



Disability Rights Commission

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**Disability Briefing
January 2004**

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Background note

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a quarterly sample survey of 60,000 households living at private addresses in Great Britain. Its purpose is to provide information on the labour market, and the questionnaire covers a wide range of demographic, education, qualification and employment related information. Since spring 1997, the LFS has provided information about disability using the following range of definitions:

Current DDA disabled: Includes people who have a long term health problem or disability which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Work limiting disabled: Includes people who have a long-term health problem or disability which affects the kind or amount of paid work which a person might do.

Long term disabled: Includes people who meet the criteria for either current DDA or work-limiting definitions of disability (or both – as is often the case) are defined as having a **current long-term disability**.

Clearly, estimates for the different definitions will vary, and it should be noted that the difference between the DDA estimates and those based on work-limiting disabilities may be exaggerated due to people not being able to assess the extent to which their work limiting disability would also affect their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. It follows that including all those with current long term disabilities improves the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the estimates. Further information of the disability questions in the LFS is included in the Technical note.

As the LFS does not collect disability related information for people over state pension age on a comprehensive basis, the information provided in this briefing is limited to adults of working age, i.e. men aged 16-64 and women aged 16-59.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

Source: Labour Force Survey (LFS) Summer 2003, Great Britain

- Nearly one in five people of working age (6.9 million) in private households in Great Britain are disabled; 3.6 million men and 3.3 women.
- Over the period for which LFS data are available on a consistent basis, there had been a gradual increase in the number of working age people reporting a disability; from 6.2 million in summer 1998 to 6.9 million in summer 2003.
- Disability rates increase with age. Some 10 percent of adults aged 16-24 were disabled in summer 2003, but this proportion increased to over one third in the 50 to retirement age category.
- Disability rates vary markedly across region, from 16 per cent in London to 23 per cent in Wales and 25 per cent in the North East of England.
- Over the past 5 years employment rates for disabled people have increased gradually (by 4 percentage points between 1998 and 2003). However, in summer 2003 disabled people were still only about half as likely as non disabled people to be in work; 49 per cent and 81 per cent respectively.
- Employment rates vary greatly according to the type of impairment a person has. Disabled people with mental health problems have the lowest employment rates of all (LFS) impairment categories at only 21%.
- Disabled people continue to experience high rates of unemployment, compared with the non disabled population. In summer 2003, the unemployment rate for disabled people in Britain was 9 percent, nearly twice as high for non disabled people (5 per cent).

- Almost half (46%) of the disabled population of working age in Britain are economically inactive i.e. outside of the labour force.
- Over one third of disabled people who are inactive say they would like to work (32 per cent), compared with one quarter (26 per cent) of non disabled people.

Table 1: Disabled people in the labour market

Estimates from the LFS, Summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.
(thousands and per cent)

	All long term disabled	DDA current disabled	Work limiting disabled	Not disabled
All persons of working age (000s)	6,860 19%	5,695 16%	5,390 15%	29,342 81%
Per cent from ethnic minorities	8	8	8	9
Per cent women	48	49	48	47
Per cent with no qualifications	27	28	30	12
In work (000s)	3,389	2,601	2,203	23,847
Per cent of population in work	49	46	41	81
Per cent of all in work:				
Self employed	13	13	14	12
Working part time	28	29	32	23
In a permanent job	94	95	94	94
ILO unemployed (000s)	317	224	260	1,221
Per cent of population	5	4	5	4
ILO unemployment rate	9	8	11	5
..who are unemployed for a year or more	30	32	30	17
Inactive (000s)	3,154	2,870	2,928	4,274
Per cent of population	46	50	54	15

Table 2: Trends in economic status of disabled people

Estimates from the LFS, summer 1998 – summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
All long term disabled (000s)	6,227	6,550	6,658	6,789	6,877	6,860
Economically active (000s)	3,157	3,450	3,496	3,516	3,642	3,706
Economic activity rate (%)	50.7	52.7	52.5	51.8	53	54
In employment (000s)	2,812	3,102	3,166	3,204	3,353	3,389
Employment rate (%)	45.2	47.4	47.6	47.2	48.8	49.4
ILO unemployed	345	348	330	311	288	317
Unemployment rate (%)	10.9	10.1	9.4	8.9	7.9	8.6
Economically inactive	3,070	3,100	3,162	3,273	3,235	3,154
Not disabled	28,839	28,747	28,885	29,007	29,141	29,342
Economically active	24,705	24,658	24,875	24,896	25,003	25,068
Economic activity rate (%)	85.7	85.8	86.1	85.8	85.8	85.4
In employment	23,210	23,262	23,624	23,682	23,727	23,847
Employment rate (%)	80.5	80.9	81.8	81.6	81.4	81.3
ILO unemployed	1,495	1,396	1,252	1,214	1,276	1,221
Unemployment rate (%)	6.1	5.7	5.0	4.9	5.1	4.9
Economically inactive	4,134	4,089	4,010	4,111	4,137	4,274

Table 3: Economic status of disabled people of working age in England, Scotland and Wales

Estimates from the LFS, summer 2003, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	Great Britain	England	Scotland	Wales
All long term disabled (% of total population)	6,860 19%	5,829 19%	627 20%	405 23%
Economically active	3,706	3,210	303	193
Economic activity rate (%)	54	55.1	48.4	47.8
In employment	3,389	2,939	271	179
Employment rate (%)	49.4	50.4	43.2	44.2
ILO unemployed	317	271	32	14
Unemployment rate (%)	8.6	8.4	10.6	7.3
Economically inactive	3,154	2,619	324	212
Not disabled (000s)	29,342	25,422	2,546	1,375
Economically active	25,068	21,652	2,232	1,184
Economic activity rate (%)	85.4	85.2	87.7	86.1
In employment	23,847	20,615	2,102	1,129
Employment rate (%)	81.3	81.1	82.6	82.2
ILO unemployed	1,221	1,037	128	55
Unemployment rate (%)	4.9	4.8	5.8	4.6
Economically inactive	4,274	3,770	314	191

Table 4: Economic inactivity of disabled people of working age

Estimates from LFS, summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	Disabled	Not disabled
All Inactive (000s)	3,154 46	4,274 15
Total inactive who wld like to work	993 32	1,120 26
Seeking work but not available in next 2 weeks	40 1.3	167 4
Not seeking work, does not want work	2,162 69	3,154 74

Table 5: Disability rates by age and ethnic origin

Estimates from the LFS, Summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	All aged 16-59/64	16-24	25-34	35-49	50-59/64
All disabled (% of total population)	6,860 19%	659 10%	975 12%	2,337 18%	2,890 33%
White	6,326 19%	606 11%	882 13%	2,093 18%	2,745 33%
Mixed	36 16%	* *	* *	20 30%	* *
Asian and Asian British	298 19%	28 7%	53 10%	127 26%	90 45%
Black and Black British	119 15%	13 8%	22 11%	56 17%	28 35%
Chinese	11 7%	* *	* *	* *	* *
Other ethnic groups	67 17%	* *	10 7%	37 27%	17 35%

Table 6: Proportion of disabled and non disabled people with no qualifications by age group

Estimates from the LFS, Summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	All aged 16- 59/64	16-24	25-34	35-49	50-59/64
All persons	5,359 15	945 15	696 9	1,670 13	2,048 23
Long term disabled	1,821 27	157 24	163 17	555 24	947 33
Not disabled	3,538 12	788 14	534 8	1,115 11	1,101 19

Table 7: Disabled people in employment by occupation

Estimates from the LFS, Summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	All long term disabled	Not disabled
All in employment	3,389	23,847
Managers and senior officials	438 13%	3,587 15%
Professional occupations	322 9%	2,964 12%
Associate professional and technical	460 14%	3,356 14%
Administrative and secretarial	416 12%	3,002 13%
Skilled trades occupations	414 12%	2,790 12%
Personal service occupations	268 8%	1,729 7%
Sales and customer service occupations	256 8%	1,869 8%
Process, plant and machinery operatives	333 10%	1,820 8%
Elementary occupations	475 14%	2,698 11%

Table 8: Disabled people of working age in employment by industry sector

Estimates from the LFS, Summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	All long term disabled	Not disabled
All in employment (000s)	3,389	23,847
Agriculture and fishing	47 1%	274 1%
Energy and water	32 1%	246 1%
Manufacturing	492 15%	3,509 15%
Construction	250 7%	1,850 8%
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	696 21%	4,731 20%
Transport and communications	260 8%	1,651 7%
Banking, finance and insurance	456 13%	3,882 16%
Public admin, education and health	933 28%	6,199 26%
Other services	214 6%	1,464 6%

Table 9: Employment and unemployment rates by type of main disability

Estimates from the LFS, Summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	Type of main impairment (000s) and as per cent of all disabled (%)	Number in employment and employment rate (%)
All long term disabled	6,860 19	3,389 49
Problems with .. arms, hands	384 6	202 53
.... Legs, feet	772 11	346 45
.... Back, neck	1,178 17	555 47
Difficulty in seeing	113 2	50 44
Difficulty in hearing	118 2	78 66
Speech impairment	11 *	* *
Skin conditions, allergies	136 2	95 70
Chest, breathing problems	842 12	539 64
Heart, blood pressure	775 12	430 56
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	357 5	183 51
Diabetes	359 5	238 66
Mental illness	631 9	130 21
Epilepsy	136 2	59 43
Learning difficulties	164 2	47 29
Progressive illness n.e.c.	285 4	117 41
Other problems, disabilities	561 8	303 54

Table 10: Employment and unemployment rates by government office region

Estimates from the LFS, Summer 2003, Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted.

(thousands and per cent)

	Total number of disabled people (000s) and as a per cent of local population (%)	In employment (000s) and employment rate (%)
All long term disabled	6,860 19	3,389 49
North East	392 25	159 40
North West & Merseyside	860 20	387 45
Yorkshire and the Humber	621 20	308 50
East Midlands	486 19	249 51
West Midlands	673 21	321 48
East	574 17	318 55
London	794 16	347 44
Inner London	310 15	116 37
Outer London	484 16	230 48
South East	849 17	523 62
South West	579 19	329 57
Wales	405 23	179 44
Scotland	627 20	271 43

Statistics on disabled people's access to goods and services

In October 2003, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) launched the Open 4 All campaign to raise awareness of new duties on service providers regarding physical access for disabled people under Part III DDA. In preparation for the launch of the campaign, and to provide an up to date picture of disabled people's experience of accessibility and its impact on their day to day lives, the DRC commissioned an GB-wide telephone survey of 500 people with mobility and sensory impairments.

Some of the key findings from this research are outlined below.

- Overall, seven in ten (73%) disabled people with mobility and sensory impairments in Great Britain said they have difficulty accessing goods and services.
- In buying goods and accessing services, the main difficulty reported by respondents was physical access to premises.
- The main physical barriers reported by people with sensory and mobility impairments were;
 - Steps at entrance of buildings (45%)
 - Negotiating heavy doors (40%)
 - Parking spaces for disabled people being used by non disabled drivers (39%)
 - Lack of lifts (37%)
- Disabled people's experiences of access to goods and services can influence the consumer behaviour of their friends and family. Seven in ten (70%) of respondents reported that their friends and family would consider using alternative services if they were told that a particular service wasn't available to their disabled friend or family member.

- When disabled people were asked about making a complaint regarding access to services, only 10% said they had made a complaint in the last 6 months. Only 11% said they had seen any improvement as a result of the complaint. Two thirds of respondents had seen no change.
- Other than access, the factor most likely to influence future use of services by disabled people, was ensuring the positive attitude of staff towards disabled people, with four in ten (41%) of respondents giving this answer.
- Less than one in five (18%) of respondents said that quality of service as a factor that would have most influence on their continued use of a service, and only about one in six (16%) responded that value for money was that critical factor.

The full report '**An NOP survey on disabled people's experiences of access to goods and services in Britain**' by **Rezina Chowdhury and Alan Worley, November 2003** will be available to download from the DRC website soon. A summary report will also be available from the website.

Update on DRC research completed in 2003

Education

- DRC Education Research Summary - September 2003
Available from DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>
- Further and Higher Education Awareness survey report - April 2003
A research study on the preparedness of staff for the new duties placed upon them by the extension of the DDA to education in September 2002
Summary report available from the DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>
- Schools Awareness Survey Report - March 2003
Research study on the preparedness of school staff for the new duties placed upon them by the extension of the DDA to schools in September 2002
Summary report available on the DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>
- The Implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4 in Educational establishments - October 2003
Summary and full report available on DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>
- Disability Discrimination in Education - A review of the literature on discrimination across the 0-19 age range - November 2003
Summary and full report available on the DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>

Transport

- Transport Literature Review - November 2003
Summary and full review on the DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>

Built Environment

- An NOP Survey on disabled people's experiences of Access to Services
Summary and full report available soon on DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>
- An Overview of Literature on Disabled People's Access to the Built Environment
Summary and full report available soon on the DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>

Other DRC research

- Attitudes and Awareness Report - August 2003
Summary and report available from DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>
- A survey of the views and experiences of young disabled people in Great Britain - January 2003
Summary and report on DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>
- Monitoring the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995: Stage III
Summary and full report available soon on the DRC website
<http://www.drc.org.uk/whatwedo/research.asp>

Technical Note

Questions on disability in the LFS

The focus of and number of questions in the health and disability module of the LFS changed in the spring 1997 to reflect the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). Since spring 1997 all working age LFS respondents have been asked:

- Do you have any health problems or disabilities that you expect will last more than a year?
If they answer 'yes' to this question, they are also asked to say what kind(s) of health problem or disability(ies) they have, based on a list read to them by the interviewer.

If they then answer '**yes**' to the following question:

- Does this (do these) health problem(s) or disability(ies) (when taken singly or together) substantially limit your ability to carry out normal day to day activities?

OR

- They said that they had the following health problems: progressive illnesses not included elsewhere (e.g. cancer, multiple sclerosis, symptomatic HIV, Parkinson's disease, muscular dystrophy)

Then they are defined as having **a current DDA disability**.

People whose health problem(s) or disability(ies) are expected to last more than a year are also asked the following questions:

- 'Does this health problem affect the KIND of work that you might do?'
- '..... or the AMOUNT of paid work you might do?'

If the respondent fulfils either of these criteria they are defined as having a **work-limiting disability**.

Those people who meet the criteria for either current DDA or work-limiting definitions of disability (or both – as is usually the case) are defined as having **a current long-term disability**.

Further information:

For more information about DRC research or enquiries related to DRC research completed in 2003, please email; research@drc-gb.org

For enquiries specifically related to disability statistics from the Labour Force Survey, contact: Breda Twomey, email Breda.Twomey@drc-gb.org.