

Disability and American Families: 2000

Issued July 2005

Census 2000 Special Reports

CENSR-23

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Census 2000 data showed that approximately 20.9 million American families had at least one member with a disability¹ and that they differed in important ways from other families. Disability can be measured in a variety of ways, as described in the next section. The remainder of this report presents estimates of disability prevalence in American families using the measures available from Census 2000, discusses the general economic well-being of families with members with a disability, and examines differences across demographic groups and geographical regions.

It is based on data from the Census 2000 long form, which includes all the questions on the short form plus additional detailed questions relating to the social, economic, and housing characteristics of each individual and household.² Estimates in this report are limited to families and people in families; see text box "Definition of Family and Related Concepts." It

¹ See "Disability status" in the next section.

² The long form was sent to a sample of approximately one in every six households. See the section on Accuracy of the Estimates for sampling procedures and sampling errors.

DEFINITION OF FAMILY AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Family Household: Census 2000 collected data on two types of households: family households and non-family households. This report focuses on the former, which, by the Census Bureau's definition, consists of a householder living with one or more individuals related to him or her by birth, marriage, or adoption. The householder and all the people in the household related to him or her are defined as family members. People living by themselves or with others to whom they are not related are not included in this report.

Family Structure: This report examines three types of families: married-couple families, families with a female householder, and families with a male householder. Married-couple families are defined as those in which the householder and spouse are listed as members of the same household. Families with a female householder are those with a female householder and no husband of the householder present. Similarly, families with a male householder are those with a male householder and no wife of the householder present.

Family Householder: The householder refers to the person (or one of the people) in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented (maintained) or, if there is no such person, any adult member, excluding roomers, boarders, or paid employees. If the home is owned or rented jointly by a married couple, the householder may be either the husband or the wife. The person designated as the householder is the "reference person" to whom the relationship of all other household members, if any, is recorded. This report uses the characteristics of the family householder, such as race and Hispanic origin, to describe the family.

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complements a Census 2000 brief on the disability status of all non-institutionalized individuals who were aged 5 and older by providing new details about the prevalence of families with members with a disability and their economic well-being in 2000.³

DISABILITY MEASUREMENTS IN CENSUS 2000 AND THIS REPORT

Census disability questions: The Census 2000 long form had six questions on disability, as shown in the text box “Questions on Disability From Census 2000.” The following terms are used in this report for the six questions: “Sensory Disability” for Question 16 part a, “Physical Disability” for Question 16 part b, “Mental Disability” for Question 17 part a, “Self-care Disability” for Question 17 part b, “Going-outside-home Disability” for Question 17 part c, and “Employment Disability” for Question 17 part d. This report adopts the above terms to be consistent with those used in other Census 2000 data products such as Summary File 3, Demographic Profiles, and the Census 2000 brief on the disability status of U.S. non-institutionalized individuals 5 years or older. Rather than relying on the technical labels, readers are encouraged to review the actual questions, which are shown in the text box.

The six disability questions on the Census 2000 long form were the result of a collaborative effort of a federal interagency working group convened by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).⁴

³ See: Judith Waldrop and Sharon Stern, *Disability Status: 2000*, C2KBR-17, Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 2003.

⁴ Adler, Michele C., Robert F. Clark, Theresa J. DeMaio, Louisa F. Miller, and Arlene F. Saluter. 1999. “Collecting Information on Disability in 2000 Census: An Example of Interagency Cooperation.” *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 62, No. 4, pp 21-30.

REPRODUCTION OF THE QUESTIONS ON DISABILITY FROM CENSUS 2000

16 Does this person have any of the following long-lasting conditions:

- | | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

17 Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more, does this person have any difficulty in doing any of the following activities:

- | | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Learning, remembering, or concentrating? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. (Answer if this person is 16 YEARS OLD OR OVER.) Going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. (Answer if this person is 16 YEARS OLD OR OVER.) Working at a job or business? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 questionnaire.

Due to the time constraints on questionnaire development, limitations on one portion of the questions were not identified in time to adjust it for Census 2000. Consequently, this paper concentrates on the responses to the other portion. Currently, another interagency effort, also under the auspices of OMB, is reviewing the census disability questions to identify improved ones for the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS).⁵

⁵ The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey collecting year-to-year information from households similar to what was collected on the Census 2000 long form. It is to replace the long form in the 2010 Census.

Disability status: At times, this report uses a summary measure of disability for its estimates and comparisons. The summary measure combines responses from the first five questions to identify family members with a disability if they are in one of the following categories: first, they were 5 through 15 years old and reported having any one or a combination of the four disabilities: sensory, physical, mental, or self-care; or second, they were aged 16 and over and reported having one or a combination of the five disabilities: sensory, physical, mental, self-care, or going-outside-home. A person so identified is referred to in this report as “a family member with a disability.” A

Table 1.
Disability Prevalence Among American Families: 2000¹

(Data based on a sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/docs/sf3.pdf)

Disability category	Families with members with a disability		Families with a householder with a disability		Families with children with a disability	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Sensory	5,759,550	8.0	3,323,365	4.6	482,630	0.7
Physical	12,004,065	16.6	7,161,740	9.9	500,470	0.7
Mental	7,360,965	10.2	2,850,060	3.9	2,031,865	2.8
Self-care	4,090,905	5.7	1,780,165	2.5	411,975	0.6
Going outside home	9,613,760	13.3	5,696,545	7.9	382,295	0.6
Employment	12,319,470	17.0	9,728,385	13.5	(X)	(X)
With a sensory or physical or both disabilities. . .	14,557,890	20.2	9,021,470	12.5	874,540	1.2
With any of five disabilities, excluding employment disability ²	20,874,130	28.9	12,993,520	18.0	2,840,735	3.9

X Not applicable.

¹The total number of U.S. families was 72,261,780 in 2000. Households made up of unrelated individuals are not included in this report.

²This is a summary recode of the five disability measurements on the Census 2000 long form. A family was coded as having members with a disability if one or more of its members reported any of the five disabilities: sensory, physical, mental, self-care, or going-outside-home. The current report uses this recode as its primary disability indicator in its estimates and comparisons. For more detailed explanations about this recode, see sections on Disability Status and Families with Members with a Disability of this report.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

family member with a disability is sometimes further identified, according to his or her family role, as “a householder with a disability” or “a child with a disability.”

The summary measure is designed to capture specific functional limitations and long-term difficulty with functional or daily living activities.⁶ Since the concept of working at a job or business (Question 17 part d) is not tied to any particular limitation or function, people who only reported difficulty in working at a job or business are not included in this summary measure. As a result, this summary measure differs from the one used in Summary File 3, which includes data on work disability status.

⁶ The term “functional limitations” generally refers to people who have difficulty performing one or more functional activities, such as seeing, hearing, speaking, lifting, using stairs, or walking. Examples of daily living activities include getting around inside the home, dressing, and bathing.

Families with members with a disability: The unit of analysis in this report is the family. Households made up solely of unrelated individuals are not included in this report. The core comparisons are between families with members with a disability and families without members with a disability. The report classifies all families that had at least one member reporting a disability as “families with members with a disability,” or as “families with children with a disability” if the person reporting a disability was under 18 years old in 2000. In general, this report does not distinguish between families with only one member with a disability and those with multiple members with a disability. Rather, it groups them together as “families with at least one member with a disability” or “families with members with a disability.” Both terms refer to the same group and are used interchangeably in this report.

DISABILITY PREVALENCE AMONG AMERICAN FAMILIES⁷

Census 2000 counted a total of 72.3 million families and found that nearly 28.9 percent of them (about 2 in every 7 families) reported having at least one member with a disability.

Table 1 shows that nearly 20.9 million families had members with a disability. Some of the families fell in more than one of the following categories:

- 5.8 million families, or 8.0 percent, reported one or more

⁷ The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

Table 2.
Presence of Disabilities in Families and Children: 2000

(Data based on a sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/docs/sf3.pdf)

Family member disabilities	Number	Percent of total families	Percent of families with members or children with a disability
Total families	72,261,780	100.0	(X)
Reporting no member with a disability	51,387,650	71.1	(X)
Reporting at least one member with a disability	20,874,130	28.9	100.0
Families reporting any members with a disability			
Reporting one member with a disability	14,325,175	19.8	68.6
Reporting two members with a disability	5,361,850	7.4	25.7
Reporting three or more members with a disability	1,187,105	1.6	5.7
Families reporting adults or children with a disability			
Reporting only adults with a disability	18,033,395	25.0	86.4
Reporting only children with a disability	1,686,305	2.3	8.1
Reporting both adults and children with a disability	1,154,425	1.6	5.5
Families reporting children with a disability¹			
Reporting one or more children with a disability	2,840,735	3.9	100.0
Reporting one child with a disability	2,473,245	3.4	87.1
Reporting two children with a disability	310,985	0.4	10.9
Reporting three or more children with a disability	56,500	0.1	2.0

X = Not Applicable.

¹This number includes all people 5 to 17 years old.

Note: Details may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

members with blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment.

- 12.0 million families, or 16.6 percent, reported one or more members with a condition that substantially limited one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.
- 7.4 million families, or 10.2 percent, reported one or more members who had difficulty in learning, remembering, or concentrating.
- 4.1 million families, or 5.7 percent, reported one or more members who had difficulty with dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home.
- 9.6 million families, or 13.3 percent, reported one or more members who had difficulty going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office.

- 12.3 million families, or 17.0 percent, reported one or more members who had difficulty working at a job or business.

In 13 million families, the householder had a disability (18.0 percent of all families), and in 2.8 million families (3.9 percent of all families), children had a disability (see Table 1).⁸

Often, more than one family member reported having a disability. Of the 20.9 million families reporting at least one member with a disability, 5.5 percent had both adults and children with a disability. Among the 20.9 million families, 25.7 percent had two people with a disability and 5.7 percent had three or more people with a disability (see Table 2).

⁸ For the definition of a family householder, see text box "Definition of Family and Related Concepts" in this report.

Disability rates varied among single-race groups and Hispanics.

Census 2000 asked respondents to report one or more races. With the exception of the Two or More Races population, all the race groups discussed in this report refer to householders who indicated only one racial identity among the six major categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race. The use of the single-race categories to present data in this report does not imply it is the preferred method.

The prevalence of disability varied among families of different racial groups and Hispanic origin. In the groups examined in this report, disability occurrence was most common among families with American Indian and Alaska Native householders — 217,000, or

Table 3.
Disability Prevalence by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Geographic Location: 2000

(Data based on a sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/docs/sf3.pdf)

Family characteristics	Total	Families reporting members with a disability	
		Number	Percent
All Families	72,261,780	20,874,130	28.9
Race and Hispanic Origin			
White alone	56,470,095	15,548,770	27.5
White alone, not Hispanic	52,769,535	14,322,150	27.1
Black alone	8,209,430	2,931,270	35.7
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	563,650	217,195	38.5
Asian alone	2,350,400	623,255	26.5
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	79,255	25,075	31.6
Some other race alone	3,206,530	1,032,330	32.2
Two or more races	1,382,420	496,235	35.9
Hispanic (of any race)	7,483,040	2,486,495	33.2
Region			
Northeast	13,633,405	3,830,505	28.1
Midwest	16,769,420	4,450,450	26.5
South	26,428,370	8,146,465	30.8
West	15,430,585	4,446,710	28.8
Rural/urban			
Rural	16,679,230	5,024,380	30.1
Urban	55,582,550	15,849,750	28.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

38.5 percent. Next were families with a Black householder, with a prevalence rate of 35.7 percent (or 2.9 million families). Disability prevalence rates for families with non-Hispanic White householders and Asian householders were below the national average at 27.1 percent and 26.5 percent, respectively. Hispanic families had a prevalence rate of 33.2 percent (or 2.5 million families reporting one or more members with a disability), as shown in Table 3.⁹

⁹ Because Hispanics may be any race, data in this report for Hispanics overlap with data for racial groups. Based on the Census 2000 sample data used for analysis of disability, the proportion of Hispanics was 8.0 percent for Whites, 1.9 percent for Blacks, 14.6 percent for American Indians and Alaska Natives, 1.0 percent for Asians, 9.5 percent for Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders, 97.1 percent for those reporting Some Other Race, and 31.1 percent for those reporting Two or More Races.

Disability was more prevalent among families in the South and in rural areas.

Disability prevalence was not evenly distributed across the four U.S. regions or between urban and rural areas.¹⁰ With a 30.8 percent disability prevalence rate, the South had the highest concentration of families with members reporting disabilities, whereas the Midwest

¹⁰ The Northeast region includes the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Midwest region includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The South region includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, a state equivalent. The West region includes the states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

had the lowest prevalence rate at 26.5 percent. About 30.1 percent of rural families and 28.5 percent of urban families reported at least one member with a disability (see Table 3).

One in every three families with a female householder with no husband present reported members with a disability.

Families with a female householder with no husband present were more likely than other family types to report having members with a disability. Among the 12.5 million such families, 34.8 percent reported one or more members with a disability, compared with 27.3 percent among the 55.5 million married-couple families and 31.6 percent among the 4.3 million families with a male householder with no wife present (see Figure 1).

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES VARIED WITH DISABILITY STATUS

Families with members with a disability had lower median income than other families.

Families with members with a disability had a median income of \$39,155, below the overall family median income of \$50,046 and the \$54,515 median income of families without members with a disability (see Table 4).¹¹ Across disability types, families with members with a mental disability had a median income of \$36,197, lower than the median incomes of \$38,775 and \$36,950 for families with members with a sensory disability or those with a physical disability, respectively.

Families with members with a disability were less likely than other families to have earnings and more likely to receive income from Social Security and public assistance.

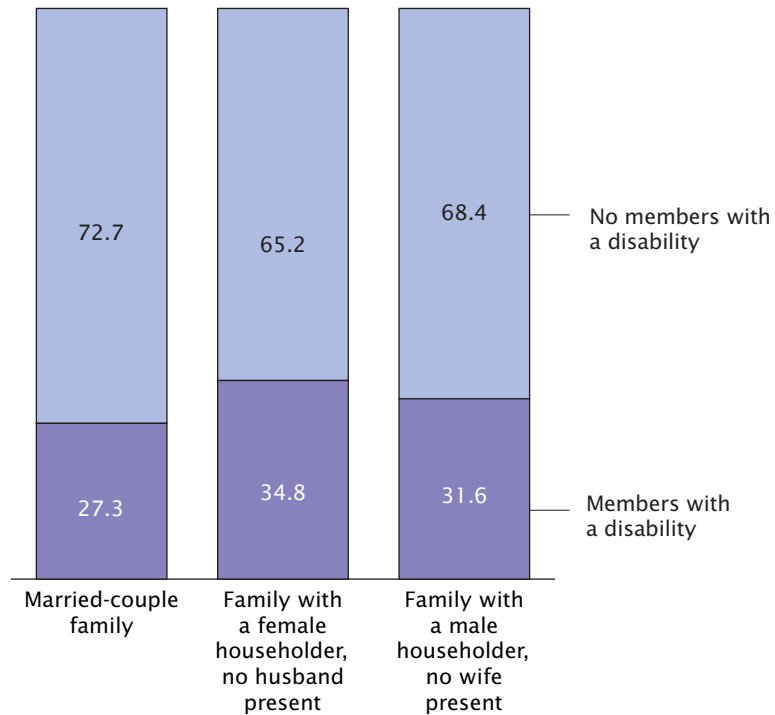
About 3 in 4 families with members with a disability (73.1 percent) had earnings from wages or salaries in 1999, compared to 84.6 percent of all U.S. families and 89.3 percent of families without members with a disability. About 11.1 percent of families with members with a disability had earnings from self-employment, compared to 13.8 percent for all families and 14.8 percent for families with members without a disability (see Table 5).

About 42.8 percent of families with members with a disability received income from Social Security, compared with 22.5 percent of all families and 14.2 percent of families

¹¹ Income levels are for calendar year 1999.

Figure 1.
Family Structure and Presence of Disabilities: 2000¹

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf)



¹ The total number of families was 72.3 million in 2000, including 55.5 million married-couple families, 12.5 million families with a female householder with no husband present, and 4.3 million families with a male householder with no wife present. Households of unrelated individuals are not included in this analysis. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

without members with a disability. About 11.7 percent had incomes from Supplemental Security Income, compared with 4.0 percent of all U.S. families and 0.9 percent of families without members with a disability. About 6.5 percent had incomes from welfare payments from state or local governments. Families with children with a disability were also more likely to receive various types of assistance from state and local governments — 11.4 percent, compared with 3.8 percent of all U.S. families and 2.7 percent of families without members with a disability (see Table 5).

Family householders with disabilities were less likely to be employed and less likely to be in the labor force than other family householders.

Family householders are often the breadwinners of their households (see text box on page 1 for definition of Family Householder used in this report). Of all family householders, those with a disability had a lower employment rate (53.5 percent compared with 80.7 percent for all family householders) and a larger proportion of people not in the labor force (42.3 percent compared with 16.4 percent for all family householders) (see Figure 2).

Table 4.

Median Income by Presence and Type of Disabilities in the Family: 1999

(Data based on a sample. Family characteristics as of 2000. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/docs/sf3.pdf)

Family characteristics	Number of families	Median income (dollars)
All families	72,261,780	50,046
Families without members with a disability	51,387,650	54,515
Families with members with any disability	20,874,130	39,155
With members with a sensory disability	5,759,550	38,775
With members with a physical disability	12,004,065	36,950
With members with a mental disability	7,360,965	36,197
All families with a householder who worked year-round full-time in 1999¹	39,175,525	61,537
Families with a householder without disability	35,907,510	62,301
Families with a householder with any disability	3,268,015	51,914
With a householder with a sensory disability	731,755	56,854
With a householder with a physical disability	1,117,910	52,870
With a householder with a mental disability	393,390	46,248
All families raising children²	30,702,405	48,936
Families raising children without a disability	27,867,765	50,098
Families raising children with any disability	2,834,640	38,332
Raising children with a sensory disability	481,910	34,603
Raising children with a physical disability	499,210	32,265
Raising children with a mental disability	2,030,230	39,353

¹This category includes family householders aged 16 to 64 in the noninstitutionalized civilian population.

²Householders and their spouses aged 15-17 are not considered as children in this table.

Note: In addition to the summary measure of families with members with a disability, this table includes estimates of three specific types of disability: sensory, physical, and mental, as they represent the central domains of disabilities. See Appendix for details on measuring disability in surveys. See the section on Family Disability Status for details on the summary measure of families with members with a disability.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

Table 5.

Family Income Sources by Presence of Disabilities: 1999

(Data based on a sample. Family characteristics as of 2000. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/docs/sf3.pdf)

1999 Income Sources	All families		Families without members with a disability ¹		Families with members with a disability ³		Families with children with a disability	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Earnings from wages or salaries from all jobs	61,134,715	84.6	45,866,920	89.3	15,267,790	73.1	2,508,265	88.3
Earnings from self-employment ¹	9,953,105	13.8	7,627,555	14.8	2,325,555	11.1	359,475	12.7
Social Security	16,249,895	22.5	7,310,905	14.2	8,938,990	42.8	304,090	10.7
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	2,901,565	4.0	456,330	0.9	2,445,230	11.7	258,340	9.1
Any public assistance or welfare payments from the state or local welfare office	2,768,355	3.8	1,403,925	2.7	1,364,430	6.5	323,695	11.4
Total ²	72,261,780	100.0	51,387,650	100.0	20,874,130	100.0	2,840,730	100.0

¹Self-employment income includes income from own nonfarm business or farm business, including proprietorships and partnerships.

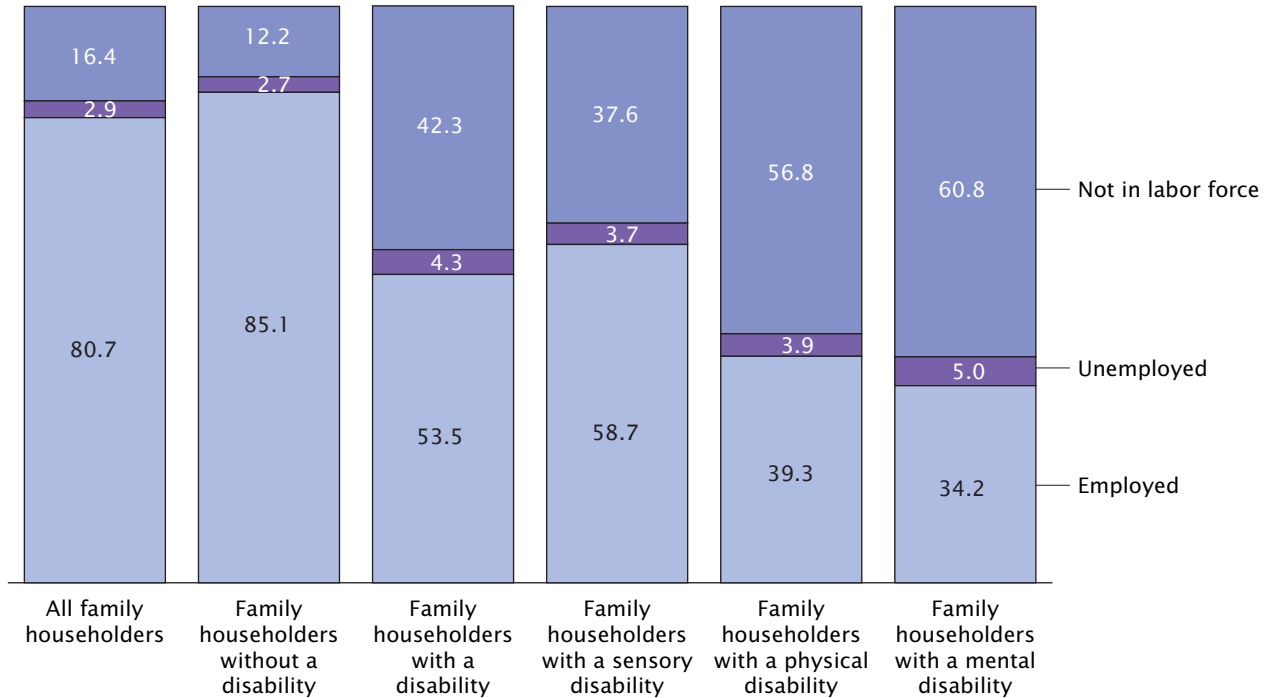
²The types of income are not mutually exclusive as families can have more than one types of income in a given year. As a result, details will not sum to totals.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

Figure 2.

Employment Status of Family Householders by Presence and Selected Type of Disabilities: 2000¹

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf)



¹ The total number of family householders in the civilian population aged 16 to 64 years old was 59.7 million in 2000. A family householder was coded as having a disability if he or she reported any of the five disabilities: sensory, physical, mental, self-care, or going-outside-home.

Note 1: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Note 2: In addition to the summary measure of families with members with a disability, Figures 2, 3, 4, and 6 in this report include estimates of three specific types of disability: sensory, physical, and mental, as they represent the central domains of disabilities. See Appendix for details on measuring disability in surveys. See the section on Family Disability Status for details on the summary measure of families with members with a disability.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

Among householders with disabilities, those with a mental disability had the lowest employment rate, 34.2 percent, and the largest proportion of people not in the labor force, 60.8 percent. Next were householders with a physical disability, with an employment rate of 39.3 percent; in 2000, 56.8 percent of them did not participate in the labor force.

The median income of families with a householder who worked full-time, year-round varied by whether the householder had a disability and by the type of disability.

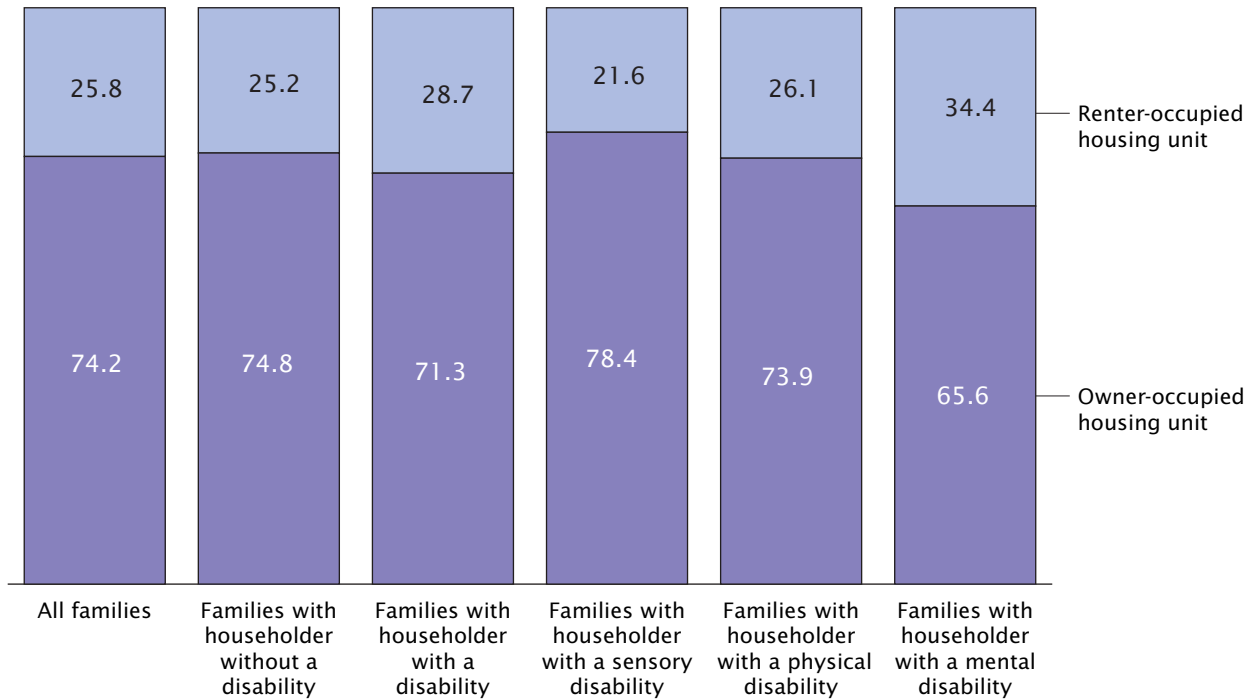
Among the approximately 3.3 million families with householders who reported a disability and worked full-time year-round in 1999, the median income was \$51,914, lower than the median income of \$61,537 for all U.S. families with householders working

full-time year-round and the median income of \$62,301 for families with householders without a disability and working full-time year-round. Across disability types, families with householders with a mental disability and working full-time year-round reported the lowest median income (\$46,248), compared with families with householders with a physical disability (\$52,870) or those with a sensory disability (\$56,854) (see Table 4).

Figure 3.

Homeownership by Selected Type of Disabilities of the Family Householder: 2000

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf)



Note 1: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Note 2: In addition to the summary measure of families with members with a disability, Figures 2, 3, 4, and 6 in this report include estimates of three specific types of disability: sensory, physical, and mental, as they represent the central domains of disabilities. See Appendix for details on measuring disability in surveys. See the section on Family Disability Status for details on the summary measure of families with members with a disability.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

Families with householders with a disability were less likely to own their residence than other families.

Among families with householders with a disability, a smaller proportion (71.3 percent) lived in owner-occupied housing units than all U.S. families (74.2 percent) or than families with householders without

any disability (74.8 percent) (see Figure 3).¹²

¹² The Census 2000 long form collected information on housing tenure from respondents of all occupied housing units. Housing units are classified as either owner-occupied or renter-occupied. A housing unit is owner-occupied if the owner or co-owner lives in the unit even if it is mortgaged or not fully paid for. Occupied housing units which are not owner-occupied, whether they are rented for cash rent or occupied without payment of cash rent, are classified as renter-occupied.

Homeownership also varied by types of disability in the family. Families with a householder with a mental disability had the smallest proportion (65.6 percent) living in owner-occupied housing units. Families with a householder with a sensory disability, meanwhile, had the largest proportion (78.4 percent).

DEFINITION OF FAMILY POVERTY AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Total Family Income: Census 2000 asked about money income received during the 1999 calendar year. The incomes of all members in each family were then summed and treated as a single amount: total family income.

Family Poverty: Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy

Directive 14, this report uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition (see the matrix below). To determine whether a family was in poverty in 1999, the total family income was compared with the appropriate poverty threshold. If the total family income was less than the threshold, then the family was considered to be in poverty.

Poverty Thresholds (Annual Dollar Amounts) by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years Old: 1999

Size of family unit	Related children under 18 years								
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or more
One person (unrelated individual)									
Under 65 years	8,667								
65 years and over	7,990								
Two people									
Householder under 65 years	11,156	11,483							
Householder 65 years and over	10,070	11,440							
Three people	13,032	13,410	13,423						
Four people	17,184	17,465	16,895	16,954					
Five people	20,723	21,024	20,380	19,882	19,578				
Six people	23,835	23,930	23,436	22,964	22,261	21,845			
Seven people	27,425	27,596	27,006	26,595	25,828	24,934	23,953		
Eight people	30,673	30,944	30,387	29,899	29,206	28,327	27,412	27,180	
Nine people or more	36,897	37,076	36,583	36,169	35,489	34,554	33,708	33,499	32,208

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

DISABILITY AND FAMILY POVERTY¹³

Using poverty status as another indicator of economic well-being, this section discusses disability and poverty among American families and the extent to which they varied across different family structures and regional and racial groups.¹⁴ A description of the definition and measurement of family

poverty is contained in the text box "Definition of Family Poverty and Related Concepts."

In every state, families with members with a disability were more likely than other families to live in poverty.

Among families with one or more members with a disability, the poverty rate was 12.8 percent — higher than the 9.2 percent for all families and the 7.7 percent for families without members with a disability. In every state and in the District of Columbia, the poverty rate was higher among families with members with a disability than among families without, as shown in Table 6. The magnitude of the

difference varied across states. In Hawaii, for instance, the poverty rate for families with members with a disability was 8.9 percent — a difference of 1.7 points from the 7.1 percent for those without members with a disability. The corresponding rates in Nevada were 6.9 percent compared with 9.1 percent and in Utah 5.8 percent compared with 8.4 percent, as shown in the last column of Table 6.

Of the families with two or more members with a disability, 16.5 percent were in poverty.

Poverty rates increased with the number of family members reporting a disability and varied

¹³ Poverty, like income, refers to calendar year 1999.

¹⁴ Estimates and comparisons in this section use the family as the unit of analysis. For poverty statistics of the entire U.S. population, see Alemayehu Bishaw and John Iceland, *Poverty: 1999: Census 2000*, C2KBR-19, Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 2003.

Table 6.
Poverty Rate by Presence of Disabilities for States: 1999

(Data based on a sample. Family characteristics as of 2000. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/docs/sf3.pdf)

Area	Total Families		Families without members with a disability			Families with members with a disability			Difference in percentage points ¹	
	Number (1)	Percent in poverty (2)	Number of families (3)	Number in poverty (4)	Percent in poverty (5)	Number of families (6)	Number in poverty (7)	Percent in poverty (8)	Column (8) minus column (2)	Column (8) minus column (5)
United States	72,261,780	9.2	51,387,650	3,950,480	7.7	20,874,130	2,670,465	12.8	3.6	5.1
Alabama	1,223,185	12.5	809,780	84,530	10.4	413,405	68,585	16.6	4.1	6.2
Alaska	153,610	6.7	116,135	6,895	5.9	37,475	3,375	9.0	2.3	3.1
Arizona	1,296,595	9.9	918,660	80,220	8.7	377,935	48,100	12.7	2.8	4.0
Arkansas	736,065	12.0	484,330	49,165	10.2	251,735	39,310	15.6	3.6	5.5
California	7,985,490	10.6	5,582,810	519,790	9.3	2,402,680	326,205	13.6	3.0	4.3
Colorado	1,092,350	6.2	825,895	43,275	5.2	266,455	24,340	9.1	2.9	3.9
Connecticut	885,745	5.6	663,135	30,540	4.6	222,615	19,440	8.7	3.1	4.1
Delaware	205,775	6.5	148,765	8,175	5.5	57,010	5,130	9.0	2.5	3.5
District of Columbia	115,965	16.7	77,540	11,415	14.7	38,425	7,950	20.7	4.0	6.0
Florida	4,238,410	9.0	2,877,525	229,560	8.0	1,360,885	153,570	11.3	2.2	3.3
Georgia	2,126,360	9.9	1,503,745	124,195	8.3	622,615	85,945	13.8	3.9	5.5
Hawaii	289,010	7.6	203,800	14,555	7.1	85,215	7,545	8.9	1.3	1.7
Idaho	337,885	8.3	246,605	18,615	7.5	91,280	9,515	10.4	2.1	2.9
Illinois	3,125,320	7.8	2,289,615	147,260	6.4	835,705	97,045	11.6	3.8	5.2
Indiana	1,611,045	6.7	1,162,630	64,745	5.6	448,415	43,045	9.6	2.9	4.0
Iowa	774,245	6.0	586,605	30,605	5.2	187,645	16,035	8.5	2.5	3.3
Kansas	706,785	6.7	524,995	30,885	5.9	181,790	16,415	9.0	2.3	3.1
Kentucky	1,110,425	12.7	729,775	69,885	9.6	380,655	70,635	18.6	5.9	9.0
Louisiana	1,163,190	15.8	782,590	107,240	13.7	380,605	76,210	20.0	4.3	6.3
Maine	342,430	7.8	244,370	15,185	6.2	98,060	11,430	11.7	3.9	5.4
Maryland	1,368,645	6.1	1,004,175	49,920	5.0	364,475	33,315	9.1	3.1	4.2
Massachusetts	1,587,535	6.7	1,172,100	61,535	5.2	415,435	44,085	10.6	4.0	5.4
Michigan	2,591,310	7.4	1,854,455	113,020	6.1	736,860	79,360	10.8	3.4	4.7
Minnesota	1,262,955	5.1	981,780	41,565	4.2	281,175	22,615	8.0	3.0	3.8
Mississippi	752,235	16.0	486,700	64,985	13.4	265,535	55,055	20.7	4.8	7.4
Missouri	1,486,545	8.6	1,063,985	76,760	7.2	422,560	50,560	12.0	3.4	4.8
Montana	238,735	10.5	175,045	16,485	9.4	63,685	8,520	13.4	2.9	4.0
Nebraska	446,550	6.7	341,005	20,615	6.0	105,545	9,360	8.9	2.2	2.8
Nevada	502,510	7.5	355,575	24,515	6.9	146,935	13,360	9.1	1.6	2.2
New Hampshire	325,580	4.3	243,130	8,105	3.3	82,450	5,845	7.1	2.8	3.8
New Jersey	2,167,575	6.3	1,586,670	83,395	5.3	580,905	52,155	9.0	2.7	3.7
New Mexico	468,900	14.5	324,755	42,125	13.0	144,145	26,055	18.1	3.5	5.1
New York	4,673,485	11.5	3,252,020	303,035	9.3	1,421,465	232,900	16.4	4.9	7.1
North Carolina	2,173,345	9.0	1,522,720	114,920	7.5	650,625	81,500	12.5	3.5	5.0
North Dakota	166,965	8.3	127,010	9,485	7.5	39,955	4,405	11.0	2.7	3.6
Ohio	3,007,205	7.8	2,180,070	143,365	6.6	827,140	91,660	11.1	3.3	4.5
Oklahoma	927,705	11.2	632,500	62,300	9.8	295,200	41,455	14.0	2.9	4.2
Oregon	884,875	7.9	635,790	43,755	6.9	249,085	26,275	10.6	2.7	3.7
Pennsylvania	3,225,705	7.8	2,332,680	148,680	6.4	893,030	101,620	11.4	3.6	5.0
Rhode Island	266,655	8.9	190,185	14,315	7.5	76,470	9,290	12.1	3.3	4.6
South Carolina	1,078,735	10.7	735,795	65,480	8.9	342,945	50,420	14.7	4.0	5.8
South Dakota	195,455	9.3	147,140	12,045	8.2	48,315	6,125	12.7	3.4	4.5
Tennessee	1,557,620	10.3	1,057,975	88,245	8.3	499,645	72,470	14.5	4.2	6.2
Texas	5,283,475	12.0	3,749,740	387,200	10.3	1,533,735	245,475	16.0	4.0	5.7
Utah	539,730	6.5	402,300	23,430	5.8	137,440	11,540	8.4	1.9	2.6
Vermont	158,685	6.3	118,610	6,210	5.2	40,075	3,715	9.3	3.0	4.0
Virginia	1,859,985	7.0	1,353,560	77,365	5.7	506,425	52,525	10.4	3.4	4.7
Washington	1,509,395	7.3	1,098,330	68,945	6.3	411,065	41,720	10.1	2.8	3.9
West Virginia	507,255	13.9	324,695	35,865	11.0	182,560	34,585	18.9	5.1	7.9
Wisconsin	1,395,035	5.6	1,059,690	49,115	4.6	335,350	29,075	8.7	3.1	4.0
Wyoming	131,510	8.1	98,195	6,960	7.1	33,315	3,625	10.9	2.8	3.8
Puerto Rico	1,008,555	44.6	556,375	228,215	41.0	452,180	222,040	49.1	4.5	8.1

¹These differences are statistically significant at 90-percent confidence level.

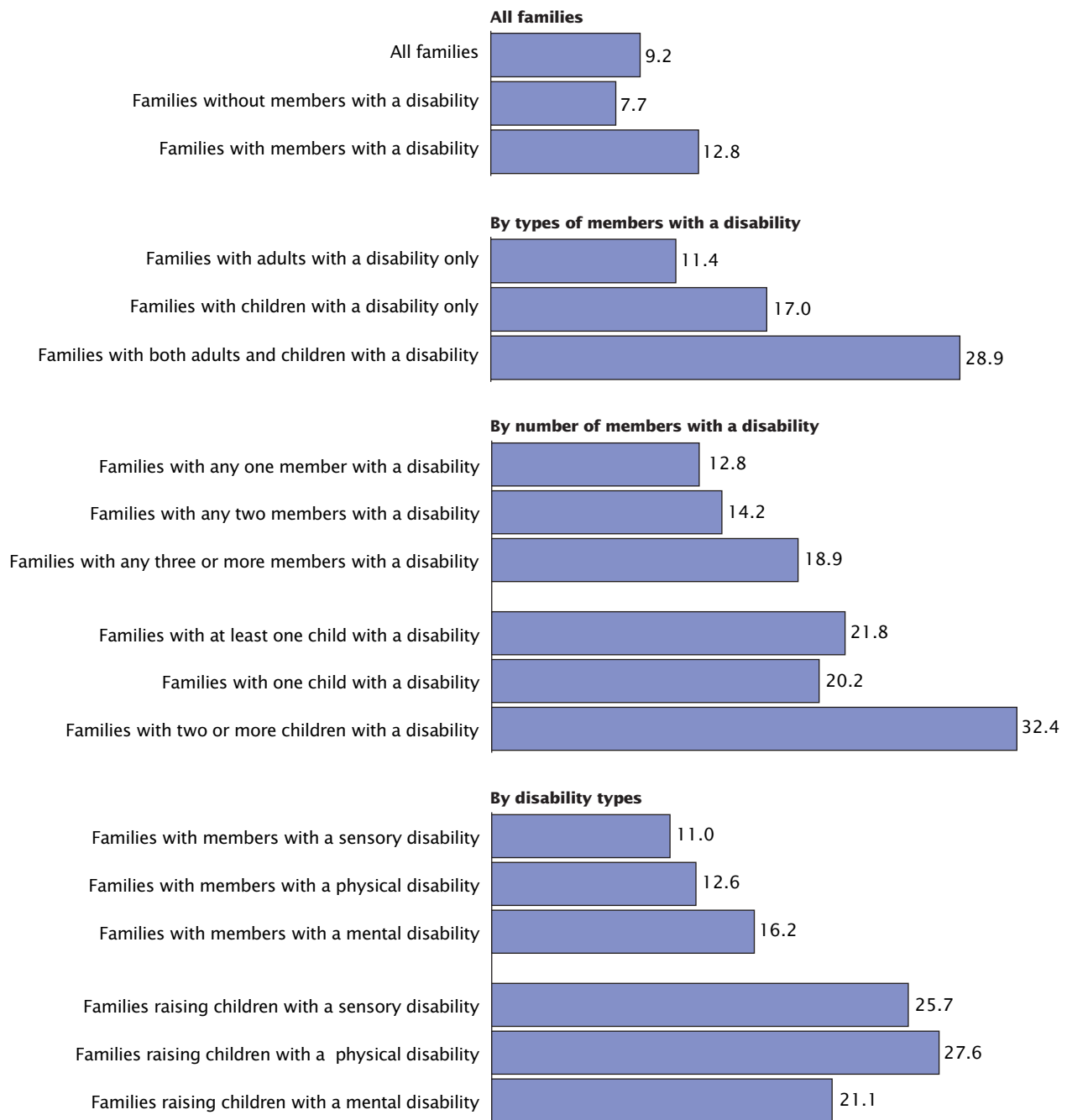
Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

Figure 4.

Poverty Rates by Number and Type of Members With a Disability: 1999

(In percent. Family characteristics as of 2000. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf)



Note 1: Householders and their spouses aged 15-17 are not considered as children.

Note 2: In addition to the summary measure of families with members with a disability, Figures 2, 3, 4, and 6 in this report include estimates of three specific types of disability: sensory, physical, and mental, as they represent the central domains of disabilities. See Appendix for details on measuring disability in surveys. See the section on Family Disability Status for details on the summary measure of families with members with a disability.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

Table 7.

Poverty Rates by Presence of Disabilities and Selected Family Characteristics: 1999(Data based on a sample. Family characteristics as of 2000. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/docs/sf3.pdf)

Family characteristics	All families		Families without members with a disability			Families with members with a disability			Difference in percentage points ¹	
	Number (1)	Percent in poverty (2)	Number (3)	Families in poverty (4)	Percent in poverty (5)	Number (6)	Families in poverty (7)	Percent in poverty (8)	Column (8) minus column (2)	Column (8) minus column (5)
Race and Hispanic Origin¹										
White alone	56,470,095	6.3	40,921,325	2,109,285	5.2	15,548,770	1,439,250	9.3	3.0	4.2
White alone, not Hispanic	52,769,535	5.5	38,447,385	1,702,285	4.4	14,322,150	1,186,810	8.3	2.8	3.9
Black alone	8,209,430	21.7	5,278,165	1,043,235	19.8	2,931,270	733,870	25.0	3.4	5.3
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	563,650	21.8	346,455	67,605	19.5	217,195	55,325	25.5	3.7	6.0
Asian alone	2,350,400	9.7	1,727,145	149,920	8.7	623,255	76,995	12.4	2.7	3.7
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone	79,255	14.6	54,18	7,405	13.7	25,075	4,180	16.7	2.1	3.0
Some other race alone	3,206,530	22.0	2,174,205	444,525	20.5	1,032,330	261,955	25.4	3.3	4.9
Two or more races	1,382,420	16.5	886,185	128,510	14.5	496,240	98,895	19.9	3.5	5.4
Hispanic (of any race)	7,483,040	20.0	4,996,545	922,615	18.5	2,486,495	572,680	23.0	3.1	4.6
Region										
Northeast	13,633,405	8.5	9,802,900	671,000	6.8	3,830,505	480,475	12.5	4.1	5.7
Midwest	16,769,420	7.2	12,318,970	739,460	6.0	4,450,450	465,695	10.5	3.3	4.5
South	26,428,370	10.6	18,281,905	1,630,450	8.9	8,146,465	1,174,130	14.4	3.8	5.5
West	15,430,585	9.5	10,983,875	909,570	8.3	4,446,710	550,165	12.4	2.9	4.1
Rural/Urban Status										
Rural	16,679,230	8.3	11,654,850	770,485	6.6	5,024,380	607,870	12.1	3.8	5.5
Urban	55,582,550	9.4	39,732,800	3,179,995	8.0	15,849,750	2,062,600	13.0	3.6	5.0
Family Type										
Married-couple family	55,458,450	4.9	40,293,445	1,530,325	3.8	15,165,005	1,188,735	7.8	2.9	4.0
Family with female householder, no spouse present	12,500,760	26.5	8,150,735	2,062,650	25.3	4,350,025	1,253,265	28.8	2.3	3.5
Family with male householder, no spouse present	4,302,570	13.6	2,943,470	357,505	12.2	1,359,095	228,465	16.8	3.2	4.6

¹These difference are statistically significant at 90-percent confidence level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

across disability type. Among the estimated 6.5 million families with two or more members with a disability, 16.5 percent were in poverty. The poverty rate for the 1.2 million families with both adults and children with a disability was 28.9 percent (see Figure 4).

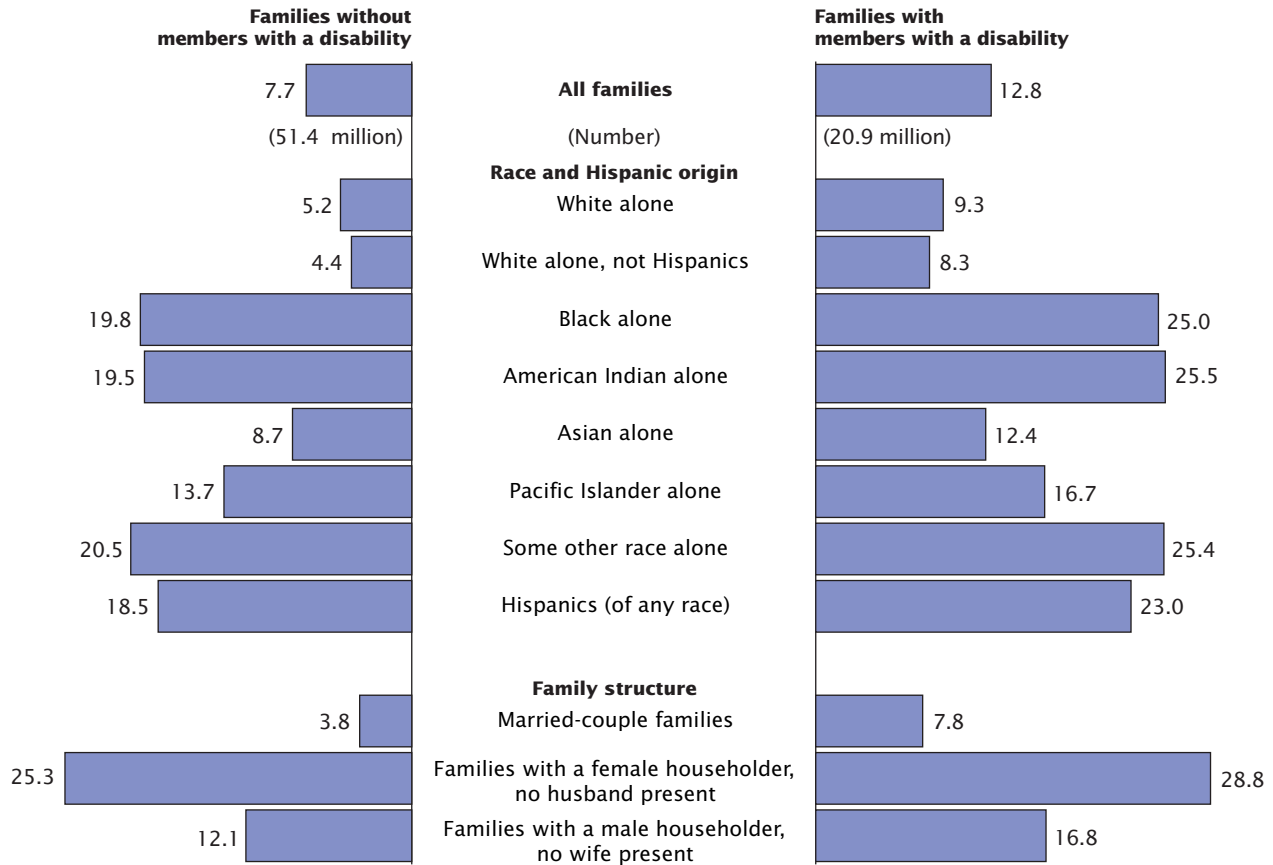
Across disability types, families with members with a mental disability were more likely to live in poverty, 16.2 percent, than were families with members with a physical or a sensory disability at 12.6 percent and 11.3 percent, respectively (see Figure 4).

Poverty and disability tended to occur in similar proportions in Black families and American Indian and Alaska Native families.

Of the single-race and Hispanic groups examined in this report, Black families and American Indian

Figure 5.
Poverty Rates by Presence of Disabilities and Other Selected Family Characteristics: 1999

(In percent. Family characteristics as of 2000. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

and Alaska Native families were most likely to be in poverty (each having a poverty rate of approximately 22 percent) and most likely to have family members with a disability (35.7 percent for Black families and 38.5 percent for American Indian and Alaska Native families). In contrast, non-Hispanic White families and Asian families had the lowest poverty rates (8.3 percent and 12.4 percent, respectively) and the lowest disability prevalence rates (27.1 percent and 26.5 percent, respectively). Hispanic

families had a poverty rate of 23.0 percent and a disability rate of 33.2 percent (see Table 3 and Table 7).

Families in the South had higher prevalence rates of both disability and poverty.

Among the four U.S. regions, families in the South had a higher poverty rate (10.6 percent) than their counterparts in the other three regions (see Table 7). The South was also the region where families had the highest disability

prevalence (30.8 percent). The Northeast had the largest difference in poverty rates: 12.5 percent poverty rate for families with members with a disability, compared with the 6.8 percent poverty rate for families without members with a disability.

In both urban and rural areas, larger proportions of families with members with a disability than families without a disability lived in poverty (see Table 7). Families in rural areas had a higher disability rate

Table 8.
Poverty Rates Among Families Raising Children and Other Selected Family Characteristics: 1999

(Data based on a sample. Family characteristics as of 2000. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/docs/sf3.pdf)

Family characteristics	Families raising children without a disability		Families raising children with a disability		Difference in percentage points ¹
	Number (1)	Percent in poverty (2)	Number (3)	Percent in poverty (4)	Column (4) minus column (2)
All families raising children ¹	27,867,765	12.6	2,834,640	21.8	9.2
Race and Hispanic Origin					
White alone	20,054,590	8.5	1,942,215	15.9	7.4
White alone, not Hispanic	18,253,415	7.2	1,760,315	14.4	7.2
Black alone	4,040,705	25.5	509,520	37.7	12.2
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	274,480	25.9	39,295	33.4	7.5
Asian alone	1,020,830	11.7	61,190	18.4	6.7
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone ..	42,155	17.1	4,280	22.7	5.6
Some other race alone	1,807,190	24.7	194,445	34.3	9.6
Two or more races	627,820	19.8	83,705	29.0	9.2
Hispanic (of any race)	3,912,795	23.5	419,975	32.7	9.2
Region					
Northeast	5,112,020	11.7	526,580	22.4	10.7
Midwest	6,332,275	9.7	653,880	18.6	8.9
South	10,095,460	14.4	1,060,420	24.0	9.6
West	6,328,010	13.3	593,760	20.6	7.3
Rural/Urban Status					
Rural	6,136,745	11.0	609,770	19.4	8.4
Urban	21,731,020	13.0	2,224,870	22.4	9.4
Family Structure					
Married-couple family	19,876,035	6.3	1,746,055	10.7	4.4
Family with a female householder with no husband present	6,231,650	31.5	906,205	42.7	11.2
Family with a male householder with no wife present	1,760,080	16.6	182,380	23.5	6.9

¹These differences are all statistically significant at 90-percent confidence level.

Note: Householders and their spouses aged 15-17 are not considered as children.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

than those in urban areas (30.1 percent compared with 28.5 percent), but not a higher poverty rate (8.3 percent compared with 9.4 percent).

The poverty rates for families with a member with a disability varied with the composition of the family and the race and Hispanic origin of the householder.

The poverty rate among families with a female householder with no husband present and with members with a disability — 28.8 percent —

exceeded the national average of 12.8 percent. The corresponding rate for families with a male householder with no wife present and with members with a disability was 16.8 percent, as shown in Table 7 and Figure 5. Married-couple families with members with a disability had a poverty rate of 7.8 percent.

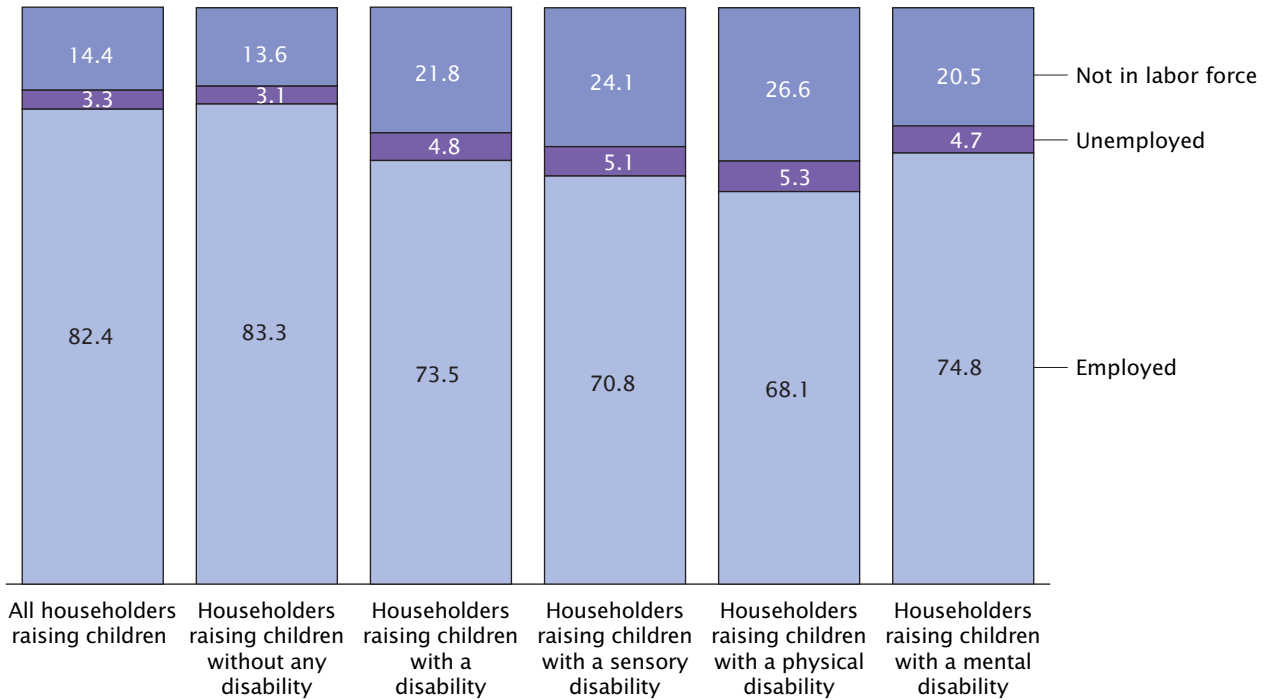
With a poverty rate of 8.3 percent, families with a non-Hispanic White householder and members with a disability were less likely to be in poverty than other families with a member with a disability. While not

statistically different from each other, the poverty rates for families with a member with a disability and a householder who was Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Some Other Race (ranging from 25.0 percent to 25.5 percent), were higher than the rates for families with a member with a disability and an Asian householder (12.4 percent), a Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander householder (16.7 percent), or a Hispanic householder (23.0 percent).

Figure 6.

Employment Status of Family Householders Raising Children With Disabilities: 2000¹

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf)



¹ The total number of family householders in the civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 16 to 64 years old and raising children was 29.7 million in 2000.

Note 1: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Note 2: In addition to the summary measure of families with members with a disability, Figures 2, 3, 4, and 6 in this report include estimates of three specific types of disability: sensory, physical, and mental, as they represent the central domains of disabilities. See Appendix for details on measuring disability in surveys. See the section on Family Disability Status for details on the summary measure of families with members with a disability.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

FAMILIES RAISING CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY

This section describes levels of income, employment situations, and the prevalence of poverty among families raising children with a disability.

One in every 26 American families reported raising children with a disability.

An estimated 2.8 million families were raising at least one child aged

5 to 17 with a disability.¹⁵ This figure represents 3.9 percent of the 72.3 million American families and 9.2 percent of the 30.7 million families raising children in 2000 (see Table 8). Among the 2.8 million families, 367,000 families, or 1.3 percent, reported raising two or more children with a disability.

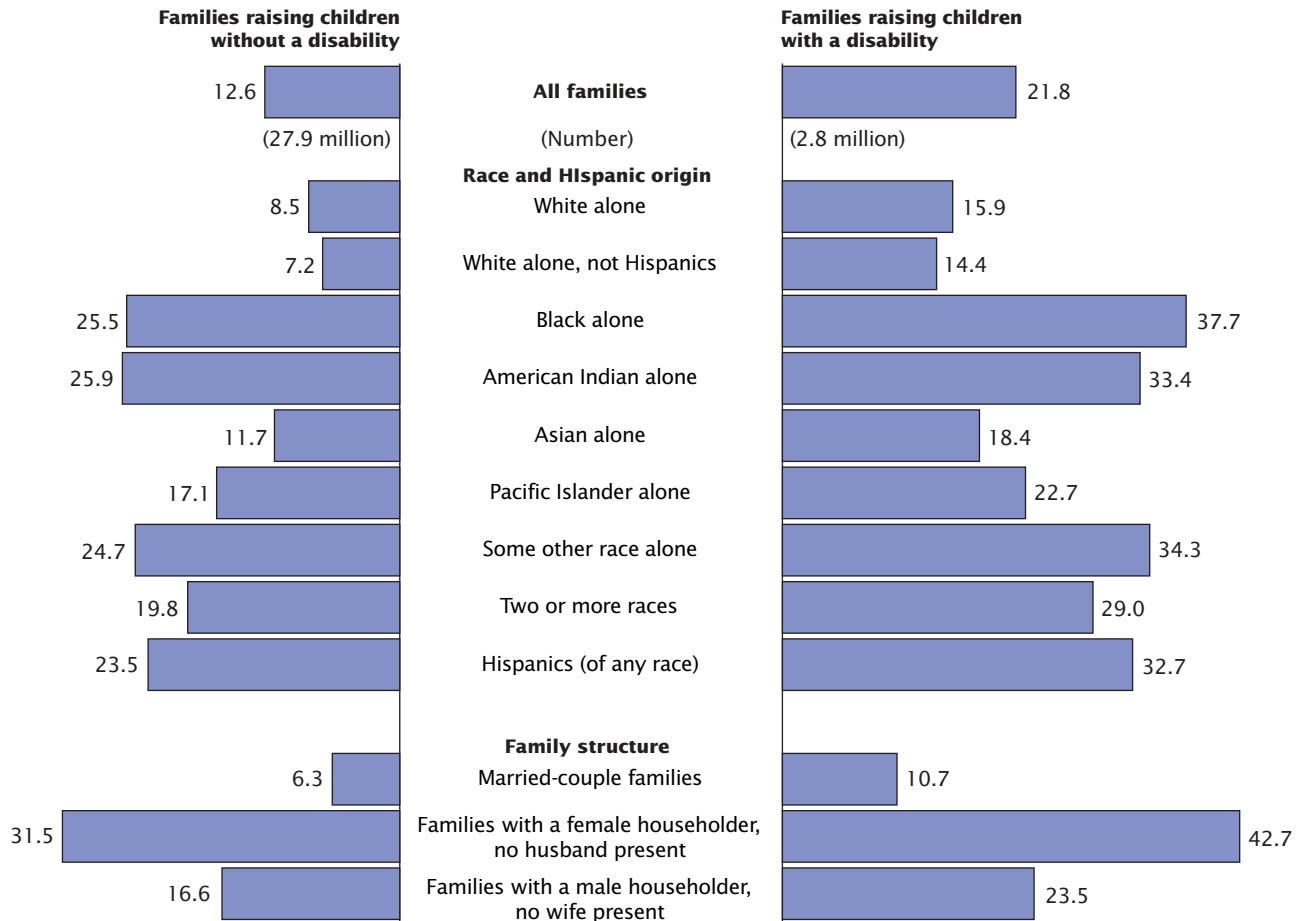
¹⁵ Householders and their spouses aged 15-17 are not considered as children.

Employment situations varied among householders raising children with a disability.

Among the 2.7 million working-age family householders raising children with a disability, 2 million, or 73.5 percent, worked part or all of 1999. The employment rate was 82.4 percent for all householders raising children and 83.3 percent for householders raising children without a disability (see Figure 6). Across disability

Figure 7.
Poverty Rates Among Families Raising Children by Selected Family Characteristics: 1999

(In percent. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf)



Note: Householders and their spouses aged 15 - 17 are not considered as children.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.

types, householders raising children with a mental disability had an employment rate of 74.8 percent, compared with 70.8 percent of householders raising children with a sensory disability and 68.1 percent of those raising children with a physical disability.

Families raising children with a disability had a lower median income than other families.

Families raising children with a disability had a median income of \$38,332, compared with \$39,515 for families with any members with a disability and \$48,936 for

all families raising children. Across disability types, families raising children with a mental disability reported a median income of \$39,353, compared to \$34,603 and \$32,265 for families raising children with a sensory disability or with a physical disability, respectively (see Table 4).

Families raising children with a disability were more likely to live in poverty than other families raising children.

Families raising children with a disability had a poverty rate of 21.8 percent, compared with 12.6 percent for families raising children without a disability. The poverty rate of families raising children with a physical disability was 27.6 percent, compared with 25.7 percent of those raising children with a sensory disability and 21.1 percent of those raising children with a mental disability, as shown in Figure 4.

The poverty rate increased with the number of children in the family who had a disability. While about 1 in every 5 families raising one child with a disability lived in poverty, the rate was about 1 in 3 for families raising two or more children with a disability, as shown in Figure 4.

Married-couple families raising children with a disability were better off economically than other families raising children with a disability.

Among families raising children with a disability, 10.7 percent of married-couple families lived in poverty, compared with 42.7 percent of families with a female householder with no husband present and 23.5 percent of families with a male householder with no wife present (see Figure 7).

ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

The data contained in this report are based on the sample of households who responded to the Census 2000 long form. Nationally, approximately 1 out of

every 6 housing units was included in this sample. As a result, the sample estimates may differ somewhat from the 100-percent figures that would have been obtained if all housing units, people within those housing units, and people living in group quarters had been enumerated using the same questionnaires, instructions, enumerators, and so forth. The sample estimates also differ from the values that would have been obtained from different samples of housing units, and hence of people living in those housing units, and people living in group quarters. The deviation of a sample estimate from the average of all possible samples is called the sampling error.

In addition to the variability that arises from the sampling procedures, both sample data and 100-percent data are subject to nonsampling error. Nonsampling error may be introduced during any of the various complex operations used to collect and process data. Such errors may include: not enumerating every household or every person in the population, failing to obtain all required information from the respondents, obtaining incorrect or inconsistent information, and recording information incorrectly. In addition, errors can occur during the field review of the enumerators' work, during clerical handling of the census questionnaires, or during the electronic processing of the questionnaires.

While it is impossible to completely eliminate error from an operation as large and complex as the decennial census, the Census Bureau attempts to control the sources of such error during the data collection and processing operations.

The primary sources of error and the programs instituted to control error in Census 2000 are described in detail in *Summary File 3 Technical Documentation* under Chapter 8, "Accuracy of the Data," located at www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf.

Nonsampling error may affect the data in two ways: first, errors that are introduced randomly will increase the variability of the data and, therefore, should be reflected in the standard errors; and second, errors that tend to be consistent in one direction will bias both sample and 100-percent data in that direction. For example, if respondents consistently tend to underreport their incomes, then the resulting estimates of households or families by income category will tend to be understated for the higher income categories and overstated for the lower income categories. Such biases are not reflected in the standard errors.

All statements in this report have undergone statistical testing and all comparisons are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. The estimates in tables, maps, and other figures may vary from actual values due to sampling and nonsampling errors. As a result, estimates in one category used to summarize statistics in the maps and figures may not be statistically different from estimates assigned to a different category. Further information on the accuracy of the data is located at www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf. For further information on the computation and use of standard errors, contact the Decennial Statistical Studies Division at 301-763-4242.

APPENDIX

Background on Disability and Its Measurement in Surveys

For over 30 years, the accepted definitions of disability have been changing. In the 1970s, the concept of a disability was associated directly with an underlying physical or mental condition. Today, there is a growing acceptance that disability is a complex process that involves the interaction between a person and his or her environment. In other words, in 1970 a person with leg paralysis would have been considered to be disabled based solely on physical condition. In 2004, ascertainment of disability status could involve the nature of the physical impairment as well as the barriers in the environment which prevent full social participation. The development of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) by the World Health Organization reflects this new perspective. The ICF is meant to codify a classification of functioning, disability, and health “to provide a unified standard language and framework for the description of health and health-related state.” The ICF views disability as an umbrella term and does not provide a single way to determine disability status. Thus, it is important to state clearly what aspect of the disablement process is being captured by a specific set of questions.

As public perception of disability has changed over time, so have the goals of programs supporting people with disabilities. In the

past, the emphasis was to provide support to people with disabilities primarily through benefits. Today, that has shifted to an emphasis on supporting independence and promoting involvement in all aspects of society. As the conceptualization of disability and as service programs for people with disabilities have changed, the Census Bureau and other statistical bodies have struggled with operationalizing the concept of disability for the purpose of measurement. The “definitions” devised by the disability theorists and researchers present challenges in two areas. First, the process of measuring a complex, multi-dimensional concept in a survey format with limited space is inherently difficult. Second, the constantly evolving concept of disability requires survey professionals to continuously develop new measurement approaches to adapt to the newest definitions of disability.

The preparations for Census 2000 followed the same pattern established for previous decennial censuses. The Census Bureau worked with other federal agencies to determine which aspects of disability were relevant and necessary for the agencies to meet their specific legal or regulatory obligations for planning and/or evaluating programs and services. As in the previous census, two of the groups that Census 2000 tried to measure were people unable to care for themselves and people limited or unable

to work due to health impairment. During the 1990s, along with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guaranteeing civil rights to people with disabilities, agencies began requesting that statistical agencies collect and report disability statistics as a demographic characteristic of the population.

The work group which developed the questions for Census 2000 faced three tasks: (1) measuring disability using a definition in keeping with the ADA, (2) meeting the needs of various agencies requiring specific information, and (3) having a maximum of six questions. The committee agreed that three domains (sensory, physical, and mental/emotional/cognitive) sufficiently represented the broad classification of impairments and health conditions that generally result in disability. In addition, the committee concluded that it could meet an array of other programmatic requirements with three questions on difficulty with specific types of functional activities. They were intended to address people with limitations in performing the following: Activities of Daily Living, which generally include self-care type activities such as bathing or dressing; Instrumental Activities of Daily Living, which are activities often associated with independent living such as going out alone to shop or visit a doctor’s office; and, finally, working at a job or business.

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