



Closing the digital divide: Disability inclusion in the Future of Work

Arif Jetha PhD

Associate Scientific Directors and Scientist
Institute for Work & Health

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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:

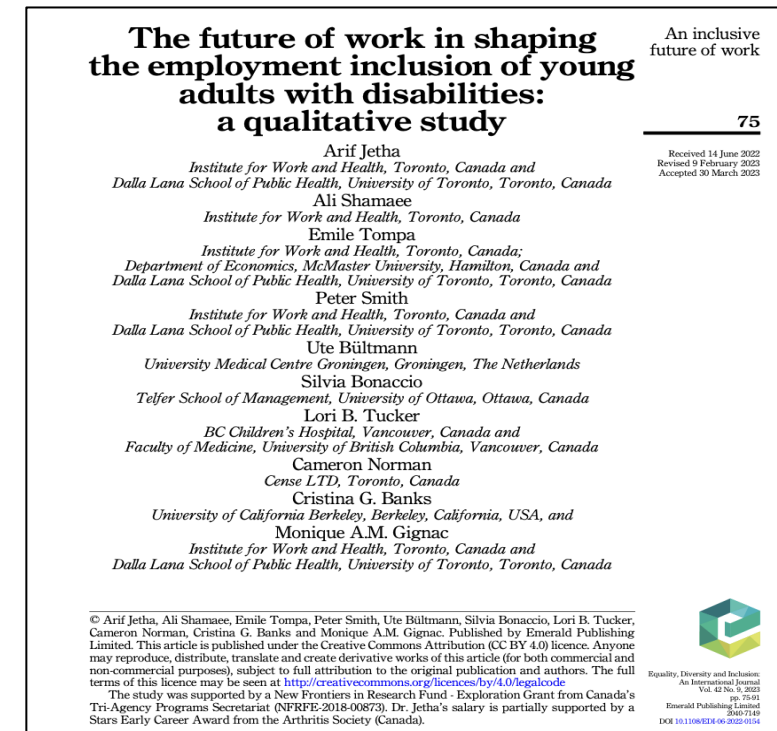
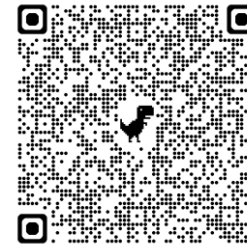
1. preventing work-related injury and illness through studies of workplace programs and practices, prevention policies and the health of workers at a population level, and
2. improving the health and recovery of injured workers through research on treatment, return to work, disability prevention and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

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

Insights based on two interview studies



40 subject matter experts



22 young adults with disability

Digital transformation of the economy

- Rapid application of diverse advanced digital technologies within workplaces
- Hyperconnectivity between people, businesses, digital devices, and data
- AI, 5G technology, IoT, smart sensors, cloud computing, virtual and augmented reality, 3D printing, robotics, blockchain technology

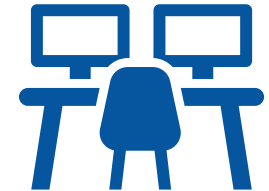


Digital transformation and persons living with disabilities

Advantage or disadvantage stems from two factors

- Advance the inclusion
- Creates new employment opportunities
- Erode the quality of work and diminish work opportunities

1. Employment arrangements



2. Digital divide

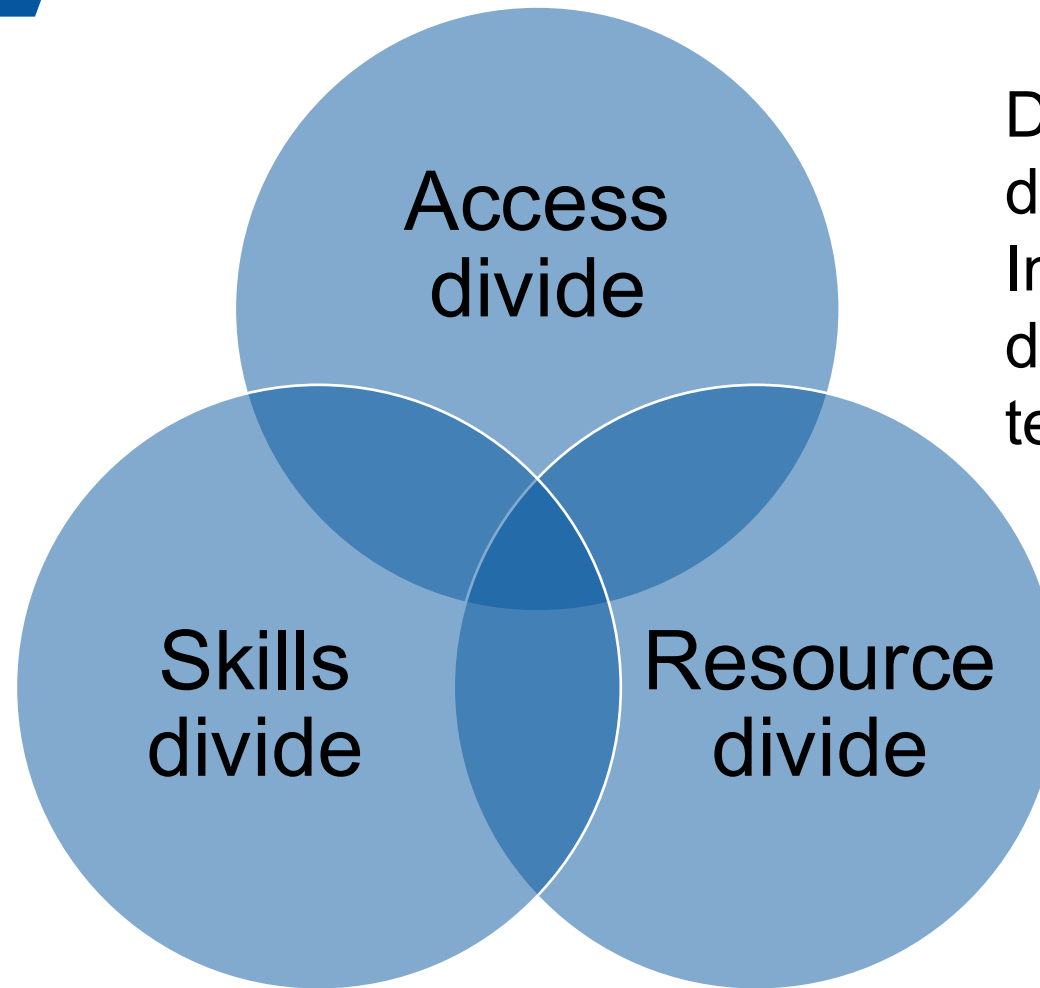


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...I don't think technology would be a good thing in my job because...customers could interface with a computer screen, and it tells them everything they want to know. What use are us to be there? ... The more technologically advanced things get, it's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

Young worker with a disability in a precarious job

Digital divide and persons living with disabilities



Disparities in access to digital technologies. Includes the availability and design of digital technologies

Disparities in possessing critical digital skills and inequities in digital training opportunities

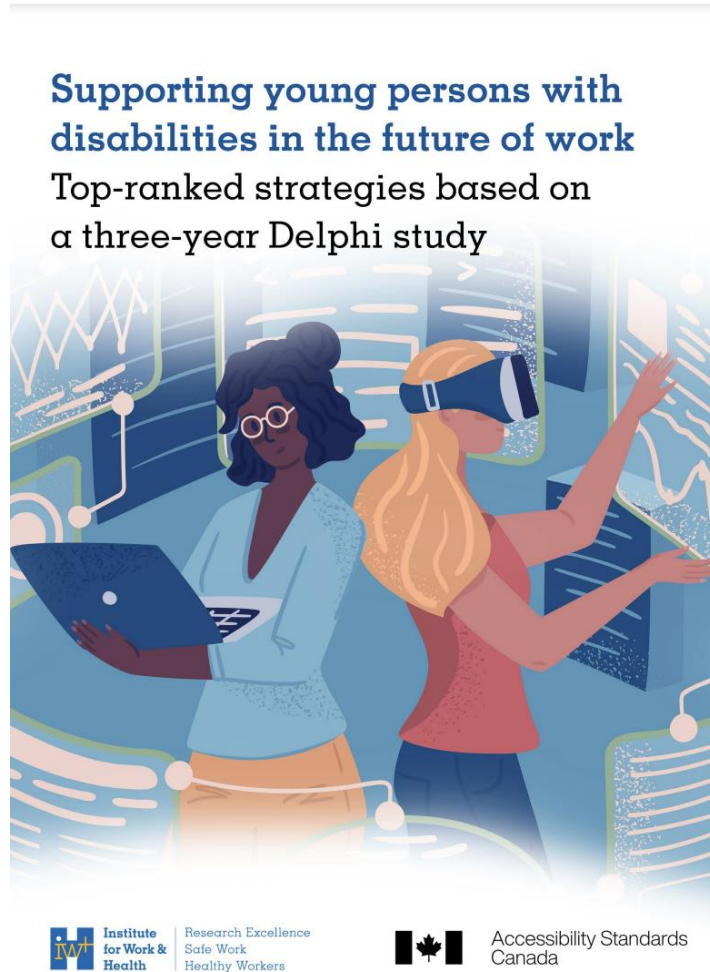
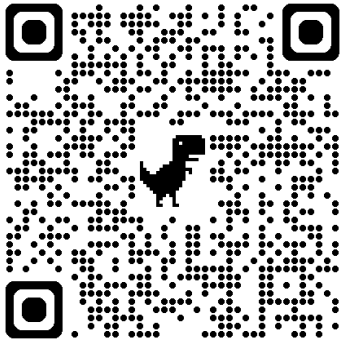
Disparities in contextual conditions that could determine technology access and participation in digital working world

“

It costs money to be employed. Which I know sounds kind of silly if you think that through, but it costs money for a computer, it costs money for WI-FI, for an Internet connection, it costs money to access those resources that you need...

Policymaker

How to promote inclusion in an economy undergoing a digital transformation?



Accessible upskilling and reskilling opportunities

Ensure access to essential digital resources

- Regulate the price of digital resources
- Subsidize access to digital resources
- Invest in digital infrastructure within communities

“

“I also think that it's vitally important that skill training needs are met, and we articulate what the future of work looks like. And not only that the skill training needs are met, but that they're accessible for people with disabilities, and I think that that one is hugely significant as well.

Employment service provider

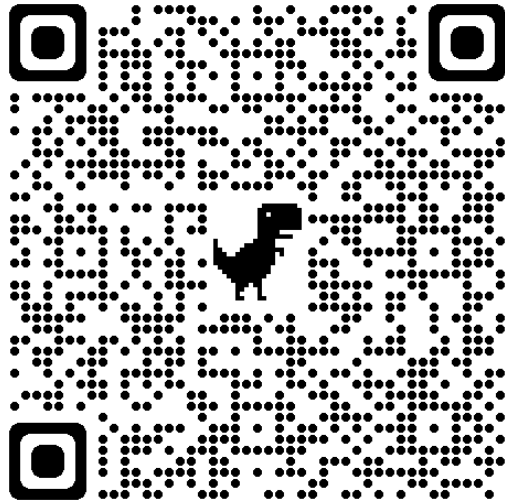
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“And the key is, people will talk about closing the talent gap, or closing the skills gap. And the truth of the matter is, you never do close that gap. For example, let’s say we closed it today and we can celebrate, hey, we closed the skills gap. Tomorrow it’s open because technology has changed, industry has changed. So, the key is not to close the skills gap, it’s to make the skilling more responsive.”

Institute for Work & Health Report

Three Scenarios of a Future Working World

Available online



Thank you

Arif Jetha PhD

Associate Scientific Director and Scientist



AJetha@iwh.on.ca



ArifJetha



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