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Day 10: Income Inequality

People with disabilities have a history of living in poverty and are over-represented in the rates of unemployed Americans. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which has been in existence for over thirty years, provided a pathway for people with disabilities to be included in the workforce. Title I of the ADA prohibits private employers, State and local governments, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

Unfortunately, as a result of potential employers' biases, preconceived notions about the disabled applicants' abilities, and low expectations, many qualified applicants with disabilities who want to work are overlooked. The unemployment rates among people with disabilities are between 70 and 80 percent. Additionally, studies show that people with disabilities who are employed are likely to earn less than their non-disabled counterparts.

Some people with disabilities aren't able to work and must rely on government assistance programs such as benefits from the Social Security Administration and state assistance programs; however, these benefits still leave many people living well beneath the poverty line.

We must be intentional about creating programs and opportunities that address these socioeconomic inequities that impact people with disabilities.



[Image description: Graphic title and text: "Workers with disabilities earn less than their peers. For every dollar paid to workers without disabilities, those with disabilities receive only 63 cents, on average." Graphic of coins in a line with a non-disabled human icon above a shorter line of coins with a disabled human icon and the words "37% less pay."]

Learn More

Read:

- Disability and Socioeconomic Status: <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/disability>
- Those with Disabilities Earn 37% Less on Average; Gap is Even Wider in Some States: <https://www.air.org/news/press-release/those-disabilities-earn-37-less-average-gap-evenwider-some-states>

Watch:

- Economic Justice & Disability, with Dessa Cosma, Detroit Disability Power: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgcva00at9U>
- Long Story Short: What Do Employment and Educational Gaps for Workers with Disabilities Cost the Nation?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tu3YICSGSQ&t=1s>

Listen:

- "Out West" – Bridging the Disability Employment Gap (transcript available): <https://westgov.org/news/article/listen-out-west-podcast-on-policies-best-practices-to-increase-employment-opportunities-for-people-with-disabilities>

Discussion:

- What are some programs that could be implemented locally to address the unemployment rates and income inequalities among people with disabilities?
- If you were interviewing a person with a disability for a job, would their disability impact your perception of their abilities? If so, in what way?

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