



# Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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## Pennsylvanians with Disabilities

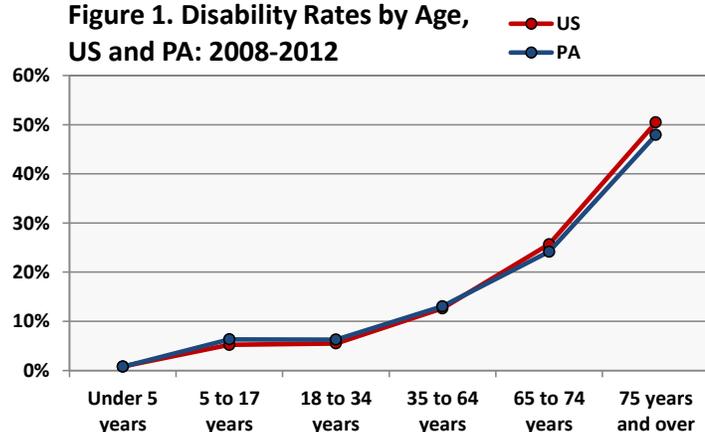
PENN STATE HARRISBURG – Information on disability status is used by a number of federal agencies and policy makers to distribute funds and develop programs to this unique population. Drawing on data from the 2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, this research brief seeks to provide a look at the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of those living with a disability during the period 2008-2012.

A total of 1,646,256 civilian noninstitutionalized Pennsylvanians had a disability in 2008-2012. This figure represented 13.2 percent of the commonwealth's population and ranked Pennsylvania ranked 17<sup>th</sup> among the states and District of Columbia in terms of percentage of the population with a disability. Nationwide, 12.0 percent of the population had a disability in 2008-2012.

### Disability Status by Age and Sex

Disability rates rose with age. For Pennsylvania children under 5 years of age, just 0.8 percent reported a disability in 2008-2012. This figure rose to 6.3 percent among older children aged 5 to 17 years. Moving into the working-age population, 6.3 percent of 18 to 34 year olds and 13.1 percent of 35 to 64 year olds had a disability. Finally, among elderly Pennsylvanians, nearly a quarter (24.2 percent) of those aged 65 to 74 and about half of those aged 75 years and over were living with a disability during the period 2008-2012. The disability rates were higher in Pennsylvania as compared to the nation as a whole for all but the 65 and older age cohorts during the period (see Figure 1.) For the most part, disability rates for males and females mirrored one another with the exception of the 5 to 17 age cohort (7.9 percent for males compared to 4.7 percent for females) and the 75 years and over cohort (45.5 percent versus 49.5 percent).

**Figure 1. Disability Rates by Age, US and PA: 2008-2012**

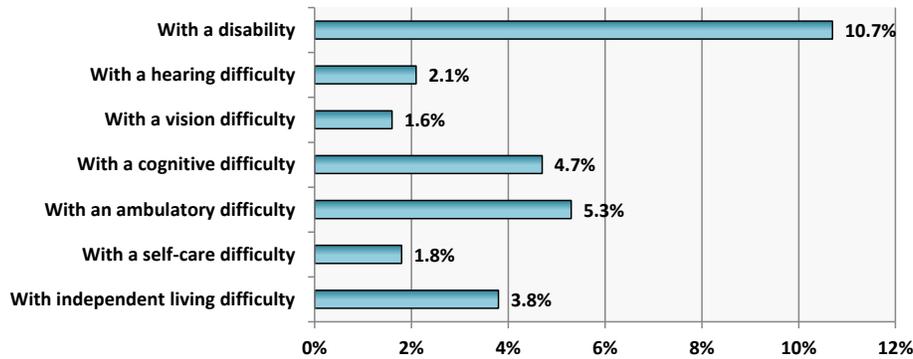


### Type of Disability

Of the 7.8 million Pennsylvanians aged 18 to 64 in the civilian noninstitutionalized population, 10.7 percent had a disability in 2008-2012. Ambulatory difficulty was the most prevalent disability type at 5.3 percent of the population (see Figure 2.). About 1.6 percent of the population had a vision difficulty, 2.1 percent had a

hearing difficulty, and 4.7 percent had a cognitive difficulty. Self-care and independent living difficulties were present in 1.8 percent and 3.8 percent of the population, respectively.

### Disability by Type for Pennsylvanians 18 to 64 years



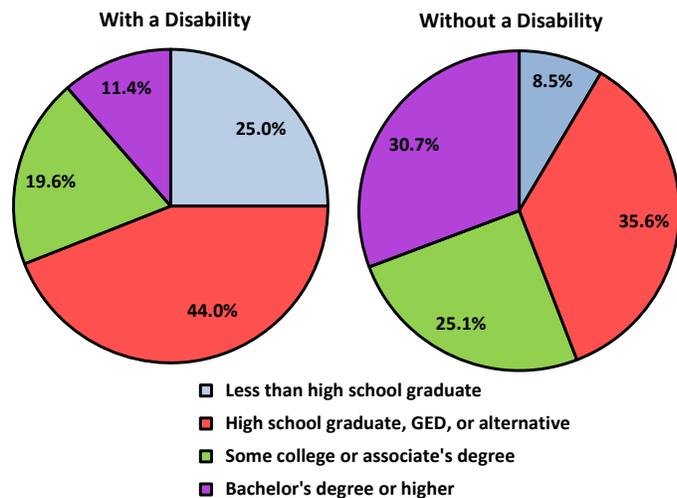
### Disability Status by Race/Ethnicity

Although most race and ethnic groups had similar rates of disability as the total population in the Keystone State, some notable differences existed in 2008-2012. The Black alone population had a disability rate of 15.9 percent during the period, 2.7 percentage points higher than the total population. Meanwhile, Pennsylvanians in the Asian alone race group had a significantly lower level of persons with a disability at 6.0 percent; 7.2 percentage points lower. There were also some noteworthy differences in the disability rates of race and ethnic groups between Pennsylvania and the United States. These include the disability rate of the Some Other race alone category, which was much higher than the nation overall (14.8 percent compared to 7.6 percent) and the Hispanic ethnic group, which was also higher in the commonwealth (13.4 percent versus 8.3 percent).

### Education Attainment

Pennsylvanians aged 25 years and over who lived with a disability had lower levels of educational attainment than those without a disability in 2008-2012 (Figure 3). One-quarter of Pennsylvanians reporting a disability lacked a high school diploma. This percentage was nearly three times as high as that of the population without a disability (25.0 percent compared to 8.5 percent). Those with a disability in 2008-2012 were also much less likely than those without a disability to attain a bachelor's degree or higher (11.4 percent versus 30.7 percent, respectively). Nationally, 26.6 percent of the Americans with disabilities lacked a high school diploma and 13.7 percent achieved a four-year degree or higher.

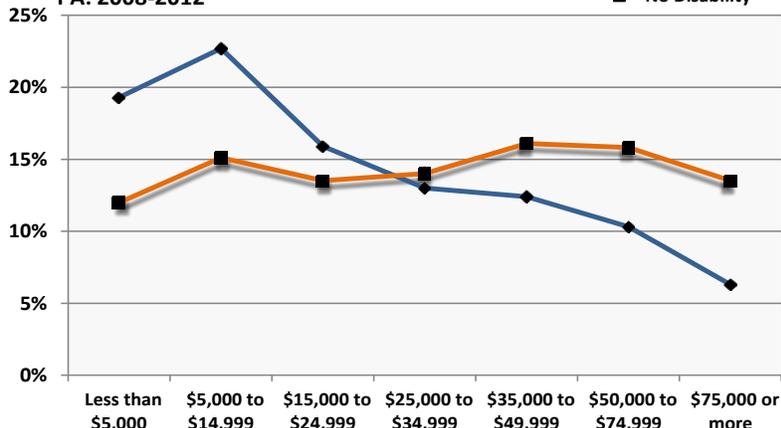
Figure 3. Education Attainment by Disability Status, PA: 2008-2012



### Income and Poverty

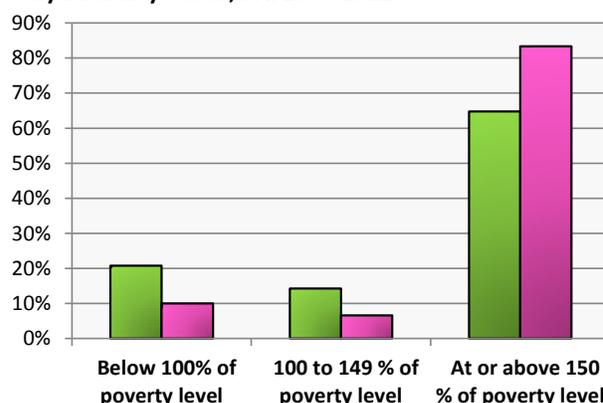
A look at annual earnings for the population with and without a disability reveals that Pennsylvania with a disability were more likely to have lower earnings during the period 2008-2012. Pennsylvanians with a disability aged 16 years and over had higher percentages in the less than \$5,000, \$5,000 to \$14,999 and the \$15,000 to \$24,999 earnings distributions, while individuals without a disability had higher percentages in the remaining earnings categories (see Figure 3.) The median earnings for those with no disability was \$31,443 compared to the \$20,053 for individuals with a disability.

**Figure 4. Income Distribution by Disability Status, PA: 2008-2012**



Pennsylvanians with a disability were also more likely than those without a disability to have income near or below the federal poverty level. More than 20 percent of Pennsylvanians with a disability had incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level and an additional 14.3 percent were between 100 and 149 percent of poverty in 2008-2012. In contrast, 10 percent of those without a disability were below poverty and only 6.6 percent were between 100 and 149 percent of the poverty level. (see Figure 5.)

**Figure 5. Ratio of Income-to-Poverty by Disability Status, PA: 2008-2012**

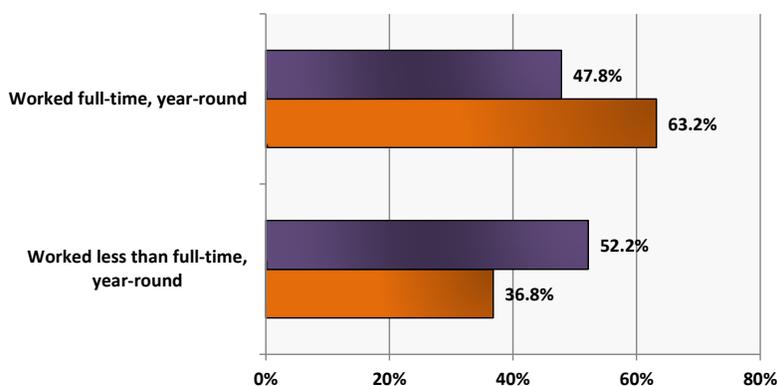


### Disability Status and Employment

During the period 2008-2012, Pennsylvanians between the ages of 18 and 64 were less likely to be employed if they had a disability. While 75.5 percent of working-age individuals without a disability were employed, only 34.2 percent of those with a disability worked. The unemployment rate for persons 16 years and over in the labor force was more than twice as high for those with a disability compared to those without (17.2 percent vs. 7.7 percent). Nearly six in 10 (58.7 percent) of individuals reporting a disability aged 18 to 64 years in the commonwealth were not in the labor force in 2008-2012.

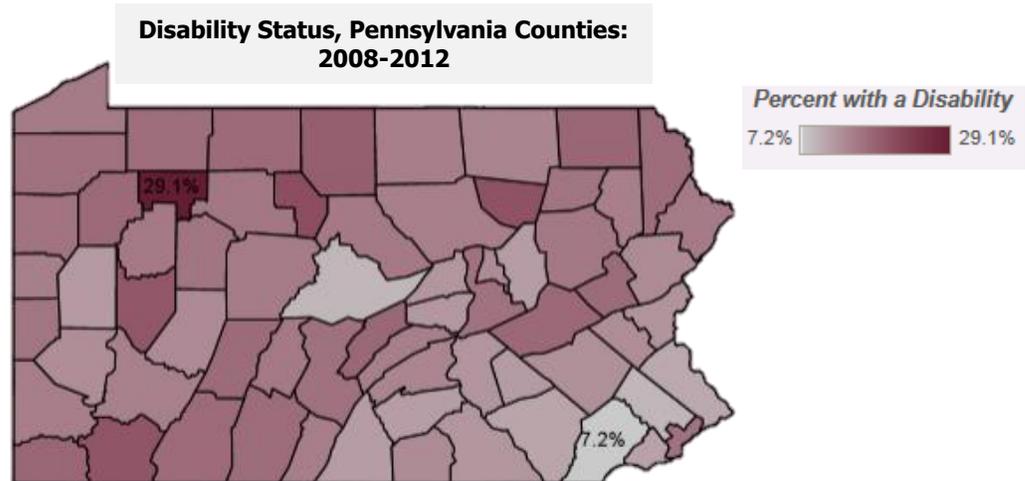
Individuals aged 16 to 64 years with a disability were also less likely to work full time than those without a disability (see Figure 6.).

**Figure 6. Full-Time Work Status by Disability Status, PA: 2008-2012**



## Uninsured by County

Forest County had the largest percentage (29.1 percent) of residents reporting a disability among Pennsylvania counties during the period 2008-2012. Cameron County followed with 20.7 percent of the population with a disability. Thirty-four Pennsylvania counties had disability rates at or above 15.0 percent in 2008-2012. The counties of Chester and Montgomery, just outside of Philadelphia, had the lowest disability rates during the period at 7.2 percent and 9.0 percent, respectively. Click [here](#) or on the map below to view an interactive map of disability rates for Pennsylvania counties.



## 2008-2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates and Disability

ACS 5-Year estimates are derived from 60 months of data collection to provide a large enough sample size to ensure the most reliable estimates for smaller geographic areas. The 2008-2012 ACS Estimates aggregate the sample responses from Pennsylvania households collected from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2012 and represent the average estimate of a population characteristic over the entire time period.

In 2008, the Census Bureau changed the way it asks about disability status in the ACS. Because of this change, the 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates about the population of people with disabilities provide the first disability related data for Pennsylvania geographic areas below 20,000 in population. The ACS uses the conceptual framework of disability as described by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF). Under this framework, disability is defined as the product of interactions among individuals' bodies; their physical, emotional, and mental health; and the physical and social environment in which they live, work, or play. For more information see [Review of Changes to the Measurement of Disability in the 2008 American Community Survey](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/2008ACS_disability.pdf), available at [www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/2008ACS\\_disability.pdf](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/2008ACS_disability.pdf).

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's National State Data Center Program.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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**Editors: For additional data; contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710 or for faculty comment on this topic; contact Penn State Harrisburg's Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.**

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