bit better for everyone ” ”

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The COVID-19 pandemic has **altered life drastically** for everyone; however, we hope that these **lived experience video testimonials** shed light upon the **intensified difficulties** faced by **Autistic Canadians**, and what we can do moving forward, to create **Autism-confident workplaces** in a world **beyond COVID-19**. You can watch our videos **here**.