

Young Disabled Adults Accessing Social Services in the Waterloo-Wellington Region

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Introduction

- Social support has been shown to be beneficial for individuals who experience disability-related challenges. (3)
- Both family and friends can provide adequate social support to the disabled individual. (3)
- Family can help with “behind the scene” activities such as scheduling doctors appointments and transportation. (2)
- One gap in the literature is the waitlists that participants have to wait to receive and gain access to support from services.
- Another gap is funding issues that can occur when trying to get access to services.

Aim

- Investigate the experiences of young disabled adults in the Waterloo-Wellington Region and their experiences with the social services in the area.

Methodology

Methods:

- We used Institutional Ethnography (IE) to conduct the study.
- IE is a way to investigate how institutions work and how people experience them in everyday contexts. (1)
- Recruitment was done via Reddit, Facebook, and Dr. Gibson’s website.

Participants:

- 10 adults between 23-30 years old (*M* age = 26.7).
- Must have lived in Waterloo-Wellington Region for 2+ years.
- Must have some sort of lived experience with disability (self-defined).

Procedure:

- We used semi-structured remote interviews to conduct the study.
- Participants were asked about their experiences with trying to access the social services in Waterloo-Wellington.
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed via Otter.ai.
- Participants received a \$10 gift card to Starbucks for their participation.

Analysis:

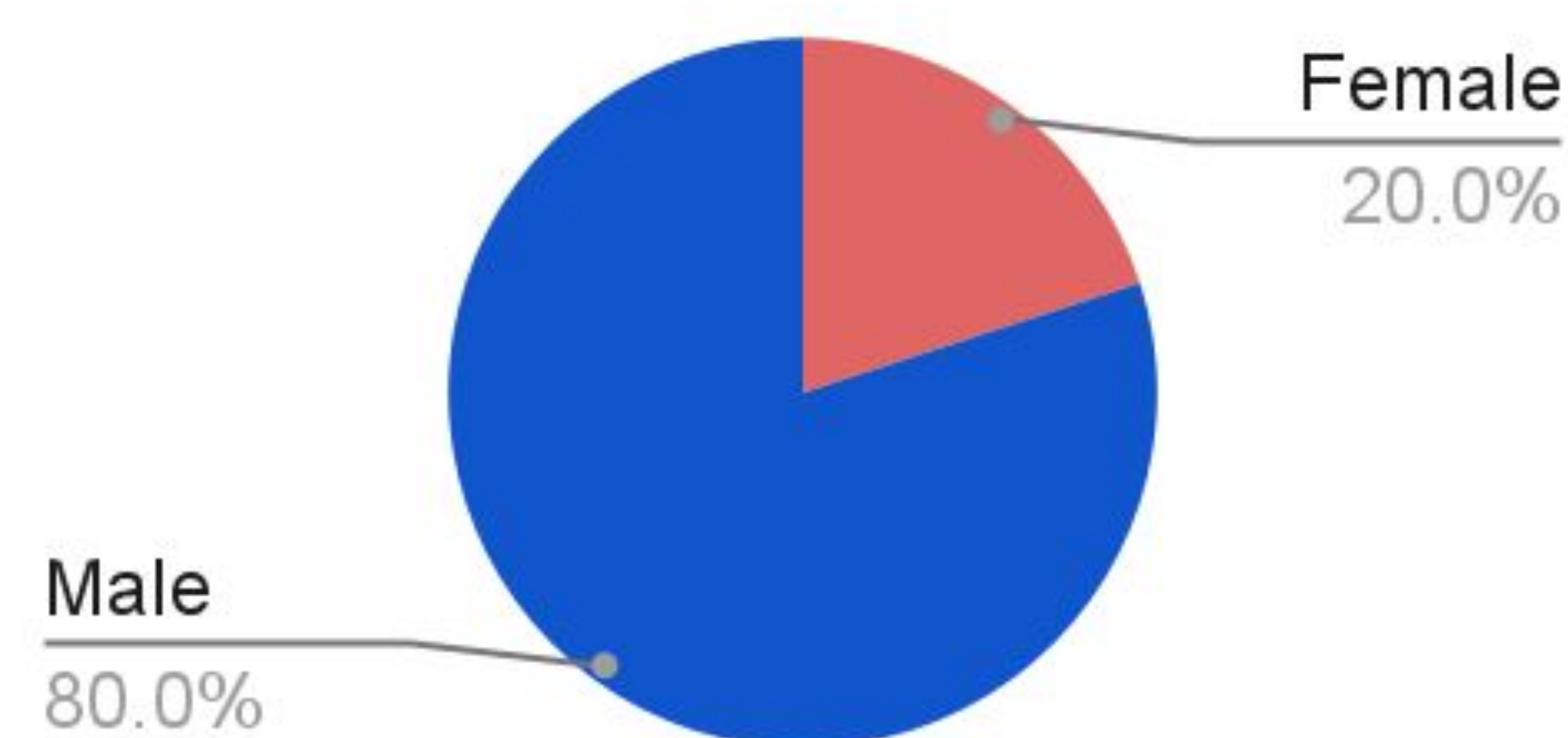
- Transcripts were analyzed in terms of the work that people did to access services.
- Common themes were identified.

Results

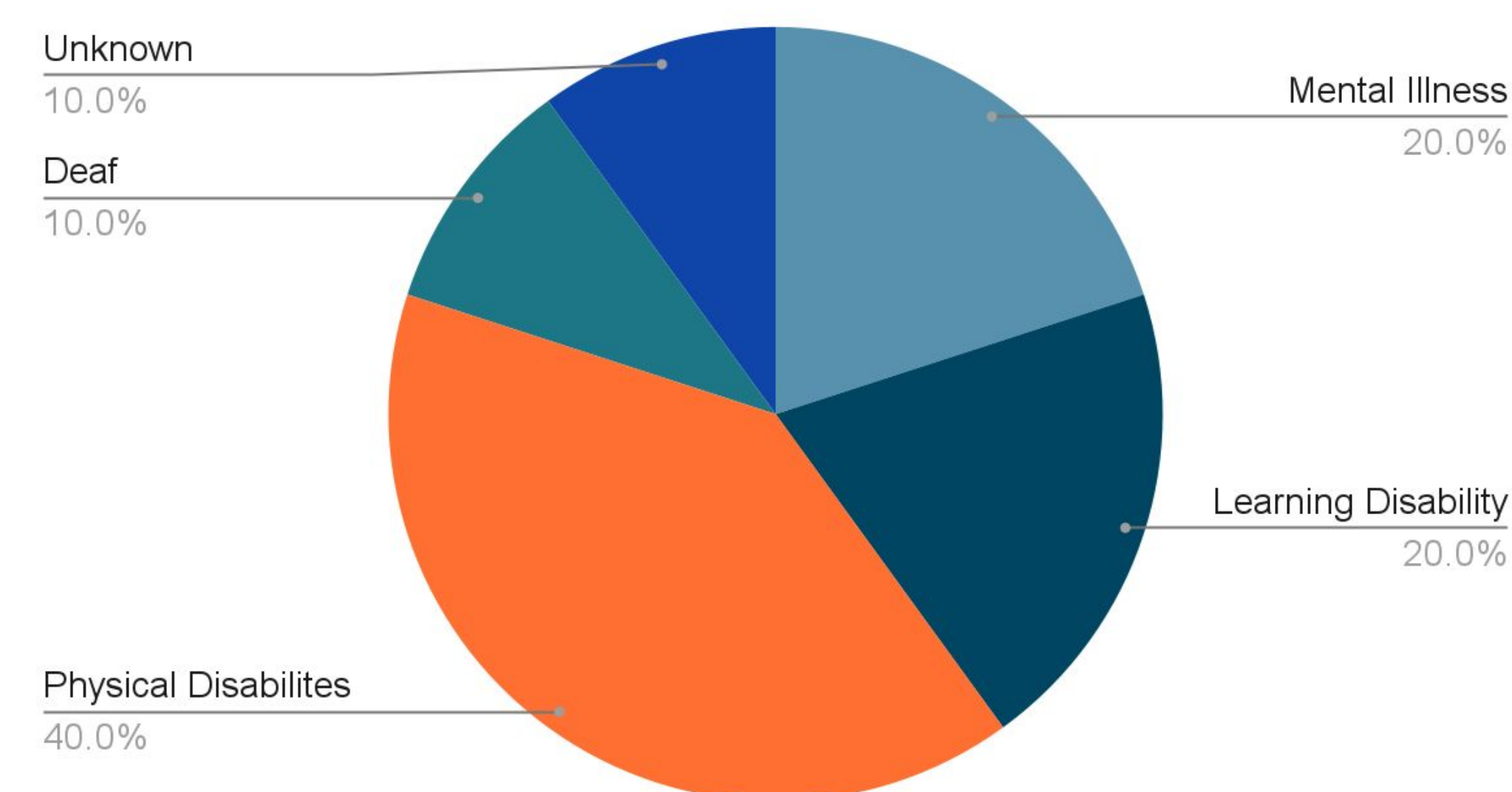
- **People relied on their social networks** to learn about and access social services.
- **Family networks were important** in finding and accessing social services.
 - *“So I made an inquiry. I told my dad to help me talk to these, this particular organizations that would make the study very easy for me”*
- **Friends and other community members in helping them** find and access services.
 - *“It’s my religious leader.....Yep, yep, he guides me? And he puts me in the way I should go about it... an organization that...guides me on assessing the social services.”*
 - *“...because I couldn’t stand up to look for service by myself. So my friends helped me the process for looking for social services in the region”*
- Participants identified inequalities in who could access services.
 - **Access was more difficult for people who did not have strong networks, people who faced additional barriers** (e.g., racism, challenges due to learning disabilities), and for **newcomers** to the region.
 - *“Um like some institutions’ biases are trying to tell me... it would have been better if I’m white and then I’m disabled I believe. I don’t want to [get]... more discrimination as such. But then [I’m] black skinned and then I’m in trouble ... some of these places are inaccessible for me.....”*

Sample

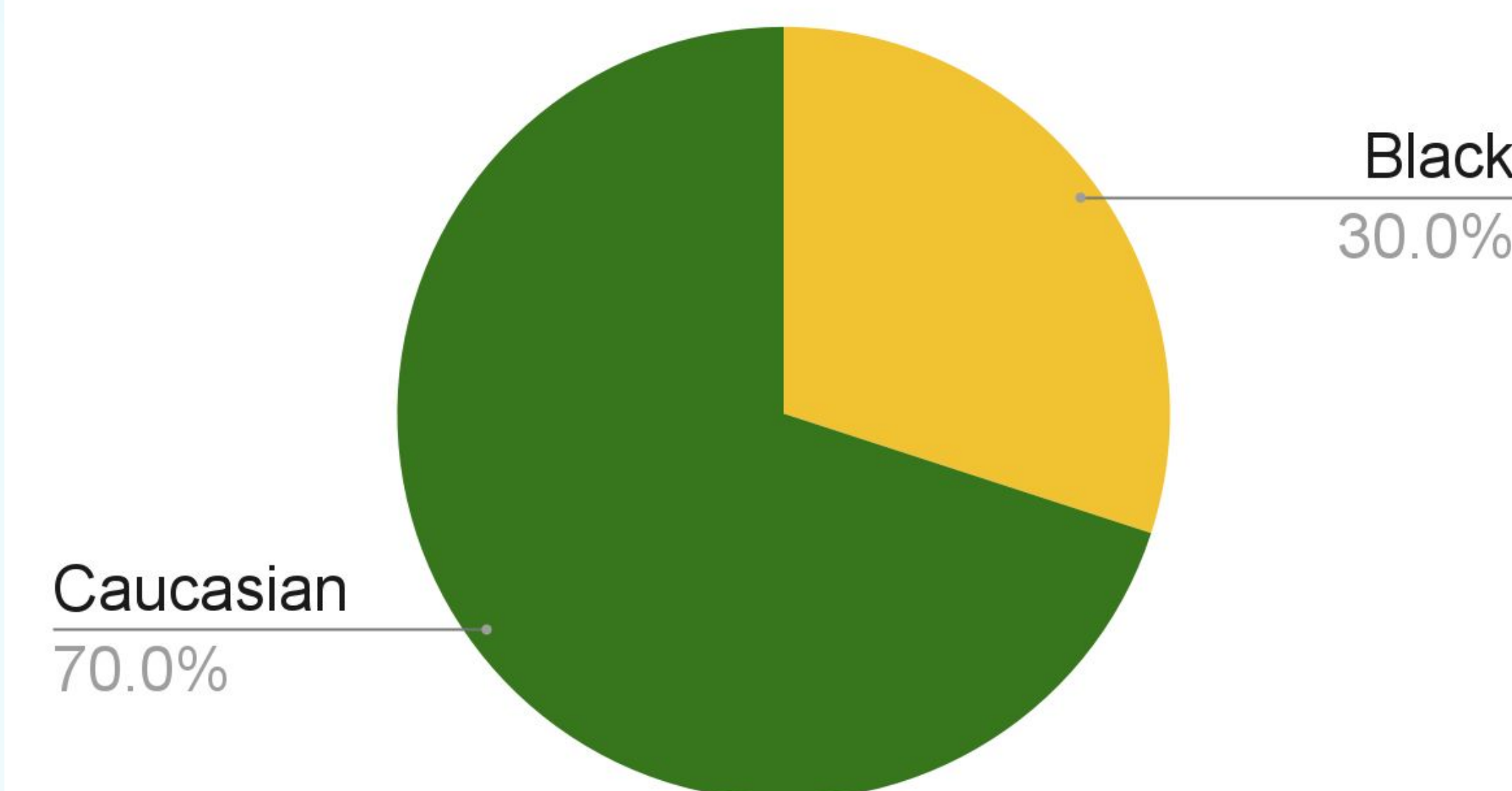
Gender



Types of Disabilities



Racial Ethnicities



Limitations

- Interviews were only conducted in English.
- Zoom sometimes caused connection problems.
- Small sample size.

Conclusion

- Services were not accessible to all.
- Individuals who did not have strong social networks struggled.
- Service providers should make sure that services are equally accessible to all.
- This is an exploratory study that requires further investigation.

References

(1) Devas, (2016). Using institutional ethnography's ideological circle to portray how textually mediated disability discourse paralyzes a Supreme Court of Canada ruling. *Culture and Organization*, 22(4), 311-329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2014.940042>

(2) Nguyen, Henderson, D., Stewart, D., Hlyva, O., Panthakee, Z., & Gertler, J. W. (2016). You never transition alone? Exploring the experiences of youth with chronic health conditions, parents and healthcare providers on self-management. *Child : Care, Health & Development*, 42(4), 464-472. <https://doi.org/10.1111/uch.1233>

(3) Towntley, & Kloos, (2013). A little goes a long way: The impact of distal social support on community integration and recovery of individuals with psychiatric disabilities. *American Journal of Community Psychology*.