

Center for Studying Disability Policy

# Using BLS data to study disability programs, policy, and employment

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

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# Center for Studying Disability Policy

**Established in 2007, the Center's mission is to provide policymakers and program administrators with the evidence they need to make informed decisions that support effective disability policies and programs**

- We evaluate interventions designed to empower people with disabilities
- We conduct research on health, education, employment, and economic well-being of people with disabilities
- We disseminate findings through forums, briefs, weekly research alerts and social media

# Value of BLS data for disability policy research

- **Official source for employment statistics**
- **Nationally representative samples allow comparisons between persons with and without disabilities**
- **Large samples and geographic identifiers support state-level estimates**
- **Stability and high frequency of surveys facilitate examination of trends**
- **Ease of use**

# National trends in disability employment

- **The National Trends in Disability Employment (nTIDE) provides monthly employment statistics for persons with disabilities**
  - A press release and live webinar, the first Friday of each month, to coincide with BLS' release of employment data (CPS).
  - Over 3,700 people view the press release or nTIDE website annually
  - Led by Kessler Foundation and University of New Hampshire and funded through the National Institute for Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)

# Relative wages of people with disabilities

- **Workers with disabilities have lower earnings than other workers in similar occupations**
  - Individuals who gained employment with the support of state vocational rehabilitation agencies reported hourly wages that were lower than the median wages of the general labor force in each of the top 50 occupations
  - Occupational Employment Statistics, Martin et al 2012

# Disability and well-being

- **Compared to people without disabilities, working-aged people with disabilities have higher rates of poverty**
  - And they make up a third of participants in safety net programs
  - Current Population Survey (CPS), Livermore and Honeycutt, 2015  
Houtenville et al, 2014
- **They spend 40 to 50 minutes more per week on health-related activities, leaving less time for leisure and work-related activities**
  - American Time Use Survey linked to CPS, Anand and Ben-Shalom, 2014

# Employer-provided long-term disability insurance

- **Few employers – just one-third, offer long-term disability insurance and they are disproportionately:**
  - Larger establishments
  - In industries and regions with lower disability prevalence
  - With a greater share of full-time workers
  - Comprised of high wage workers
  - National Compensation Survey, Anand and Wittenburg, 2017

# Disability among veterans

- **What impact did a 2010 Veterans Administration (VA) policy change simplifying the process for obtaining disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder have?**
  - The percentage of veterans reporting they receive VA disability compensation increased substantially from 2002 to 2013
    - Particularly among younger (ages 18–39) and older (ages 50–64) veterans
    - Concurrent with an increase in cognitive limitations
  - CPS Veterans Supplement, Ben-Shalom et al (2016), Contreary et al (2017)



# Young adults with disabilities

- **How is the “gig economy” affecting young adults with disabilities relative to those without disabilities?**
  - More likely to have varying work schedules
  - Higher month to month variation in hours worked
  - Monthly CPS and NLSY97, Luca and Sevak, 2019
- **Timing of disability onset among youth matters, with those with later onset having poorer labor market outcomes**
  - NLSY97, Mann and Honeycutt, 2013

# Dynamic impact of recessions on workers with disabilities

- **They experienced greater declines in employment than people without disabilities during and after the Great Recession, particularly in blue-collar and goods producing jobs**
  - CPS, Livermore and Honeycutt, 2015
- **Variation in local economic conditions can explain variation in SSDI awards, particularly among older men**
  - Local Area Unemployment Statistics used with Social Security Administrative data, Anderson et al, 2019.

SSDI = Social Security Disability Insurance

# Continuing measurement and data challenges

- **How to measure disability in population surveys**
  - Concerns with both work-related disability measure and CPS six-question sequence
  - Burkhauser et al, 2012
- **Need for a longitudinal survey on disability?**
- **Whether BLS is considering new ways to identify people with disabilities**

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# For more information

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