

EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPATION RECOVERY POST-2020 FOR PEOPLE WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES, AN UPDATE

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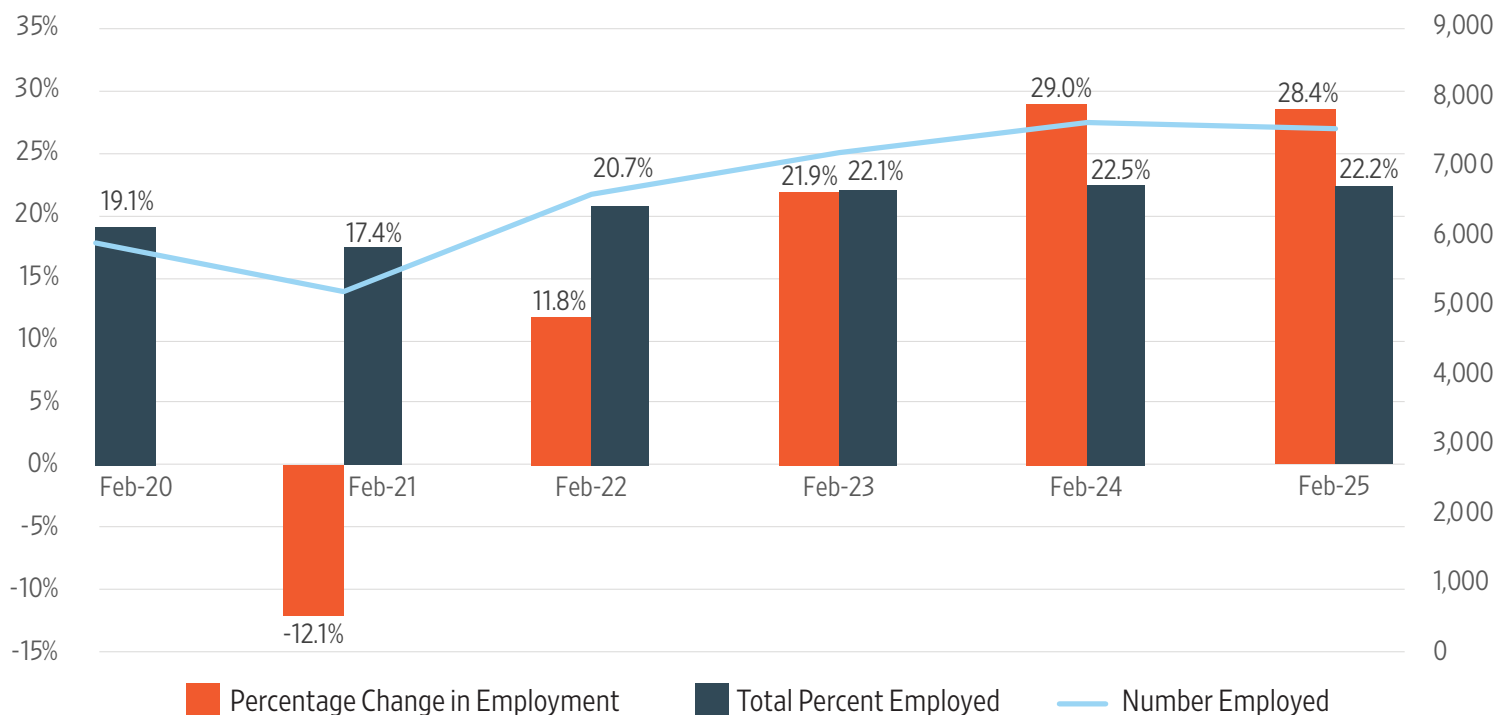
Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Monthly Employment Situation

Introduction

This DataNote updates previous findings on employment trends for people with disabilities, first explored in [Data Note 69](#) and [Data Note 91](#). Earlier findings highlighted the sharp employment decline that occurred in the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic and tracked recovery using February 2020 as a baseline. This update extends that analysis through February 2025 to examine how employment trends have evolved over time for people with and without disabilities.

As shown in Figure 1, employment for people with disabilities initially dropped sharply but rebounded by 2022, surpassing pre-2020 levels. Growth continued into 2024, with a 29% increase in employment compared to February 2020. In 2025, employment remained above pre-2020 levels showing a net increase of 28.4% compared to 2020. Table 1 summarizes these employment trends.

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



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

While people with disabilities experienced a more significant employment decline between 2020 and 2021 (-12.11%) than those without disabilities (-5.12%), their recovery outpaced that of people without disabilities. Employment growth remained strong through 2024 before a slight, but insignificant decline in 2025. In contrast, employment recovery for people without disabilities was slower, with a modest 1.9% increase above pre-pandemic levels by 2025. Their employment rate declined slightly from 65.3% in 2024 to 64.9% in 2025.

These trends indicate that people with disabilities saw a stronger employment recovery, likely due to their lower pre-2020 employment levels. In contrast, the slower rebound for people with disabilities reflects their already higher employment rates. As both groups saw a slight employment decline in 2025, it will be important to continue monitoring these employment rates to determine whether this small decline signals a stabilization or the start of a broader downturn. It will also be important to assess the lasting impact of labor market shifts like remote work.

Table 1: Number of People Employed with and without Disabilities Age 16 and over, February 2020 through February 2025

	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%
February 2025	7,601	28.4%	22.2%	154,943	1.9%	64.9%

*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 (2025). Employment situation summary. Economic News Release.
<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>



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