

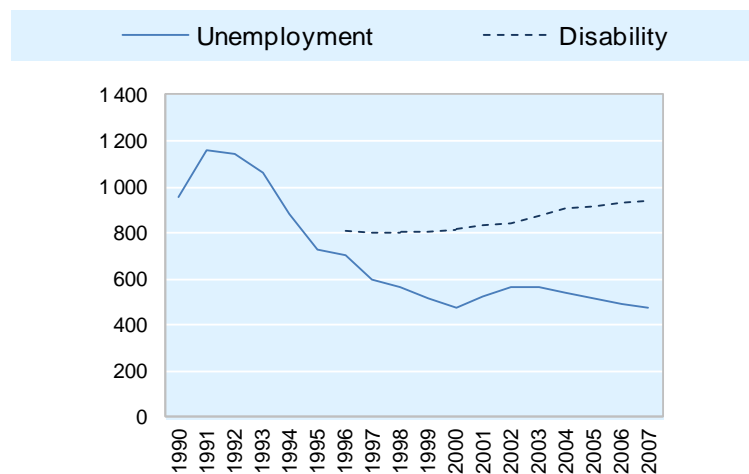
## OECD (2010) – SICKNESS, DISABILITY AND WORK: BREAKING THE BARRIERS

### CANADA

#### KEY FINDINGS

- In Canada, the number of people receiving unemployment benefit fell rapidly after the crisis in the early 1990s when the number peaked at over one million. The number of people on disability benefits, on the contrary, stayed on its level and started to increase around 2000. It exceeded the unemployment number in 1995 and the difference grew steadily until 2007 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Long-run trends in unemployment and disability recipiency numbers in Canada, 1990-2007 (in thousand persons)



- The number of people of working age in Canada who receive disability benefit has always been and still is below the OECD average; in 2008, 4.4 % compared to 5.7% (Figure 2).
- There are large differences across Canadian provinces in both levels and trends in the number of people receiving disability benefit; levels range from as low as 2% in Alberta to around 6% in the four smaller provinces in the East of the country.
- Public spending on sickness and disability as a share of GDP is also lower in Canada than on average across the OECD, 1% compared to 1.9%. Half of the spending is for federal programmes and the other half for provincial programmes.
- The unemployment rate for people with chronic health problems or disability at the end of 2007 was lower than that of the OECD average, at 9% compared to 13.7%. But it was 50% higher than Canada's unemployment rate for people without health problems (Figure 3).
- A very large number of people with health problems or disability live in poverty: 29.5% compared to an OECD average of 22%. This is almost twice the figure for Canada's general population.

#### POLICY CHALLENGES

1. **Promote early intervention and access to supports.** Systematic early identification of health problems is near absent in any of the public benefit and employment programmes.
  - Strengthen the early identification of problems in federal insurance programmes.
  - Make sure that provincial employment support reaches people in need of help earlier.

2. **Make the system of federation work for persons with disabilities.** Both the federal government (through federal insurance programmes and residual employment schemes) and the provincial governments (employment policy making, active labour market programmes and last-resort social assistance schemes) bear responsibility for persons with disabilities. There are relatively few mechanisms for ensuring a coordinated approach to administering these policies. This could be improved by clarifying the roles of the different government layers and by promoting good-practice sharing and learning across provinces.
3. **Move towards a client-oriented service delivery framework.** There is a multitude of agencies involved at different stages. From the perspective of the client, it is often unclear which institution they should contact, and there is no roadmap for clients to navigate through the system.
  - Promote one-stop-shop service delivery via Service Canada or provincial counterparts.
  - Implement systematic case management with mutual responsibilities.

Figure 2. **Disability benefit recipiency rates in 2008, Canada in comparison with 30 other OECD countries, plus OECD average (percentages)**

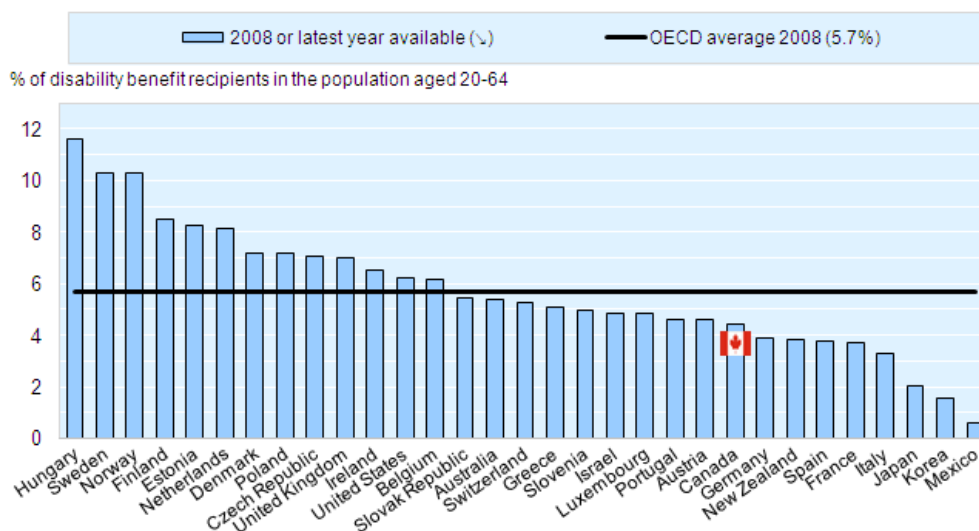


Figure 3. **Selected key labour market indicators by disability status, around 2007 i.e. before the recent economic downturn, Canada and OECD averages (percentages)**

