

The social construction of age and disability in paid work

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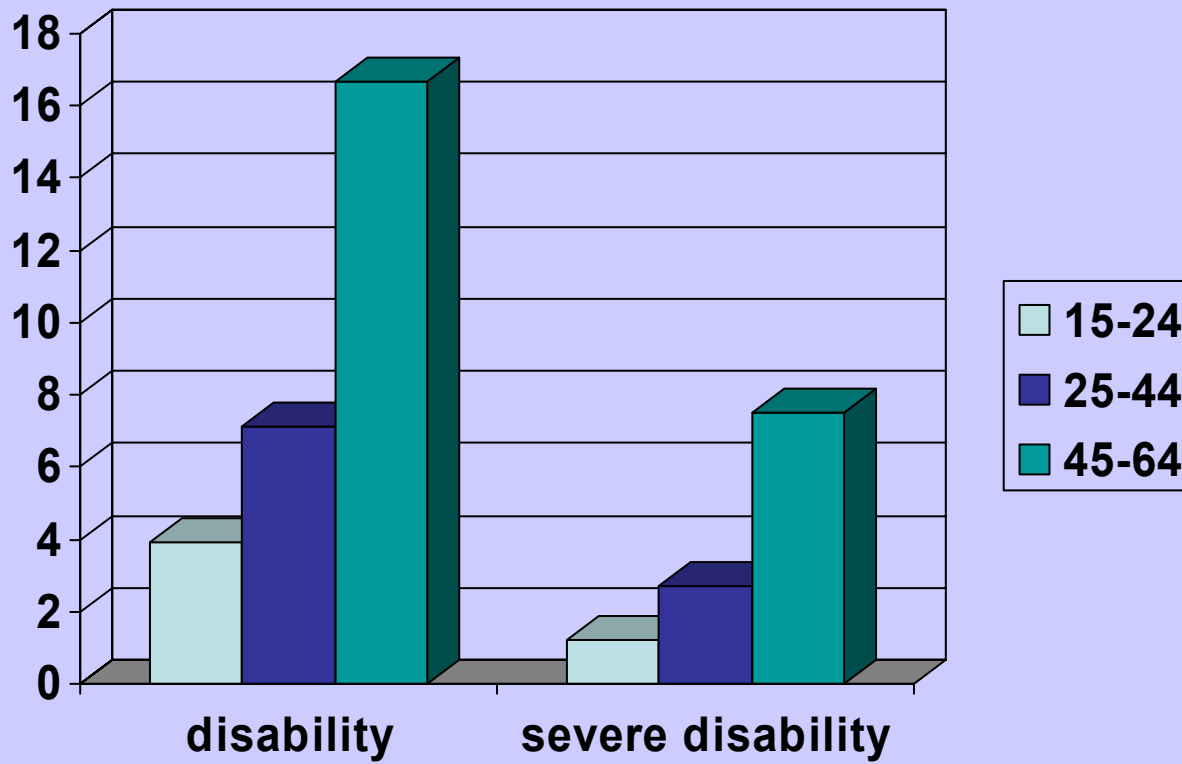
Introduction:

Considering older workers and disability



“Discriminatory attitudes and behaviour may be linked to the common misconception that many older workers leave the workforce due to physical or cognitive disability. Research suggests that the basis for this belief is thin; it also suggests that any limitations can be overcome with thoughtful training and workplace innovations Hence, disability is not a significant issue for most older workers” (McMullin et al., 2002).

Disability and Age



Disability and Age



- Importance of Workforce Aging
 - Employers and governments must recognize the magnitude of the relationship between aging and disability
 - Must invest in workplace accommodations for aging employees with disabilities.

Disability and age



- Why aging employees with disabilities instead of employees with disabilities?
 - 1) Disability is usually not associated with a condition that existed at birth
 - 2) For two thirds of workers with disabilities, age of onset is under 55
 - 3) Biopsychosocial process of aging is connected to disability in complex ways.



Defining disability

- Encouraging Employment
 - ADA; Employment equity act.
- Compensating employees with disabilities
 - CPP; WSIB
- Disability as activity limitation (PALS).
- Disability as intersection between health conditions and contextual factors (WHO).

Defining older workers



- Little consistency in definitions
- Age at which one is defined as an older worker varies depending on many factors including gender, the nature of work, supply and demand, and the age structure of the industry, occupation, and firm.

Intersection of Age and Disability?



- How do social constructions of age and disability intersect?
- How do these constructions affect the experience of aging workers?
- Disability as a barrier to employment for older workers.



Conclusions

- How do employers and employees conceptualize disability, aging, and the relationship between the two?
- Are functional limitations that preclude full employment for older workers conceptualized as a disability or as simply being old?
- Some older workers with disabilities may fall through the cracks of workplace accommodation measures.