

## People with a disability in 2012: a visual essay

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In 2008, six questions were added to the Current Population Survey (CPS) to identify people with a disability. The six disability-related questions were developed through the efforts of multiple federal agencies and disability experts over the course of several years. The questions used by the CPS for measuring disability are prefaced by the following:

*This month we want to learn about people who have physical, mental, or emotional conditions that cause serious difficulty with their daily activities. Please answer for household members who are 15 years old or over.*

This introduction is then followed by the six questions:

- 1. Is anyone deaf or does anyone have serious difficulty hearing?*
- 2. Is anyone blind or does anyone have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?*
- 3. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?*
- 4. Does anyone have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?*

*5. Does anyone have difficulty dressing or bathing?*

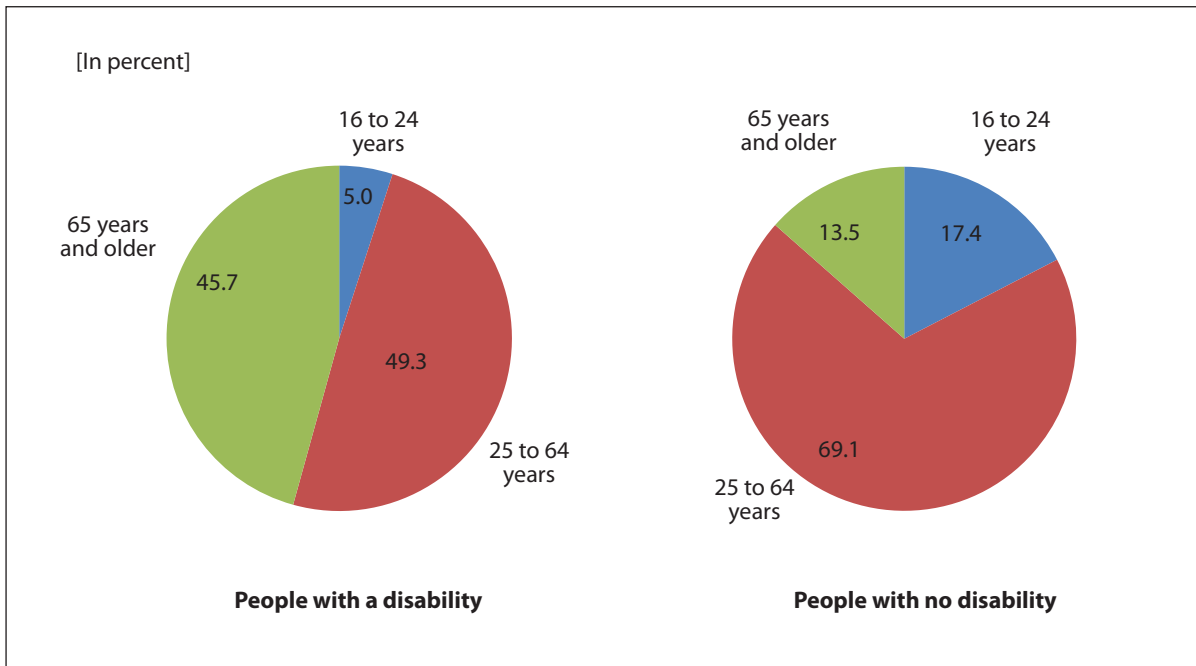
*6. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?*

A response of yes to any of the six questions is required to classify a person as having a disability.

The CPS, which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, is a monthly survey of about 60,000 households that provides information on the labor force status, demographics, and other characteristics of the nation's civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over. The addition of the disability-related questions made such data available for the first time specifically about people with a disability. More information about the CPS disability-related questions is available online at: [http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability\\_faqs.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability_faqs.htm).

This visual essay presents information on the employment status and other labor force characteristics of people 16 years and over with a disability in 2012. All of the charts present annual average data for 2012. This essay was prepared by Terence M. McMenamin, an economist in the Division of Labor Force Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Email: [cpsinfo@bls.gov](mailto:cpsinfo@bls.gov).

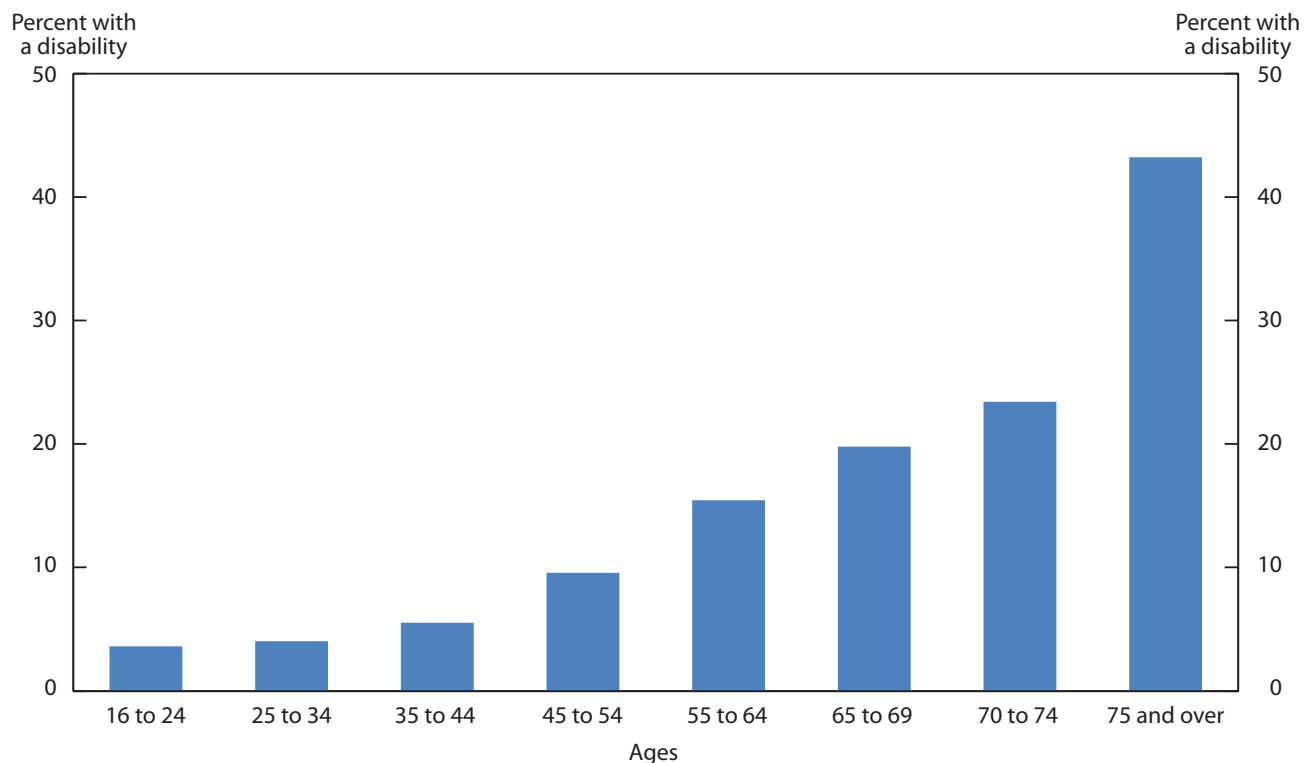
**1. People with a disability are more likely to be ages 65 and over than people with no disability**



NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over.  
SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- In 2012, 45.7 percent of people with a disability were ages 65 or older; in contrast, only 13.5 percent of people with no disability were in that age group.
- Among people with a disability, the proportion ages 16 to 24 was 5.0 percent; in contrast, among people with no disability, the proportion in that age group was 17.4 percent.

## 2. Older people are considerably more likely than younger people to have a disability

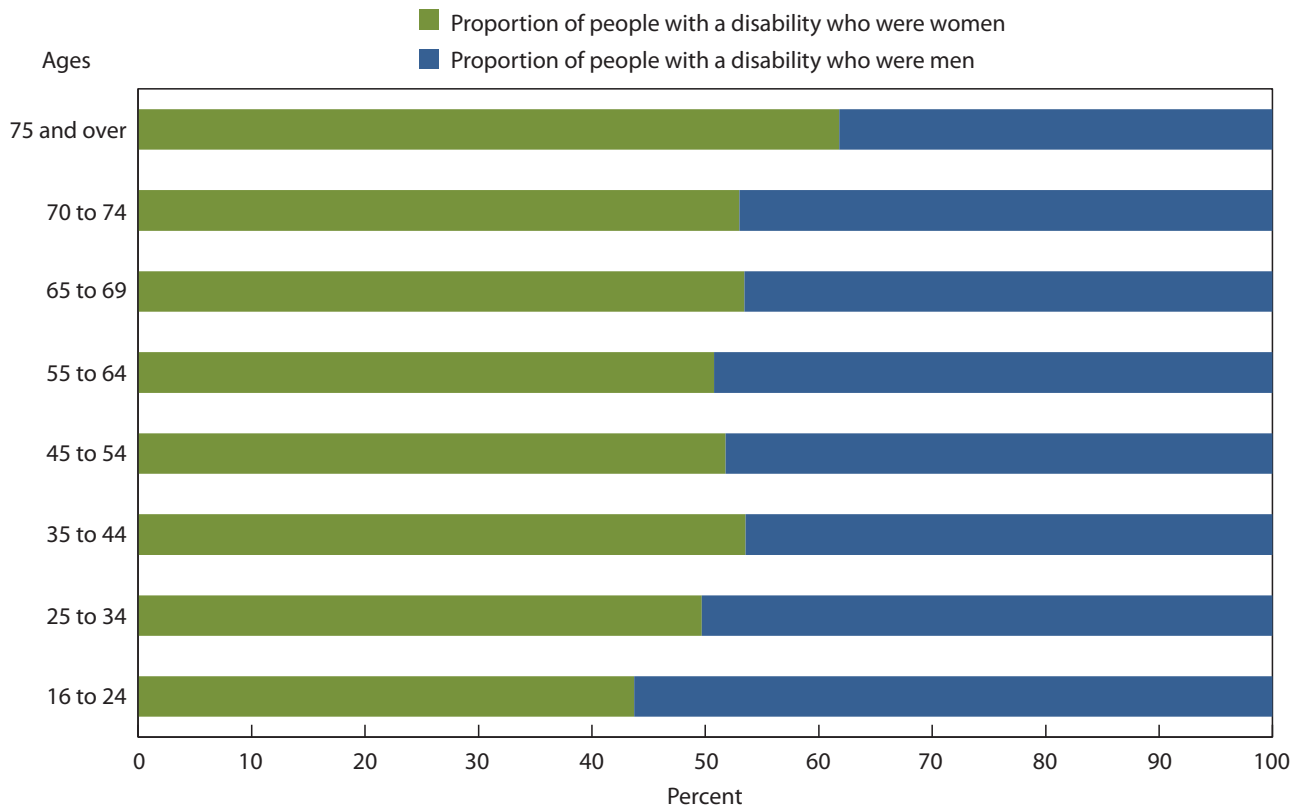


NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over.

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- The primary reason such a large proportion of those with a disability were 65 years and over is because the likelihood of having a disability increases dramatically with age.
- The proportion of people with a disability was around 5 percent or less for those below 45 years of age. This proportion rose to about 10 percent among people ages 45 to 54 and continued increasing with age, rising to 43 percent among those 75 years and over.

### 3. Older people with a disability are more likely to be women

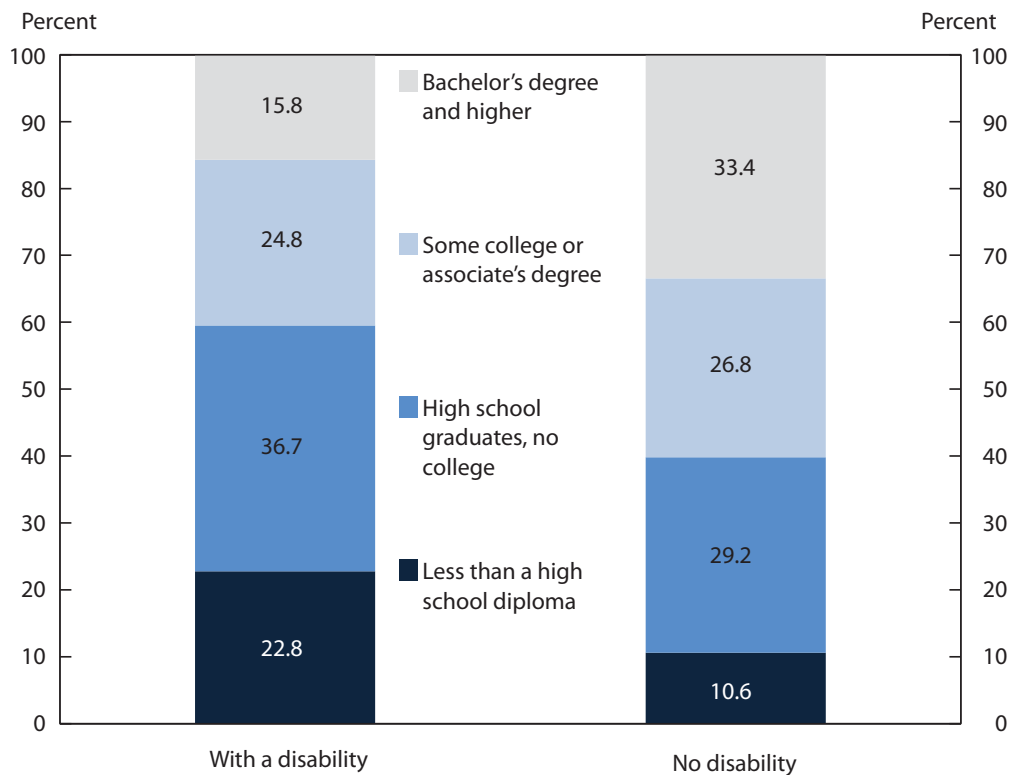


NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over.

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- In older age groups, women tend to make up an increasingly large share of people with a disability. This partly reflects the longer life expectancy of women.
- Although the overall population of people 16 to 24 years of age was about evenly split between men and women, nearly 3 out of every 5 people with a disability in this age group were men.

#### 4. Educational attainment is lower for people with a disability

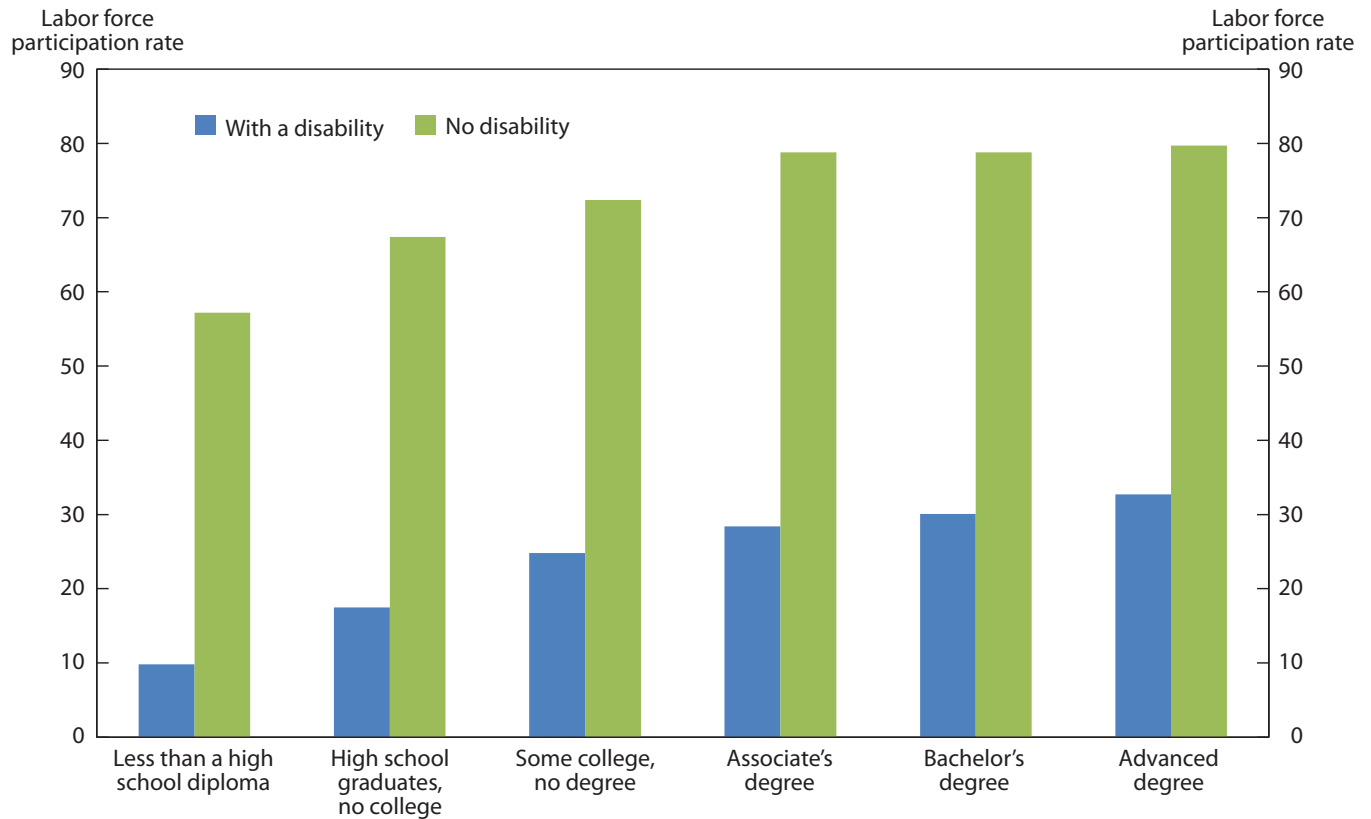


NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 25 and over.

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- About 3 out of 5 people ages 25 and over with a disability had a high school education or less, whereas 3 out of 5 people in the same age group but with no disability either had a college degree or had attended at least some college.
- The proportion of people with a disability who did not graduate from high school—about 23 percent—was more than twice as high as for people without a disability.

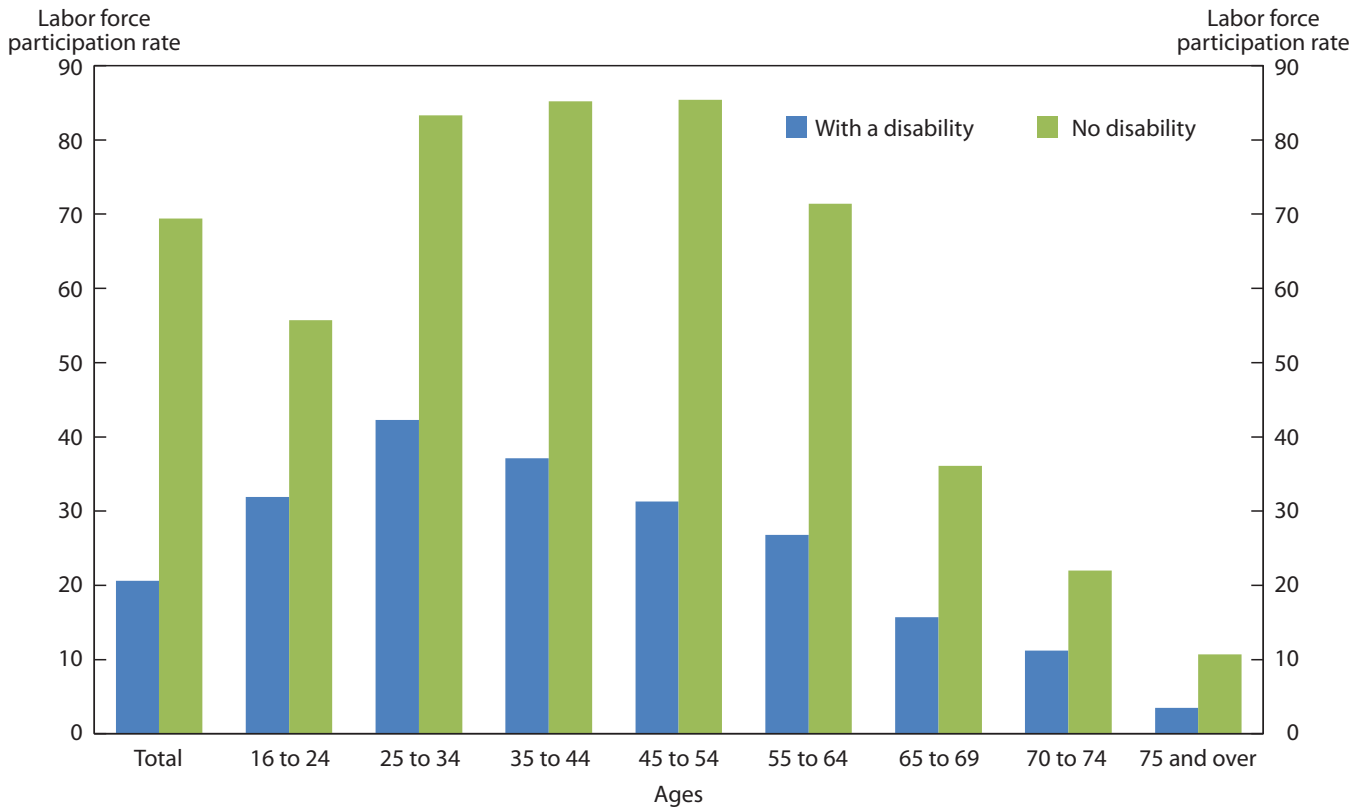
**5. At each level of educational attainment, people ages 25 and over with a disability have a lower labor force participation rate than people with no disability**



NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 25 and over.  
SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- Labor force participation rates are higher among people with greater educational attainment regardless of disability status. However, people with a disability had lower labor force participation rates at all levels of educational attainment than did people with no disability.
- In 2012, the labor force participation rate of people with a disability was highest for those who held an advanced college degree—32.7 percent. This compares with a participation rate of 79.7 percent for those with no disability who held an advanced degree.

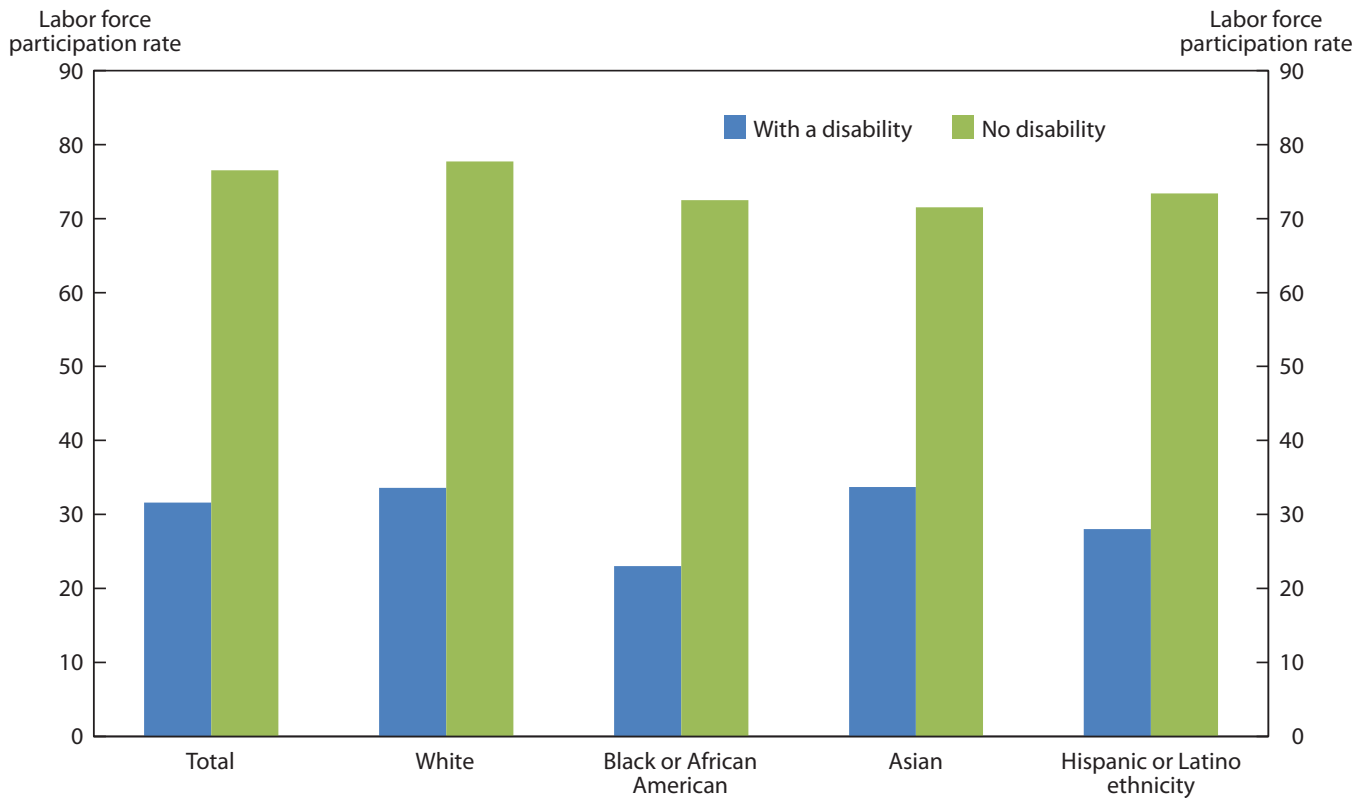
**6. Within each age group, people with a disability have a lower labor force participation rate than people with no disability**



NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over.  
 SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- Labor force participation for people with no disability was highest for those ages 25 to 54, with a large decline among older age groups. In contrast, labor force participation for those with a disability was highest for 25- to 34-year-olds but declined steadily starting at age 35.
- The labor force participation rates for people ages 65 and over were much lower than for people in younger age groups, both for those with and for those without a disability; however, even among people ages 65 and over, there was a large difference between the labor force participation rates of those with a disability and of those without.

**7. Within each major race and ethnicity group, people ages 16 to 64 with a disability are less likely to participate in the labor force than people with no disability**



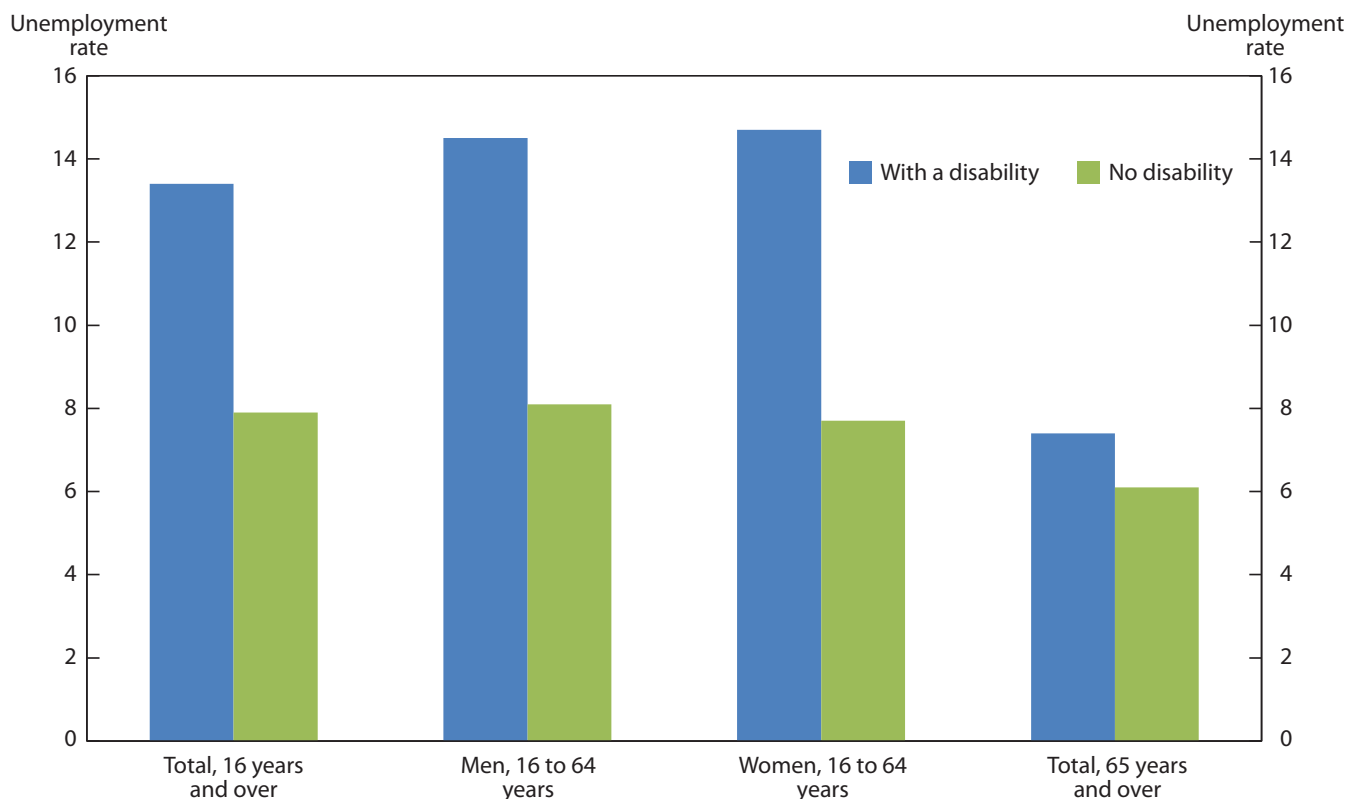
NOTE: People of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be of any race. Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 to 64.

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- Regardless of race or ethnicity, people ages 16 to 64 with a disability were much less likely to participate in the labor force than people with no disability; their labor force participation rates in 2012 were 31.6 percent and 76.5 percent, respectively.
- The labor force participation rate for people with a disability who were White (33.6 percent) or Asian (33.7 percent) was higher than for people with a disability who were Black (23.0 percent) or Hispanic (28.0 percent).



## 8. The unemployment rate for people with a disability is higher than for people with no disability

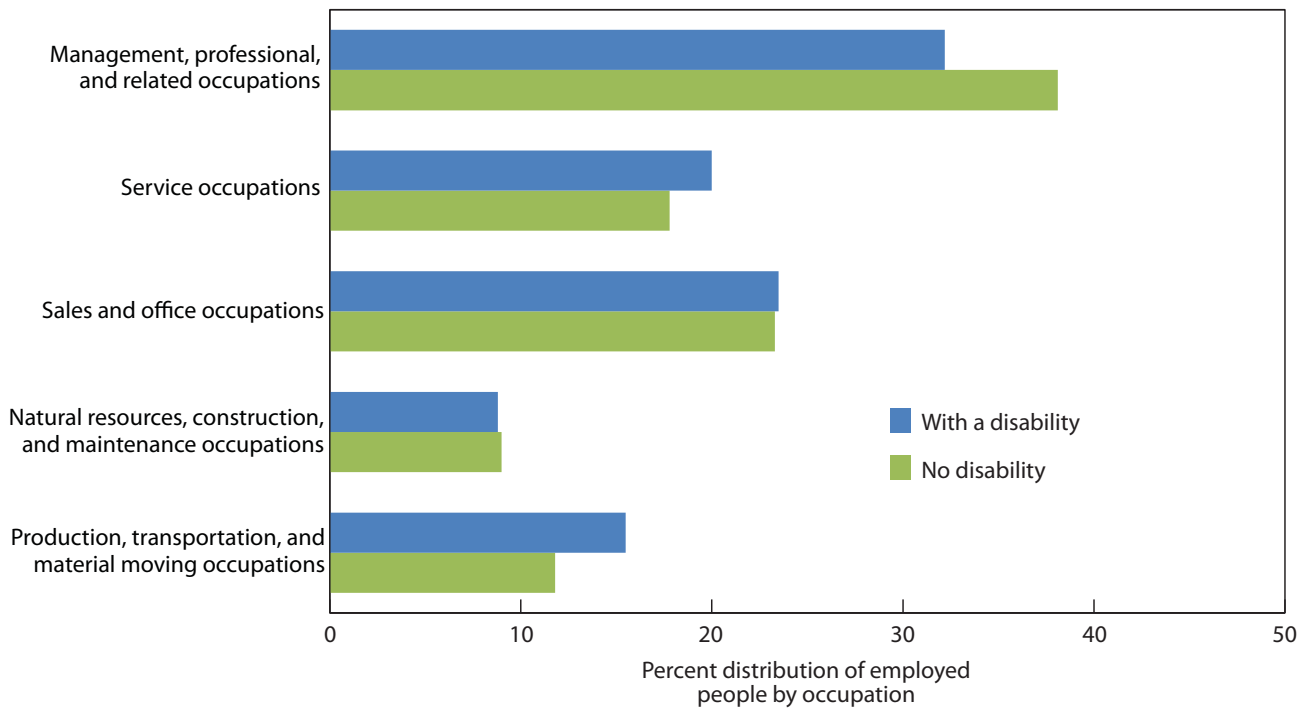


NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over.

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- Since 2008 when data on the labor force status of people with a disability first were collected, the unemployment rate for people with a disability has remained considerably higher than that for people with no disability. In 2012, the unemployment rate for people with a disability was 13.4 percent, compared with 7.9 percent for those with no disability.
- Similarly, among people ages 16 to 64, the unemployment rate in 2012 was much higher for those with a disability. Men ages 16 to 64 with a disability had an unemployment rate of 14.5 percent, compared with 8.1 percent among those with no disability. Among women in this age group, those with a disability had an unemployment rate about twice as high as those without a disability; their rates were 14.7 percent and 7.7 percent, respectively.
- People ages 65 and over had lower unemployment rates than younger people, regardless of disability status. The difference in the unemployment rates between those with and without a disability was less pronounced than among younger people.

**9. Employed people with a disability are less likely than those with no disability to have managerial and professional jobs and more likely to have production jobs**

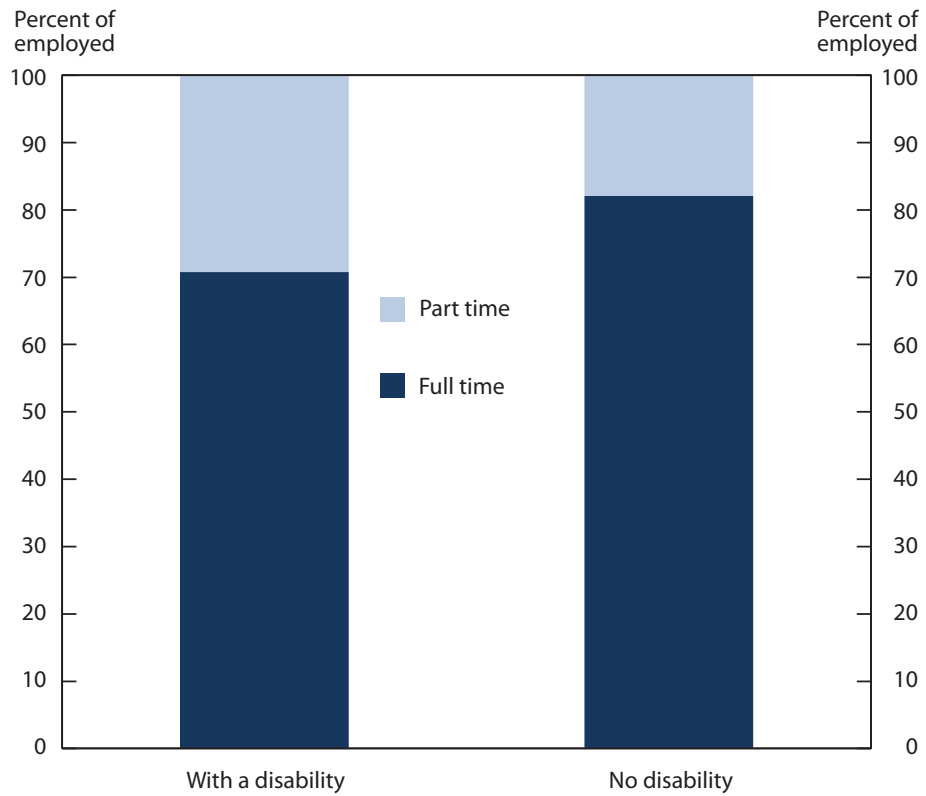


NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over.

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- Employed people 16 years and over with a disability were more likely in 2012 to work in production, transportation, and material moving occupations than were those with no disability (15.5 percent versus 11.8 percent). This pattern also held for service occupations (20.0 percent versus 17.8 percent).
- Employed people with a disability were less likely than those with no disability to be in management, professional, and related occupations—32.2 percent compared with 38.1 percent.

### 10. Employed people ages 16 to 64 with a disability are more likely to work part time than people with no disability

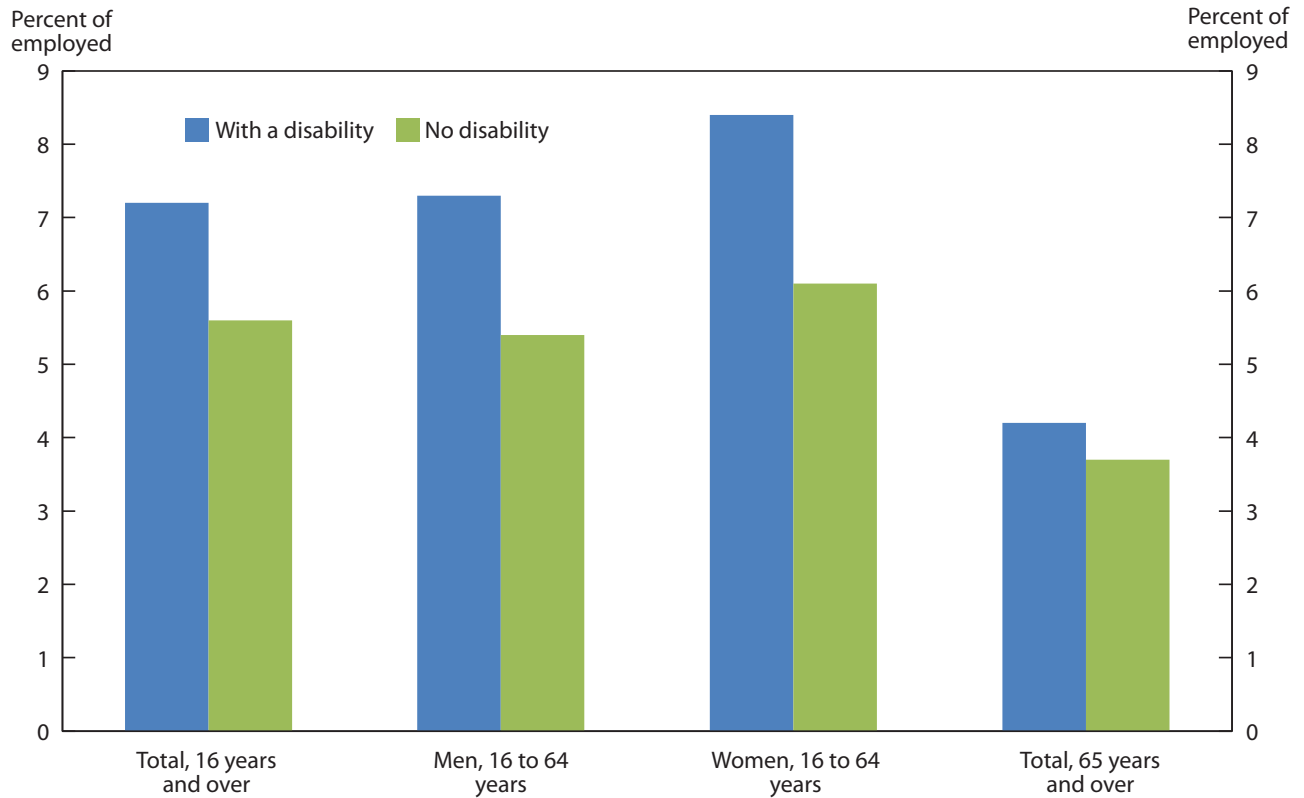


NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 to 64.

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- In 2012, nearly 1 in 3 workers ages 16 to 64 with a disability usually worked part time—that is, less than 35 hours per week—compared with about 1 in 5 workers with no disability.
- Employed people ages 65 and over with a disability were also more likely to usually work part time than those with no disability.

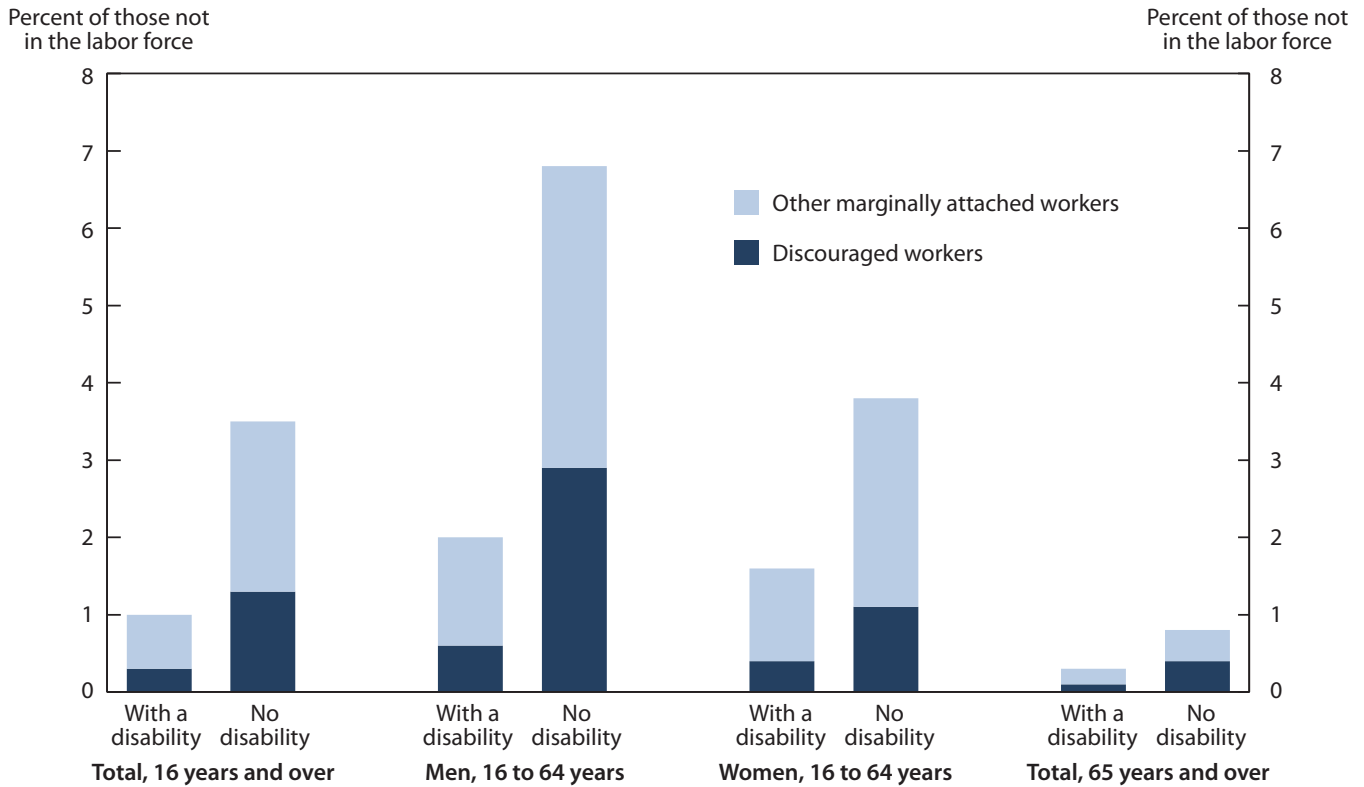
### 11. Employed people with a disability are more likely than those with no disability to work part time for economic reasons



NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over.  
SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- People with a disability were more likely to work part time because of economic reasons than were people with no disability—7.2 percent compared with 5.6 percent. Those who worked part time because their hours had been cut back or because they were unable to find a full-time job are classified as working part time for economic reasons (also referred to as involuntary part time workers).
- The difference was most pronounced among workers ages 16 to 64. Among workers ages 65 and over, the incidence of involuntary part time work was about the same regardless of disability status.

**12. Regardless of disability status, relatively few people not in the labor force are marginally attached to the labor force**



NOTE: Data are 2012 annual averages for the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and over.

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- Relatively few people not in the labor force—that is, people neither working nor actively looking for work—showed some attachment to the labor market. Of those not in the labor force, only 1.0 percent of people with a disability were classified as marginally attached to the labor force, compared with 3.5 percent of people with no disability. People marginally attached to the labor force wanted to work, were available for work, and had looked for a job at some point in the prior 12 months but not in the past 4 weeks.
- People ages 65 and over who were marginally attached to the labor force accounted for less than 1 percent of those not in the labor force regardless of disability status.
- Some people who were marginally attached to the labor force were classified as discouraged workers. These people suspended their job search for at least one of the following reasons: they think no work is available, they could not find work, they lack schooling or training, employers think they are too young or old, or other types of discrimination. Only a very small proportion of those not in the labor force were discouraged workers, whether they had a disability or not (0.3 percent and 1.3 percent, respectively).