

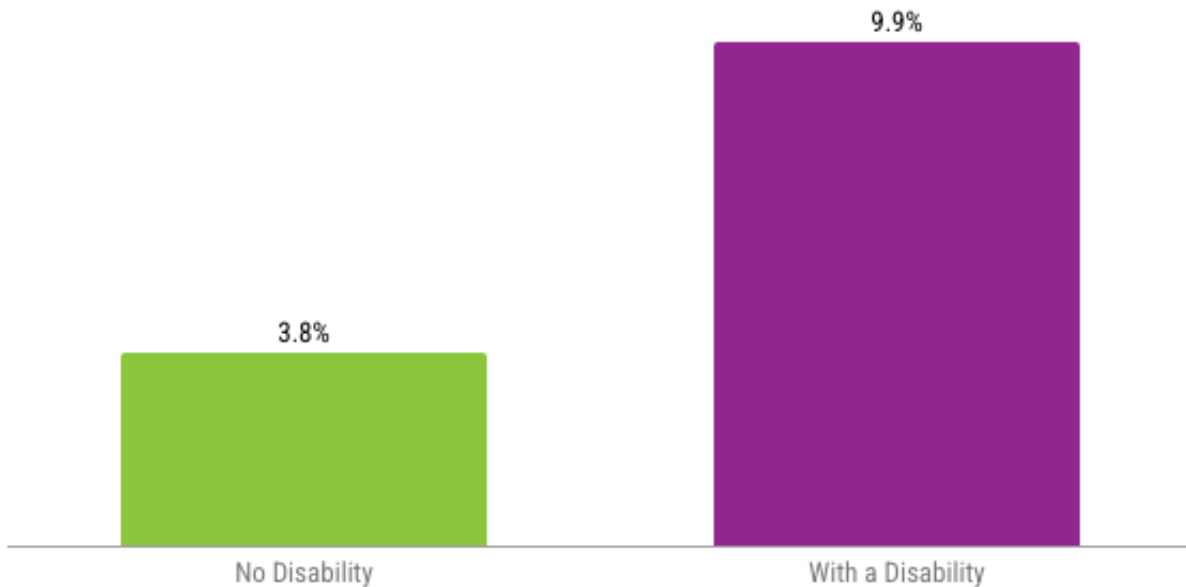
People with disabilities face employment challenges

As part of Disability Employment Awareness Month, PSRC is exploring the employment trends of the central Puget Sound region's people with disabilities.

In 2023, one in 10 of the region's residents reported a disability on the American Community Survey (ACS). In total, they made up 6.9% of the region's workforce.

Around 148,000 people with disabilities were employed. **Of those reporting a disability and interested in participating in the workforce, 9.9% were unemployed. This is much higher than the unemployment rate of those without disabilities at 3.8%.**

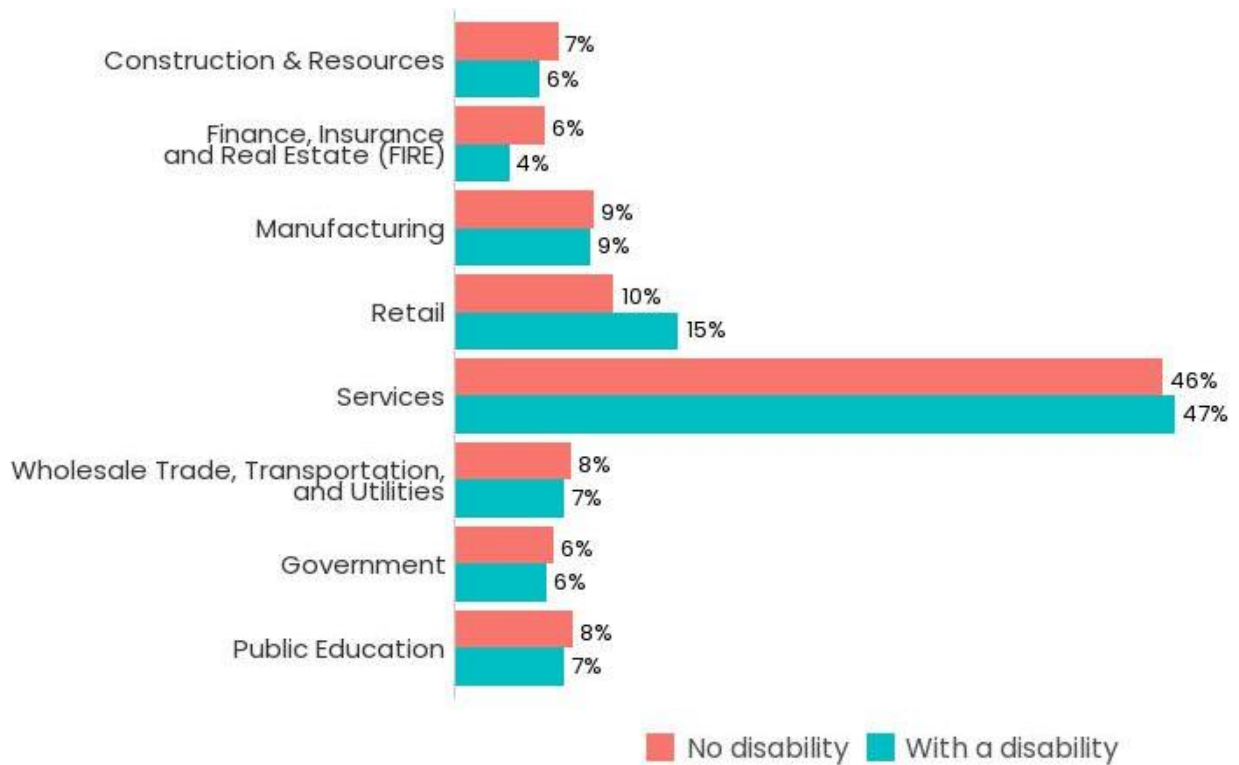
Unemployed by Disability Status, 2023



Source: ACS 1-year 2023 B18120 Employment Status by Disability Status and Type (Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population 18 to 64 Years)

The Census data also shows differences between those with and without disabilities working in different sectors. In 2023, the sector employing those with disabilities at a disproportionately higher rate was retail.

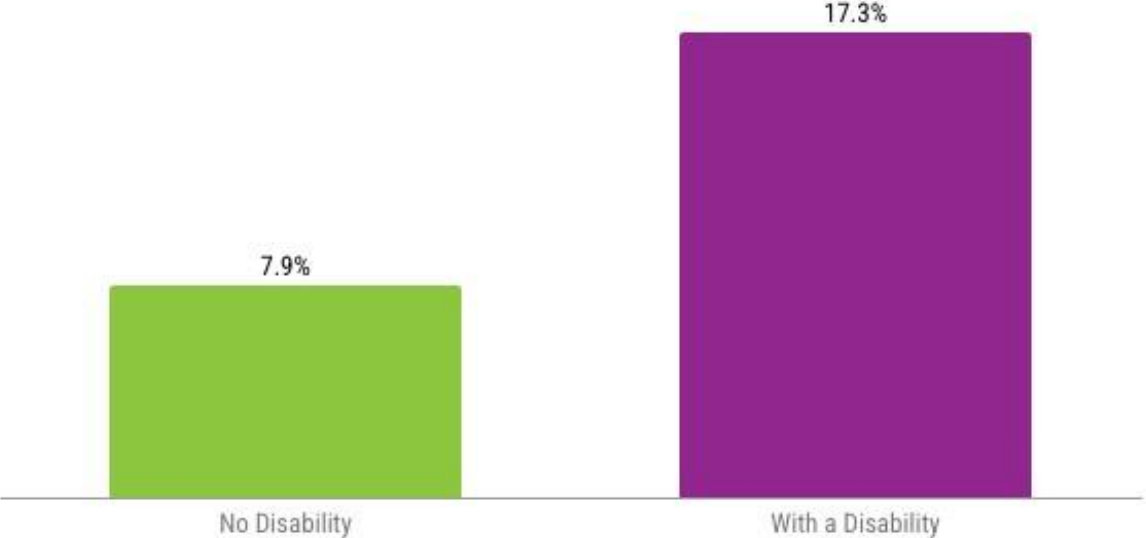
Disability Status by Covered Employment Job Sectors, 2023



Source: ACS 1-year 2023 PUMS

These differences have an impact, as [Census data](#) shows that sectors such as Retail pay below average wages. Those reporting disability in the region saw median annual earnings of \$51,000, while the median for the population overall was over 30% higher, at \$70,300 in 2023. These relatively higher levels of unemployment and lower wages increase the likelihood that people with disabilities will live below the poverty line. In fact, those with disabilities (17.3%) are twice as likely as the rest of the population (7.9%) to live in poverty. Differences in sector employment and a higher rate of unemployment has an impact on economic outcomes.

Poverty Status by Disability Status, 2023



Source: ACS 1-year 2023, C18130 Poverty Status by Disability Status and Age

Now, 50 years after the passage of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and over 30 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, we’re still seeing major disparities between those with and without disabilities. Those with disabilities experience different employment patterns and may fall behind on income and poverty.

PSRC will continue to track the data on ability to inform the region on the disabled community’s needs.

Our recent work has included the [Equity Pilot Program](#), which asked project sponsors to identify marginalized communities (such as people with disabilities) that their transportation projects are serving, articulate the disparities the community was facing, how they’re addressing these disparities, and more. Looking forward, PSRC will study the commuting and transportation needs of people with disabilities in our region.