



What the future of work looks like to young people disabilities

Arif Jetha PhD

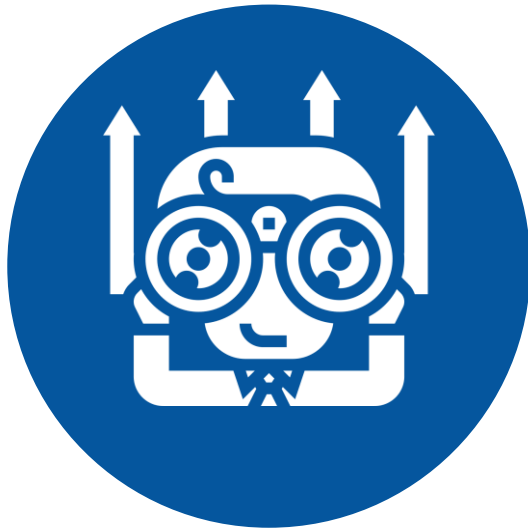
Scientist, Institute for Work & Health

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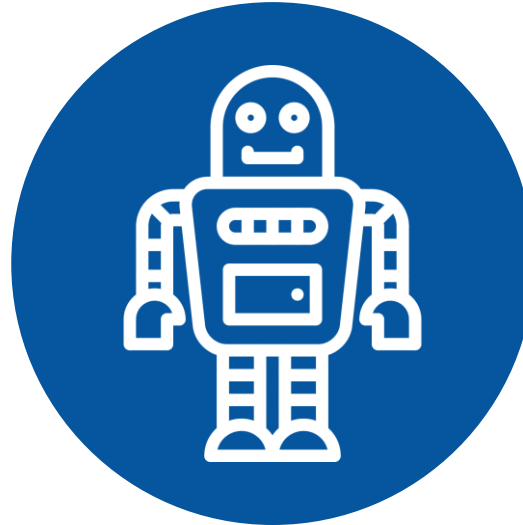
Jetha et al., (2021). Health needs above automation fears: The role of the future of work in shaping career decisions and appraisals of employment among young adults with disabilities. *Under review.*

Open access pre-print available

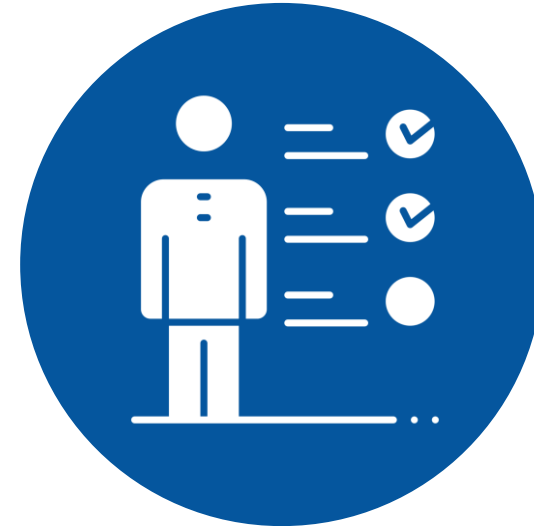
Take home messages



**Hesitation to think
about the future of
work**

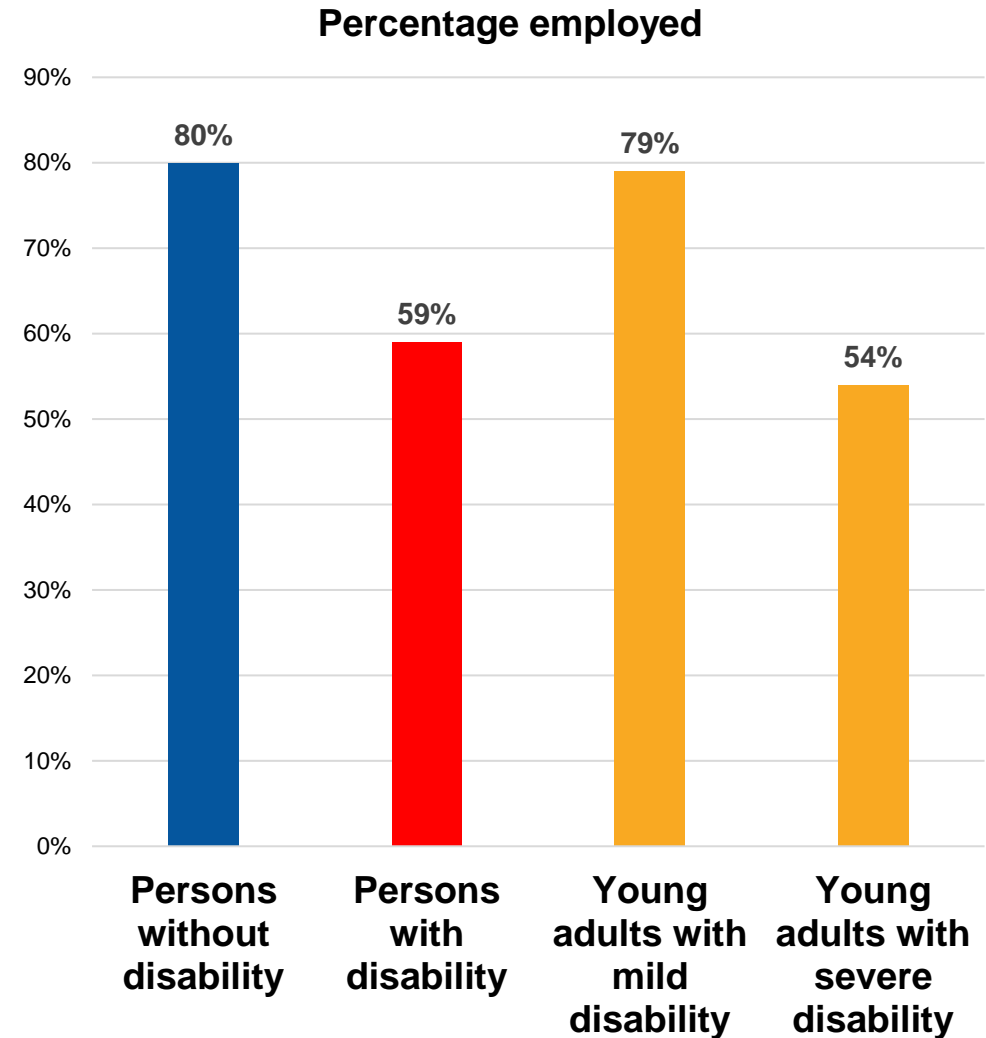
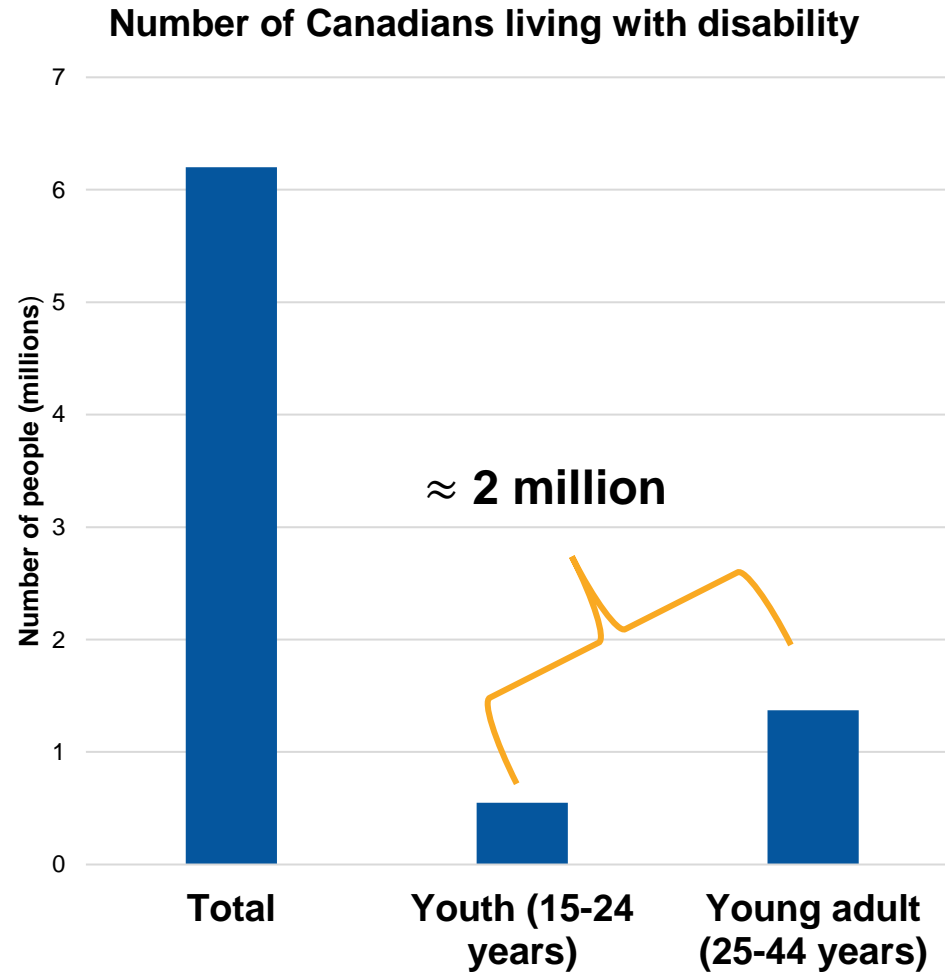


**Impact of digital
transformations**

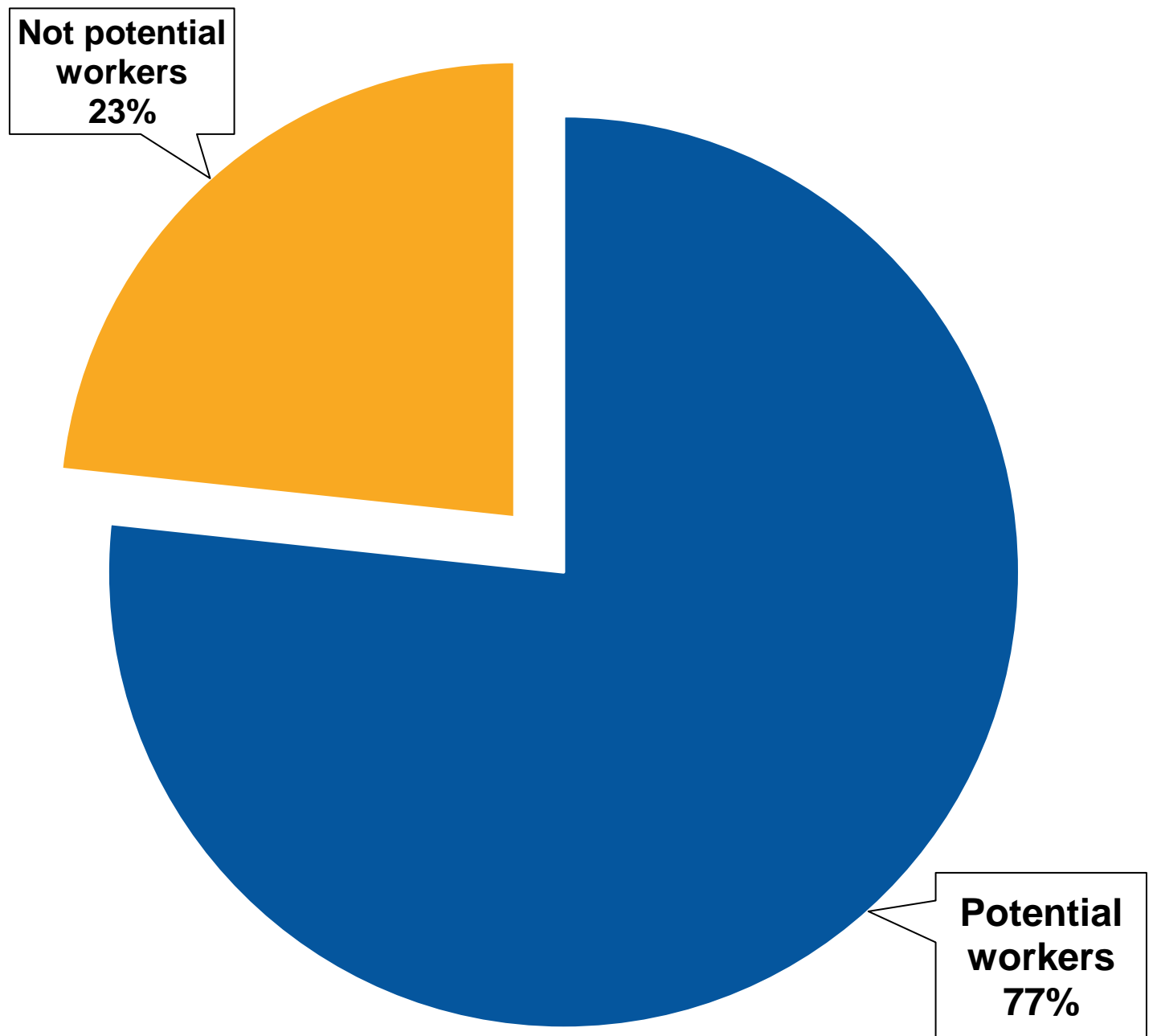


**Importance of
tailored job
skilling**

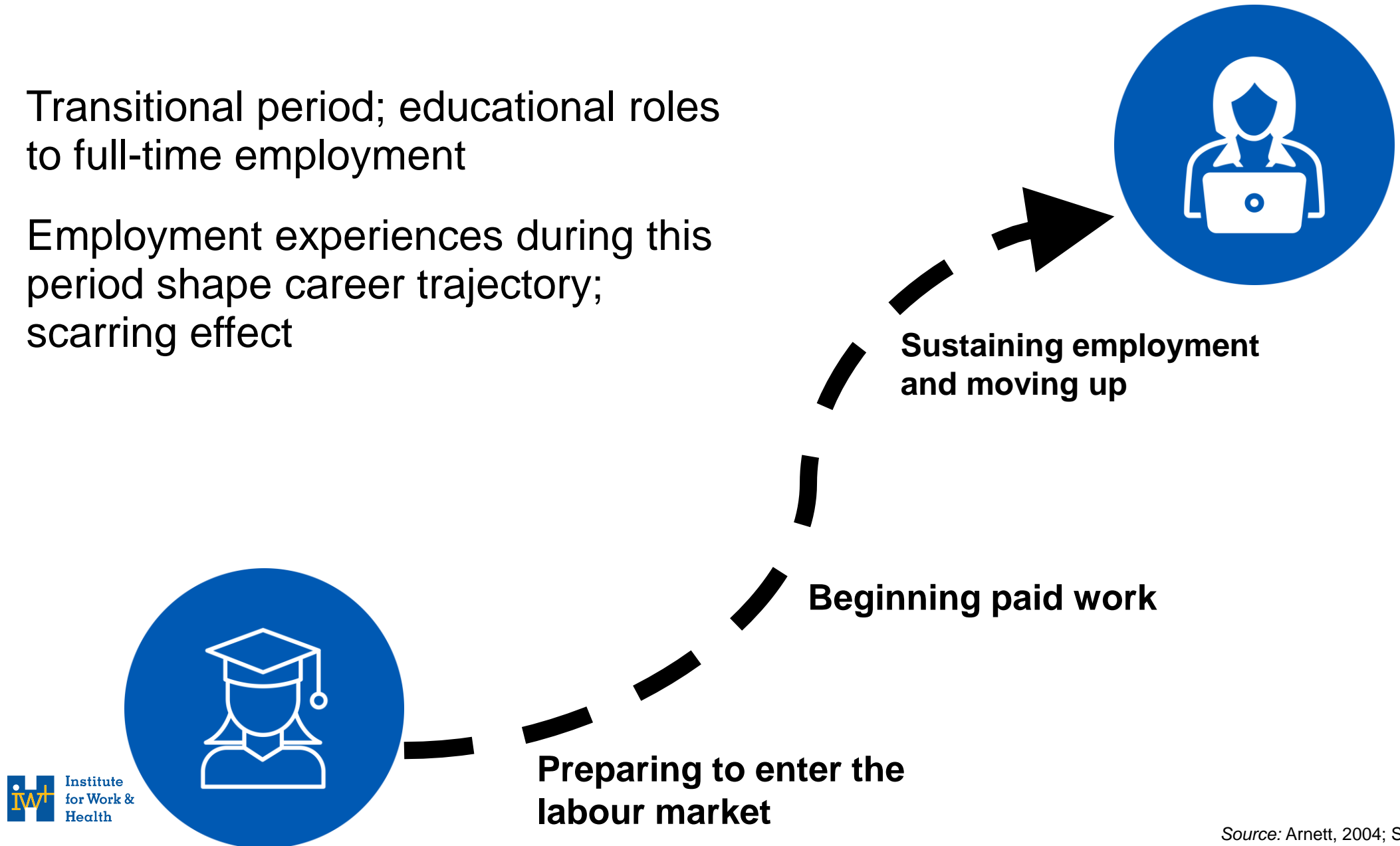
Young people, disability and employment

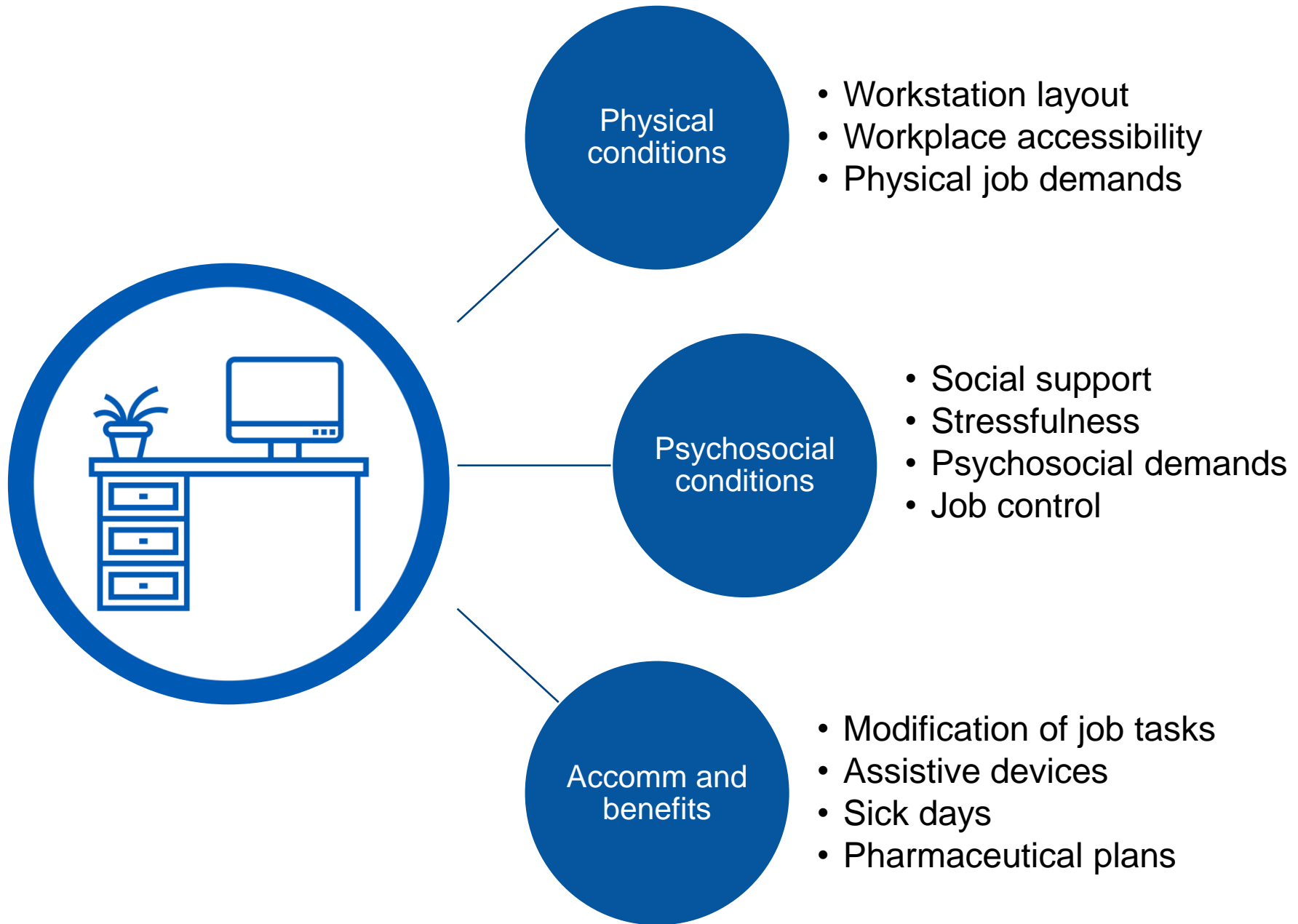


**108,790 Canadian NEET youth with disabilities
(neither enrolled in
education nor
employment)**



- Transitional period; educational roles to full-time employment
- Employment experiences during this period shape career trajectory; scarring effect



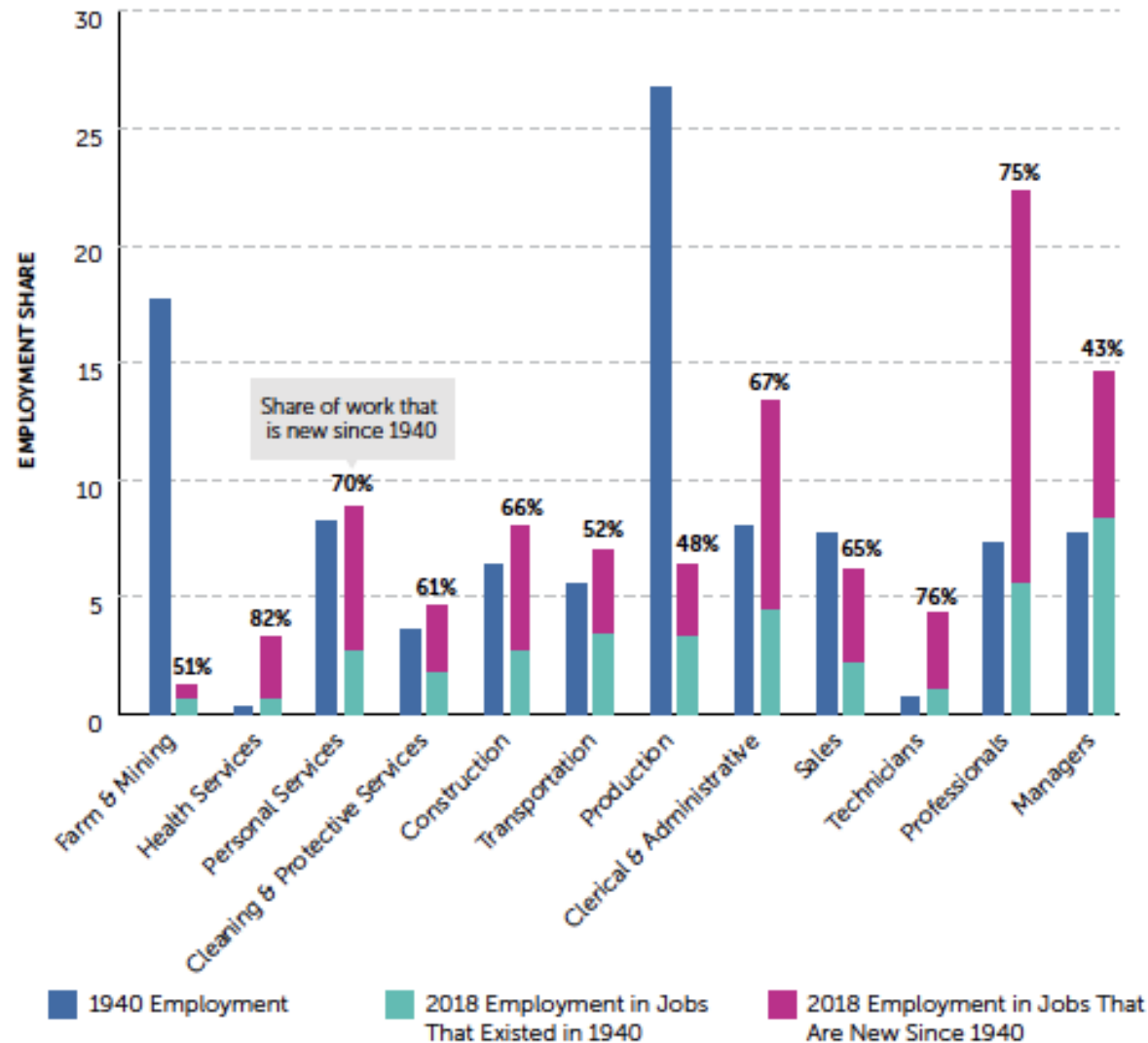


What is the future of work?

- Large-scale and rapid digitization and automation of diverse domains of working life
- Coupled with social, demographic, political and environmental changes
- Reflects a dramatic change to every industry and transformation of all aspects of work
- Superimposed on top of ongoing industrial shifts, offshoring of work, growth in non-standard work arrangements



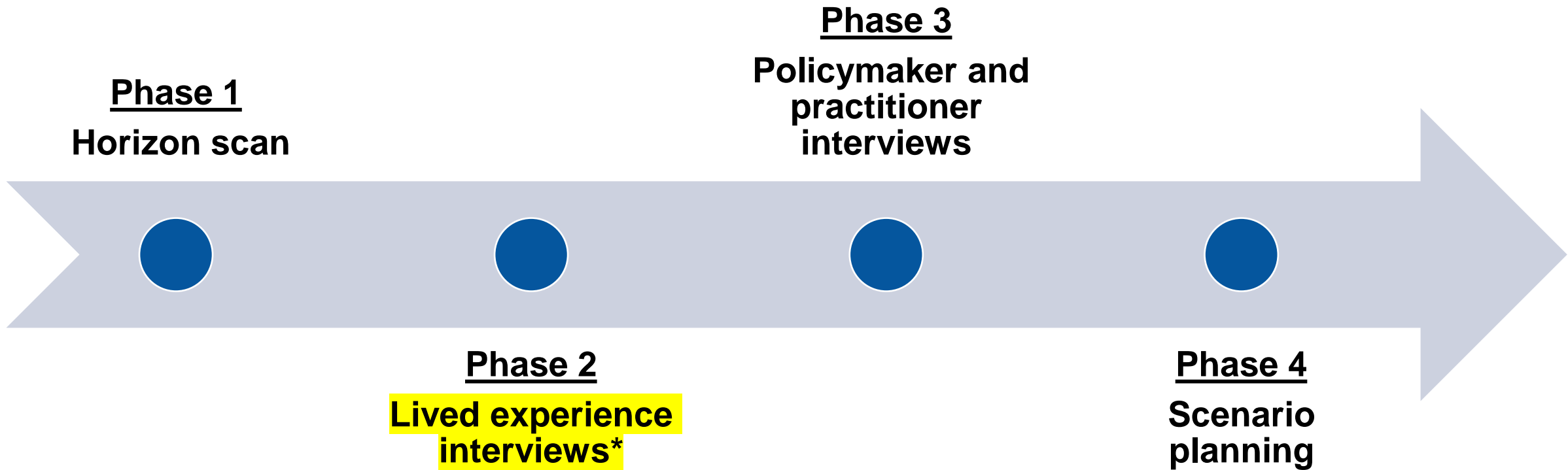
More Than 60% of Jobs Done in 2018 Had Not Yet Been “Invented” in 1940

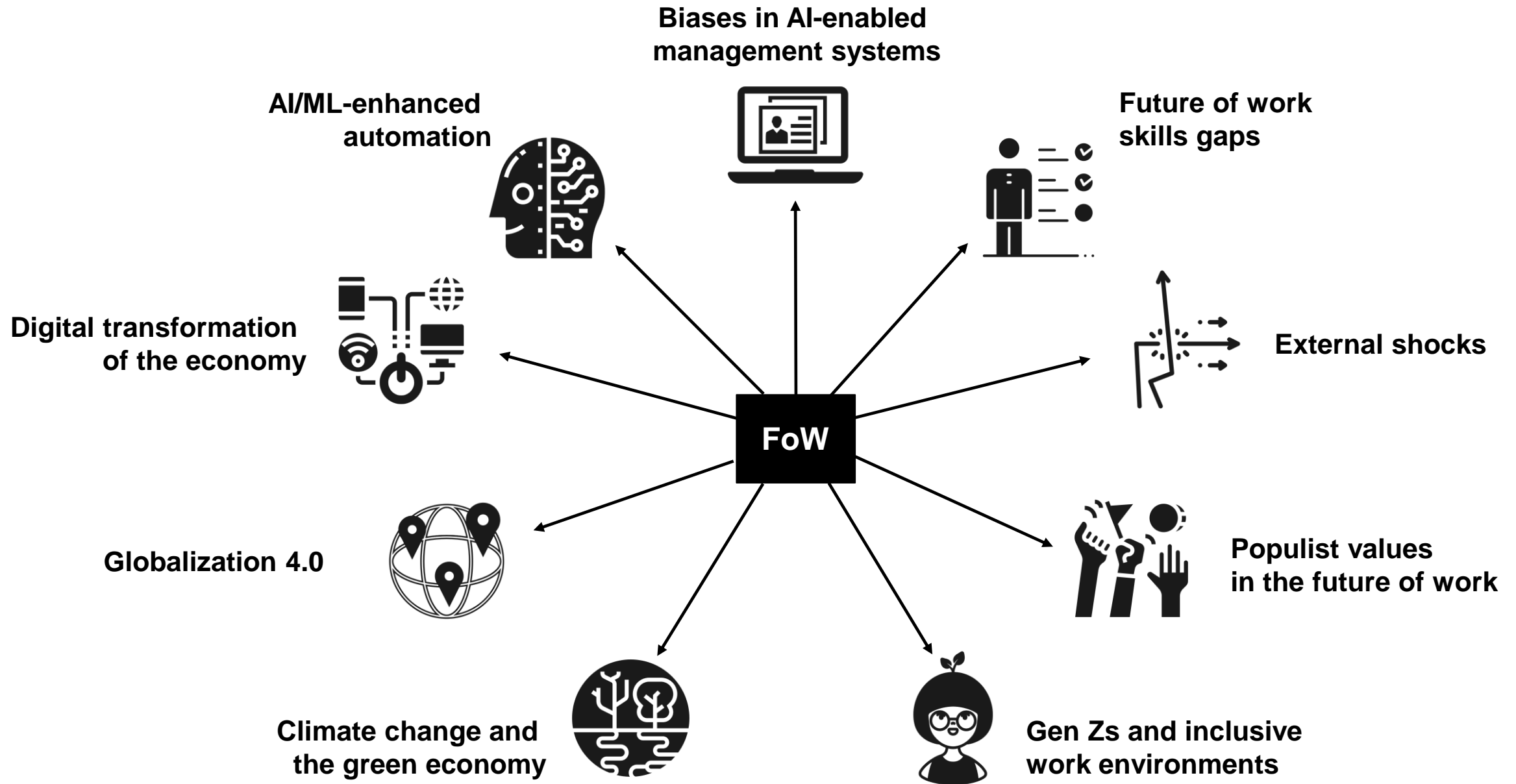


What new jobs will be created in next two decades?

How will the working conditions within these new jobs create barriers or facilitators to employment for people living with disabilities?

What steps can we take in the present to address barriers to inclusion that may emerge in the future?



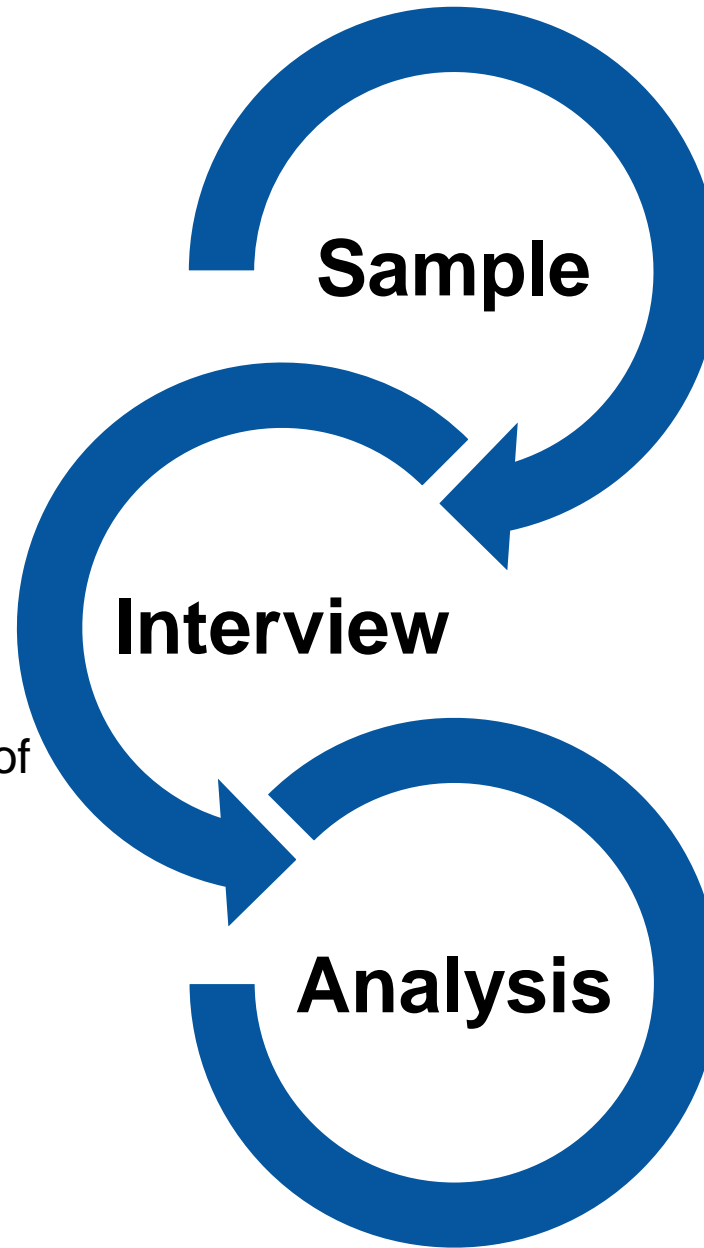


Objectives

1. Examine the perceptions held by young people with disabilities regarding their work history and their long-term employment prospects
2. Determine if there are aspects of the future of work that would change the labour market experiences of young people with disabilities

Methods

- One-on-one semi-structured interviews
 - Past working experiences
 - Career aspirations
 - Thoughts on different aspects of the future of work



- Community-based recruitment
- Ages 18-35 years
- Any self-reported disability

- Double coding of transcripts
- Inductive thematic analysis
- Additional interviews to examine emerging themes

The illustration depicts a mountain composed of green, tiered blocks, each representing a different digital skill or technology. The blocks are labeled from left to right: 'NEW DIGITAL LITERACY', 'A.I. 101', 'S.T.E.M. UPGRADE', 'POLISHING SOFT SKILLS', 'MOVING YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE', and 'WORK FROM HOME EFFICIENTLY'. A large, open laptop sits on the peak of the mountain. Various icons and figures are scattered across the mountain, including flags with symbols like a house, a person, and a gear, a person climbing a ladder, a person walking, and a person running. Small text elements like '-5 \$', '-10 \$', and 'THANKS!' are also present, suggesting a reward or achievement system. The background is a dark, textured purple.

- 22 participants
- 64% women
- 55% worked full-time; 18% not working due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- 55% physical disability; 45% mental health or cognitive disability

THEME A: Career aspirations and work-related decisions were more likely to be shaped by health needs and expectations, not necessarily changes in the future of work

“ Hesitation to think too far into the future

“It’s difficult for me to think about the future because I used to make plans and then life would go in very unexpected ways, so I just stopped.”

Participant ID#164



Career decisions centered on health needs

“I know that my health can fluctuate a lot in a year, it goes from feeling fine to not several times over a year. Because it’s unpredictable it can affect everything. It can affect how well I can look for a job and how well I can perform at a job. I also think that the wrong job could, if I was in a job that was too high stress or they’re not accommodating enough, it could make mental health worse.”

Participant ID#128



Emphasis on secure work arrangements

“A lot of times, the gig economy is seen as a good thing, that maybe it will actually include people with disabilities furthermore. I’m sure that’s about the reality too. But I think the gig economy could be quite dangerous for people with disabilities, the inclusion of people with disabilities, partly because right now accommodations are enshrined in [employment legislation]. So, when you move into the gig economy, you are no longer an employee, you are a contractor.”

Participant ID#101

THEME B: Digital technologies are seen as the biggest driver of change



Digital transformation creates employment opportunities

“...if there’s more advances in technology where people can have the same software they’re using at work and be able to use that at home, I think it will give, especially for people with disabilities, more opportunities to be able to have a job and keep a job.”

Participant ID#173

“ Humans play a role in workplaces reliant on digital technology

“I mean, a robot could definitely do a good chunk of my role, but, at the end of the day, I have to gain more strategic leverage to, sort of, overcome that...The people operations is always going to be a factor. I mean, you see bank tellers and the ATM machine coming in, and, yeah, it took some jobs, but now, they phased it, work on client management...”

Participant ID#146

“ Inclusivity in the application of digital technology

“I think that technology can only do so much if those technological advances are not paired with structural and institutional attitudes of accessibility...When I look at technological advances, they seem to mostly prioritize an ethic of productivity. And so, when it comes to disabled workers, technological advancement help business and it also help employers because now disabled workers can be just as productive as a non-disabled worker...”

Participant ID#169

“ Digital transformation creates obstacles,
especially for those precariously employed

“I don’t think technology would be a good thing in my job because...customers could interface with a computer screen, and it tells them everything they want to know. What use are us to be there? We’re dispensing information. The more technologically advanced things get it’s the less likely they’ll [employer] need us.”

Participant ID#121

THEME C: Job skills and the future of work

“ Building digital skills

“...A lot of start-ups look for people who just know Python, or even know basic web development, so I had to learn a little bit of HTML and CSS along the way...I do see the utility of having a tangible and hard skill. Because university teaches a lot of soft skills...But, again, it's not even about the piece of paper [university diploma], it's about being able to utilize it.”

Participant #137



Soft skills provide a future of work edge

“I’ll take on sort of advisory positions and that’s my way of improving my softer skills, which I think sometimes that’s been also a challenge for people with disabilities. Because some people with disabilities experience extreme social isolation. And that makes it challenging to develop your social skills, which are honestly in the future of work, seems to be a bigger thing than an actual degree. I think that’s also a barrier. So, I’m always doing a bit of that as I grow in my career...”

Participant ID#101

“ Obstacles to upskilling related to disability

“Originally, when I went into university, I was planning on doing an undergrad and then training to be an occupational therapist. A few years into university, that just had to go, because I could barely finish my BA..I was mush by the end of it. So, I couldn't really think about doing other school. Now, I'm not mush anymore, so maybe one day, but it's still closed. I wouldn't rule it out completely, but also it's difficult to think about.”

Participant ID#164

“ Opportunities for upskilling related to work arrangements


“One of the appealing things about this company that I’ve come to was that they give a yearly stipend that you can put towards education. One of the big things in my industry, as much as I talk about how much I love books and the printed books and all this stuff, there’s also been a big movement towards data and data analysis and trend patterns and that kind of thing. I have had it in my head, taken a few classes this last year looking at computer science and statistics, things like that.”

Participant ID#120



Discussion

- Promoting a longer-term career perspective
- Work arrangements represent a significant determinant to success or failure in the future
- Accessibility lens to the design and implementation of digital technologies
- Role of human workers in the future of work
- Tailoring skilling initiatives

A woman wearing a white hard hat and a light blue button-down shirt is looking down at a tablet computer she is holding with both hands. She is wearing glasses and a watch on her left wrist. The background is a blurred industrial or factory setting with various equipment and lights.

Where are we going from here?

- Interview study of policy leaders, employment service providers and labour market experts
- Forecasting strategies for inclusion in the future of work
- Scenario planning



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Investigator team

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Thank you

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