

## Job Challenges of Women With Disabilities 25 Years After the A.D.A.

By Carol Boyer

Equal pay for women is one of the signature equality issues facing us today, and as far as I'm concerned, it's something we can never talk about enough. But what's also worth talking about is equal pay for women with disabilities, which of course is the focus of today's program. I can't tell you how impressed I am that the organizers of this event have chosen to explore the equal pay issue through the lens of disability. To some, it may seem like a unique take on the larger issue, but to me, it's a consideration that cannot be ignored.

As you heard, I work in the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, commonly referred to as ODEP. As part of the Labor Department's focus on expanding opportunities for all Americans, we work to promote policies and practices that ensure today's workforce is inclusive of all people—including people with disabilities. So workplace equality issues facing people with disabilities are what we live and breathe each day.

In ODEP, we consider workplace equality—including equal pay—to be a basic civil right. And if you think about it, that quest for equality has been the foundation of all of the civil rights movements throughout our history. We were reminded of this last July when our nation celebrated the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—the landmark legislation that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin, in turn increasing access to opportunity for more Americans. And then, in 1990, that ideal of equality was renewed and expanded with the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As you probably know, we'll be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the ADA this summer, and there is a lot to celebrate. We've made monumental progress in meeting its vision—especially in terms of physical access. Just think about the accessible practices that have become commonplace in our nation today, from curb cuts to accessible restrooms. However, in spite of these monumental strides, Americans with disabilities are still lagging behind the rest of the population on the jobs front. In fact, Secretary of Labor Perez calls employment the "unfinished business" of the ADA, and I couldn't agree more.

### Low Employment & Wage Rates

Now, focusing that lens a bit further, let's talk about women with disabilities. According to research recently conducted for ODEP and the Labor Department's Women's Bureau, today, women with disabilities represent more than one in 20 working-age Americans. Furthermore, women with disabilities outnumber men with disabilities, with nearly one in nine U.S. women—or 11 percent—living with one or more disabilities.

Despite their significant representation in the U.S. population—not to mention their human capital potential—working-age women with disabilities average an employment rate of 32 percent, which means they make up 2 percent of the workforce. And unfortunately, more often than not, their employment is in a part-time or temporary capacity and in fields of work that have more commonly been associated with low-wages and low-benefits.

Moreover, a severe wage gap persists; full-year working women with disabilities earn only 60 cents to every dollar earned by able-bodied men; 72 cents to every dollar earned by men with disabilities; and 80 cents to every dollar earned by their female able-bodied counterparts. This is an employment reality that is further marred by a poverty rate of 29.5 percent.

And that's a tough reality to confront. Women with disabilities face many potential barriers and challenges to finding employment, staying employed, advancing in their careers, and achieving equal pay. Now, it's worth noting that in many instances, these barriers are similar to those experienced by able-bodied women, as well. However, the challenge of acquiring meaningful and competitive employment is magnified and altered for women living with disabilities, who encounter even greater challenges—especially when other characteristics such as disability type, severity or minority status are introduced.

Qualitative research shows that women with disabilities are often disadvantaged by so called "double discrimination" and the stigma of "weakness" associated with both their gender and their disability status, if not also with their race. Affecting personal decisions, the decisions of families, and the perceptions of

employers, this exacerbating barrier often results in limited access to education and training, including leadership building and work-to-learn opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships and technical education programs.

What's more is that women with disabilities are at a higher risk of violence, abuse and bullying—which is another factor that can negatively impact their employment outcomes.

ODEP and our employer technical assistance center recently co-hosted a webinar on women and trauma, and some of the statistics presented were staggering. We learned that 83 percent of females and 32 percent of males with developmental disabilities have experienced sexual assault. And that 37.3 percent of women with disabilities have experienced violent abuse in their lifetime, as compared to 20.6 percent of women without disabilities. 28.5 percent have been threatened with violence, compared with 15.4 percent of those without disabilities.

And what's the workplace connection to this shocking data? Well, trauma impacts our ability to work. It results in absences, chronic tardiness, anxiety about one's safety on the job, changes in work performance and more. So there are many compounding barriers associated with being a woman and having a disability (among other traits), potentially leaving these women sidelined from opportunity.

What's clear is that efforts are still needed to address the barriers to employment and competitive pay that women with disabilities face. Luckily, solutions do exist, and I'd like to talk about a few of them today.

### Solutions & Strategies

According to the research I mentioned earlier, together we can collectively adopt and implement strategies to improve the state of employment and earnings of women with disabilities.

- One of them is to reduce early biases toward girls and young women with disabilities, and their own internal stigma, which is just so important.
- The second is to increase early access and participation in the STEM fields of study. I know you're all aware of the emphasis to encourage more women to pursue careers in science, tech, engineering and math, and women with disabilities must be a part of this initiative.
- Other strategies are to improve education-to-career transition efforts that aim to reinforce concepts of independent living, economic self-sufficiency and full participation; and to increase post-secondary educational attainment by women with disabilities.
- We must also work to reduce isolation by mainstreaming, mentorships, networks, and early exposure to work.

- And finally, we must continue to promote employer-oriented promising practices in disability inclusion and hiring, and efforts to reduce discrimination within the hiring and accommodation processes.

Now, how exactly can we make this all happen? Much of it maps back to the employer, and there are many exemplary businesses practices that we espouse in ODEP. The practices fall into the areas of:

- Organizational readiness and inclusive environments;
- Accessible employment processes;
- Provision of workplace accommodations;
- Recruitment, training and professional development;
- Mentorships and networks; and
- Information-sharing and awareness-raising.

You can learn much more about these practices by visiting ODEP's website, which is [dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep). There, you'll be connected with a number of resources, programs and initiatives that can help employers and other stakeholders promote more inclusive work environments.

One of ODEP's signature initiatives is the Campaign for Disability Employment, or CDE, which is a public education campaign funded by ODEP that works to raise awareness about the value and talent that people with disabilities bring to America's workplaces.

The CDE's latest product is a public service announcement called "WHO I AM" that is airing on broadcast and cable stations nationwide. It features nine working people with disabilities and underscores a vital message—that we all have many sides to ourselves; many diverse factors that make us who we are, both on the job and off. Copies of that PSA, and an accompanying discussion guide, are being distributed today, so I hope you'll check it out. You can learn more about the CDE, as well as best practices for creating a flexible and inclusive workplace, by visiting the website [WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org](http://WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org).

I also recommend visiting the websites of two of ODEP's technical assistance centers, the Job Accommodation Network, which you can find at [AskJAN.org](http://AskJAN.org); and the Employer Assistance and Resource Network, whose website is [AskEARN.org](http://AskEARN.org). In fact, the hub of ODEP's Employer Technical Assistance Center is located down the road in Albertson at The Viscardi Center, which is an incredible organization that works to educate, employ and empower people with disabilities.

You know, one of The Viscardi School's alumni is a graduate of Hofstra University, and a former colleague of mine. His name is Paul Hearne, and he was appointed to serve as the Executive Director of the National Council on Disability under the George H. W. Bush administration, among other distinguished honors. Another distinguished Hofstra University member is Dr. Frank Bowe, whom I also worked with. Frank was the Dr. Mervin

Livingston Schloss Distinguished Professor for the Study of Disabilities at Hofstra, and he had a very distinguished career devoted to disability rights. Unfortunately, both of these great men have passed away, but their contributions to the rights of individuals with disabilities have impacted millions of people's lives.

### The Promise of Education

And that's a great segue to talk about the role of the educational system in combating the employment challenges of women with disabilities.

The effects of education and a successful education-to-work transition are clear. Women with disabilities with a college degree live in poverty at a far lower rate when compared to those who have less than a high school education—14 percent compared to 45 percent. Furthermore, those with a college degree see higher employment rates—49 percent—when compared to women with disabilities who have less than a high school education—19 percent. And compounding this issue is that women with disabilities have lower educational attainment than the national average.

So it's evident that educational systems and communities have a critical role to play in the transition to the work lifecycle. Educational entities—whether primary and secondary schools, institutions of higher education, like Hofstra, or leaders of vocational rehabilitation, job training, or career and technical education programs—all have an opportunity to shape the future labor force in a manner that better supports girls and young women with disabilities. With successful academic progression, transition to higher education, and clear pathways to meaningful work with competitive and livable salaries, labor outcomes can be improved.

So, what are some exemplary practices that educational organizations can embrace? The first is to start when women with disabilities are young. We must develop individual plans of action and tracks to meaningful employment for youth with disabilities and engage students in early discussions about work. We must also initiate early discussions about opportunities related to transitions, early work exposure, independent living, and disability rights—and engage students as active participants along the way.

The next strategy is to individualize. We must base transition services on the individual needs of the student and incorporate the student's interests into Individualized Education Plans. Promoting and supporting a STEM education is important here, as well. And so is formalizing linkages to other services while the student is still in school and based on an individualized needs assessment.

Educational organizations also must partner and collaborate in this area. They can partner with students, her family, programs that complement basic academics, and local and state governments to ensure success. A critical piece of this is partnerships with post-secondary academic institutions and vocational programs, and

encouraging public-private networks and leadership and mentorship initiatives that support and inform the transition from education-to-employment

And a final exemplary practice is streamlining the transition to work. Educational institutions must raise awareness about and increase opportunities for early exposure to work, leveraging a spectrum of options such as mentorships, internships, apprenticeships, career and technical education. They can facilitate easy access to information related to STEM education, post-secondary education, work-to-learn opportunities, internships and job openings, health, benefits, and services. And they can prioritize individualized transition plans and identify vocational rehabilitation linkages.

### Conclusion

So that's some of ODEP's perspective on the equal pay issue, all through the lens of employment challenges faced by women with disabilities. And I should mention that much of the data and promising practices I shared today will soon be released by ODEP and DOL's Women's Bureau as a white paper and fact sheet series, so please check our website often for those upcoming features. Just visit [dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep) and select "women" from the topic list at the top of the page.

The “double discrimination” factor is a tragic reality faced by women with disabilities, however, if coupled with employer inclusion and achievement in education, we truly have the power to significantly improve their labor market outcomes.

Helen Keller once said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." And those words certainly ring true on this important issue. I hope that all of you will commit to working together toward true workplace equality, and to being a part of the solution on equal pay for all women, including those with disabilities. The "unfinished business" of the ADA is beckoning, and we all can play a role in seeing it through.

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## Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age & Disability Status, 2014-2015

((numbers in thousands; household data; not seasonally adjusted))

Employment status, sex, and age	Persons with a disability		Persons with no disability	
	March 2014	March 2015	March 2014	March 2015
<b>TOTAL, 16 years and over</b>				
Civilian noninstitutional population	28,863	29,919	218,395	220,161
Civilian labor force	5,634	5,917	149,994	150,401
Participation rate	19.5	19.8	68.7	68.3
Employed	4,819	5,222	140,271	142,413
Unemployed	815	695	9,722	7,988
Unemployed rate	14.5	11.7	6.5	5.3
Not in labor force	23,229	24,002	68,401	69,760
<b>Men, 16 to 64 years</b>				
Civilian labor force	2,502	2,674	75,591	75,765
Participation rate	33.1	34.2	82.1	82.0
Employed	2,095	2,306	70,336	71,365
Employment-population ratio	27.7	29.5	76.4	77.2
Unemployed	407	368	5,254	4,400
Unemployed rate	16.3	13.8	7.0	5.8
Not in labor force	5,058	5,140	16,475	16,647
<b>Women, 16 to 64 years</b>				
Civilian labor force	2,170	2,312	67,103	66,766
Participation rate	27.7	28.1	70.5	69.9
Employed	1,827	2,053	62,928	63,434
Employment-population ratio		23.3	25.0	66.1
Unemployed	343	259	4,175	3,332
Unemployed rate	15.8	11.2	6.2	5.0
Not in labor force	5,661	5,909	28,137	28,777
<b>Both sexes, 65 years and over</b>				
Civilian labor force	962	931	7,300	7,870
Participation rate	7.1	6.7	23.5	24.4
Employed	897	864	7,007	7,614
Employment-population ratio	6.7	6.2	22.5	23.6
Unemployed	65	67	293	255
Unemployed rate	6.8	7.2	4.0	3.2
Not in labor force	12,510	12,953	23,789	24,337

**Note:** A person with a disability has 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; 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.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/print.pl/news.release/empsit.t06.htm>.



## New Americans on Long Island – A Vital Fifth of the Economy

by David Dyssegaard Kallick

According to a study conducted by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a service of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), workplace accommodations not only are low cost, but also positively impact the workplace in many ways. JAN, in partnership with the University of Iowa's Law, Health Policy, and Disability Center (LHPDC), interviewed 1,182 employers between January 2004 and December 2006. In addition, JAN, in partnership with the West Virginia University School of Social Work (formerly School of Applied Social Sciences), interviewed 945 employers between June 28, 2008, and July 31, 2014. Employers in the JAN study represented a range of industry sectors and sizes and contacted JAN for information about workplace accommodations, the ADA, or both. Approximately eight weeks after their initial contact, the employers were asked a series of questions about the situation they discussed with JAN and the quality of the services JAN provided. The employers in the study reported that a high percentage (57%) of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make, while the rest typically cost only \$500.

DIRECT BENEFITS	
Retained a valued employee	90%
Increased the employee's productivity	71%
Eliminated costs associated with training a new employee	60%
Increased the employee's attendance	54%
Increased diversity of the company	41%
Saved workers' compensation or other insurance costs	38%
Hired a qualified person with a disability	13%
Promoted an employee	9%
INDIRECT BENEFITS	
Improved interactions with co-workers	64%
Increased overall company morale	59%
Increased overall company productivity	56%
Improved interactions with customers	44%
Increased workplace safety	44%
Increased overall company attendance	41%
Increased profitability	29%
Increased customer base	17%

Source: Job Accommodation Network (Original 2005, Updated 2007, Updated 2009, Updated 2010, Updated 2011, Updated 2012, Updated 2013, Updated 2014). Workplace accommodations: Low cost, high impact. Retrieved 4-14-2015, from <http://AskJAN.org/media/lowcosthighimpact.html>

After several decades in the mid-20th century with little immigration, Long Island, like the country as a whole, has seen a significant increase in the immigrant share of the population in the past few decades. This has led to natural questions about the role of immigrants in the local economy, as well as to misunderstanding about who immigrants on Long Island are and the economic roles they play.

In 2011, the Fiscal Policy Institute published the first version of this report as a response to these questions. The title was *New Americans on Long Island: A Vital Sixth of the Economy*. The title of this new report remains the same, but the subtitle must be updated to reflect the latest data: immigrants now make up a vital fifth of the Long Island economy.

In general, we see that immigrants are playing a slightly bigger role across the board than we saw in the previous study. The immigrant population, and in particular the immigrant share of the working-age population, is somewhat larger, and the economic contribution is correspondingly larger.

Immigrants on Long Island are a comparatively affluent group, like Long Island residents in general. Nassau and Suffolk Counties are among the most affluent suburban counties in the United States—Nassau ranks 11th and Suffolk 34th among all U.S. counties, with overall median family incomes of \$112,000 in Nassau and \$98,000 in Suffolk—both far above the national median of \$64,000.

Immigrants on Long Island have at the same time a lower income than other Long Islanders and a far higher income than most Americans. The median income for families with at least one immigrant adult on Long Island was \$97,000 in 2013. That is below the median for Long Island families in which all family members were born in the United States (\$119,000). Yet the immigrant family income on Long Island is fully 50 percent higher than the overall family income for the United States.

Immigrants make an economic contribution to Long Island that is closely proportionate to their share of the population. Immigrants work in a wide range of jobs, pay a substantial amount in taxes, and are slightly more likely than U.S.-born Long Islanders to be small business owners. On the other hand, not everything about immigration is positive: immigrants earn lower wages than similarly educated U.S.-born workers; there are considerable differences in outcomes for both U.S.- and foreign-born workers by race and ethnicity; and there is no doubt that undocumented immigrants are working primarily in low-wage jobs.

Figure 1. Immigrant share of economic output matches share of population

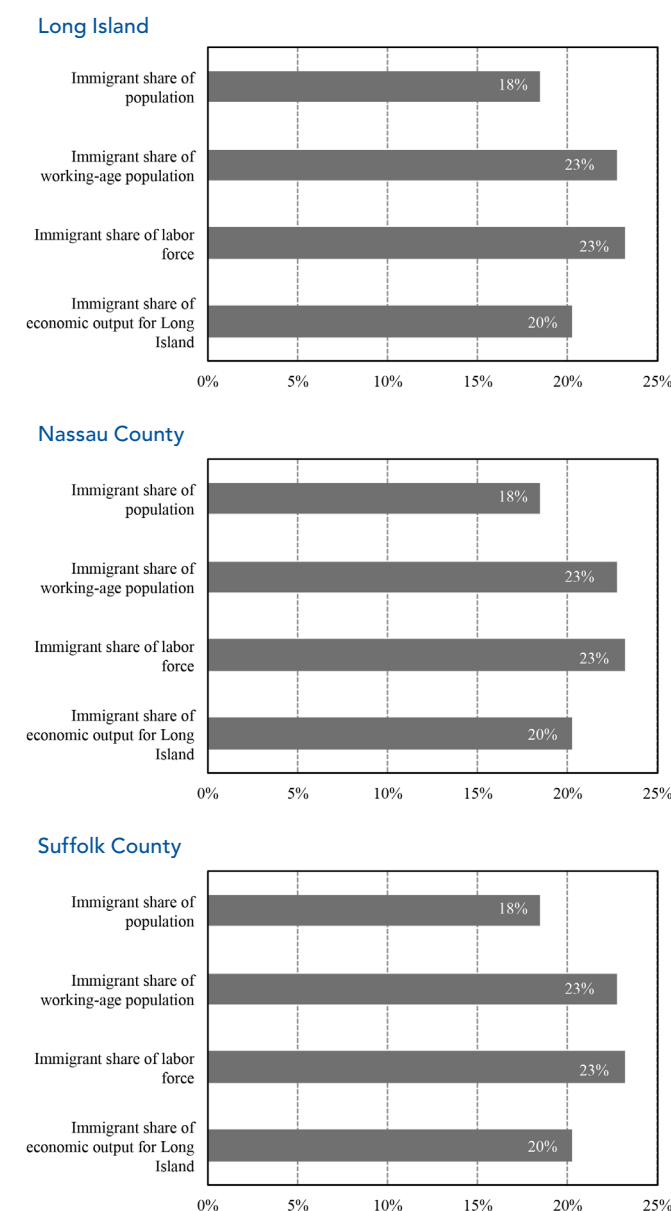


Figure 1: Source: FPI analysis of 2013 ACS. For detailed source notes, see appendix.