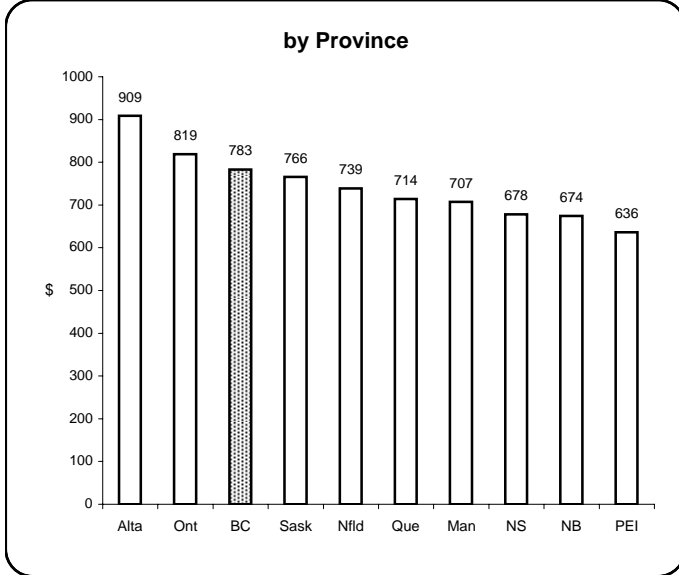
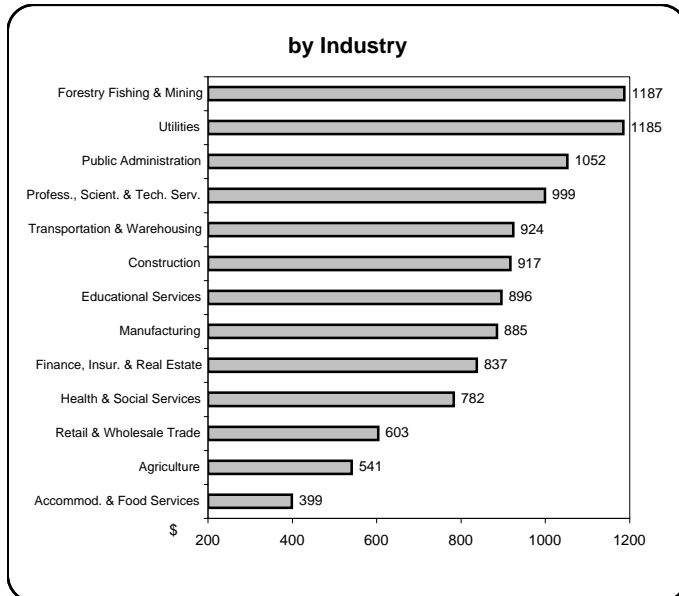
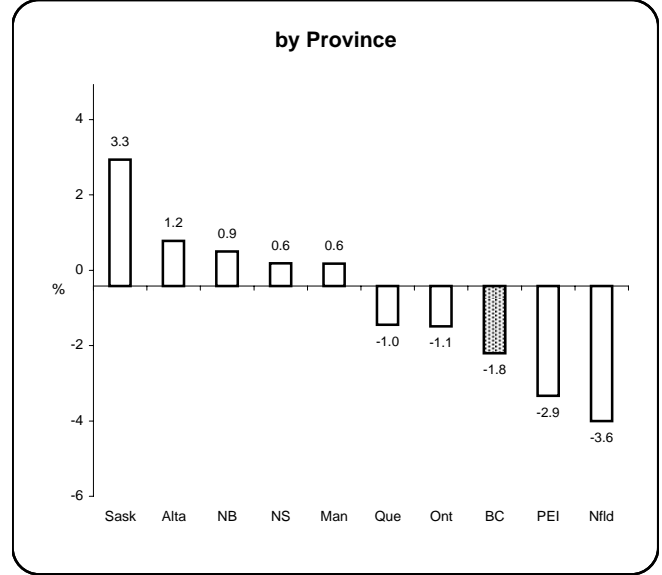


## Earnings & Employment Trends ♦ January 2009

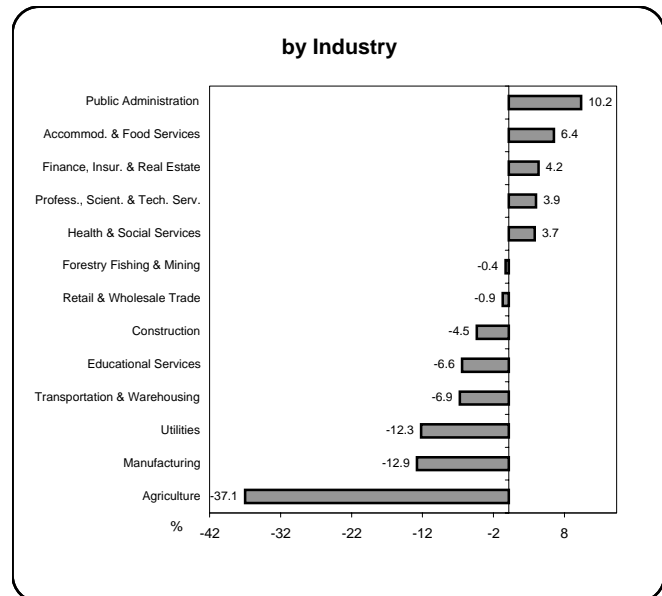
### Average Weekly Wage Rate\* - January 2009



### Employment Growth\* - January 2009



\* Latest 12 month average



\* Month over same month previous year (unadjusted)

Prepared by: BC Stats

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey

### Feature Article: Labour Market Participation of Persons with Disabilities

# Labour Market Participation of Persons with Disabilities

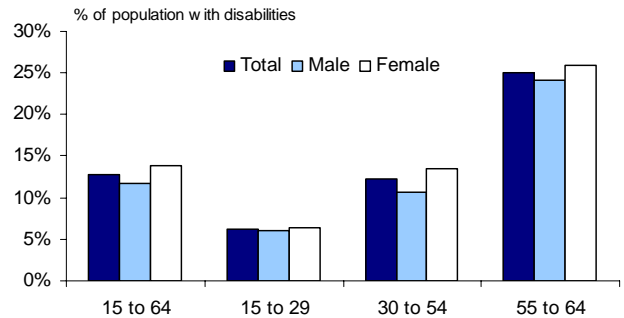
## Introduction

Statistics Canada recently released the results of the Participation and Activity Limitations Survey (PALS) 2006. PALS is a post-censal survey that uses the 2006 Census to identify adults and children in the population who have a disability, that is, those who experience limitations in everyday activities because of a condition or health problem. PALS also has additional filter questions to confirm the respondent's disability status. This article will look at the prevalence of disability for the BC's working age population (15 to 64), the types and severity of disabilities experienced and the labour market outcomes of these individuals. For selected measures, comparisons will also be made to the 2001 PALS survey. As there were some minor changes to the sampling methodology in 2006, where comparisons occur, the 2006 results will use the 2001 sample frame.

## Prevalence of Disability in BC

In 2006, 12.8% (or 355,430 persons) of the working age population in BC indicated they had a disability. It is apparent that disabilities become more common with age, ranging from a low of 6.3% of those between the ages of 15 and 29 to a high of 25.1% among those aged 55 to 64. Intuitively, this makes sense since most disabilities will last for the rest of a person's life, and more of each age group will develop disabilities as they age. As well, women report higher rates of disability than men both overall and within each age category.

## Women report higher rates of disability than men

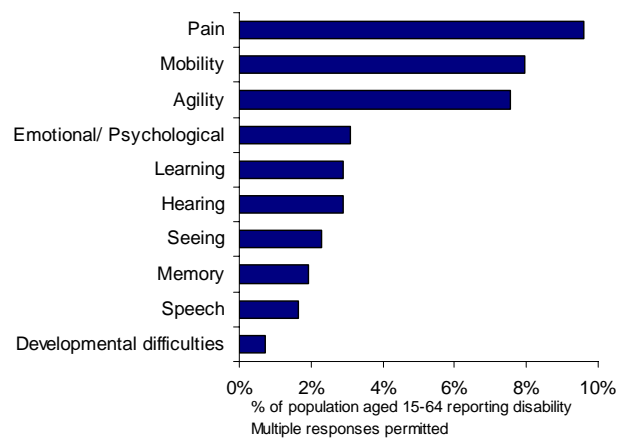


Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

## Types of Disabilities

The most common types of disabilities among the working age population were those related to mobility/activity limitations, including pain (9.6%), mobility (8.0%) and agility (7.5%). Psychological, learning and hearing difficulties were the next most prevalent disabilities. Many of those who have disabilities often experience more than one type of limitation.

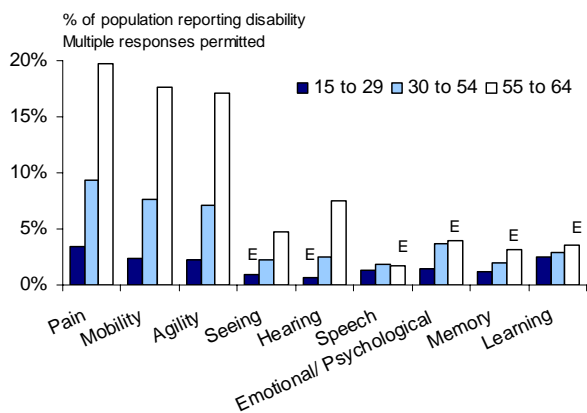
## Mobility and activity limitations are the most common disabilities



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

Not only does the rate of disability increase with age, almost all types of disability also increase with age. The only exception is developmental disabilities, which by definition should be identified early in life and remain unchanged unless undiagnosed. Disabilities associated with prolonged use of the body increase sharply with age and most were more prevalent among women than men—the exceptions were hearing and learning disabilities being more common among men aged 15 to 64 than among women.

**Almost all disabilities investigated increase with age<sup>1</sup>**



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

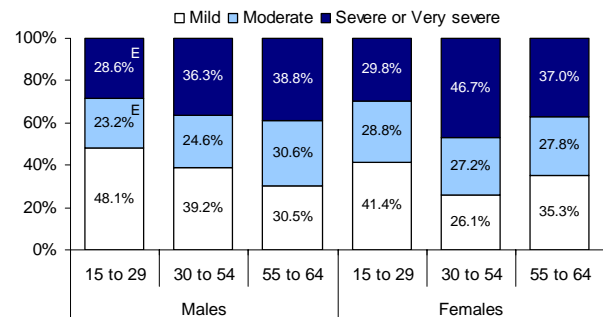
**Severity of Disability**

The level of severity for disabilities is a calculated measure based on the average level of severity for individual disabilities. The severity of an individual disability is based upon the frequency and intensity of the limitation. Thus, the overall severity is increased by the presence of multiple disabilities of varying severities or one very limiting disability.

More than one-third (33.9%) of those with disabilities experienced mild limitations, while

39.0% indicated they had a severe or very severe limitation. Men more often reported mild disabilities compared to women (37.3% vs. 31.1%, respectively); however, the life-stage pattern varies considerably between men and women.

**Mild disabilities are more common among men than women**



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

While men in each age category reported lower rates of disability compared to women, those with disabilities more often also reported they had a mild disability compared to women, although as age increases more and more men reported a greater severity of disability. On the other hand, women indicated significantly fewer mild disabilities among those aged 30 to 54 compared to both the older and younger cohorts, with virtually all of the difference occurring at the highest levels of severity.

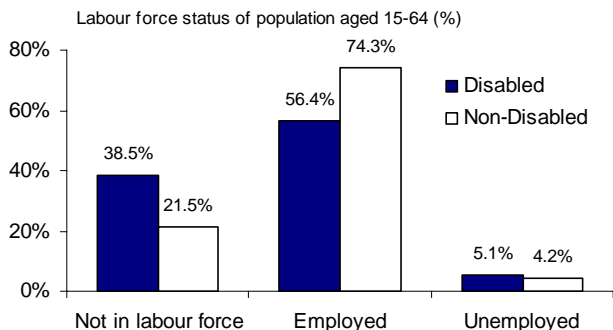
**Labour Market Outcomes**

It is important to note that the age distribution of disabled persons is very different compared to the non-disabled population, with disabled persons being significantly older on average. Consequently, the labour force characteristics of these two groups will be different; therefore, all rates presented for the population with disabilities have been age standardised to the age distribution of the non-disabled population.

<sup>1</sup> Note: E – Use with caution, F – Too unreliable to publish, X – Suppressed to protect confidentiality

In 2006<sup>1</sup>, there were 355,430 disabled persons between 15 and 64 years of age in BC, of which 136,720 were not in the labour force and 18,060 were unemployed. Disabled persons were significantly more often not in the labour force compared to those without disabilities (38.5% vs. 21.5%, respectively).

**Disabled persons are more often not taking part in the labour market compared to the non-disabled**



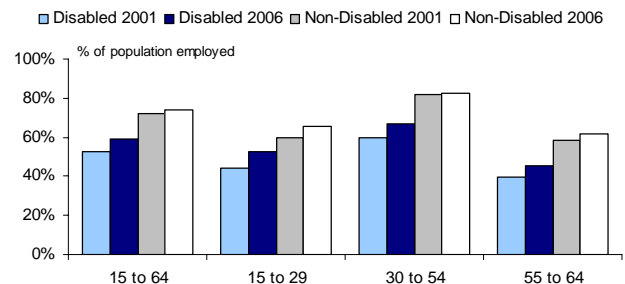
Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

**Employment Rate**

The employment rate of persons with a disability was significantly lower than the rate for those without a disability in both 2001 (52.6% vs. 72.0%, respectively) and 2006 (59.1% vs. 74.3%, respectively), especially when looked at by age. The gap between disabled and non-disabled persons widens as age increases, despite the employment rate declining for the oldest age category for both groups. However, between 2001 and 2006 the gap between disabled and non-disabled persons has narrowed for each age category. This reflects an increasing proportion of the disabled population participating in the labour force, which is in line with the increase seen for the non-disabled population in recent years.

<sup>1</sup> Using 2001 sample frame

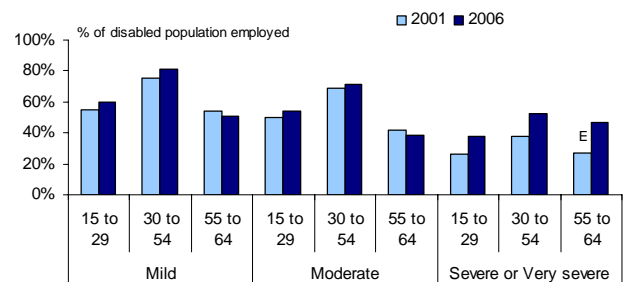
**A gap in the employment rate widens between disabled and non-disabled persons as they age; however, the gap has narrowed since 2001**



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006 and 2001

The employment rate for those with severe or very severe disabilities increased the most compared to the other severities of disabilities between 2001 and 2006. Interestingly, although the employment rate for those between the ages of 55 and 64 with a severe or very severe disability increased the most compared to the other age and severity groupings, this was the only age group to experience a decline in employment for the other levels of severity.

**Between 2001 and 2006 those with severe or very severe disabilities made the greatest strides in employment**

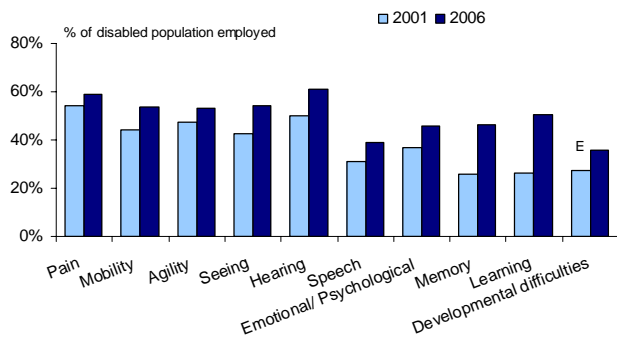


Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006 and 2001

When the employment rate is examined by the type of disability it becomes apparent that it has improved greatly for some and not for others. Perhaps because of increasing availability of assistive technologies and with the advent of computer software and hardware price decreases those with learning and memory disabilities experienced the largest increases in

the employment rate. Persons with developmental difficulties and speech limitations were the furthest below the average employment rate.

**Increases in employment between 2001 and 2006 vary considerably for some disabilities**



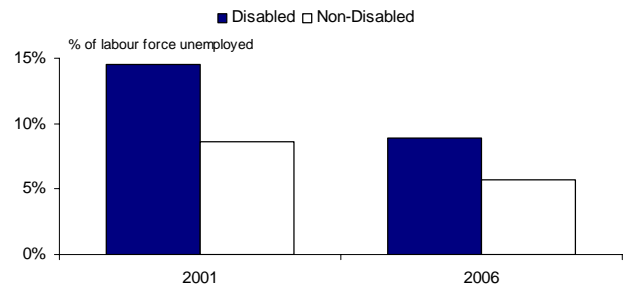
Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006 and 2001

**Unemployment Rate**

Although the proportion who were unemployed among the disabled and non-disabled population were relatively similar (5.1% vs. 4.2%, respectively), this does not show the proportion of those actively working or seeking work who are unable to find employment.

The unemployment rate fell between 2001 and 2006 both overall and for persons with disabilities. More importantly, the gap narrowed between those with and without disabilities by approximately half. The decline among persons with disabilities was not due to these persons dropping out of the labour force, as the proportion not in the labour force also declined from 41.2% to 38.5%.

**The unemployment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled persons nearly halved since 2001**



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006 and 2001

**Looking to the Future**

The employment rate is useful for revealing the proportion of the population of interest that is working and the unemployment rate looks at those who are willing to participate but unable to find work. These rates cannot adequately profile those who are unable to work because of their limitation. Unfortunately, this aspect of labour market outcomes is beyond the scope of this article.

However, BC Stats has ordered custom data from the 2001 and 2006 Participation and Activity Limitations Surveys and is commencing work on a more comprehensive profile of persons with disabilities in BC, with comparisons to Canada and the western provinces. Beyond an in depth look at those with disabilities and their labour market outcomes contrasted to those without disabilities, the profile aims to shed some light on the reasons persons with disabilities have differing labour market outcomes compared to those without disabilities. Some of the issues that will be explored in detail include educational attainment, limitations and barriers to employment, training in the workplace, workplace accommodations that are required for labour force participation, and accommodations that have been provided by employers among the employed.