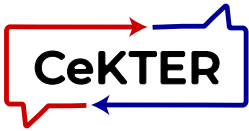


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## Statistics That Can Shape Disability Policy [English and Spanish versions]

Item Type	Article
Authors	StatssRRTC;CeKTER
Citation	StatssRRTC & CeKTER. (2025). Statistics That Can Shape Disability Policy. Worcester, MA: UMass Chan Medical School, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Implementation Science and Practice Advances Research Center (iSPARC), Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research.
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.13028/0err-a368">10.13028/0err-a368</a>
Publisher	UMass Chan Medical School
Download date	2026-01-07 23:56:09
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14038/54130">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14038/54130</a>



# Statistics That Can Shape Disability Policy

Highlights from the Disability Statistics Collection funded by the Disability Statistics and Demographics Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (StatsRRTC)  
University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability

## The StatsRRTC Is the Go-To Source for Disability Data

Policy makers need disability statistics to determine whether, or what, new policy approaches are needed. Relevant statistics can be found through [the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics \(StatsRRTC\)](#).

This Center supports decision making through a variety of integrated research and outreach activities by:

- Improving knowledge about and access to existing statistics (and the underlying data),
- Generating the knowledge needed to improve future disability data collection, and
- Strengthening connections between the users of disability statistics, data collection agencies, and decision makers.

## What the StatsRRTC Disability Statistics Collection Can Tell You

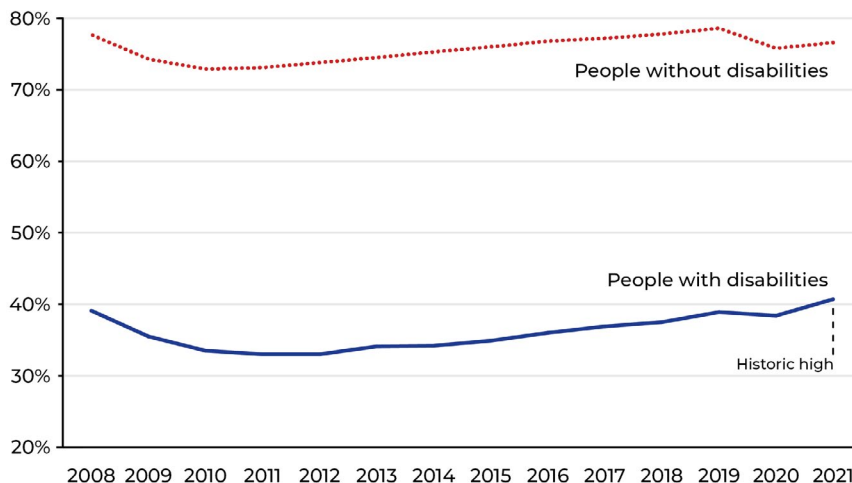
### Percent of US population with Disabilities Has Grown

13.5% of all Americans (or 44,482,000) have a disability in 2021 compared to 13.2% (or 43,227,000) in 2019. State level population statistics are also available.

### Employment Rate of People with Disabilities Has Improved but Gaps Remain

The good news is that recent statistics (2008–2021) suggest that disability employment rates reached a historic high (40.7% in 2021) (Kessler Foundation & UNH Institute on Disability, [February 2022 nTIDE report](#)) perhaps indicating the success of the numerous efforts to improve the employment of people with disabilities.

Percent Employed



The bad news is that statistics collected between 2008–2021 suggest that the gap between the percentage of people with disabilities who were employed and those without typically hovered at 40%. While in 2021 there was slight reduction in the employment gap between people with and without disabilities, statistics suggest more needs to be done to narrow the employment gap between people with and without disabilities.

## Earnings of People with Disabilities Have Improved but Gaps Have Widened

The 2021 median earnings of full-time/full-year workers with disabilities was \$45,314. This is a \$6,319 earnings gap when compared to people without disabilities.

## Twice as Many People with Disabilities Live in Poverty


In 2021, 25.4% of people with disabilities were in poverty compared to 11.8% of people without disabilities,

accounting for a gap of 13.6 percentage points. Although poverty went down for both groups, the gap between people with and without disabilities still widened between 2010–2021.

## There Are Rural Disparities

The StatsRRTC's 2023 *Disability Statistics Infographic: Experience of People with Disabilities in Rural America* shows that over 3.1 million people with disabilities live in the most rural places. They are more likely to live in poverty and to be unemployed compared to their urban counterparts with disabilities.

**2023 Annual Disability Infographic: Experience of People with Disabilities in Rural America**

 University of New Hampshire  
Institute on Disability

*In the Most Rural Places and with Greater Disparities...*

**Percentage Reporting Disabilities**

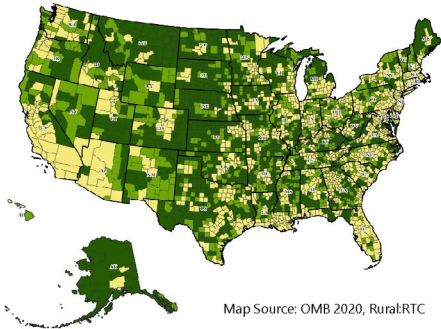
Metropolitan	12.1%
Micropolitan	16.0%
Non-Core (Most Rural)	17.8%

3,144,000 people with disabilities live in the most rural places, where the percentage reporting disabilities is highest (17.8%).

**Defining Places**

**Urban Counties:**  
Metropolitan: counties with urban core of 50,000+ people

**Rural Counties:**  
Micropolitan: counties an urban core of 10,000-50,000  
Non-Core: counties with no urban core (< 10,000 people)



Map Source: OMB 2020, Rural:RTC

**Poverty**

**1 in 4** people with disabilities in the most rural places experience poverty

... compared to ...

**1 in 5** people with disabilities in the most urban places experience poverty

**Employment**


People with Disabilities, Ages 18-64

Metro	38.7%
Micro	34.9%
Non-Core	32.5%

Data Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey, civilian, noninstitutional population.

**Health Insurance**

In the most rural places, people with disabilities report...

Lower rates of Private coverage 46.8%		Higher rates of Public coverage 77.8%
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...compared to people with disabilities in other areas.\*

\*Metropolitan: Private 49.9%, Public 73.2%;  
Micropolitan: Private 48.5%, Public 76.0%

RTC:Rural

Research & Training Center  
on Disability in Rural Communities  
[rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu](http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu)



Disability Statistics & Demographics


Rehabilitation Research & Training Center  
[disabilitycompendium.org](http://disabilitycompendium.org)

# There Are Racial Inequities

The StatsRRTC's 2023 Disability Statistics Infographic: Social Inequities Experienced by African Americans shows that in the U.S., almost 3.5 million Black and African American adults (ages 18–64) have a disability. While the disability prevalence in all races was

reported at 10.5%, for Black/African Americans it was 13.8%. Black and African American adults with disabilities are 22% less likely to have a job compared to all races. Further they are 44% more likely to live in poverty than all races.

## 2023 Annual Disability Infographic: Social Inequities Experienced by African Americans




In the US, nearly 3.5 million African American adults have a disability<sup>a</sup>

**Percentage Reporting Disability<sup>a</sup>**

10.5%

All other races



13.8%

African American

African Americans with disabilities face many social inequities that prevent them from realizing their full potential. Policies to promote equity are needed to improve social determinants such as education, employment, and more among African Americans with disabilities.

African American students with disabilities are:  
*(when compared to all other students with disabilities)*


22.5%

More likely

to spend time outside a regular classroom<sup>b</sup>

African American 33.2%

All other races 27.1%



343%

More likely

to be placed in a correctional facility<sup>b</sup>

African American 0.31%

All other races 0.07%

1.6%

Less likely


to have completed high school<sup>a</sup>

African American 84.5%

All other races 85.9%

African American adults with disabilities are...  
*(when compared to all other adults with disabilities)*

22%




less likely

to be employed<sup>a</sup>

African American 31.9%

All other races 40.9%

44%




more likely

to experience poverty<sup>a</sup>

African American 32.8%

All other races 22.8%

84%




more likely

to lack adequate housing<sup>c</sup>

African Americans 12.7%

All other races 6.9%


*Sources: Authors' calculations using data from <sup>a</sup>2021 American Community Survey, ages 18-64 from IPUMS ([www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org)); <sup>b</sup>2020 IDEA Part B Child Count & Educational Environment for school age students 5-21 in US states, DC and Bureau of Indian Education; and <sup>c</sup>2021 American Housing Survey.*



LANGSTON UNIVERSITY

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Advancing Employment Equity for Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities


"Empowering Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities to Obtain Competitive Integrated Employment, Build Stellar Careers, and Generate Entrepreneurial-Driven Wealth"



LANGSTON UNIVERSITY

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Research and Capacity Building for Minority Facilities

"Empowering Minority-Serving Institutions/Minority Entities to Participate in Disability, Independent Living, Rehabilitation, and Health Research and Development"



Disability Statistics & Demographics

Rehabilitation Research & Training Center

[disabilitycompendium.org](http://disabilitycompendium.org)

## About StatsRRTC

Led by the University of New Hampshire, the StatsRRTC is a collaboration of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Kessler Foundation, and Mathematica Policy Research.

The [Disability Statistics Collection](#) provides a singular location to obtain and compare the most recent federal, state, and county level disability statistics. The Disability Statistics Collection includes the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, the Annual Disability Statistics Supplement, State Reports for County-level Data, and Infographics that are publicly available. Policymakers can use the yearly and topic spanning disability statistics to advocate for and write legislation, view trends over time, compare their constituencies to others, and to inform stakeholders in their districts.

### Examples of how StatsRRTC statistics have informed disability policy:

Disability statistics were used to:

- Create a formula for funding rural counties based on prevalence of disability.
- Inform an audience of adult education and literacy field directors on the need for inclusive local programming.
- Advocate for funding in a testimony to a state legislature.

## References

Bach, S., Paul, S., & Houtenville, A. J. (2023). *2023 Annual Disability Infographic: Experience of People with Disabilities in Rural America*. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, Institute on Disability.







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Houtenville, A. J., Paul, S., & Brucker, D. L. (2021). Changes in the employment status of people with and without disabilities in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 102(7), 1420–1423. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2021.03.019>

“Policymakers have described the collection as ‘reliable, consistent, predictable,’ ‘essential,’ ‘the gold standard,’ and ‘a one stop shop.’”

**The StatsRRTC’s Annual Reports on People with Disabilities in America are based on the six disability questions in the American Community Survey (ACS). A disability is defined as a “yes” to one of the disabilities identified by the questions. The questions are below:**

-  Is this person deaf or does he/she have serious difficulty hearing?
-  Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?
-  Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
-  Does this person have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
-  Does this person have difficulty dressing or bathing?
-  Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping?

Kessler Foundation & University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability, (producer). (2022, February 18). *nTIDE Lunch & Learn Webinar Series: COVID-19 Updates-2/18/22* [video]. Available at <https://www.researchondisability.org/ntide-episodes-list>

Lindsay, S., Cagliostro, E., Albarico, M., Mortaji, N., & Karon, L. A. (2018). Systematic review of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 28, 634–655. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-018-9756-z>

2014–2018 American Community Survey - civilian, noninstitutional population

2018 American Community Survey, ages 18–64 from IPUMS [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org)

Suggested Citation: StatsRRTC & CeKTER. (2025). *Statistics That Can Shape Disability Policy*. Worcester, MA: UMass Chan Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, Implementation Science and Practice Advances Research Center (iSPARC), Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research.

The production of this brief was funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), Grant #90DPEM0004. The content was funded by NIDILRR through the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics (StatsRRTC) grant #'s 90RTGE0001 & 90RTGE0005. NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this brief do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



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