



Attitudes toward the Disabled in Denmark

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*The Danish Disability Council
Danish National Institute of Social Research Research*

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Foreword

At the request of the Danish Disability Council and the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs, the Danish National Institute of Social Research conducted a country-wide study of adult Danes' attitudes toward the disabled. This study is the first of its kind in Denmark and covers both general and specific attitudes toward the disabled. By "general attitudes" is meant situations where the respondent is not an active participant in relation to the attitude object. "Specific attitudes" focus on hypothetical situations in which the respondent would have social interaction with one or more disabled persons. The study reveals a lack of correspondence between general and specific attitudes. It also points to factors which have a decisive influence on attitudes toward the disabled.

This pamphlet, published by the Danish Disability Council and the Danish National Institute of Social Research, presents the study's principal findings, emphasising the factors which affect specific attitudes in a positive or negative direction. The original Danish version was written by Henning Olsen, senior researcher at the Institute of Social Research and edited by information specialist Casper Hollerup of the Danish Disability Council. The original Danish version, with minor revisions, was translated by Steven Sampson.

Copenhagen, September 2002

Jørgen Søndergaard

Contents

Introduction	7
General attitudes toward the disabled	9
What does it mean to be disabled?	9
General attitudes	10
Public sector efforts	11
The disabled at the workplace	13
Summary of general attitudes	14
Specific attitudes to the disabled	15
Birth and childhood	15
Adult life	16
Assistance and care	18
The disabled at the workplace	19
Summary of specific attitudes	20
Attitudes to specific groups of disabled	21
Specific attitudes, behaviour and knowledge	23
General tendencies	24
Tendencies within specific areas	25

Introduction

This brochure summarizes the findings of a study of the Danish population's attitude toward the disabled. The study, conducted in 1999 by the Danish National Institute of Social Research, is based on a 100-question survey administered to a sample of 1000 adult Danes aged 18-75.

It is difficult to provide a precise answer to what it means to be disabled. The concept of "disabled" is constantly constructed and reconstructed. Generally, it is reasonable to say that being disabled involves having permanent physical and/or mental problems in interaction with social and societal conditions. In this study, a respondent is considered disabled if they regard themselves as disabled.

Attitudes can be both general and specific. "General attitudes" mean that the respondent is *not* an active participant in relation to what is being assessed. "Specific attitudes", in contrast, concern possible hypothetical forms of social interaction between the respondent and a disabled person in specific situations of the "What would you do if..." or "How would you feel if" type. Hence, the survey of respondents' general and specific attitudes assesses two quite different kinds of attitudes.

With certain exceptions, there is an overall tendency toward only partial correspondence between general and specific attitudes toward the disabled. Hence, if a group in the population has positive general attitudes to the disabled, it is not certain that the group also has positive specific attitudes. The general attitude measures can be applied to only a limited degree – and at times not at all – in predicting expected behaviour in relation to the disabled.

General attitudes toward the disabled

The following remarks concern the Danish population's general attitudes toward the disabled, toward what it means to be disabled, their general attitude to the public sector's efforts to improve conditions for the disabled and their attitude toward disabled people's participation at the workplace.

What does it mean to be disabled?

The study first assessed what the population *understood by the concept "disabled"* (Danish: *handicappet*). Most adults are able to explain the term, while a minority have an unclear or no understanding of what it means. Among the unclear views are responses which refer only to examples of specific types of disability, such as those who refer to the blind, the deaf or wheel-chair users.

Danish adults, for example, believe that the disabled are people who deviate from the normal or average, people who can no longer get along without assistance, or people who have reduced or no ability to work and therefore find it difficult to obtain a job. According to the following understandings, the term "disabled" refers to:

"people who do not live up to the average in society"

"people who have a need for support"

"people who cannot earn their daily bread".

The view that the disabled are "people who need help" is often mentioned by those Danes with no or little advanced education. In contrast, those with more schooling tend to view the disabled as "abnormal" or "deviant". Others – especially the youth – refer to various forms of *essence*, i.e., specific permanent physical and/or behavioural characteristics of the individual, such as:

"people with physical or mental shortcomings"

"people with inherited or acquired defects".

Most adult Danes, however, understand being disabled as *social “works of construction”*, i.e. that being disabled is ultimately viewed as created by the concrete social and societal context of which the disabled are a part.

General attitudes

As concerns adult Danes’ attitudes *to the disabled in general*, the majority of Danes – especially women – are relatively or especially critical toward the conditions offered to the disabled. Those from the Copenhagen area are more critical than others, as are those respondents in our sample who are themselves disabled. It is difficult to know what the respondents are thinking of when they make statements about the condition of the disabled person in general. As noted, however, strongly critical general attitudes are not necessarily synonymous with a corresponding set of specific attitudes.

When disabled people interact with non-disabled in various social contexts, the disabled can be said to be *socially integrated*. Most Danes are positive and very few are neutral or overtly negative toward social interactions with disabled persons. In this area as well, women reveal themselves to have more positive attitudes than men. Age also plays a role, with people who have passed their youth years tending to be most positively disposed toward the disabled. It plays no great role where one lives in Denmark when it concerns difference in general attitudes toward the social integration of the disabled. Surprisingly, attitudes toward the social integration of the disabled are not affected by whether or not the respondent is disabled.

Social integration and equality of opportunity are functionally related. If there is to be equality of *opportunity* between the disabled and other people, the disabled should not only be included in social collectivities, but also be accorded the same rights and possibilities as others. A significant majority of our respondents – especially the women – hold the view that equality of opportunity for the disabled is partially or very much lacking.

The disabled respondents also tend to be more critical than others when it concerns equal opportunity for the disabled person. Educational background also plays a role for how one views equal opportunity for the disabled person. Many people with higher educations have no reservations about the current situation of equal opportunity – or lack of it – for disabled. Adults with shorter or mid-level educations (social workers, nurses, school teachers), belong to the most critical group.

If the disabled are to have the same possibilities as others, they must not be subjected to discrimination. Virtually all adult Danes are against *discrimination against the disabled*. As with most of the other general attitudes, female respondents strongly reject discrimination of the disabled. Among the male respondents, the youth are less critical than others toward discrimination of the disabled. Not surprisingly, the most vocal critics of discrimination are found among the disabled respondents.

The Danish population is thus predominantly positively disposed toward social equality for the disabled. However, if one *cuts across the attitudes*, the tendency is not entirely the same. The positive general attitudes are not quite as widespread when several general attitude areas are included at the same time. For example, only every third adult believes that the condition of the disabled in general and equal opportunity for the disabled person can improve, while also being positive toward the social integration for the disabled.

Women are more critical than men regarding the general situation of the disabled, their social integration and possibilities to achieve equal opportunity. We thus obtain different results when comparing attitudes toward specific issues with the cross-cutting attitudes.

Public sector efforts

There is a widespread dissatisfaction with the *efforts made by Danish politicians toward the disabled*. Virtually no respondents believe that the politicians “do too much” for the disabled, while the vast majority – especially the women – believe that politicians do “too little” or “much too little”. Respondents who have passed their youth

are most dissatisfied, as are the disabled respondents themselves. Those respondents with higher educations are the least dissatisfied group when different levels of education are compared. Finally, respondents from Copenhagen are the most dissatisfied with the efforts made by politicians.

Virtually no one among the Danish adult population desires to reduce the *expenditures of the state or municipality for the disabled*, and about half the respondents cite the need for increased expenditures. It is especially female respondents who cite the need for further expenditures. The youth are least disposed towards spending more funds. Disabled respondents are no more willing than others to increase expenditures for the disabled.

Is the population just as critical when it concerns general attitudes to *public care and service toward the disabled*, e.g., home care and practical aids? As not everyone has had experience with this kind of care, a considerable minority do not express general opinions on this issue. Among those respondents who have definite opinions, however, the critics are in the majority. However, a small minority point toward various possible alternatives to public care and service, e.g., increased help from family and friends. Especially women, followed by older men, express dissatisfaction with the level of publicly funded care of the disabled. Not surprisingly, the disabled themselves are more critical than others.

The study also investigated how Danes view the efforts to increase accessibility and movement for the disabled in, for example, public offices, libraries, shops and cinemas. Generally speaking, the Danish population believes that there are clear shortcomings in the degree of physical accessibility offered to disabled citizens. This is especially true among female respondents and older men. On the accessibility issue, the disabled are no more dissatisfied than others.

The tendencies thus point to the population being very or decidedly dissatisfied with the public effort to improve the lot of the disabled. However, if one examines *cross-cutting attitudes*, the tendency changes in a less critical direction. For example, only every fourth

adult simultaneously finds that “politicians do too little”, that “too little funds are used on the disabled”, and that “public sector care of the disabled is unsatisfactory”. On the other hand, very few respondents have cross-cutting non-critical attitudes toward the public effort to improve conditions for the disabled.

Women are more often than men to be generally dissatisfied with the public sector efforts to improve conditions for the disabled. Measured by age, the cross-cutting critical general attitudes are found especially among middle-aged and older people, while younger men comprise the least dissatisfied group. Those from Copenhagen further distinguish themselves by being the most generally dissatisfied.

The disabled in the workplace

The findings of the study shows that over half the Danish adult population believe that the *work possibilities for disabled people* are inadequate. The youth – especially those pursuing higher education – are to a lesser extent proponents of this view. It is especially the functionaries, early retirees and pensioners who desire a more prominent place for the disabled at the workplace.

Cutting across population groups, there is predominant agreement that *Danish firms should hire the disabled, even though it may exclude others from obtaining jobs*. Agreement applies across categories of age, whether informants are disabled or non-disabled, and across educational background, main occupation and geographic location. On this issue as well, the women have more positive attitudes than men.

There are also predominantly critical voices regarding *private employers who have to think more about their own firm than pay attention to the disabled* when they hire new employees. People without schooling or with short- or medium-term educations tend to be more dissatisfied with this kind of employer’s thinking than those with professional educations. On the other hand, independent businessmen and private functionaries are less critical than others within this area.

Taken separately, the responses to the questions about disabled persons in the workplace show that the Danes have predominantly positive general attitudes on this issue. If Danish politicians want to enhance work possibilities for disabled individuals, they have the majority of the population behind them. It should be remarked, however, that the disabled have roughly the same views on these questions as the public in general.

Summary of general attitudes

Whether adults in general can be said to have positive general attitudes toward the disabled person depends on whether one looks at one attitude at a time or at the cross-cutting attitudes. If one examines one attitudinal area at time, it can be concluded that Danes desire improved conditions for the disabled, and at the general level, the vast majority of Danes are positively disposed toward the disabled. Around every second respondent, for example, believes that more funds should be allocated to improve the situation of the disabled. Nevertheless, the study also shows that only few respondents have positive attitudes toward the disabled person within *all* the above-mentioned general attitudinal areas.

Positive general attitudes about the disabled are not equally widespread among the various population groups. Gender can account for the differences between the general attitudes to a greater degree than can education and geographic location. Within largely all the general attitude areas, women hold more positive views about the disabled than do men.

Specific attitudes toward the disabled

Possible readiness to act, i.e., how people would be expected to act toward the disabled, is described by investigating specific attitudes. The Danes' specific attitudes are described towards two areas, birth and childhood, as well as three additional areas concerned with adult life. In addition, respondents were asked about their attitudes toward providing personal assistance and care to a disabled person, and their attitudes about having a disabled person at their place of work.

Birth and childhood

The Danish population's broad specific attitudes concern especially social integration and thereby ultimately also the *right to life*. It is a moral question as to whether a "disabled foetus" should be able to come to term and be brought into the world. The question thus reads:

"Imagine that you have a pregnant wife or that you are yourself pregnant, and a doctor says that your child will be born with one of the handicaps I mention. Should the pregnancy be terminated?"

The Danish sample has predominantly negative attitudes toward allowing the pregnancy to come to term. Many respondents, however, do not have a fixed opinion on this question.

Women are no more positive than men when it concerns carrying through a pregnancy leading to a disabled child. Whereas youth, in answering the general attitude questions, have more negative attitudes about the disabled than older adults, this is not true when it concerns the issue of a specific attitude toward pregnancy in which a disabled infant will be born. Here it is the older adults who are most negative. If the respondents are categorized according to level of education, the *least* negative are those with short-term or medium-term educations.

When children are born – disabled or not – it is another question as to whether disabled parents are better or worse than others at raising children:

“Think of an adult family member or of a friend whom you care for. If he or she had one of the disabilities which I mention and had children, would you then believe that this person was better or worse at raising children?”

Here it is the negative views which predominate, especially as concerns disabled parents who are mentally disabled or mentally ill. However, not all adults have a definite opinion on this question.

Women are more positive than men towards the idea of disabled parents. Among others – especially pensioners and early retirees – there is a tendency to be more negative towards the disabled as parents. Youth – those pursuing higher education, for example – do not have the least negative attitudes. Hence, many youth do not have negative opinions about the birth of disabled children but would rather not see these children being raised by their disabled parents.

Adult life

There are various ways of discriminating against disabled adults who are thereby excluded from social integration. A question on our survey was:

“Imagine that one of your close relatives were to marry someone with a disability, and that you would subsequently have to be in regular contact with this person. How comfortable or uncomfortable would you feel if the person had one of the handicaps which I mention?”

Very few people will meet a new disabled family member entirely without reservations. Most often, the specific attitudes which appear are predominantly neutral. This applies roughly equally to both men and women. However, the disabled respondents are less negative than others, while those with higher educations belong to the most negative group.

The results concerning possible readiness to act build partially upon the answer to the question:

“Imagine that in some place in Denmark a new residence would be established for people with disabilities. How close to your home should this residence be if those who moved in had one of the disabilities which I mention now?”

A majority of the Danish population – about equal numbers of men and women – have no reservations about having eight different types of disabled inhabitants as neighbours. In general, age does not play a role either. Among the men, however, the younger men – 25-34-year-olds – are less accommodating. Finally, people in the Copenhagen suburbs also tend to be less accommodating than the rest of the population.

Will a disabled person be accepted as an equal passenger, if he or she, for example, travels on a train? The question is formulated as follows:

“Imagine that you are embarking on a five-hour train journey. What is the closest the disabled passengers I mention can sit to you before you feel uncomfortable?”

Nearly all respondents can easily picture this situation. Only a minority – about equally divided between men and women – have no problems about having a disabled co-passenger. Many have clear inhibitions about the kind of social contact – it can be silent or spoken – and do not desire to be seated next to, for example, someone with a spastic disorder, mental disability, or an agitated manic-depressive. Youth, especially younger men, tend to have more reservations than the older respondents.

The study thus indicates the Danish population to be predominantly neutral – though at times more negative – in their specific attitudes toward various aspects of the social integration of disabled persons. However, there is an overtly negative attitude toward the completion of pregnancies where the infant will be disabled.

The individual positive attitudes are hardly as widespread when conditions are analysed in terms of *several simultaneously positive specific attitudes*. Only about every sixth adult Dane has all three of the following attitudes:

- No reservations against a disabled person marrying into the family.
- No objection to a residence housing disabled people in the immediate vicinity of where I live.
- Sitting close to a disabled person on a longer rail journey.

On the other hand, far fewer people have cross-cutting *negative* attitudes within the three afore-mentioned areas.

Assistance and care

Nearly all respondents have an opinion about *offering assistance* to an actual or hypothetical disabled family member or friend. The vast majority believe that they are ready to offer temporary practical aid and emotional support and care, while fewer are open towards a disabled person's temporarily moving into one's home for up to a month's duration. Every second adult is prepared to offer the maximum degree of aid when it is a case of helping at least two kinds of disabled persons: a relative, friend and/or neighbour – with practical assistance, emotional support and temporary moving in.

Approximately equal proportions of men and women are prepared to offer the maximum aid when it is a case of assistance and care. However, age plays a role, and not surprisingly, it is the elderly who are least willing to help. At their age, many elderly have their own needs for assistance and therefore find it more difficult to help others. In other contexts, the younger respondents – especially the young men – have shown themselves to be most negative about the disabled. This does not apply, however, to helpfulness toward handicapped relatives and friends.

The degree of helpfulness declines, though continues to be significant, when focus is placed on the population's willingness to execute *voluntary, unpaid work* together with and for the benefit of the dis-

abled person. Around every fifth respondent is strongly or very interested in carrying out this kind of work, or does so already. Especially women express a strong interest in conducting voluntary work with the disabled. It can be doubted, however, whether all those who express an interest in conducting voluntary disability work will actually do so. Nevertheless, the opinions expressed point to the receptive specific attitudes of many adults on this issue.

The disabled at the workplace

It has been shown that the Danish population has predominantly positive general attitudes toward the disabled in the workplace. From here it does not necessarily follow that there are positive attitudes when focus is placed on potential readiness to act in relation to disabled colleagues. Only those actually working were asked about the disabled at the workplaces.

Regardless of age, the employed male and female respondents were predominantly positive when asked whether the disabled ought to have the *same possibilities as others to obtain work at their own workplace*. A significant majority state that disabled persons ought to have just as much possibility. Very few are of the opinion that the possibilities of the disabled ought not to be just as good. The most negative views are found among those employed respondents with only a primary school education, while the highly educated workers are among the most positive toward the possibilities of disabled workers to obtain jobs.

If one asks those who are working whether they would make it *easier to hire the disabled* if they were heads of their own firms, the typical answer was positive. This is true for both men and women. Men of a younger age, however, are far more negative regarding this question than other employed men.

The possible readiness to act in relation to disabled colleagues also emerges when the respondent is given hypothetical responsibility for hiring a new colleague. If there were two equally qualified applicants – one of whom disabled – *who would receive the offer of a position?* The responses reveal that the attitudes of the working respondents

to disabled colleagues are not as inhibited in this area. More striking, however, is the significant uncertainty towards taking a position on the question.

A final question concerns receptivity toward *working together with and helping disabled colleagues*. When the question is experienced as personally relevant, nearly all have an opinion about it. A significant majority of the working respondents are receptive toward entering into cooperation with and eventually assisting a disabled colleague. At the same time, a significant minority are negative or simply reject such cooperation. This is especially true of the youth and younger men.

About half the employed respondents have *cross-cutting positive specific attitudes* toward disabled colleagues. The predominantly, though not overwhelmingly, positive tendency is underlined by the fact that only few employed men have cross-cutting negative attitudes. In all, the employed men in the ages of 18 to 34 years of age have the most negative views about the disabled in the workplace.

Summary of specific attitudes

The survey shows that many of those in the Danish population are far from positive toward the disabled when their specific attitudes are surveyed within certain individual areas. Adults are rather predominantly neutral and not infrequently characterized by negative views about the disabled.

The tendency is underscored by the fact that only few respondents have cross-cutting positive specific attitudes toward the disabled. Only every tenth respondent had very positive or predominantly positive attitudes toward a new disabled family member, towards living next to a residence housing disabled people, to taking a longer train journey while sitting next to a disabled person, and helpfulness toward a disabled family member or friend.

People's geographic location in Denmark can often account for the description of differences in the specific attitudes toward the disabled person. This is the case, for example, with attitudes toward

marriage with a disabled person and willingness to assist a disabled family member or friend. Age can also provide an independent explanatory contribution, e.g., in describing the differences in views of the disabled as parents, and differences in the view of working together with a disabled colleague. In addition, disability plays a role in several cases.

The most notable finding, however, is that gender can only rarely explain the extent of the specific attitudes. In only a single case does gender in the final instance provide an independent explanatory contribution. This is surprising when one recalls the general attitudinal measures, where gender more often showed itself to be an explanatory factor more often than other factors.

Within the framework of general attitudes, women tend more often than men to express “socially responsible” attitudes. In measuring nearly all the specific attitudes, however, the women’s tendency to express more “disabled-friendly” attitudes is reduced or vanishes entirely. This is one reason why the distinction between general and specific attitudes is so important.

Attitudes toward specific groups of disabled

Up to now, focus has been upon specific attitudes toward the disabled taken as a group. However, the specific attitudes depend considerably on which type of disability or disabilities about which the respondent is thinking of when they express opinions. In the following, a distinction is drawn between three categories of disability:

Communicative disability	Sensory disability Other communicative disability
Physical disability	Serious mobility disability Partial mobility disability Other mobility disability Other physical disability
Mental disability	Mental illness Other mental disability

When it concerns the entire group of attitudes toward *being pregnant with a “disabled foetus” and toward the disabled as parents*, a hierarchy of opinions can be identified, with those suffering from communicative disabilities ranking highest. This group can expect the most positive attitudes. Next follows the physically disabled, where e.g., wheelchair users without “deviant” external characteristics can expect relatively positive attitudes. The situation differs in the case of those with spastic disorders, whose position in the attitude hierarchy approaches that of the mentally disabled. That the mentally disabled have the lowest position in the hierarchy is shown, for example, by the fact that very few respondents express positive views toward the birth of mentally disabled children or would like to see the mentally disabled and mentally ill bringing up children.

We do not see the quite the same tendency when we focus on persons who will simultaneously feel comfortable together with a disabled person who has *married into the family*, accept the proximity of a *dwelling housing disabled persons* as next-door neighbour, and *sit alongside a disabled person* on the train. Here the physically and communicative disabled persons are viewed in about the same way. In contrast, the group of mentally disabled again occupy the lowest place in the hierarchy. Only every tenth Danish adult is unreservedly positive toward mentally underdeveloped and manic-depressives, while this applies to every third respondent when it concerns those disabled persons who are blind, deaf, stutterers, wheelchair users and people with arthritis.

Specific attitudes toward the disabled are nearly always concrete. Even though a single unequivocal hierarchy of attitudes has not been found, the mentally disabled seem to be placed lowest in the hierarchy. Also, physically disabled persons with “deviant” bodily behaviour or appearance – such as the spastic’s salivating and uncontrolled muscular movements – find themselves in a danger zone. In contrast, people with communicative disabilities are more seldom exposed to negative attitudes and possible prejudices.

Specific attitudes, behaviour and knowledge

The following concerns the association between the adults' behaviour and knowledge on the one hand and their attitudes toward the disabled on the other. Focus is on specific attitudes, because these attitudes, as mentioned, come closer to possible readiness to act in relation to the disabled person and thereby have greater predictive power than general attitudes. In the survey, 16 knowledge-related and behavioural factors are cited which can have significance for the formation of specific attitudes towards the disabled:

Knowledge about the general conditions of the disabled	One factor
Knowledge behaviour within the last year	Four factors: conversation with or about the disabled; reading about disability; disability-oriented television/radio habits; attended lectures about the disabled.
Childhood behaviour	Four factors: social childhood factors; childhood contacts with disabled persons; disabled friends during school age; a clearly remembered disability experience; read books/seen films, etc. about disabled people.
Behaviour in civil society within the past year	Four factors: social contacts with disabled; willingness to help the disabled; voluntary association work with disabled; and leisure time interests together with disabled persons.
Behaviour outside civil society within the past year	Three factors: Execution of work tasks together with disabled, self-chosen togetherness with disabled colleagues outside actual work time and contact with those disabled who are not employed in the workplace.

General tendencies

In the study, several interesting tendencies are pointed out. The first is that in only a few cases can factual knowledge about the general conditions of the disabled help explain whether the population's specific attitudes about the disabled person are positive or negative. In contrast, behaviour in relation to the disabled person often plays an important role. Hence, considerable evidence points to the conclusion that knowledge of the disabled person's conditions itself is of limited importance in predicting the population's attitudes to the disabled person. It must be mentioned, however, that the tendency naturally depends upon how the knowledge is measured. The questions concerning knowledge are relatively general, e.g. rules concerning a specially designed car for the disabled, and are thus not directed toward more practically experienced knowledge.

The second tendency concerns the significance of social relations between disabled persons and others. Having had tangible experiences and association with disabled persons are generally associated with *more positive* attitudes, while relations which are "distant" and "unknown" leads to more critical attitudes and can possibly create prejudices. In the population as a whole, disabled childhood friends and contacts with and conversations about or with disabled people within the last year are the most frequent factors contributing to a positive attitude.

In statistical terms, *positive-acting factors* are those that lead to positive attitudes, that one has significant knowledge and/or widespread behaviour in relation to handicapped persons. Conversely, *negative-acting factors* are those where significant knowledge and/or widespread behaviour leads to more negative attitudes. Not infrequently, positive attitudes are also promoted by actual helpfulness towards disabled people and by social contacts with the disabled during childhood.

Other forms of behaviour also often lead to positive attitudes, even though the behaviour does not necessarily entail direct social contact with the disabled person. This applies, for example, to reading about disability within the last year and having read disability-

related books or viewed disability-related films childhood. In contrast, television and radio habits seem to be of less significance for the creation of positive specific attitudes towards the disabled.

A third tendency is that childhood experiences with the disabled have in various cases positive long-term effects on specific attitudes to the disabled person. This applies, for example, to having had schoolmates with disabilities as well as contact with the disabled within and outside the family.

Finally, it cannot be denied, but on the other hand is not finally demonstrated, that women are more affected in their attitudes than men. This last point is supported by the fact that the number of positively-acting correlations is significantly larger among women. Women seem to be especially positively affected in cases where they enter into social contexts with disabled persons.

Tendencies within specific areas

A question within the area of *birth and childhood* concerns, as mentioned, are the specific attitudes to one's own or spouses' hypothetical *pregnancy with a disabled foetus*; here the factors which affect attitudes toward pregnancy with a disabled foetus are exclusively positive. Conversations about or with the disabled and reading about disability within the last year also play a role for the diffusion of positive attitudes concerning such pregnancies. In contrast, this is not the case for knowledge about the general conditions of disabled people.

Also certain conditions in childhood – social contacts and friendships with disabled persons as well as disability-related books read, films seen, etc. – have positive effects on the attitudes which people acquire much later in life regarding pregnancies with disabled foetuses. Finally, current social contacts with the disabled play a positive explanatory role.

Nor does knowledge of the disabled person's general conditions contribute to explanation when it concerns the *disabled people's suitability as parents*. Rather, the key factor is childhood contacts with

the disabled person and the experience of having read books and seen films about disability during childhood. Both factors, however, lead to more negative opinions about disabled people as parents. Here we can see an exception from the general tendency.

When it concerns the social integration of the disabled into adult life, one question about attitudes concerns contacts with family members who enter into *marriage with a disabled person*. Here knowledge itself does not play an explanatory role. Rather, it operates to induce positive attitudes if one has had disabled friends in childhood and has current leisure time interests together with disabled people. In the same way, the probability for positive attitudes towards a disabled person who has married into the family increases if one has had disabled friends in childhood, and if one cultivates leisure time interests together with disabled persons.

Danes' attitude toward having *disabled people as neighbours* has, as mentioned, a positive tendency. Further, knowledge does not in itself help explain whether the attitudes toward the disabled are positive or not. In contrast, there are positive associations between eight behavioural factors and attitudes toward handicap residential collectives, but none which are negative. Both friendships and other childhood contacts with disabled persons help promote positive attitudes toward having a group of disabled persons as neighbours. The same is true for recent social contacts, e.g., helpfulness toward the disabled. Also, knowledge behaviour within the last year – conversations about or with the disabled person, reading and lectures on disability – have a positive effect. Finally, positive attitudes are promoted if one has social contacts with disabled persons who regularly appear at one's workplace.

The study shows that Danes are quite negative about *disabled people as passengers* on a longer rail journey. What factors explain whether one has positive or negative attitudes toward disabled passengers? When the 16 possible explanatory factors are included (see the table), there are exclusively positive correlations. One of these concerns *for the first time* the positive role of the knowledge factor: someone whose one's knowledge about general conditions of the

disabled is significant tends to be relatively more positive about sitting across from a disabled passenger. Conducive to these kinds of attitudes are also the following factors: having had disabled childhood friends, current social contacts with disabled persons, willingness to help and sharing leisure interests with disabled persons, conversations about or with disabled people, reading about and attending lectures on disability, etc.

With reference to *assistance and care*, both men and women have consistently shown themselves willing to assist eventual disabled family members and friends. Several positive associations are seen when all possible explanatory factors are included with the goal of elucidating the dispersion of helpfulness. Some factors, however, are more interesting than others. If one has had regular contact with disabled persons in childhood, with disabled schoolmates and has read books or seen films about disability, it increases the probability that respondents will be more willing to assist the disabled later in life. Here as well, knowledge about the disabled people's general conditions does not play an explanatory role. The same is true for the population's interest in carrying out *voluntary unpaid work* together with and for the benefit of the disabled. In contrast, eight other factors are conducive to respondents expressing the desire to carry out volunteer work, e.g., having had schoolmates who had disabilities.

As mentioned previously, only the working population was asked their opinions about disabled people *at the workplace*. The attitudes of the working portion of our sample are predominantly positive, when asked whether disabled people ought to have the same possibilities as others to obtain work at precisely the respondent's workplace. Notably two factors are decisive for positive attitudes: execution of work tasks together with the disabled person and voluntary social contact with disabled colleagues outside actual work time.

Another kind of specific attitude concerns the preference to *hire a disabled person* at the workplace when there is an equally qualified non-disabled applicant. Two childhood factors and three forms

of knowledge behaviour are decisive for whether the respondent expresses a preference for giving the position to the disabled applicant. Childhood contacts and friendships with disabled persons promote attitudes much later in life whereby people will tend to be more disposed towards hiring disabled applicants. This also the case for respondents who have had conversations, read books and saw/heard television/radio programs about disabled persons within the previous year.

As mentioned, a majority of the working population is positive toward entering into *work-related cooperation* with a disabled colleague. Here, too, one finds two well-known tendencies: first, the explanatory factors operate exclusively positive, and second, knowledge of the general conditions affecting the disabled does not in itself contribute to explaining specific attitudes toward them. However, there are four other factors which all concern communication about or with the disabled. In this as well as most of the other attitudinal areas, social interaction with the disabled person in general helps promote the population's positive specific attitudes toward this group among the population.