



The mission of the California Labor Lab is to extend the pursuit of health and safety for workers in traditional employment to those in a wide range of alternative arrangements in partnership with affected communities.

Data Brief #5: Employment among Persons with Disabilities in California

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In the California Work and Health Survey, the principal disability measure is based on the question, “Are you limited in any way because of a long-term physical or mental impairment or chronic condition.” Those who respond that they are limited are then asked if the impairment or condition keeps them from working at a job or business.

Of the 26.0 million Californians between 18 and 70, 6.2 million (23.7%) indicate that they are limited in any way due to an impairment or chronic condition while 3.0 million (11.7%) state that the impairment or condition keeps them from working at a job or business.

Activity limitation does not differ substantially by gender, but rates of such limitation are much higher among persons 35-54 and 55-70 when compared to those 18-34. They are also much higher among those with lower levels of education. In part reflecting the fact that a higher proportion of Hispanics and Asians are in the youngest age groups, rates of activity limitation are lower in these groups than among whites not of Hispanic origin and African Americans.

Effect of Disability on Employment

Persons with disability are about two-thirds as likely to be working as those without in the week prior to interview, 49% and 72%, respectively.

Among those who are employed, however, the effect of disability on work quantity is smaller than on whether someone is employed. 47% and 54% of persons with and without disabilities, respectively, worked full-time for the entire year prior to interview, a ratio of .88.

The effect of disability on employment differs dramatically by demographic characteristic.

- *The effect of disability is greater for men than women.* The employment rate of women with disabilities is 73% as great as among those without, while the rate among men with disabilities is only 61% as great as men without.
- *Disability has a large impact on employment among African Americans,* with those with disabilities only 39% as likely to be working as those without.
- *The effect of disability increases with age.* Among those 18-34, persons with disabilities are 97% as likely to be employed as those without; while among those 35-54 and 55-70, persons with disabilities are only 66% and 59% as likely to be employed as those without.
- *Disability affects the employment of those with lower levels of education to a much greater extent than those with college degrees or graduate education.*
 - Persons with disabilities with a high school education or less are only 58% as likely as those without to be employed, while among those with graduate education, such persons are 99% as likely to be employed.

Summary and Conclusions

Persons with disabilities defined by activity limitation are only two-thirds as likely to be employed in the week prior to interview as those without, but if able to retain employment, they are almost 90% as likely to work full-time for the entire year. Consistent with many studies in the disability and employment literature, total cessation of work is a more likely outcome than change within employment to a less extensive work schedule.

Maintenance of employment for those working and finding a way to help those out of work gain entry to employment and sustain work are crucial to the well-being of persons with disabilities.

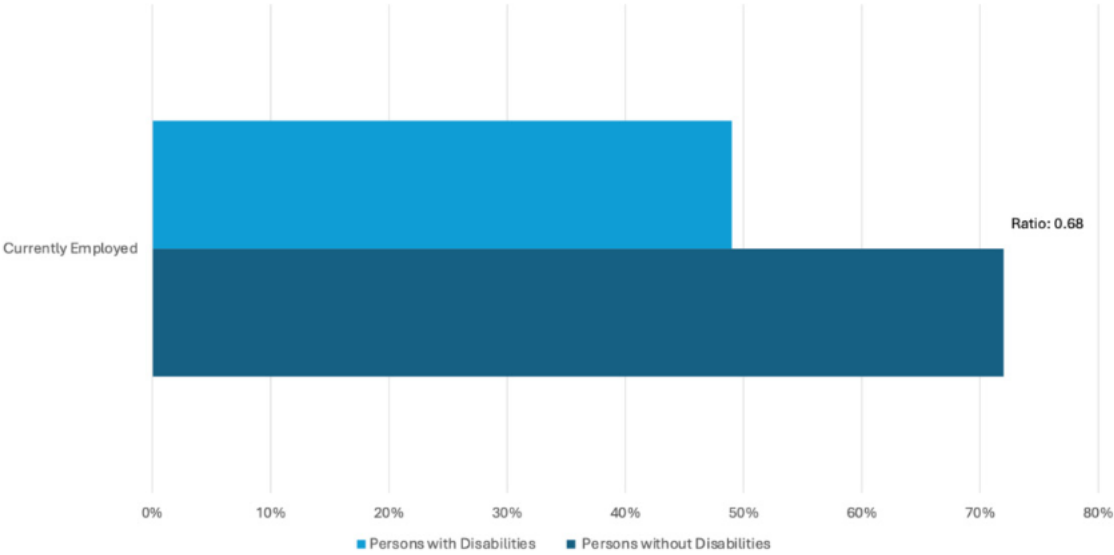
About the Survey

The California Work and Health Survey (CWHS) used a random sample of cell phones to develop its study cohort of 4,014 working age Californians. The CWHS was administered between November 2022 and May 2023 by telephone interviewers or completed on-line at the respondents' choice. Both the telephone-administered and on-line surveys could be completed in English or Spanish. The survey covered current employment status, working conditions among the employed, health status, and economic well-being. The results were weighted to reflect known characteristics of the working age population of California.

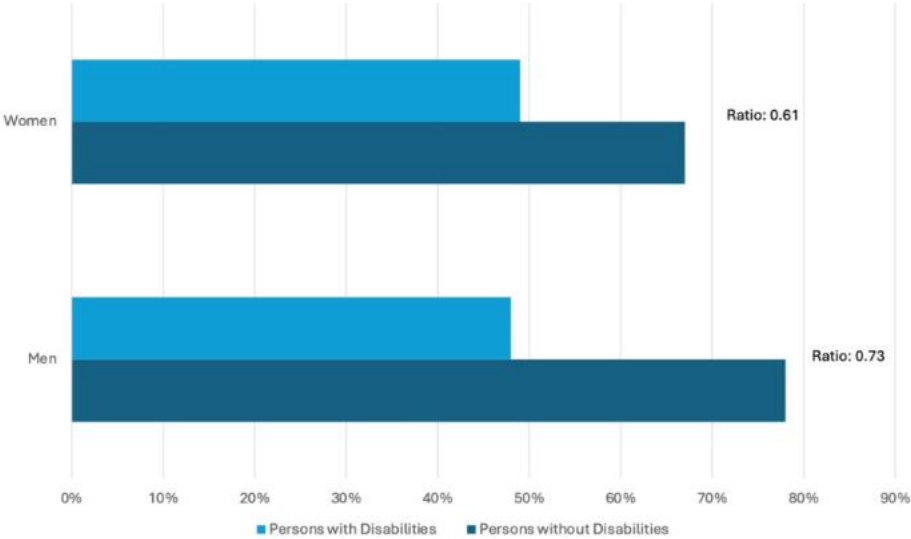
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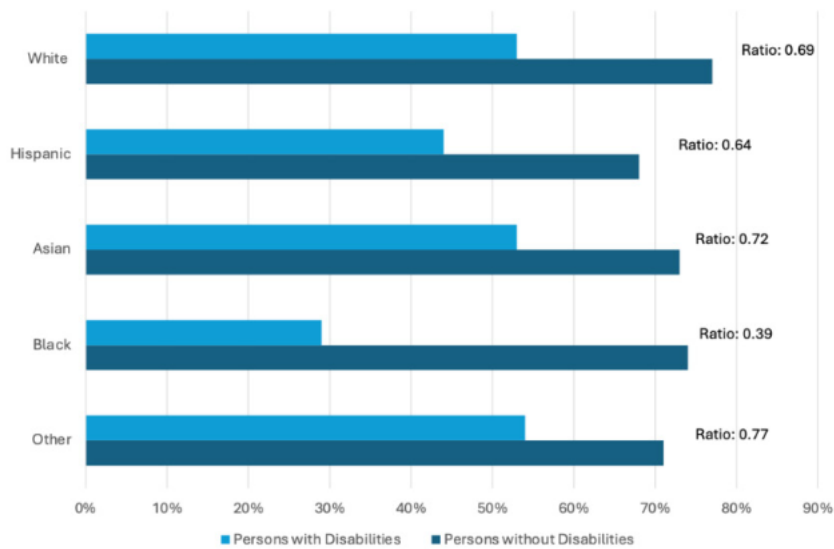
Employment of Persons With and Without Disabilities in Week Prior to Interview (%)



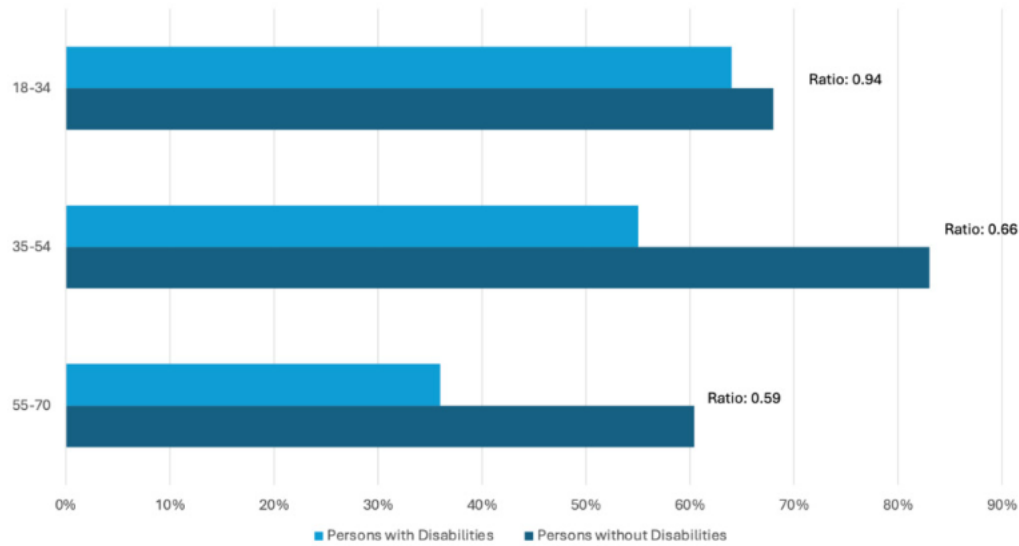
Employment of Persons With and Without Disabilities in Week Prior to Interview, by Gender (%)



Employment of Persons With and Without Disabilities in Week Prior to Interview, by Race (%)



Employment of Persons With and Without Disabilities in Week Prior to Interview, by Age (%)



Employment of Persons With and Without Disabilities in Week Prior to Interview, by Education (%)

