

Policy Brief

Disability in America



2020 marked the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The main goal of the law was to prohibit discrimination and increase opportunities for people with disabilities. Such opportunities are in areas that include but are not limited to transportation, public accommodations, and of course, employment. The ADA is federally mandated, and employers over time have been using its requirements as a blueprint to promote an inclusive environment for disabled applicants and employees.

The purpose of this brief is to provide information and statistics that broaden your outlook on the topic concerning the integration of people with disabilities into the workforce. As you proceed to learn more about disability, employment, and inclusion, it is vital to understand and remember that the development of a successful plan to integrate means people with disabilities are treated no differently than any other employee. In keeping with the spirit of the ADA, people with disabilities should be held to the same standards as the rest of the workforce; this includes the same level of pay, opportunities for advancement, etc. With all of that being said, let's get to work!

Disability Defined

Titles I-V of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are codified in Title 42, chapter 126, of the United States Code. Section 12102 in chapter 126 defines disability and its as

follows: “(A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (B) a record of such an impairment; or (C) being regarded as having such an impairment.”

Visible & Non-Visible Disabilities:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Learning Disabilities (i.e., Dyslexia)
- Mobility Disabilities – Cerebral Palsy (CP), Muscular Dystrophy (MD), Spina Bifida, etc.
- Medical Disabilities – Cancer, Heart Diseases, Diabetes, etc.
- Psychiatric Disabilities – Depression, Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder etc.
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Visual Impairments – Glaucoma, Cataract, Blindness, etc.
- Austin Spectrum Disorders (i.e., Asperger Syndrome)

Employment at a Glance for People with Disabilities in the United States (2020)

17.9%

Percentage of the disabled population employed in 2020 (Compared to 61.8% of those without a disability).

12.6%

National unemployment rate for people with disabilities in 2020, up by 5.3% from 2019

29.1%

The 2020 employment-population ratio for persons with a disability, age 16-64 (Compared to 70% for persons without a disability without a disability).

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2020 Jobless Rates for People with Disabilities, (by racial group)

Black: 16.3% unemployment rate

White: 11.6% unemployment rate

Hispanic: 16.8% unemployment rate

Asian: 15.7% unemployment rate

COVID-19 Pandemic & Workers with Disabilities (2020)

Number of jobs lost nationally in the disability community by August 2020 (Nearly 1 million)

18.9% National unemployment rate for those with a disability, April 2020 (Compared to 14.3% for those without a disability)

11% National unemployment rate for those with a disability, December 2020 (Compared to 6.3% for those without a disability)

Job losses for workers with disabilities (by August 2020)

1 in 5 workers with disabilities lost their jobs ○●●●●

1 in 7 non-disabled workers lost their jobs. ○●●●●

Labor force participation rate for working-age persons with disabilities (United States)

April 2020 19.8%

(compared to 65.2% for persons without a disability)

Dec. 2020 20.0%

(compared to 66.6% for persons without a disability)

References

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FLORIDA CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Department of Child and Family Studies • College of Behavioral & Community Sciences
University of South Florida • 13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd. • MHC 2113A • Tampa, FL 33612
813-974-3126 • Toll Free: 1-866-818-4797 • Website: www.flcic.org



UNIVERSITY of
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