

Job gains for Americans with disabilities add to strength of labor market

August 4 2017



Comparison shows increases in the employment-to-population ratio and the labor participation rate for people with and without disabilities. Credit: Kessler Foundation

Sustained job growth for Americans with disabilities contributed to the upward trend in the labor market, according to today's National Trends in Disability Employment - Monthly Update (nTIDE), issued by Kessler Foundation and the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability (UNH-IOD). This extends the record trend to 16 consecutive months for this population. Integrating resources and strategies among stakeholder groups, including funders, government agencies, community

organizations, and employers, is essential to meeting the needs for accessibility, job training, and extended support services for people with disabilities in the workplace. National leaders in disability employment are coming together with a shared commitment to maximize the impact of the many and varied funding streams.

In the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Jobs Report released Friday, August 4, the employment-to-population ratio for working-age people with disabilities increased from 28.1 percent in July 2016 to 29.7 percent in July 2017 (up 5.7 percent; 1.6 percentage points). For working-age people without disabilities, the employment-to-population ratio also increased from 73.3 percent in July 2016 to 74.1 percent in July 2017 (up 1.1 percent; 0.8 percentage points). The employment-to-population ratio, a key indicator, reflects the percentage of people who are working relative to the total population (the number of people working divided by the number of people in the total population multiplied by 100).

"For sixteen consecutive months we have seen increases in the employment-to-population ratio for people with disabilities," noted John O'Neill, PhD, director of employment and disability research at Kessler Foundation. "This is the longest run of improvements in the employment situation for people with disabilities since the data was first available in September of 2008. Let's hope that this trend continues and the employment-to-population ratio rebounds to prerecession levels for people with disabilities by the end of 2017."

The labor force participation rate for working-age people with disabilities increased from 32.0 percent in July 2016 to 33.1 percent in July 2017 (up 3.4 percent; 1.1 percentage points). For working-age people without disabilities, the labor force participation rate also increased from 77.1 percent in July 2016 to 77.6 percent in July 2017 (up 0.6 percent; 0.5 percentage points). The [labor force participation](#) rate is the percentage of the population that is working or actively looking for

work.

"These results show that people with disabilities are working, want to work, and are indeed striving to work," said Andrew Houtenville, PhD, associate professor of economics at UNH, and research director at the Institute on Disability.

In New York City, a major project was launched in 2015 to foster sustainable employment opportunities for people with disabilities across a range of sectors. NYC: ATWORK blends funding from private sources with public resources to meet employers' need for workers. "Our city has almost 1 million people with disabilities. Overwhelmingly, people with disabilities are either unemployed or under-employed, making them the largest source of untapped potential in this city," stated Victor Calise, commissioner of Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. "Our team aims to address this issue with the city's first public-private employment initiative for people with disabilities, 'NYC: ATWORK,' which is designed to connect talent to businesses, generating meaningful employment opportunities in high growth sectors with competitive wages for New Yorkers with disabilities."

Aviation is one sector that is leveraging its recruitment efforts through the city's initiative. "Our goal is to help move the needle forward for people with disabilities." said Bob Bilak, director of Crew Relations and Compliance Programs at JetBlue. Aligned with our mission of inspiring humanity, our business practices focus on innovative hiring and business mentoring programs. Gainful employment speaks directly to humanity, confidence and self-esteem. Through our partnership with NYC: ATWORK, we have created Reaching Blue Heights Talent Pipeline program, providing access and opportunities for those with disabilities to pursue careers with JetBlue. We also help some jobseekers gain the skills and resources needed to gain employment elsewhere."

In July 2017, among workers ages 16-64, the 4,719,000 workers with [disabilities](#) represented 3.2 percent of the total 145,325,000 workers in the U.S. The next nTIDE will be issued on Friday, September 1, 2017.

NOTE: The statistics in the nTIDE are based on Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers, but are not identical. They are customized by UNH to combine the statistics for men and women of working age (16 to 64).

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Provided by Kessler Foundation

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