



Worker Wellbeing and the Gig Economy

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Who we are

The Institute for Work & Health is a not-for-profit research organization based in Toronto, Canada

We conduct and share research to protect and improve the health of working people. Our research is carried out in two broad domains:

1. preventing work-related injury and illness through studies of workplace programs and practices, prevention policies and the health of workers at a population level, and
2. improving the health and recovery of injured workers through research on treatment, return to work, disability prevention and management, and compensation policies

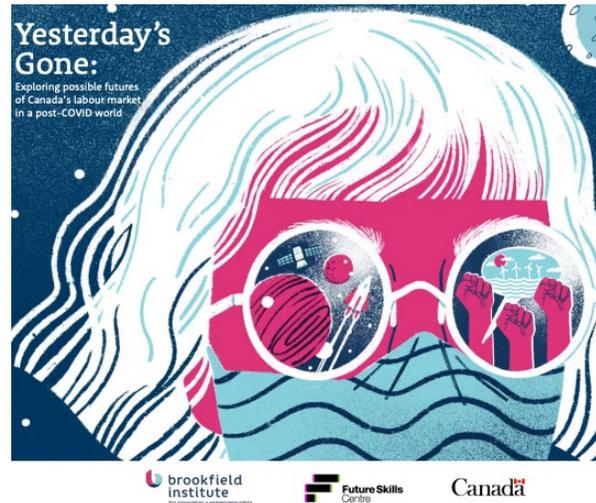
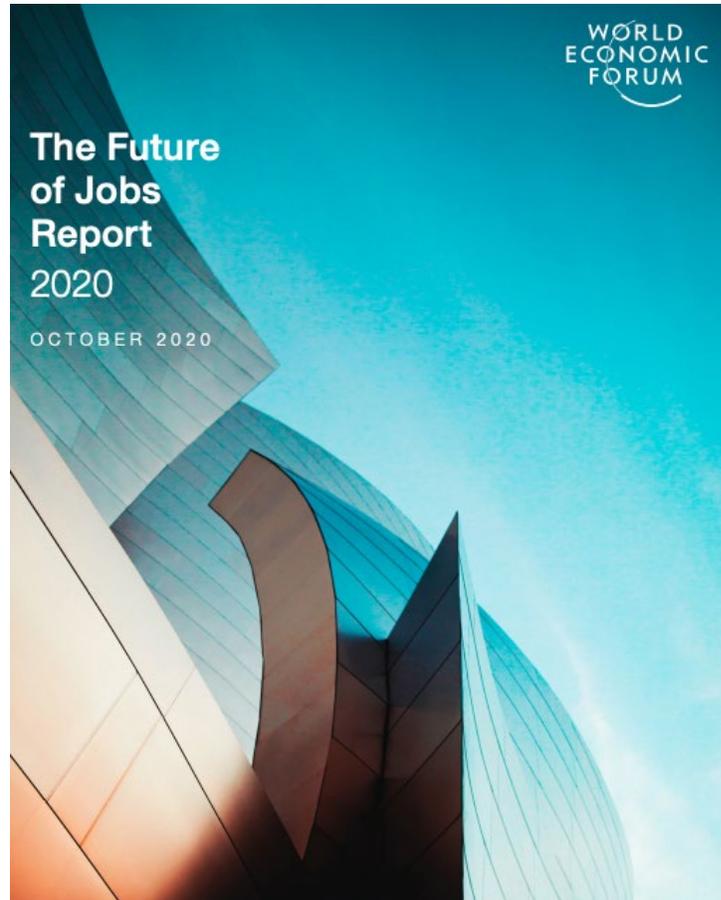
Our research is valued by policy-makers, workers and workplaces, clinicians, and occupational health, safety and disability management professionals

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 life
- Superimposed on top of ongoing industrial shifts, offshoring of work, growth in non-standard work arrangements



Knowledge gaps in FoW research

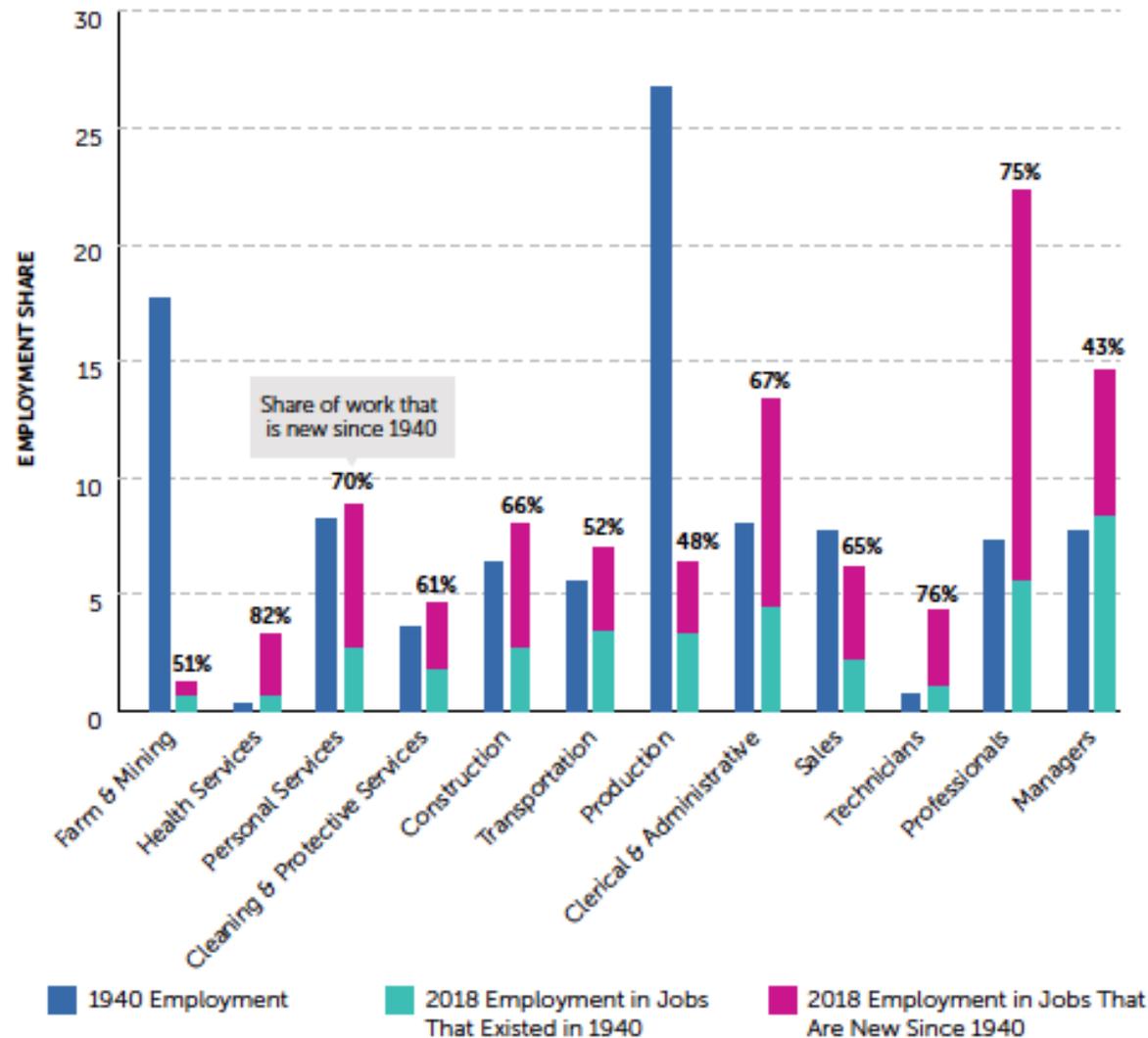


- Significant amount of research which has sought to project changes to the working world

What's missing?

- Experiences of diverse groups of workers within the FoW
- Public health implications of the FoW

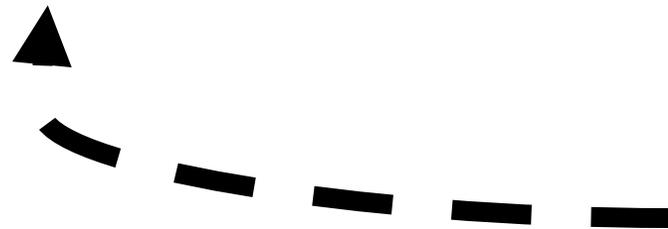
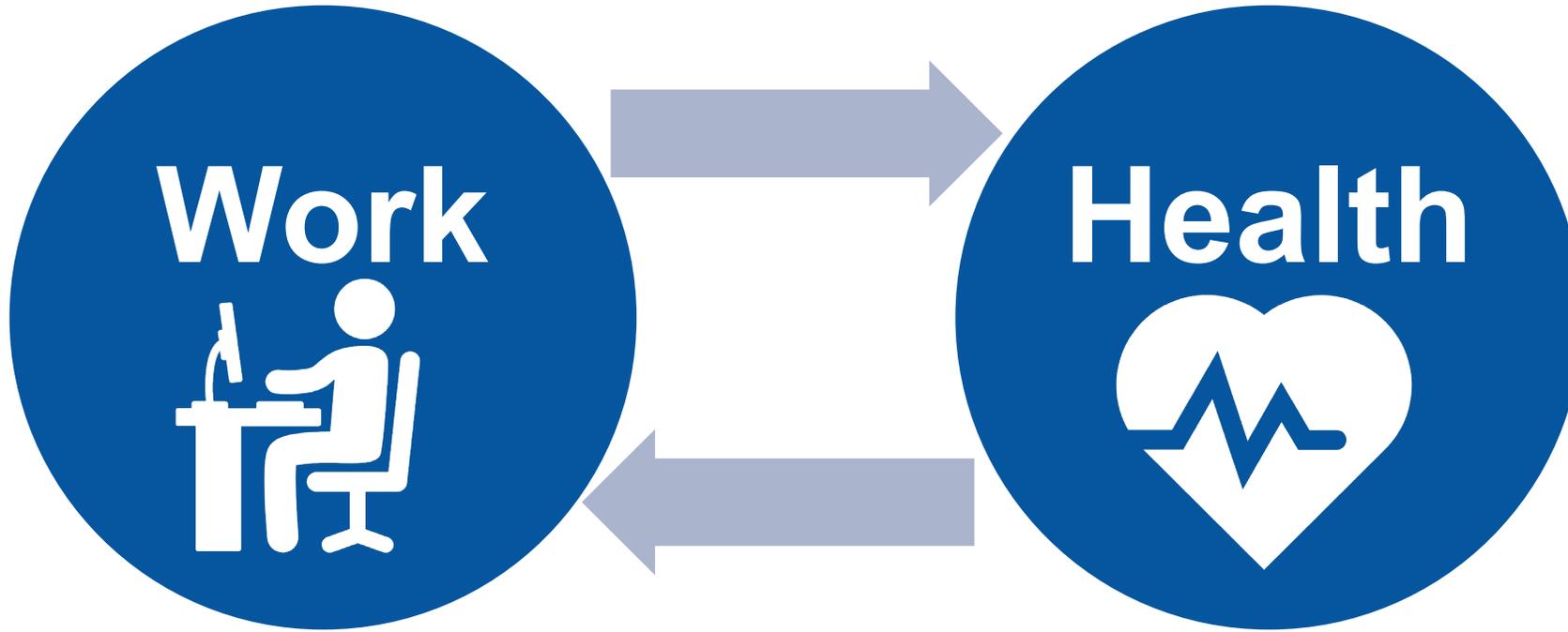
More Than 60% of Jobs Done in 2018 Had Not Yet Been “Invented” in 1940



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?



A graphic on a grey background. On the left is a white icon of a human head profile with a vertical dashed line down the center. The right side of the head is filled with white circuit board patterns. To the right of the icon, the text "Future of work" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Who are vulnerable workers?



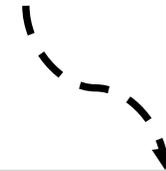
Exposed to adverse and unsafe work conditions

Lack access to employment legislation or statutory benefits

Lack opportunities to improve working conditions

Earn low wages or experience employment instability

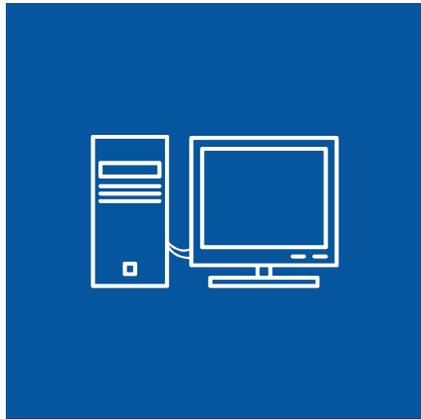
≈ 1/3 of Canadian workers experience vulnerability



Women, visible minorities, immigrants, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2+, those with low socioeconomic status, people with disabilities

Back to the future

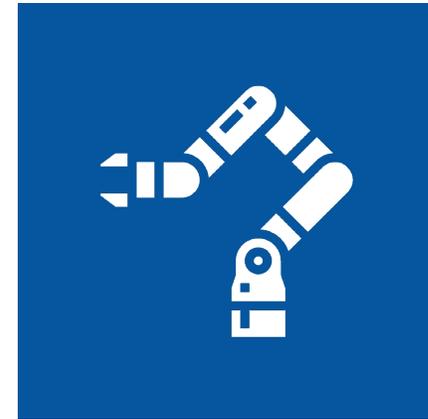
Past events provide a roadmap for how FoW might contribute to health and social inequities



1980s/1990s
Personal computers



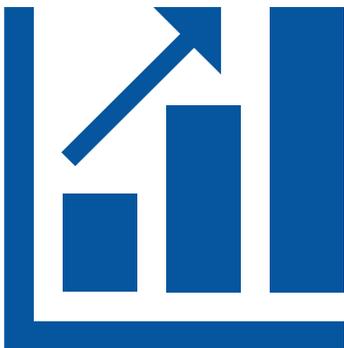
2008
Recession



Automation

Gig work

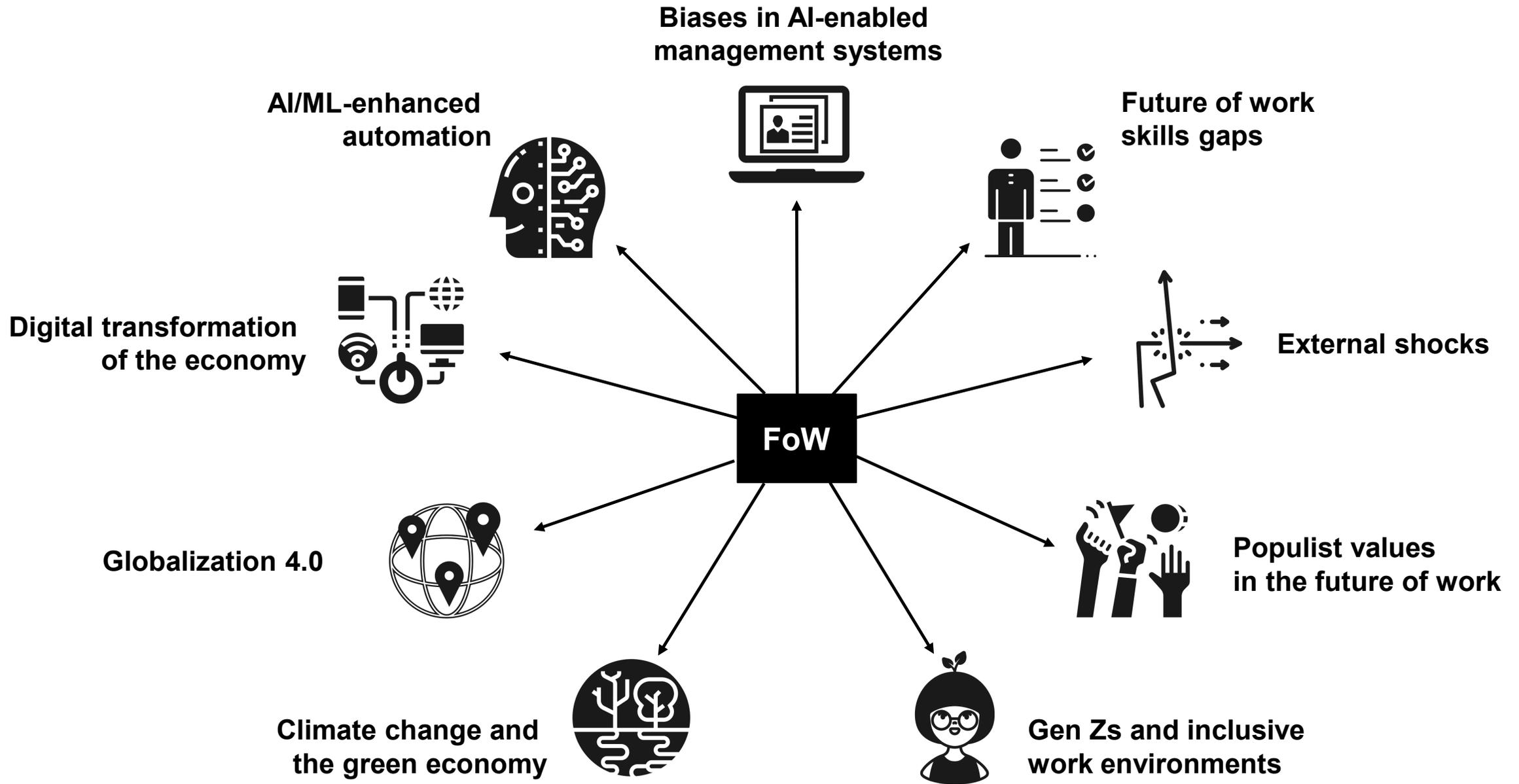
- Temporary or project-based employment
- Workers are hired on-demand to complete a particular task or for a certain period
- Microtasking; job tasks are parceled out and contracted to workers using digital platforms
- Precarious form of employment and insecure



- Proportion of Canadian workers in the gig economy increased from 2005 (5.5%) to 2016 (8.2%)
- In 2018, 28% of Canadians earned a portion of their income through a digital platform
- COVID-19 accelerated the platform economy by 176%

What evidence exists on the different trends that may span social, technological, economic, environmental and political domains and characterize the future of work?

How do future of work trends impact vulnerability within the labour market including employment in the gig economy?



Digital technology and artificial intelligence



Challenges

- Precarious and stressful work arrangement
- Job displacement
- Unsafe working conditions

Opportunities

- Productivity gains
- Accessibility
- New labour market entry points
- Increased opportunities for people with lived experiences

In the future of work, the most disadvantaged workers could be pushed into situations where they are working in adverse conditions

Findings from a qualitative study of youth and young adults with disabilities

- Semi-structured interviews on thoughts and perceptions regarding the future of work
- 22 young adult participants living with a disability
- 64% women
- 55% worked full-time; 18% not working due to the COVID-19 pandemic





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



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



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



Discussion

- Trends in the future of work have the potential to contribute to the erosion of standard work arrangements
- Work arrangements represent a significant determinant to success or failure in the future of work for vulnerable groups of workers
- Importance of creating pathways that enable workers to transition out of gig work
- Innovating labour protections and strengthening social safety nets

Upcoming future of work studies at IWH

Are you interested in participating?

Employers, human resource representatives, policy makers and workers, labour market knowledge leaders, occupational health and safety representatives





New Frontiers in Research Fund
Fonds **Nouvelles frontières** en recherche



Investigator team

	Institution	Disciplines
Arif Jetha	IWH	Public Health, disability
Ali Shamaee	IWH	Foresight
Cristina Banks	UC Berkeley	I-O psychology, workplace health promotion
Silvia Bonaccio	U Ottawa	I-O psychology, disability
Ute Bültmann	U Groningen	Life course epidemiology, disability
Monique Gignac	IWH	Social psychology, disability
Cameron Norman	OCADU and Cense Design	Foresight, public health
Peter Smith	IWH	Epidemiology, disability
Emile Tompa	IWH	Economics, disability
Lori Tucker	UBC and BC Children's Hospital	Transitional medicine

Thank you

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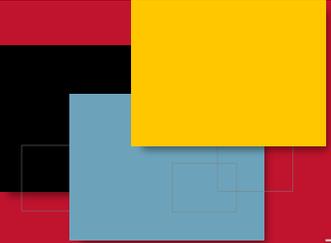


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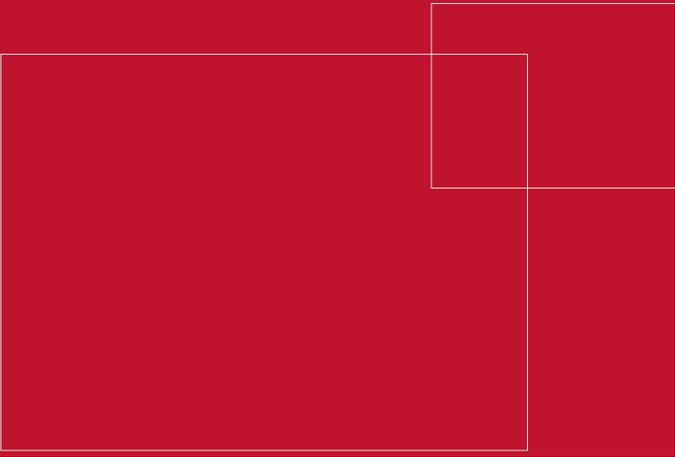


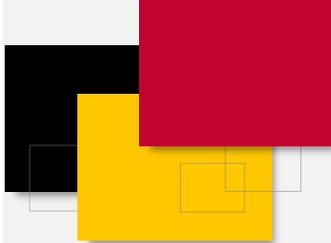
Worker Well-being and the Gig Economy

Deborah Stienstra
June 9, 2022



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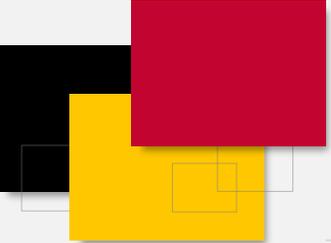




Overview

- Gig economy and workers with disabilities
- What do livelihoods have to do with it?
- What does our research suggest about young women with disabilities and livelihoods?





Gig economy and workers with disabilities

Recent Carleton webinar on Gig economy:

<https://carleton.ca/politicaconomy/2022/work-and-labour-seminar-series/>

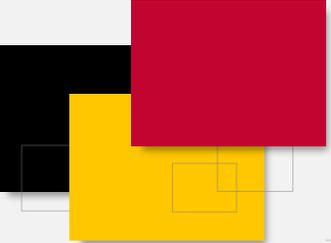
- Jennifer Scott from Gig Workers United:

<https://gigworkersunited.ca/>

- Gig workers Bill of Rights:

<https://ofl.ca/action/gig-workers/>





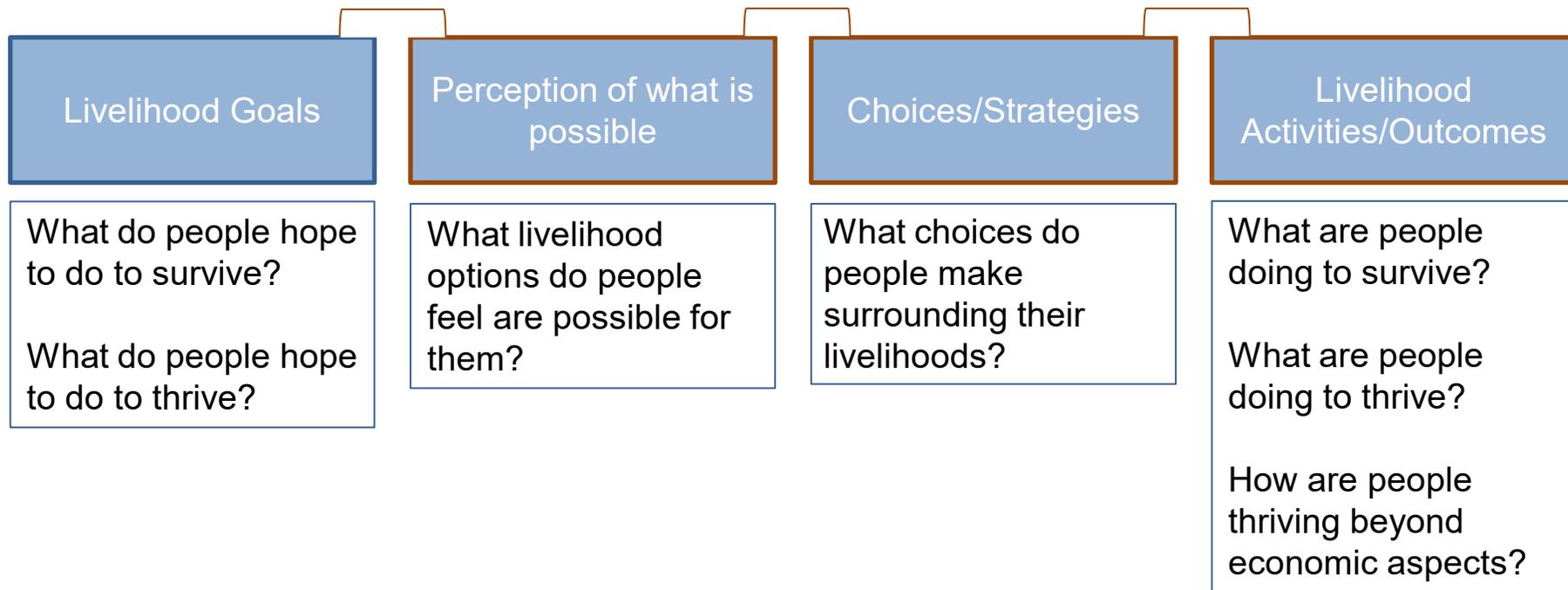
What are livelihoods?

Means by which people meet their needs in order to make a living and a life

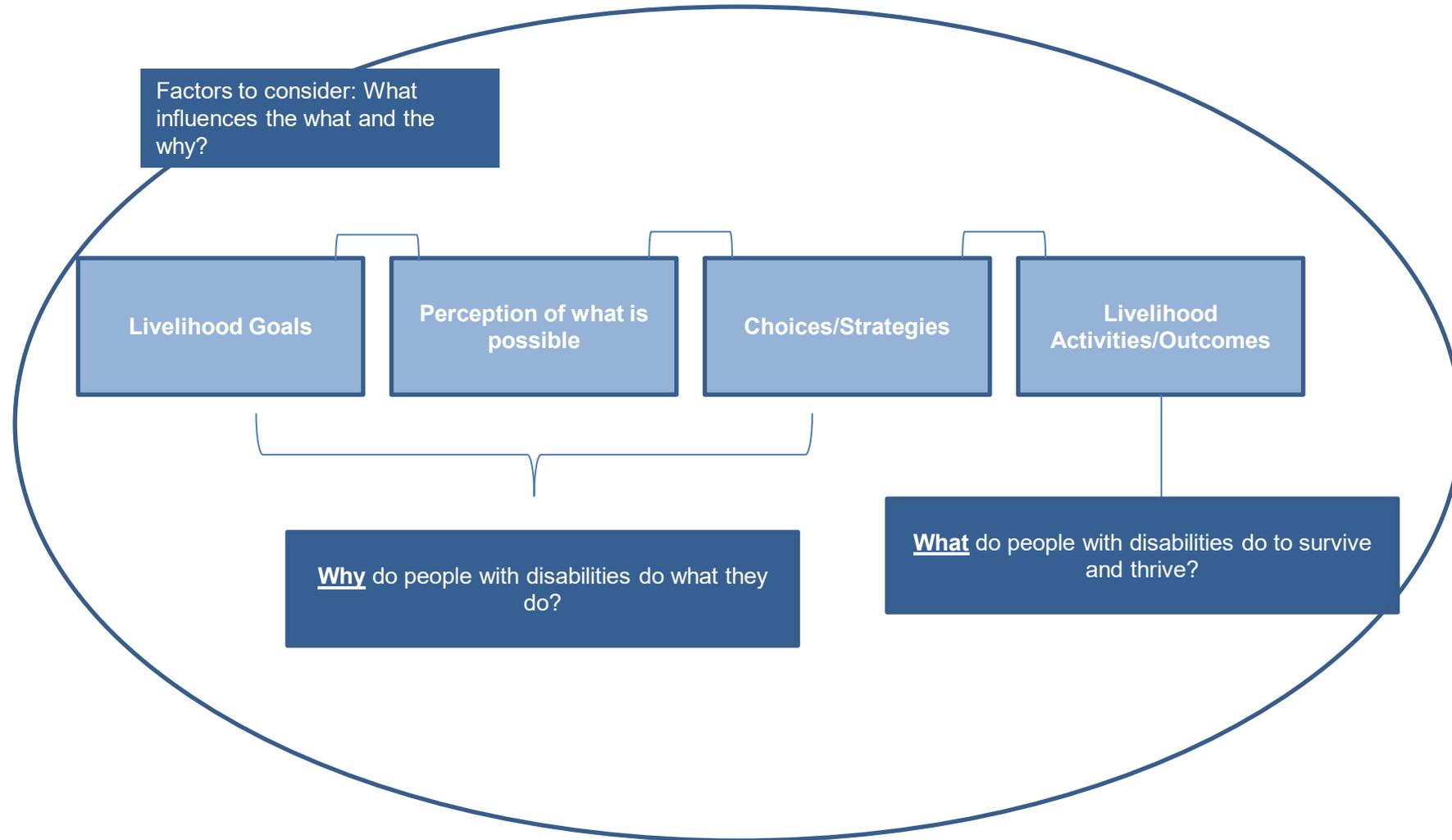
- Shape how we live as individuals, families and communities, and our sense of well-being
- Includes employment, market gardening, the arts, bartering, informal recycling, care providing, volunteering...



Understanding a Livelihoods Pathway



Livelihoods Approach



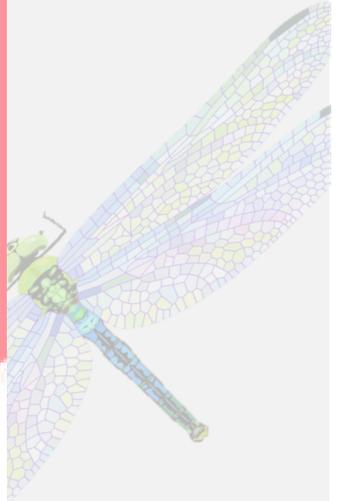
Findings from research

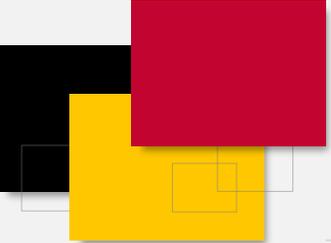
Partner organizations --
DAWN Canada and CCRW

<https://liveworkwell.ca/young-women-disabilities-and-pre-employment-supports>



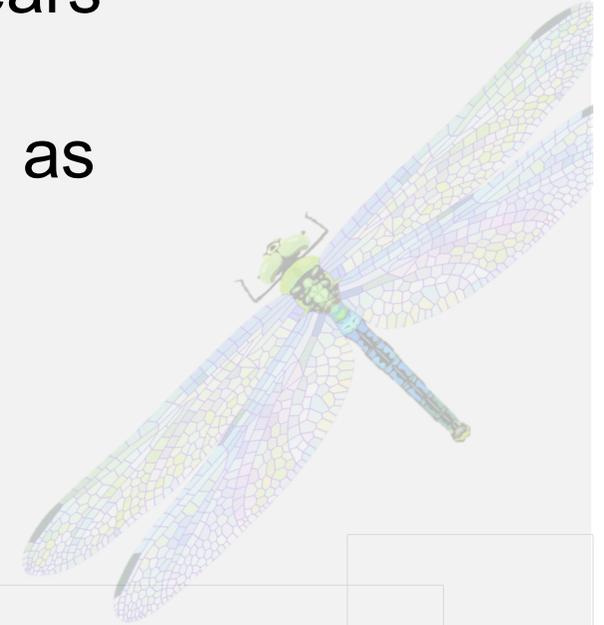
**YOUNG WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES
& PRE-EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS**





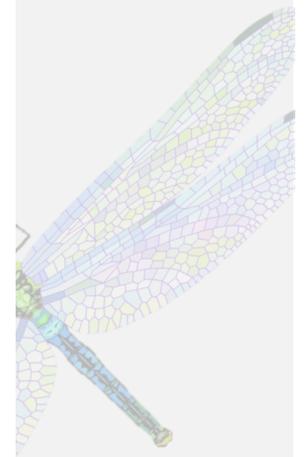
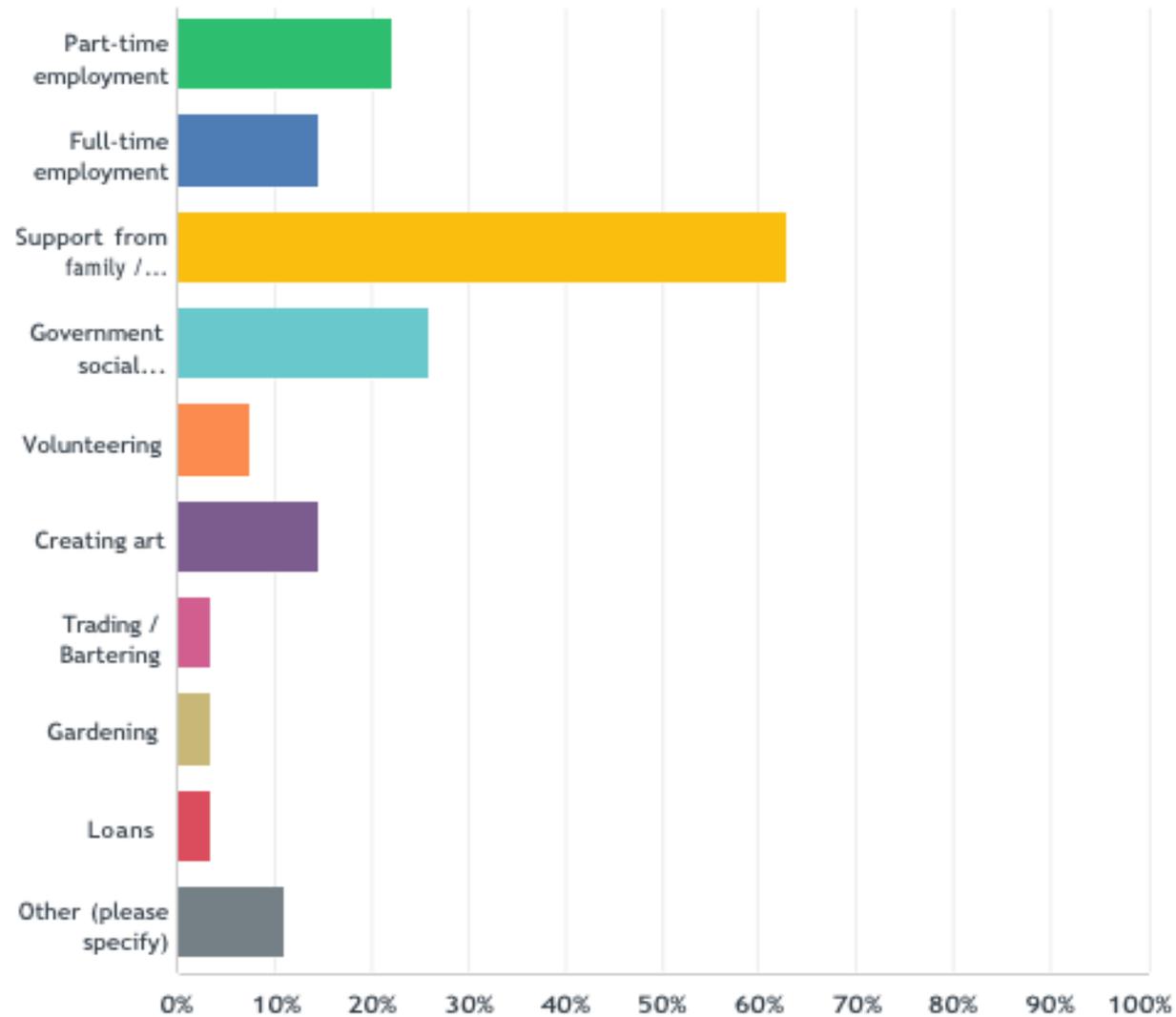
Who participated in the survey?

- 30 young women with disabilities, 18-34 years old
- Most identified as women, small proportion as non-binary
- Almost 1/3 identified as Black or racialized minority
- Over 1/3 identified as LGBTQ2S
- 72% born in Canada
- Most live in urban or suburban communities
- 18% had experience living in institutions



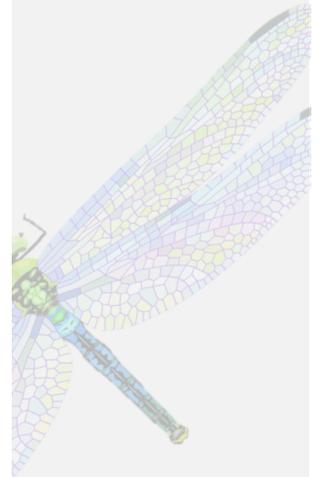
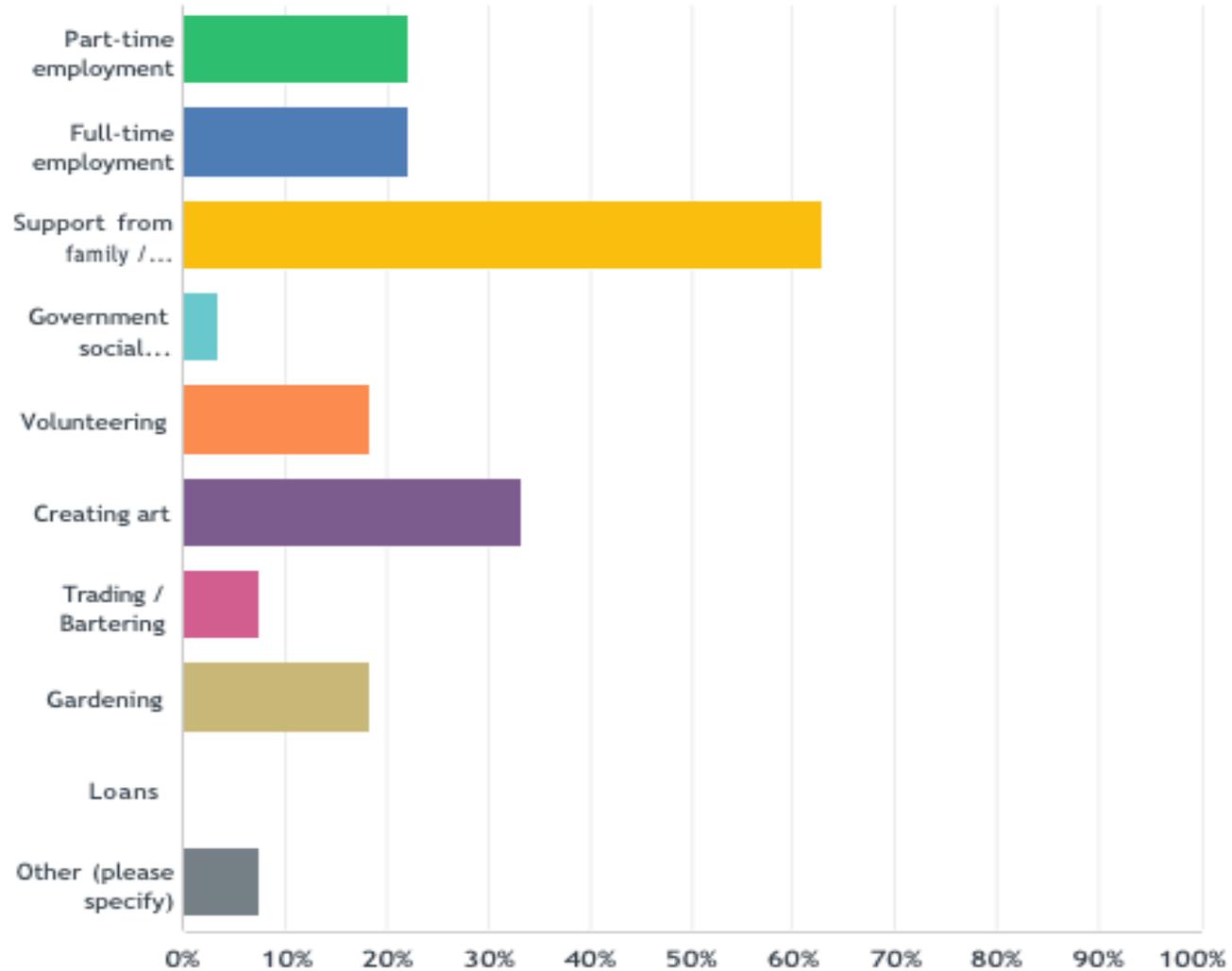
Q8 How do you meet your needs (for example: food, housing, care, as well as purpose, belonging, etc.)? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 27 Skipped: 3



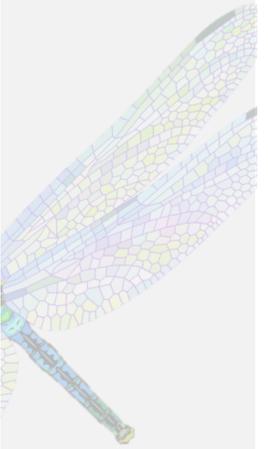
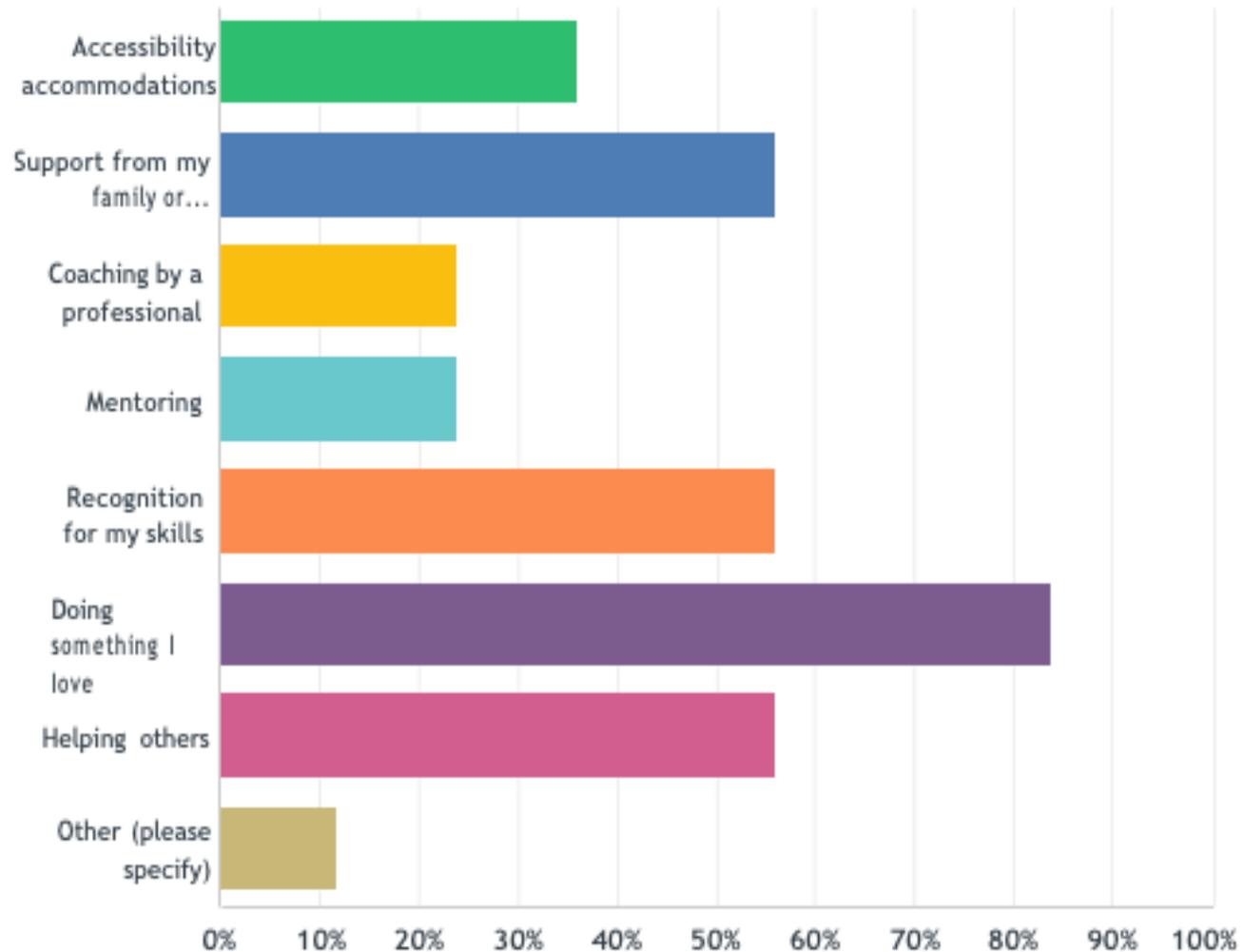
Q10 From the choices you selected in the previous question, which ones bring you the most joy, or are the most meaningful to you? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 27 Skipped: 3



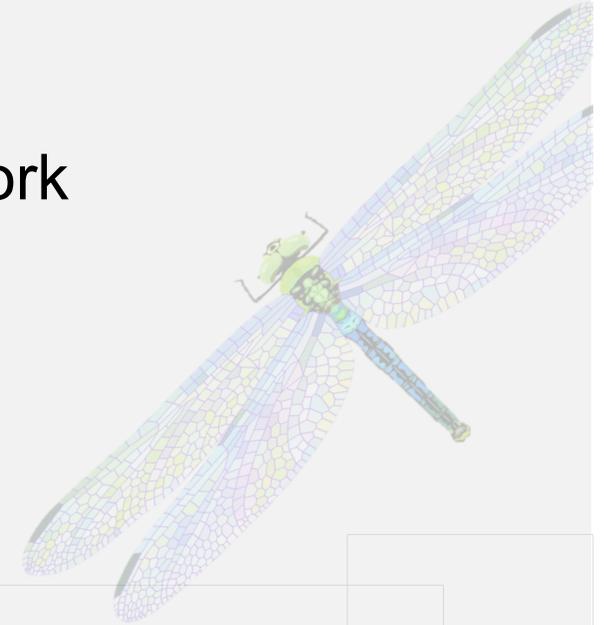
Q14 What type of support(s) do you need to make a living or to live well? (Select all that apply)

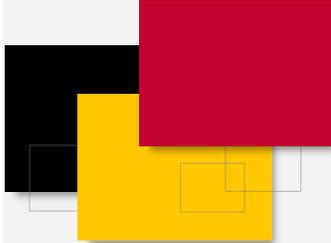
Answered: 25 Skipped: 5



Why (not) Gig Work?

- Limited involvement in gig work
- High proportion have part-time, precarious work
- Many suggested the changes to work create greater barriers to their participation in employment

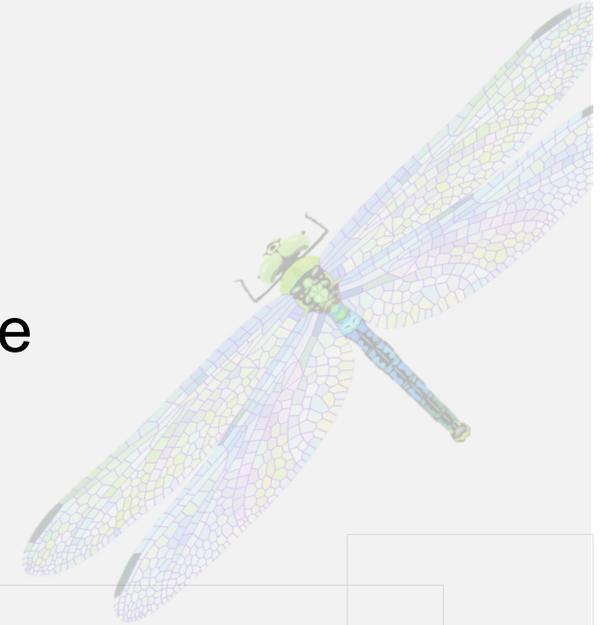


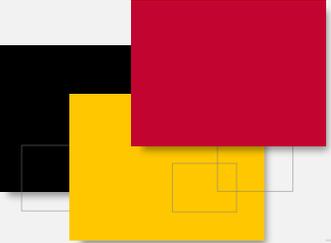


Livelihoods and Gig Work

Why do people with disabilities (not) choose gig work?

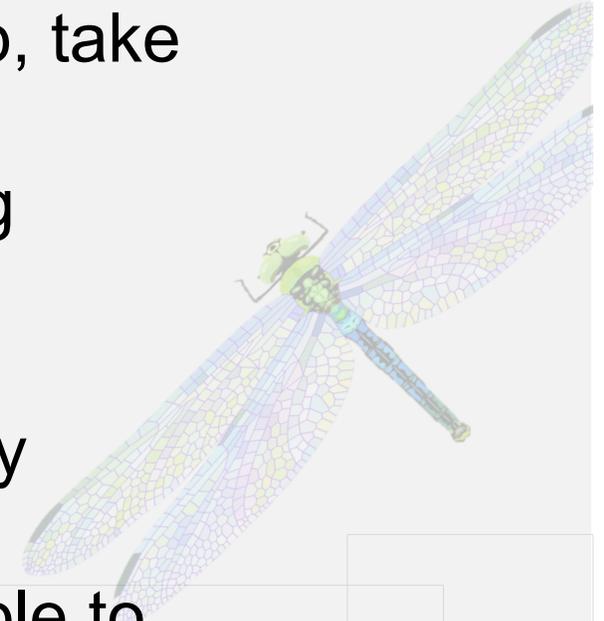
What are people with disabilities doing to survive and thrive in this changing work environment?





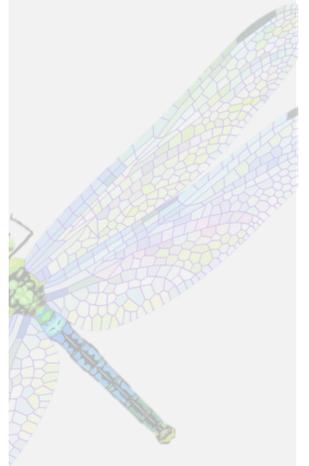
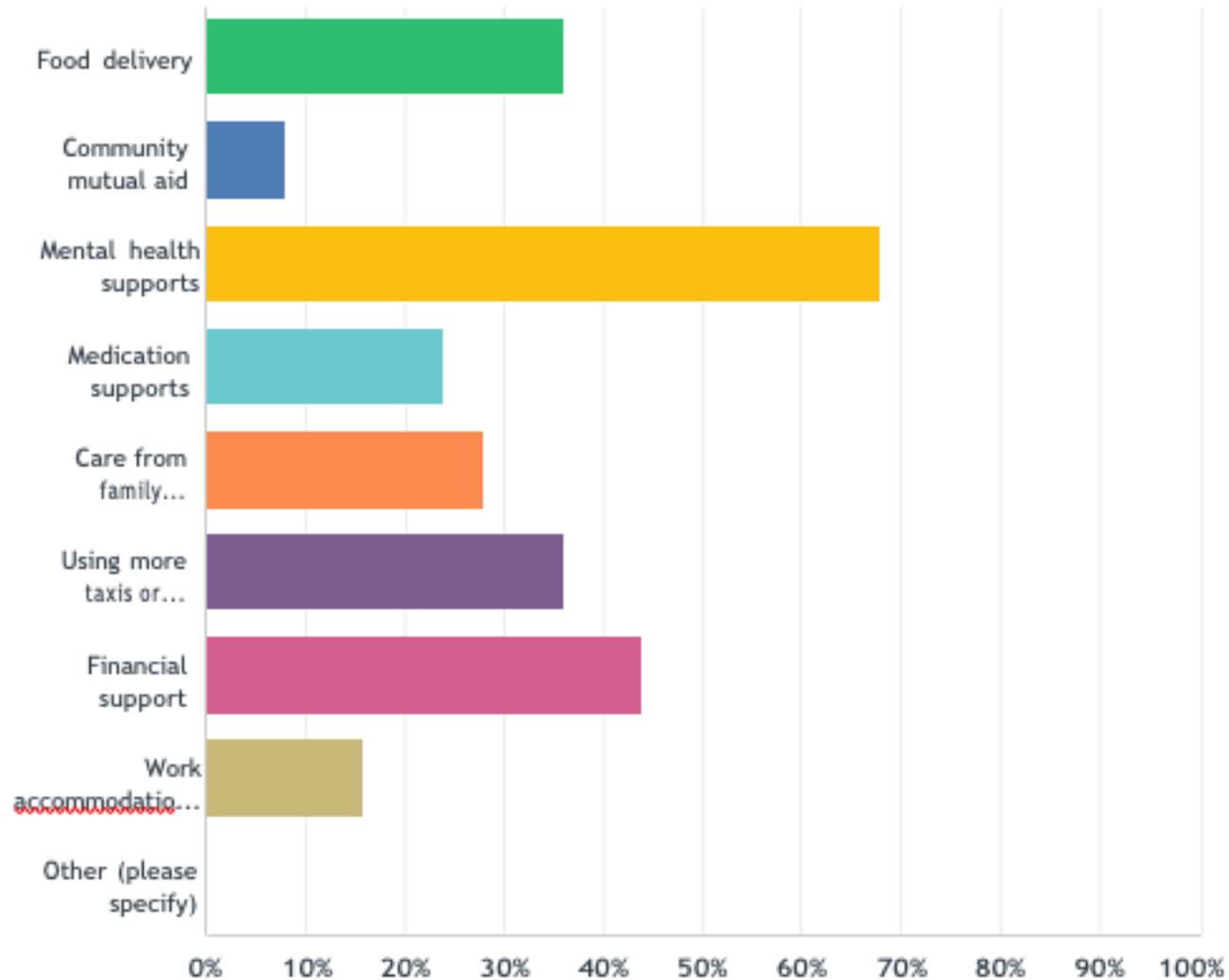
What does living well mean to you? How do you thrive?

- Being able to live a stable life with stable job, take care of well being
- Staying socially active, laughing often, being financially secure enough to live beyond paycheque to paycheque
- Being able to create a safety net, explore my creativity, create meaningful art
- Having a part-time/full-time job and being able to pay for your bills and have food on your table.



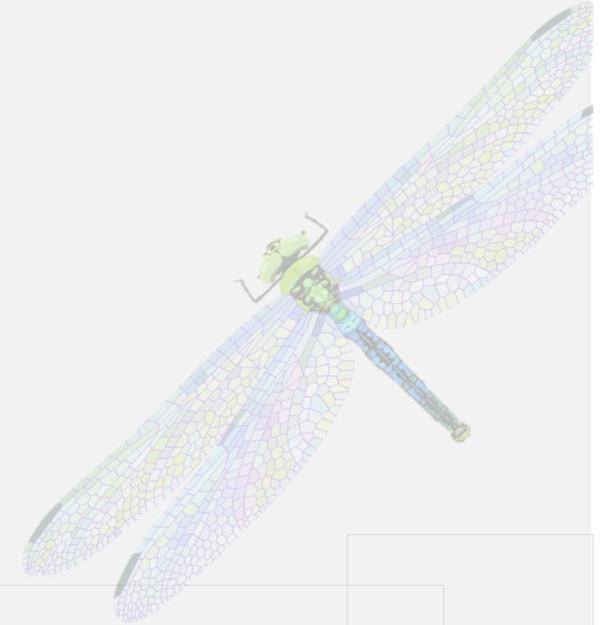
Q15 What additional supports did you require to meet your needs during the pandemic, if any? (Select all that apply)

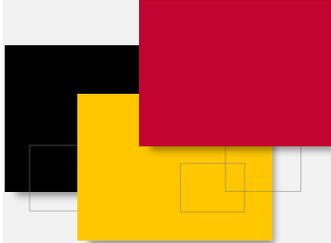
Answered: 25 Skipped: 5



Livelihood Implications of Gig Work

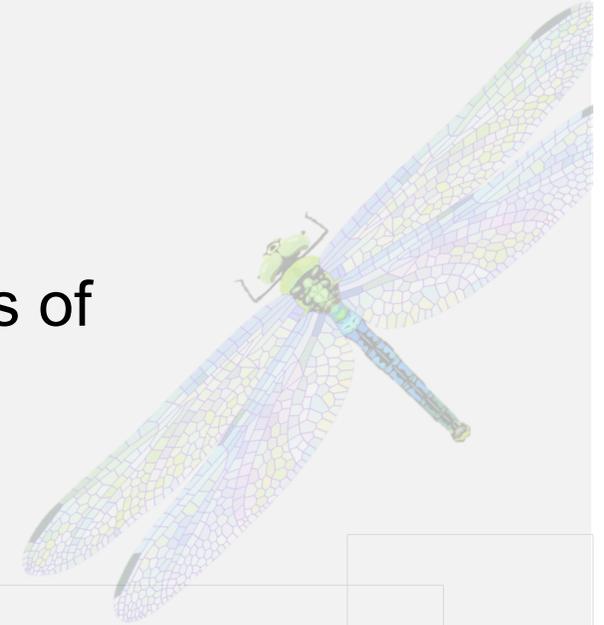
- Accessibility barriers
- Lack of workplace protections
- Flexibility requirements may not be possible given impairments/conditions
- Isolation reinforced
- May not support survival let alone thriving





If Gig Work, then What?

- How to address accessibility barriers
- Fight for workplace protections collectively
- Disability organizations encourage awareness of what is and isn't possible in gig work
- Disability organizations ensure their work placements are accessible, sustainable and long-term

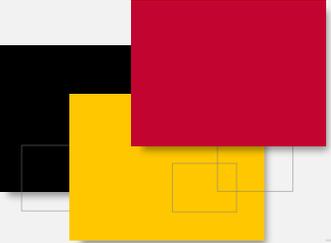


What is needed to survive and thrive?

- Paid work is important but not sufficient
- Also need to address caring work, volunteering, mental health supports, food security, housing

“I don’t want to be a burden, I never want to be a burden. But at the same time, if I can’t get a job. What options do I have?”

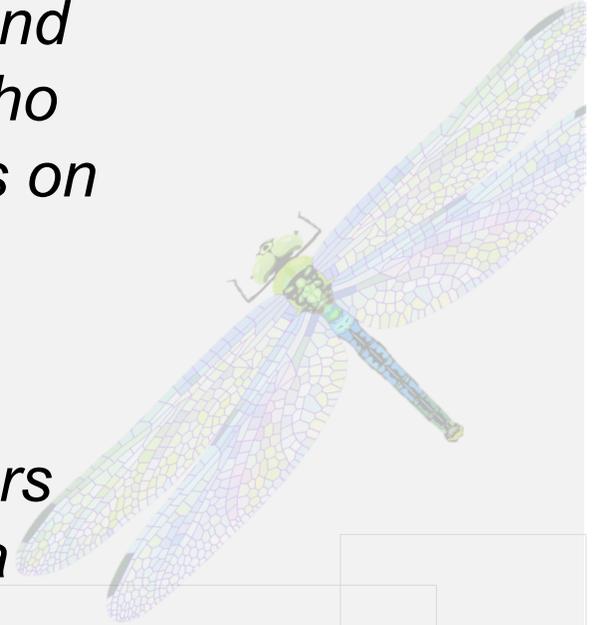


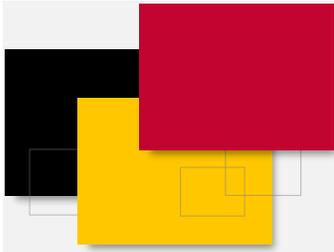


Livelihoods and Living Well

“I have three human beings, my mom, my dad and my brother, and two feline fur babies at home who don’t judge me for who I am, who don’t put limits on me, who tell me that I am capable.”

“Being engaged in society...it opens a lot of doors for us...social engagement, it makes me thrive a lot.”





Thank you!

Any questions?

<https://liveworkwell.ca/>

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