

Labour market experiences of people with disabilities

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Key points

- According to autumn 2001 LFS data, nearly one in five people of working age in private households had a current long-term disability (3.7 million men and 3.4 million women).
- Fewer than 10 per cent of adults aged 16-19 years reported a disability in autumn 2001, but this proportion increased to around one third for adults in the 50 to retirement age category.
- Some 3.4 million disabled people were in employment in autumn 2001, an employment rate of 48 per cent, compared with an employment rate of 81 per cent for those not disabled. However, employment rates for disabled men and women have increased over the three-year period to autumn 2001 by 2.7 percentage points.
- The overall ILO unemployment rate for disabled people was 8.3 per cent compared with 4.8 per cent for non-disabled people in autumn 2001.
- Approximately half of the disabled population in the UK are economically inactive (44 per cent men and 52 per cent women), compared with only 15 per cent of the non-disabled population (9 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women).
- Disability has a great impact on the combined economic activity status of households, with households containing a disabled adult having a workless rate of 31.1 per cent compared with a rate of 9.7 per cent for those households where no disabled adult was present.

An examination of the characteristics of people with disabilities and how they fare in the labour market using up-to-date analysis from the Labour Force Survey.

Introduction

THIS ARTICLE focuses on the labour market experiences of disabled people. Building on previous *Labour Market Trends* articles, most recently in May 2001, the article aims to:

- provide an up-to-date picture of the social and demographic characteristics of disabled people in the UK;
- give an overview of the relative participation of disabled people in the labour market and the impact of disability on household labour market behaviour; and
- give more detailed consideration to some of the labour market experiences of the disabled in the main economic activity states relative to those with no disability.

Most people spend a large proportion of their lives in the labour force and their interactions with the labour market have a large part to play in their broader social experience. Earnings, for example, are a primary source of income for individuals and households. Income, in

turn, clearly influences relative experiences of affluence or poverty. More broadly, however, work provides networks of friends and colleagues, a sense of participation or social inclusion, and opportunities for both personal and professional development.

Within the labour market as a whole it is possible to identify groups whose characteristics, be they social, demographic, based on geographic location or whatever, influence the extent to which they are able or willing to participate in the labour market. Consequently, their economic and social experiences will be relatively different.

Current government policies are concerned with addressing disparities between the labour market experiences of relatively worse-off groups. The Green Paper *Towards Full Employment* sets out the Government's plans for full employment across the UK, and its intention of 'closing the gap in

Table 1 People of working age with disabilities by age group and sex; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Thousands			Per cent		
	Disabled	Not disabled	Total	Disabled	Not disabled	Total
Men						
16-19	139	1,365	1,504	9.2	90.8	100
20-24	189	1,641	1,831	10.3	89.7	100
25-34	530	3,844	4,375	12.1	87.9	100
35-49	1,148	5,406	6,554	17.5	82.5	100
50-64	1,724	3,358	5,083	33.9	66.1	100
All	3,731	15,615	19,346	19.3	80.7	100
Women						
16-19	121	1,311	1,432	8.4	91.6	100
20-24	186	1,569	1,755	10.6	89.4	100
25-34	569	3,602	4,171	13.6	86.4	100
35-49	1,256	5,173	6,429	19.5	80.5	100
50-59	1,259	2,491	3,750	33.6	66.4	100
All	3,390	14,146	17,536	19.3	80.7	100

Source: Labour Force Survey

Box 1 Government aims

The Green Paper *Towards full-employment* sets out the Government's goal with regard to employment: 'to create and sustain employment opportunities for all over the next decade – in every part of the country'. A recognition that certain groups traditionally fare worse than others in the labour market informs the Department for Work and Pensions' Public Service Agreement target for Great Britain¹ which states: 'over the three years to 2004 increase the employment rates of disadvantaged areas and groups, taking account of the economic cycle, people with disabilities, lone parents, ethnic minorities, the over-50s and the 30 local authority districts with the poorest initial labour market position – and reduce the difference between their employment rates and the overall rate'.

For the disabled, this translates into three interconnected strands of labour market policy:

- improving incentives to work via the tax and benefit system, for example through the Disabled Person's Tax Credit;
- helping people back into work, for example via the New Deal for Disabled People; and
- tackling discrimination in the workplace via anti-discrimination policy. Underpinning this are the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and the Disability Rights Commission.

employment rates for ethnic minorities, disabled people and other disadvantaged groups and areas' (see *Box 1*).

Whatever the analysis being undertaken, 'disability' as a concept is complex and can be defined in a number of ways. Since 1997, in the Labour Force Survey (LFS), respondents have been asked questions to identify whether

they had a current disability covered by the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), or a work-limiting disability, or both (see *Labour Market Trends*, June 1998). It is this broad description, covering any of these three definitions of disability (defined as a current long-term disability), that is used throughout this article. In interpreting these results

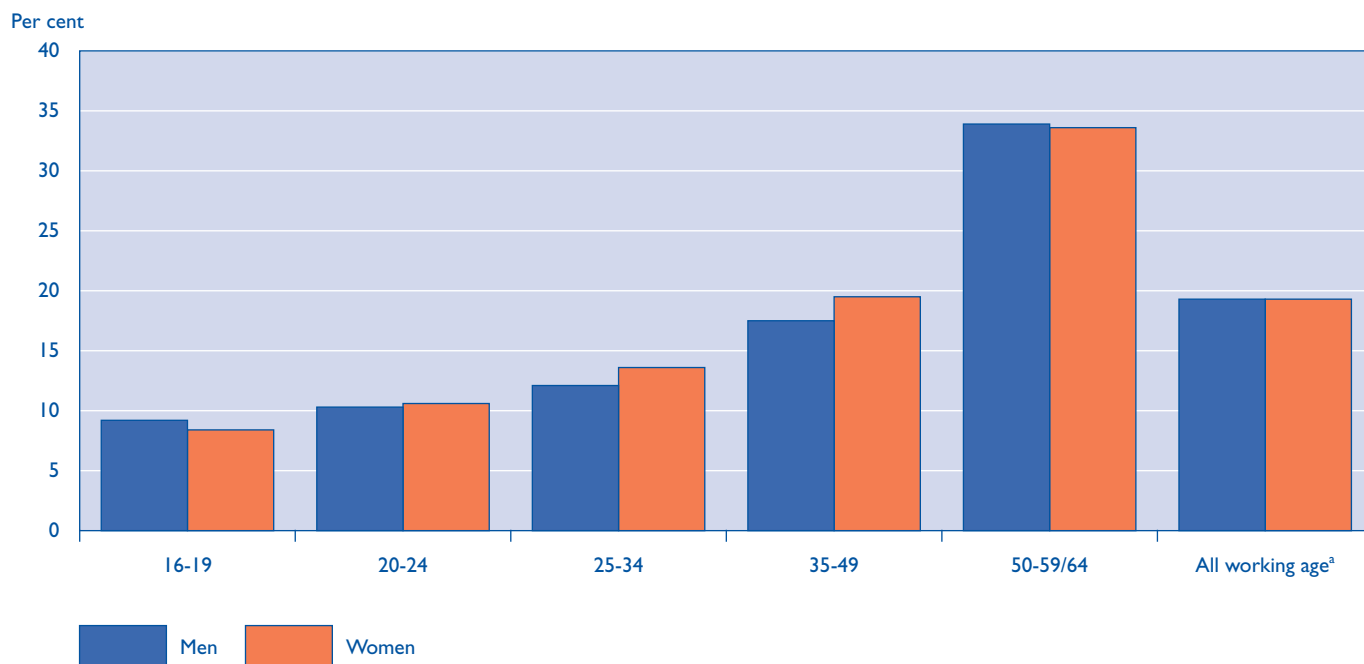
it is important to bear in mind that this definition covers a wide range of impairments which themselves can differ greatly in severity.

Due to the change in LFS questions in 1997 it is not possible in the current article to put any post-DDA changes in the context of long-term trends. Comparisons over time where they appear are therefore only shown from 1997 onwards and, as the data are not seasonally adjusted, the results are presented only for autumn quarters to allow comparability over time. All analyses in the article apply only to people of working age: women aged 16-59 and men aged 16-64.

Characteristics of disabled people

Disabled people form a significant part of the working-age population in the UK. Nearly one in five people of working age in private households had a current long-term disability in autumn 2001, according to LFS data. This translates to over 7.1 million people (3.7 million men and 3.4 million women, see *Table 1*). The disability rates for men and women of working age were both 19 per cent, but for most age groups women had slightly higher disability rates than men. The likelihood of having a long-term disability

Figure 1 Disability rates by sex and age; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force Survey

^a Working age is defined as 16-64 for men and 16-59 for women.

or health problem increases with age. As *Figure 1* demonstrates, fewer than 10 per cent of men and women in the 16-19 age group had a disability. However, this proportion increased for each age group shown to around a third for both men and women in the 50 to retirement age category.

Over the the period for which data are available on a consistent basis there has been a significant increase in the proportion of working-age people reporting a disability. This has risen from 17.8 per cent of the population in autumn 1998 to 19.3 per cent in autumn 2001. *Table 2* shows that this is

not associated just with older age groups. In fact, the proportion of people reporting a disability has grown faster than the general population for both sexes and all age groups with the exception of women aged 16-19. *Table 2* also shows that while the number of people in the 25 to 34-year-old age

Table 2 Change in working-age population by age group and whether or not disabled; United Kingdom; autumn 1998 to autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Thousands			Per cent		
	Disabled	Not disabled	Total	Disabled	Not disabled	Total
Men						
16-19	18	*	18	14.9	0	1.2
20-24	13	58	71	7.3	3.7	4.0
25-34	25	-295	-271	4.9	-7.1	-5.8
35-49	129	237	366	12.6	4.6	5.9
50-64	143	104	246	9.0	3.2	5.1
All	327	103	430	9.6	0.7	2.3
Women						
16-19	-3	17	14	-2.6	1.3	1.0
20-24	16	48	65	9.7	3.2	3.8
25-34	49	-344	-295	9.4	-8.7	-6.6
35-49	156	149	305	14.2	3.0	5.0
50-59	133	99	232	11.8	4.1	6.6
All	352	-31	321	11.6	-0.2	1.9

Source: Labour Force Survey

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

group has decreased over the four-year period, the numbers reporting disabilities have increased. These increases are likely to be, at least in part, a result of higher reporting, for example as a result of increased public awareness about different types of disability.

Figure 1 demonstrates the strong association between the reporting of disabilities and the age of the respondent. An earlier article (see pp151-8, *Labour Market Trends*, March 2002) presented population projections from the Government Actuary's Department to demonstrate the likely implications of population change for the labour force. Among other findings, the article described the projected increase in the population, and also the combination of factors which are increasing its average age. While this is the context within which future levels of disability will be measured, actual future levels of disability are very difficult to predict, and will be a result of complex interactions between, among other factors, population structure, labour market and health policy, medical advances and reporting patterns.

Disability rates vary markedly across regions from 16 per cent in the South East to 24 per cent in the North East and Merseyside (see Table 3). The reasons for regional variations in disabilities are not explored any further in this article but are likely to be associated with regional variation in: the distribution of industries; the availability of, and access to health care and adequate housing; lifestyle and dietary behaviour; levels of education; and the age distribution of the population.

Table 4 shows the main disabilities reported. Some 35 per cent of respondents with disabilities reported problems with their arms, legs, neck, back, hands and feet, as the main difficulty. A further 13 per cent of respondents reported chest or breathing problems. Some 14 per cent of men and 8 per cent of women cited heart, blood pressure and circulatory conditions. Mental illness in the form of depression, phobias etc. was reported by 9 per cent of disabled people as their main problem (8 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women).

Table 3 Disabled people of working age by region and country; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Disabled		Not disabled
	Numbers (000s)	Rates ^a (%)	(000s)
United Kingdom	7,121	19.3	29,761
Great Britain	6,922	19.3	28,930
England	5,885	19.0	25,033
North East	381	24.2	1,192
North West	937	22.2	3,277
Yorkshire and the Humber	638	20.6	2,465
East Midlands	484	18.6	2,117
West Midlands	646	19.9	2,597
East	580	17.2	2,783
Greater London	835	17.2	4,015
South East	814	16.3	4,173
South West	571	19.1	2,414
Wales	406	23.0	1,360
Scotland	631	19.9	2,537
Northern Ireland	200	19.4	831

Source: Labour Force Survey

a Disabled people as a proportion of the total working-age population.

Participation

There are two key areas of enquiry when looking at the position of people with disabilities in the labour market: why people with disabilities are disadvantaged and the extent to which they are disadvantaged. While much of the remainder of the article considers the latter question by analysing the relative labour market position of the disabled, there is some scope for considering the reasons why disadvantage occurs for this group.

Reasons for disadvantage

The labour market, like any other, can be considered in terms of demand for and supply of labour. It is also reasonable to expect that factors affecting these will differ for subgroups of the population. In the case of people with disabilities, factors affecting an individual's ability or willingness to supply their labour are likely to include:

- the severity of the disability;
- access to and within a potential workplace;
- beliefs about the likelihood of facing

discrimination or the availability of suitable jobs; and

- the trade off between employment income and benefit receipt.

Factors affecting demand could include whether the requirements of the job could actually be fulfilled by a person with disabilities, for example blindness and occupations involving driving, or discrimination. Discrimination can be direct, in terms of wrongly conceived ideas about someone's ability to do a job, or indirect, due to limited workplace facilities and access for disabled people.

A statistical exploration of labour demand and supply issues for this group is limited by a lack of appropriate data sources. In particular, very little data exists on attitudes to employing disabled people, and especially on disabled people's attitudes to working. Using existing data sources it is possible, however, to consider the way in which the severity of a disability is likely to affect the ability of individuals to supply their labour. Before considering this issue, some scene-setting about the labour market position of people with disabilities generally is required.

Table 4 Disabled people by health problem and sex; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

Type of long-term health problem	All		Men		Women	
	(000s)	Per cent	(000s)	Per cent	(000s)	Per cent
Musculo-skeletal problems	2,472	34.8	1,291	34.7	1,182	35.0
Back or neck	1,277	18.0	639	17.2	638	18.9
Legs or feet	791	11.2	455	12.2	336	10.0
Arms, hands	404	5.7	196	5.3	208	6.2
Difficulty in seeing	136	1.9	84	2.3	53	1.6
Difficulty in hearing	119	1.7	65	1.7	54	1.6
Speech impediment	*	*	*	*	*	*
Skin conditions, allergies	131	1.9	73	2.0	59	1.7
Chest, breathing problems	924	13.0	459	12.3	465	13.8
Heart, blood, pressure, circulation	798	11.2	526	14.1	272	8.1
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	340	4.8	165	4.4	174	5.2
Diabetes	333	4.7	205	5.5	127	3.8
Epilepsy	159	2.2	79	2.1	80	2.4
Mental illness	636	9.0	302	8.1	334	9.9
Depression, bad nerves	432	6.1	193	5.2	240	7.1
Mental illness, phobia, panics	204	2.9	110	2.9	94	2.8
Learning difficulties	149	2.1	100	2.7	49	1.4
Progressive illness not elsewhere classified	310	4.4	143	3.8	167	5.0
Other problems, disabilities	582	8.2	224	6.0	357	10.6
All disabled people^a	7,121	100.0	3,731	100.0	3,390	100.0

Source: Labour Force Survey

a Includes those who did not state the nature of their health problem or disability. However, percentages exclude these people. Percentages are the proportions of disabled people with each type of disability.

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

Table 5 Disabled people of working age by economic status and sex; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Thousands			Per cent ^a		
	Disabled	Not disabled	All	Disabled	Not disabled	All
All						
Economically active, of which	3,720	25,398	29,118	52.2	85.3	78.9
In employment	3,410	24,180	27,590	47.9	81.2	74.8
ILO unemployed	310	1,217	1,528	8.3	4.8	5.2
Economically inactive	3,401	4,363	7,764	47.8	14.7	21.1
All of working age	7,121	29,761	36,882	100	100	100
Men						
Economically active, of which	2,078	14,246	16,324	55.7	91.2	84.4
In employment	1,876	13,530	15,407	50.3	86.6	79.6
ILO unemployed	202	715	917	9.7	5.0	5.6
Economically inactive	1,653	1,369	3,023	44.3	8.8	15.6
All of working age	3,731	15,615	19,346	100	100	100
Women						
Economically active, of which	1,642	11,152	12,794	48.4	78.8	73.0
In employment	1,533	10,650	12,183	45.2	75.3	69.5
ILO unemployed	109	502	611	6.6	4.5	4.8
Economically inactive	1,748	2,994	4,742	51.6	21.2	27.0
All of working age	3,390	14,146	17,536	100	100	100

Source: Labour Force Survey

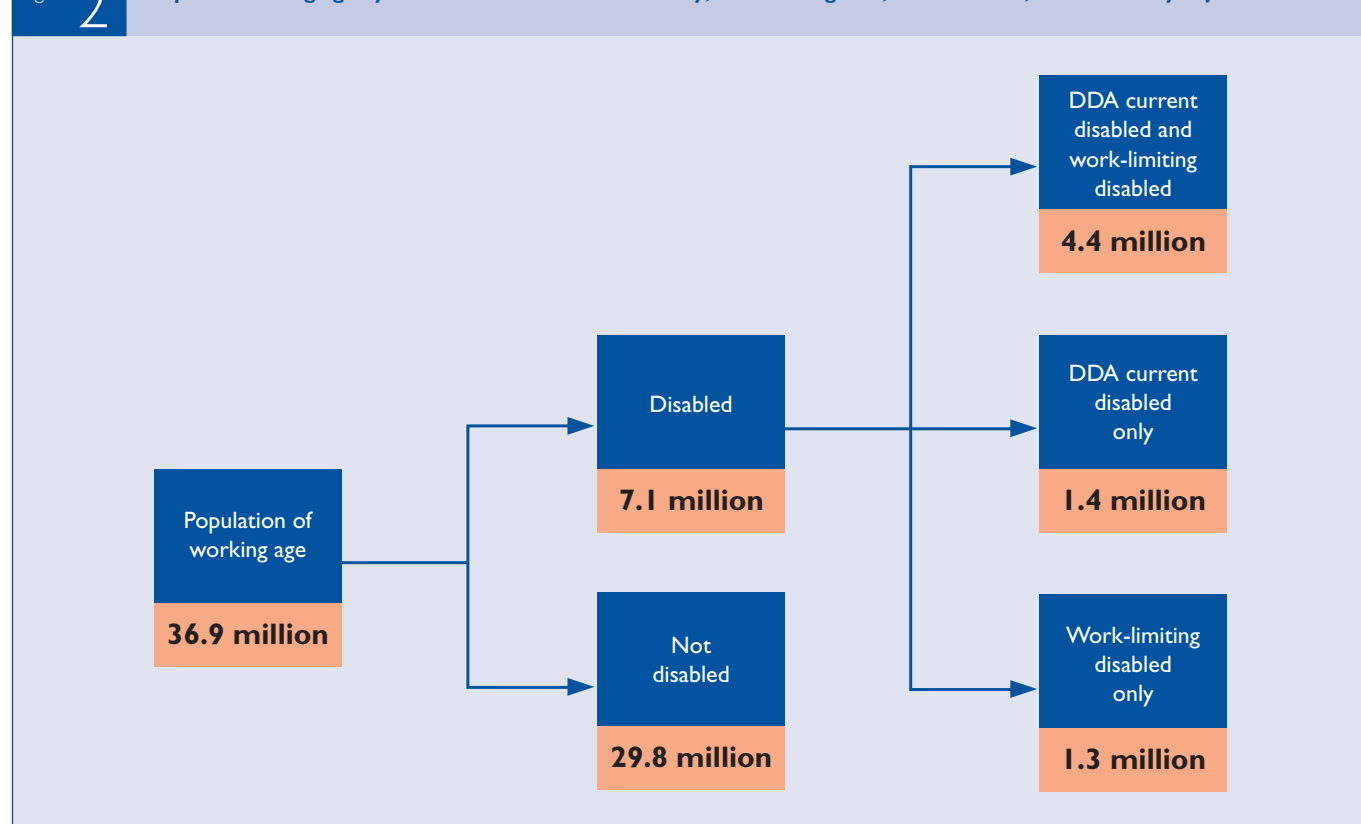
a As a proportion of working-age people..

Table 6 Employment, ILO unemployment and inactivity rates of working-age disabled people by different definitions of disability: United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Employment rate (%)	ILO unemployment rate (%)	Inactivity rate (%)	All people (000s)
All disabled	47.9	8.3	47.8	7,121
of which:				
DDA current disabled only	81.5	3.2	15.9	1,427
Work-limiting disabled only	67.0	9.0	26.4	1,287
DDA disabled and work-limiting disabled	31.4	11.9	64.3	4,408
Not disabled	81.2	4.8	14.7	29,761

Source: Labour Force Survey

Figure 2 People of working age by different definitions of disability; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force Survey

Participation rates

Of the 7.1 million working-age people in the UK having a disability, just over half are in the labour force (an economic activity rate of 52.2 per cent in autumn 2001). This compares with an economic activity rate of 85.3 per cent for those without a disability, and 78.9 per cent in the working-age population as a whole (see [Table 5](#)). Conversely, approximately half of the disabled population in the UK are economically inactive (44 per cent men and 52 per cent women), compared

with only 15 per cent for people who are not disabled (9 per cent for men and 21 per cent for women).

In total, 3.4 million disabled people were in employment in autumn 2001, an employment rate of 48 per cent, compared with 81 per cent for people with no disabilities. Some 50 per cent of disabled men were in employment, compared with 87 per cent of non-disabled men. For women, the rates were 45 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. This demonstrates the employment gap between disabled people and the rest of the population, with men having

higher employment rates than women.

The ILO unemployment rate for disabled people in autumn 2001 was 8.3 per cent (compared with 4.8 per cent for the rest of the working-age population). For men, the unemployment rate was almost twice as high as for non-disabled men (9.7 per cent compared with 5.0 per cent); for women, the gap was narrower (6.6 per cent compared with 4.5 per cent). These disparities in participation rates are one of the targets of the government's labour market policy (see [Box 1](#)).

Effects of severity of disability

The severity of an individual's disability and its effects on the ability to supply labour can be considered in two ways from the Labour Force Survey: degrees of severity within the broad definition described at the beginning of the article and in terms of the severity of the main type of health problem reported.

Figure 2 shows the three definitions of disability used by the LFS: DDA current disabled, work-limiting disabled or both. As well as asking about the types of health problem or disability, the LFS also asks respondents whether the problem affects either the kind or the amount of paid work they might do. Within the LFS a respondent is classified as currently DDA disabled if they have a progressive illness not included elsewhere (for example, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, symptomatic HIV, Parkinson's disease) which in their opinion does not affect either the kind or amount of paid work they can undertake; or they have a health problem or disability, which when taken singly or together, substantially limits their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with work-limiting disabilities are those with health problems that are not DDA disabilities, which limit either the kind or amount of paid work they undertake. Those with a DDA disability which also limits the type or amount of paid work are classified as having both.

Table 6 and *Figure 2* show that of the 7.1 million people with a disability, 1.4 million (20 per cent) were DDA current disabled only. This group in their own estimation were not currently limited in the type or amount of work undertaken. This is reflected in the participation rates illustrated in *Table 6*. In fact this group had a higher employment rate and lower unemployment rate than those with no disabilities in autumn 2001. In contrast, the pattern of participation is very different between those with a work-limiting disability only and those with a DDA disability that limits the kind or amount of work they do. Most notable here perhaps is the inactivity rate of 64.3 per cent for those in the latter group. This, however, does not implicitly mean that this

group does not want to work. An analysis of the reasons for inactivity among the DDA and work-limiting disabled showed that 32 per cent wanted to work, compared with 26 per cent for those economically inactive without a disability. This is explored more generally in *Table 12*.

Table 7 demonstrates the other dimension of severity by illustrating the way in which the main type of disability reported affects the employment rate for men and women. It shows, for example, that people with mental illness, learning difficulties or psychological impairments are less likely to be found in employment than people with physical impairments, having an employment rate of 18.4 per cent overall. In contrast, disabled people with skin conditions and allergies had the highest employment rate at 69.3 per cent, followed by people with hearing difficulties at 68.1 per cent.

Households with a disabled person

The presence of a disability clearly has an influence on the economic activity status of individuals; it also has a great impact on the combined economic activity status of the household. The data contained in *Table 8* shows the combined economic activity status of a household by whether or not the household contained a disabled adult.

In autumn 2001 around 5.7 million, or a third of working-age households, contained at least one disabled adult of working age. In the population as a whole the total workless household rate was 16.4 per cent. However, households with a disabled adult had a workless rate of 31.1 per cent, compared with a rate of 9.7 per cent for those households where no disabled adult was present. The biggest contribution to this result is the difference between the proportion of households where all people in the household were inactive (as opposed to both unemployed or a combination of unemployment and inactivity): 27.0 per cent for households with a disabled adult and 6.7 per cent for those without. The reasons for this disparity are not explored further here, but are likely to be associated with household composition, age structure, and the need for care to be provided by other household members for any people with disabilities. The interaction between the presence of a disabled adult and the economic activity status of the household has been earmarked as a valuable topic for future analysis.

Trends

Employment rates for disabled men and women have increased over the three-year period to autumn 2001. The total rate for disabled people rose by

Table 7 People in employment by sex, whether disabled and type of health problem; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	All		Men		Women	
	In employment (000s)	Employment rate (%)	In employment (000s)	Employment rate (%)	In employment (000s)	Employment rate (%)
All people of working age ^a	27,590	74.8	15,407	79.6	12,183	69.5
Not disabled	24,180	81.2	13,530	86.6	10,650	75.3
Disabled by type of long-term health problem						
Musculo-skeletal problems	1,128	45.6	629	48.7	499	42.2
Back or neck	588	46.1	315	49.3	273	42.8
Legs or feet	345	43.5	210	46.1	135	40.1
Arms, hands	195	48.4	104	53.1	91	44.0
Difficulty in seeing	60	44.3	41	49.3	19	36.3
Difficulty in hearing	81	68.1	48	74.1	33	61.0
Speech impediment	*	*	*	*	*	*
Skin conditions, allergies	91	69.3	52	71.6	39	66.4
Chest, breathing problems	592	64.0	309	67.2	283	60.8
Heart, blood pressure, circulation	402	50.3	264	50.2	137	50.5
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	177	52.0	98	59.2	79	45.2
Diabetes	217	65.1	145	70.8	71	56.0
Epilepsy	70	44.0	38	47.5	32	40.5
Mental illness	117	18.4	56	18.5	61	18.3
Depression, bad nerves	96	22.2	43	22.2	53	22.2
Mental illness, phobia, panics	21	10.4	13	11.9	*	*
Learning difficulties	32	21.4	23	23.2	*	*
Progressive illness n.e.c.	121	39.0	54	37.8	67	40.0
Other problems, disabilities	308	52.9	109	48.6	199	55.7
All disabled^b	3,410	47.9	1,876	50.3	1,533	45.2

Source: Labour Force Survey

a Working age is defined as 16-64 for men and 16-59 for women.

b Includes those who did not state the nature of their health problem or disability.

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

2.7 percentage points to 47.9 per cent (see *Table 9*). While the table demonstrates the difference in rates between disabled and not disabled people already identified, it also shows that between autumn 1998 and autumn 2001 this difference had narrowed, with the employment rate for people with disabilities increasing by 2.7 percentage points compared with an increase of 0.9 percentage points for the not disabled population and an increase of 0.8 percentage points in the rate for the total working-age population. A similar pattern exists for both ILO unemployment and economic inactivity, and for both men and women. The rates for the disabled showed significant differences compared with those with no disabilities, with the relative position of the disabled having improved over the three-year period shown in the table.

Labour market experiences

This final section seeks to explore some of the other dimensions of disabled peoples' experiences in the labour market. It considers each of the three main labour market states and looks at some of the factors which may combine with the presence of disability to reduce further the likelihood of labour market attachment for those with disabilities. It also looks at the implications of the presence of disability for the income of the household.

Employment experiences

It has already been shown how the type of disability or health problem reported influences the employment rates for disabled adults (see *Table 7*). Employment rates for the disabled also

differ with age as demonstrated in *Table 10*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the relationship between age and disability, the employment rates for men and women in the 50-plus age group are particularly low, 41.4 per cent and 38.0 per cent respectively. More specifically, the differences in employment rates between disabled and non-disabled people in this age group are larger than for other groups. For example, there was an employment rate differential of 42 percentage points for the 50-59/64 age groups. For disabled men, employment rates were highest for 25 to 34-year-olds at 60.8 per cent, and for disabled women the rate peaked at a lower age: 20-24 (54.6 per cent). For non-disabled men and women, the rate peaked at the 35-49 age group (94.1 per cent and 81.4 per cent respectively).

The working patterns of people with disabilities appear to be broadly similar

Table 8 Economic activity status of working-age households by whether or not a disabled adult present;^a United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Thousands			Per cent		
	Households containing at least one disabled adult	Households containing no disabled adult	All households	Households containing at least one disabled adult	Households containing no disabled adult	All households
All in household are employed	2,096	8,440	10,536	36.8	68.0	58.2
Household includes employed and unemployed	174	382	556	3.1	3.1	3.1
Household includes employed and inactive	1,549	2,320	3,869	27.2	18.7	21.4
Household includes employed, unemployed and inactive	103	65	168	1.8	0.5	0.9
All in household are unemployed	91	251	341	1.6	2.0	1.9
Household includes unemployed and inactive	141	115	256	2.5	0.9	1.4
All in household are inactive	1,538	836	2,373	27.0	6.7	13.1
All households^b	5,691	12,409	18,100	100	100	100

Source: Labour Force Survey

a Working-age households contain at least one person of working age. Disabled adult refers to presence of at least one disabled person of working age.

b Excludes households with missing combined economic activity status.

Table 9 Economic status of working-age people by sex and whether disabled; United Kingdom; autumn 1998 to autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Employment rates			ILO unemployment rates			Inactivity rates		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
All									
Autumn 1998	74.0	78.9	68.7	6.3	6.9	5.6	21.0	15.3	27.3
Autumn 1999	74.5	79.5	69.1	6.0	6.4	5.5	20.8	15.1	27.0
Autumn 2000	74.7	79.6	69.4	5.4	5.7	5.0	21.0	15.6	27.0
Autumn 2001	74.8	79.6	69.5	5.2	5.6	4.8	21.1	15.6	27.0
Disabled people									
Autumn 1998	45.2	46.5	43.8	10.8	12.4	8.9	49.3	46.9	51.9
Autumn 1999	46.8	48.8	44.6	10.7	12.1	8.8	47.6	44.5	51.1
Autumn 2000	46.9	49.1	44.3	9.0	10.2	7.4	48.5	45.3	52.1
Autumn 2001	47.9	50.3	45.2	8.3	9.7	6.6	47.8	44.3	51.6
Non-disabled people									
Autumn 1998	80.3	86.0	74.0	5.7	6.2	5.1	14.8	8.3	22.0
Autumn 1999	80.8	86.4	74.7	5.3	5.6	5.0	14.6	8.5	21.4
Autumn 2000	81.1	86.7	75.1	4.9	5.1	4.7	14.7	8.7	21.3
Autumn 2001	81.2	86.6	75.3	4.8	5.0	4.5	14.7	8.8	21.2

Source: Labour Force Survey

to those without them. While disabled people are less likely to work full-time than their non-disabled counterparts (72.1 per cent and 77.6 per cent respectively in autumn 2001), the distribution of working hours for the disabled and non-disabled is very similar, with 50.0 per cent of all disabled people working 31-45 hours per week, compared with 52.2 per cent of non-disabled people. Some 8 per cent of disabled people (not looking for a different job) expressed a desire to work longer hours, compared with 7 per cent of non-disabled people. For disabled women, this proportion rose to 9.5 per cent, compared with 6.6 per cent for disabled men. Just over

one-fifth (21.2 per cent) of disabled people in employment had some form of flexible working arrangement, compared with 19.7 per cent of non-disabled people.

An analysis of the occupational classification of disabled people demonstrates that there are fewer than average disabled people among managers and senior officials, professional, associate professional and technical occupations, and sales and customer services occupations. There are higher than average proportions of disabled people in administrative and secretarial, skilled trades, personal services, and elementary occupations. For example,

out of the total employed population in the UK, 14 per cent were managers and senior officials and 12 per cent were in elementary occupations. In comparison, 12 per cent of the working disabled population were managers and senior officials and 15 per cent were in elementary occupations.

Unemployment experiences

For all male age groups, ILO unemployment rates for those with disabilities were more than double those of non-disabled men, with the exception of men aged 16-19 where the rate for disabled men was around two-thirds higher than that for non-disabled men.

Table 10 Economic status of working-age people by sex, whether disabled and age group; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Per cent								
	Employment rates			ILO unemployment rates			Economic inactivity rates		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
All	74.8	79.6	69.5	5.2	5.6	4.8	21.1	15.6	27.0
16-19	53.4	54.8	51.9	17.2	17.7	16.7	35.5	33.4	37.7
20-24	71.3	74.6	67.8	9.1	10.7	7.3	21.6	16.5	26.8
25-34	80.1	88.3	71.6	5.0	5.4	4.6	15.6	6.7	25.0
35-49	81.7	88.0	75.3	3.5	3.7	3.3	15.3	8.6	22.2
50-59/64	68.1	70.6	64.7	3.2	3.6	2.5	29.7	26.8	33.7
All disabled people	47.9	50.3	45.2	8.3	9.7	6.6	47.8	44.3	51.6
16-19	40.2	40.9	39.5	25.6	28.3	22.2	45.9	42.9	49.3
20-24	54.6	54.5	54.6	15.9	20.8	10.1	35.1	31.1	39.2
25-34	54.4	60.8	48.6	11.1	13.4	8.2	38.8	29.8	47.1
35-49	54.5	59.3	50.1	6.6	7.3	5.8	41.7	36.1	46.8
50-59/64	40.0	41.4	38.0	5.5	6.4	4.2	57.7	55.8	60.3
All non-disabled people	81.2	86.6	75.3	4.8	5.0	4.5	14.7	8.8	21.2
16-19	54.7	56.2	53.1	16.6	16.8	16.3	34.5	32.4	36.6
20-24	73.2	76.9	69.4	8.5	9.7	7.0	20.0	14.8	25.4
25-34	83.9	92.1	75.2	4.4	4.6	4.2	12.2	3.5	21.5
35-49	87.9	94.1	81.4	3.1	3.2	2.9	9.4	2.8	16.2
50-59/64	82.4	85.6	78.1	2.6	2.9	2.1	15.4	11.9	20.2

Source: Labour Force Survey

The pattern was broadly similar among women, although the differentials tended to be somewhat smaller. Half of all unemployed disabled people were aged 35 or more compared with almost one third for non-disabled people. ILO unemployment rates varied according to type of disability or health problem reported, with the highest unemployment rate (26 per cent) having been recorded for people with learning difficulties, followed by people with some kind of mental illness (18 per cent).

In autumn 2001, some 35 per cent of unemployed people with disabilities had been unemployed for at least a year, compared with 21 per cent for those

without disabilities (see *Table 11*). Some 19 per cent of unemployed people with disabilities and aged under 25 were long-term unemployed, compared with 10 per cent of non-disabled unemployed in the same age group. For the 35-49 age group the differential was much higher at 16 percentage points.

Inactivity experiences

In autumn 2001, of the 7.8 million people who were economically inactive, 3.4 million (44 per cent) were disabled. *Table 12* gives an analysis of the economically inactive by their degree of attachment to the labour market.

Some 32 per cent of all economically inactive working-age disabled people said they would like to be in paid employment. In comparison, 26 per cent of corresponding non-disabled people said they would like to work. The proportion of disabled men wanting to work was higher than for disabled women (34 per cent compared with 30 per cent), but there was only a 1 percentage point differential between non-disabled men and women (27 per cent and 26 per cent respectively). Some 25 per cent of economically inactive disabled people stated a desire to work but were not available to start in the next two weeks, mainly due to their disability or health problems, whereas some 68 per cent of disabled people stated they were not seeking or not wanting work.

Income

According to the autumn 2001 LFS, some 48 per cent of the working-age disabled population were in work, and of this total 14 per cent were receiving state benefits, of which 3 per cent were receiving sickness/disability benefits and 0.7 per cent were receiving inca-

Table 11 People ILO unemployed over one year as a proportion of all unemployed by age and whether disabled; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Per cent		
	All	Disabled	Not disabled
All	23.4	34.8	20.5
16-24 ^a	10.8	19.1	9.6
25-34	23.9	28.2	22.9
35-49	33.7	45.5	30.0
50-59/64	39.7	44.8	36.9

Source: Labour Force Survey

a Age bands 16-19 and 20-24 are combined here due to small sample sizes of individual age bands.

Table 12 Economically inactive people of working age by sex, reason for inactivity, and whether disabled; United Kingdom; autumn 2001; not seasonally adjusted

	All	Disabled	Per cent Not disabled
All			
Total inactive who say they would like to work ^a	28.7	32.1	26.1
Seeking work but not available within the next two weeks	2.4	1.3	3.3
Not seeking but would like work	26.3	30.8	22.8
Of which			
Available to start	7.5	5.9	8.8
Not available to start	18.8	24.9	14.0
Not seeking work, does not want work	71.3	67.9	73.9
All inactive (000s=100%)	7,764	3,401	4,363
Men			
Total inactive who say they would like to work ^a	30.9	34.3	26.8
Seeking work but not available within the next two weeks	2.9	1.3	4.9
Not seeking but would like work	28.0	33.0	21.9
Of which			
Available to start	8.2	6.2	10.7
Not available to start	19.8	26.8	11.2
Not seeking work, does not want work	69.1	65.7	73.2
All inactive (000s=100%)	3,023	1,653	1,369
Women			
Total inactive who say they would like to work ^a	27.3	29.9	25.8
Seeking work but not available within the next two weeks	2.1	1.3	2.5
Not seeking but would like work	25.2	28.6	23.2
Of which			
Available to start	7.1	5.6	7.9
Not available to start	18.2	23.1	15.3
Not seeking work, does not want work	72.7	70.1	74.2
All inactive (000s=100%)	4,742	1,748	2,994

Source: Labour Force Survey

a Includes those who did not state whether they were available or not.

capacity benefit. In comparison, some 81 per cent of the non-disabled population were in work, and of this total 19 per cent were receiving state benefits, but only 0.4 per cent were receiving a sickness/disability benefit. For the disabled population out of work, over 42 per cent received state benefits, compared with only 9 per cent of the out of work non-disabled population. Of the disabled population who were not in work, 29 per cent received sickness/disability benefit, while 19 per cent received incapacity benefit. Care should be taken in interpreting benefits data from the LFS, which are known to be underreported.

The combined effects of greater reliance on benefits and differing economic activity status for households with disabled people affect income distribution. *Figure 3* presents data from the Family Resources Survey 2000/01 demonstrating the different income distributions of people living in households where disabled adults were present and other people. This shows that working-age adults living in households containing at least one disabled adult were overrepresented at the bottom of the income distribution and underrepresented at the top end, whereas for those

Figure 3 Working age adults by household income distribution^a and presence of disabled adults in the household;^b United Kingdom; 2000/01



Source: Family Resources Survey 2000/01

a Net equivalised disposable household income has been used to rank individuals who are then divided into quintile groups.
b Excludes self-employed individuals.

Table 13 Proportions of working-age people with no qualifications by age and whether disabled; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	All		Disabled		Not disabled	
	Thousands	Per cent	Thousands	Per cent	Thousands	Per cent
16-19	361	12	61	24	300	11
20-24	289	8	62	17	227	7
25-34	835	10	225	21	610	8
35-49	1,956	15	645	27	1,310	12
50-59/64	2,322	26	1,099	37	1,223	21
All	5,762	16	2,092	30	3,670	12

Source: Labour Force Survey

living in households where no disabled person was present the opposite was true.

Additional risk factors

Education

As has been demonstrated elsewhere,² there are strong links between educational attainment and economic activity status. In general, those with higher qualifications are more likely to be in employment than those with lower qualifications or none at all. Disabled people tend to have lower educational qualifications than those without disabilities. For example 37 per cent of disabled adults aged 50 and over did not have a qualification, compared with only 21 per cent for non-disabled people. This occurrence is not just found in the higher age bands, however: the proportion of people aged 16-24 with disabilities and without a

qualification was 19 per cent, compared with 9 per cent for the non-disabled population (see *Table 13*).

Ethnicity

Recent articles and reports highlight the labour market 'disadvantage' of ethnic minority groups, as well as the diversity of labour market experiences which exists within this broad classification (see, for example, pp29-42, *Labour Market Trends*, January 2001 and 'Ethnic employment penalties in Britain', pp389-46, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, July 2000). In the context of disabled people's participation in the labour market, ethnicity may be considered an additional risk factor, since those from an ethnic minority background (constituting around 7 per cent of the total disabled population) have lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates relative to their White counterparts. As

Table 14 demonstrates, while the overall employment rate for disabled people of working age in autumn 2001 was 47.9 per cent, the rate for the White disabled population was high at 48.8 per cent in comparison with the rate for disabled people from an ethnic minority background at 36 per cent. Correspondingly, while the overall unemployment rate for disabled people was 8.3 per cent, it dropped to 7.7 per cent for disabled White people, but rose to 18.9 per cent for disabled people from an ethnic minority.

Conclusion

There are both demand and supply side factors to explain the relatively poor position of people with disabilities in the labour market. Severity of disability is one of the clear factors in the ability or willingness of people to supply their labour. Other factors such

Table 14 Employment and ILO unemployment rates for disabled and non-disabled people of working age by ethnic group and sex; United Kingdom; autumn 2001, not seasonally adjusted

	Per cent					
	Employment rates			ILO unemployment rates		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Disabled						
All ethnic groups	47.9	50.3	45.2	8.3	9.7	6.6
White	48.8	50.8	46.6	7.7	8.8	6.3
All ethnic minority groups	36.0	42.7	29.7	18.9	23.0	12.6
Not disabled						
All ethnic groups	81.2	86.6	75.3	4.8	5.0	4.5
White	82.7	87.8	77.0	4.4	4.5	4.2
All ethnic minority groups	63.9	71.9	55.6	10.5	11.9	8.7

Source: Labour Force Survey

as age, socio-demographic characteristics, level of qualification, and type of disability are interlinked, which may further explain why people with disabilities, in general, have lower employment rates and higher unemployment and economic inactivity rates than their counterparts without disabilities.

In addition, those with disabilities are more reliant on state benefits than others and are also more likely to live in households with relatively lower income than those without disabilities. Disabled people more often work part-time, but the relationship between disability and the number of hours is not very strong.

Further work is planned to consider the way in which multiple factors such as ethnicity, disability and educational status relate to various labour market outcomes.

Further information

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Notes

- 1 The Department for Work and Pensions' Public Service Agreement targets are for Great Britain, whereas all analyses in this article are based on UK data. Readers should note therefore that it is not possible to make a direct comparisons between them.
- 2 *Enduring Economic Exclusion: Disabled people, income and work*, Tania Burchardt, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000.