

# Disability and Employment in the Time of Coronavirus

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# Defining Disability



- Need to understand what we are measuring
- Limitations and comparability of data sources
- Legal, medical, survey, and conceptual definitions

# Who has a disability?

## Americans with Disabilities Act

A person who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,
- has a history or record or such an impairment, or
- is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

## Current Population Survey

(same as American Community Survey)

Reports any of these six types of impairment:

- Hearing
- Visual
- Ambulatory
- Cognitive
- Independent living
- Personal care

## World Health Organization

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF):

- Differentiates between impairments of body function and structure, activity and capacity limitations, and participatory restrictions
- Classification system includes environmental factors

# Defining Disability



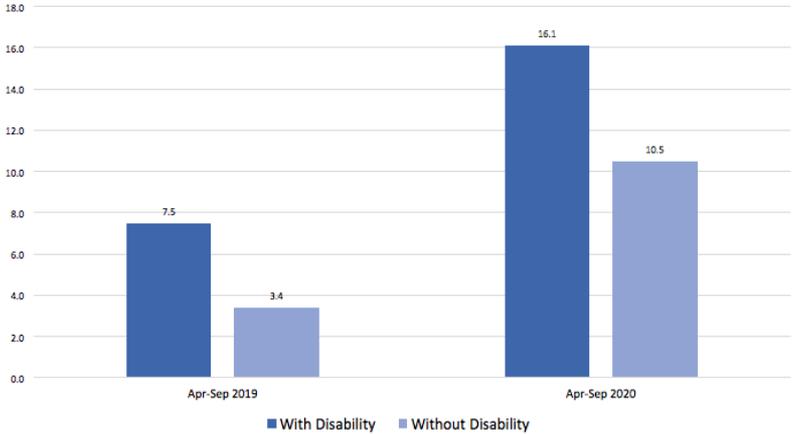
Current Population Survey (CPS)  
—Basic Monthly

American Community Survey  
(ACS)

- **Hearing:** *Is anyone deaf or does anyone have serious difficulty hearing?*
- **Visual:** *Is anyone blind or does anyone have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?*
- **Cognitive:** *Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?*
- **Ambulatory:** *Does anyone have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?*
- **Independent Living:** *Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?*
- **Personal Care:** *Does anyone have difficulty dressing or bathing?*

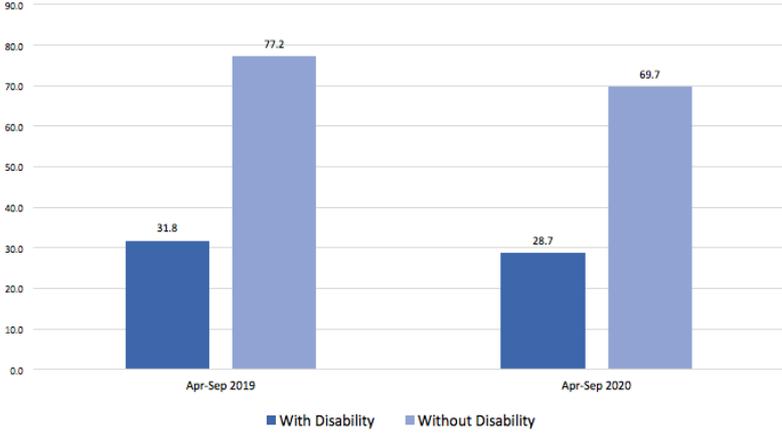
# Measuring employment: unemployment rate or employment to population ratio

### Unemployment Rate by Disability Status, Age 18-64



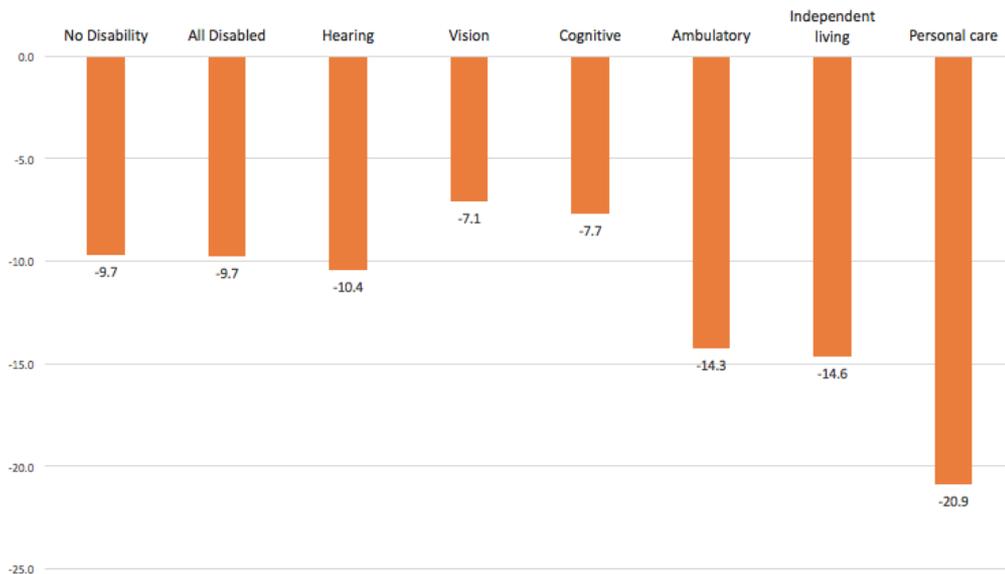
Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-CPS extract, 2019-2020.

### Employment-to-Population Ratio by Disability Status, Age 18-64



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-CPS extract, 2019-2020.

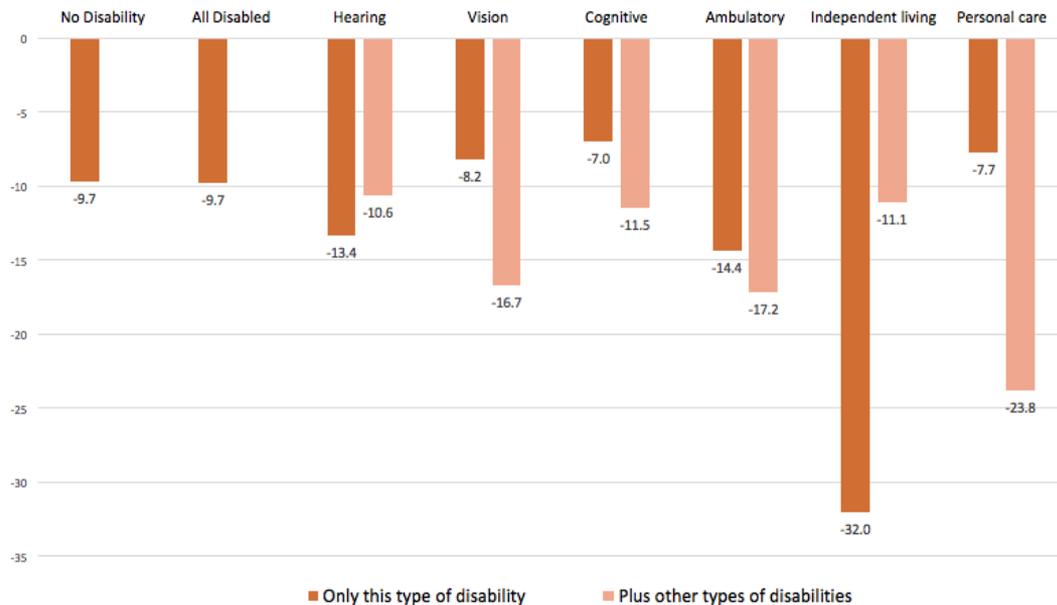
## Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Employment-to-Population Ratio by Disability Status, Age 18-64



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-CPS extract, 2019-2020.

Disability is not a monolith: Using the CPS to measure pandemic EPOP changes

## Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Employment-to-Population Ratio by Detailed Disability Status, Age 18-64



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-CPS extract, 2019-2020.

Disability diversity: accounting for those with multiple disabilities

# Policy implications

- Affordable access to health care services enables those with disabilities to remain in the workforce (Mathematica 2015 focus groups)
- Limitations of current programs
  - Full workforce integration can jeopardize eligibility for benefit programs that ensure long-term needs of the disabled are met without interruption
  - Asset limits prevent disabled from amassing a financial cushion

# Policy implications

- Additional investment in care workers and a more compassionate approach toward caregivers, including guaranteed paid family and medical leave
- Consideration of intersection between disability and other demographic factors
- Reevaluation of what constitutes a “reasonable” accommodation (example: remote work suddenly feasible due to the pandemic)



Questions