A Disability Lens is Essential to Economic Justice

According to the CDC, 61 million adults in the United States have a disability.¹ As the Century Foundation’s Disability Economic Justice Collaborative explains, “Disability can be both a cause and a consequence of economic insecurity.” Nonprofits and funders must recognize how existing policies and systems exclude and/or financially penalize people with disabilities, especially those who are BIPOC and LGBTQIA+. The following statistics highlight just some of the many economic inequities disabled people experience.

**Education**

For the 2018-2019 school year, the average graduation rate for students with disabilities was 67.1%, which is 17.5 percentage points lower than the 84.6% rate at which all students graduated.²

**Employment**

In 2021, only 19.1% of disabled were employed, compared to 63.7% of non-disabled people.³

**Healthcare**

In 2020, 21.6% of disabled people in the U.S. reported they could not see a doctor due to cost barriers.⁴

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¹. Disability Impacts All of Us Infographic Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.
⁴. Disability and Health Data System (DHDS) Data. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Division of Human Development and Disability.
Housing

In 2021, nearly 40% of renters with a disability struggled to pay rent, compared to a national average of 25%.\(^5\)

Income

The 2019 median income for disabled people in the U.S. was $25,270, compared to $37,262 for non-disabled people.\(^6\)

| Disabled  | $25,270 | Non-disabled  | $37,262 |

In 2021, the maximum federal Supplemental Security Income benefit was less than the federal poverty level (FPL), at $794 per month, or about 74% of the FPL for an individual.\(^7\)

In 2019, 21.6% of disabled people were considered poor based on the Supplemental Poverty Measure Census, compared to just over 10% of non-disabled people.\(^8\)

People receiving home and community-based services through Medicaid are not permitted to have financial assets that exceed state-determined thresholds, meaning many disabled people can’t have above $2,000 in assets to maintain eligibility.\(^9\)

\(^5\) Economic Justice is Disability Justice The Century Foundation, Disability Economic Justice Collaborative.

\(^6\) B18140 Census Bureau Table U.S. Census Bureau.

\(^7\) Supplemental Security Income for People with Disabilities Kaiser Family Foundation.

\(^8\) 7 Facts About the Economic Crisis Facing People with Disabilities in the United States The Century Foundation, Disability Economic Justice Collaborative.

\(^9\) State Policy Choices About Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Kaiser Family Foundation.

Join us on the journey to disability inclusion!

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum is committed to expanding philanthropic commitment to disability rights and justice by centering the leadership of the disability community. Visit our website and if you’re eligible, sign up for a free membership.