

Economic News Release



Persons With A Disability: Barriers to Employment, Types of Assistance, and other Labor-Related Issues Summary

For release 10:00 a.m. (EDT) Wednesday, April 24, 2013

USDL-13-0729

Technical information: (202) 691-6378 * cpsinfo@bls.gov * www.bls.gov/cps

Media contact: (202) 691-5902 * PressOffice@bls.gov

PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY: BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT, TYPES OF ASSISTANCE, AND OTHER LABOR-RELATED ISSUES -- MAY 2012

In May 2012, half of all persons with a disability who were not working reported some type of barrier to employment, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Lack of education or training, lack of transportation, the need for special features at the job, and a person's own disability were among the barriers reported. Among persons with a disability who were employed, over half had some difficulty completing their work duties because of their disability.

These findings were obtained from a supplement to the May 2012 Current Population Survey (CPS). The supplement was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. The CPS is a monthly survey of about 60,000 households that obtains information on national employment and unemployment for the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and over, including information on persons with a disability. The May 2012 supplement collected information about barriers to employment, prior work experience, career and financial assistance, requested changes to the workplace, and related topics for persons with a disability. For more information, see the Technical Note.

Selected Characteristics of Persons with a Disability

In May 2012, about 28.3 million men and women in the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and over had a disability. Persons with a disability tend to be older than those with no disability, reflecting the increased incidence of disability with age. In May 2012, 45.4 percent of persons with a disability were age 65 and over, compared with 13.4 percent of those with no disability. Women were somewhat more likely to have a disability than men, partly reflecting the greater life expectancy of women. In terms of educational attainment, 15.1 percent of persons age 25 and over with a disability had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 33.4 percent for persons with no disability. (See table 1.)

About 18.2 percent of persons with a disability were employed in May 2012, well below the employment-population ratio of 64.3 percent for persons with no disability. In part, this reflects the older age profile of the group of persons with a disability. However, the employment-population ratio was much lower among persons with a disability for all age groups.

Barriers to Employment

Half of those with a disability who were not employed in May 2012 (that is, persons who were either unemployed or not in the labor force) reported at least one barrier to employment. When asked to identify barriers they had encountered, most reported that their own disability was a barrier to employment (80.5 percent). Other barriers cited included lack of education or training (14.1 percent), lack of transportation (11.7 percent), and the need for special features at the job (10.3 percent). (See tables 2 and 3.)

A greater proportion of persons ages 16 to 64 reported a barrier to employment than those age 65 and over (70.8 percent and 29.8 percent, respectively), perhaps reflecting the fact that older workers are, in general, less likely to participate in the labor force. Among persons with a disability age 25 and over, 38.6 percent of persons with a college degree who were not employed reported a barrier to employment, compared with 52.9 percent of those with less than a high school diploma.

Prior Work Experience

Among persons with a disability who were not in the labor force in May 2012 (that is, neither employed nor unemployed), 87.7 percent had worked before. This proportion was essentially the same for both men and women. A person's disability status was established at the time of the survey; their previous work experience may have occurred at a time when they did not have a disability. (See table 4.)

The proportion of persons with a disability who were not in the labor force but had prior work experience increased with age. For example, 21.1 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds had worked before, compared with 96.9 percent of those age 65 and over.

Individuals with a disability who had higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to have had work experience. About 96.9 percent of those age 25 and over with a college degree had worked before, compared with 84.7 percent of those with less than a high school diploma.

Career Assistance Programs

In May 2012, 7.4 percent of persons with a disability reported using some type of career assistance program within the past 5 years to help them prepare for work or advance on the job. Career assistance programs include Vocational Rehabilitation Centers, One-Stop Career Centers, and similar programs. (See table 5.)

Persons with a disability who were unemployed (that is, actively looking for work) at the time of the survey were more likely than those who were employed or not in the labor force to have used some

type of career assistance. About 26.7 percent of persons with a disability who were looking for work in May 2012 reported using a career assistance program, compared with 11.1 percent of employed persons with a disability and 5.9 percent of those not in the labor force.

Persons with a disability ages 16 to 64 were more likely to have used a career assistance program than those age 65 and over (12.0 percent and 2.0 percent, respectively).

Financial Assistance Programs

About 58.4 percent of persons with a disability received financial assistance within the past year from one or more of the following sources: Workers Compensation, Social Security Disability Income, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans Disability compensation, disability insurance payments, Medicaid, Medicare, and other payments or programs. (See table 6.)

Among persons with a disability, those who were employed were least likely to have received some type of financial assistance within the past year (23.9 percent). About 39.8 percent of persons with a disability who were unemployed received assistance from at least one of the financial assistance programs listed above, compared with 67.0 percent for those not in the labor force. (Differences in use of financial assistance among those with a disability reflect a variety of factors such as age, work history, or program eligibility requirements.)

Some financial assistance programs include work limitations in order to establish or maintain program eligibility. The large majority (92.5 percent) of those who received financial assistance within the past year reported that the program(s) they used did not cause them to work less than they otherwise would have.

Difficulty Completing Work Duties

In May 2012, just over half of employed persons with a disability reported that their disability caused difficulty in completing their current work duties. About 27.8 percent reported a little difficulty in completing work duties, 21.1 percent reported moderate difficulty, and 7.0 percent reported severe difficulty. About 44.1 percent of employed persons with a disability had no difficulty completing their current work duties. (See table 7.)

Among employed persons with a disability, those age 65 and over were less likely to report that they had some difficulty completing their work duties than were those ages 16 to 64--46.8 percent versus 57.6 percent. Men and women were about equally likely to report difficulty completing work duties due to their disability.

Requesting Changes in the Workplace

Employed persons with a disability were more likely to have requested a change in their current workplace to do their job better than were those with no disability (12.5 percent and 8.4 percent, respectively). Such changes included new or modified equipment; physical changes to the workplace; policy changes to the workplace; changes in work tasks, job

structure, or schedule; changes in communication or information sharing; changes to comply with religious beliefs; accommodations for family or personal obligations; training; or other changes. Among workers with a disability, 14.1 percent of those ages 16 to 64 had requested a change in their current work place, compared with 3.6 percent of those age 65 and over. (See table 8.)

Regardless of disability status, requests for changes to work tasks, job structure, or schedule were most common, followed by requests for new or modified equipment. (See table 9.)

Persons with a disability who asked for a change in their current workplace were more likely to have requested physical changes to the workplace than were those with no disability. In contrast, training, policy changes, or changes in communication or information sharing were more commonly requested by employed persons with no disability.

Commute

About 74.6 percent of persons with a disability used their own vehicle for their commute to work. Other commuting methods used much less often by persons with a disability included riding in a friend or family member's car, taking a bus, walking, and taking the train or subway. Commuting methods among persons with no disability followed a very similar pattern. (See table 10.)

Work at Home

In May 2012, about 24.5 percent of employed persons with a disability did some work at home as part of their job, compared with 20.2 percent of those with no disability. Older workers (age 65 and over) with a disability were more likely to work at home than those ages 16 to 64, while men and women with a disability were equally likely to work at home. (See table 11.)

Persons with a disability who had higher educational attainment were more likely to work at home. For example, among persons with a disability age 25 and over, college graduates were more than 3 times as likely to work at home than those without a high school diploma (48.9 percent and 14.8 percent, respectively).

Flexible Work Hours

Employed persons with a disability were more likely than those with no disability to have flexible work schedules in May 2012 (42.2 percent and 35.0 percent, respectively). These workers reported that they had flexible work hours that allowed them to vary the time they began or ended work. (See table 12.)

Over half (57.3 percent) of workers with a disability age 65 and over had flexible work schedules, compared with 39.4 percent of those between 16 and 64 years of age. Men and women with disabilities were about equally likely to have flexible work hours.

Regardless of disability status, the likelihood of having a flexible work schedule was higher for college graduates than for persons with less education.

Temporary Jobs

In May 2012, about 5.8 percent of employed persons with a disability held jobs that were temporary, compared with 4.4 percent of those with no disability. These workers expected their job to last only for a limited time or until the completion of a project. (See table 13.)

For both persons with and without a disability, the likelihood of holding a temporary job was highest among persons who had not completed high school.

- [Persons With A Disability: Barriers to Employment, Types of Assistance, and other Labor-Related Issues Technical Note](#)
- [Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by disability status and selected characteristics, May 2012](#)
- [Table 2. Persons with a disability who were not employed by age, sex, educational attainment, prior work experience, and barrier to employment, May 2012](#)
- [Table 3. Persons with a disability who were not employed by age, sex, educational attainment, prior work experience, and type of barrier to employment, May 2012](#)
- [Table 4. Persons with a disability who were not in the labor force by sex, age, educational attainment, and prior work experience, May 2012](#)
- [Table 5. Persons with a disability who received career assistance in the past 5 years by current employment status, prior work experience, and age, May 2012](#)
- [Table 6. Persons with a disability who used a financial assistance program in the past year by age, employment status, usual full- or part-time status, and program limitation on work, May 2012](#)
- [Table 7. Employed persons with a disability by age, sex, and level of disability-related difficulty in completing current work duties, May 2012](#)
- [Table 8. Employed persons who requested a change in their current workplace to help them do their job better by age, sex, and disability status, May 2012](#)
- [Table 9. Employed persons who requested a change in their current workplace to help them do their job better by age, sex, disability status, and type of change requested, May 2012](#)
- [Table 10. Employed persons by typical commute to work and disability status, May 2012](#)
- [Table 11. Employed persons who worked at home by age, sex, educational attainment, and disability status, May 2012](#)
- [Table 12. Employed persons with flexible work hours by age, sex, educational attainment, and disability status, May 2012](#)
- [Table 13. Employed persons with temporary jobs by age, sex, educational attainment, and disability status, May 2012](#)
- [HTML version of the entire news release](#)

The PDF version of the news release

Table of Contents

Last Modified Date: July 15, 2016

RECOMMEND THIS PAGE USING:  Facebook  Twitter  LinkedIn

TOOLS

Areas at a Glance
Industries at a Glance
Economic Releases
Databases & Tables
Maps

CALCULATORS

Inflation
Injury And Illness

HELP

Help & Tutorials
FAQs
Glossary
About BLS
Contact Us

INFO

What's New
Careers @ BLS
Find It! DOL
Join our Mailing Lists
Linking & Copyright Info

RESOURCES

Inspector General
Budget and
No Fear Act
USA.gov
Benefits.gov

[Freedom of Information Act](#) | [Privacy & Security Statement](#) | [Disclaimers](#) | [Customer Survey](#) | [Important Web Site Notices](#)

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | Division of Labor Force Statistics, PSB Suite 4675, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE Washington,

DC 20212-0001

www.bls.gov/CPS | Telephone: 1-202-691-6378 | [Contact CPS](#)