

Advancing Disability Inclusion in Canada

Career success and inclusion in practice

Agenda

1. Background: Disability & Work in Canada

2. A Problem

- Glass ceilings (Braddock & Bachelder, 1996)

3. A Potential Solution

- The “three-legged stool” (Samosh, 2021)
 - a) Career self-management strategies
 - b) Social networks
 - c) Organizational and societal factors

4. Next Steps

Background:

Disability and Work in Canada

Part 1

□ In Canada, what does disability mean?

Disability as medical

- Individual as source of problem, person is “abnormal” (Jammaers et al., 2016)
- Goal often becomes changing the individual

Disability as social

- Health condition as personal, disability as a societal problem (Shakespeare, 2006)
- From community and social movements in the 1970s and 1980s (UPIAS)
- Goal becomes changing the environment, reducing stigma and discrimination

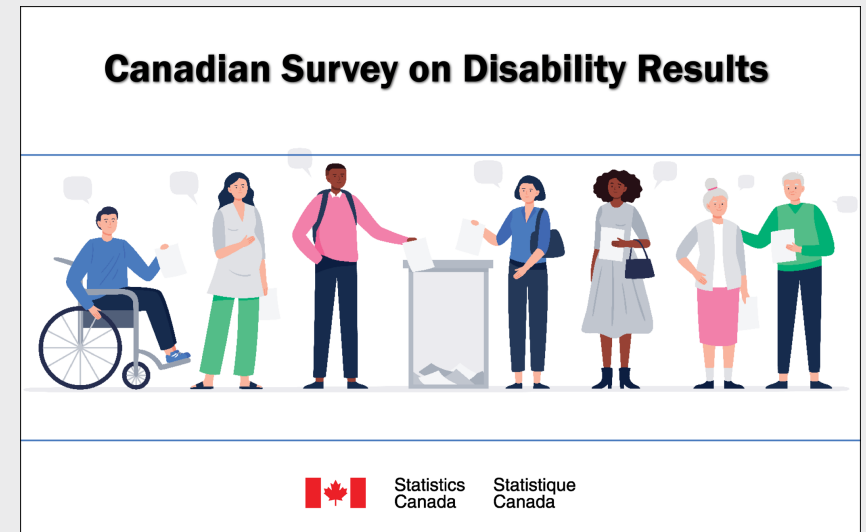
Disability as socio-medical

- Let the individual define their experience
- Barriers can be medical or social (McColl & Jongbloed, 2006; Samosh et al., 2023)

Disability & Work in Canada

Over 1 in 4 Canadians has a disability (27%) (Statistics Canada, 2023)

- Steadily increasing (22% in 2017), changing due to:
 - De-stigmatization and comfort self-identifying?
 - COVID-19 and mental health?
 - Aging population?
 - Measurement change toward social model?
- Includes a range of experience: disability type, age of onset, severity, course (e.g., stable, episodic, progressive), concealability, more
- Disability is complex and individual



Age and disability

15+ years:

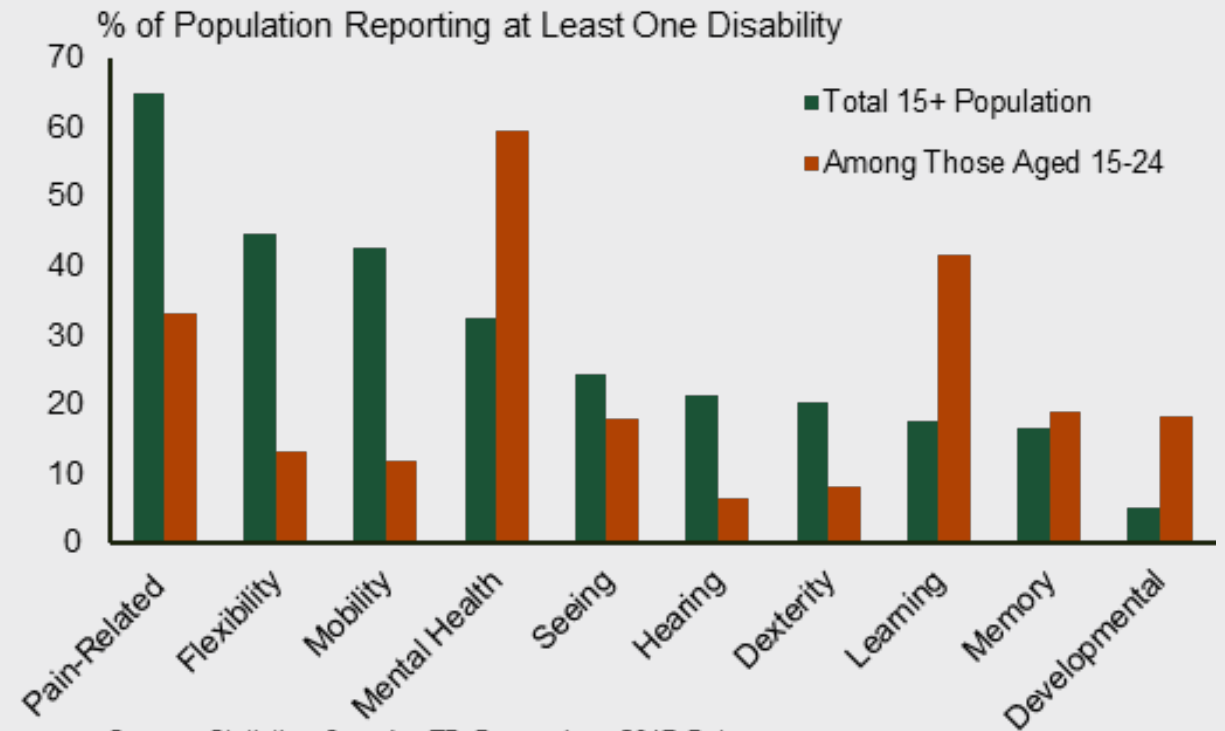
- Pain disabilities

15-24 years:

- Mental health and learning disabilities



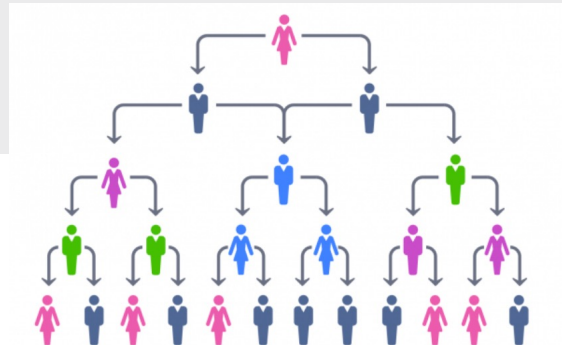
Chart 2: Pain-Related Disability Most Common; Mental Health For Younger Canadians



Source: Statistics Canada, TD Economics. 2017 Data.

Work outcomes

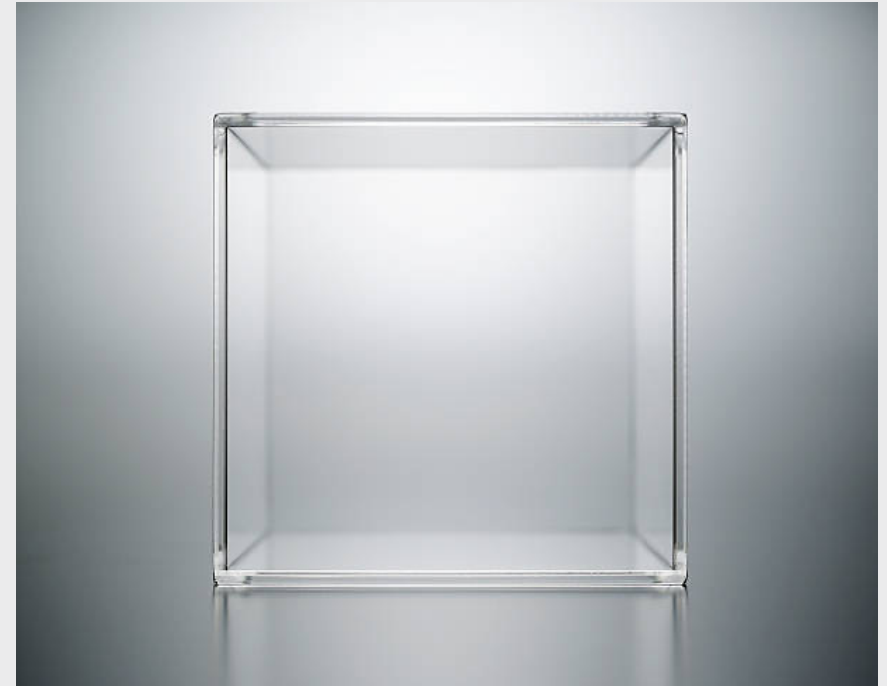
- Lower rates of employment (62%), underemployment, and poverty (Statistics Canada, 2023)
 - Disability type and other characteristics of disability matter
 - E.g., employment rate: severe disability = 42%, mild disability = 74%, no disability = 78%
 - However, employment rates have increased slightly (3% since 2017)
- Underrepresentation in managerial and executive positions (Bebbington & Özbilgin, 2013)
 - Even in many disability-related organizations
 - Yet, there are many leaders with disabilities in organizations



A Problem:

Glass Barriers

Part 2



Career Advancement Barriers

Glass Ceilings (Braddock & Bachelder, 1994)

- a) Attitudinal barriers (e.g., low expectation stereotypes, discrimination, myths about disability)
- b) Educational barriers (e.g., pre-employment and training during employment) (Tompa et al., 2020)
- c) Environmental barriers (e.g., physical access)
- d) Technological barriers (e.g., accessibility with screen readers)
- e) Individual-level barriers (e.g., self-limiting behaviours)

Educational Barrier

Highlight:

Limited access to pre-career employment as a major barrier. Employment at 16 as a predictor of employment at 25



A Potential Solution:

The “Three-Legged Stool”

Part 3



The Three-Legged Stool of Career Success (Samosh, 2021)

Three categories of facilitators required in combination:

- Organizations and individuals can support these facilitators or “legs”

1. Career self-management strategies

2. Social networks

3. Organizational and societal factors



Pillar 1: Career Self-Management Strategies

1. Behaviours

- a. Learning communication & advocacy skills (e.g., humour)
- b. Proving yourself; giving it 150% (not equitable)
- c. Building credibility (e.g., via education)

2. Attitudes

- a. Taking a “positive” attitude, while respecting negative experience
- b. Perceiving barriers as contestable challenges
- c. Building confidence and self-determination
- d. Recognizing disability potentially as ability (affirmative perspective)

Universities and organizations can create opportunities to learn these **as skills**.

Opportunity to connect students with high profile persons with disabilities

Example Organization:

Lime Connect

<https://limeconnect.com/>

Pillar 2: Social Network

1. Internal Network (at work)

- a. Inclusive managers, colleagues, and employees; champions
- b. Access to challenging tasks
- c. Mentorship and sponsorship

2. External Networks (outside work)

- a. Fostering a positive disability identity and motivating success
- b. Modeling skills
- c. Supporting access to employment

Organizations can implement:

- Skills-based training for managers and co-workers (normalize disability as human experience)
- Hold managers accountable
- Support champions
- Mentorship and sponsorship programs
- Inclusive succession planning

Pillar 3: Organizational and Societal Factors

1. Organizational Policy and Procedure

- a. *Proactive* employers (e.g., universal design—being accessible from the start)
- b. *Flexible* employers (e.g., willingness to be creative and collaborative if issues arise)

2. Programs and Funding

- a. Career entry and advancement programs

3. Social Systems

- a. Critical, visible, mass of leaders with disabilities

Policy option:

Implement a standard on disability at work:

Example:

CSA Z1011
Work Disability
Management System
Standard

<https://www.csagroup.org/>

Summary points

Three categories of facilitators required together. Please consider them when designing for inclusive programs, employment, and careers:

1. **Career self-management strategies** (individual-level)
2. **Social networks** (group-level)
3. **Organizational and societal factors** (higher-level)

Everyone can play a role in supporting the development of all three pillars:

- Being **proactive** and **flexible**
- Respecting **individual difference, complexity of disability**, persons with disabilities as “minority of everyone”



Next steps

Part 4

Future directions

Affirmative perspectives

Systems perspectives and developing employer skills

"Nothing about us without us"

Additional resources:



**Employer Assistance
Resource Network (EARN):**
<https://askearn.org/>

Many resources for
employers and managers



**Job Accommodation
Network (JAN):**
<https://askjan.org/>

A searchable database of
accommodations by disability
type, task, and more



**Job Demands and
Accommodation Planning
Tool (JDAPT):**
<https://aced.iwh.on.ca/jdapt/worker-en/access>

Helps guide the
accommodation conversation



Work Wellness Institute:
<https://workwellnessinstitute.org/>

Webinars and other
resources



**Inclusive Design for
Employment Access
(IDEA):**
<https://vraie-idea.ca/>

Monthly webinars and other
resources in development

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Thank you!

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