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What Types of Jobs Do People with Disabilities Want?

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Abstract *Introduction* Do non-employed people with disabilities want to work, and if so, what types of jobs do they want? Researchers seeking to explain the low employment rate among people with disabilities have focused primarily on skill gaps, employment disincentives from disability income, accommodation mandates, and (to a lesser extent) employer attitudes and unwelcoming corporate cultures. There has been little attention paid to the attitudes of non-employed people with disabilities. *Methods* This paper uses the 2006 General Social Survey, a representative national survey of US adults that has disability information and a special supplement on worker preferences, to examine the above question. *Results* We find that, relative to their non-disabled counterparts, non-employed people with disabilities are (a) as likely to want a job but less likely to be actively searching, (b) as likely to have prior job experience, and (c) similar in their views of the importance of income, job security, and other valued job characteristics. The results, which vary little by type of impairment, indicate that the low employment rate of people with disabilities is not due to their reluctance to work or different job preferences. *Conclusion* Combined with evidence that a large share of new jobs can be performed by people with disabilities, the findings point toward the value of dismantling barriers to employment facing many people with disabilities.

Keywords Disability · Job preference · Employment barriers

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Do non-employed people with disabilities want to work, and if so, what types of jobs do they want? Despite passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other policy initiatives designed to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities, their employment rates remain low [1–3]. One recent estimate is that only 40% of the 18 million working-age people with disabilities are employed, which is half the 80% rate for people without disabilities [4]. Their low employment rates contribute to high rates of poverty [5–7]. Employment is important not only for increasing economic resources but also for its social and psychological effects, since it helps incorporate people with disabilities fully into mainstream society by increasing their social networks, civic skills, independence, citizenship behaviors, and sense of efficacy and inclusion from filling a valued social role [8].

Among the possible reasons for the low employment rates of people with disabilities, researchers have identified skill gaps and employment disincentives from disability income, particularly Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), as contributing factors [2, 9]. In addition, employer attitudes and unwelcome corporate cultures reflecting stigma and prejudice against disability may constrain their employment opportunities [10–12]. The attitudes of non-employed people with disabilities regarding work and employers, however, have received relatively little attention. If

non-employed people with disabilities are reluctant to work or have unrealistic expectations about potential jobs, this may contribute to their low employment levels. If, however, their attitudes and expectations are similar to those of non-disabled people, then other factors appear to be primarily responsible for their low employment levels.

While some recent studies explore the attitudes and experiences of employed people with disabilities [3, 13], we are aware of no existing studies of the work-related attitudes of non-employed people with disabilities. One commonly-cited statistic is that 63% of non-employed people with disabilities would prefer to be working [14], although we do not have comparisons of this figure between people with and without disabilities. In this investigation we use the nationally-representative General Social Survey (GSS) to provide recent data on the desire for jobs, and the importance of several job characteristics, among non-employed people with disabilities in the US. We make comparisons between people with and without disabilities, and among people with different types of impairments.

Theory and Literature Review

There are several reasons that job preferences of people with disabilities may differ from those of people without disabilities. First, they may desire flexibility in work arrangements to deal with health or mobility conditions. As noted by Schur: "Many people with disabilities experience fatigue and other health problems, making it difficult to work a full 40-hour work week on a regular, predictable basis. Those with mobility impairments may have transportation problems, making flexible contingent work more attractive" [15]. People with disabilities are in fact more likely to be part-time and temporary employees [15], although they are not more likely to be in jobs with flexible hours [16].

Second, people with disabilities have lower incomes on average, fewer assets, and are more likely to live in poverty [6], which may lead them to place a higher priority on income in choosing a job. Third, their low incomes and greater likelihood of living alone [6] may make them more risk averse and lead them to place a higher value on job security, and thereby to decrease the chances their income will suffer an unexpected drop and they will not be able to meet their basic needs.

As noted, there is no prior research comparing the job preferences of people with disabilities to those without disabilities, but there is a general literature on job preferences that yields insights. Research on job attribute preferences has been conducted since the 1940s, but most of the early work was done to understand recruitment through potential employees' assessment of job and organizational variables [17]. In the studies of this era, particularly after World War II, opportunity for advancement was found to be more important than pay concerns [18].

Since this early research a number of important studies have been conducted to understand the phenomena of how individuals perceive and select jobs. This extensive research has identified and analyzed a long list of variables including job characteristics such as pay, promotion opportunities, benefits, autonomy, flexibility, type of work, and lay-off policies [17, 19, 20]; organization characteristics such as location, values, and recruiter characteristics [21]; individual characteristics such as motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), growth factors, and values [17, 22]; recruiter characteristics, recruitment policy, and perception of the recruitment process [19, 23]; person-organization fit including corporate image [21], perceived fit [19, 24, 25], ecological rating [17], and similar values [26]; and other personal and situational factors including hiring expectancy [19]; job pursuit intention [17], and demographic and social factors such as culture, social change, and institutions [27].

One important research stream is concerned with understanding and comparing job attitude preferences based on gender. These studies are relevant to disability because gender differences in job attribute preferences have been theorized to result from different family responsibilities in the non-work sphere of life [28]. Similarly, the preferences of people with disabilities may reflect personal and family concerns (e.g., health issues, transportation difficulties, therapy schedules, medical appointments, need for personal assistance, and reliance on family members). Many of the studies on gender find differences in job preferences between women and men. Jurgensen [18] conducted research on a "job preference form" that was created in the early 1940s and was filled in by all applicants of the Minnesota Gas Company since 1945. Among other things, the study discovered that men's ranking of 10 factors that make jobs good or bad had security, advancement, and type of work as the top three variables; while women ranked type of work, company, and security as their top three preferences. Brenner and Tomkiewicz [29] reexamined prior work on sex differences in job orientation to see if they still existed, and found significant differences on 8 of 25 job characteristics. Lacy et al. [30] studied five job attributes with reference to gender: promotion, income, security, hours, and meaningfulness of work. They found minimal differences by sexes as both genders rank ordered meaningfulness of work as the most important job attribute. Bigoness [31] conducted a study drawing samples from 27 MBA programs. He discovered professional growth, work environment, and salary as three major job attributes. Out of these three job attributes females, contrary to previous research, placed more emphasis on professional growth, males gave salary more importance, and there were no sex differences on job attributes.

More recent research based on role theory shows that role differences affect job attribute preferences in four categories: intrinsic, career orientation, work conditions, and parental responsibilities. Furthermore, job and organizational attributes that reduced role conflict were preferred more by women. Thomas and Wise [22] found gender differences based on various job factors like diversity in the organization, and recruiter characteristics. Chapman et al. [19] conducted a meta-analysis of 71 studies and found that men and women differ in their job attribute preferences, especially regarding those job attributes that reduce the conflict between work and non-work roles, such as flexible hours, on-site day cares, location, commute, and family friendly benefits. Furthermore, Chapman et al. [19] attributed these consistent differences to "role conflict" as suggested by Wiersma [28]. Finally, Miller and Hayward [32] found that both sexes prefer jobs that are stereotypical and are dominated by their respective genders. From the above review it is clear that with some similarities men and women do differ in job attribute preferences. But at the same time it would seem that the research on gender differences does not go beyond a limited number of job and organizational factors [22].

The key conclusion from this literature for our purposes is that the non-work sphere of life can exert a strong influence on job preferences and attitudes, helping explain many of the gender differences in job preferences [28]. Similarly, as noted above, the need to accommodate non-work concerns such as health and mobility issues may lead people with disabilities to prefer jobs with greater flexibility, while their lower incomes and greater likelihood of living alone may lead them to prefer jobs with high income and job security.

There are several studies that assess job preferences of people with mental impairments with the aim of matching their preferences with future jobs. The requirement for matching jobs with job preferences, especially for people with mental impairments, is primarily based on requirements for vocational rehabilitation specified in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, amended in 1998 [33]. Furthermore, assessment of job preference and choice is consistent with the philosophy of self-determination that would lead to better job satisfaction and better quality of life [33, 34]. Finally, assessment is considered an important component of job matching that increases chances of employment success, creating higher levels of motivation for the job seeker to improve skills, and respect for individual choice [34].

Based on the above, there are some studies that assess the use, validity, and reliability of assessment software used to ascertain job preferences of people with mental and intellectual disabilities. In all cases, the software programs were found to be useful as tools to match jobs with preferences of the people with disabilities [33, 35, 36]. Other than these efforts there is research that assesses aspects of rehabilitation programs for people with severe mental illness (SMI). These studies find, for example: people with SMI have the desire to work more hours, and their job preferences stay stable over time [37]; job preference and actual jobs should match for job satisfaction [36]; and job preference assessment is an important tool to match jobs for people with mental disabilities [34].

In sum, there is a research gap in the job attribute preference literature, with no studies comparing the job preferences of people with and without disabilities. The little work that has been done is limited to examining overall job preferences of people with mental disabilities for the purposes of vocational rehabilitation.

Data Source

The data source for this article is the 2006 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is a long-standing nationally-representative survey of Americans age 18 or older, conducted every year or two since 1972 by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.[1] The 2006 GSS had seven questions added to identify people with disabilities, which were drawn from the 2001–2002 National Comorbidity Survey after an intensive analysis to determine the most efficient set of questions for identifying people with disabilities [38]. The survey has a total of 2,777 respondents with disability information, of whom 590 were identified with a disability representing a weighted disability rate of 19.2%. This disability rate is similar to the rate of 17.6% using the same disability identifiers in the 2001–2002 NCS, and to the 17.7% rate using a different set of identifiers for those age 21 or older in the 2006 American Community Survey conducted by the US Census Bureau.[2] When the GSS data are restricted to those of working age (18–64), there are 2,273 respondents of whom 391 were identified with a disability, representing a weighted disability rate of 15.9%. The seven questions identifying disability are presented in the "Appendix" to this article. These questions allow identification of four major categories of impairment: visual, hearing, mobility, and mental.

The questions on job preferences are not part of the core GSS, but part of a special module in 2006 conducted in coordination with the International Social Survey Programme.[3] The question wordings for the variables used are

[1] http://www.gss.norc.org/.

[2] Calculated from [39] using estimates for the 21–64, 65–74, and 75 or older age categories.

[3] www.issp.org.

Table 1 Disability prevalence and employment rates among working-age population

	Prevalence			Employment rate if condition at left
	Overall (1)	Among employed (2)	Among non-employed (3)	(4)
Overall (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	72.0
No disability (%)	84.1	88.7	72.7	75.6
Disability (%)	15.9	11.3	27.3	51.2***
Type of disability				
Visual impairment (%)	3.7	2.7	6.3	51.5***
Hearing impairment (%)	4.5	4.0	5.8	63.4***
Mobility impairment (%)	8.6	4.8	18.3	40.0***
Mental impairment (%)	7.6	4.2	16.2	39.7***
Sample size	2,273	1,660	612	

*** Significant difference from no-disability employment rate at $P < 0.001$

provided in the "Appendix". Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 present tabulations by disability status and type of disability, while Table 6 presents OLS regressions controlling for a variety of personal characteristics that may have independent influences on job preferences. All analyses are restricted to those of working age (18–64).

Results

Table 1 shows the disability prevalence and employment rates among the working age population. The table shows that the employment rate among people with disabilities is 51% compared to 75% among people with no disabilities. It further shows that the low level of employment persists for people with all types of disabilities, as compared with people with no disabilities, but it is especially low (40%) among people with mobility and mental impairments. The low employment rates are consistent with a wide variety of other studies on employment of people with disabilities (e.g., [1–4]).

The remaining tables focus on the non-employed, making comparisons between people with and without disabilities, and among those with different types of disability. Table 2 presents descriptive data on demographic characteristics and sources of economic support, showing several differences that may help explain job preferences. Non-employed people with disabilities are on average 7 years older than individuals with no disability (46.8 years as compared to 39.5 years). Furthermore, individuals with disabilities have on average fewer years of schooling as compared to individuals with no disability (12.5 years as opposed to 13.3 years), and are only half as likely to have attained a college degree. While differences in gender and marital status are not significant, people with disabilities live in smaller households on average, and are less likely to live with preteens.

Lower levels of education and higher age may lead to difficulties in finding jobs, less income, and different preferences in jobs. Looking at the main sources of economic support, non-employed people with disabilities are less likely than non-disabled people to receive support from their spouses or partners (24 and 52%, respectively) and more likely to receive social assistance and welfare (23 and 6%). Lastly, the above results are found across all types of impairments.

How many non-employed people with disabilities want to work? Table 3 shows almost no difference between people with and without disabilities in the desire for paid work. Four-fifths (80%) of non-employed people with disabilities would like a job now or in the future, compared to 78% among the non-disabled. The rate is especially high among people with mental impairments (90%). Given that disability income, pensions, and welfare assistance often create disincentives for employment, we examine the data separately for those who do not receive such income, and find that 78% desire to work, which is also almost identical to the overall figure. The table further shows that people with disabilities not only have the same desire to work but their desire to spend "much more" time in paid work is significantly higher than for non-disabled people (42 and 20%, respectively). Employment is a socially-valued activity which may cause these rates to be inflated by social desirability bias, but there is no reason to believe that this bias would differ by disability status, so the comparisons still yield useful information.

Despite their similar or greater desires for paid work, people with disabilities are not optimistic about getting jobs. When asked how likely it is they would get a job, only 25% said "very likely", which is only half the rate of non-employed people without disabilities (51%). The rate is low across the four types of impairment. People with disabilities are also less likely to be currently searching for jobs (20%) compared to non-disabled people (33%), which

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for non-employed sample

	No disability (1)	Any disability (2)	Visual impairment (3)	Hearing impairment (4)	Mobility impairment (5)	Mental impairment (6)
Age						
Mean	39.5	46.8***	49.7***	50.6***	49.5***	44.8***
SD	15.2	12.2	12.1	12.8	9.7	11.8
Gender						
Female (%)	67.4	60.9	63.2	54.5	55.6**	63.8
Race						
White non-Hispanic (%)	69.8	67.2	68.1	69.6	69.1	72.6
Black (%)	15.4	24.2**	21.6	26.9	21.3	19.4
Hispanic (%)	9.8	6.8	9.3	8.4	5.0*	4.8*
Other (%)	5.9	3.6	1.0**	0.0	4.7	4.3
Education						
Mean years	13.3	12.5***	12.0**	12.1*	12.5**	12.3***
SD	2.8	2.9	3.5	3.5	2.7	3.1
% with college degree	16.5	8.5**	3.1***	3.4***	9.0**	6.7***
Married, spouse present (%)	52.6	44.4	32.8**	45.1	48.6	40.0**
Household members						
Mean number	3.2	2.6***	2.4***	2.5***	2.5***	2.7***
SD	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4
% w/preteens	10.5	4.7**	4.1	3.4*	1.5***	4.2**
% w/teens	14.4	16.9	16.8	9.2	13.7	20.2
Main source of economic support						
Pension/social security (%)	11.0	11.6	10.5	11.9	13.0	17.1
Unemployment benefits (%)	4.8	3.7	0.0	7.7	4.7	4.0
Spouse/partner (%)	52.4	24.3***	26.0**	22.0***	21.7***	26.4***
Other family members (%)	13.7	10.2	9.4	0.0	8.0	13.0
Social assistance/welfare (%)	5.5	23.3***	29.8**	39.6***	22.4***	22.9***
Occasional work (%)	0.8	1.3	0.0	7.0	0.0	2.2
Other (%)	11.8	25.7**	24.3	11.7	30.2***	14.5
Sample size						
Demographics	421	191	48	40	127	120
Economic support	153	106	24	20	71	63

* Significant difference from no-disability figure at $P < 0.10$, ** $P < 0.05$, *** $P < 0.01$

may both reflect and contribute to their low optimism in finding a job. When asked about specific actions to find a job in the past 12 months, people with disabilities were as likely to have answered advertisements, registered at agencies, advertised for a job, or asked relatives, friends, or colleagues about a job, but they were less likely to have applied directly to an employer (18% compared to 33% for people without disabilities). When broken out by impairment type, people with visual impairments were less likely to have taken four of the six specific actions to find jobs, while people with hearing and mobility impairments—but not mental impairments—were less likely to have applied directly to employers.

What prior employment experience and training do non-employed people with disabilities have? Table 4 shows that people with disabilities are as likely as non-disabled people to have had jobs in the past (87 and 83% respectively). The table also shows that the average years since the last job ended are significantly higher for people with disabilities (8.3 years compared to 4.7 years), suggesting that there is a possibility of greater deterioration of job skills, or perhaps job networking, among people with disabilities. But if we look at training to improve skills in the past 12 months we observe no significant difference between people with and without disabilities (13 and 16%, respectively), suggesting that at least some people with

Table 3 Desire and search for jobs among non-employed

	No disability	Any disability	Visual impairment	Hearing impairment	Mobility impairment	Mental impairment
Would like paid job now or in future (%)	77.5	80.3	74.8	85.7	79.2	90.1**
If no pension, SS, or welfare (%)	83.6	77.6	77.2	80.2	76.4	91.4
Would prefer to spend "much more" time in paid work (%)	20.0	42.1***	24.3	37.9	48.1***	37.7**
If no pension, SS, or welfare (%)	25.3	46.7**	17.6	48.3	54.7**	53.2**
"Very likely" to get job (%)	51.3	24.7***	16.2***	27.3*	19.9***	27.0***
If no pension, SS, or welfare (%)	55.0	29.0***	22.5**	30.5	25.0***	38.1
Searching for job (%)	33.0	20.0**	6.2***	19.3	12.1***	26.6
If no pension, SS, or welfare (%)	35.5	25.0	10.8***	25.3	15.1***	38.1
Actions to find job in past 12 months						
Registered at unemployment agency (%)	17.1	13.2	4.1***	27.5	12.1	15.9
Registered at private agency (%)	11.4	7.9	2.1***	7.0	7.2	13.9
Answered advertisements for jobs (%)	24.7	19.8	4.2***	22.7	15.5	26.7
Advertised for job (%)	6.1	8.8	0.0	7.0	9.1	13.2
Applied directly to employers (%)	33.2	18.4**	8.2***	12.2**	18.8**	26.2
Asked relatives, friends, or colleagues to help find job (%)	31.8	26.1	29.6	14.3*	23.1	39.0
Sample size						
All	154	107	25	20	72	63
If no pension, SS, or welfare	121	63	13	11	43	34

* Significant difference from no-disability figure at $P < 0.10$, ** $P < 0.05$, *** $P < 0.01$

disabilities are trying to update their skills. Not surprisingly the most likely reason cited for ending the last job among people with disabilities is permanent disability (48%), while people without disabilities were most likely to cite family responsibilities (37%). The occupations of the most recent jobs between people with and without disabilities are fairly similar, so differences in job search and optimism cannot be accounted for by differences in occupational experience.

What types of jobs do people with disabilities prefer? Table 5 presents simple tabulations to a variety of questions about important job characteristics. The results show that people with disabilities are not significantly different from non-disabled people on any of the questions, except that they are less likely to prefer a private business to a government job (64% compared to 75%). Possible explanations for this preference may be that people with disabilities may believe that government agencies are less likely to practice discrimination in hiring and work practices, or that government agencies provide better and more stable benefits, perhaps due to their union status.

The simple comparisons in Table 5, however, may mask underlying differences in job preferences by disability status, due to the confounding influence of differences in age, education, and household size found in Table 2. Table 6 provides a more rigorous analysis of job preferences of people with disabilities, using multiple regression with controls for a variety of these demographic variables (listed at the bottom of the table). The findings from the regressions do not, however, change the basic findings described earlier: there are no significant differences in job preferences, except for a greater desire for government jobs among people with disabilities (column 21).

Contrary to expectations and popular belief, people with disabilities are not more likely to desire flexibility, high income, or job security, at least as compared to people without disabilities controlling for certain demographic factors. There are several significant coefficients when disability is broken into the four major types of impairments. People with mental impairments, for instance, are less likely than non-disabled people to say that high income or promotion chances are important in a job, and more likely to say that helping others and helping society is important. People with mobility impairments are more likely to report that high income is important, but also more likely to say that they would enjoy work even if they were not paid. An important caveat regarding these few significant findings is that some of the coefficients will have high *T*-statistics and resultant significance levels even if the null hypothesis is true (a Type 1 error). In the absence of consistent patterns, we are reluctant to interpret these few significant findings associated with specific impairments. This problem is not due to sample size; in fact, a larger sample would increase the chances of incorrectly rejecting the null hypothesis. Further research in this area should be sensitive to this issue, using multiple methods to validate

Table 4 Prior employment and recent training among non-employed

	No disability (1)	Any disability (2)	Visual impairment (3)	Hearing impairment (4)	Mobility impairment (5)	Mental impairment (6)
Ever had job for 1 year or more [% (*n*)]	83.2 (153)	86.7 (108)	85.7 (25)	71.3 (21)	96.3*** (72)	85.1 (63)
When last paid job ended						
Mean # of years ago (*n*)	4.74 (127)	8.25*** (91)	10.98*** (21)	9.23* (16)	8.07*** (66)	9.00*** (50)
Main reason job ended						
Retirement age (%)	6.4	2.3	0.0	0.0	2.9	4.0
Retired early by choice (%)	13.6	7.1	15.4	3.3**	5.6*	0.9***
Retired early not by choice (%)	1.4	6.5	0.0	0.0	5.0	5.5
Became permanently disabled (%)	9.5	47.7***	38.0**	55.2***	55.8***	44.3***
Place of work shut down (%)	14.1	4.8**	10.5	3.5**	2.9**	7.6
Dismissed (%)	6.3	4.8	2.5	3.3	6.1	8.5
Term of employment/contract ended (%)	10.0	6.8	14.2	7.4	4.8	7.3
Family responsibilities (%)	36.6	17.4***	17.1*	27.3	13.5***	21.8*
I got married [% (*n*)]	2.1 (125)	2.6 (89)	2.4 (21)	0.0 (15)	3.4 (66)	0.0 (50)
Occupation of most recent job						
Management (%)	5.9	6.7	10.9	1.5**	5.0	4.0
Mgt-related (%)	4.0	1.1**	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0
Professional (%)	16.7	9.5*	4.9***	6.2	6.1***	12.0
Technical (%)	3.3	1.6	1.3	0.0	2.0	0.9**
Sales (%)	12.0	11.8	4.9	14.2	7.3	13.1
Clerical (%)	18.9	15.6	19.8	9.2	16.6	12.3
Service (%)	21.5	28.9	40.9**	34.4	33.6**	32.7*
Agricultural (%)	0.6	2.5	0.0	2.9	3.7*	3.9
Blue-collar [% (*n*)]	17.1 (365)	22.2 (162)	17.2 (37)	31.7 (29)	24.1 (110)	21.1 (99)
Had training to improve job skills in past 12 months [% (*n*)]	16.4 (150)	13.4 (107)	2.0*** (25)	17.6 (20)	10.3 (72)	12.3 (63)

* Significant difference from no-disability figure at $P < 0.10$, ** $P < 0.05$, *** $P < 0.01$

any significant relationships and establish patterns that tell a consistent and meaningful story.

Conclusion

This evidence strongly indicates that the low employment rate of people with disabilities is not due to their reluctance to work or to different job preferences. Non-employed people with disabilities are as likely as their counterparts without disabilities to report they want a job now or in the future, and do not express generally different preferences over the characteristics of jobs.

While people with disabilities are as likely as those without disabilities to express the desire for a job, they are less likely to be actively looking for a job, apparently due to less optimism about finding a suitable job. This lower optimism may reflect the very real recognition that one's impairments often constrict productivity in a number of jobs so that fewer suitable jobs are available, particularly if one has low education and training levels. Importantly, the lower optimism may also reflect perceptions that employer attitudes or culture—including prejudice, discrimination, and reluctance to make workplace accommodations—often decrease the chances of a job offer, promotion, or successful retention [13]. While it is clear that the disability income system plays a strong role in the employment trends for people with disabilities [9, 40], in this sample we find the same pattern of preferences for a job and optimism over finding one even when restricting the sample to people who do not receive disability, pension, or welfare income.

The finding that job preferences are similar between people with and without disabilities is somewhat surprising, given that flexibility in the hours or days that one works may be of special benefit to many people with disabilities. It is consistent with evidence that people with disabilities are no more or less likely to have flexible work schedules [16]. A concern for flexibility may nonetheless be expressed in their greater likelihood of taking part-time and temporary jobs [15], since these jobs require fewer fixed time commitments so that more time is preserved to deal with expected and unexpected health and mobility

Table 5 Preferences over jobs among non-employed

	No disability (1)	Any disability (2)	Visual impairment (3)	Hearing impairment (4)	Mobility impairment (5)	Mental impairment (6)
Job is just way of earning money (% disagreeing)	61.2	52.3	46.2	50.1	47.2*	54.0
Would enjoy job even if not paid (% agreeing)	57.4	65.6	67.8	49.9	73.7**	63.8
"Very important" job characteristics						
Job security (%)	62.5	64.2	69.1	76.9	63.8	63.7
High income (%)	37.2	39.9	33.3	27.0	47.1	36.3
Opportunities for advancement (%)	48.3	45.1	44.9	47.9	44.7	42.0
Interesting job (%)	52.7	58.0	49.1	47.3	54.3	58.8
Working independently (%)	31.5	34.4	53.3*	43.2	30.5	35.4
Helping others in job (%)	41.8	43.1	44.8	36.0	39.8	46.7
Useful to society (%)	42.5	53.0	53.1	33.9	51.5	60.2**
Flexible hours (%)	19.2	15.0	12.5	10.9	11.2	19.0
Top rank among 5 job characteristics for						
"High income" (%)	30.5	30.3	32.6	48.4	31.8	29.8
"No danger of being fired" (%)	9.8	14.2	11.0	6.7	18.3	14.9
"Working hours are short" (%)	6.2	5.3	2.1	9.8	0.6***	8.4
"Chances for advancement" (%)	19.5	16.9	4.5***	21.3	15.9	17.4
"Work gives feeling of accomplishment" (%)	34.0	33.3	49.7	13.7**	33.3	29.4
Prefer being employee to self-employed (%)	39.3	39.2	41.6	44.2	41.8	38.5
Prefer small firm to large firm (%)	69.2	70.1	70.7	61.7	67.1	68.4
Prefer private business to govt. job (%)	75.3	64.1	54.5*	51.3*	58.1**	65.1
n	179	114	27	23	73	69

* Significant difference from no-disability figure at $P < 0.10$, ** $P < 0.05$, *** $P < 0.01$

issues. The low income levels of people with disabilities and their higher likelihood of living alone may also be expected to make them more interested in high income and job security, but the present results indicate they are no more money-focused or risk averse than workers in general. The answer to the question posed by the title—"What types of jobs do with disabilities want?"—therefore seems to be "The same as everyone else."

How realistic are their desires for jobs? An examination of US Bureau of Labor Statistics occupational projections over the 2008–2018 period, matched to data on occupational ability requirements, shows that a large share of new jobs can be performed by people with disabilities [41]. If people with disabilities both want to work and are able to perform many of the available jobs, what keeps them from working? And, note the answer to this question may be particularly telling, given the data used in this investigation were gathered in 2006, during a period of continued economic growth shortly before the economic recession began in 2008, which has dramatically raised the unemployment rates for persons with and without disabilities.

The low employment rate can be traced to factors on both the supply and demand sides of the labor market. On the supply side, some people with disabilities are limited by health issues, transportation barriers, disincentives from disability income programs, and lower average levels of education and training [42]. Barriers also exist on the demand side: employer uncertainty and lack of information, concerns about accommodations, unwelcoming corporate cultures, and lingering prejudice and discrimination that the ADA and its Amendment Act are designed to combat [42].

Some of these barriers can be addressed by research that focuses on how negative misperceptions about people with disabilities can be changed. Case studies of companies using multiple methods (surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus groups) can help identify the effect of corporate policies and attitudes on the employment opportunities and experiences of people with disabilities, and the effectiveness of best practices. Employers often have misplaced concerns about the costs of accommodations and fail to recognize the potential benefits; recent research has found that accommodations can not only decrease employee turnover and increase employee productivity and commitment, but can also have positive spillover effects on the attitudes of co-workers [43]. Research in this area should be widely disseminated in popular and practitioner outlets for employers, HR professionals, service providers, and disability organizations. In addition, employers should be made more aware of the Job Accommodations Network (funded

Table 6 Regressions predicting preferences over job characteristics

	Job just way of earning money		Would enjoy work even if not paid		Job security important		High income important		Promotion chances important		Interesting job important	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Disability	0.156		0.148		−0.0808		−0.0903		−0.184		−0.0320	
	(0.182)		(0.191)		(0.111)		(0.132)		(0.127)		(0.105)	
Visual impairment		0.106		0.0886		−0.0992		−0.343		−0.174		0.230
		(0.350)		(0.256)		(0.242)		(0.279)		(0.232)		(0.235)
Hearing impairment		0.349		−0.350		0.283*		0.162		0.120		0.109
		(0.319)		(0.385)		(0.158)		(0.202)		(0.204)		(0.200)
Mobility impairment		0.224		0.670***		−0.0251		0.330**		0.0678		−0.00202
		(0.228)		(0.199)		(0.130)		(0.147)		(0.177)		(0.128)
Mental impairment		−0.208		−0.212		−0.185		−0.397**		−0.305*		−0.00988
		(0.226)		(0.216)		(0.163)		(0.174)		(0.181)		(0.133)
Observations	288	287	287	286	288	287	287	286	287	286	287	286
R-squared	0.096	0.104	0.076	0.116	0.059	0.070	0.097	0.137	0.137	0.146	0.034	0.041

	Working independently important		Helping others important		Helping society important		Flexible hours important		Prefer private co.to govt. job	
	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(25)	(26)
Disability	−0.0512		0.0709		0.165		−0.244		−0.113*	
	(0.124)		(0.112)		(0.106)		(0.171)		(0.0670)	
Visual impairment		0.413**		−0.0293		−0.0447		0.238		−0.153
		(0.208)		(0.205)		(0.210)		(0.258)		(0.133)
Hearing impairment		0.0553		−0.112		−0.173		−0.185		−0.203*
		(0.251)		(0.176)		(0.148)		(0.298)		(0.120)
Mobility impairment		−0.114		−0.0734		−0.0312		−0.111		−0.137*
		(0.148)		(0.124)		(0.114)		(0.197)		(0.0781)
Mental impairment		−0.164		0.193*		0.282**		−0.129		0.00493
		(0.171)		(0.115)		(0.136)		(0.246)		(0.0768)
Observations	287	286	286	285	286	285	286	285	280	279
R-squared	0.073	0.087	0.027	0.034	0.057	0.064	0.071	0.067	0.153	0.177

Robust standard errors in parentheses

All regressions control for age and its square, gender, race/ethnicity (African-American, other race, Hispanic), education, household size, being married, presence of pre-teens in household, presence of teens in household, and the interaction of these last three variables with gender

Full results available on request

*** $P < 0.01$, ** $P < 0.05$, * $P < 0.1$

by the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy) and the regional Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (funded by the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research) which play a valuable role in providing information and technical assistance to help address disability issues.

Continued efforts to combat low employment rates and barriers are valuable from a variety of perspectives, and have led to a number of policies, proposals, and demonstration projects such as the Ticket to Work and the Medicaid Buy-In programs [42, 44]. For people with disabilities, employment has not just economic value, but important social, civic, and psychological value as well [8, 45]. For employers, who today face an unprecedented challenging and competitive economic and global environment, people with disabilities remain an underutilized labor pool that can and must help fill expected labor shortages over the next two decades as baby boomers retire. Moreover, present labor demographics and economic realities will require more people to remain working at older ages, so that there will be increased attention to disabilities resulting from work and aging. These combined trends, which are likely to last a generation, require new and innovative strategies to hire, promote, and retain qualified and motivated workers with and without disabilities.

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Appendix: Question Wordings

Disability Questions

Any disability: Yes to question 1 or 2 below, or to two or more of questions 3–7

Do you have

1. a hearing problem that prevents you from hearing what is said in normal conversation even with a hearing aid?
2. a vision problem that prevents you from reading a newspaper even when wearing glasses or contacts?
3. any condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying?
4. Any other physical disability?
5. Any emotional or mental disability?

Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 3 months or longer, do you have difficulty doing any of the following

6. Learning, remembering or concentrating?
7. Participating fully in school, housework, or other daily activities?

Hearing impairment: yes to question 1 above
Visual impairment: yes to question 2 above
Mobility impairment: yes to question 3 above
Mental impairment: yes to question 5 above

Prior Employment and Recent Training

Ever had job for 1 year or more: Have you ever had a paid job for 1 year or more? (1 = yes, 0 = no)

When last paid job ended: When did your last paid job end?

Main reason job ended: What was the main reason that your job ended?

I reached retirement age
I retired early, by choice
I retired early, not by choice
I became (permanently) disabled
My place of work shut down
I was dismissed
My term of employment/contract ended
Family responsibilities
I got married

Had training to improve job skills in past 12 months.: Over the past 12 months, have you had any training to improve your job skills? (1 = yes, 0 = no)

Desire and Search for Jobs

Would like paid job now or in future: Would you like to have a paid job, either now or in the future? (1 = yes, 0 = no)

Would prefer to spend much more time in paid work: Suppose you could change the way you spend your time, spending more time on some things and less time on others. Which of the following things would you like to

spend more time on, which would you like to spend less time on and which would you like to spend the ____ amount of time on as now? Time in a paid job (1 = much more time, 5 = much less time)

"Very likely" to get job: How likely do you think it is that you would find a job? (1 = very unlikely, 4 = very unlikely)

Searching for job: Are you currently looking for a job (1 = yes, 0 = no)

Actions to find job in past 12 months.: Thinking about the last 12 months, have you done any of the following in order to find a job?

a. Registered at a public unemployment agency?
b. Registered at a private employment agency?
c. Answered advertisements for jobs?
d. Advertised for a job in newspaper or journals?
e. Applied directly to employers?
f. Asked relatives, friends, or colleagues to help you find a job?

Job Preference Questions

Job is just way of earning money: For each of the following statements please tell me how much you agree or disagree with it, thinking of work in general. A job is just a way of earning money—no more (1-strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

Would enjoy job even if not paid: For each of the following statements please tell me how much you agree or disagree with it, thinking of work in general. I would enjoy having a paid job even if I did not need the money (1-strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

Job security: For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job. How important is: Job security (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important)

High income: For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job. How important is: High income (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important)

Opportunities for advancement: For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job. How important is: Good opportunities for advancement (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important)

Interesting job: For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job. How important is: An interesting job (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important)

Working independently: For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job. How important is: A job that allows someone to work independently (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important)

Helping others in job: For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job. How important is: A job that allows someone to help other people (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important)

Useful to society: For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job. How important is: A job that is useful to society (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important)

Flexible hours: For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job. How important is: A job that allows someone to decide their times of work (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important)

Prefer being employee to self-employed: Suppose you were working and could choose between different kinds of jobs. Which of the following would you personally choose? Would you choose: being an employee, or being self-employed?

Prefer small firm to large firm: Suppose you were working and could choose between different kinds of jobs. Which of the following would you personally choose? Would you choose: working in a small firm, or working in a large firm?

Prefer private business to govt. job: Suppose you were working and could choose between different kinds of jobs. Which of the following would you personally choose? Would you choose: working in a private business, or working for the government or civil service?

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