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# Understanding Requirements and Unmet Needs for Accommodations for Non-Senior Adults with Disabilities through a Social-Cultural Lens

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# Agenda

I. Data
II. Increasing participation has meant more unmet need for accommodation
III. Identifying disability related to significance of activities; cultural change
IV. Unmet need for aids, devices and supports is related to life-cycle roles, perceptions
V. French/English Variations in self-identification of disability
VI. In Sum: Insights in using a social/cultural perspective

# I. Data

- Data come primarily from the 2001 and 2006 Participation and Activity Limitations Surveys (PALS)
  - Covers adults (aged 15-69) with health and activity limitations
- Supplementary materials from the 2001-2007 Surveys of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID)
  - Covers adults (aged 16-69) with health and activity limitations
- In both cased referred to as “working age people with disabilities”

# II. Increasing participation has meant more unmet need for accommodation

# Background:* Increased Employment and Post Secondary Schooling Participation

- Recent years have seen unprecedented increases in the # and % of working aged people with disabilities employed and youth with disabilities attending post secondary schooling**
  - proportion with at least some work annually--rose from 52.1% in 1999 to over 60.2% in 2007
    - For those working, both average # of weeks and hours worked increased
  - The proportion of youth who had attended school in the past five years increased by 27% and post-secondary accreditation rose by 10 percentage points during this same period

*Source SLID

** The impact of the recent recession on employment levels for people with disabilities is not yet known

# Concurrent accommodation trends

**Overall:**

- In 2006, 64% of working aged people with disabilities indicated that they required an assistive aid or device in order to undertake some everyday activities, up from 53% in 2001
- Between 2001 and 2006 the proportion requiring these who indicated that they had an unmet need doubled—increasing from 21% to 42%

# Concurrent Trends (continued)

## At work:

- 424,000 required some type of accommodation at work in 2006 compared with 305,000 in 2001
  - Wholly related to higher levels of employment (37% required aids and devices in both years)
- The number with job-related accommodation needs which were not fully met rose from 68,000 in 2001 to 146,000 in 2006 and the % with unmet need increased from 22% to 34%

## At school:

- Requirements for aids and devices increased by 77% and the number of those with an unmet need rose in tandem

Similar increases in accommodation requirements in intra-regional travel

# Understanding the Change

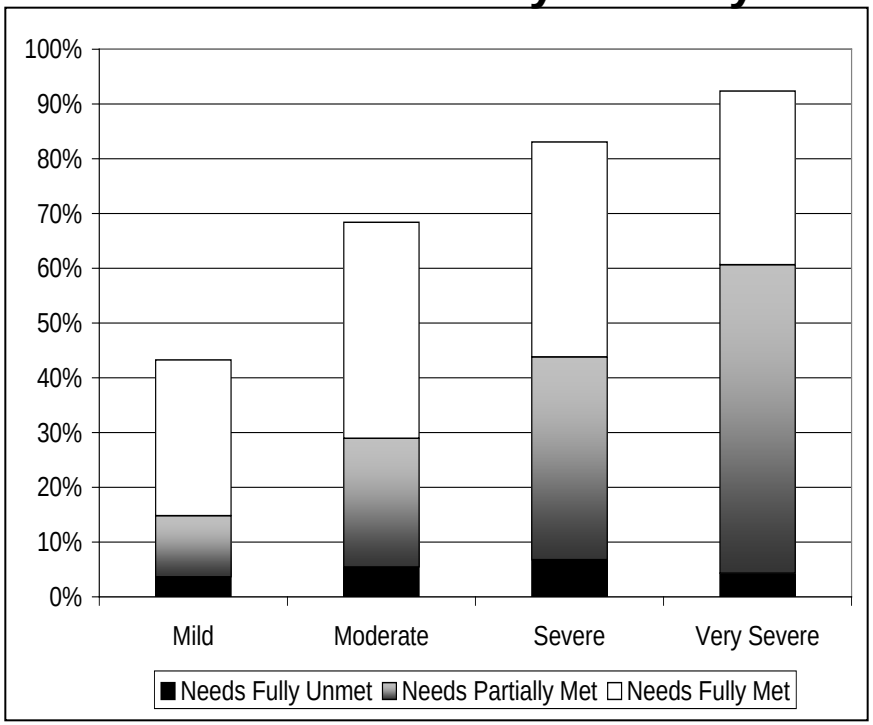
Increase in requirements and unmet need correlated with:

- Increased demand coming with increased participation by people with disabilities in society
  - Marked jump in labour force participation; attendance/successful completion of post-secondary schooling
- New technologies, greater awareness of available aids and devices
  - Example: PALS indicated large growth in requirements/unmet needs for special chairs/and back supports at work
    - In line with societal adoption of ergonomic concepts in office design
- Affordability less commonly an issue
  - Percentage indicating cost as a reason for unmet need for aids and devices fell from 72% in 2001 to 53% in 2006
  - In contrast, those indicating inadequate awareness of options/where to find these up from 18% to 21%
  - **Linked to increasing labour force participation which meant substantial increases in average income, insurance coverage**

# Greater inclusion of people with more severe disabilities magnified trends

- Higher proportion need aids and devices in undertaking activities of daily living
- % employment change 2001-06 highest among those with severe/very severe disabilities
  - 1 % point for those with mild disability; between 3-4 % points for those with severe, very severe condition
  - 56% of total growth in requirements/unmet need at work in this population
    - Overall, just over 20% of employed

**Proportion of Adults with Disabilities Requiring Aids and Devices showing Level of Unmet Need by Severity**



# III. Identifying disability related to significance of activities;  cultural change

# Background: Self-identification of those with learning disabilities has sky-rocketed

Between 2001 and 2006 the proportion of people identifying as having a learning disability increased by 36%

- Particularly marked: 54% increase among those 15-24

- More than double the overall increase in the disability rate
  - Much of the overall increase in disability rate tied to population aging
  - The increase in learning disabilities largely driven by changes among young adults

# Understanding the Change

- Culture based Hypotheses:
  - Reduced stigma?
  - Increased identification/naming of conditions as learning disabilities?
  - Increased reliance on capacity to learn in the new economy?
- Second hypothesis is in line with another generality:

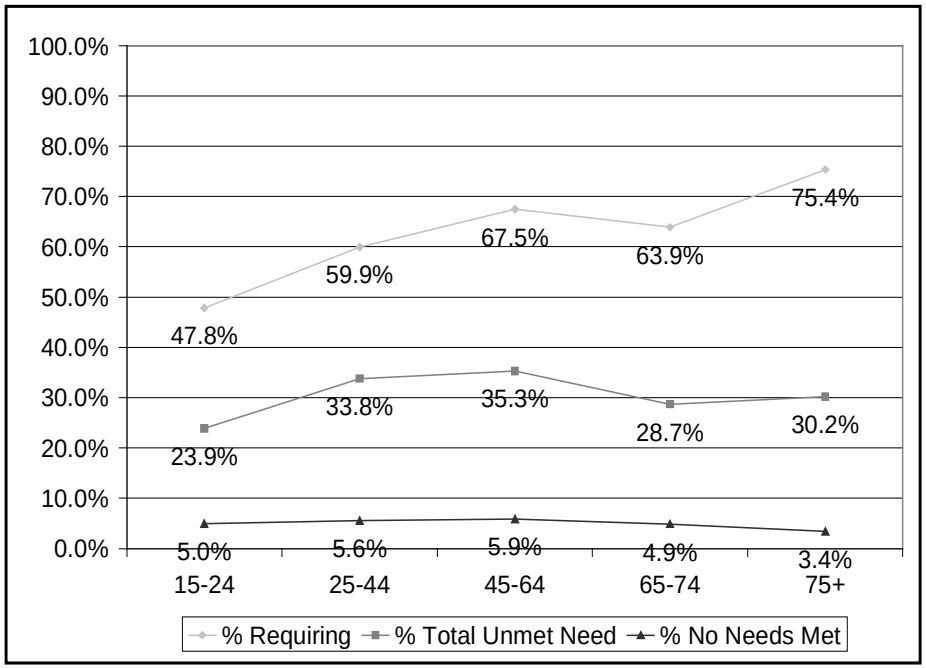
  Learning disability predominates among children; minor among older people with disabilities
  - 70% of children with disabilities indicate a learning disability in contrast to 17% overall
  - Reflects importance of varying significance of formal learning activities at different stages of life
    - i.e. central role of schooling in childhood/youth

# IV. Unmet need for aids, devices and supports related to life-cycle roles, perceptions

# Background: Requirements for aids/devices/supports increases with age but the likelihood needs are unmet peaks at middle age

- More than half of adults 25-64 have unmet needs for aids/devices peaking at just under 60% for those 45-54 in contrast to just over 40% for seniors
- Similar trend for help with activities of daily life

**Proportion of Adults with Disabilities Requiring Aids and Devices showing Level of Unmet Need by Age**



# Among whom does need peak?

- For those 35-54: Peaks in unmet need for help with housework; meal preparation; requirements for aids/devices supports at work; local transportation (primarily related to private automobile use)
- For those 25-44: Peak in unmet need in childcare

# Understanding the middle-aged peak in unmet need

- Requirements for aids/devices/supports generally increase with increases in age-related impairments
- Domains/intensity of functioning peak at mid-life
  - Simultaneously raising a family; holding employment (often with increasing responsibility); caring for parents
  - Referred to in some life-cycle literature as the period of maximum self-sufficiency; maximum stress
- Unmet need pattern is more significantly influenced by second factor
  - At age 65 significant age-related supports fall into place
  - Reduction in job-related and, for many, family-related pressures
    - Note: often replaced by spousal care requirements
- Accentuated by financial burden which also peak at mid-life
    - Pressures of mortgage; financing post-secondary schooling etc.
    - Those 35-54 most likely to indicate that money/lack of insurance coverage reason why needs unmet

# V. French/English Variations in self-identification of disability

# Background: Quebec self-assessed disability rate consistently below the overall, Canadian rate

- While gap is narrowing; English-speaking Canadians more likely to identify themselves as having a disability than French are in identifying themselves as "*handicapée*"
  - Gap widest in Quebec, where least interaction with English culture
- Threshold varies with type of condition/impairment
  - More similar for developmental, seeing, memory and speaking limitations
  - Wider gap for more common mobility/agility and pain

**Disability Rates: Canada and Quebec, 2001 and 2006**

| | 2001 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|
| Canada | 12.4% | 14.2% |
| Quebec | 8.4% | 10.4% |

# Understanding linguistic/cultural difference

- Work by Statistics Canada indicates that among francophones (especially in Quebec):
  - Threshold for linking condition/impairment to the term used tends to be higher
  - Also weaker link to acknowledgement of underlying condition as disability
- Differences also occur internationally
  - Stronger variation by type of disability
  - Often tied to stigmatizing nature of disability in society
    - For example leading to lower disability rates in India among women

# VI. In Sum:
# Insights in using a social/cultural perspective

1. Participation and inclusion—working, continuing in school, raising a family, becoming more active in the community, all generate new requirements for accommodation and result in new unmet need
   - Increases in unmet need for aids, devices and supports are, at least partially, reflections of increasing inclusion of people with disabilities in society
   - With increasing levels of employment/access to the money necessary to obtain supports, some pressure shifts from affordability to understanding and finding what's out there

# In sum (continued)

2. Identifying disability related to significance of activities; cultural change
   - Focus on education peaks in early life
     - So too does self-identification of learning disabilities
   - Life cycle pressures/stresses tend to peak at middle age
     - So too do unmet needs for aids/devices/supports
3. Acknowledgement of condition or condition as disability related to broad conceptual/language differences
   - Still significant French/English differences
   - International differences extend to the likelihood of acknowledging condition