

EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPATION RECOVERY POST-COVID-19 FOR PEOPLE WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES, AN UPDATE

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Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Monthly Employment Situation

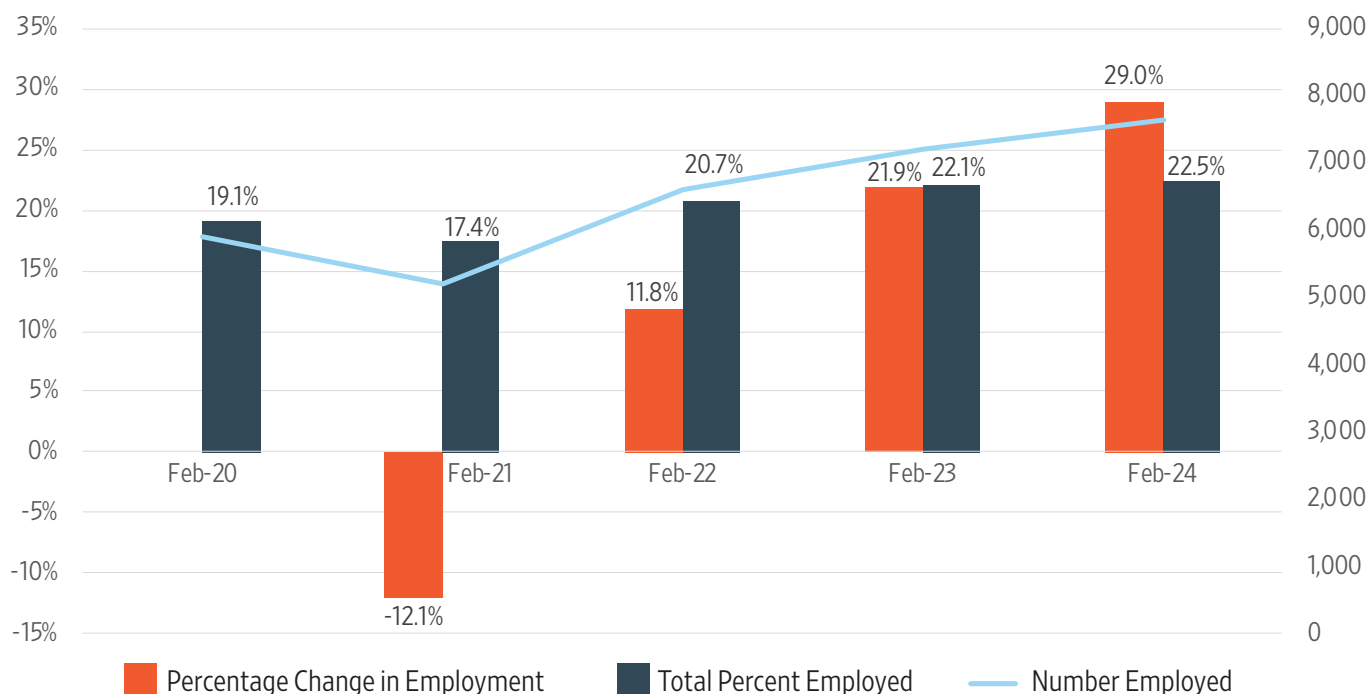
Introduction

In this DataNote, we compare the employment levels of people with disabilities pre-COVID-19-pandemic (February 2020) to their employment levels post-pandemic in February 2024.

This DataNote expands and updates findings from DataNote 69. The previous findings highlighted changes in the employment of people with disabilities between March 2020 and October 2020 during the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this DataNote, we used February 2020 as the baseline for pre-pandemic employment status and compared the change in employment for people with and without disabilities between February 2020 and February 2024.

As illustrated in Figure 1, employment for people with disabilities fell sharply in the first year of the pandemic. By 2022, the number of people with disabilities who were employed surpassed pre-pandemic levels. This upward trend continued, and by February 2024, the number of people with disabilities who were employed had increased by 29% compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 1: Percent change in the number of people with disabilities employed*



*Number employed in 1,000's, individuals with disabilities ages 16-64

Table 1 illustrates the changes in employment numbers and percentages over this period for people with and without disabilities. People with disabilities experienced a substantial decline in employment, with a -12.11% change compared to -5.12% for those without disabilities from 2020 to 2021. However, their recovery has been notably robust.

In contrast, while people without disabilities started with higher employment rates in February 2020, their recovery has been more gradual, with a modest percentage increase of just 0.4% from February 2020 to 2024.

The lower initial employment levels for people with disabilities may partially explain the more pronounced recovery rates observed. Conversely, the higher baseline employment levels for those without disabilities resulted in a slower, yet steady, recovery.

Monitoring this data on a yearly basis will help to provide an understanding of whether disruptions in the labor market due to the COVID-19 pandemic – such as greater acceptance of remote work and the use of various technologies to increase workplace efficiency – continue to positively impact people with disabilities.

Table 1: Number of People Employed with and without Disabilities Age 16 and over, February 2020 through February 2024

	People with a disability ¹			People with no disability		
	Number of people employed*	Percent change in number employed since Feb 2020	Percent employed	Number of people employed*	Percent change in number employed since Feb 2020	Percent employed
February 2020	5,918		19.1%	152,100		66.5%
February 2021	5,201	-12.11%	17.4%	144,312	-5.12%	62.5%
February 2022	6,613	11.8%	20.7%	150,329	-1.2%	65.0%
February 2023	7,214	21.9%	22.1%	152,498	0.3%	65.3%
February 2024	7,636	29.0%	22.5%	152,679	0.4%	65.3%

*number employed is measured in thousands

TABLE 1 DEFINITIONS

Number of people employed: The number of people ages 16–64 who were employed in a given year (number in thousands).

Percent change in number employed since Feb 2020: The percentage change in the number of people employed since February 2020. This percentage compares each year's employment level to that of February 2020, indicating how much employment has increased or decreased.

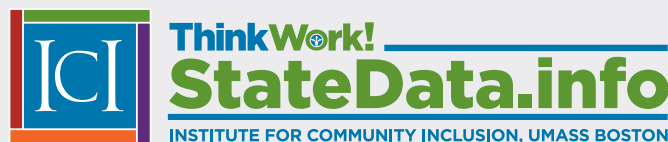
Percentage employed: The proportion of people ages 16–64 who were employed out of the total population.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics defines a person with a disability as having at least one of the following conditions: is deaf or has serious difficulty hearing; is blind or has serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses; has serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition; has serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; has difficulty dressing or bathing; or has difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition.

Reference

Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024). Employment Situation Summary. Economic News Release. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>

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