

Immigrants with disabilities more frequently employed than US-born persons with disabilities

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Currently, foreign-born people make up approximately 13 percent of the total U.S. population. As the immigrant population grows, understanding its disability status and employment characteristics becomes increasingly important. People, both native and foreign-born, with disabilities make important contributions to our society, and many individuals continue to work despite a wide range of impairments. A new study by researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital focuses on disability and employment among working-age immigrants in the United States.

According to the study, released online in advance of print as an early view by the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, there were an estimated 24 million U.S. working-age adults with [disabilities](#) in 2007. Of these, 8.5 million (35 percent) were employed. The study revealed that for each type of disability, including sensory, physical, mental and emotional conditions, both foreign-born citizens with disabilities and non-citizens with disabilities were more likely than their U.S.-born counterparts to be employed.

"The [employment](#) decisions of immigrants with disabilities may be impacted by eligibility for public assistance," explained Huiyun Xiang, MD, PhD, the study's lead author and principal investigator in the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

"Whereas U.S.-born people with disabilities have greater access to public

assistance and may depend less on salary income. Also, eligibility for foreign-born people is complicated by length of residency, citizenship, refugee status, work history and other factors."

The two most common occupations for foreign-born people with disabilities were in production and cleaning/maintenance, while the two most common occupations for U.S.-born people with disabilities were in sales and office/administrative support. The study also showed that the median income for foreign-born persons with disabilities was \$20,000; however, for U.S.-born people with disabilities, \$22,000 was the median income.

"People with disabilities often face a variety of barriers to employment, including limited access to public transportation, limited mobility in and around the workplace and societal prejudice or discrimination," said Dr. Xiang, also a faculty member of The Ohio State University College of Medicine. "However, English language proficiency is likely an additional barrier for immigrants with disabilities and may affect the occupational options available to them."

Provided by Nationwide Children's Hospital

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