

Ongoing job growth reflects people with disabilities striving to work

July 7 2017



In June 2017, there were increases in the employment to population ratio and labor participation rate for people with and without disabilities. Credit: Kessler Foundation & UNHIOD

Americans with disabilities continued to engage in the labor market, reaching 15 months of job gains, according to today's National Trends in Disability Employment - Monthly Update (nTIDE), issued by Kessler Foundation and the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability (UNH-IOD). This extends the longest stretch of recorded gains for this population. As the nation implements the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, vocational

rehabilitation (VR) services are evolving to better serve people with significant disabilities. By aligning VR with programs for students and young adults with severe disabilities, there are more options for their transition to competitive, integrated employment.

In the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Jobs Report released Friday, July 7, the employment-to-population ratio for working-age people with [disabilities](#) increased from 28.1 percent in June 2016 to 29.8 percent in June 2017 (up 6 percent; 1.7 percentage points). For working-age people without disabilities, the employment-to-population ratio also increased from 73.2 percent in June 2016 to 73.9 percent in June 2017 (up 1 percent; 0.7 percentage points). The employment-to-population ratio, a key indicator, reflects the percentage of people who are working relative to the total population (the number of people working divided by the number of people in the total population multiplied by 100).

"Fifteen consecutive months of employment growth for people with disabilities is outstanding news," according to John O'Neill, PhD, director of employment and disability research at Kessler Foundation. "However, there is still a long way to go before people with disabilities reach their pre-Great Recession employment levels, not to mention parity with people without disabilities," he added.

The [labor force participation](#) rate for working-age people with disabilities increased from 32.1 percent in June 2016 to 33.0 percent in June 2017 (up 2.8 percent; 0.9 percentage points). For working-age people without disabilities, the labor force participation rate also increased from 76.9 percent in June 2016 to 77.3 percent in June 2017 (up 0.5 percent; 0.4 percentage points). The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the population that is working or actively looking for work.

"The growth in the labor force participation rate of people with

disabilities continues to outpace that of people without disabilities, which is a strong indicator that [people](#) with disabilities are working, want to work, and are indeed striving to work," said Andrew Houtenville, PhD, associate professor of economics at UNH, and research director at the Institute on Disability.

"Congress has given a clear directive to focus on competitive integrated employment and to positively impact the workforce participation rate of persons with disabilities," states Stephen A. Wooderson, CEO of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). "As outlined in WIOA, the priority for public [vocational rehabilitation](#) programs is serving job seekers with significant disabilities." With the emphasis on more comprehensive preparation for employment and extended support services in the workplace, connecting with VR is essential for youth and adults who are striving to work. "Incorporating work experiences during high school increases the likelihood of employment after graduation," notes Wooderson, "and options for customized employment and supported [employment](#) help meet the needs of jobseekers with significant disabilities."

In June 2017, among workers ages 16-64, the 4,719,000 workers with disabilities represented 3.3 percent of the total 144,945,000 workers in the U.S.

The next nTIDE will be issued on Friday, August 4, 2017.

Provided by Kessler Foundation

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