

Postdoc Update Report – Cameron Crawford, October 6, 2017

Overview

This research is extending the initial analysis I developed for my PhD dissertation by developing a more robust measure of “decent work”, using the conceptual framework that guided the International Labour Organization in its articulation of indicators of decent work in its 2012 publication entitled, *Decent work indicators. Concepts and definitions*.

The research has mined Statistics Canada’s Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) of 2012 for variables that most closely resemble the ILO indicators. The research used the CSD because it is a largest, most comprehensive data set on disability in Canada, and contains many variables with information consistent with the ILO indicators. The 2012 version of the CSD was used because the 2017 version was still in the field when the present research was initiated. It is anticipated that the present methodology will be readily applicable to more recent versions of the CSD and, with some modification, could also be used with previous versions of Statistics Canada’s disability surveys, such as the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) of 2001 and 2006.

Major units of analysis and research questions

The first major unit of analysis for the present research is the workplace, with attention to the occupations of disabled workers, and the industry sectors and provinces/territories in which the workplaces operate. This level of analysis was chosen in order to answer the research question, “What and where are the occupations and industries that provide disabled workers with jobs that are most and least congruent with decent work?” A related question is, “What are some salient characteristics of workplaces that offer disabled employees work that is congruent and incongruent with decent work?” Accordingly, related aims were to ascertain the hours of work and earnings of employed people with disabilities who work in jobs that are congruent and incongruent with decent work, the extent to which various disability-specific supports are in place that individuals require and which are employers’ responsibility to provide¹, and the extent to which various other conditions of decent work are in place.

The secondary major unit of analysis was disabled people who are working, with a focus on their socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, visible minority and First Nations status, education level, the type(s), severity and cause(s) of disability, and the needs disabled people present to employers for various job accommodations, irrespective of whether employers actually meet those needs. A guiding research question is, “Who are the people most and least likely to obtain decent work?”

Conceptualizing and operationalizing decent work

¹ The focus has been placed on job accommodations that *employers* may or not be providing which facilitate basic access to work and which facilitate job performance once people are on the job. While community-provision of accessible transportation is not one of the supports that are within the scope of the present research, it is a major issue for disabled people. Accordingly, the analysis *is* taking into account the extent to which employers accommodate employees who may be using accessible community transportation, or who may be having difficulty with its use, or who need it and are not able to obtain it.

The research has generated eight equally-weighted indices that reflect major ILO domains of concern, i.e., the ILO's "Substantive elements" of decent work. These are: a) employment opportunities; b) adequate earnings and productive work; c) decent working time; d) stability and security of work; e) equal opportunity and treatment in employment; f) safe work environment; g) social security; and h) social dialogue, workers and employers' representation.² Each index is based on scales, which in turn are based on source variables from the CSD or complex derivations based on CSD variables, which will be explained at greater length in the final report for this project. The scales and indices include disability issues as matters to be addressed integrally along with other issues within a broad conceptualization of decent work, rather as a stand-alone issue to be addressed only or primarily as a matter of "equal opportunity and treatment in employment" for people with disabilities, as the ILO's present conceptualization seems to imply. The scores in the derived scales have been recalibrated for each of the indices so that each index has a maximum value of 1. This approach was adopted to accord each substantive element within the ILO framework equal weight in summative scales that were also derived and which comprise all of the indices. Pearson correlations between the separate indices indicate that they are quite independent of one another and therefore measure different dimensions of decent work.

Remaining work to be done on this project

Many iterations of the scales and indices were tested before the research settled upon the approach discussed above. Numerous challenges were encountered along the way; the final report will provide a description of those issues and more detailed rationale for the present approach. Owing to unforeseen difficulties, the final report is running behind schedule by about three months. However, sufficient funding has been reserved to pursue the remaining work. Now that the final indices have been designed and tested, the next stages of the research will generate newly-designed tables and explore the characteristics of decent work in terms of the workplaces that provide it and the people who hold it. Dimensions to be explored for workplaces will include all (or most) of the detailed subject matters reflected in the source variables for the indices discussed above and in the Annex, as well as key socio-demographic characteristics of employees with disabilities, including their province/ territory, age, gender, Indigenous person and visible minority status, marital status, living arrangements, recent attachment to the social security system, type(s), cause(s) and severity of disability, earnings, hours of work, job security, and needs for various disability-related supports for access to employment and for participation on the job. These include needs for and the availability of employer-provided job accommodations and community-provided supports such as accessible transportation.

Other details

In addition, core elements of an online survey of employers have been designed which could be used to capture major characteristics of workplaces that employ disabled people, employer experiences with those individuals, and employer experiences with customers/ clients after hiring employees with disabilities. The survey could also be used to capture employers' experiences of employment-related

² For reasons that are explained in the Annex, the research did not develop scales and indices for three other ILO substantive elements related to decent work, namely: economic and social context for decent work; combining work, family and personal life; and work that should be abolished.

and other agencies that may have been involved before or during the hiring of people with disabilities, or in providing follow-up support to employers and /or the individuals hired.

While participating in this project I was a member of the External Working Group that provided input to the development of the Government of Ontario's most recent Provincial Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. I have played a significant role in the evaluation of a large, national employment project that focuses on strengthening employer capacity and interest to hire people with significant levels of disability in Canada. The organizations involved in this project are looking for funding to extend the project and the evaluation research. I have been in discussions with the Knowledge and Human Development Authority of Dubai about following up on research I conducted for them in support of their strategy to improve the education of disabled students in that Emirate. The next phase of the work is to develop and research a multi-pronged strategy to support the transition of youth to employment in Dubai.

Annex – General approach to deriving scales and indices relating to decent work

The general approach for deriving the indices and their scales for this research is as follows:

1. Economic and social context for decent work

No scales or index were derived for this area of ILO concern as it involves macro-level indicators of the economy and of general work conditions in a given society.

2. Employment opportunities index –

This index is based on a scale that captures: the extent to which the workplace's industry and the occupations worked by its employees are consistent with ones that facilitate gender-based equality of participation, i.e., employment levels for disabled women that are roughly on par with the employment levels for non-disabled men; the extent to which workplaces support youth who are working to attend school as well; the extent to which workplaces facilitate the suitable utilization of disabled employees' skills and experience at work; the extent to which workplaces make available job redesign and/or telework in order to facilitate disabled employees' participation at work.

3. Adequate earnings and productive work index –

This index is based on a scale that captures: whether the wages employers pay to disabled workers are sufficient to lift those workers beyond the income level of "working poor" people; whether workplaces provide "decent earnings", i.e., at least two-thirds the earnings of non-disabled males, taking into account the gender of disabled employees and the number of weeks they work per year and the number of hours they work per week; the extent to which the workplace makes employer-sponsored/paid training available to disabled employees; the extent to which workplaces make available the assistive technologies, other technical aids and supports disabled people require for productive work; the extent to which cost is a factor behind workplaces' inability or refusal to make accommodations available to the disabled workers who need them.

4. Decent working time index –

This index is based on a scale that captures: whether workplaces usually enable disabled employees to work from 1 to 48 hours per week rather than requiring more work; the extent to which workplaces make available the modified hours or days of work that disabled employees require; and the extent to which workplaces seem to be enabling disabled employees to work the number of hours they would prefer to be working, taking into account their other responsibilities and needs.

5. Combining work, family and personal life

No scales or index were developed for this area of ILO concern as the CSD does not have pertinent information.

6. Work that should be abolished

No scales or index were developed for this area of ILO concern as the CSD does not have pertinent information.

7. Stability and security of work index –

This index is based on a scale that captures: the extent to which workplace provide disabled employees permanent vs temporary/casual work, and the extent to which disabled employees' work is long-term vs short term, i.e., three years or longer in duration.

8. Equal opportunity and treatment in employment index –

This index is based on a scale that captures: the extent to which disabled employees are in workplaces where there is an absence of discrimination in the job-interview, hiring and promotion processes, taking into account: a) disability as a ground of discrimination, b) disability in conjunction with Indigenous Person and visible minority status, and c) that any discrimination that did occur was within and not before the timeframe of the interview or job with a given employer; whether there is employer awareness about disabled employees' work limitations due to disability (i.e., disability-confident and competent work culture); whether there is employer awareness of disabled employees' needs for job accommodations (i.e., work culture that supports disclosure); and the extent to which disabled employees are in occupations and industries where employers provide gender-based pay equity.

9. Safe work environment index –

This index is based on a scale that captures: the extent to which disabled employees' disabilities were not caused by work-related factors with their present employers; the extent to which employees have the needed ergonomic workplace features they require; and the extent to which disabled employees are able to gain access to and navigate their work environments because those built environments are accessible.

10. Social security measure –

Social security is a concern for the ILO to the extent that a given society makes it available in the advent of unemployment. However, the employment of people with a recent attachment to the social security system reflects indirect employer support for social security measures and for individuals who may have been disadvantaged or stigmatized by virtue of their attachment to that system. A single indicator was developed that captures whether disabled employees are in workplaces that have provided them work or return-to-work after attachment to the social security system in the past year, i.e., social assistance, Employment Insurance, Workers' Compensation, Canada/Quebec Pension Plan, private insurance for disability.

11. Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation

This measure is based on a single indicator that captures whether disabled employees are in workplaces where employees are members of unions or covered by collective agreements.

Composite Decent Work scale and Global Decent Work ordinal measure

In addition to the above eight indices, the research developed a composite scale for decent work that adds the scores from across the indices discussed above. That scale was then recalibrated into a Global Measure that consists of four ordinal categories. One of the categories consists of missing data from

across the indices, which were each designed to sequester missing data from valid data. The remaining valid data in the scale were divided into three other categories that reflect a high, medium or low degree of congruence between decent work as the ILO has conceptualized it and the jobs that disabled people actually hold.