

Landmark advances in employment reframe the outlook for people with disabilities in post-pandemic era

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A woman with long dark hair wearing an orange dress sits in a motorized wheelchair and smiles at colleagues seated around a conference table. Credit: Jordan Nicholson

A recent commentary published in *The Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine* highlights the unprecedented upward trend in employment for people with disabilities, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic's economic recovery phase.

In an [article](#) titled "Employment and people with [disabilities](#): Reframing the dialogue in the post-pandemic era," the authors examine the confluence of factors contributing to the recent record-high employment levels among people with disabilities. This trend has been supported by a favorable labor market, evolving employer attitudes, and the adoption of inclusive workplace practices. A series of National Trends in Disability Employment (nTIDE) reports issued by Kessler Foundation and the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability explored the contributions of diverse subgroups within the disability community to this positive shift.

A contributing factor was the rapid adaptation by employers to the acute labor shortages caused by the pandemic. Innovations in recruiting, hiring, training, and employee retention have expanded opportunities for people with disabilities. Notably, a 2022 Kessler Foundation survey revealed significant shifts in supervisors' perceptions towards more inclusive hiring practices and accommodations, signaling a sustainable change in workplace culture.

The authors also address the uncertainties about the longevity of these gains as the pandemic's direct impact wanes. The widespread adoption of remote work, recognized as beneficial for many employees including those with disabilities, faces a future of mixed prospects as workplaces readjust and offices reopen. Yet, evidence suggests remote and hybrid work arrangements as viable, ongoing options that will continue to support employment equity for people with disabilities.

The article underscores the importance of continued research and policy

development to extend the [upward trend](#) for employment of people with disabilities. By recognizing the achievements and challenges highlighted during the post-pandemic recovery, stakeholders can work towards further narrowing the [employment](#) gap and fostering a more inclusive economy.

More information: Carolann Murphy et al, Employment and people with disabilities: Reframing the dialogue in the post-pandemic era, *The Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/10790268.2024.2315927](#)

Provided by Kessler Foundation

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