

Disability Among the Working Age Population: 2008 and 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Many policies directed toward the population of people with disabilities have focused on expanding employment opportunities. Federal laws, like the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), have attempted to improve workplace conditions by encouraging reasonable accommodation and reducing job discrimination. Over the two decades since the ADA was signed, countless numbers of people with disabilities have credited the legislation with improving their lives.¹ Despite the progress made, barriers still remain that limit full participation in the labor force.²

This report presents data on disability and employment among the population 16 to 64 years old to help assess the economic differences between people with and without disabilities in the 2008 and 2009 American Community Surveys (ACS). The data presented in this report are for the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which exclude people in prisons, nursing homes, and active duty military.

¹ National Council on Disability, "The Impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act: Assessing the Progress Toward Achieving the Goals of the ADA," Washington, DC, July 26, 2007.

² National Council on Disability, "National Disability Policy: A Progress Report," Washington, DC, March 31, 2009.

Disability: Difficulty with any of the six types of disability collected in the American Community Survey: vision, hearing, ambulatory, cognitive, self-care, and independent living. It covers functional limitations in the three domains of disability (communication, mental, and physical³), activities of daily living (ADLs), and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs).

Vision difficulty: Blindness or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses or contacts.

Hearing difficulty: Deafness or serious difficulty hearing.

Cognitive difficulty: Serious difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions.

Ambulatory difficulty: Serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.

Self-care difficulty: Difficulty dressing or bathing. This type relates to ADLs.

Independent living difficulty: Difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping. This type relates to IADLs.

Employment-to-population ratio: The ratio of people who are currently employed to the total population, in terms of percentage.

³ The three domains of disability are used to broadly categorize types of disability. See *Americans With Disabilities: 2005 (P70-117)* available at <www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/p70-117.pdf>.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2009, 19.5 million people, or 9.9 percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 16 to 64, had a disability. Between 2008 and 2009, both the number and percent of people with disabilities did not change.
- In 2009, West Virginia had the highest disability rate for people aged 16 to 64 years at 16.8 percent. Hawaii had the lowest rate, not statistically different from California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Utah.
- About 34.7 percent of people with disabilities were employed compared with 71.9 percent of people without a disability. North Dakota⁴ had the highest employment-to-population ratio for people with disabilities, whereas the District of Columbia⁵ had the lowest employment-to-population ratio for people with disabilities.

DISABILITY IN THE WORKING-AGE POPULATION

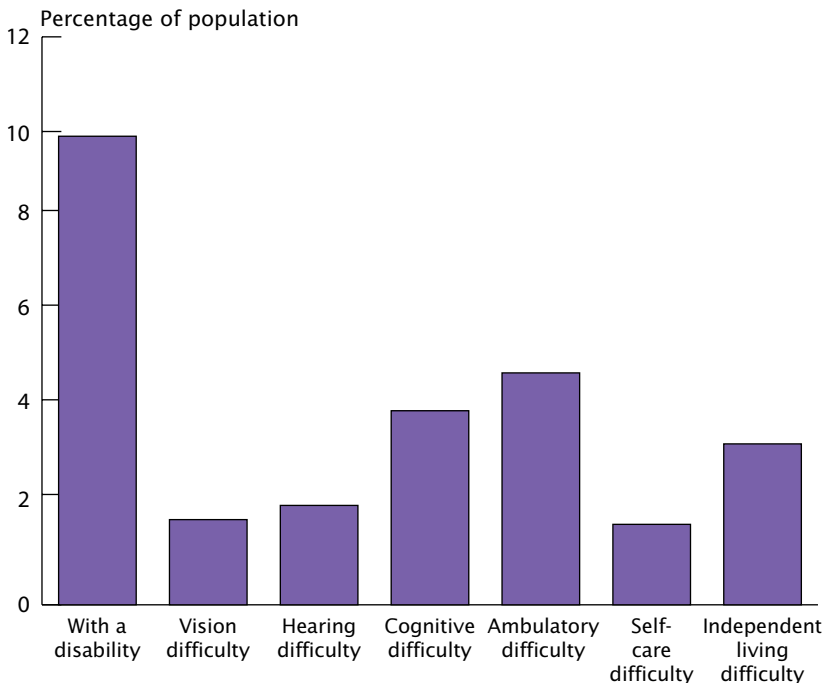
Of the 197.6 million people aged 16 to 64 in the civilian noninstitutionalized population in 2009, about 9.9 percent, or 19.5 million people, had a disability (see table). Neither the number nor percent of people with a disability were statistically different from the 2008 estimates.

Ambulatory difficulty was the most prevalent disability type at 5.0 percent of the population, as shown in Figure 1. About 1.7 percent of the population had a vision difficulty, 2.0 percent had a hearing difficulty, and 4.1 percent had a cognitive

⁴ Not statistically different from Wyoming.

⁵ Not statistically different from Alabama, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Figure 1.
Disability Status and Type: 2009



Note: Data are for the civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 16 to 64 years. This excludes people in correctional facilities, nursing homes, other institutions, and the armed forces.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

difficulty. Self-care and independent living difficulties were present in 1.7 percent and 3.4 percent of the population, respectively.⁶

As shown in the table, West Virginia had the highest prevalence of disability of any state at 16.8 percent. Hawaii had the lowest prevalence of disability at 7.5 percent, not statistically different from California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Utah. Between 2008 and 2009, seven states experienced changes in the rates of disability. The disability prevalence rates for Arizona, Illinois, Mississippi, and Texas decreased while the

⁶ The percentage with a vision difficulty and percentage with a self-care difficulty round to the same number but are statistically different.

prevalence rates for Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio increased.

EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Because a large proportion of people with disabilities are not in the labor force, an employment-to-population ratio is a more descriptive measure of this population's economic situation. Nationally, 34.7 percent of people aged 16 to 64 years with a disability were employed in 2009, down from 38.2 percent in 2008. For people without a disability, the employment-to-population ratio decreased from 75.2 percent in 2008 to 71.9 percent in 2009. While the declines between the two groups were not statistically different from each other, people

Number and Percent of People 16 to 64 Years With a Disability by State and Puerto Rico: 2008 and 2009

Area	With a disability in 2008				With a disability in 2009				Change in disability (2009 less 2008)	
	Number ¹	Margin of error ² (±)	Percent	Margin of error ² (±)	Number ¹	Margin of error ² (±)	Percent	Margin of error ² (±)	Number ¹	Percent
United States . . .	19,470,362	70,857	9.9	0.1	19,511,992	83,745	9.9	0.1	41,630	-0.1
Alabama	424,476	11,477	14.3	0.4	433,364	10,030	14.5	0.3	8,888	0.2
Alaska	52,574	4,093	11.7	0.9	49,765	5,116	10.7	1.1	-2,809	-0.9
Arizona	410,819	11,598	10.2	0.3	390,228	11,418	9.5	0.3	*-20,591	*-0.7
Arkansas	278,740	8,005	15.5	0.4	284,750	8,978	15.7	0.5	6,010	0.2
California	1,920,577	26,636	8.0	0.1	1,898,118	22,046	7.9	0.1	-22,459	-0.1
Colorado	262,288	7,436	8.0	0.2	263,655	8,832	7.9	0.3	1,367	-
Connecticut	183,631	7,420	8.1	0.3	189,190	7,138	8.3	0.3	5,559	0.2
Delaware	60,439	3,988	10.8	0.7	60,525	4,248	10.7	0.7	86	-0.1
District of Columbia	36,831	3,690	8.9	0.9	42,254	4,185	10.0	1.0	5,423	1.1
Florida	1,083,669	20,469	9.5	0.2	1,095,352	19,800	9.5	0.2	11,683	-
Georgia	631,345	13,542	10.1	0.2	632,084	15,463	10.0	0.2	739	-0.1
Hawaii	58,251	3,523	7.3	0.4	59,788	4,052	7.5	0.5	1,537	0.2
Idaho	95,287	4,986	9.9	0.5	101,522	5,148	10.5	0.5	6,235	0.5
Illinois	678,493	15,627	8.1	0.2	654,101	13,743	7.8	0.2	*-24,392	*-0.3
Indiana	444,183	10,531	10.8	0.3	437,399	10,592	10.6	0.3	-6,784	-0.2
Iowa	174,908	5,993	9.1	0.3	171,419	6,344	8.9	0.3	-3,489	-0.2
Kansas	178,979	6,948	10.1	0.4	182,259	6,642	10.2	0.4	3,280	0.1
Kentucky	425,754	9,088	15.4	0.3	425,914	11,424	15.3	0.4	160	-0.1
Louisiana	365,227	9,585	12.9	0.3	359,341	10,354	12.5	0.4	-5,886	-0.4
Maine	115,125	5,102	13.3	0.6	118,589	4,737	13.6	0.5	3,464	0.4
Maryland	302,269	10,986	8.2	0.3	302,745	9,787	8.1	0.3	476	-0.1
Massachusetts	394,320	11,727	9.1	0.3	387,683	11,558	8.8	0.3	-6,637	-0.3
Michigan	730,896	13,322	11.2	0.2	749,726	16,508	11.6	0.3	18,830	*0.3
Minnesota	261,782	7,304	7.6	0.2	277,105	7,888	8.0	0.2	*15,323	*0.4
Mississippi	285,712	10,009	15.5	0.5	261,201	10,373	14.2	0.6	*-24,511	*-1.3
Missouri	455,257	10,978	12.0	0.3	463,093	10,727	12.1	0.3	7,836	0.1
Montana	68,861	4,010	11.0	0.6	68,373	3,612	10.9	0.6	-488	-0.1
Nebraska	95,848	4,837	8.5	0.4	98,624	4,711	8.7	0.4	2,776	0.2
Nevada	138,799	7,042	8.3	0.4	142,605	6,157	8.4	0.4	3,806	0.1
New Hampshire	78,265	4,819	8.8	0.5	77,659	4,398	8.7	0.5	-606	-0.1
New Jersey	413,816	11,299	7.3	0.2	426,109	11,444	7.5	0.2	12,293	0.2
New Mexico	148,053	6,326	11.8	0.5	147,955	6,252	11.7	0.5	-98	-0.1
New York	1,115,645	18,070	8.7	0.1	1,109,513	16,133	8.6	0.1	-6,132	-
North Carolina	661,171	14,039	11.2	0.2	661,450	12,346	11.1	0.2	279	-0.1
North Dakota	34,108	2,493	8.3	0.6	36,675	2,959	8.8	0.7	2,567	0.5
Ohio	819,340	13,974	11.1	0.2	850,393	15,028	11.4	0.2	*31,053	*0.4
Oklahoma	334,713	9,331	14.6	0.4	329,344	8,731	14.3	0.4	-5,369	-0.3
Oregon	271,816	9,585	10.9	0.4	265,448	8,388	10.6	0.3	-6,368	-0.3
Pennsylvania	848,251	15,020	10.6	0.2	853,417	16,252	10.5	0.2	5,166	-0.1
Rhode Island	70,313	4,393	10.2	0.6	68,807	4,602	9.9	0.7	-1,506	-0.2
South Carolina	341,719	9,717	11.9	0.3	335,492	9,622	11.6	0.3	-6,227	-0.4
South Dakota	43,281	2,764	8.6	0.6	45,753	3,665	9.0	0.7	2,472	0.3
Tennessee	515,808	11,118	12.8	0.3	533,193	11,713	13.1	0.3	*17,385	0.3
Texas	1,549,366	23,094	10.0	0.1	1,532,691	22,256	9.8	0.1	-16,675	*-0.2
Utah	131,896	7,058	7.8	0.4	134,701	6,568	7.8	0.4	2,805	0.1
Vermont	46,336	3,282	11.0	0.8	47,698	3,064	11.4	0.7	1,362	0.4
Virginia	437,151	11,992	8.7	0.2	449,973	11,462	8.8	0.2	12,822	0.1
Washington	438,653	11,194	10.2	0.3	448,492	12,597	10.2	0.3	9,839	0.1
West Virginia	203,209	6,838	17.2	0.6	197,633	6,479	16.8	0.6	-5,576	-0.5
Wisconsin	316,718	7,848	8.6	0.2	320,825	7,356	8.7	0.2	4,107	0.1
Wyoming	35,394	2,831	10.2	0.8	37,999	3,582	10.7	1.0	2,605	0.5
Puerto Rico	480,184	10,833	19.0	0.4	448,039	10,191	17.6	0.4	*-32,145	*-1.4

- Represents or rounds to zero.

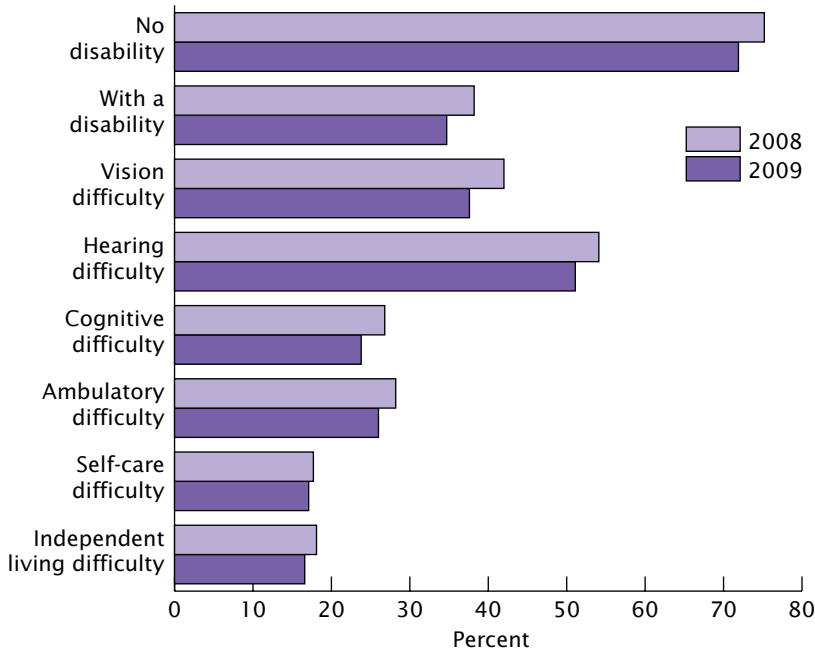
* Statistically different at the 90 percent confidence level.

¹The numbers and percents shown in this table are for the civilian noninstitutionalized population. This excludes people in correctional facilities, nursing homes, other institutions and the armed forces.

²Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. This number when added to and subtracted from the estimate forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2008 and 2009, Puerto Rico Community Surveys, 2008 and 2009.

Figure 2.
Employment-to-Population Ratio by Disability Status and Type: 2008 and 2009



Note: Data are for the civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 16 to 64 years. This excludes people in correctional facilities, nursing homes, other institutions, and the armed forces.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2008 and 2009.

with disabilities were differentially affected by the economic downturn due to their lower overall employment.⁷

Of the six disability types, people with hearing difficulties had the highest employment-to-population ratio at 51.1 percent in 2009 (Figure 2). People with independent living difficulties had the lowest employment-to-population ratio at 16.6 percent. For each disability type, the ratio decreased from 2008 to 2009. People with vision difficulty experienced the greatest decline in the employment-to-population ratio, falling 4.3 percentage points from 42.0 percent

⁷ The percent decline in the employment-to-population ratio for people with disabilities was 9.1 percent, compared with the percent decline in the ratio for people without disabilities at 4.4 percent.

in 2008 to 37.7 percent in 2009. People with self-care difficulty experienced the smallest decline from 17.7 percent in 2008 to 17.2 percent in 2009.⁸

In 2009, 26 states had employment-to-population ratios greater than the national estimate while 14 states and the District of Columbia had ratios that were lower than the national estimate. As shown in Figure 3, areas with low employment-to-population ratios appear concentrated in the southeastern area of the United States.

North Dakota had the highest employment-to-population ratio for people with disabilities at 56.0

⁸ The employment-to-population ratio for people with self-care difficulty in 2008 was not statistically different from the ratio for people with independent living difficulty in the same year.

percent, not statistically different from Wyoming. The District of Columbia had the lowest employment-to-population ratio at 26.8 percent, not statistically different from Alabama, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

NOTE

In 2008, the Census Bureau changed the way it asks about disability status in the ACS. Because of this change, 2008 and 2009 estimates about the population of people with disabilities should not be compared to ACS disability estimates from prior years. For more information see *Review of Changes to the Measurement of Disability in the 2008 American Community Survey*, available at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/2008ACS_disability.pdf>.

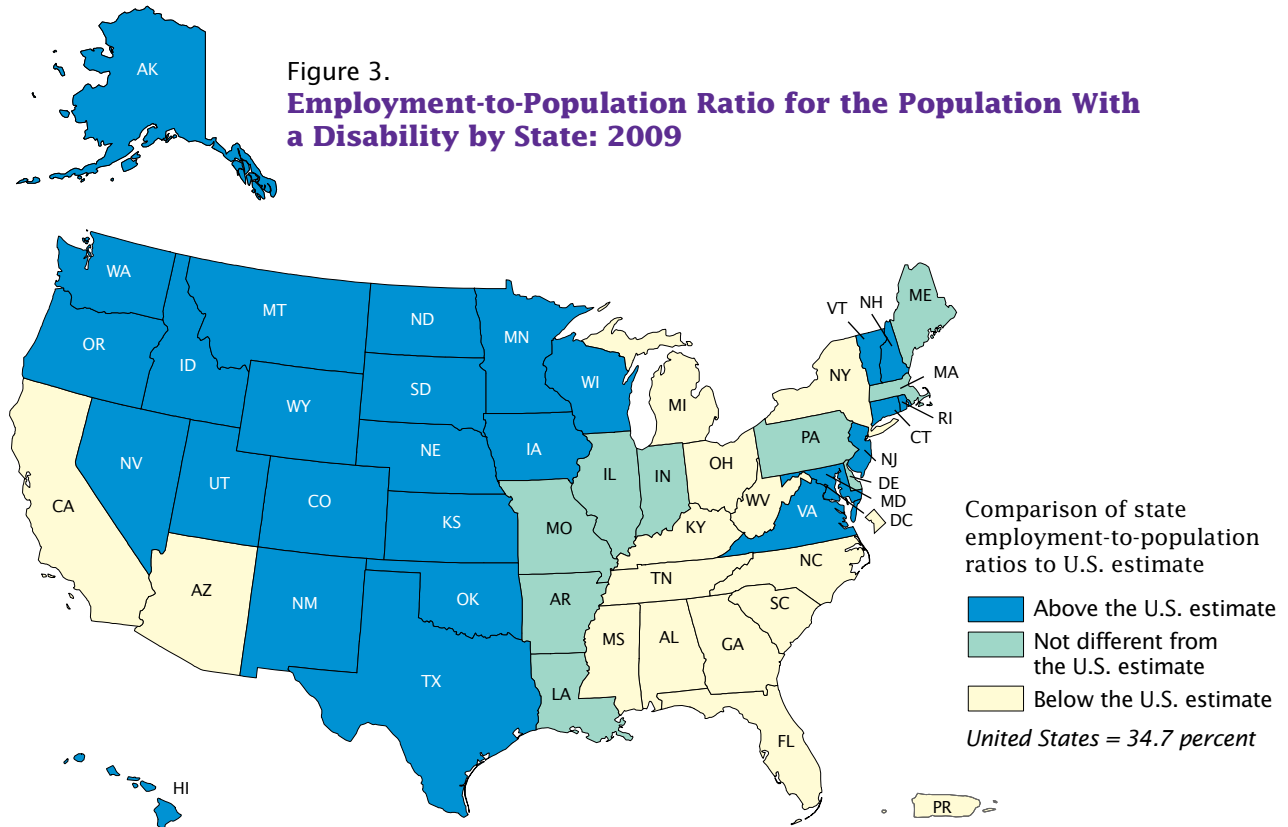
FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the population of people with disabilities, go to the U.S. Census Bureau Web site on disability at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/disability.html>, contact the Health and Disability Statistics Branch of the U.S. Census Bureau at 301-763-9112, or e-mail <matthew.w.brault@census.gov>. For monthly employment statistics about people with disabilities, go to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site for disability data in the Current Population Survey at <www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability.htm>.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

Data presented in this report are based on people and households that responded to the ACS in 2008 and 2009. The resulting estimates are representative of the civilian

Figure 3.
**Employment-to-Population Ratio for the Population With
 a Disability by State: 2009**



Note: Data are for the civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 16 to 64 years. This excludes people in correctional facilities, nursing homes, other institutions, and the armed forces.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009, Puerto Rico Community Survey, 2009.

noninstitutionalized population. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. Due to rounding, some details may not sum to totals. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the “2009 ACS Accuracy of the Data” document located at www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2009.pdf.

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit www.census.gov/acs/www.