

Data Note

No. 63, 2019

Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS), 2017

Employment Rates for People With and Without Disabilities

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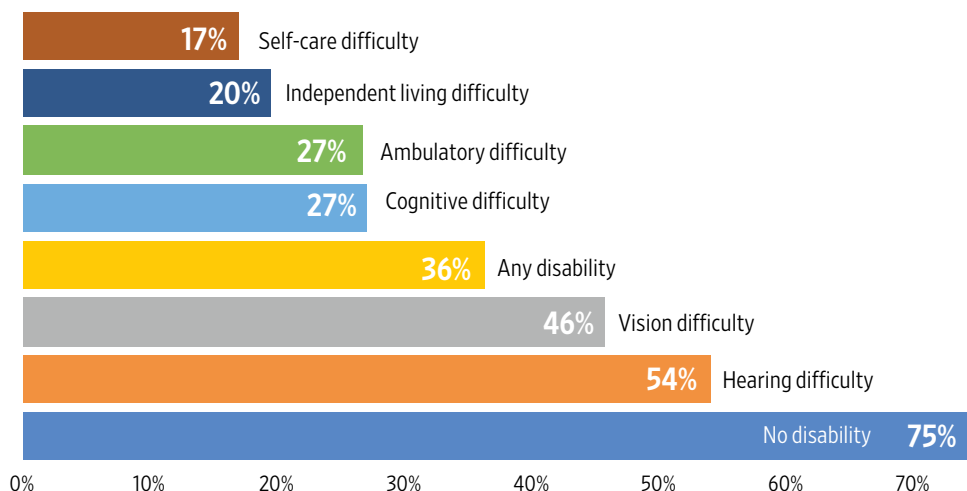
Data show that people with disabilities are consistently less likely to be working than their non-disabled counterparts. In this Data Note, the employment rate for working-age people is compared across disability types, as well as those without disabilities.

“Working-age people” is defined as those who are non-institutionalized, ages 16–64. The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of people who are employed by the sum of people who are employed, unemployed, and not in the labor force. “Not in the labor force” is defined as unemployed and not actively job searching in the past four weeks.

As Figure 1 shows, the employment rate for individuals with any disability, i.e., any one of the disabilities listed on the ACS, was 36.3%. Comparatively, the employment rate of individuals without disabilities was over twice that (74.8%). Looking at the disability subpopulation groups in Figure 1, individuals with a self-care difficulty (i.e., difficulty with bathing or dressing) had the lowest employment rate, at 17%. Those with hearing difficulty and vision difficulty had the highest at 54% and 45.8%, respectively. Fewer than 30% of people with independent living difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, and cognitive difficulty were employed.

While employment rates across disability subpopulation groups vary, all disability groups lag far behind their counterparts without a disability. The employment rates by subpopulation underscore the challenges faced by specific groups in obtaining and retaining employment. Closing the employment rate gap between working-age people in various disability subpopulations and their working-age counterparts without disabilities should be a critical goal for policy and practice.

Figure 1. 2017 Employment Rate



Suggested Citation

Shepard, J. (2019). Employment rates for people with and without disabilities. DataNote Series, Data Note 63. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed by the U.S. Census Bureau to show communities how they are changing. The ACS collects information from all 50 states and D.C. on topics such as disability, age, race, income, commute time, home value, and veteran status. As with the official decennial census, information about individuals is confidential.

Source: www.census.gov

ACS Disability Type Definitions		# of Individuals
Self-care difficulty	Having difficulty bathing or dressing	3,606,121
Hearing difficulty	Deaf or having serious difficulty hearing	3,977,267
Vision difficulty	Blind or having serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses	3,947,154
Independent living difficulty	Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping	7,485,714
Ambulatory difficulty	Having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs	9,770,835
Cognitive difficulty	Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions	9,191,844
Any disability	Respondent indicated "Yes" to one or more of the functional impairments listed above	20,945,431

Source: American Community Survey (ACS), 2017
www.census.gov/topics/health/disability.html

