

Understanding Disparities by Ability Status in the Twin Cities Region

Key findings

In the Twin Cities region, people with disabilities have employment, economic well-being, and housing outcomes that compare unfavorably to those of people without disabilities. The changing demographics of the Twin Cities region is likely to increase the prevalence of people with disabilities. Unless disparities that undermine the well-being of the region's residents with disabilities are addressed, these disparities are likely to harm our region even more in the future.

Our focus	How prevalent are disabilities in the Twin Cities region?	Are people with disabilities able to access economic opportunity?	How does ability status affect housing?
Our findings	<p>One in every 11 residents reports at least one disability, most commonly an ambulatory or cognitive disability. People with disabilities live across the region, with some clustering in the core where public transportation and services may be more accessible. Older residents are more likely to live with disabilities, which has implications for our aging region.</p>	<p>People with disabilities are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less likely to be in the labor force or employed full-time; • more likely to report lower earnings; and • more likely to live below or near measures of poverty compared with persons without disabilities. These disparities undermine their overall economic well-being. 	<p>People with disabilities can be at a disadvantage in housing markets, given their economic profile. Compared with households where no occupant reports a disability, households with disabilities are less likely to live in an owner-occupied home and more likely to experience housing cost burden (that is, spending more than a third of one's income on housing).</p>

In the Twin Cities region, one in every 11 residents reports at least one disability

In 2011-2015 about 276,000 people with disabilities lived in the Twin Cities region, around 9% of the region's total population. The U.S. Census Bureau collects information on six types of difficulties: hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living. It categorizes people who report any one of the six difficulty types as a person with disability. Ambulatory and cognitive disabilities are the two most common forms of disabilities, followed by independent living difficulties. Difficulty with hearing, self-care, and vision are relatively less common types of disabilities.¹

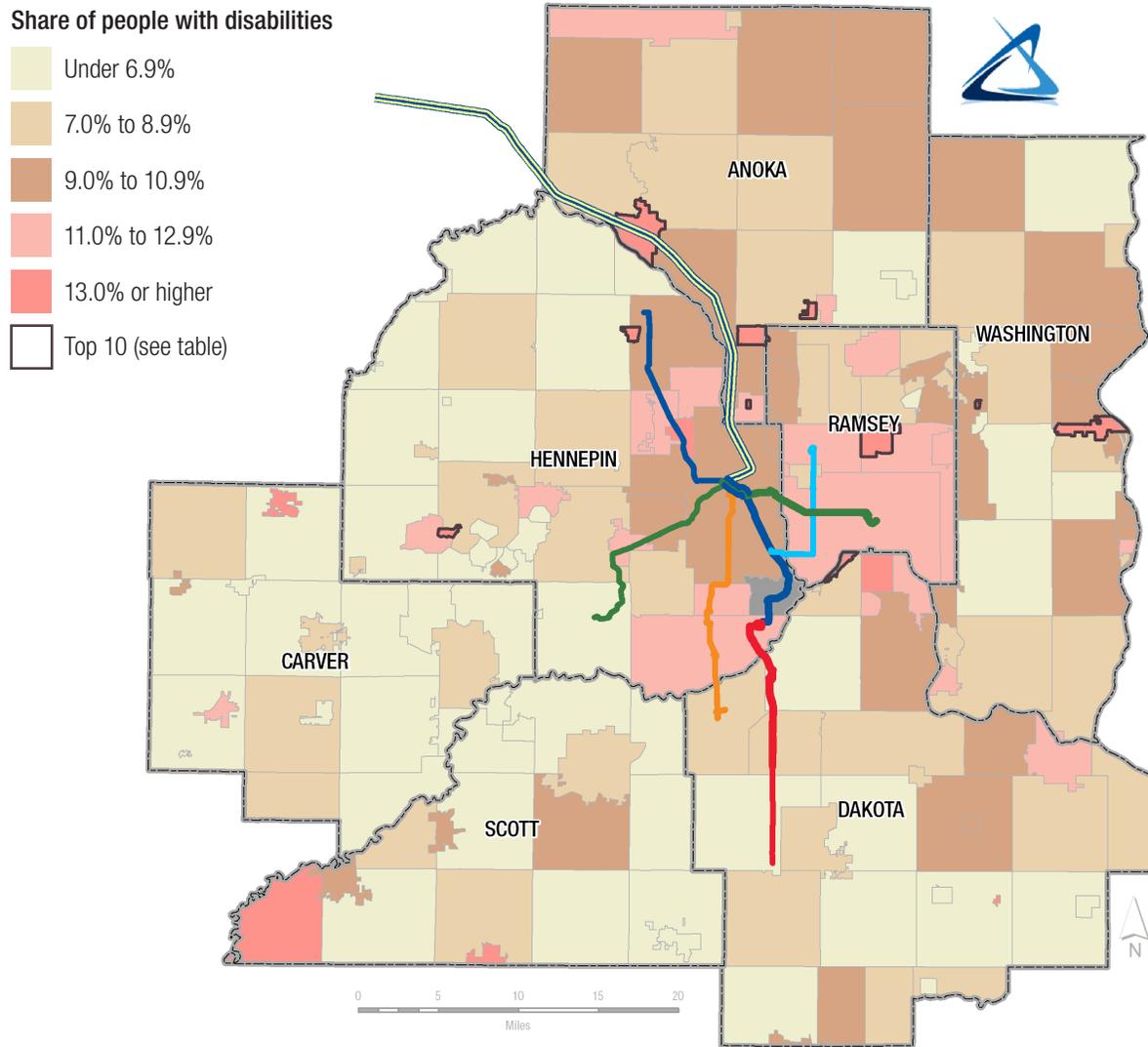
FIGURE 1. DISABILITY TYPES AMONG RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2011-2015.

The share of people with disabilities in the region's communities ranges from 21% in Oak Park Heights and Lilydale to 2% in Elko New Market (Figure 2). Many communities with higher concentrations of people with disabilities are in the core of the region where public transportation and services may be more accessible. These communities include Saint Paul (12%), Minneapolis (11%), and several first-ring suburbs. Not surprisingly, communities with higher shares of residents who are 65 or older also have high shares of people with disabilities. Oak Park Heights (21%), Lilydale (21%), Anoka (17%), Osseo (16%), and Little Canada (15%) are among these communities.

FIGURE 2. SHARE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BY CITY/TOWNSHIP



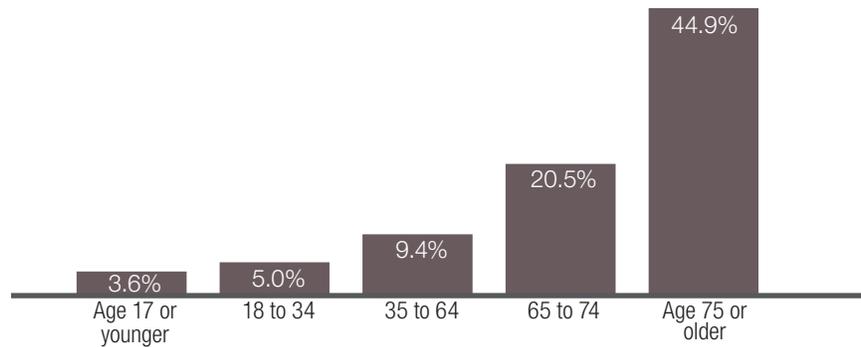
Region's Top 10* Highest share of people with disabilities	
Oak Park Heights	21%
Lilydale	21%
Spring Park	18%
Hilltop	18%
Anoka	17%
Willernie	17%
Osseo	16%
Spring Lake Park	16%
Lexington	15%
Little Canada	15%

**Of cities and townships with at least 500 residents.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2011-2015.

The prevalence of disabilities increases as people age (Figure 3). The overall prevalence of people with disabilities in the region is likely to increase as the region’s demographic profile changes: According to the most recent regional forecast, the number of residents who are 65 or older will double between 2010 and 2030, and the share of residents who are 65 or older will go from 13% in 2015 to 22% in 2040.² If the likelihood of disability by age does not change, the region will have around 465,000 adults with disabilities in 2040—around 60% more than today.

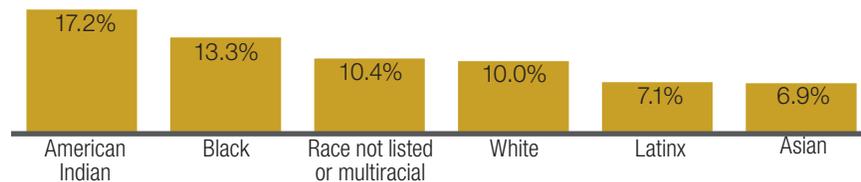
FIGURE 3. DISABILITIES AMONG AGE GROUPS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2011-2015.

The prevalence of disabilities differs by race and ethnicity (Figure 4). About one in every six American Indian residents have a disability, the highest share among racial and ethnic groups (for context, American Indian residents account for .5% of the region’s total population). Disability among Black residents is the second-highest in the region (about one in every eight Black residents), followed by other residents of color (10.4%) and White residents (10%).

FIGURE 4. DISABILITIES AMONG RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2011-2015.

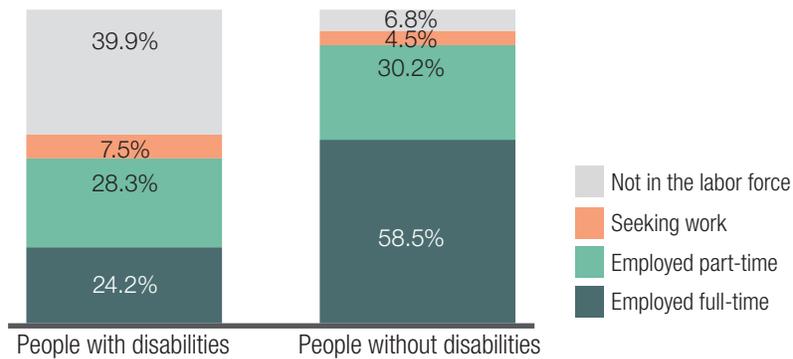
People with disabilities experience economic disparities, reflected in work status and earnings

People with disabilities can face difficulties that undermine employment opportunities. In some cases, the nature of their disability prevents them from working, thus removing them from the labor force altogether. In other situations, reluctance of employers to hire people with disabilities can make it challenging to get jobs. The persistent barriers to employment may discourage people with disabilities from seeking employment.

These difficulties create stark disparities in the work status between people with and without disabilities (Figure 5). Consider that

- Two in every five residents with disabilities are not in the labor force, compared with one in every 15 people without disabilities.
- One in every four people with disabilities are employed full-time, compared with three in every five people without disabilities.
- One in every 14 people with disabilities are actively seeking work, nearly double the share of people without disabilities. (While this group represents the unemployed, this is not the unemployment *rate* as is typically understood. To get the unemployment rate, we must limit our scope to include only those in the labor force. When we do that, we see that the unemployment rate of people with disabilities was 15% in 2011-2015, three times higher than that of people without disabilities at 5%.)

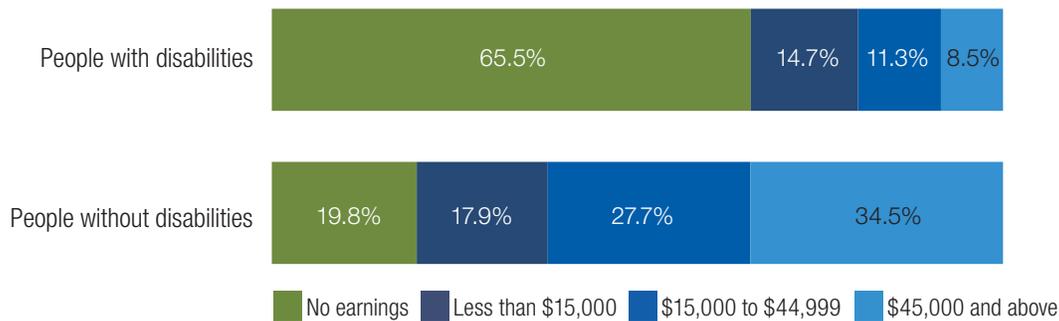
FIGURE 5. WORK STATUS BY ABILITY STATUS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2011-2015.

In combination, the disparities in work status and employment rates erode the earning potential of people with disabilities. Two out of every three people with disabilities have no earnings, compared with one in every five people without a disability (Figure 6). Put differently, a person with a disability is over three times more likely to have no earnings than one without a disability. Conversely, a person without a disability is four times more likely than a person without a disability to make over \$45,000 a year.

FIGURE 6. ANNUAL EARNINGS BY ABILITY STATUS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimate Public Use Microdata, 2011-2015.

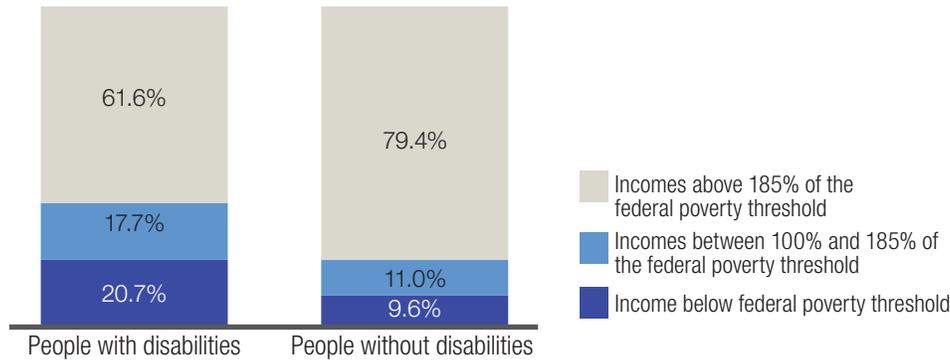
People with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty

Like work status, earnings only tell part of the story. People without earnings—that is, income from paid employment—may have other sources of income. In some cases, people who have no earnings, including people with disabilities, qualify for government programs that provide alternative sources of income. Poverty rates, calculated by using an individual's total income, can provide a more holistic picture of economic well-being.

Unsurprisingly, disparities based on ability status extend to poverty rates as well: one in every five people with disabilities in the region had incomes below the federal poverty level in 2011-2015. In contrast, only one in every 10 people without disabilities live in poverty. In other words, people with disabilities are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than residents without disabilities (Figure 7, next page).

The federal poverty level is a conservative measure of actual poverty, however. The federal poverty level for a family of four in 2016 was \$24,563. In a region like ours, where the Area Median Income (AMI) is relatively high (\$85,800 in 2016), defining poverty as 185% of the federal poverty level better aligns this measure with 50% of AMI, often used as the income eligibility threshold for federal and state assistance programs, like Housing Choice Vouchers. Even with this broader definition, the poverty disparity remains: people with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities.

FIGURE 7. POVERTY RATES BY ABILITY STATUS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimate Public Use Microdata, 2011-2015.

People with disabilities are more likely to experience housing cost burden

Housing is one of the most essential pieces of a person’s well-being. Without affordable housing, people—especially low-income people—struggle to make ends meet. Not surprisingly, the disparities summarized above put people with disabilities at a disadvantage in housing markets. For instance, housing tenure figures reveal disparities between residents with and without disabilities (Figure 8). About 60% of households with a resident who has a disability are owner-occupied homes, compared with 70.5% of households where no one reports a disability.

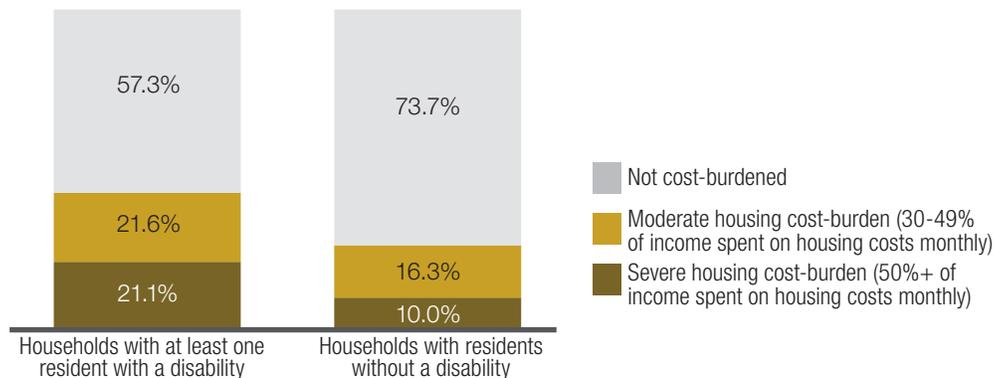
FIGURE 8. HOUSEHOLD TENURE BY RESIDENTS' ABILITY STATUS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimate Public Use Microdata, 2011-2015.

Further, people with disabilities are more likely to experience housing cost burden—that is, paying a third or more of their income on housing—compared with people without disabilities. While 42.7% of the Twin Cities households where at least one person reports a disability experience housing cost burden (moderate and severe combined), only 26.3% of the households where no one reports a disability are cost burdened (Figure 9). Similarly, one in five households where at least one person reports a disability faces severe housing cost burden, while only one in 10 households where no one reports a disability faces severe housing cost burden.

FIGURE 9. HOUSEHOLD COST BURDEN BY RESIDENTS' ABILITY STATUS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimate Public Use Microdata, 2011-2015.

Endnotes

¹The U.S. Census Bureau reports disability prevalence for the civilian, non-institutionalized section of the population, thereby excluding persons living in group homes or institutions such as nursing homes, treatment centers, and correctional facilities. As a result, the actual number of people with disabilities in the Twin Cities region is likely to exceed the Bureau's estimates used in this report. For a detailed description of disability types listed in Figure 1, [visit the Census Bureau's documentation website \[LINK\]](#).

² For more information on the regional forecast, see our *MetroStats* report, "[The Twin Cities Regional Forecast to 2040: Steady Growth and Big Changes Ahead](#)" [PDF].

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