

ADVOCACY

People First of Toledo Monthly Newsletter

Disabled Employment on the Rise

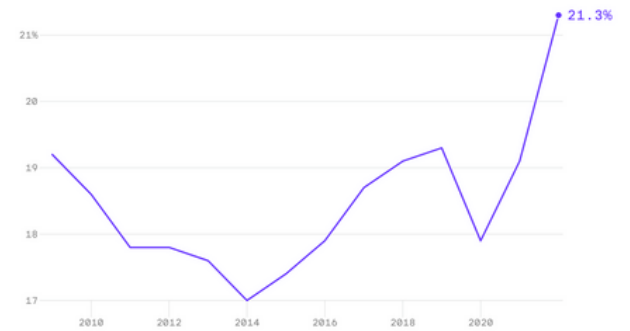
By Quinn Thomas

On March 15th, 2020, millions of workers were sent home for the COVID-19 shutdown and then never returned to that job. Thousands were laid off, or found their jobs were on indefinite hold but their bills were not, and were forced to find alternative work. Some took the opportunity to retire. And sadly, millions of people died.

Shutdowns have since been lifted. Workplaces opened back up only to find they no longer had enough workers. "The data suggests that labor demand has outstripped labor supply for at least the last year, creating labor shortages," according to the Economic Innovation Group. This means there are too many jobs and not enough workers.

Share of Americans with a disability who are employed

Annually, 2009-2022



Data: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Chart: Axios Visuals

UPCOMING EVENTS

WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS

Every Wednesday through May 17. Next is at Wildwood starting in the Visitor Center at 6:00.

AUTISM WALK

April 30, 10:00, at the Franklin Park Mall.

PARENT RESOURCE FAIR

May 4, 6:00-8:00, at the Ability Center gym.

STORYTELLING WORKSHOPS

6 sessions starting May 9 and running through July 15, all from 5:30-7:00 at Larc Lane Center.

This labor shortage is deeply affecting the disabled community. In one major way is the shortage of direct care workers. But another effect is the employment rate for people with disabilities ourselves.

The disabled unemployment rate was 10.8% in 2021, 8.2% in 2022, and now just 7.3% this past month. More disabled people are currently working than there ever have been since they started tracking the statistics. These may seem like small differences, but they are record-breaking.

Why the change? One reason is the culture change that COVID-19 has brought. When the shutdowns hit, many companies started letting their employees work from home rather than forcing them to go into the office every day. What were considered "impossible" accommodations before became standard practice. Adaptive technology has become more and more popular as well to make remote work easier.

But there's another, less happy, reason for the change as well. Sometimes when people get infected with COVID-19, they never fully recover. This is called "long COVID." 79% of people with long COVID say it causes limitations in their day-to-day activities. 27% said they were significant limitations.

Long COVID is a new disability that people can have. It's common enough that it has caused a boom in the disabled population. 15% of American adults have had long COVID at some point, and 6% still do. While long COVID put an estimated 4,000,000 people out of work, enough of those who have it are still working that it has increased the number of workers with a disability.



**People First
of
Toledo**

OUR NEXT MEETING

Our May meeting will be on the third Thursday of the month, the 18th, from 6:00-7:30 as usual. We will be partnering with Disability Rights Ohio and sponsored by the Ability Center for a postcard writing event asking our Ohio legislators to raise wages for Direct Support Professionals.