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Center on Employment Policy for Persons
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Report

2010 Progress Report on the Economic Well-Being of Working-Age People with Disabilities

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2010 Progress Report on the Economic Well-Being of Working-Age People with Disabilities

Introduction

This progress report on the prevalence rate, employment, poverty, and household income of working-age people with disabilities (ages 21-64) uses data from the 2010 and earlier Current Population Surveys – Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS-ASEC, a.k.a. Annual Demographic Survey, Income Supplement, and March CPS). The CPS is the only dataset that provides continuously-defined yearly information on the working-age population with disabilities since 1981.

Data Source

The CPS is a monthly survey of the non-institutionalized population of the United States. Information is collected on labor force characteristics (e.g., employment, earnings, and hours of work). In March of each year, the CPS basic monthly survey is supplemented with the CPS-ASEC. This supplement focuses on sources of income, government program participation, previous employment, insurance, and a variety of demographic characteristics. The CPS and the CPS-ASEC are used extensively by government agencies, researchers, policy makers, journalists, and the general public to evaluate government programs, economic well-being and behavior of individuals, families, and households.

The Census Bureau conducts the CPS on behalf of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The CPS surveys the resident population of the United States. Citizens living abroad or people living in long-term care facilities are not surveyed. The CPS began in the early 1940s, but the work limitation variable was not introduced until 1981. In 1994, major revisions were made to the employment questions on the Basic Monthly Survey. Changes made in the CPS-ASEC were less substantial, and mainly reflected the shift to computer-assisted interviews. Approximately 150,000 individuals participate in the surveys annually, although this number has increased in recent years. For more information on the CPS-ASEC, see Burkhauser and Houtenville (2006) at http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/edicollect/1233/, or the BLS/Census Bureau website http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/cpsmain.htm.

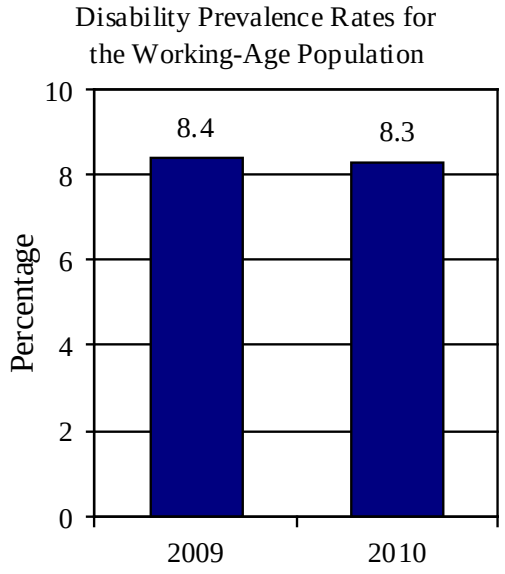
Definition of Disability[1]

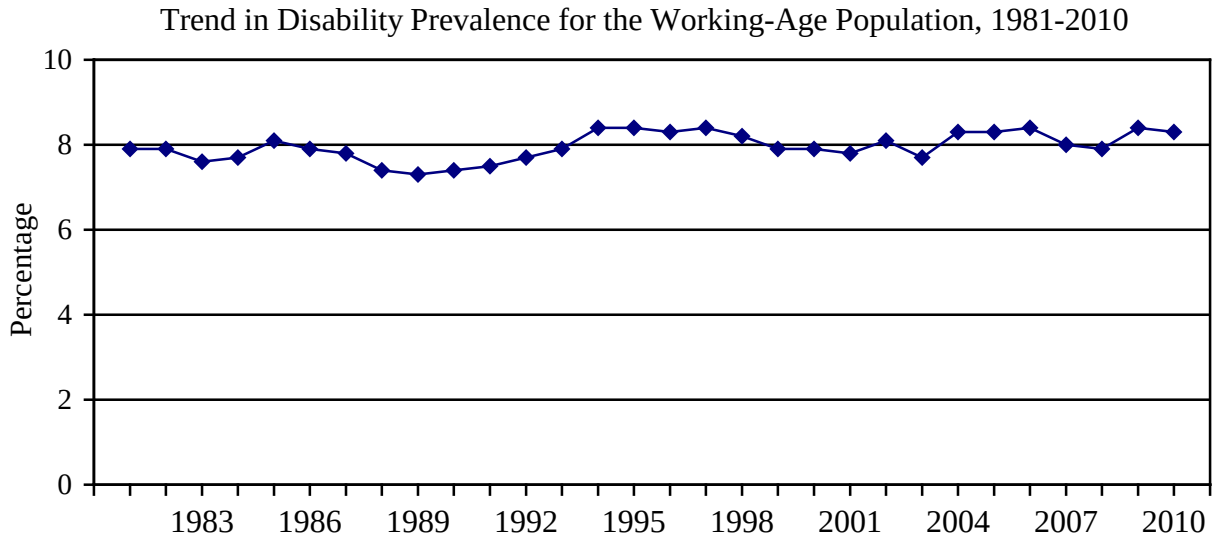
The CPS-ASEC asks the work limitation question: "[d]oes anyone in this household have a health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do? [If so,] who is that? Anyone else?" Similar work limitation questions appear in the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The CPS-ASEC work limitation question has been used extensively in the economics literature to capture the working-age population with disabilities and to compare its employment and economic well-being with the working-age population without disabilities. Yet its use, especially outside the economics literature, is controversial. Some researchers and policy advocates dismiss results based on the CPS as fundamentally flawed, arguing that the set of individuals with work limitations captured in these data represent neither the actual population with disabilities nor its employment trends. (See especially Hale, 2001.) Burkhauser, Daly, Houtenville, and Nargis (2002) show that while the *levels* of employment found in the CPS data are significantly lower than those found in datasets with better measures of the working-age population with disabilities, the employment *trends* are not significantly different. For a fuller discussion of the relative strengths and weaknesses of CPS data for policy research related to the working-age population with disabilities, see Burkhauser and Houtenville (2006); Houtenville, Stapleton, Weathers and Burkhauser (2009); and Burkhauser, Houtenville, and Tennant (2011).

Prevalence Rate

• In March 2010, the disability prevalence rate for the working-age population was 8.3 percent, similar to the rate in 2009.

• After rising from a low of 7.3 percent in 1989 to a peak of about 8.4 percent in 1994, prevalence rates were relatively stable through 1997 before falling through 2001. Since then, rates have fluctuated between a range of 7.7 and 8.4 percent.





Note: The values in this chart are available in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Prevalence Rate, Standard Error and Sample Size, by Disability Status and Year, 1981-2010

Year	Prevalence Rate	Standard Error	Sample Size
1981	7.9	0.11	98,196
1982	7.9	0.12	88,593
1983	7.6	0.11	89,277
1984	7.7	0.11	89,048
1985	8.1	0.11	89,656
1986	7.9	0.11	87,819
1987	7.8	0.11	86,783
1988	7.4	0.11	87,005
1989	7.3	0.12	80,683
1990	7.4	0.11	88,505
1991	7.5	0.11	88,658
1992	7.7	0.11	87,562
1993	7.9	0.11	86,835
1994	8.4	0.11	83,984
1995	8.4	0.11	83,606
1996	8.3	0.12	72,573
1997	8.4	0.12	73,606
1998	8.2	0.12	73,807
1999	7.9	0.12	74,400
2000	7.9	0.12	75,515
2001	7.8	0.08	73,029
2002	8.1	0.09	119,812
2003	7.7	0.08	119,994
2004	8.3	0.08	118,462
2005	8.3	0.12	116,889
2006	8.4	0.12	116,219
2007	8.0	0.11	115,477
2008	7.9	0.11	115,617
2009	8.4	0.12	116,497
2010	8.3	0.11	117,769

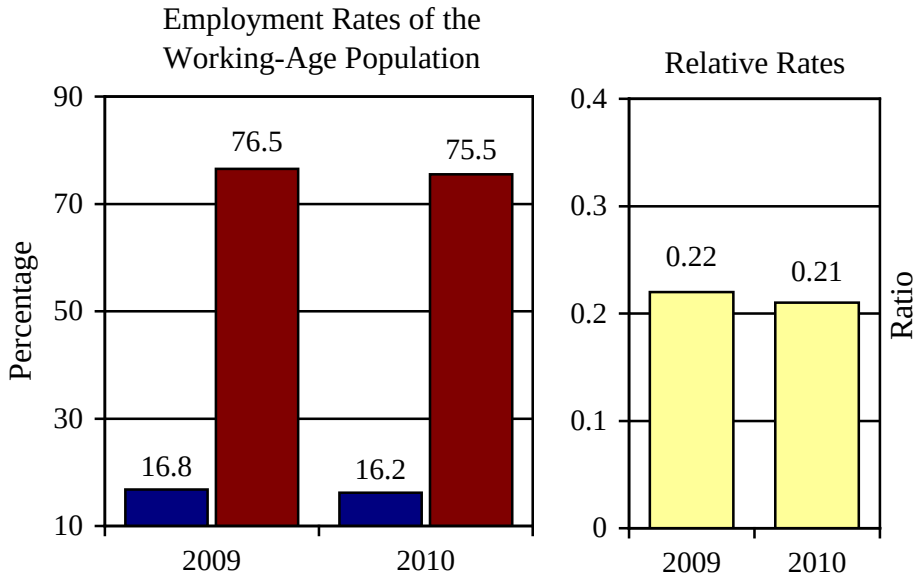
Source: 1981-2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Note: The population with disabilities is identified using the work limitation question: "[d]oes anyone in this household have a health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do? [If so,] who is that? Anyone else?" Sample size reflects those ages 21-64 in the reference (survey) year.

Employment Rate

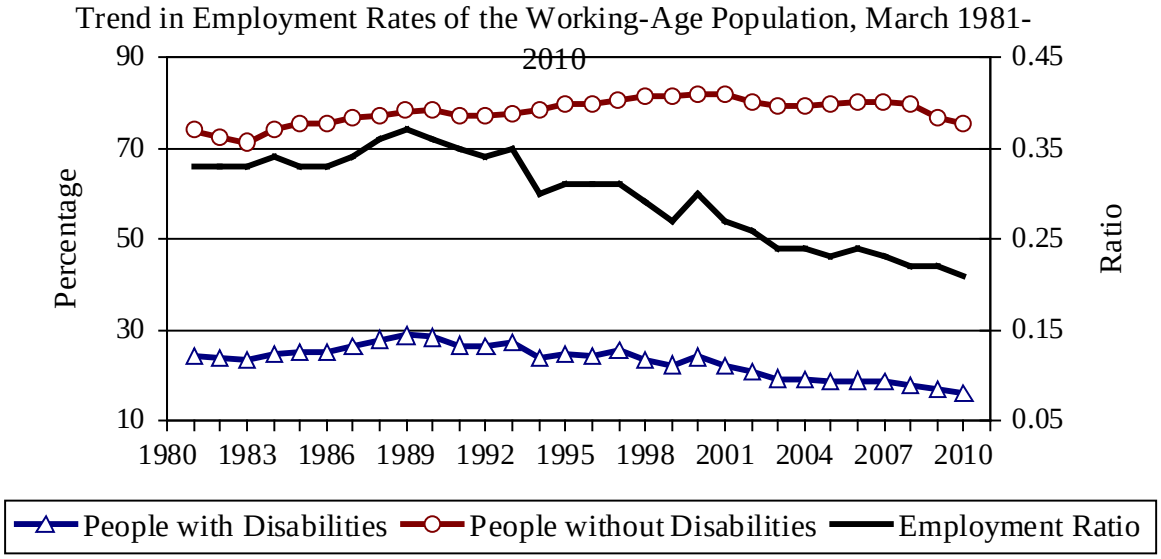
• In March 2010, the employment rate of working-age people with disabilities was 16.2 percent, down from 16.8 percent in 2009, and well below the peak of 28.8 percent in 1989.

• In March 2010, the employment rate of working-age people without disabilities was 75.5 percent, down from 76.5 percent in 2009 and below its peak of 81.7 percent in 2000.



• In March 2010, working-age people with disabilities were only 21 percent as likely to be employed as a working-age person without disabilities.

• In March 2009 and March 2010, the relative employment rates of working-age people with disabilities were similar (0.22 and 0.21 respectively), with both well below the 1989 peak of 0.37.



Note: The values in this chart are available in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Employment Rate, Standard Error and Sample Size, by Disability Status and Year, March 1981-2010

	People with Disabilities			People without Disabilities		
Year	Employment Rate	Standard Error	Sample Size	Employment Rate	Standard Error	Sample Size
1981	24.4	0.62	7,708	73.9	0.19	90,488
1982	23.8	0.65	7,005	72.5	0.20	81,588
1983	23.5	0.65	6,835	71.3	0.20	82,442
1984	24.8	0.66	6,825	74.0	0.19	82,223
1985	25.1	0.64	6,990	75.3	0.19	82,666
1986	25.3	0.64	6,680	75.5	0.19	81,139
1987	26.3	0.65	6,526	76.5	0.18	80,257
1988	27.9	0.68	6,300	77.2	0.18	80,705
1989	28.8	0.74	5,858	78.2	0.19	74,825
1990	28.4	0.70	6,448	78.4	0.18	82,057
1991	26.6	0.68	6,463	77.1	0.18	82,195
1992	26.5	0.66	6,577	77.2	0.18	80,985
1993	27.2	0.65	6,684	77.4	0.18	80,151
1994	23.9	0.60	6,775	78.3	0.18	77,209
1995	24.6	0.61	6,755	79.6	0.17	76,851
1996	24.4	0.67	5,892	79.7	0.19	66,681
1997	25.4	0.67	6,082	80.7	0.18	67,524
1998	23.3	0.65	5,929	81.3	0.18	67,878
1999	22.3	0.65	5,772	81.4	0.18	68,628
2000	24.1	0.66	5,934	81.7	0.17	69,581
2001	22.1	0.47	5,691	81.6	0.13	67,338
2002	20.8	0.44	9,070	79.9	0.13	110,742
2003	19.3	0.44	8,971	79.1	0.13	111,023
2004	19.2	0.42	9,334	79.1	0.13	109,128
2005	18.6	0.57	9,194	79.5	0.18	107,695
2006	18.9	0.57	9,193	80.1	0.18	107,026
2007	18.7	0.58	8,649	80.3	0.17	106,828
2008	17.7	0.57	8,662	79.7	0.18	106,955
2009	16.8	0.54	9,106	76.5	0.18	107,391
2010	16.2	0.53	9,235	75.5	0.19	108,534

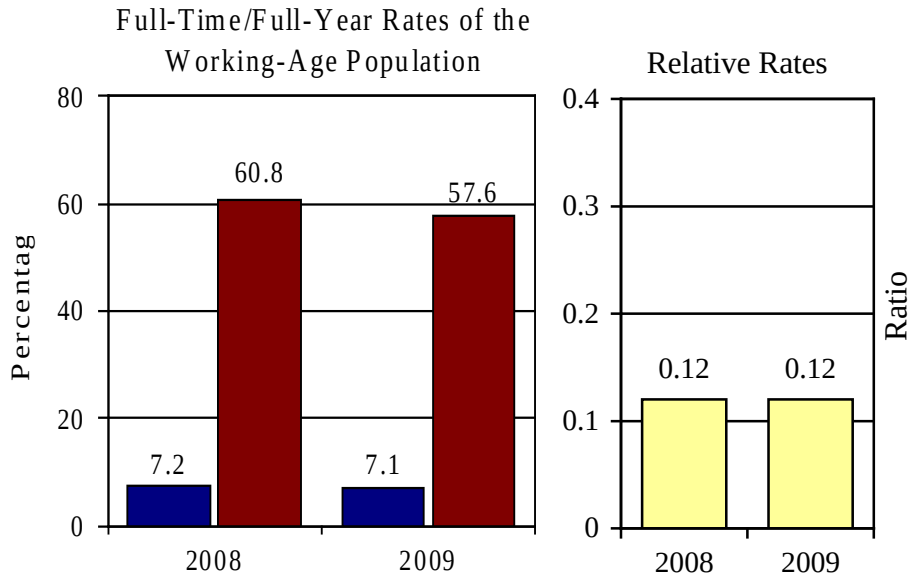
Source: 1981-2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Note: The population with disabilities is identified using the work limitation question: "[d]oes anyone in this household have a health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do? [If so,] who is that? Anyone else?" Sample size reflects those ages 21-64 in the reference (survey) year.

Full-Time/Full-Year Employment

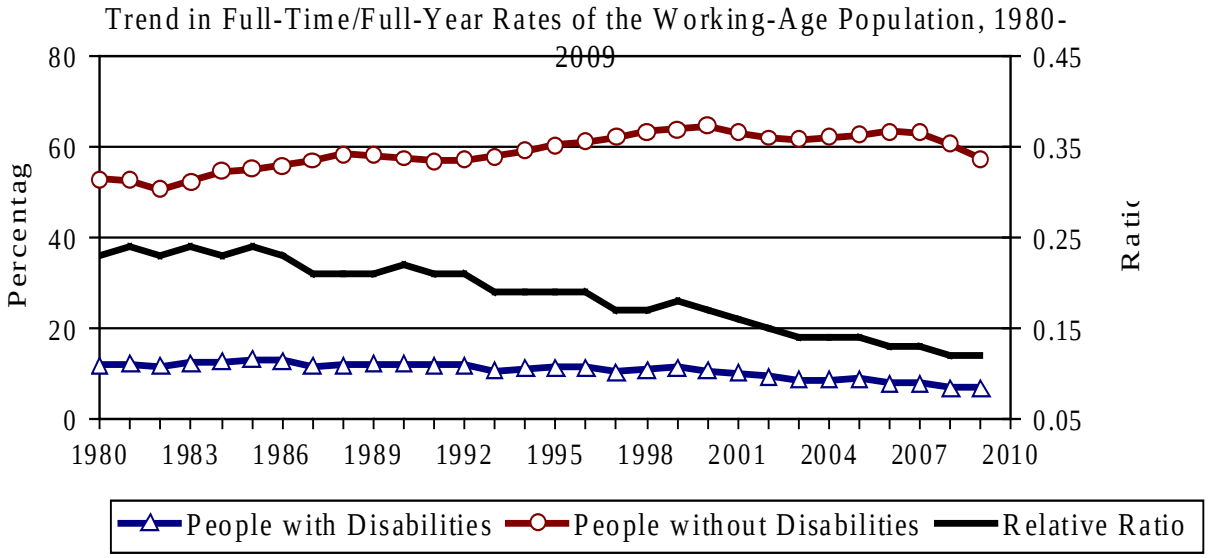
• In 2009, the full-time/full-year employment rate of working-age people with disabilities was 7.1 percent, similar to the employment rate of 7.2 in 2008 and well below its peak of 13.3 percent in 1985.

• In 2009, the full-time/full-year employment rate of working-age people without disabilities was 57.6 percent, down from 60.8 percent in 2008 and below its peak of 64.8 percent in 2000.



• In 2009, working-age people with disabilities were 12 percent as likely to be employed full-time/full-year as a working-age person without disabilities.

• The relative full-time/full-year employment rate of working-age people with disabilities was 0.12 in both 2008 and 2009.



Note: The values in this chart are available in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Full-Time/Full-Year Employment Rate, Standard Error and Sample Size, by Disability Status and Year, 1980-2009

	People with Disabilities			People without Disabilities		
Year	FT/FY Rate	Standard Error	Sample Size	FT/FY Rate	Standard Error	Sample Size
1980	12.0	0.47	7,951	53.1	0.22	88,544
1981	12.4	0.49	7,270	52.8	0.23	79,760
1982	11.9	0.49	7,053	50.9	0.22	80,779
1983	12.6	0.50	7,079	52.5	0.22	80,621
1984	12.8	0.49	7,259	54.8	0.22	81,224
1985	13.3	0.49	6,901	55.3	0.22	79,859
1986	13.0	0.49	6,780	56.1	0.22	79,202
1987	11.8	0.48	6,518	57.2	0.21	79,731
1988	12.1	0.53	6,074	58.5	0.23	74,016
1989	12.5	0.50	6,673	58.3	0.22	81,121
1990	12.4	0.50	6,673	57.7	0.22	81,172
1991	12.0	0.48	6,748	57.1	0.22	79,963
1992	12.1	0.47	6,873	57.4	0.21	79,191
1993	10.9	0.43	6,999	58.1	0.21	76,328
1994	11.4	0.44	6,977	59.3	0.21	76,048
1995	11.7	0.49	6,049	60.6	0.23	66,013
1996	11.5	0.48	6,227	61.3	0.23	66,731
1997	10.6	0.47	6,056	62.3	0.22	67,181
1998	11.0	0.48	5,891	63.5	0.22	67,723
1999	11.6	0.49	6,091	64.0	0.22	68,763
2000	10.9	0.35	5,811	64.8	0.16	66,581
2001	10.3	0.33	9,281	63.3	0.16	109,400
2002	9.5	0.32	9,144	62.2	0.16	109,676
2003	8.8	0.30	9,524	61.9	0.16	107,857
2004	8.9	0.41	9,400	62.3	0.22	106,483
2005	9.0	0.41	9,413	62.9	0.21	105,780
2006	8.2	0.40	8,870	63.6	0.21	105,685
2007	8.0	0.40	8,866	63.4	0.21	105,977
2008	7.2	0.37	9,334	60.8	0.21	106,443
2009	7.1	0.37	9,449	57.6	0.22	107,453

Source: 1981-2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Note: The population with disabilities is identified using the work limitation question: "[d]oes anyone in this household have a health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do? [If so,] who is that? Anyone else?" Sample size reflects those ages 21-64 in the reference (not survey) year.

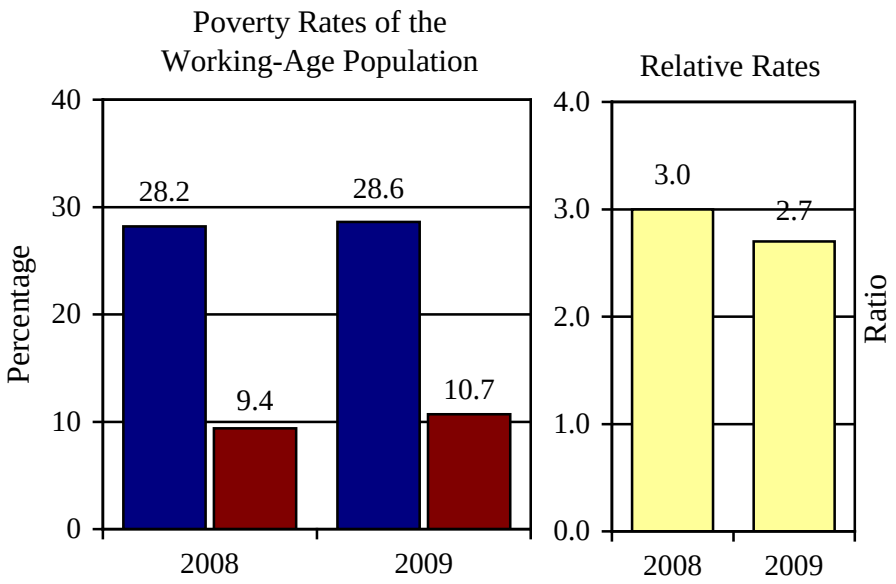
Poverty Rate

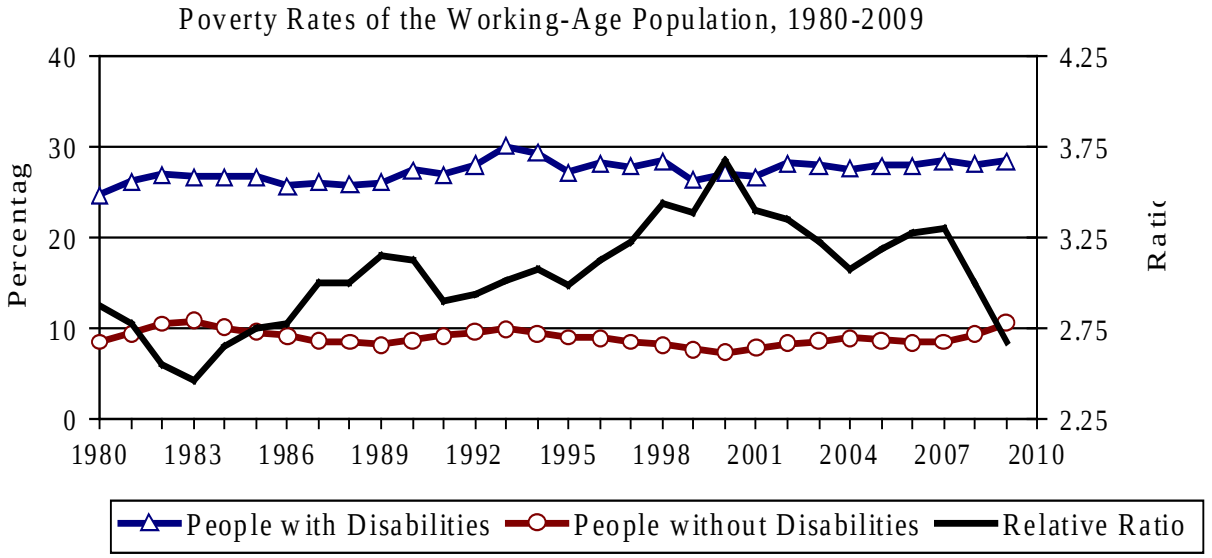
• In 2009, the poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities increased very slightly to 28.6 percent, well above its low of 24.8 percent in 1980.

• In 2009, the poverty rate of working-age people without disabilities was 10.7 percent, up slightly from 9.4 percent in 2008 and well above its 7.4 percent low in 2000.

• In 2009, working-age people with disabilities were 2.7 times more likely to be in poverty when compared to working-age people without disabilities.

• Between 2008 and 2009, the relative poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities decreased from 3.0 to 2.7. The relative rate is well below its high of 3.7 in 2000.





Note: The values in this chart are available in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Poverty Rate, Standard Error and Sample Size, by Disability Status and Year, 1980-2009

	People with Disabilities			People without Disabilities		
Year	Poverty Rate	Standard Error	Sample Size	Poverty Rate	Standard Error	Sample Size
1980	24.8	0.62	7,951	8.6	0.12	88,544
1981	26.3	0.66	7,270	9.5	0.13	79,760
1982	27.0	0.67	7,053	10.6	0.14	80,779
1983	26.8	0.66	7,079	10.9	0.14	80,621
1984	26.8	0.64	7,259	10.1	0.13	81,224
1985	26.8	0.64	6,901	9.7	0.13	79,859
1986	25.8	0.64	6,780	9.3	0.13	79,202
1987	26.2	0.65	6,518	8.7	0.12	79,731
1988	25.9	0.71	6,074	8.6	0.13	74,016
1989	26.2	0.67	6,673	8.3	0.12	81,121
1990	27.5	0.67	6,673	8.8	0.12	81,172
1991	27.0	0.66	6,748	9.3	0.13	79,963
1992	28.1	0.65	6,873	9.6	0.13	79,191
1993	30.1	0.64	6,999	10.0	0.13	76,328
1994	29.4	0.63	6,977	9.5	0.13	76,048
1995	27.3	0.68	6,049	9.1	0.13	66,013
1996	28.3	0.68	6,227	9.0	0.13	66,731
1997	27.9	0.69	6,056	8.6	0.13	67,181
1998	28.5	0.70	5,891	8.3	0.13	67,723
1999	26.4	0.67	6,091	7.8	0.12	68,763
2000	27.2	0.50	5,811	7.4	0.09	66,581
2001	26.8	0.48	9,281	7.9	0.09	109,400
2002	28.3	0.50	9,144	8.4	0.09	109,676
2003	28.0	0.47	9,524	8.7	0.09	107,857
2004	27.7	0.65	9,400	9.0	0.13	106,483
2005	28.0	0.65	9,413	8.8	0.13	105,780
2006	28.0	0.66	8,870	8.5	0.12	105,685
2007	28.6	0.67	8,866	8.6	0.12	105,977
2008	28.2	0.64	9,334	9.4	0.13	106,443
2009	28.6	0.64	9,449	10.7	0.13	107,453

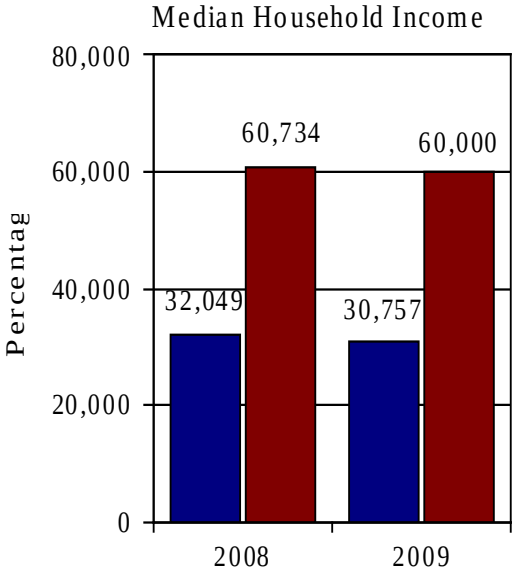
Source: 1981-2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

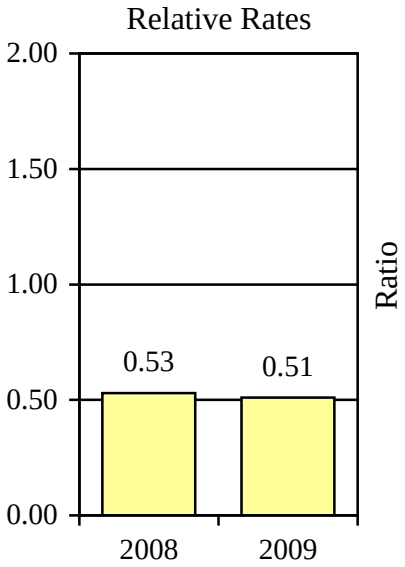
Note: The population with disabilities is identified using the work limitation question: "[d]oes anyone in this household have a health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do? [If so,] who is that? Anyone else?" Sample size reflects those ages 21-64 in the reference (not survey) year.

Median Household Income (Constant 2009 Dollars)

• In 2009, the median household income of households that include any working-age people disabilities was $30,757, a decrease from $32,049 in 2008 and below its peak of $34,335 in 1999.

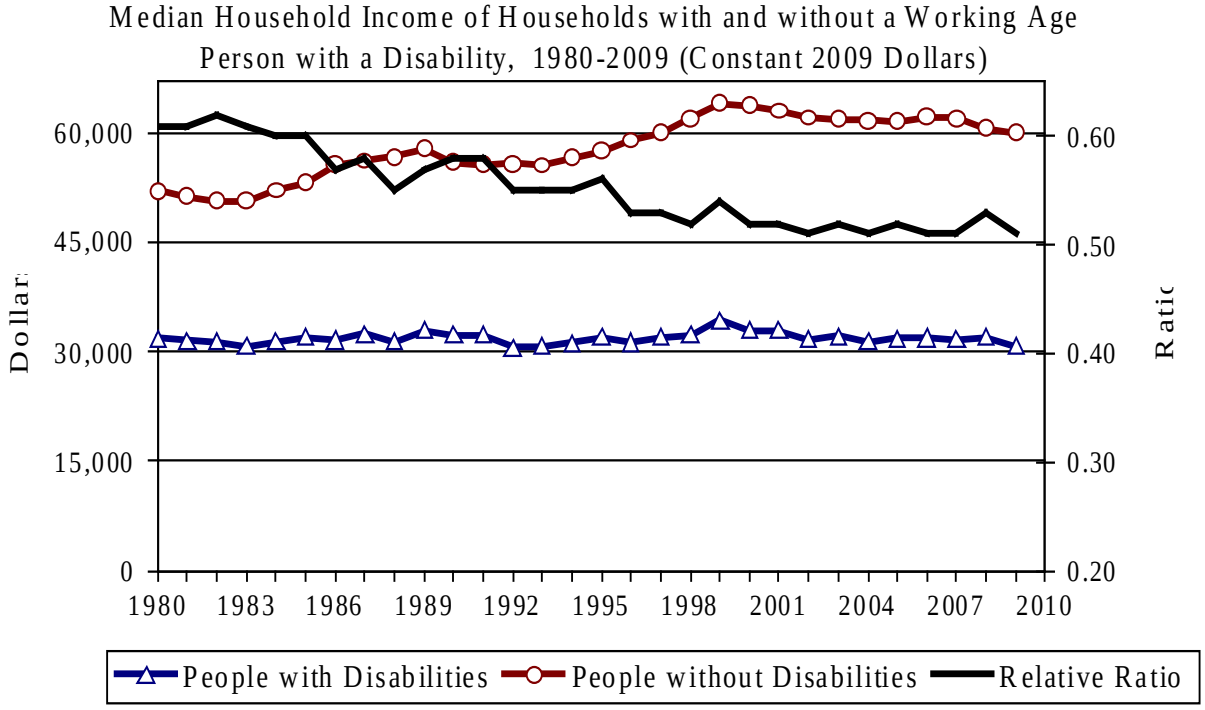
• In 2009, the median household income of households without any working-age people with disabilities was $60,000, down slightly from $60,734 in 2008 and below its peak of $64,145 in 1999.





• In 2009, the median household income of households with any working-age people with disabilities was 51 percent of the median household income of households with no working age people with disabilities.

• The relative median household income of households with any working-age people with disabilities decreased to 0.51 in 2009, from its value of 0.53 in 2008, but still well below its peak of 0.62 in 1982.



Note: The values in this chart are available in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Median Household Income, Standard Error and Sample Size, by Disability Status and Year, 1980-2009 (Constant 2009 Dollars)

	Households with People with Disabilities			Households without People with Disabilities		
Year	Median Household Income	Standard Error	Sample Size	Median Household Income	Standard Error	Sample Size
1980	31,800	318	7,354	52,099	137	47,707
1981	31,496	318	6,645	51,292	147	42,973
1982	31,382	321	6,515	50,721	146	43,046
1983	30,812	319	6,507	50,643	148	43,095
1984	31,425	318	6,655	52,163	152	43,444
1985	31,985	334	6,337	53,272	154	42,854
1986	31,656	335	6,222	55,769	158	42,456
1987	32,551	347	6,016	56,192	160	43,041
1988	31,371	366	5,615	56,753	174	40,187
1989	32,913	369	6,146	57,784	167	43,682
1990	32,306	348	6,171	56,018	163	43,712
1991	32,309	333	6,213	55,626	163	42,943
1992	30,569	332	6,358	55,810	165	42,455
1993	30,706	299	6,429	55,613	169	40,799
1994	31,267	326	6,431	56,656	170	40,776
1995	32,076	357	5,554	57,603	185	35,645
1996	31,319	353	5,697	59,030	188	36,031
1997	31,990	373	5,589	59,981	193	36,462
1998	32,372	383	5,422	62,074	198	36,886
1999	34,335	390	5,607	64,145	204	37,010
2000	32,950	277	5,327	63,812	146	36,177
2001	32,979	269	8,480	63,038	146	59,182
2002	31,692	264	8,372	62,108	142	59,371
2003	32,250	263	8,636	61,925	147	58,095
2004	31,450	353	8,564	61,793	201	57,361
2005	31,860	344	8,588	61,586	201	56,983
2006	31,950	366	8,158	62,326	204	56,939
2007	31,672	368	8,114	62,098	204	57,360
2008	32,049	337	8,517	60,734	198	57,125
2009	30,757	336	8,582	60,000	202	57,098

Source: 1981-2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey.
Note: The population with disabilities is identified using the work limitation question: "[d]oes anyone in this household have a health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do? [If so,] who is that? Anyone else?" Sample size reflects the number of households with members ages 21-64 in the reference (not survey) year.

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Glossary of Terms

Disability.[1] A work limitation is determined in the March CPS by the following question: "[d]oes anyone in this household have a health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do? [If so,] who is that? Anyone else?"

Employment Rate. The employment rate is estimated in the month of March, which is when the CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement and its work limitation question are asked. Also known as the employment-to-population ratio, the employment rate is the percentage of the population that is employed. Persons who are employed are persons 16 years and over in the civilian non-institutional population who, during the full week prior to their survey, (a) did any work at all (at least 1 hour) as paid employees, worked in their own business, profession, or on their own farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers in an enterprise operated by a member of the family, and (b) all those who were not working but who had jobs or businesses from which they were temporarily absent because of vacation, illness, bad weather, childcare problems, maternity or paternity leave, labor-management dispute, job training, or other family or personal reasons, whether or not they were paid for the time off or were seeking other jobs. Each employed person is counted only once, even if he or she holds more than one job. Excluded are persons whose only activity consisted of work around their own house (painting, repairing, or own home housework) or volunteer work for religious, charitable, and other organizations. The total population (the numerator of the employment rate) consists of persons who are employed, persons who are unemployed, and persons not in the labor force. Note: the employment rate is not 100 minus the unemployment rate.

Full-Time/Full-Year Employment. At least 50 weeks during the previous calendar year and at least 35 hours per week. Determined by condition that weeks worked is greater than or equal to 50 and usual hours per week is greater than or equal to 35 hours.

Household Income. Household income is the sum of personal incomes of all household members. Income values are based on a large set of questions. The CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement in March asks questions on the amount of income received in the preceding calendar year from each of the following sources: earnings (from the

labor market, farming and self-employment), unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, public assistance, veterans' payments, survivor benefits, disability benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, dividends, rents, royalties, estates and trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support, financial assistance from outside of the household, and other income. Personal income is the sum of income from these components. No corrections were made to account for topcoding of household income, as topcoding has slight effect on median calculations. However, income is adjusted for inflation. The dollar values in years prior to 2009 have been adjusted upwards to their 2009 equivalent. To do so, we use the Consumer Price Index Research Series (CPI-U-RS) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (for more information, see http://www.bls.gov/cpi/cpirsdc.htm). A dollar value in a given year is divided by the CPI-U-RS of that year and then multiplied by the CPI-U-RS of 2009. Median household income is calculated with the household as the unit of analysis, using household weights without adjusting for household size. Adjusting household income by dividing by size presents an alternative measure of economic well-being by accounting for the fact that some households have more members than others.

Poverty Rate. The poverty rate is the percentage of persons living in families in which the family (pre-tax) income is below the poverty line. The poverty line is determined by the federal government as specified in OMB Statistical Policy Directive 14. It approximates the dollar value necessary to purchase essential goods and services for people or families. It is important to note that the poverty line does not provide a complete description of what people and families need to live, rather it is an estimate based upon a set of assumptions. For example, the poverty measure assumes that the needs of the population with disabilities are the same as those without disabilities. The poverty line depends on the size and composition of the family with regard to the number of children, adults and persons age 65 or over. For example, the poverty line (or threshold) in 2009 was $11,161 for a one-person family and $21,834 for a four-person family with two children (under age 18), and $21,832 for a four-person family with three children. The thresholds for 2009 may be found at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/thresh09.html. More detail about the calculation of the poverty line may be found at www.census.gov/population/www/cps/cpsdef.html, or www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/poverty.shtml.

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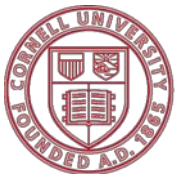
[1] In this report, we focus on the CPS-ASEC work limitation question in order to monitor changes over time. However, beginning in June 2008, the Basic Monthly CPS includes a new set of six questions to identify persons with various types of disabilities. The disability questions appear in the Basic Monthly CPS in the following format:

> This month we want to learn about people who have physical, mental, or emotional conditions that cause serious difficulty with their daily activities. Please answer for household members who are 16 years old or over.

- Is anyone deaf or does anyone have serious difficulty hearing?
- Is anyone blind or does anyone have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?
- Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
- Does anyone have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
- Does anyone have difficulty dressing or bathing?
- Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping?

These questions were originally developed by the U.S. Census Bureau and are also used on the American Community Survey. They can be used in conjuction with the CPS-ASEC economic indicators for the first time in March 2009, when the CPS-ASEC and Basic Monthly surveys are jointly fielded. The new disability questions are asked during the incoming rotations of the CPS, and responses that are collected earlier are retained to establish disability status in later rotations (Burkhauser and Houtenville (2006) describes the CPS rotation scheme). Burkhauser, Houtenville, and Tennant (2011) demonstrate that using the six question sequence yields different results for the socio-economic measures presented in this report. The employment rate, the full-time/full-year employment rate, and median household income are higher for the disability population when identified using the six questions as compared to the population identified by the CPS-ASEC work limitation question alone. Likewise, the poverty rate for the population identified by the six item measure is lower than for the CPS-ASEC worked-limited population. For more information about the new CPS disability questions please visit http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability_faq.htm.



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