



**Disability Rights Commission**

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**Disability Briefing  
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**Change by • advice • conciliation • legal enforcement**

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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)

	<b>All long term disabled</b>	<b>DDA current disabled</b>	<b>Work limiting disabled</b>	<b>Not disabled</b>
<b>All persons of working age (000s)</b>	<b>6,860</b> <b>19%</b>	<b>5,695</b> <b>16%</b>	<b>5,390</b> <b>15%</b>	<b>29,342</b> <b>81%</b>
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
<b>In work (000s)</b>	<b>3,389</b>	<b>2,601</b>	<b>2,203</b>	<b>23,847</b>
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
<b>ILO unemployed (000s)</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>1,221</b>
Per cent of population	5	4	5	4
<b>ILO unemployment rate</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>
..who are unemployed for a year or more	30	32	30	17
<b>Inactive (000s)</b>	<b>3,154</b>	<b>2,870</b>	<b>2,928</b>	<b>4,274</b>
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)

	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>All long term disabled (000s)</b>	<b>6,227</b>	<b>6,550</b>	<b>6,658</b>	<b>6,789</b>	<b>6,877</b>	<b>6,860</b>
Economically active (000s)	3,157	3,450	3,496	3,516	3,642	3,706
<b>Economic activity rate (%)</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>52.7</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>51.8</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>
In employment (000s)	2,812	3,102	3,166	3,204	3,353	3,389
<b>Employment rate (%)</b>	<b>45.2</b>	<b>47.4</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>49.4</b>
ILO unemployed	345	348	330	311	288	317
<b>Unemployment rate (%)</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>8.6</b>
Economically inactive	3,070	3,100	3,162	3,273	3,235	3,154
<b>Not disabled</b>	<b>28,839</b>	<b>28,747</b>	<b>28,885</b>	<b>29,007</b>	<b>29,141</b>	<b>29,342</b>
Economically active	24,705	24,658	24,875	24,896	25,003	25,068
<b>Economic activity rate (%)</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>86.1</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>85.4</b>
In employment	23,210	23,262	23,624	23,682	23,727	23,847
<b>Employment rate (%)</b>	<b>80.5</b>	<b>80.9</b>	<b>81.8</b>	<b>81.6</b>	<b>81.4</b>	<b>81.3</b>
ILO unemployed	1,495	1,396	1,252	1,214	1,276	1,221
<b>Unemployment rate (%)</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>4.9</b>
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
<b>All long term disabled (% of total population)</b>	<b>6,860 19%</b>	<b>5,829 19%</b>	<b>627 20%</b>	<b>405 23%</b>
Economically active	3,706	3,210	303	193
<b>Economic activity rate (%)</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55.1</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>47.8</b>
In employment	3,389	2,939	271	179
<b>Employment rate (%)</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>50.4</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>44.2</b>
ILO unemployed	317	271	32	14
<b>Unemployment rate (%)</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>7.3</b>
Economically inactive	3,154	2,619	324	212
<b>Not disabled (000s)</b>	<b>29,342</b>	<b>25,422</b>	<b>2,546</b>	<b>1,375</b>
Economically active	25,068	21,652	2,232	1,184
<b>Economic activity rate (%)</b>	<b>85.4</b>	<b>85.2</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>86.1</b>
In employment	23,847	20,615	2,102	1,129
<b>Employment rate (%)</b>	<b>81.3</b>	<b>81.1</b>	<b>82.6</b>	<b>82.2</b>
ILO unemployed	1,221	1,037	128	55
<b>Unemployment rate (%)</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>4.6</b>
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)

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

**Table 5: Disability rates by age and ethnic origin**

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

(thousands and per cent)

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

	<b>All aged 16- 59/64</b>	<b>16-24</b>	<b>25-34</b>	<b>35-49</b>	<b>50-59/64</b>
<b>All persons</b>	5,359 15	945 15	696 9	1,670 13	2,048 23
<b>Long term disabled</b>	1,821 27	157 24	163 17	555 24	947 33
<b>Not disabled</b>	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)

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

	<b>All long term disabled</b>	<b>Not disabled</b>
<b>All in employment (000s)</b>	<b>3,389</b>	<b>23,847</b>
<b>Agriculture and fishing</b>	47 1%	274 1%
<b>Energy and water</b>	32 1%	246 1%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	492 15%	3,509 15%
<b>Construction</b>	250 7%	1,850 8%
<b>Distribution, hotels and restaurants</b>	696 21%	4,731 20%
<b>Transport and communications</b>	260 8%	1,651 7%
<b>Banking, finance and insurance</b>	456 13%	3,882 16%
<b>Public admin, education and health</b>	933 28%	6,199 26%
<b>Other services</b>	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 (%)
<b>All long term disabled</b>	<b>6,860</b> 19	<b>3,389</b> 49
<b>Problems with .. arms, hands</b>	384 6	202 53
.... Legs, feet	772 11	346 45
.... Back, neck	1,178 17	555 47
<b>Difficulty in seeing</b>	113 2	50 44
<b>Difficulty in hearing</b>	118 2	78 66
<b>Speech impairment</b>	11 *	* *
<b>Skin conditions, allergies</b>	136 2	95 70
<b>Chest, breathing problems</b>	842 12	539 64
<b>Heart, blood pressure</b>	775 12	430 56
<b>Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion</b>	357 5	183 51
<b>Diabetes</b>	359 5	238 66
<b>Mental illness</b>	631 9	130 21
<b>Epilepsy</b>	136 2	59 43
<b>Learning difficulties</b>	164 2	47 29
<b>Progressive illness n.e.c.</b>	285 4	117 41
<b>Other problems, disabilities</b>	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)

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