Gendered Work Restrictions: Disability and the Division of Labor in France

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Abstract

While the gendered division of paid and unpaid work among different-sex couples is known to be shaped by social class and gender, the role of disability remains underexplored. Regression models using French Labor Force Survey data reveal that, compared with couples without limitations, those in which one or both partners have long-lasting limitations are less likely to be dual earners, and those in which the woman has limitations display less gendered specialization in parenthood. A thematic analysis of biographical interviews with 37 disabled adults highlights subjective experiences and decision-making processes regarding paid and unpaid work across different couple employment configurations, as well as the social influences shaping them. Although men's employment restrictions and women's housework restrictions prompt circumstantial adjustments in the division of labor, they do not fundamentally transform gender roles. This tension between material constraints and symbolic norms is encapsulated by introducing the new concept of *gendered work restriction*.

A growing consensus holds that analyses of the gendered division of labor must account for intersecting inequalities of social class and race (Carbonnier and Morel, 2018; Cartier et al., 2018). However, models and theories often overlook disability, understood as a material and symbolic system within the broader structure of inequality (Bouchet, 2024) in which individuals with impairments or chronic illnesses face restrictions in social contexts (Shakespeare, 2013; Mitra, 2018). Still, this population encounters specific disadvantages in paid and unpaid work. In France, in 2023, 6.8 million of the 40.9 million individuals of working age (15–64 years)—approximately 1 in 6—either experienced limitations in daily activities due to a long-term health problem

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or had an administratively recognized disability. Their employment rate was just 52%, whereas the national average was 68%. Additionally, nearly 1 in 20 people (4.6%) in this age group reported severe restrictions in performing routine domestic tasks, such as shopping, performing housework, or handling administrative formalities (DREES, 2024).

When disability is considered in family research, it is typically framed through a medical lens and perceived as a burden on the family (Bixby, 2023), particularly in the context of mothers of disabled children (Guyard et al., 2013; DeRigne and Porterfield, 2017) or other family members (Bauer and Sousa-Poza, 2015; Cheneau, 2019) who reduce their labor supply or withdraw from the labor market to provide informal care. Meanwhile, the roles of disabled people in shaping the division of labor within households remain largely overlooked.

This bias, shaped by an implicit standard of normative functioning, hinders assessments of the validity of general research in the social sciences regarding disabled people. For example, in current research, time availability, economic resources, and gender roles are three major factors used to explain the division of paid versus unpaid labor (Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel, 2020; Dominguez-Folgueras, 2022); however, they are rarely applied to disabled people. Nevertheless, disability is likely to influence each of these factors. Employment restrictions limit how much time disabled people spend in market work (Anand and Ben-Shalom, 2014; Shandra, 2018) and place them at risk of poverty, although the minimum income from disability allowances may provide a buffer in some countries such as France (Palmer, 2011). Moreover, disabled men and women are presumed incapable of performing traditional gender roles and are devalued if they face actual challenges in performing them (Gerschick and Miller, 1995; Shuttleworth et al., 2012; Frederick, 2017; Doé, 2019).

This study investigates how disability influences the gendered division of labor in different-sex couples within the French context, using a mixed-methods approach. First, the quantitative phase uses multinomial logistic regression on a large national dataset, the 2013–2019 French Labor Force Surveys, to examine gendered employment configurations—specifically, the distribution of employment within 41,824 different-sex couples according to each partner's disability status (defined as experiencing long-term limitations in daily activities due to a health condition) and parental status (having at least one child under 18). Second, the qualitative phase investigates the underlying processes shaping these labor divisions, examining the interplay between paid and unpaid work through a thematic analysis of biographical interviews. This phase includes in-depth biographical interviews with 37 individuals raised with contrasting conditions involving long-term limitations in Western societies: visual impairment (20 participants) and specific learning difficulties (17 participants).

Results from both the quantitative and qualitative phases show that the arrangements of disabled people in couples exhibit specific characteristics compared with traditional models of the gendered division of labor. The concept of *gendered work restrictions* is introduced to capture the material adjustments to traditional gender roles made to navigate disability-related obstacles ("restrictions") and the way these adaptations are framed as exceptions, leaving the underlying gender norms ("gendered work") largely unchallenged.

I. Problematizing disability and gendered labor divisions

1. Disability-related employment inequalities in the context of the dual-earner model

Over the last 4 decades, dual-earner families have become the most common family arrangement in industrialized countries, supplanting the traditional male-breadwinner model (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001). While this shift coincides with an increase in the number of couples who intentionally choose not to become parents (Blackstone and Stewart, 2012), it mainly reflects the increasing tendency of mothers to juggle professional activities with family responsibilities (Yavorsky et al., 2015; Maruani, 2017). In 2024, across OECD countries, approximately two-thirds of couples with at least one child under 14 were dual earners (OECD, 2024). However, gendered specialization in parenthood continues to drive employment inequalities, with many women leaving the labor market after childbirth to manage domestic and parental responsibilities (Pailhé and Solaz, 2012; Wood and Marynissen, 2019). More broadly, the distribution of employment within different-sex couples depends on structural factors, such as labor market conditions and the educational attainment of each partner (Steinbring et al., 2024).

Among the individual circumstances influencing employment patterns, disability status should not be overlooked. Disabled individuals are generally less likely than their nondisabled counterparts of the same gender to be employed, with the employment likelihood decreasing as the degree of limitation increases (Parodi and Sciulli, 2012; Bouchet, 2021b). Moreover, disability intersects with gender in shaping employment opportunities, as documented by a growing body of literature (Ballo, 2019, 2023; Maroto et al., 2019; Boudinet, 2024). Employment gaps are larger between disabled and nondisabled men than between disabled and nondisabled women; however, in absolute terms, disabled women have the lowest employment rates (Pettinicchio and Maroto, 2017; Collet and Lhommeau, 2022). Additionally, unemployment imputed to illness or disability among male partners is a common pattern in female-breadwinner households (Kramer and Kramer, 2016; Blom and Hewitt, 2020). Finally, evidence indicates that informal family

caregivers, particularly women, are less likely than noncaregivers to be employed (Bauer and Sousa-Poza, 2015). While most research focuses on caregiving in general, several studies focusing specifically on labor market responses to a partner's health issue suggest that spousal caregivers often reduce their hours or leave employment altogether (Jeon and Pohl, 2017; Anand et al., 2022; Bondoux, 2024). These findings suggest atypical employment patterns in different-sex couples including one or more disabled people. However, a systematic comparison of couples in which neither partner, the man only, the woman only, or both partners are disabled remains to be conducted. Furthermore, research is needed to determine whether the gendered specialization in parenthood observed in the general population also applies to disabled parents, an understudied group (Rivera Drew, 2009).

2. Gendered tradeoffs in the division of labor: insights from experiences of disability

In different-sex couples, the division of paid work is intricately linked to the distribution of unpaid work, such as domestic and parental responsibilities, which motivates our investigation into the processes fueling these divisions. Three factors are essential to our analysis: time availability, economic resources, and gender roles (Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel, 2020; Dominguez-Folgueras, 2022).

First, time availability is defined as the amount of time individuals have at their disposal outside of paid work; for example, when one parent is unemployed, they may take on more childcare responsibilities (Pailhé and Solaz, 2008). Studies indicate that the time disabled parents "save" by not being employed is partly offset by the additional time required to manage unpaid work in restrictive environments, including coping with fatigue (Payne and McPherson, 2010) and learning and completing parenting tasks without adequate support (Rosenblum et al., 2009).

Second, economic resources refer to both the income disparity between spouses, which may shape bargaining power (Usdansky and Parker, 2011), and their absolute levels, which support women's financial autonomy (Gupta, 2006). Disability benefits play a critical role in providing for families in the absence of labor income (Rivera Drew, 2009), so much so that disabled mothers may forgo the aspiration of part-time employment for fear of losing this resource (Malacrida, 2019). However, even when disability benefits are accounted for, a wide income gap between nondisabled and disabled people persists (Maroto et al., 2019), potentially creating economic dependencies within couples (Bouchet, 2021a) and influencing bargaining power over household chores and parental responsibilities.

Finally, gender roles encompass practices influenced by gender identities, values, and norms. These roles are widely discussed in terms of how couples'

daily actions contribute to "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1987) or "undoing gender" (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009).[1]

Research on the lived experiences of disabled individuals reveals a broad range of perceptions and responses to stigma at the intersection of gender and disability. Many individuals rely on models of hegemonic masculinity (Gerschick and Miller, 1995; Kilkey and Clarke, 2010), hegemonic femininity, or ideal motherhood (Thomas, 1997; Payne and McPherson, 2010) to align with social expectations. Some disabled women even overperform normative motherhood to prevent social disapproval (Grue and Lærum, 2002; Malacrida, 2009). In other cases, however, disability stigma prompts individuals to distance themselves from gender norms through alternative practices and principles (Gerschick and Miller, 1995).

Additionally, the subjective perspectives of disabled people can meaningfully inform the decision-making processes connecting these three factors. Although time availability, economic resources, and gender roles are often studied in isolation (Dominguez-Folgueras, 2022), an integrative approach to gender (Risman, 2018) suggests that material and cultural dimensions are interconnected. For example, debates focus on how men, upon losing employment and having more time available, adjust their participation in unpaid work. One line of argument, drawing on theories of gender display (Brines, 1994) and deviance neutralization (Greenstein, 2000), suggests they may reduce domestic and parental tasks to reaffirm traditional gender roles. A contrasting view, based on task transferability theory (Solaz, 2005; Pailhé and Solaz, 2008), holds that men may instead take on more chores because some tasks can be transferred between spouses when one becomes unemployed, despite established patterns of specialization. Qualitative investigation allows for the connection between the material and symbolic dimensions of the division of labor through process narratives, i.e., "typical stories… whose steps have a logic, perhaps even a logic as inevitable as the logic of causes" (Becker, 1998, p. 49). Moreover, drawing directly on the perspectives of disabled people provides essential insights, challenging the epistemic injustice that marginalizes them by routinely excluding them from the processes through which society makes sense of the world (Mladenov and Dimitrova, 2023)—for instance, when family research on disability privileges caregivers' perspectives.

3. Hypotheses

Regarding employment configurations, I hypothesize that couples with one disabled partner are less likely than couples with two nondisabled partners

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[1] In gender studies, *doing gender* refers to how individuals perform gender in everyday interactions, thereby producing and reproducing societal expectations. For example, dual-earner different-sex couples in which women handle most housework and childcare—and perceive this as fair—can be seen as doing gender. These expectations form an accountability structure through which people are evaluated. In contrast, when individuals deviate from traditional gender scripts, such as in commuter marriages where children live with the father, they may be said to "undo gender."

to rely on a dual-earner model due to disability-related employment inequality. Instead, they are more likely to adopt a single-earner model that relies primarily on the nondisabled spouse (Hypothesis 1). Additionally, the combined effects of the employment barriers faced by disabled individuals and spousal caregiving dynamics may increase the likelihood of a no-earner model in couples where one or both partners have disabilities, compared with nondisabled couples (Hypothesis 2). Finally, I hypothesize that gendered specialization in parenthood—manifesting as increased employment among fathers compared with childless men, and decreased employment among mothers compared with childless women—occurs in couples with one or both disabled partners, just as it does in the general population (Hypothesis 3).

Regarding decision-making processes, from a task transferability perspective, various material factors—such as having more time available due to work restrictions or receiving nonmarket income through disability benefits—may encourage greater involvement in domestic work and childcare and lead to long-term withdrawal from the labor market for some individuals (Hypothesis 4). Symbolic factors may complicate these influences in heterogeneous ways across couples: while disability stigma could clash with gender stereotypes, prompting some disabled individuals to adopt alternative perspectives that reduce gender inequality in the division of paid and unpaid labor, gender display and deviance neutralization mechanisms could reinforce traditional norms. For example, disabled men facing employment barriers may focus on job-seeking rather than domestic or parental responsibilities, whereas disabled women facing restrictions in housework or childcare may intensify their efforts at home, even if doing so means leaving the workforce (Hypothesis 5).

II. Methods

To test these hypotheses, I relied on a sequential mixed-methods protocol. The rationale for integrating methods is complementarity, where each method addresses a distinct aspect of the research question, rather than triangulation, which typically aims to validate results across methods (Small, 2011). A regression analysis of representative survey data addresses the first three hypotheses, identifying significant differences in employment configurations based on the disability status of each partner and parental status. This analysis focuses on paid work and examines patterns using standardized indicators. The statistical results, derived from a representative sample, enable inferences regarding external validity. A thematic analysis of biographical interview data then addresses Hypotheses 4 and 5, revealing the material and symbolic dimensions of the intrahousehold tradeoffs experienced by disabled individuals. This approach links paid and unpaid work and explores decision-making processes as they appear in the lived experiences of disabled people. The qualitative results, derived from a diversified (although not representative) sample, do not

aim for external generalization, but they allow for the transferability of findings to other contexts (Teddlie and Yu, 2007) and analytic generalizations (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2017).

1. Quantitative phase

The statistical analyses relied on a large dataset, the French Labor Force Surveys, conducted by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies. These representative surveys covered individuals living in households, with each household surveyed for 6 consecutive quarters and one-sixth of the sample renewed each quarter. Household members aged 15–89 had to complete an individual questionnaire. The dataset included information on disability status, gender, and family structure, along with data on employment and other background characteristics. Some questions, such as those concerning disability status, were asked only in Waves 1 and 6.

I relied on 2013–2019 survey data, retaining only one observation per couple (i.e., no repeated observations of the same couple over time and no panel modeling). Specifically, I primarily used observations from Wave 6 and incorporated lagged responses on disability status from Wave 1. This approach served to identify people with limitations that lasted at least 18 months (see below). I included in the sample working-age individuals (15–64 years, according to the International Labour Organization standard) living with a partner of a different gender, whether married or cohabiting, provided that both partners' questionnaires were returned. Individuals were excluded if they or their partner were outside the labor market due to ongoing studies or retirement (measured by receipt of retirement pensions) or if disability status information was incomplete or inconsistent between Waves 1 and 6.[2] By matching data from both partners, I obtained a final sample of 41,824 different-sex couples, totaling 83,648 partnered individuals.

Multinomial logistic regression was used to examine the employment configurations within couples. Since this method assumes independence of irrelevant alternatives, a robustness check was conducted using paired combinatorial nested logit regression, which does not rely on this assumption (Koppelman and Wen, 2000). The results were identical in sign and significance for all effects discussed.[3]

The dependent variable, employment configurations, was coded into four categories: dual earners (both partners employed), male breadwinner (only the man employed), female breadwinner (only the woman employed), and no earner (neither partner employed).

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(2) This includes changes from "No, not limited at all" to any degree of limitation, and vice versa. Only 18-month-long limitations were within the scope of the study.

(3) The results of the paired combinatorial nested logit regressions are available in Table S.1 of the Online Appendix, available at https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.ebf40k23

The main variable of interest was couples' disability status. Several indicators exist to define a disabled population, including self-reported long-term limitations, self-identification, and administrative classifications (Ravaud et al., 2002). In this study, disability status was derived from the Global Activity Limitation Indicator, a core variable in European surveys relying on the following question: "Have you been limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do, for at least 6 months?" (Dauphin and Eideliman, 2021). This question has high sensitivity (Cambois et al., 2015) and allows for a range of responses: "yes, severely limited," "yes, but not severely limited," and "no, not limited at all." However, it captures individuals with lasting limitations and those with more transitory difficulties, with the latter being much more common and associated with substantially lower socioeconomic disadvantages (e.g., Parodi and Sciulli, 2012; Mitra, 2018). To capture the systemic effects of disability, I focused on individuals with sustained exposure to limitations, specifically those who reported some degree of limitation in Wave 1 and Wave 6, indicating limitations lasting at least 18 months by Wave 6. As in other studies (Parodi and Sciulli, 2012), I categorized individuals as having mild limitations if they reported being "limited but not severely" in both waves and as having severe limitations if they reported being "severely limited" in at least one of the two waves.

Six categories of couples' disability status were identified: "both without limitations," "man (only) with mild limitations," "man (only) with severe limitations," "woman (only) with mild limitations," "woman (only) with severe limitations," and "both with limitations." This classification was motivated by pragmatic considerations, acknowledging the need to understand disability as a continuum whenever possible (i.e., reflecting how situations vary by degree of limitation), while also accounting for sample-size constraints (i.e., the limited number of couples with two disabled partners in the survey).[4]

Another major independent variable was parental status, coded as a binary variable indicating whether at least one of the partners lives with their own child(ren), including at least one child under the age of 18.

Other control variables included each partner's educational attainment (5 categories), migration status (3 categories), age and age squared, the disabled child allowance (*allocation d'éducation de l'enfant handicapé*) received by the couple as a proxy for having a disabled child (2 categories), and the year of the survey (6 categories).

I estimated the effects of couples' disability status and parental status on the log odds of each employment configuration, controlling for covariates. Model 1 treated the variables of interest as independent, whereas Model 2 accounted for the two-way interaction effects between couples' disability status and parental status. Results reaching at least the .05 significance threshold were considered statistically significant.

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(4) Models using a more aggregated version of the variable—systematically combining mild and severe limitations—yield consistent results, showing intermediate effect sizes and the same significance level.

Average predicted probabilities were then derived from the models to enhance the intelligibility of the results, following a counterfactual logic. Each probability was computed by first estimating predictions for each observation, applying the models' coefficients for one category or a specific combination of categories of the variables of interest (e.g., the combination of "man with mild limitations" and "no child under 18") while keeping all other characteristics at observed values and then averaging the set of predictions. All analyses were performed using R.

2. Qualitative phase

Between December 2019 and June 2020, I conducted 37 semistructured biographical interviews in France. Initially, the interviews took place in six cities in metropolitan France and their suburbs, but after the March 2020 lockdown due to COVID-19, they were conducted by telephone or videoconference with participants from more diverse areas. These interviews targeted adults aged 30–55 who had grown up with visual impairments (20 participants) or specific learning difficulties (17 participants). These two groups were chosen as contrasting disabled subpopulations, differing by type of limitation (visual or cognitive), visibility of the impairment (high or low), and timing of sociopolitical recognition as a disability (several centuries for visual impairments, 2005 legislation for specific learning difficulties). The rationale is that findings derived from highly contrasting subpopulations are more likely to be transferable to the broader disabled population (Engel and Munger, 2003).

I distributed announcements in digital and print formats (large print, braille, sans serif font with 1.5-line spacing) via associations, vocational training centers, assistive technology stores, forums, and social media. The announcements referenced specific impairment groups and clarified that the study as a whole focused on individuals who had grown up with "disabling difficulties or disabilities."

The qualitative sample included 20 women, 15 men, and two nonbinary individuals. Of them, 26 had lived or were currently living in a cohabiting couple, and 16 had children. The interviews began with an information sheet. The participants were then invited to share their life stories, covering various aspects, from education to employment, relationships, and parenthood. The interview recordings were transcribed, resulting in a corpus of nearly 1,400 pages, which is maintained in a data repository and available upon request.[5] The transcripts were analyzed using an inductive, semantic approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). An initial serialization of the interviews helped identify convergences and divergences among participants across key dimensions (e.g., education, couple- and parenthood, employment). The corpus was then systematically coded using the R package RQDA. Preliminary findings on convergences and divergences informed the initial set of themes.

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(5) Bouchet C. 2022. Enquête Handicap et destinées sociales : entretiens (1/2), data.sciencespo.fr. https://doi.org/10.21410/7E4/IIQYAR

I then reread the interviews incrementally, adding new theme codes as needed and organizing them into thematic categories.

This article focuses on eight themes within four thematic categories related to paid and unpaid work, as well as their interrelation, to explore the intrahousehold tradeoffs and decision-making processes experienced by the participants. The gendered imbalance in certain thematic categories, such as those related to unpaid work, is considered a finding in itself; it mirrors how certain topics were raised and discussed differently by female and male interviewees when recounting their life stories and, thus, the varying significance of these themes in daily life according to gender roles.

III. Results

1. Employment configurations

In the French Labor Force Surveys, employment configurations appeared very different between different-sex couples with or without a disabled partner (Table 1). In line with the prevailing model in Western societies, over three-quarters of couples where neither partner had limitations were dual earners. This proportion was notably lower when one or both partners had limitations, ranging from approximately two-thirds where only one partner had mild limitations to approximately one-quarter when both had limitations. Male breadwinning was more common in couples where women had mild (25.7%) or, even more so, severe (49.5%) limitations compared with 15.0% in nondisabled couples. Conversely, female breadwinning was much more frequent when men had mild (15.9%) or severe (43.3%) limitations or when both partners had limitations (18.0%) compared with 4.1% in couples without limitations. Finally, the no-earners configuration was overrepresented in all types of couples where at least one partner had limitations, peaking at 33.3% when both had limitations.

These results reveal compositional differences: couples including men and/or women with limitations were, on average, older and less educated than their nondisabled counterparts (see Table 1). Reflecting these demographics, having a child under 18 at home was also much less common in the former than in the latter.[6] Multinomial logistic regression controlled for these covariates (Table 2).

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[6] By extension, couples where one or both partners had limitations were less likely to have cohabiting children of any age than couples where neither partner had limitations, with proportions ranging from 52.6% for couples where both partners had limitations to 71.4% when the man had mild limitations, compared with 77% for couples with two nondisabled partners. This finding may reflect the higher average age of disabled individuals, meaning that they may have had children who had already left home, or indicate different fertility behaviors. While having a child could be a stronger selection factor for couples with limitations, rerunning Model 2 of the regression on the population of parents—distinguishing between those with children under 18 and those with older children—yields identical results in terms of the effect sign. However, due to reduced sample size, "both with limitations" is no longer significant and "women with severe limitations" is significant only at a .10 threshold (see Table S.2 in the Online Appendix).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the French Labor Force Surveys sample

	Both without limitations	Man with mild limitations	Man with severe limitations	Woman with mild limitations	Woman with severe limitations	Both with limitations
Employment configurations						
Dual earners	78.2	65.6	33.8	66.5	41.7	26.8
Male breadwinner	15.0	11.3	6.3	25.7	49.5	22.0
Female breadwinner	4.1	15.9	43.3	3.4	2.0	18.0
No earner	2.6	7.2	16.6	4.5	6.8	33.3
Age (mean)						
Men	43.2	47.4	49.4	46.8	47.9	52.1
Women	41.0	44.7	46.2	45.6	47.1	50.6
Migration status of men						
French-born, French-born parents	80.7	78.9	74.8	83.7	82.2	75.0
Generation 1, foreign-born	10.7	11.6	15.8	10.5	10.2	17.9
Generation 2, foreign-born parent	8.6	9.5	9.4	5.8	7.6	7.2
Migration status of women						
French-born, French-born parents	80.5	78.1	75.6	84.5	82.1	75.6
Generation 1, foreign-born	11.1	11.6	16.5	9.6	9.1	16.2
Generation 2, foreign-born parent	8.4	10.3	8.0	6.0	8.8	8.2
Educational level of men						
Less or no education	15.2	22.7	33.5	17.8	24.7	39.8
Professional school	27.1	38.8	39.5	37.9	36.9	39.2
High school	18.6	15.6	12.2	15.9	15.8	11.2
Higher education	38.6	22.0	14.5	27.8	22.0	9.5
Unknown	0.6	0.8	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.4
Educational level of women						
Less or no education	13.1	22.7	29.6	20.7	28.2	46.0
Professional school	19.8	24.6	27.2	27.0	30.4	30.0
High school	20.0	18.0	17.7	19.3	18.4	11.9
Higher education	46.4	34.3	25.1	31.4	22.6	11.7
Unknown	0.6	0.4	0.3	1.5	0.3	0.3
At least one child under 18	66.9	57.6	50.5	50.2	47.9	34.3
Disabled child allowance	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.9	1.0
Unweighted N couples	35,812	996	1,522	1,105	1,529	860
Unweighted N individuals	71,624	1,992	3,044	2,210	3,058	1,720

Interpretation: Among different-sex couples composed of two nondisabled partners, 38.6% of male partners have reached higher education compared with only 9.5% of male partners in couples where both partners have limitations.
Note: Weighted statistics presented as percentages, unless otherwise specified.
Source: 2013–2019 French Labor Force Surveys.

Table 2. Relative risk ratios from multinomial logistic regression
on employment configurations in different-sex couples

Ref. = Dual earners	Model 1			Model 2		
	Male breadwinner	Female breadwinner	No earner	Male breadwinner	Female breadwinner	No earner
Couples' disability status (Ref. = Both without limitations)						
Men with mild limitations	0.89 [0.72, 1.10]	4.02*** [3.35, 4.83]	3.26*** [2.52, 4.22]	0.95 [0.68, 1.33]	4.11*** [3.20, 5.28]	2.97*** [1.95, 4.53]
Men with severe limitations	0.93 [0.74, 1.17]	18.09*** [15.85, 20.65]	11.65*** [9.71, 13.97]	1.04 [0.74, 1.47]	18.18*** [15.12, 21.86]	13.43*** [10.27, 17.55]
Women with mild limitations	2.25*** [1.94, 2.61]	0.88 [0.63, 1.23]	2.64*** [2.00, 3.50]	2.91*** [2.37, 3.58]	1.00 (0.66, 1.52)	3.51*** [2.39, 5.14]
Women with severe limitations	7.02*** [6.24, 7.91]	0.95 [0.68, 1.34]	5.96*** [4.77, 7.44]	9.43*** [7.99, 11.12]	1.03 [0.66, 1.61]	7.84*** [5.78, 10.62]
Both with limitations	3.71*** [3.03, 4.55]	8.51*** [6.86, 10.56]	25.48*** [20.65, 31.44]	4.09*** [3.15, 5.30]	9.24*** [7.14, 11.97]	30.76*** [23.61, 40.09]
Parental status (Ref. = No child under 18)						
At least one child under 18	1.80*** [1.66, 1.94]	1.00 [0.90, 1.12]	1.79*** [1.56, 2.07]	1.93*** [1.78, 2.10]	1.02 [0.90, 1.15]	1.99*** [1.68, 2.35]
Disabled child allowance (Ref. = No)						
Yes	2.20*** [1.64, 2.95]	0.82 [0.41, 1.62]	2.40*** [1.43, 4.03]	2.21*** [1.65, 2.96]	0.82 [0.42, 1.63]	2.43*** [1.45, 4.07]
Two-way interactions						
Men with mild limitations × Child under 18				0.91 [0.59, 1.40]	0.95 [0.66, 1.37]	1.18 [0.69, 2.01]
Men with severe limitations × Child under 18				0.83 [0.53, 1.31]	1.00 [0.77, 1.29]	0.79 [0.55, 1.13]
Women with mild limitations × Child under 18				0.61*** [0.45, 0.82]	0.74 [0.37, 1.48]	0.57* [0.32, 1.00]
Women with severe limitations × Child under 18				0.55*** [0.44, 0.70]	0.88 [0.44, 1.76]	0.58* [0.37, 0.90]
Both with limitations × Child under 18				0.81 [0.54, 1.23]	0.78 [0.49, 1.25]	0.63* [0.41, 0.96]
Intercept	0.27*** [0.24, 0.30]	0.09*** [0.08, 0.11]	0.08*** [0.07, 0.10]	0.25*** [0.22, 0.29]	0.09*** [0.08, 0.11]	0.08*** [0.06, 0.10]
N (couples)	41,824			41,824		
N (individuals)	83,648			83,648		
AIC	58,632			58,619		
Pseudo R^2 McFadden	0.17			0.17		
LRT Model 2 vs. Model 1	—			$p < .001$		

Interpretation: According to Model 1, couples where the man has severe limitations are approximately 18 times more likely than couples where both partners have no limitations to follow a female-breadwinner model versus a dual-earner model (relative risk ratio = 18.09).
Notes: Control variables are age (linear and squared) of men and women, educational attainment of men and women, migration status of men and women, and year. AIC = Akaike information criterion. LRT = likelihood-ratio test.
Statistical significance: + $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. 95% confidence intervals in brackets.
*Source:* 2013–2019 French Labor Force Surveys.

In Model 1, net of controls, couples where the woman had limitations were more likely to adopt a male-breadwinner or no-earner model than a dual-earner model compared with couples without limitations. Similarly, couples where the man had limitations were more likely to follow a female-breadwinner or no-earner model than a dual-earner model. In both cases, the gap follows a gradient, with larger differences observed for severe limitations than for milder limitations. Finally, couples where both partners had limitations were more likely to follow a male-breadwinner, female-breadwinner, or no-earner model than a dual-earner model. Parental status and child disability added to these patterns: couples with at least one child under 18 were more likely to follow a male-breadwinner or no-earner model than a dual-earner model—even more so if they received the disabled child allowance—compared to couples without children of this age.

Figure 1 presents the average predicted probabilities derived from these findings, expressed as percentages. Childless couples (i.e., couples without children under 18) without limitations had an 81.1% probability of following the dual-earner model, with 11.6% following the male-breadwinner model, 4.8% following the female-breadwinner model, and 2.5% following the no-earner model. In contrast, the probability of dual earning ranged from 44.4% for childless couples where both partners had limitations to 70.1% and 71.1% for childless couples where only the man or only the woman had mild limitations, respectively. The probability of the male-breadwinner model peaked at 40.3% for couples where women had severe limitations (20.7% if limitations were mild), whereas the probability of the female-breadwinner model reached 40.1% for couples where men had severe limitations (15.6% if limitations were mild). In childless couples where both partners had limitations, these probabilities were 17.8% and 18.4%, respectively. Finally, the no-earner model was most likely when either partner had limitations, peaking at 19.3% when both partners did. Similar trends appeared in couples with children, with lower dual-earning probabilities overall.

Model 2 refined these findings by introducing an interaction effect between couples' disability status and parental status. This interaction effect was statistically significant overall, as demonstrated by the likelihood-ratio test comparing the goodness of fit between Model 1 and Model 2 (Table 2). Regarding specific terms, significance was observed for three types of couples: couples where women had mild or severe limitations and couples where both partners had limitations. For these couples, parenting had a smaller effect on the likelihood of no earning versus dual earning and (when only the woman had limitations) the likelihood of male breadwinning versus dual earning, compared with couples without limitations.

Figure 2 displays the average predicted probabilities derived from Model 2. For couples without limitations, as in Model 1, the probability of following the dual-earner model varied substantially with parental status: 81.6% for

Figure 1. Average predicted probabilities of each employment configuration (Model 1)
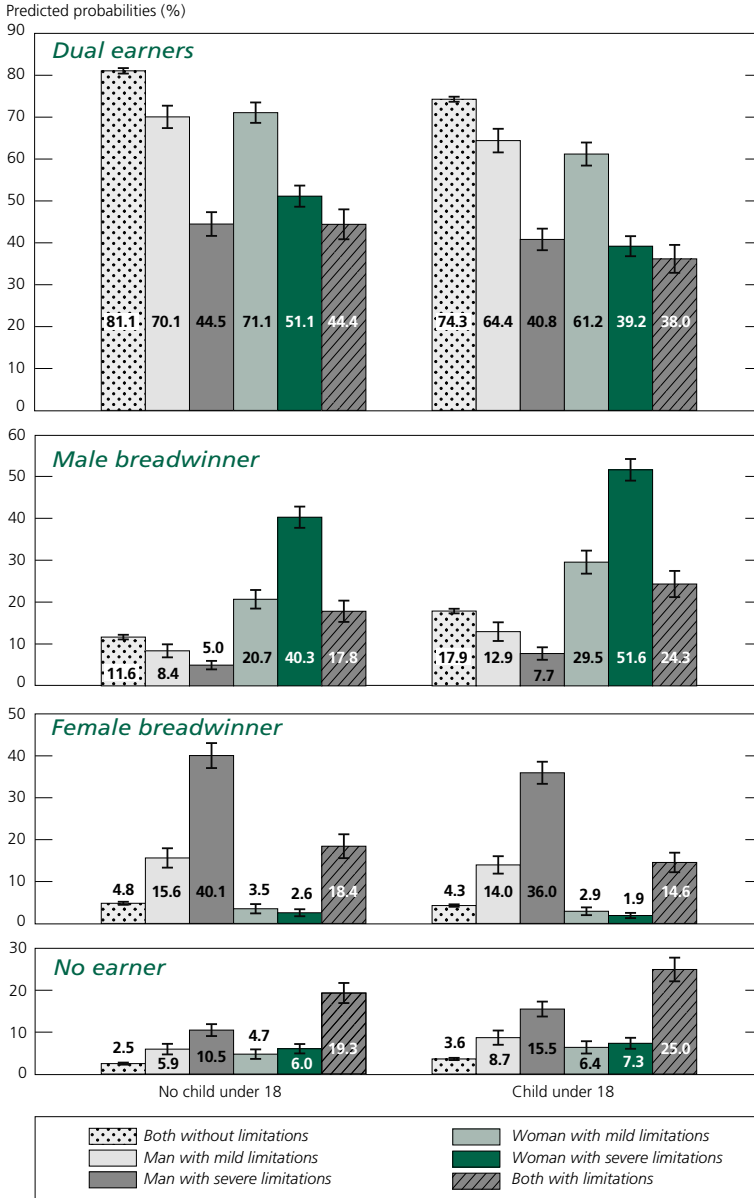
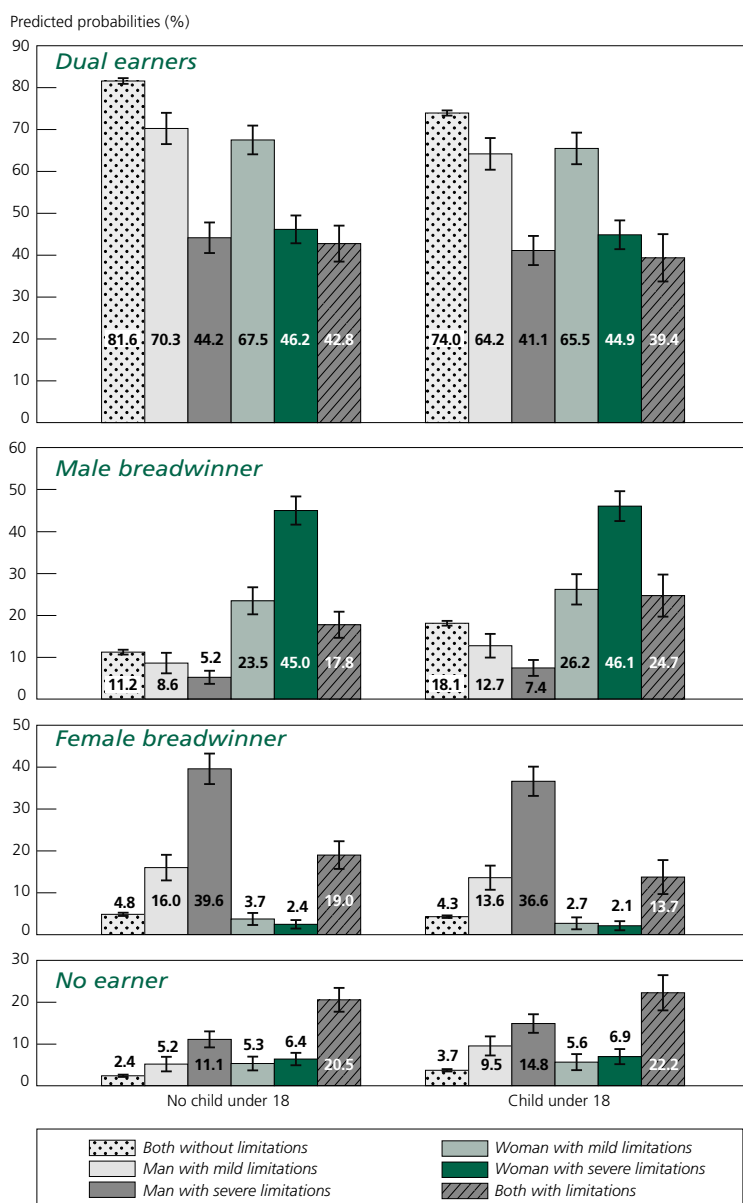*Interpretation:* If all couples in the sample had hypothetical clones identical in all Model 1 characteristics except for disability status and parental status, the average probability of being in a dual-earner configuration would be 81.1% for childless couples where both partners had no limitations.

Note: Average predicted probabilities derived from Table 2, Model 1. The data are presented as percentages with 95% confidence intervals.

Source: 2013–2019 French Labor Force Surveys.

Figure 2. Average predicted probabilities of each employment configuration (Model 2)

Predicted probabilities (%)

Dual earners

Both without limitations	Man with mild limitations	Man with severe limitations	Woman with mild limitations	Woman with severe limitations	Both with limitations
81.6	70.3	44.2	67.5	46.2	42.8
74.0	64.2	41.1	65.5	44.9	39.4

Male breadwinner

| 11.2 | 8.6 | 5.2 | 23.5 | 45.0 | 17.8 |
| 18.1 | 12.7 | 7.4 | 26.2 | 46.1 | 24.7 |

Female breadwinner

| 4.8 | 16.0 | 39.6 | 3.7 | 2.4 | 19.0 |
| 4.3 | 13.6 | 36.6 | 2.7 | 2.1 | 13.7 |

No earner

| 2.4 | 5.2 | 11.1 | 5.3 | 6.4 | 20.5 |
| 3.7 | 9.5 | 14.8 | 5.6 | 6.9 | 22.2 |

No child under 18 — Child under 18

Legend:
- Both without limitations
- Man with mild limitations
- Man with severe limitations
- Woman with mild limitations
- Woman with severe limitations
- Both with limitations

Interpretation: If all couples in the sample had hypothetical clones identical in all Model 1 characteristics except for disability status and parental status, the average probability of being in a dual-earning configuration would be 81.6% for childless couples where both partners have no limitations.

Note: Average predicted probabilities derived from Table 2, Model 2. The data are presented as percentages with 95% confidence intervals.

Source: 2013–2019 French Labor Force Surveys.

couples without children under 18 versus 74% for those with at least one child of this age. This difference was much smaller for couples where the woman had mild limitations (67.5% vs. 65.5%) or severe limitations (46.2% vs. 44.9%) or where both partners had limitations (42.8% vs. 39.4%). Similarly, the probabilities of the male-breadwinner model were much closer for couples without and with children under 18 when the woman had mild (23.5% vs. 26.2%) or severe limitations (45% vs. 46.1%) than for couples without limitations (11.2% vs. 18.1%). The probabilities of a no-earner model were also closer for couples without and with children for couples where women had mild limitations (5.3% vs. 5.6%), severe limitations (6.4% vs. 6.9%), or where both partners had limitations (20.5% vs. 22.2%) than for couples without limitations (2.4% vs. 3.7%).

The employment configurations of couples with disabled partners diverged from the classic gendered patterns observed in nondisabled couples, including less specialization related to parenting status for couples where the woman or both partners had limitations. This is most pronounced in cases of severe limitations but remains noticeable with milder limitations. The following section explores the processes influencing this division of labor, linking paid work to unpaid work.

2. Lived processes connecting paid and unpaid work

The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed the lived processes through which disabled people engage in paid work, domestic work, and/or childcare for their households. While the qualitative sample was not representative of the overall disabled population in France, it included a diverse range of sociodemographic profiles (see Table 3). Importantly, more than two-thirds were either living in a couple at the time of the interview (18) or had previously lived in a couple (8), and nearly half had children under 18 (14) or adult children (2).

Eight themes, raised primarily by men (2), by women (4), or equally by both groups (2), were classified into four main categories: (a) gendered perception of restrictions; (b) social control reinforcing gender norms; (c) family support to circumvent restrictions; and (d) lack of paid work and unpaid work (Table 4). The first two categories highlight subjective experiences in different couple employment configurations and the social influences shaping them, the third category describes processes that facilitate a dual-earner model for some couples with a disabled partner, and the fourth category examines processes leading to asymmetrical configurations (male or female breadwinner).

a. Gendered perception of restrictions

The first two themes pertain to perceptions of restrictions and obstacles related to disability. Theme 1, "perceived restrictions in household and

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the qualitative sample at interview time

	Visual impairment (20)	Specific learning difficulties (17)
Gender (self-identified)	Women: 12 Men: 8	Women: 8 Men: 7 Nonbinary: 2
Age in 2020	Mean: 41.6 Min.: 30 Max.: 52	Mean: 39.3 Min.: 30 Max.: 55
Migration status	French-born, French-born parents: 14 Generation 1, foreign-born: 2 Generation 2, foreign-born parent: 4	French-born, French-born parents: 16 Generation 1, foreign-born: 1
Educational level	Professional school: 2 High school: 7 Higher education: 11	Less or no education: 1 Professional school: 3 High school: 4 Higher education: 9
Employment	Unemployed or out of the labor market: 8 Employed: 12	Unemployed or out of the labor market: 6 Employed: 11
In a couple, living together	Never: 6 Previously: 4 Currently: 10	Never: 5 Previously: 4 Currently: 8
Last partner (if ever in a couple)	Nondisabled partner: 8 Disabled partner: 6	Nondisabled partner: 9 Disabled partner: 3
Last employment configuration (if ever in a couple)	Dual earners: 7 Male breadwinner: 3 Female breadwinner: 3 No earner: 1	Dual earners: 7 Male breadwinner: 3 Female breadwinner: 1 Unknown: 1
Child (currently or previously cohabiting)	Never: 12 Aged 18 and over: 1 Under age 18: 7	Never: 9 Aged 18 and over: 1 Under age 18: 7

Interpretation: Of the 20 individuals with visual impairments in the sample, 10 were living in a couple at the time of the interview, four were single but had previously been in a couple, and six had never been in a couple.
Note: To ensure greater anonymity, aggregated characteristics of the participants are provided instead of a pseudonymized list of individual characteristics. Due to the small sample size, exact numbers are reported rather than percentages.
Source: Semistructured biographical interviews conducted in France between December 2019 and June 2020.

parenting tasks," is mostly found among women—consistent with social norms that place the responsibility for unpaid work mainly on women (Banens and Marcellini, 2015). The challenge of performing domestic work without assistance from relatives, despite facing limitations related to visual impairments, is a topic raised by 10 out of the 12 women in the sample, compared with only 2 out of the 8 men. The traditional assignment of domestic responsibilities to women shapes these viewpoints. For example, Cynthia Vidal,[7] a teacher with visual impairment in a dual-earner couple, expressed concern about not overburdening her nondisabled partner with certain domestic tasks she finds difficult to manage, particularly the more menial chores traditionally assigned to women:

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(7) The interview transcripts are translated verbatim from French. All mentioned names are pseudonyms.

Table 4. Overview of categories and themes

Category	Theme	Gender (raised by)	Example
Gendered perception of restrictions	1. Perceived restrictions in household and parenting tasks	Mostly women	Cynthia Vidal: visual impairment, nondisabled partner, childless, in a dual-earner couple
	2. Difficulties in contributing to family expenses	Mostly men	Jérôme Poirier: visual impairment, nondisabled partner, father, in a female-breadwinner couple
Social control reinforcing gender norms	3. Call to order by partner	Balanced	Fabien Jourdan: specific learning difficulties, nondisabled partner, father, in a dual-earner couple
	4. Discredit from unfamiliar individuals	Mostly women	Emeline Lemaire: visual impairment, single (separated from a disabled partner), mother, previously in a male-breadwinner couple
Family support to circumvent restrictions	5. Partner's role regarding employment	Balanced	Yacine Kasmi: specific learning difficulties, nondisabled partner, father, in a dual-earner couple
	6. Relatives' role concerning domestic and parental work	Mostly women	Monica Deslandes: specific learning difficulties, nondisabled partner, mother, in a dual-earner couple
Lack of paid work and unpaid work	7. Homemaking and mothering out of necessity	Mostly women	Marie Zimmerman: visual impairment, single (separated from a nondisabled partner), mother, previously in a male-breadwinner couple
	8. Circumstantial homemaking and fathering	Mostly men	Yannick Coulon: visual impairment, single (separated from a disabled partner), father, previously in a female-breadwinner couple

As for administrative tasks, I currently do them with my partner. But before I was with him, I used to do them with [an association]. So… [she inhales] what I mean is, that's how it worked out, but if he weren't around, I would've continued doing them with someone else… and, for example, he's not the one who does the cleaning! Because I thought that, in any case, I would have asked someone [from an association] for cleaning. And since he helps me with other things…

In contrast, Theme 2, "difficulties in contributing to family expenses," is specifically associated with men. While both men and women in the sample mentioned employment-related obstacles, only five fathers—three with visual impairments and two with specific learning difficulties—described these obstacles as hindrances to economically providing for their families. Like nondisabled men, they saw this responsibility as a central component of the "package deal" that binds them to their families (Townsend, 2002). Asked about his future prospects, Jérôme Poirier, an unemployed father with visual impairment in a female-breadwinner couple with his nondisabled partner, explained that remaining unemployed could jeopardize his family's upper-class consumption pattern. He felt responsible for preventing this from happening:

> The obstacle, it could be… the financial aspect. Needing to find… an in-come equivalent to what I had before. … We have a house to pay for, we have… [he sighs] the children's school fees [in private schools] … Real estate and education are costly! Then, food, well… Anyway, you must eat, so…! We made the choice to eat… properly. So, well, we eat organic.

b. Social control reinforcing gender norms

The next two themes illustrate how the gender representations of the interviewed individuals are acquired and reinforced through social control exercised by others. Theme 3, "call to order by partner," involves women whose partners criticize the quality of their domestic or parental work (three women) and men whose partners criticize their lack of commitment to employment (two men). For example, Fabien Jourdan, a man with specific learning difficulties in a dual-earner couple, described how his nondisabled wife criticized him during his transition from a high-paying executive role in the private sector—where reading difficulties made administrative tasks particularly time-consuming—to a lower-paying public sector job. During the interview, he still felt compelled to defend his decision to leave his former job:

> I was losing my health, my life, and… it was too much for me. So… in ret-rospect, I don't regret having made that choice. Especially because, here, I'm not in need… we can't do anything crazy, but… it's OK.

However, as highlighted in Theme 4, "discredit from unfamiliar indi-viduals," only women in the sample mentioned experiencing disqualification or criticism from unfamiliar people—reflecting the social scrutiny often directed at women, especially mothers (Frederick, 2017). For example, seven mothers mentioned having their parenting abilities questioned by nursery staff, teachers, colleagues, or even strangers on the street, partic-ularly when their disability was visible (severe visual impairment) or disclosed (moderate visual impairment, specific learning difficulties). Emeline Lemaire, a stay-at-home single mother with visual impairment who was previously in a male-breadwinner couple with her disabled partner, mimicked such episodes:

> "Hold on, I'm going to help you! [horrified exclamation] And you have a baby too, oh my God, how will you manage? Even when I had my children!" Many people address my children as if I'm not there, you know! It's the classic comment, "Take good care of your mom, OK? Help your mom!"

These comments highlight how the women interviewed are constrained by prevailing norms of motherhood. They are subject to overprotective or critical interventions precisely because they are prejudged as not meeting these standards effectively—seen primarily as beneficiaries of care rather than as capable caregivers.

c. Family support to circumvent restrictions

Two other themes pertain to material arrangements within families, through which individuals' relatives contribute to alleviating their restrictions in paid or unpaid work. Theme 5, "partner's role regarding employment," appears in eight interviews, with roughly equal representation between men (3) and women (5). Informal support from partners can, for example, mitigate issues related to transportation accessibility for commuting to work or in the application process. Yacine Kasmi, a skilled employee with specific learning difficulties in a dual-earner couple, explained how his nondisabled partner helps him manage his writing difficulties, from job applications to the core tasks of his job.

> I've always managed to make it work. I mean, I've always managed to… get someone to help me with writing a cover letter, or… and so on and so forth. I have my partner, for example, who helps me a lot. Especially when it comes to writing letters… you know, when I have really important things to do.

Theme 6, "relatives' role concerning domestic and parental work," is present only in the interviews with women. Relying on the implicit assumption that, by default, domestic and parenting tasks are the responsibility of women, four women explained that they received informal "assistance" from their partners and/or other family members (father, stepmother, sister, etc.) when they encountered difficulties with certain activities. Monica Deslandes, an animal breeder with specific learning difficulties in a dual-earner couple, described a daily arrangement in which she handles most tasks, including additional responsibilities related to their children's disabilities, such as providing transportation to the speech therapist, completing disability files, and coordinating with teachers. However, in her words, her nondisabled husband "help[ed]" with certain aspects.

> When there is mental arithmetic to do with the children, he takes care of it! … It's better for my husband to share his methods with our son, since I don't have methods!

d. Lack of paid work and unpaid work

Two final themes relate to the mutual influence between a lack of paid work and engagement in unpaid work, such as housework or childcare. Theme 7, "homemaking and mothering out of necessity," is observed only among women in the sample, specifically mothers. Five mothers and no fathers reported reducing their working hours to manage household tasks and childcare or, when unemployed, forgoing job opportunities incompatible with their family responsibilities. Marie Zimmerman, a stay-at-home single mother with visual impairment, was previously married to a nondisabled man and worked full-time as a secretary. As they became parents, they gradually shifted from a dual-earner model to a male-breadwinner model. When their eldest daughter

was born, she opted for part-time work to accommodate the extra time needed to manage domestic chores with a disability:

> [Full-time] it was really… tiring. When you don't have a driver's license, for shopping… for everything! Everything is a bit complicated. [When I went part-time,] I had at least one day, in the middle of the week, when I could, well, breathe!

Upon the birth of her second daughter, after her company refused to further reduce her hours, she resigned and, for the first time in her life, requested the disability allowance.

Last, Theme 8, "circumstantial homemaking and fathering," is specific to men. Three men in the sample actively participated in parenting tasks during periods when they had a child under the age of 3 and could not find employment. In two cases, their partners were employed. While their forced free time made it easier for them to invest in parenting, these fathers still regarded this role as temporary and undervalued. Yannick Coulon, a physiotherapist with visual impairment who was previously in a female-breadwinner couple with a disabled woman, even described this period as "hell, downfall." He portrayed the role of a stay-at-home dad in tragic terms: "my future was to read books and live off my disability allowance and take care of my son!" While this father expressed deep love for his son, he lucidly depicted his deprivation from the model of masculinity that he had hoped to adopt:

> My father worked, my mother was a housewife, I was molded into that. … It was completely unconscious, it was like, "Well yes, it's normal, I bring home the money," and then… except that it wasn't like that at all because she had a job, she cared a lot about it, and she even earned more than me… but alongside that, it was… cooking wasn't her thing! So, I found myself doing the cooking…. Well, that, it hurt my image… that I had internalized through my family experience.

Overall, the thematic analysis of the interview data explains several intra-household decision-making dynamics involving time availability, economic resources, and/or gender norms. The next section details the intertwined influences of disability-related material barriers and traditional gender roles while reviewing the hypotheses.

IV. Discussion

1. Hypothesis review

The quantitative phase, focused on employment configurations, shows that the dual-earner model, which is typical among nondisabled different-sex couples in Western societies, is less common for couples with one or more disabled partners. The male-breadwinner model is more likely in couples with

a disabled woman, and the female-breadwinner model is more likely in couples with a disabled man, supporting Hypothesis 1 (for a summary of the hypotheses, see Table 5). Interestingly, this pattern holds even when the disabled partner has mild limitations, indicating a continuum of disadvantage. Additionally, couples with a disabled man, a disabled woman, or two disabled partners are more likely to follow a no-earner model, consistent with Hypothesis 2. Although beyond the scope of this study, these findings hold important socioeconomic significance, as the employment penalties faced by disabled individuals and their partners substantially contribute to poverty in these populations (Parodi and Sciulli, 2008; Palmer, 2011). Finally, contrary to Hypothesis 3, gendered specialization in parenthood is less common in couples where women or both partners have disabilities than in nondisabled couples. Overall, disability appears to disrupt several traditional gendered arrangements.

Table 5. Review of hypotheses

Part of the research question (method used)	Hypothesis	Empirical support from the study?
Employment configurations (regression with interaction effects)	1: For couples with one disabled partner, the dual-earner model is less likely, and the single-earner model that relies primarily on the nondisabled spouse is more likely than for nondisabled couples.	Yes
	2: For couples with one or two disabled partners, the dual-earner model is less likely, and the no-earner model is more likely than for nondisabled couples.	Yes
	3: There is the same gendered specialization in parenthood for couples with one or two disabled partners and for nondisabled couples.	No
Decision-making processes linking paid and unpaid work (thematic analysis)	4: In case of employment restrictions, time availability and nonmarket income sources favor disabled parents' unpaid work over paid work.	Partly (time availability)
	5: Heterogeneous influences related to gender norms: while, for some disabled men and women, the rejection of traditional gender roles may reduce inequalities in the division of labor, for others, mechanisms such as gender display and deviance neutralization may reinforce traditional roles.	No

The qualitative phase, based on thematic analysis of biographical interviews, helps identify the underlying processes. In line with Hypothesis 4, the restrictions in paid work faced by disabled interviewees may prompt adjustments in the division of labor within the couples that they are part of. While daily unpaid work contributes to limiting disabled women's employment opportunities, employment barriers increase disabled men's availability for domestic and family chores. The economic impact of resources from disability allowances is less pronounced, as the interviewees can barely "live off" the limited amount (up to 900 euros/month at the time of the interviews) and cannot capitalize for the family. An additional mechanism emerges: when disabled individuals encounter obstacles, family members frequently intervene to assist with work-related activities or assume certain household responsibil-

ities. This finding supports results of a modest redistribution of unpaid labor toward nondisabled men (among other relatives), as noted in the literature (Banens and Marcellini, 2015). Although not observed in this study, it is plausible that in some couples, the time spent supporting a disabled partner competes with paid work, contributing to the no-earning configuration observed in the quantitative analysis. More positively, this support may also help reduce the employment penalty associated with motherhood, which could explain the negative interaction effect—observed in the statistical analysis—between couples where women have limitations and those parenting a child under 18, in terms of male breadwinning or no earning.

Finally, Hypothesis 5 is unsupported, as the gender norms in the sample appear to be consistently centered on traditional gender roles. The individuals interviewed have internalized these roles, initially through the model of their (nondisabled) parents and later by being called to order whenever they deviated from these norms. Some disabled women even exhibit "gender display" behaviors in response to restrictions, performing hegemonic femininity by increasing their time spent on domestic work at the expense of labor market participation. Furthermore, even those who occasionally diverge from traditional roles—such as disabled women delegating certain domestic or parenting tasks to their male partners or disabled men taking on traditionally female responsibilities—still reference mainstream gender norms as a gold standard. Here, disability underscores how strong gender beliefs can persist in the face of unconventional circumstances (Ridgeway, 2011).

2. Implications

These results refine knowledge about models of the gendered division of labor, providing a counterpoint to the usual able-bodied-centered perspective. The terms of material tradeoffs are somewhat different for couples with a disabled person than for nondisabled couples, as the encountered restrictions frame the time invested in paid work versus domestic work and childcare.

Building on the preceding analysis, I propose the concept of gendered work restriction, which highlights two equally important aspects: practical adaptations within the traditional gendered division of labor in response to material constraints ("restrictions") and their perception by disabled people as abnormal in relation to unchallenged gender norms ("gendered work").

On the one hand, as demonstrated by the statistical analysis, employment configurations are shaped by disability in different-sex couples, departing from gendered and parenting patterns. Qualitative evidence shows that men's employment restrictions and women's housework restrictions partially attenuate inequalities in the division of labor, validating a "task transferability" perspective (Solaz, 2005).

On the other hand, circumstantial adjustments in the face of restrictions do not substantially alter gender roles. Disabled women often find ways to

bypass restrictions on unpaid work—handling household chores and childcare, including care for a disabled child, with support or extra time. In doing so, they preserve their identification with homemaking and mothering roles, albeit at the cost of gender inequality. In contrast, certain employment barriers cannot be overcome (even with spousal support) and profoundly affect disabled men's identification as breadwinners without offering an acceptable alternative role. This mismatch between practices and representations enriches our understanding of the interplay between material circumstances and gender ideologies (Risman, 2018).

Integrating disability into the analysis of the gendered division of labor also advances intersectionality research. When intersectionality research does not explicitly include disability, it risks implicitly focusing on nondisabled individuals (Bouchet, 2024), much as feminist studies have been critiqued for their historical bias toward white, middle-class experiences (West and Fenstermaker, 1995). While valuable studies address this bias by examining the intersections between disability and gender in employment (e.g., Ballo, 2019; Maroto et al., 2019; Boudinet, 2024) and caregiving within families (Banens and Marcellini, 2015; Shandra and Penner, 2017; Cheneau, 2019), this paper extends these efforts by examining the interplay of both dimensions. It also provides important coverage of disabled fathers (Kilkey and Clarke, 2010), who are studied much less frequently than disabled mothers (Grue and Lærum, 2002; Frederick, 2017; Doé, 2019; Malacrida, 2019).

3. Limitations

The quantitative and qualitative data pertain to the population living in households; thus, the results do not apply to disabled individuals in institutional settings. Marital and relationship statuses are protective factors against institutional placement (Bouvier et al., 2011), whereas the obstacles to life as part of a couple in institutions are considerable (Giami and de Colomby, 2008). Thus, partnered individuals living in institutions represent a highly atypical group that should be studied as such.

The quantitative data, although remarkable in terms of sample size, lack detailed information on types of limitations (mobility, sensory, cognitive, etc.) and timing of onset. This constrains the ability to conduct more nuanced analyses by subgroups of disabled individuals.

The qualitative sample is not randomly drawn from the quantitative sample and is therefore not representative, although the recruitment criterion of "disabling difficulties" broadly reflects long-term limitations, allowing for comparable findings. The qualitative sample also focuses on early-onset difficulties (birth, childhood, or adolescence), aligning with the quantitative component's focus on individuals with enduring limitations but applying a stricter criterion. While this choice offers valuable insight into lifelong decision-making processes, it should not obscure the key differences between those with early-onset

impairments and those who acquire them in adulthood, notably in terms of identity, educational paths, and family opportunities (Barnartt and Altman, 2016). For example, impairments present before a couple forms are linked to lower relationship formation and higher separation rates, whereas later-onset impairments tend to stabilize existing relationships (Banens et al., 2007). Moreover, the onset of impairment in adulthood suggests a different relationship with employment and income. In the context of inadequate working conditions, employment itself can become a source of health problems (Barnay, 2016). The possibility of remaining employed—or, if not, the type and level of replacement income available—depends particularly on the cause of the impairment (occupational or not), as well as on characteristics of the previous job, such as qualifications, public or private sector employment, and wages (Duguet and Le Clainche, 2014; Bondoux, 2024). Thus, further qualitative studies are needed to better understand couples' decision-making when one partner acquires a disabling condition.

Importantly, neither the quantitative nor qualitative analyses aim to establish causation. Multinomial logistic regression models do not account for unobserved heterogeneity and focus on the distribution of employment configurations rather than their changes over time. Therefore, the statistical results are correlational, with the sole assurance that disability status preceded the employment configurations studied. Moreover, the thematic analysis aligns with a paradigm interested in processes rather than causation (Becker, 1998).

Conclusion

Building on the French case, this study highlights that classical theories of the gendered division of labor are not disability neutral. Disability interacts with gender in the division of labor, influencing couples' configurations and processual tradeoffs in ways that challenge traditional gender arrangements and reinforce traditional gender norms—a tension reflected in the new concept of gendered work restriction.

I aim to encourage similar research in diverse countries, considering additional intersections such as social class and race. Studies using more precise data on specific limitations (e.g., cognition, mobility) would also be useful for refining the analysis of the challenges faced in paid and unpaid work. This research helps clarify the norms and prerequisites for engaging in various types of work, whether paid or unpaid, within households.

Finally, social changes in the division of labor need to be studied from a disability perspective. For example, the rise of telecommuting during the COVID-19 pandemic may have eased certain employment restrictions for disabled people (Schur et al., 2020), potentially transforming the division of labor within their households in ways different from those of nondisabled

couples (Pailhé et al., 2022). This ambitious program cannot be achieved through disability research alone; it calls for a critical reassessment of family research to adequately account for disability.

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Résumé

Célia Bouchet • **Quand la division sexuée du travail est entravée : handicap et arrangements conjugaux en France**

S'il est connu que la division sexuée du travail rémunéré et non rémunéré au sein des couples hétérosexuels est structurée par le genre et la classe sociale, le rôle du handicap reste largement négligé. À partir d'une analyse de données de l'enquête Emploi en continu, cette étude révèle que les couples dans lesquels un·e ou les deux partenaires présentent des limitations durables sont moins souvent biactifs que ceux sans limitation, et que, lorsque la femme est concernée, la spécialisation parentale y est moins marquée. L'analyse thématique des entretiens biographiques menés auprès de 37 adultes handicapé·es met en évidence les expériences subjectives et les arbitrages réalisés dans l'organisation du travail rémunéré et domestique, en fonction des configurations professionnelles des couples et des influences sociales sous-jacentes. Les restrictions rencontrées par les hommes et les femmes, respectivement en matière d'emploi et de travail domestique, mènent à des ajustements circonstanciels dans la division sexuée du travail, sans pour autant abolir les normes de genre qui la sous-tendent. Cette tension entre contraintes matérielles et normes symboliques est conceptualisée à travers le concept de restrictions à la division sexuée du travail.