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**FAIR360**  
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON  
**DISABILITY**

## National Disability Employment Awareness Month: Advancing Access and Equity

Observed in October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) showcases the inclusive employment policies and practices that support people with disabilities. The month also highlights the contributions of America's workers with disabilities past and present. "Advancing Access and Equity" is the theme of NDEAM in 2023.

In this Meeting in a Box, we provide tips on disclosing a disability at work and the programs and policies of the Fair360, formerly DiversityInc Top Companies for People With Disabilities (PWD).

The National Organization on Disability (NOD) has also compiled a Disability in the Workplace Toolkit that includes facts and figures and informative sections including defining disability and accommodations, busting common myths and a modern disability rights timeline.

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# The Power of Transparency: Disclosing a Disability at Work

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to disclosing a disability at work.

It's a personal decision that requires careful consideration such as the nature of one's disability, the work environment, comfort level and the potential need for accommodations. While challenges may exist, the potential benefits of disclosure can outweigh the drawbacks.

Practices such as having senior executives share their own disabilities, leaders promoting disabilities internally and externally and having a Chief Accessibility Officer or equivalent position, correlate to positive talent outcomes and a more trusting, inclusive environment, according to the National Organization on Disability's (NOD) **2023 Employment Tracker**. NOD says companies have a 32% higher employee self-identification rate when a senior leader is vocal about their own disability.

**READ:** [The Expansion and Evolution of Self-Identification Campaigns](#)

## Benefits of Disclosure

**Access to Accommodations:** One of the primary benefits of disclosing a disability is the potential for workplace accommodations. These could include modified work hours, assistive technology, ergonomic adjustments or changes in responsibilities to ensure an inclusive and productive work environment.

**Building Trust:** Disclosing a disability can foster a sense of trust between an employee and their supervisor or HR department. Open communication about one's needs can lead to a supportive atmosphere where both parties work together to find solutions.

**Representation and Inclusion:** By sharing their experiences, individuals contribute to a more representative workplace. This can lead to greater awareness and sensitivity to different needs, fostering a culture of acceptance and understanding.

## Challenges and Considerations

**Stigma and Bias:** Unfortunately, stigma and bias can still exist in some workplaces, potentially leading to discrimination or unequal treatment. Individuals may fear that disclosure could impact their career advancement or how they're perceived by colleagues.

**Privacy Concerns:** Some individuals may prioritize their privacy and choose not to disclose their disability. They might worry that sharing this information could lead to unwanted attention or questions.

**Career Progression:** While workplaces are becoming more inclusive, individuals may worry about the impact of disclosure on their career progression. It's important to note that legally, employers are not allowed to discriminate based on disability.







## Strategies for Disclosure

**Timing:** Choose a time to disclose that feels comfortable and appropriate. This could be during the interview process, after accepting an offer or once settled into the role.

**Research and Planning:** Before disclosing, research the company's non-discrimination and accommodations policies. Having a plan in place can help navigate the conversation more smoothly.

**Open Communication:** Be clear and direct about your needs. Discuss how your disability may or may not impact your work and suggest potential solutions.

## Creating an Inclusive Work Environment

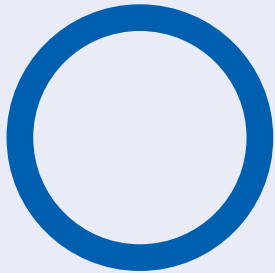
**Education:** Encouraging disability awareness and sensitivity training for all employees can help foster a more inclusive workplace.

**Promoting Openness:** Leadership can set the tone by promoting a culture of openness and acceptance. When higher-ups are open about their own experiences, it can encourage others to do the same.

**Flexible Policies:** Establishing flexible work policies and a willingness to accommodate individual needs can make a significant difference in creating an inclusive workplace.



# Fair360 Facts and Figures



**100%**

of Top Companies for People With Disabilities give employees the ability to self-identify



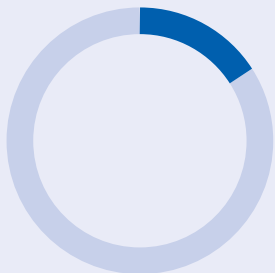
**67%**

of Hall of Fame Companies partner with the National Organization on Disability for the recruitment of people with disabilities



**58%**

of Hall of Fame Companies have mandatory disability awareness training for their entire workforce



**18%**

of Top Companies for People With Disabilities have optional disability awareness programs for all employees

# Fair360 Top Companies for People With Disabilities (PWD)

**Hilton**  
**Wells Fargo**  
**TD Bank**  
**Dow**  
**Northrop Grumman**  
**Accenture**  
**The Boeing Company**  
**KeyBank**  
**Comcast NBCUniversal**  
**The Hershey Company**  
**KPMG**  
**AT&T**  
**Medtronic**  
**Capital One**  
**Toyota North America**  
**U.S. Bank**  
**ADP**  
**Abbott**  
**TIAA**  
**Mastercard**  
**The Cigna Group**  
**Eli Lilly and Company**

# Empowering Opportunities: Top Companies for People With Disabilities

Companies that embrace disability inclusion in the workplace go beyond the superficial. They embody the principles of equality and fairness and foster a workplace where everyone can contribute their unique talents and perspectives.

When a company prioritizes disability inclusion, it fosters a sense of belonging, leading to higher job satisfaction, increased employee loyalty and a stronger company reputation. Fair360 explored the programs, policies and practices that set the five Top Companies for People With Disabilities apart.

## Hilton

*No. 1 on the Fair360 Top Companies for People With Disabilities and a [Hall of Fame](#) company.*

Hilton grew membership in its People With Disabilities Team Member Resource Group by nearly 20% in October 2022.

In 2022, Hilton signed the Disability:IN CEO pledge and the Valuable 500 pledge, which furthered its commitment to disability inclusion.

Hilton created a free educational workshop in the United Kingdom in partnership with the Down's Syndrome Association and Aurora Foxes. The agenda of the fall workshop will include the benefits of embracing inclusivity and adapting hiring processes for people with learning disabilities.

Since 2020, Hilton's Courageous Conversation Series has provided a platform for intentional conversations with thought leaders to advance allyship, racial and gender equity and a more inclusive workplace. Topics include: understanding

the spectrum of disabilities and how to design inclusive workplaces.

Technology can be a powerful tool for people with disabilities. Hilton's programs like [Digital Key](#) allow guests with disabilities to bypass the front desk.

## Wells Fargo

*No. 2 on the Fair360 Top Companies for People With Disabilities list and [No. 32](#) on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity.*

In 2022, 8% of employees at Wells Fargo self-identified as having a disability.

Wells Fargo launched the Neurodiversity Program in 2020 for its finance and technology businesses. In 2022, the company hired 130 employees in the United States and India.

The National Partnerships and Programs team drives recruiting efforts through professional organizations like Disability:IN. The Disability:IN Global Conference and Expo is a three-day event focusing on disability inclusion.

In 2022, Wells Fargo donated \$500,000 to organizations serving people with disabilities including Autism Society, RespectAbility and National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Wells Fargo's supplier fairness strategy reflects its commitment to support organizations, programs and services for the disability community, including Disability:IN.





No. 3 on the Fair360 Top Companies for People With Disabilities list and **No. 20** on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity.

5.8% of TD Bank’s Canadian workforce identifies as having a disability—the largest percentage among banks.

TD Bank is the host employer for Project SEARCH. The one-year national program helps adult students with intellectual and developmental disabilities transition into the workplace.

In 2023, TD Bank launched the fourth Enabling Leaders cohort. The leadership communications program was created for colleagues who identify as having a disability.

TD Bank works with Specialisterne, a hiring program designed to increase the representation of people with autism.

TD Bank signed the [Joint Investor Statement on Corporate Disability Inclusion](#), urging all businesses to become more inclusive workplaces by hiring and supporting people with disabilities.



No. 4 on the Fair360 Top Companies for People With Disabilities list and **No. 7** on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity.

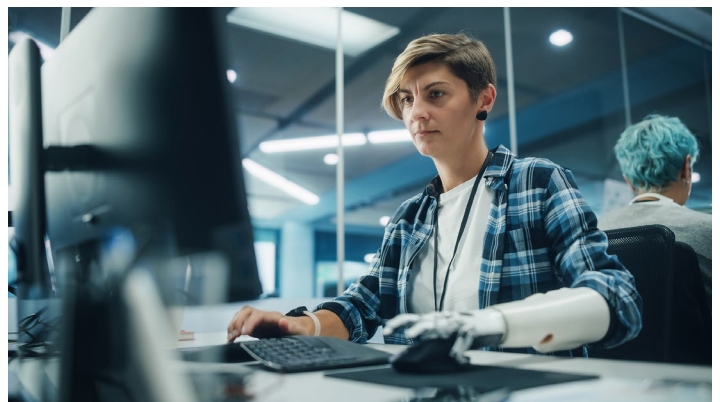
In 2022, 6.1% of Dow employees self-identified as having a disability.

Dow’s employee resource group Disability Employee Network (DEN), empowers employees with disabilities, raises awareness and educates them about disabilities to create better allies.

DEN and the Women’s Inclusion Network, its women-focused employee resource group (ERG), partnered with Dow’s Operations team in Latin America to advance accessibility at many of its manufacturing plants. Among the improvements were inclusive accessibility options to sites and facilities and new and updated lactation rooms.

In celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in 2022, DEN promoted disability inclusion through events and the sharing of valuable resources. The theme, “Let’s Talk About It,” provided a platform to encourage individuals to feel comfortable talking about disabilities and disability inclusion.

Listen Up! is Dow’s global video series where employees share firsthand accounts of hearing disabilities that are non-work related.



No. 5 on the Fair360 Top Companies for People With Disabilities list and **No. 27** on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity.

In 2022, 8.5% of Northrop Grumman’s employees self-identified as having a disability.

Northrop Grumman’s Victory Over Impairment & Challenge Enterprise (VOICE) ERG fosters an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities and employees who are caregivers to family members in need. VOICE has 13 chapters with more than 1,300 employees.

With Operation IMPACT, Northrop Grumman hires and supports service-disabled veterans as they transition out of the military to a private sector career.

Northrop Grumman has relationships with the Disability Student Offices on college campuses and provides Advanced Higher Education funding.

Northrop Grumman’s commitment to accessibility and accommodations includes requirements for designers and developers to improve its websites for people with disabilities. The company also integrates accessibility into its policies and procurement practices, trains staff and uses testing tools and assistive technology to check for accessibility.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Q** How can organizations balance proactive communication and respecting privacy for those who choose not to disclose their disabilities?
- Q** How can leaders set an example for inclusivity by actively supporting employees with disabilities?
- Q** How can organizations address unconscious bias regarding perceptions of employees with disabilities and how can this contribute to a more inclusive workplace?
- Q** How can we challenge and break down stereotypes and misconceptions about the abilities and contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce?
- Q** Are there specific initiatives or changes you'd like to see in your workplace to further enhance inclusivity?
- Q** How can organizations celebrate employees with disabilities in the workplace beyond awareness months?





# NOD Disability in the Workplace 2023 Toolkit

## About the Toolkit

This toolkit is a resource to help you and your employees develop an increased awareness and appreciation of the potential of people with disabilities in the workplace. People with disabilities – both visible and non-visible – still face discrimination, especially when it comes to hiring.

## Modern Disability Rights Timeline



**1932**

The first president with visible disabilities, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was elected, but the public was shielded from the extent of his disabilities.

**1934-1940**

The California Council of the Blind, later renamed the National Federation of the Blind of California, was founded in 1934. Six years later, the **National Federation of the Blind** was founded.



**1935**

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the **Social Security Act**, which provided cash benefits and medical and therapeutic services for people with disabilities.

**1945**

The first National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week took place, which later became **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**.

America Needs  
*ALL of us*



**1946**

The **National Mental Health Foundation** was founded.

**1948**

Congress passed legislation prohibiting discrimination in federal employment for people with physical disabilities.



**1960s**

The disability rights movement began, encouraged by the examples of the Civil Rights and Women's Rights Movements.

**1963**

President John F. Kennedy signed the **Community Mental Health Act**, which helped those who were "warehoused" in institutions move back into their communities.





## 1968

The **Architectural Barriers Act** was passed, mandating that federally constructed buildings and facilities be accessible to people with physical disabilities.



## 1972

The Center for Independent Living was founded in Berkeley, California and led by disabilities activist Ed Roberts.

## 1973

The **Rehab Act** established equal access for people with disabilities through removal of architectural, employment and transportation barriers in federal establishments.



## PRESIDENT GERALD FORD SIGNING A NEW LAW



Parents with handicapped children are optimistic about this change.

On Nov. 29, 1975, then President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142). With the adoption of this act, Congress opens public school doors for many children with disabilities and sets the foundation of the country's commitment to ensuring that children with disabilities have opportunities to develop their talents, share their gifts, and contribute to their

## 1975

The **Education for Handicapped Children Act** of 1975 (later the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act or IDEA) guaranteed a free public education for all children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

## 1977

During the 504 Protest, San Francisco activists held a 28-day sit-in calling for federal civil rights for people with disabilities. The measure was signed that year.





## 1978

The **National Council on Disability** was established as an advisory board within the Department of Education.

## 1981

The United Nations commemorated the first **International Year of Disabled Persons**. Alan A. Reich became the first person to address the UN General Assembly from a wheelchair.



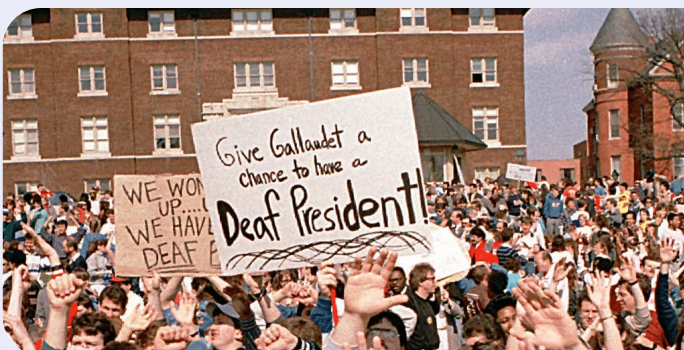
# NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITY

## 1982

The **National Organization on Disability** (NOD) was founded by Alan A. Reich to continue the momentum of promoting disability inclusion.

## 1984

The **Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act** ensured equal poll access.



## 1988

The **Deaf President Now** protest went on for eight days at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. The movement was a success.





## 1990

President George H.W. Bush signed the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** into law, enshrining equal access and non-discrimination.

## 1995

The **American Association of People with Disabilities** was created, advocating for legal rights for people with disabilities.



## 1996

**Mental Health Parity Act** banned health plans from imposing unwarranted dollar limits on mental health benefits.

## 1998

President Bill Clinton signed the **Internet Accessibility Law**, which gave people with disabilities access to all electronic and information technology in the federal sector.



## 1999

The U.S. Supreme Court's **Olmstead Decision** affirmed the right to live in the community rather than in state-run institutions. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote the majority opinion.

## 2004

The **First Disability Pride Parade** was held in Chicago with nearly 2,000 attendees.



## 2008

The **ADA Amendments Act** clarified and broadened the term “disability.”

## 2009

President Barack Obama signed **Rosa’s Law**, replacing the term “mental retardation” with the term “intellectual disability.” The law was named after 9-year-old Rosa Marcellino.



## 2012

The first ever **Global Accessibility Awareness Day** was celebrated, inspired by web developer Joe Devon's blog post.

## 2013

After meeting with disability advocates, President Barack Obama signed the Section 503 rule change to the Rehab Act (setting a 7% utilization goal of employees with disabilities).





## 2018

As part of the **FAA Reauthorization Act** of 2018, the U.S. Department of Transportation began requiring that airlines track reports of mishandled wheelchairs & scooters.

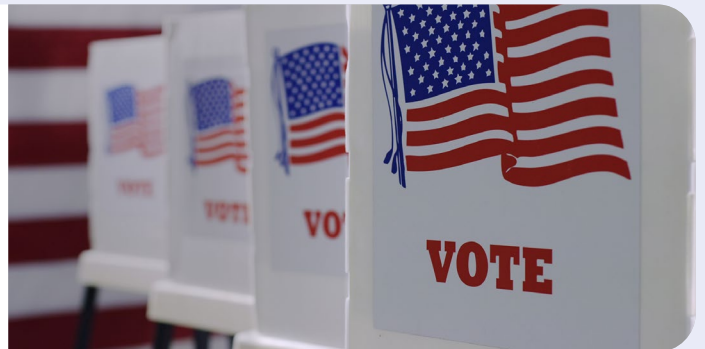


## 2021

The Biden administration announced it would erase student loan debt for more than 300,000 Americans with severe disabilities that prevented them from earning a significant income.

## 2022

A law was passed in New Hampshire to help students with disabilities register to vote.



## 2023

The Biden administration proposed new regulations to make state and local government websites and apps more accessible for people with disabilities.

# Busting Common Myths

## MYTH

People who use wheelchairs are chronically ill.

## FACT

A person may use a wheelchair for a variety of reasons, none of which are related to an illness.

## MYTH

It's rude to ask somebody who is deaf whether they can read lips.

## FACT

It's okay to ask a deaf person if they can read lips; it is only rude if you do not face them and give your full attention.

## MYTH

People without disabilities should proactively try to assist people with visible disabilities.

## FACT

It is considered condescending and/or ableist to assume somebody with disabilities needs assistance; ask, never assume.

## MYTH

People with intellectual disabilities have a low IQ so you should communicate with them the way you would with a child.

## FACT

Intellectual or developmental disabilities do not always reflect intelligence or ability to communicate.



# Disability Defined

What is a disability?

**A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.**

This could include one or more of the following:

- Walking
- Seeing
- Sitting
- Hearing
- Speaking
- Breathing
- Learning
- Lifting
- Self-care
- Bodily functions



**Mental Health**



**Neurological**



**Physical**



**Sensory**

## Apparent Disabilities

- Amputation
- Blindness
- Cerebral Palsy
- Down Syndrome
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Paralysis
- Short Stature
- Stuttering

## Non-Apparent Disabilities

- ADHD
- Anxiety
- Autism
- Depression
- Dyslexia
- Epilepsy
- Fibromyalgia
- Long-Covid

## Chronic

Managed (insulin-controlled diabetes), periodic (fibromyalgia flare-ups) or inactive (cancer in remission).

## Temporary

Major, but usually short(er) term, for example: pregnancy with complications like preeclampsia.

# Accommodations Defined

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires "reasonable accommodations" as they relate to three aspects of employment:

**1**

Ensuring there is equal opportunity in the application process

**2**

Enabling an individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job

**3**

Enabling an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges



Reasonable accommodation:

**A modification or adjustment to a job or work environment.**

What qualifies as "reasonable?"

An employer ultimately decides, but it must be feasible/plausible, effective and cannot pose undue hardship for the employer.

What should you do if your request for an accommodation is denied?

**1**

Ask for more information about the reason for the denial

**2**

Provide additional information and offer alternative solutions

**3**

Investigate the internal appeals process

# Language

Pay attention to the language you use and how it affects others - words shape perceptions:

## Ask First.

Ask how someone prefers to be referred to.

Some people like to use person-first language while others prefer identity-first.

## Person-First.

If you are not able to ask someone how they like to be referred to, default to using person-first language.

In the United States it is widely accepted to use person-first language.

## Be Anti-Ableist.

Don't describe someone with a disability in a way that paints them as a victim or as an inspiration (for something that would not be considered inspiring for an able-bodied person).



Neurodiversity and neurodivergence are often mistakenly used interchangeably. However, they are different concepts with different meanings.

## Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a term that describes the variation in which brains work and process information within a group or population. You would never refer to an individual as "neurodiverse."

## Neurodivergence

Neurodivergence describes how a brain may function or process information atypically. A person with a learning disability, intellectual disability or mental illness, may be described as "neurodivergent."

# Policy



People with disabilities can **still** legally be paid below the minimum wage.

[Learn More](#)

## 14(c)

A loophole allows employers that hold a 14(c) certificate to pay employees with disabilities less than the federal minimum wage (\$7.25/hour).

Some of the biggest ways Congress and the Administration can make a difference in disability employment include:

**1**

Ending the subminimum wage [14(c) certificate]

**2**

Enforcing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act

**3**

Supporting people with disabilities who travel for work

## Key Legislation

Transformation to the Competitive Integrated Employment Act by U.S. Senators Bob Casey and Steve Daines and U.S. Representatives Bobby Scott and Cathy McMorris Rodgers.

This bipartisan legislation would provide states and employers with the resources to transition workers with disabilities into fully integrated and competitive jobs, which includes earning at least the minimum wage alongside individuals without disabilities, while phasing out the subminimum wage.



# Facts and Figures

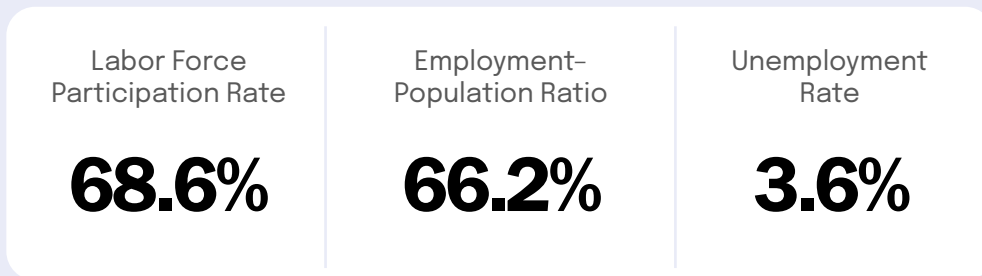
## Persons with a disability

Ages 16+



## Persons without a disability

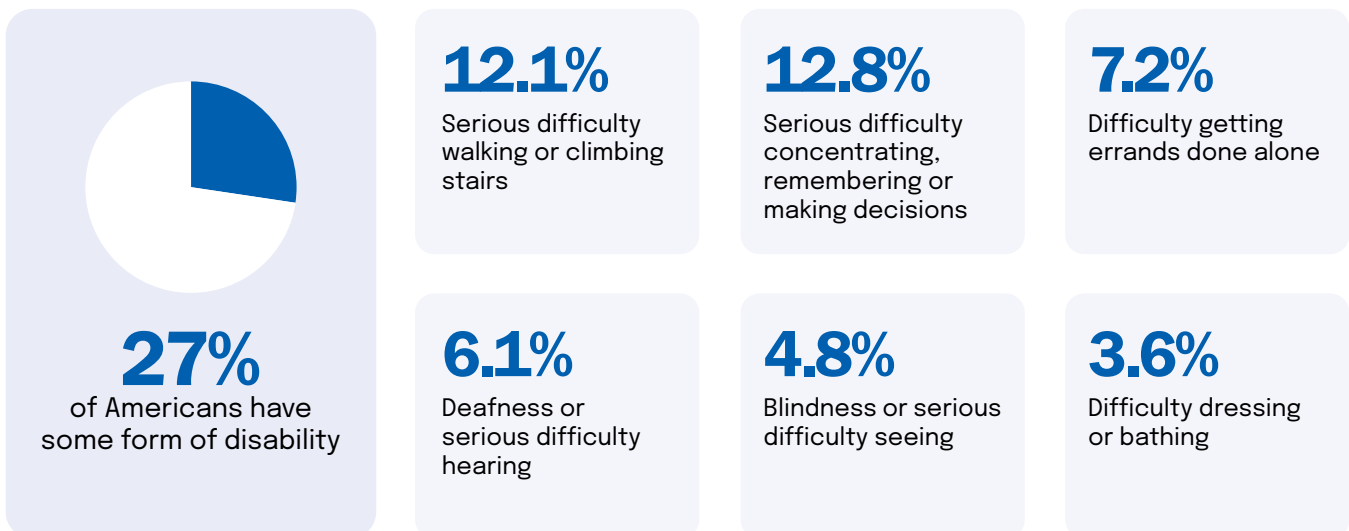
Ages 16+



\*Numbers updated in July 2023 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy.

[Learn More](#)

In 2022, persons with a disability who were employed were more likely to be self-employed than those without a disability (9.5% vs 6.1%).



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



This toolkit was made possible thanks to the  
generosity of Charter Communications.