

The Prevalence of Disabilities in the Knoxville Region

Date:
April 2013

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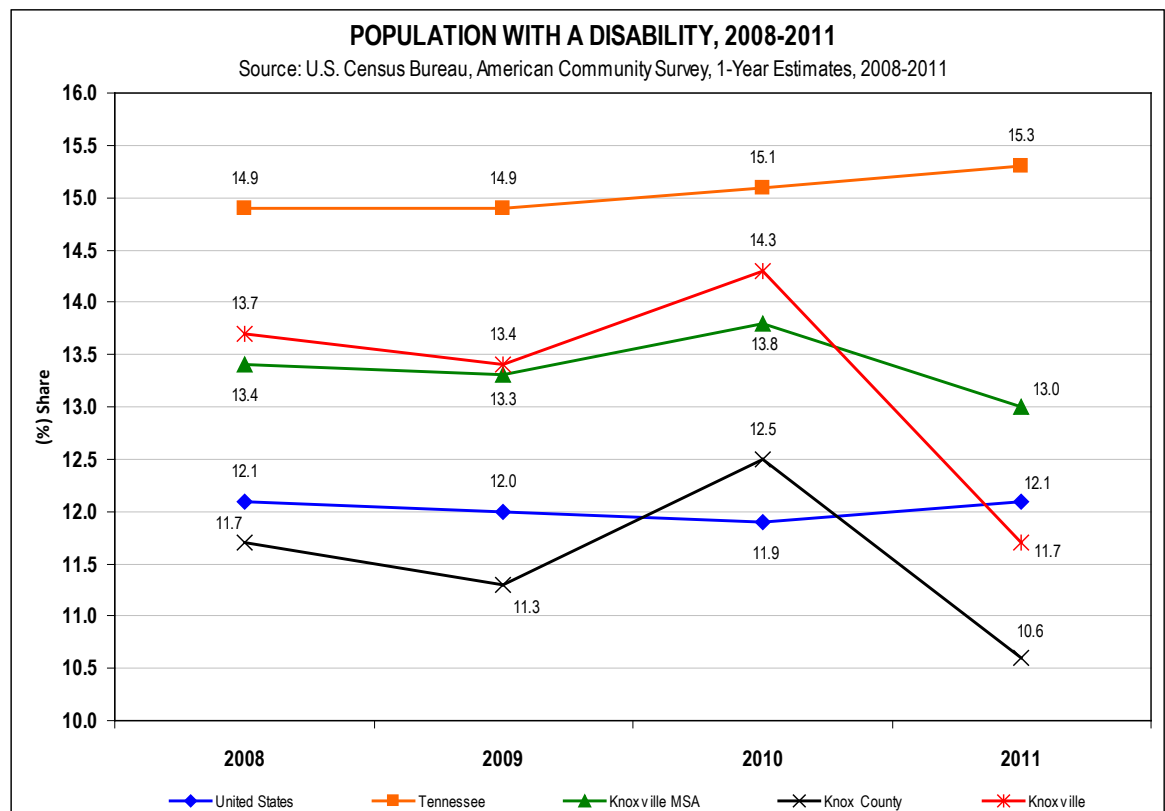
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In the last 25 years, programs and policies such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have focused on expanding opportunities and legal rights for people with disabilities. While countless individuals have credited the ADA with improving their lives, obstacles remain that limit social integration and economic self-sufficiency.

This report examines socio-economic characteristics of our region's population with disabilities. Gender, race, age, income, poverty levels, employment, and labor force participation are among the information provided for Knox County and several surrounding counties. The report also describes the prevalence of disabilities and obstacles faced.

Demographic Characteristics

Many Americans experience disability first hand. In 2011, 37.2 million people in the United States, or 12.1 percent of the population reported a disability. In Tennessee, that share was higher, 15.3 percent. Locally, of the 698,000 people living in the Knoxville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)—Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, and Union counties—about 13.0 percent, or 91,000 individuals, had a disability. The number was 46,000 people, or 10.6 percent, in Knox County and 21,000 people, or 11.7 percent, in Knoxville.



Women are more likely to have a disability than men, due in part to longer life expectancy for females. In the U.S. and Tennessee, disabilities are present in 12.3 percent and 15.4 percent of total female populations, respectively, compared to 11.7 percent and 14.8 percent of the male population. Regionally, the data follows the same pattern, except in Roane and Sevier counties where disabled male population shares are larger with 23.8 percent and 17.1 percent, respectively.

TABLE 1: SEX BY DISABILITY STATUS

Indicator	United States		Tennessee		Knoxville MSA		Knox County		Knoxville			
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent		
Total:	304,085,860		6,253,874		692,912		429,471		177,735			
Male:	148,334,362	48.8	3,027,005	48.4	337,119	48.7	208,763	48.6	86,200	48.5		
With a disability	17,413,242	11.7	446,941	14.8	44,010	13.1	23,014	11.0	10,839	12.6		
Female:	155,751,498	51.2	3,226,869	51.6	355,793	51.3	220,708	51.4	91,535	51.5		
With a disability	19,085,806	12.3	495,859	15.4	49,181	13.8	26,634	12.1	13,032	14.2		

Indicator	Anderson County		Blount County		Loudon County		Union County		Roane County		Sevier County	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total:	74,304		121,931		48,173		19,033		53,558		89,599	
Male:	36,009	48.5	59,091	48.5	23,785	49.4	9,471	49.8	26,339	49.2	44,086	49.2
With a disability	6,613	18.4	8,804	14.9	3,962	16.7	1,617	17.1	6,257	23.8	7,539	17.1
Female:	38,295	51.5	62,840	51.5	24,388	50.6	9,562	50.2	27,219	50.8	45,513	50.8
With a disability	7,206	18.8	9,417	15.0	4,238	17.4	1,686	17.6	5,643	20.7	7,387	16.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note: Knoxville MSA is Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, and Union counties.



By race, the share of individuals with a disability varies according to geography. For example, nationally and statewide, the American Indian and Alaska Native group register the largest share of people with a disability. However, in the Knoxville metro area, people of two or more races report the greatest share with 17.5 percent.

When considering population by total count, White and Black or African American are the two largest racial groups. At the local level, these two groups have similar shares of people with a disability. In the White population, individuals with a disability account for 13.6 percent in the metro area, 11.6 percent in Knox County, and 13.7 percent in Knoxville. In the Black or African American population, 13.1 percent of individuals across the metro area are with a disability, 12.4 percent in Knox County, and 13.6 percent in Knoxville. The share of individuals with a disability among the Hispanic or Latino community is relatively small in comparison, from a high of 7.1 percent regionwide to a low of 5.2 percent in Knox County.

TABLE 2: RACE AND ETHNICITY BY DISABILITY STATUS

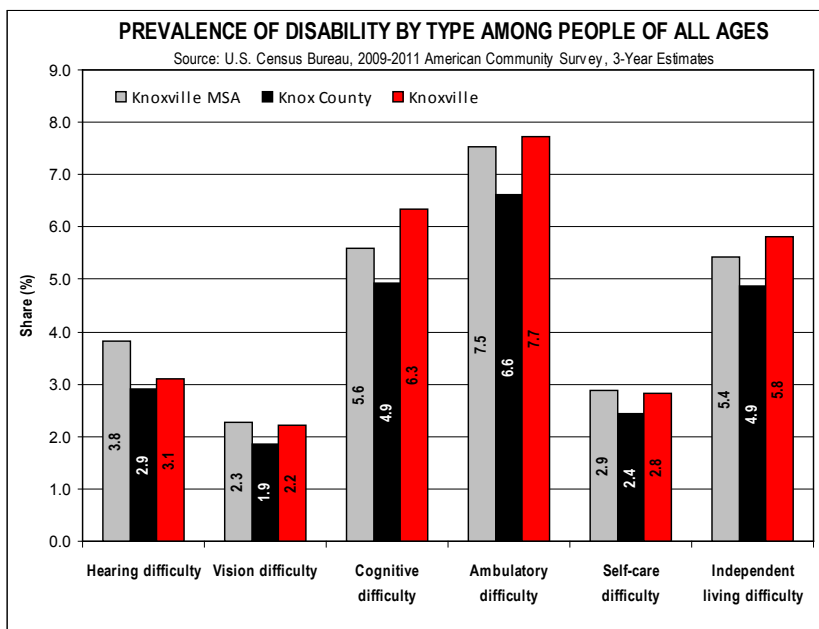
Indicator	United States		Tennessee		Knoxville MSA		Knox County		Knoxville			
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent		
Total:	304,085,860		6,253,874		692,912		429,471		177,735			
With a disability	36,499,048	12.0	942,800	15.1	93,191	13.4	49,648	11.6	23,871	13.4		
White alone:	226,048,983	74.3	4,916,972	78.6	620,415	89.5	371,406	86.5	138,658	78.0		
With a disability	28,021,996	12.4	770,044	15.7	84,507	13.6	43,192	11.6	18,998	13.7		
Black or African American alone:	37,487,143	12.3	1,030,378	16.5	47,003	6.8	39,863	9.3	30,727	17.3		
With a disability	5,125,302	13.7	143,887	14.0	6,177	13.1	4,962	12.4	4,166	13.6		
American Indian and Alaska Native alone:	2,464,612	0.8	15,289	0.2	1,150	0.2	N	N	N	N		
With a disability	393,242	16.0	3,368	22.0	155	13.5	N	N	N	N		
Asian alone:	14,719,784	4.8	91,623	1.5	10,697	1.5	8,272	1.9	N	N		
With a disability	926,212	6.3	4,342	4.7	424	4.0	333	4.0	N	N		
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander alone:	496,198	0.2	2,543	0.0	N	N	N	N	N	N		
With a disability	45,489	9.2	99	3.9	N	N	N	N	N	N		
Some other race alone:	14,736,805	4.8	91,004	1.5	N	N	N	N	N	N		
With a disability	1,100,118	7.5	4,236	4.7	N	N	N	N	N	N		
Two or more races:	8,132,335	2.7	106,065	1.7	9,802	1.4	6,635	1.5	3,175	1.8		
With a disability	886,689	10.9	16,824	15.9	1,719	17.5	1,043	15.7	619	19.2		
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	49,980,607	16.4	287,800	4.6	23,836	3.4	15,059	3.5	7,997	4.5		
With a disability	4,113,926	8.2	17,256	6.0	1,685	7.1	784	5.2	421	5.3		
Indicator	Anderson County		Blount County		Loudon County		Union County		Roane County		Sevier County	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total:	74,304		121,931		48,173		19,033		53,558		89,599	
With a disability	13,819	18.6	18,221	14.9	8,200	17.0	3,303	17.4	11,900	22.2	14,926	16.7
White alone:	69,000	92.9	114,858	94.2	46,256	96.0	18,895	99.3	50,698	94.7	85,768	95.7
With a disability	12,908	18.7	17,215	15.0	7,959	17.2	3,233	17.1	11,512	22.7	14,562	17.0
Black or African American alone:	3,109	4.2	3,399	2.8	N	N	N	N	1,312	2.4	N	N
With a disability	442	14.2	623	18.3	N	N	N	N	194	14.8	N	N
Some other race alone:	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
With a disability	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Two or more races:	1,104	1.5	1,512	1.2	N	N	N	N	1,181	2.2	N	N
With a disability	368	33.3	256	16.9	N	N	N	N	179	15.2	N	N
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
With a disability	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Notes: Knoxville MSA is Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, and Union counties. An "N" entry indicates that data for this geographic area cannot be displayed because the number of sample cases is too small. Some other race alone includes but is not limited to: American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.

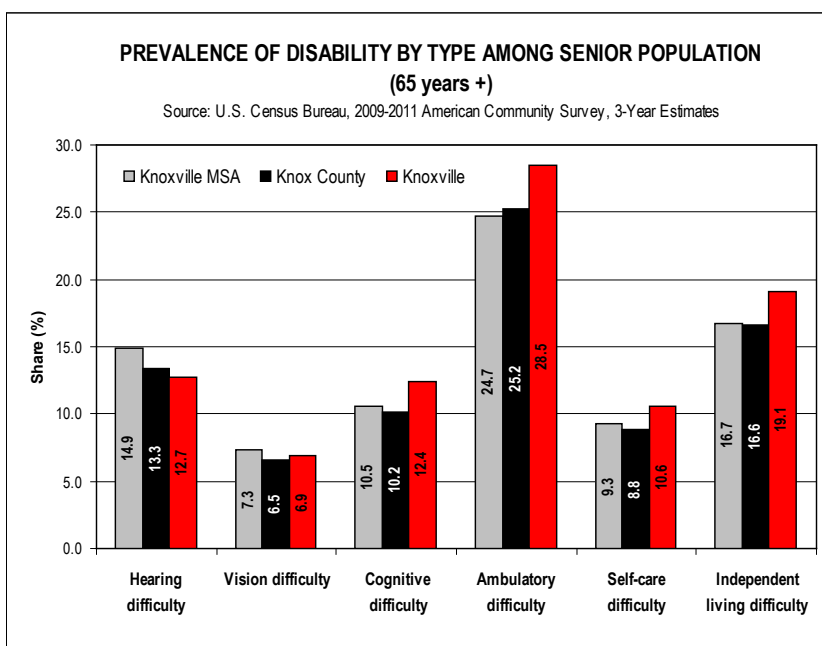
As people age, the likelihood of having a disability of some kind increases. Across the country, around five percent of people 5 to 34 years old are with a disability. The share increases to 12.6 percent among those 35 to 64 years old, while doubling to one out of four people of retirement age (65 to 74 years). People 75 years of age and over face the largest prevalence, with one out of every two having a disability.

Locally, disability shares by age group are similar to national trends. Individuals 65 to 74 years old with a disability comprise around 25 percent of the Knoxville metro area. Among those 75 years and over, individuals with a disability make up 50 percent of the population regionwide, translating into 22,311 people in the metro area, 12,248 people in Knox County and 6,140 people in Knoxville.

Although disabilities can be as different as the people who experience them, the challenges and opportunities are often similar. To help understand the role a disability plays in the life of an individual, the U.S. Census Bureau classifies disabilities into six types: hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living. When considering all age groups, ambulatory difficulty is the most prevalent type, accounting for 13,737 people (7.7 percent) in the Knoxville population, 28,444 people (6.6 percent) in Knox County, and 52,194 people (7.5 percent) in the Knoxville metro area. Individuals with an ambulatory disability experience serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs, which often results in limited physical activity and further health decline.



Among the senior population, ambulatory difficulty was also the most prevalent, and at much higher rates: 28.5 percent (6,813 people) share in Knoxville, 25.2 percent (13,998 people) in Knox County, and 24.7 percent (24,764 people) in the Knoxville Region. The second most prevalent disability type among the senior population was independent living difficulty with 19.1 percent in Knoxville, 16.6 percent in Knox County, and 16.7 percent in the Knoxville metro area. Individuals with independent living difficulty encounter challenges performing instrumental activities of daily living such as shopping or visiting a doctor's office.



Disability

Difficulty with any of the six types of disability as reported in the American Community Survey: vision, hearing, ambulatory, cognitive, self-care, and independent living. It covers functional limitations in the three domains of disability (communication, mental, and physical), activities of daily living (ADLs), and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs).

Vision difficulty

Blindness or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses or contacts.

Hearing difficulty

Deafness or serious difficulty hearing.

Cognitive difficulty

Serious difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions.

Ambulatory difficulty

Serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.

Self-care difficulty

Difficulty dressing or bathing. This type relates to ADLs.

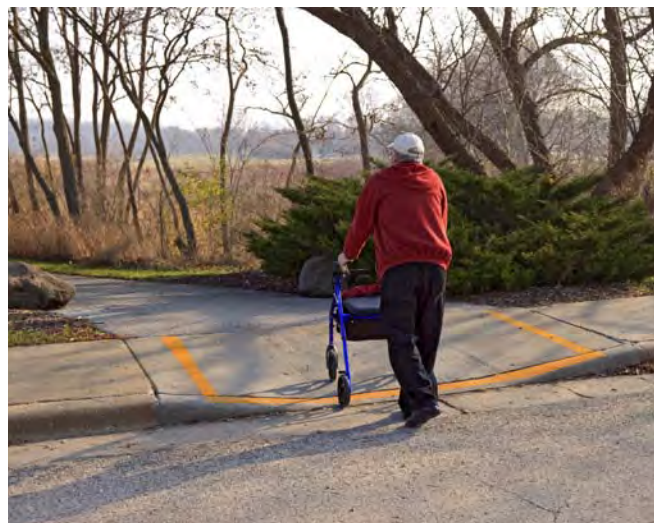
Independent living difficulty

Difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping. This type relates to IADLs.

TABLE 3: AGE BY DISABILITY STATUS

Indicator	United States		Tennessee		Knoxville MSA		Knox County		Knoxville			
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent		
Total:	304,085,860		6,253,874		692,912		429,471		177,735			
With a disability	36,499,048	12.0	942,800	15.1	93,191	13.4	49,648	11.6	23,871	13.4		
Under 5 years:	20,150,467	6.6	406,188	6.5	40,555	5.9	26,026	6.1	10,592	6.0		
With a disability	157,928	0.8	3,776	0.9	335	0.8	251	1.0	69	0.7		
5 to 17 years:	53,751,358	17.7	1,084,523	17.3	111,308	16.1	67,914	15.8	21,419	12.1		
With a disability	2,784,591	5.2	63,017	5.8	5,971	5.4	3,353	4.9	1,210	5.6		
18 to 34 years:	69,925,687	23.0	1,397,417	22.3	157,752	22.8	109,473	25.5	58,896	33.1		
With a disability	3,830,470	5.5	95,960	6.9	8,461	5.4	4,912	4.5	2,520	4.3		
35 to 64 years:	121,074,018	39.8	2,535,366	40.5	283,108	40.9	170,590	39.7	62,907	35.4		
With a disability	15,310,712	12.6	436,416	17.2	41,486	14.7	21,600	12.7	10,747	17.1		
65 to 74 years:	21,617,796	7.1	483,467	7.7	56,710	8.2	30,643	7.1	12,255	6.9		
With a disability	5,540,941	25.6	150,484	31.1	14,627	25.8	7,284	23.8	3,185	26.0		
75 years and over:	17,566,534	5.8	346,913	5.5	43,479	6.3	24,825	5.8	11,666	6.6		
With a disability	8,874,406	50.5	193,147	55.7	22,311	51.3	12,248	49.3	6,140	52.6		
Indicator	Anderson County		Blount County		Loudon County		Union County		Roane County		Sevier County	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total:	74,304		121,931		48,173		19,033		53,558		89,599	
With a disability	13,819	18.6	18,221	14.9	8,200	17.0	3,303	17.4	11,900	22.2	14,926	16.7
Under 5 years:	4,201	5.7	6,757	5.5	2,356	4.9	1,215	6.4	2,727	5.1	5,319	5.9
With a disability	0	0.0	21	0.3	63	2.7	0	0.0	107	3.9	13	0.2
5 to 17 years:	12,156	16.4	20,419	16.7	7,430	15.4	3,389	17.8	8,477	15.8	14,534	16.2
With a disability	879	7.2	1,214	5.9	457	6.2	68	2.0	895	10.6	984	6.8
18 to 34 years:	13,931	18.7	23,012	18.9	7,588	15.8	3,748	19.7	8,960	16.7	17,199	19.2
With a disability	1,363	9.8	1,520	6.6	504	6.6	162	4.3	682	7.6	1,236	7.2
35 to 64 years:	31,610	42.5	52,223	42.8	20,582	42.7	8,103	42.6	23,576	44.0	38,937	43.5
With a disability	6,220	19.7	8,252	15.8	3,467	16.8	1,947	24.0	5,540	23.5	7,661	19.7
65 to 74 years:	6,473	8.7	11,443	9.4	6,453	13.4	1,698	8.9	5,685	10.6	8,449	9.4
With a disability	1,864	28.8	3,314	29.0	1,538	23.8	627	36.9	2,324	40.9	2,387	28.3
75 years and over:	5,933	8.0	8,077	6.6	3,764	7.8	880	4.6	4,133	7.7	5,161	5.8
With a disability	3,493	58.9	3,900	48.3	2,171	57.7	499	56.7	2,352	56.9	2,645	51.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note: Knoxville MSA is Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, and Union counties.



Labor Force Characteristics

Disabilities reach across age, sex, and racial groups, and obstacles to self-sufficiency and social integration remain. A major barrier is the ability to obtain gainful employment. In a study conducted by the National Technical Assistance and Research Leadership Center at Rutgers University, people with disabilities often meet or exceed the job performance of co-workers without disabilities, yet labor and workforce statistics reveal a disparity between the two groups.

Labor force participation rates among people with disabilities are considerably lower than those of individuals without a disability. Nationally and statewide, the participation rate for the population (18 to 64 years) with a disability is 42.1 percent and 37.3 percent, respectively, half of the 81.2 percent and 80.5 percent for those with no disability. In the Knoxville metro area, Knox County, and Knoxville, labor force participation rates were in the mid-30s, a dramatic difference compared to rates around 80 percent for the population with no disability.

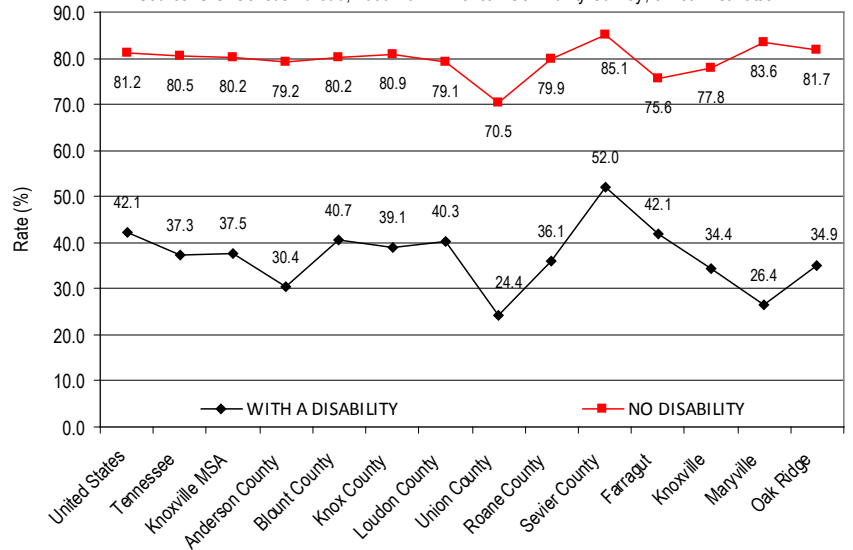
Among the working age population (18 to 64 years), six out of 10 of individuals with a disability are not in the labor force, compared to two out of 10 with no disability.

Unemployment is significantly higher for individuals with a disability than it is for individuals with no disability. Nationally, disabled workers are twice as likely to be unemployed: 19.3 percent compared to 9.6 percent. In Tennessee, the disparity is even greater: 22.8 percent compared to 9.8 percent.

Because a large number of people with disabilities are not in the labor force, an employment-to-population ratio is more descriptive. Nationally, 33.9 percent of people 18 to 64 years old with a disability are employed, compared to 73.4 percent with no disability. Locally, employment rates for people with a disability in the Knoxville metro area and Knox County were slightly lower than the U.S., but higher than the state. Sevier County had the highest employment rate for individuals with a disability at 40.4 percent, while Union County had the lowest, 22.7 percent.

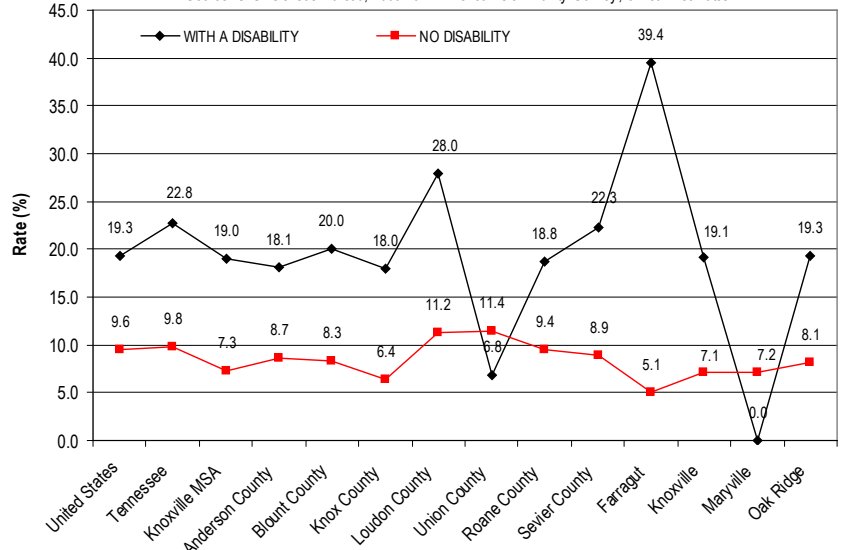
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates



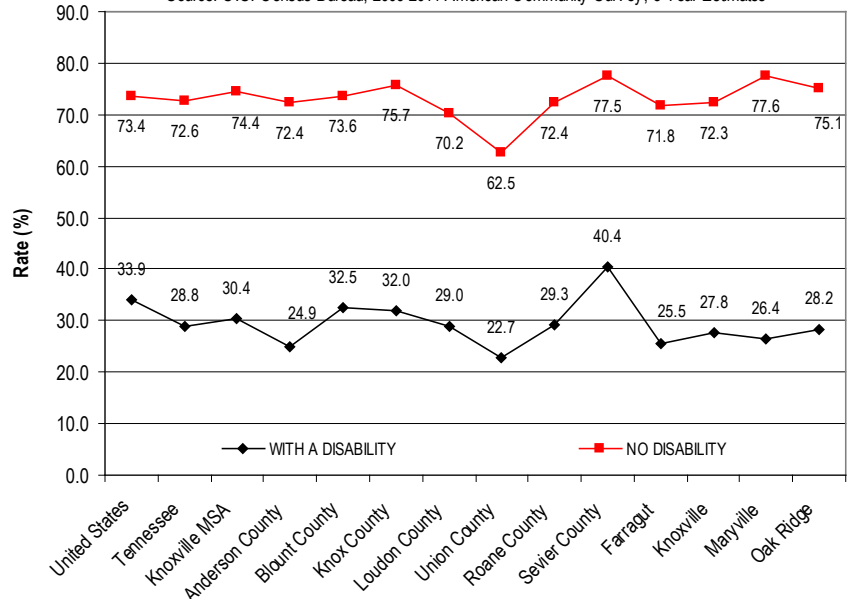
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates



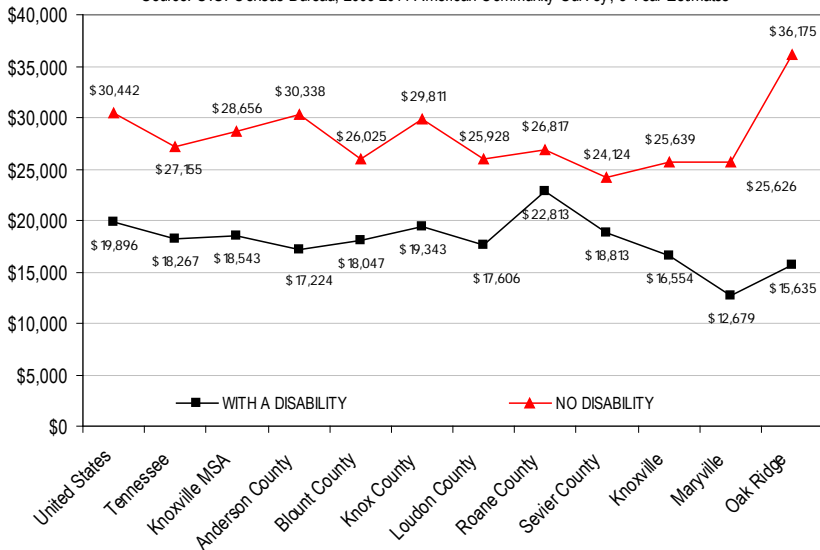
EMPLOYMENT RATE

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates



MEDIAN EARNINGS BY DISABILITY STATUS

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates



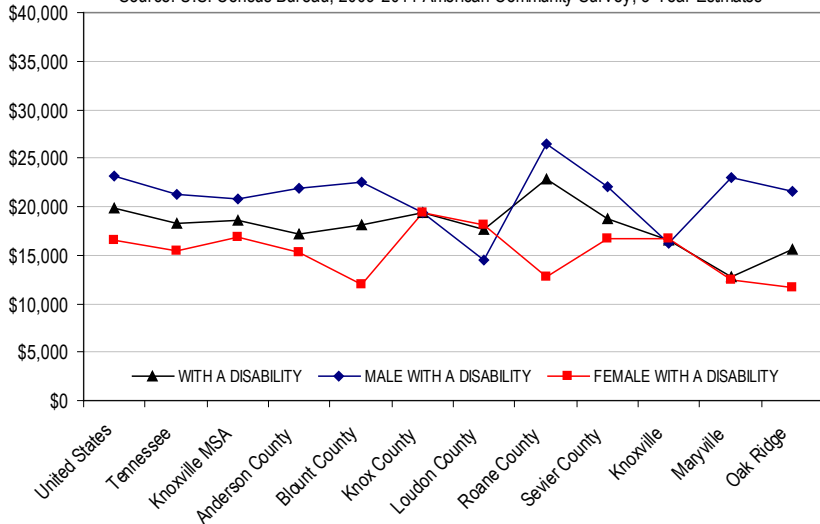
Income and Poverty Characteristics

The disparity in labor force participation and employment rates carries over to income as well. Median earnings of individuals with a disability, compared to those with no disability, vary from 15 percent less in Roane County to as much as 57 percent less in Oak Ridge. In Knox County earnings among people with no disability are 1.5 times higher than those of individuals with a disability.

Women with a disability typically earn less than their male counterparts with a disability when it comes to earnings. The greatest discrepancy is in Roane County where women make 52 percent less than men do. Loudon County, Knoxville, and Knox County are the only areas where women earn the equivalent, or slightly more than men.

MEDIAN EARNINGS BY DISABILITY STATUS BY SEX

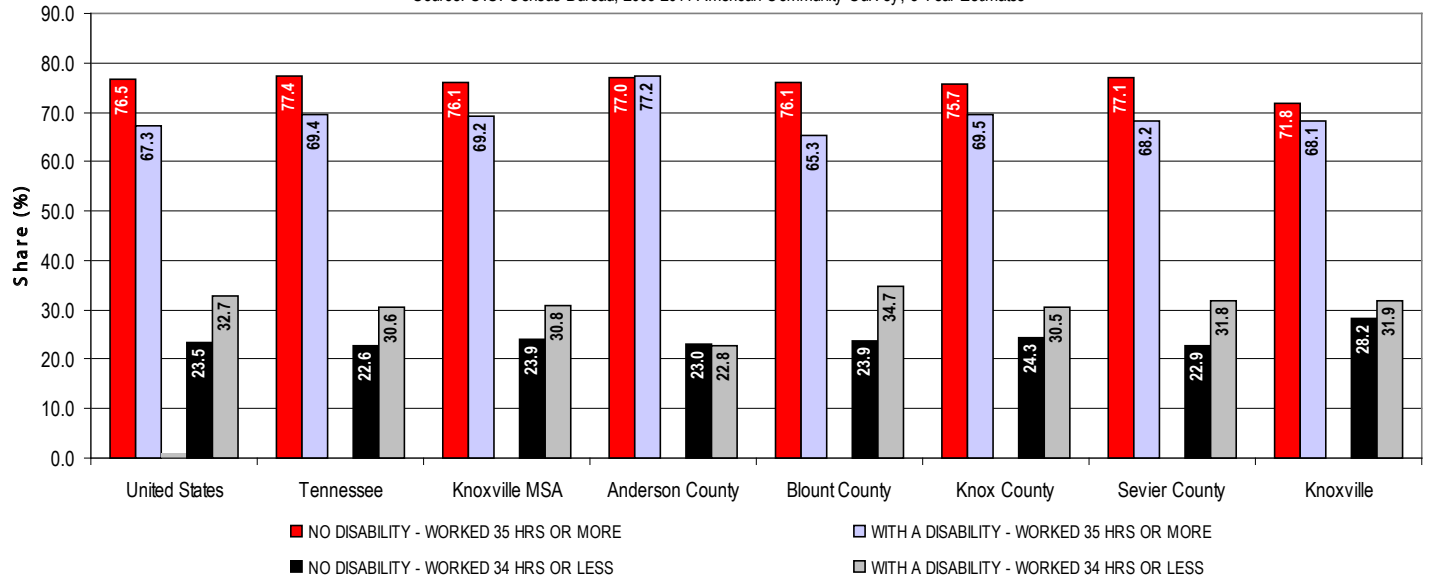
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates



Full-time (35 hours or more) versus part-time employment contributes to lower median incomes for individuals with a disability. Although circumstances and factors prevent some from working full time, the total working age population consistently shows a difference in the number of hours a person with no disabilities works, compared to those with a disability. In the U.S. and Tennessee, about 76 percent of people with no disability worked full time, while 68 percent of individuals with a disability work full time. Blount

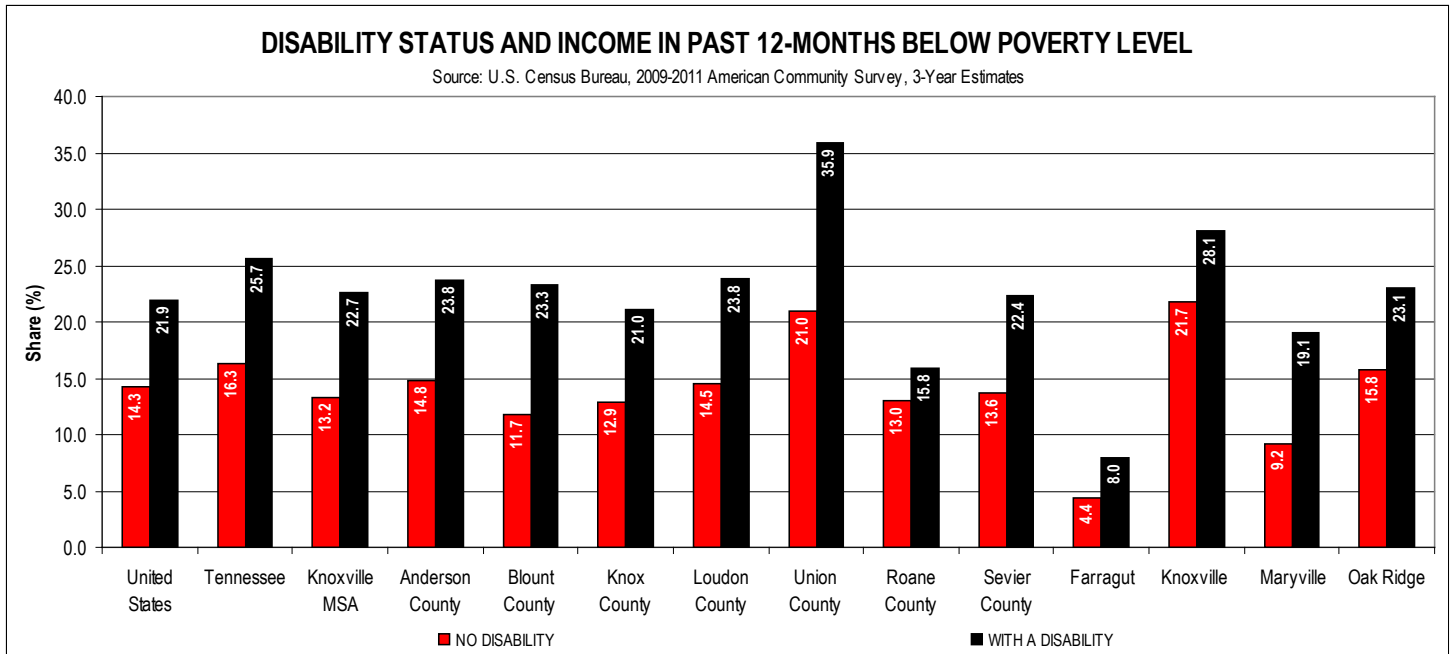
DISABILITY STATUS BY WORK STATUS

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates



County had the largest difference, where 76.1 percent of individuals with no disability worked full time, and 65.3 percent of people with a disability worked full time. Anderson County was the only local area where the share of persons with a disability working full time matched those with no disability.

Disproportionate earnings and fewer full-time employment opportunities contribute to higher rates of poverty among individuals with a disability. In the United States, 14.3 percent of persons with no disability live below poverty, compared to 21.9 percent with a disability. At the local level, the largest share of persons with a disability living in poverty was in Union County with 35.9 percent, while 21 percent with no disability were below poverty level. In Knoxville, 28.1 percent of persons with a disability live in poverty, compared to 21.7 percent with no disability.



In Conclusion

Individuals with a disability represent a sizeable share of the regional population. In the coming years, as the population grows in both number and age, prevalence of disabilities will increase too. Numerous groups and organizations work locally to bring more social and economic opportunity to persons with disabilities. Support of their efforts will be even more important as this population grows.