



**DirectEmployers
Association**

The Wide Wage Gap for Disabled Workers

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No one person can grant or gatekeep access. Access is something we **create together**.

We should have **captions and transcripts** if you need them.

If you need to take a break, log off, answer phone calls, stand up, twiddle your fingers, fidget, or feel overwhelmed – **go for it!**

If you would like a copy of these slides, the images have **alt text** and should be **screen reader accessible** too. 😊

Disability Employment Statistics

- ❑ **1 in 4** Americans have a disability
- ❑ 17.9 percent of persons with a disability were employed (2020)
- ❑ **29 percent of workers with a disability** were employed part time (2020)
 - Compare with 16 percent for nondisabled workers
- ❑ 10.3% of disabled workers were self-employed (2020)
 - Compare with 6.1% of nondisabled workers
- ❑ Disability-specific employment rates for post-high school



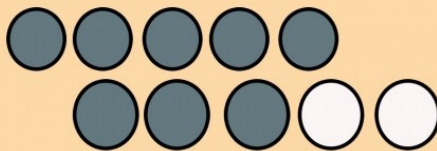
Disability Employment

THE NUMBERS

33% Percentage of the disabled
population employed
part-time in 2014
(Compare to 18 percent of those without a disability)

The unemployment rate for people
with disabilities in 2014...
More than twice the rate for people
without a disability, 5.9 percent.

12.5%



8 IN 10 Number of disabled people
NOT in the workforce in 2014

People with disabilities are self-starters.

11% are self-employed,
compared to 6 percent
of those with no disability





Source: The U.S. Dept. of Labor

Graphic by: Lily Altavenna, National Center on Disability and Journalism, ASU

COVID-19's Impact on the Workforce

National Trends In Disability Employment: COVID Update Month-to-Month Unemployment Numbers for People With and Without Disabilities



Labor Force Participation Rate			Employment-Population Ratio		
	Dec '20	Jan '21		Dec '20	Jan '21
	33.2	32.8		29.4	28.7
	% change ↓ -1.2			% change ↓ -2.4	
	75.7	75.5		70.9	70.5
	% change ↓ -0.3			% change ↓ -0.6	

* PWD – People with disabilities; PWOD – People without disabilities

Source: Kessler Foundation/University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability

Some Wage Disparities

- ❑ People with disabilities make about **68 cents for every dollar earned by nondisabled people** (American Association of University Women, 2016)
 - This likely accounts for part-time, self-employed, and independent contractors
 - Boston metro is about 63 cents per dollar – that's an income gap of about \$24,000/year (Ruderman Family Foundation)
- ❑ As a group, full-time, year-round workers with a disability earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by those with no disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019)
- ❑ Some careers have higher wage disparities than other professions
- ❑ The wage gap grows with higher levels of education

Not Just An American Issue



How Does Disability Employment & The Wage Gap Impacts Lives

- ❑ Disabled people are **more likely to be living in poverty**
 - Nearly 27% of people with disabilities live below the federal poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017)
- ❑ Disability is expensive!
 - Health insurance premiums, or “forced poverty” to receive Medicaid
- ❑ Asset caps for people receiving Social Security Income and Medicaid
 - To get SSI, your countable resources must not be worth **more than \$2,000 for an individual or \$3,000 for a couple**
 - This also contributes to the unemployment rate
- ❑ Social Security Disability Income is a separate issue

A Closer Look at Disabled Women

- ❑ Prevalence of disability is **higher among women** than among men across all age groups.
- ❑ In 2017, only 34.6% of American women with disabilities were employed
 - In contrast, 82.5% of nondisabled American women are employed.
- ❑ Disabled women are more likely than disabled men to be unemployed or underpaid
- ❑ Women with disabilities earn **72 cents for every dollar** earned by men with disabilities



Policy Consideration: How Can You Legally be Paid Pennies for Work?

- ❑ **The Fair Labor Standards Act (1938):** part of Great Depression era recovery
 - Established child labor regulations, minimum wage, overtime pay, and record-keeping.
 - BUT: **Section 14(c)** of the Fair Labor Standards Act allows authorized employers with certificates from the federal government to **pay workers with disabilities less than the federal minimum wage** (currently: \$7.25/hour).
- ❑ Who are 14(c) certificate holders?
 - Typically, they are nonprofits and manufacturers
 - A list is publicly available on the U.S. Department of Labor website
- ❑ Why do people support subminimum wage?
 - “Supporters of subminimum wage believe that working is what impacts self-esteem and not wages earned, so their wages do not matter.” – Allison Boot
 - Wages and their impact on benefits
- ❑ Why are people against subminimum wage?
 - Equal pay for equal work; high disability poverty rates
 - Often in segregated environments (“sheltered workshops”) rather than competitive, integrated employment.

Subminimum Wage Coming to an End

- ❑ At least six states have ended or began phasing out subminimum wage: Alaska, Maryland, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Texas.
- ❑ Bipartisan and nonpartisan calls to end subminimum wage
 - Congressional Republicans and Democrats are in favor of abolishing subminimum wage (Transition to Competitive Employment Act)
 - In Sept. 2020, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued a report to end the practice
- ❑ The current administration pledged to end subminimum wage for people with disabilities



The Americans With Disabilities Act

“Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 **prohibits** private employers, State and local governments, employment agencies and labor unions from **discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities** in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, **compensation**, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

The ADA covers employers with 15 or more employees, including State and local governments.

Your individual state civil rights laws may be more restrictive.

Where Does the ADA Fit Into This?

- ❑ The ADA is the floor, not the ceiling
- ❑ The ADA prohibits disability discrimination
- ❑ But, the Rehabilitation Act makes a much more concerted effort to hire and promote people with disabilities



How Do We Address This Wage Gap?

- ❑ Salary transparency for all workers
- ❑ Champion employees with disabilities
- ❑ Ending disability stereotypes
- ❑ Investing in diverse suppliers and support disability-owned businesses





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