

Key Findings: 2000 N.O.D./Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities

To determine what gaps exist and to note changes over time, specific quantifiable measurements or "indicators" have been developed for key life activities. A **gap** is defined as the number of percentage points by which Americans with disabilities lag behind other Americans on a given indicator. The following illustrates the gaps between people with and without disabilities on each of the 10 indicators of quality of life. For each indicator, the gap has been highlighted in bold, and other data relevant to the gap has been provided.

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Employment

- **Of all people with working age people with disabilities (aged 18-64), only 3 out of 10 (32%) are employed full or part-time, compared to eight in ten working-age people without disabilities (81%) - a gap of 49 percentage points.**
- However, among those who say they are able to work despite their disability or health problem, fully 56% of people with disabilities are working, and the gap between people with and without disabilities is 25%.
- Over the past fourteen years, there has been noticeable improvement in employment among those who say they are able to work. 56% of people with disabilities who say they are able to work are working today, compared to 46% in 1986.

- The employment picture for 18-29 year olds is the most promising. Among this cohort, 57% of those with disabilities who are able to work are working, compared to 72% of their non-disabled counterparts - a gap of 15%.¹
 - Among the employed, people with disabilities are somewhat less likely than people without disabilities to say that their jobs require them to use their full talents and abilities (40% versus 48% respectively).
 - Among the unemployed, more than 2 out of 3 people with disabilities (67%) would prefer to work.
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Income

- **People with disabilities are almost three times as likely as people without disabilities to live in poverty², having a household income of \$15,000 or less (29% versus 10% respectively) - a gap of 19 percentage points.**
 - Likewise, people with disabilities are half as likely than people without disabilities to live in households that earn more than \$50,000 annually (16% versus 40% respectively)
 - However, among 18-29 year olds, the gaps are only 9 points in both cases - those with household incomes of \$15,000 or less and those with household incomes of \$50,000 or more.³
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Education

- **More than 1 out of 5 people with disabilities failed to complete high school (22%), compared to less than 1 out of 10 people without disabilities (9%) - a gap of 13 percentage points.**

- Slightly more than 1 out of 10 people with disabilities (12%) have graduated from college, compared to 23% of their non-disabled counterparts.
 - However, in the past fourteen years, there has been marked progress in the area of education. In fact, almost 8 out of 10 people with disabilities (77%) have graduated from high school today, compared to 6 out of 10 (61%) in 1986.
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Health Care

- **People with and without disabilities are equally likely to have health insurance of some kind (90% versus 89% respectively).**
 - However, people with disabilities are three times as likely to not have gotten needed health care on at least one occasion last year, when compared to people without disabilities (19% and 6% respectively) - a gap of 13 percentage points. Similarly, people with disabilities are much more likely to postpone or put off seeking needed health care because they could not afford it (28% versus 12% respectively).
 - People with disabilities are also four times as likely, when compared to people without disabilities, to have special needs that are not covered by their health insurance (28% versus 7% respectively).
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Access to Transportation

- **People with disabilities are much more likely to consider inadequate transportation to be a problem (30% versus 10% respectively) - a gap of 20 percentage points.**

Entertainment/Going Out

- **People with disabilities are less likely to go to restaurants at least once per week than people without disabilities (40% versus 59%) - a gap of 19 percentage points.**
- Similarly, people with disabilities less likely than people without disabilities to:
 - visit a supermarket or food store at least once per week (55% versus 83%)
 - visit a department store, mall or shopping center at least once per week (23% versus 41%)
 - go to movies or theater 4 or more times per year (22% versus 48%)
 - go to live popular music performances 4 or more times per year (9% versus 16%)
 - go to a sports event 4 or more times per year (15% versus 35%)
 - go to events related to their hobbies such as dancing, art shows, or events for collectors 4 or more times per year (21% versus 36%)
- Again, the most encouraging signs are seen among the youngest cohort of 18-29 years olds. These younger people with disabilities are almost as likely as their non-disabled counterparts to go out to restaurants at least once per week (59% versus 61%).⁴

Socializing

- **Significant majorities of people with and without disabilities socialize with friends, family, and neighbors at least once per week. However, people**

with disabilities still socialize less than people without disabilities (85% versus 70% respectively) - a gap of 15 percentage points.

- Not surprisingly, similar to entertainment, younger people with disabilities (aged 18-29) are almost as likely as their non-disabled counterparts to socialize with close friends, relatives, or neighbors (89% versus 90%).⁵
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Attendance at Religious Services

- **Approximately half of people with disabilities (47%) attend religious services at least once per month. However, 65% of people without disabilities do the same - a gap of 18 percentage points.**
 - This is not an indication of religious faith since religious faith is almost equally important to people with and without disabilities - 84% of people with disabilities and 87% of people without disabilities consider religious faith to be important to them.
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Political Participation/Voter Registration

- **People with disabilities are less likely to be registered to vote than people without disabilities (62% versus 78% respectively) - a gap of 16 percentage points.**⁶
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Life Satisfaction

- **Half as many people with disabilities say that they are very satisfied with life in general, when compared to people without disabilities (33% versus 67% respectively) - a gap of 34 percentage points.**
 - However, as with many of the other indicators, this gap in life satisfaction decreases for younger people aged 18 to 29. For this youngest cohort, 44% of people with disabilities, compared to 57% of people without disabilities, say they are "very satisfied with life" - a gap of 13 percentage points.⁷
 - People with disabilities expect their quality of life to get better over the next four years, though less so than people without disabilities (41% versus 76% respectively).
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Trends

When comparing this 2000 data to earlier research, certain social and economic indicators have gotten better for people with disabilities. Most notably, over the past fourteen years, education has shown signs of improvement for all people with disabilities, and employment has shown signs of improvement for people who say they are able to work. Specifically, among those who say they are able to work despite their disability or health problem, 56% of people with disabilities are working today, compared to 46% in 1986. Moreover, almost 8 out of 10 people with disabilities (77%) have graduated from high school today, compared to 6 out of 10 (61%) in 1986. These improvements most likely stem from multiple causes including: the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a booming economy, and substantial growth in technology.

When looking more closely at the past two years, it seems that for all of the 10 indicators (except education and attendance at religious services), most things have stayed the same or improved slightly for both people with and without disabilities. This is not surprising in light of the economic growth that has occurred recently in the U.S., which typically leads to higher incomes, lower unemployment rates, better access to health care and more discretionary money. For people with disabilities, the past two years has seen the greatest improvements in access to entertainment, with 40% going to restaurants at least once per week, compared to 33% in 1998. This finding is confirmed by the fact that people with disabilities (77%) overwhelmingly

agree that access to public facilities such as restaurants, theaters, stores, and museums has gotten better over the past four years.

However, while the data shows progress for both people with and without disabilities, the improvements have been much more modest for people with disabilities. It seems that people with disabilities have been less likely to benefit (at least on the 10 indicators) from the economic expansion. This finding is not surprising, given that people with disabilities are more likely to have lower incomes than people without disabilities, and lower income individuals are less likely to benefit from increases in the stock market or an overall economic surge.

Notes:

¹Caution should be used when drawing conclusions from these percentages as the results are based on small sample sizes.

²The 1999 U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Threshold was \$17,000 for a family of four.

³Caution should be used when drawing conclusions from these percentages as the results are based on small sample sizes.

⁴Caution should be used when drawing conclusions from these percentages as the results are based on small sample sizes.

⁵Caution should be used when drawing conclusions from these percentages as the results are based on small sample sizes.

⁶These numbers are taken from the 1996 Current Population Survey (CPS) as they were in the 1998 N.O.D./Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities. The CPS only measures voter registration for people without disabilities after a Presidential election. Therefore, we are unable to measure the political participation gap until 2001, at which time we will update this quality of life indicator.

⁷Caution should be used when drawing conclusions from these percentages as the results are based on small sample sizes.