

Disability and Employment: Building A Research Agenda

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Outline of presentation

1. How many people with disabilities are employed?
2. How many employers hire people with disabilities?
3. How often are accommodations needed, and what are their costs and benefits?

Outline (cont.)

4. Do non-employed people with disabilities want to work?
5. What are the prospects for increasing employment of people with disabilities?
 - Good news and bad news
6. What should be on the research agenda?

1. How many people with disabilities are employed? (age 21-64, 2006)

No disability	80%
Any disability	38%

Sensory impairment	48%
Mobility impairment	32%
Mental/cognitive impairment	29%
Difficulty going outside	17%

(from www.disabilitystatistics.org)

2. How many employers hire people with disabilities?

A 2003 national employer survey by Rutgers' Heldrich Center found that:

- 26% of companies employ at least one person with a known disability
 - 20% of companies with 5-24 employees
 - 42% of companies with 25+ employees

- Among those employing people with disabilities:
 - 59% have an employee with a physical disability
 - 44% have an employee with a mental disability
 - 85% were aware of the disability at the time of hiring

- Many of these employers identify employer attitudes as a key problem:

20% say that the greatest barrier to people with disabilities finding employment is employer reluctance to hire, or discrimination/prejudice

3. How often are accommodations needed, and what are their costs and benefits?

Among companies employing people with disabilities, only 24% reported that any accommodations were needed (from 2003 Rutgers survey)

Among the 24% of companies providing accommodations, the average cost was:

\$100 or less	34%
\$500 or less	71%

Benefits of Accommodations

Surveys of employers who used Job Accommodation Network show that a dollar spent on accom. leads to an estimated \$35 in benefits on average

Main benefits reported:

- Hire/retain qualified employee 56%
- Increase worker's productivity 54%
- Saved workers comp/insur. costs 38%

4. Do non-employed people with disabilities want to work?

Yes. 59% of non-employed working-age people with disabilities report that they would like a paid job.

(2006 General Social Survey)

5. What are the prospects for increased employment of people with disabilities?

Bad news

A. Disability employment rates haven't increased over past 20 years

- Big role played by disincentives from disability income programs (especially SSDI)

Bad news (cont.)

B. Occupational trends are not favorable

People with disabilities are under-represented in fastest-growing occupations (based on BLS projections)

=> they would have 79,000 more jobs by 2016 if they were evenly distributed across occupations

Bad news (cont.)

<u>Top 5 fastest-growing occupa.</u>	<u>% w/dis.</u>
Network systems analysts	5.4%
Personal/home care aides	16.1%
Personal financial advisors	3.3%
Computer software engineers	3.4%
Veterinarians	2.5%
(All occupations	7.3%)

Bad news (cont.)

- Projected job growth for people with disabilities is disproportionately in occupations with very low wages (median wage <\$21,220):

31% of workers with disabilities

21% of workers in general

Bad news (cont.)

C. Employees with disabilities face many workplace disparities

Not just lower pay, but also lower job security, access to training, and other workplace outcomes

Good news

A. Growing importance of computers and new information technologies

- Many people with disabilities can easily use computers
- New technologies help compensate for many sensory, mobility limitations

Good news (cont.)

- Computer skills speed return to work after disability onset, and close earnings gaps
- 45% of non-employed people with disabilities are regular computer users or say they could use computers without difficulty

Good news (cont.)

B. Ability requirements in many growing occupations can be met by many people with disabilities

- E.g., one-third of projected job growth by 2016 is in occupations where gross body coordination is not important, so can be done by people in wheelchairs.

Good news (cont.)

C. Increased use of telecommuting and flexible/temporary work arrangements

- Particular benefits for people with mobility impairments, medical needs
- Can be part of transition to standard jobs (8% of employees with disabilities started as temp workers)

Good news (cont.)

- As labor markets tighten, increased employment of people with disabilities occurs mostly in flexible and part-time jobs.

This indicates these jobs meet the needs of many people with disabilities

Good news (cont.)

- Workers with disabilities are:
 - 40-50% more likely to do home-based work for pay,
 - 50% more likely to do part-time work,

Good news (cont.)

- Workers with disabilities are also:
 - 100% more likely to be in flexible contingent jobs,
 - but no more likely to have flexible working hours

Good news (cont.)

D. Growing attention to workplace diversity and benefits of inclusion

- Driven in part by projected labor shortages

Good news (cont.)

- More companies (39 of Fortune 100) are expressly including disability as one of the criteria for diverse workforce

Good news (cont.)

- Disability disparities at work do not exist in all worksites: employees with disabilities especially benefit when corporate cultures are responsive to all employees

(See Schur presentation tomorrow)

Good news (cont.)

- Many prominent companies are using and promoting best practices for employing people with disabilities

(See Schur presentation tomorrow, and Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment, 2007, at www.ncd.gov)

Good news (cont.)

E. Non-employed people with disabilities want the same types of jobs as other non-employed people

- On average, attach similar importance to pay, security, advancement, flexibility

=> Job expectations appear to be well within the mainstream

6. What should be on the research agenda?

Supply/demand nexus:

1. Evolving ability requirements of jobs, and potential for accommodations
 - => match to ability info on people with disabilities
 - => build accommodations data into O*Net

Research agenda (cont.)

2. Employer responses to projected labor shortages

=> Corporate best practices in recruiting and developing qualified employees with disabilities

Research agenda (cont.)

3. Job search intensity, strategies, and preferences of non-employed people with disabilities

=> compare to data on job opportunities, successful strategies

Research agenda (cont.)

4. Company policies, costs, and benefits of accommodations

⇒ number and types of requests, how handled

⇒ for all employees, not just those with disabilities

Research agenda (cont.)

5. Job mobility in era of globalization
 - ⇒ relation of disability to layoffs/
downsizing
 - ⇒ portability of skills

Research agenda (cont.)

6. Job-relevant computer training for non-employed people with disabilities
=> What are the skills of the 45% who can use computers, and how do those match up to ability requirements of available jobs?

Research agenda (cont.)

7. Business start-ups for people with disabilities

=> e.g., N.J. Voc Rehab is helping VR clients start carefully-planned worker cooperatives