

Employment and Work Adjustments of the Disabled: 1972 Survey of Disabled and Nondisabled Adults

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Of the 156 million individuals in the United States who were currently disabled in 1972, 8 out of 10 were employed as the disability began. For these persons, several aspects of work adjustments after the onset of disability are examined here, with the measures of adjustment based on self-reports of the disabled. Women were less likely to be employed after onset than men. Those employed full time before they were disabled were more likely to work after onset than those who had been part-time workers. The relationship between duration of disability and employment varied with severity of disability. Among the severely disabled, those with a long-term disability were more likely not to work than were the recently disabled. Keeping the pre-onset work status varied with type of employment. For the severely and occupationally disabled, industries staffed by craftsmen and operatives had lower rates of retention than did other sectors. Most of those who returned to work after onset did so within 6 months. Men who returned to work did so more quickly than did women. Doctor's advice and family responsibility were the primary reasons for not returning to work.

LOSS OR REDUCTION in the ability to work following onset of illness is a common element in virtually all definitions of disability.¹ A given level of physical impairment does not, however, leave all individuals with identical activity limitations. That is, personal characteristics of the disabled—age, sex, level of education, motivation—are directly related to levels of adaptation and/or recovery.² In addition, elements of the work career before onset of the incapacitating chronic illness affect work adjustments of the disabled.

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¹ See Lawrence D Haber, "Some Parameters for Social Policy in Disability: A Cross-national Comparison," in *Health and Society, Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, Summer 1973, pages 319-340, see also S B Slater et al, "The Definition and Measurement of Disability," *Social Science and Medicine*, vol 8, 1974, pages 305-308

² For a general discussion, see David Mechanic, "Response Factors in Illness: The Study of Illness Behavior," *Social Psychiatry*, vol 1, 1966, pages 11-20

This report provides some description of the post-onset work status of the disabled. The data are from a 1972 survey, sponsored by the Social Security Administration, of 18,000 disabled and nondisabled persons aged 20-64.³

The focus is on a basic research issue: What are the relationships between selected characteristics of the disabled and work patterns following disability? Adjustment is measured by reports of the work-related status before and after onset. The concern here is to note what factors (both characteristics of individuals and of work before onset) are associated with the dislocation in work status that onset of disability is presumed to bring about.

Levels of adjustment may be defined by the closeness of the disabled person's current work schedule (at the time of the survey) to the work schedule before onset. In this survey series, such a longitudinal measure is based on retrospective self-report by the disabled respondents. Such a measure does not meet the rigorous definition of either true-panel or cross-sectional data, but it is one form of before/after measurement.

The study looks at work status over a period of time. Onset of disability is defined as the point in time when the respondent judged that an illness of physical condition limited his ability to work. If a disabled individual worked either full time before and after onset or part time before and after onset, "no change" is noted in his work pattern. Since the number of workers who move from part-time work before onset to full-time work after onset is small, these individuals are also reported in the "no change" category. (The "not working" group comprises those who are unemployed or not in the labor force after onset.) Those disabled who worked

³ For earlier reports from the survey, see Kathryn H Allan, "First Findings of the 1972 Survey of the Disabled: General Characteristics," *Social Security Bulletin*, October 1976, and Paula A Franklin, "Impact of Disability on the Family Structure," *Social Security Bulletin*, May 1977

full time before onset but part time after onset make up the other group with a "reduced" work status Excluded from the analysis are the disabled who were unemployed before onset, since the notion of adjustment in work status is not meaningful in this context Some data for this group are presented, however, in table 1.

The definition of severity of disability used in this survey of the disabled and in the 1966 Social Security Administration survey⁴ is based on the individual's self-report of his capacity for work and/or current work schedule It is not a measure of clinically evaluated health (See the technical note, page 15 for the listing of self-reports included in each level of severity.) As a result, many of the relationships revealed by the tabular material in this report should have been anticipated In this survey, for example, it is a matter of definition that the severely disabled are more likely to be unemployed than are the occupationally disabled Relationships resulting from the characteristics of the disabled, independent of the level of disability, were also looked for, however As the impact of these variables were examined with the severity of disability controlled, the essentially tautological nature and the associations between severity of disability and post-onset work schedules can be overlooked

One further point should be made here Why is work loss or reduction an important focus of the effects of functional loss and physical incapacitation? Implicit in much of the literature is the notion that work serves to define individuals⁵ It is an element that organizes time and in part determines location of residence Work itself is a performance status, and the income from work—a function of occupation, level of responsibility on the job, and amount of working time—determines the range of other-than-work roles that individuals occupy and the levels of performance of those roles Identification with fellow employees and with content of work affect after-work associations and pursuits In sum, because of the central focus of work on the lives of individuals, the modes of participation in the labor force provide benchmarks against which

TABLE 1—Employment status at onset Percentage distribution of disabled adult population aged 20-64, by severity of disability and sex, 1972

Severity of disability and sex	Total number ¹ (in thousands)	Percentage distribution, by employment status			
		Total	Full time	Part time	Not working
All disabled					
Men	6,713	100 0	78 4	3 8	17 8
Women	7,156	100 0	42 9	12 4	44 7
Severe					
Men	2,708	100 0	82 0	5 7	12 4
Women	3,777	100 0	43 7	13 0	43 3
Occupational					
Men	1,915	100 0	86 4	2 4	11 2
Women	1,503	100 0	42 2	16 9	40 9
Secondary work limitation					
Men	2,090	100 0	66 4	2 5	31 0
Women	1,876	100 0	41 9	7 6	50 4

¹ Excludes 1,681,000 with unknown work status before onset, out of 15,500,000 total disabled noninstitutionalized population aged 20-64

the total recovery process of the disabled is measured.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND EMPLOYMENT AFTER ONSET

The first question is whether work-status patterns (before-onset and after-onset comparisons) vary with the severity of disability and with selected demographic characteristics of the disabled Tables 2-5 present these data, omitting persons with unknown work status before or after the onset of their disability

When the differences in work adjustment according to disability status are examined, it appears that the greater the extent of disability, the greater the likelihood that the disabled worked less than they did before the disablement This observation applies to each of the demographic characteristics. Among the severely disabled, more than one-half of those who worked less after onset were not working at all and the proportion not working was more than 80 percent in most groups within the various demographic categories By contrast, in almost every instance no more than one-fourth of those who reported secondary work limitations worked the same schedule as they did before onset.

When the data are controlled for severity of disability in table 2, a significant difference (at 0.05 level) in work schedules is shown for men and women in the occupational disability category. Women were less likely (70 percent) to be employed than men (90 percent) The

⁴ See Social Security Administration, Office of Research and Statistics, *Survey of the Disabled 1966* (Reports Nos 1-24), 1967-74

⁵ For an explicit treatment of this topic, see Everett C Hughes, *Men and Their Work*, Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1958

TABLE 2—Disabled adult population aged 20-64 employed before onset Percentage distribution by change in work status, severity of disability, and sex, 1972

Severity of disability and sex	Total number ¹ (in thousands)	Percentage distribution, by change in work status			
		Total	No change ²	Work reduced	
				Still working ³	Not working ⁴
All disabled					
Men	5 427	100 0	49 9	11 5	38 6
Women	3 927	100 0	30 3	13 9	54 3
Severe					
Men	2 325	100 0	14 4	8 0	77 6
Women	2 121	100 0	8 2	6 3	86 5
Occupational					
Men	1 682	100 0	71 2	18 4	10 4
Women	877	100 0	37 2	32 2	30 6
Secondary work limitation					
Men	1 429	100 0	81 9	8 8	9 3
Women	929	100 0	74 1	14 0	11 9

¹ Excludes 3,473,000 with unknown work status, either before or after onset
² Represents those who continued to work full time or part time and those who changed from part time to full time
³ Represents those who changed from full time to part time work
⁴ Represents those unemployed after onset

higher incidence of reduced-work status among women suggests several possible explanatory phenomena

According to the following tabulation, which gives the percentages of men and women who worked part time before onset of disability,

Sex	Total number reporting ¹ (in thousands)	Percent working before onset	
		Full time	Part time
Men	5,427	96 0	4 0
Women	3,927	77 6	22 4

¹ Excludes 3,473,000 with unknown work status, either before or after onset

relatively more women than men worked part time before their disablement Furthermore, pre-onset part-time workers were less likely to maintain a constant work pattern than were full-time employees Specific labor practices or policies of former employees might affect the treatment of workers in part-time schedules A previous part-time work history might not be viewed with favor by prospective employers when it is coupled with current disability Men who had been full-time employees may feel the necessity to work at pre-onset levels if they are primary wage earners⁶

⁶ Pearl S German and Joseph W Collins, *Disability and Work Adjustment* (Survey of the Disabled 1968, Report No 24), Social Security Administration, Office of Research and Statistics, 1974

TABLE 3—Disabled adult population aged 20-64 employed before onset Percentage distribution by change in work status, severity of disability, and age, 1972

Severity of disability and age (at survey)	Total number ¹ (in thousands)	Percentage distribution, by change in work status			
		Total	No change ²	Work reduced	
				Still working ³	Not working ⁴
All disabled					
Under 34	1,334	100 0	51 4	15 3	33 3
35-44	1,421	100 0	47 8	15 3	36 9
45-54	2,903	100 0	47 3	12 4	40 3
55-64	3 731	100 0	31 0	10 4	58 6
Severe					
Under 34	339	100 0	17 5	9 2	73 3
35-44	590	100 0	23 4	11 5	65 1
45-54	1,258	100 0	10 1	7 4	82 5
55-64	2,281	100 0	8 3	5 7	86 0
Occupational					
Under 34	427	100 0	57 9	18 5	23 6
35-44	379	100 0	43 7	28 0	28 3
45-54	877	100 9	65 7	24 1	10 2
55-64	876	100 0	60 7	22 2	17 1
Secondary work limitation					
Under 34	568	100 0	66 8	16 6	16 6
35-44	447	100 0	83 8	9 7	6 5
45-54	768	100 0	87 1	7 1	5 8
55-64	374	100 0	75 8	10 9	13 3

¹ Excludes 3 438,000 with unknown work status, either before or after onset or age at time of survey
² See table 2 footnote 2
³ See table 2 footnote 3
⁴ See table 2, footnote 4

On the other hand, women who were working part time to supplement the wages of other workers in the family may leave the labor force upon onset of disability if the family has a sufficient level of income from the efforts of other family members

Among the severely disabled, younger workers (under age 44) were significantly more likely to work at pre-onset levels than were older workers (table 3) It should be noted that the severely disabled shown in the tabulation below as working

Age and sex	Severely disabled employed before onset	
	Total number (in thousands)	Percent working full time after onset
Age		
Under 34	339	10 0
35-44	590	22 4
45-54	1,258	6 5
55-64	2,281	6 2
Sex		
Men	2,352	12 9
Women	2,121	4 1

full time after onset include some in the "no change" work category This finding runs counter to the sense of the definition of severely disabled as being unable to work or being unable to work regularly. These individuals worked despite their

own indications that they should not be able to do so. This contradiction is not necessarily due to measurement error. Economic need could be an obvious explanatory factor.

A recent study cites several noneconomic reasons why a disabled worker's assessment of his condition (which affects the decision to work) can run counter to clinical evaluations of his health (on which self-assessments of ability to work are often based).⁷ These arguments center on the concept of self-esteem, as that concerns the disabled person's social status in the family, and as routine and work activity serve to overcome the often debilitating effects of idleness. The pressure is to seek employment, so that vocational interests and social contacts are maintained.

The difference in work rates between younger and older workers in the severely disabled category, however, does indicate an interaction between age and the operation of the social-psychological mechanisms mentioned above. Without supporting multivariate investigations, it is not possible to assess the relative impact of social motivation, physical and job flexibility associated with age, and the necessity of economic subsistence on two phenomena: the relationship between age and employment and the decision to work despite disability.⁸

Table 3 also reveals a significant difference between the younger (under age 44) and older workers in the occupationally disabled category. That younger workers were more likely to have reduced work schedules is an unanticipated finding, given the results for the severely disabled. When the definition of this disability grouping is taken into account, however, it is not surprising that those who are able to work regularly after onset but unable to do the same work are likely to maintain their post-onset work schedules with increasing job tenure. As length of service is a function of age, older workers with less than severe limitations might be expected to have a

⁷Linda H. Alken, "Chronic Illness and Responsive Ambulatory Care," in David Mechanic, *The Growth of Bureaucratic Medicine*, John Wiley and Sons, 1976.

⁸Martin D. Hyman, "Social Psychological Factors Affecting Disability Among Ambulatory Patients," *Journal of Chronic Diseases*, vol. 28, 1975, pages 199-216; Lawrence D. Haber, "Age and Capacity Devaluation," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, September 1970, pages 167-182; and Daniel Robinson, *The Process of Becoming Ill*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1969.

stable work pattern. A similar younger/older worker difference was found for workers with secondary limitations, but the percentage difference was not statistically significant.

The hypothesis can be advanced that—with age controlled—the longer the duration of disability, the more likely the disabled are to find employment and even attain pre-onset work status. Such a hypothesis assumes that the level of wage replacement in the form of disabled-worker or similar benefits does not rise with the duration of the disabling condition, and that labor-market conditions are constant. The disabled become accustomed to their physical incapacitation, and any compensating for their condition may result in increased adaptability and a greater inclination to seek work because of greater self-competence attendant upon this increased adaptability.

It is difficult to bring the data precisely to bear on this hypothesis in a cross-tabular presentation, but table 4 does give evidence of an important interaction effect—involving severity of disability, duration of condition, and work status—that does not completely validate it.

TABLE 4—Disabled adult population aged 20-64 employed before onset. Percentage distribution by change in work status, severity of disability, and duration of disability, 1972

Severity of disability and duration of disability (in years)	Total number ¹ (in thousands)	Percentage distribution, by change in work status			
		Total	No change ²	Work reduced	
				Still working ³	Not working ⁴
All disabled					
Less than 1	1,349	100 0	42 8	10 3	46 9
1-2	335	100 0	40 0	20 1	39 9
2-5½	3,792	100 0	41 3	13 7	45 0
5½-10	1,881	100 0	39 7	10 3	50 0
10 or more	1,916	100 0	42 3	12 6	45 1
Severe					
Less than 1	764	100 0	21 7	6 0	72 3
1-2	196	100 0	32 8	15 3	51 9
2-5½	1,719	100 0	11 0	8 1	80 9
5½-10	865	100 0	4 3	6 1	89 6
10 or more	890	100 0	5 9	5 7	88 4
Occupational					
Less than 1	258	100 0	27 2	34 4	28 4
1-2	85	100 0	31 2	31 7	37 1
2-5	1,071	100 0	59 0	24 1	16 9
5½-10	541	100 0	65 2	16 4	18 4
10 or more	565	100 0	69 3	22 4	8 3
Secondary work limitation					
Less than 1	327	100 0	96 3	1 5	2 2
1-2	54	100 0	79 7	19 1	1 2
2-5	1,002	100 0	74 2	12 1	13 7
5½-10	475	100 0	75 0	11 1	13 9
10 or more	461	100 0	79 6	13 8	6 6

¹ Excludes 3,554,000 with unknown work status, either before or after onset, or who did not report duration of disability.

² See table 2, footnote 2.

³ See table 2, footnote 3.

⁴ See table 2, footnote 4.

The findings for the occupationally disabled do support the hypothesis. Workers who reported onset of disability less than 2 years before the survey were more likely not to work than were those whose disabling condition started earlier. For the severely disabled, however, the relationship was the inverse of that for the occupationally disabled. This finding points up the simple fact that a physical condition may deteriorate over time. It may also reflect the fact that those with severe disability are more likely to receive benefits and that the more severe the limiting medical condition, the likelier that their benefits are awarded close to onset.

Furthermore, the occupationally disabled group with disability of greater than 2 years' duration must have included formerly severely disabled workers who had made some form of recovery. For this group, the passage of time affected work adjustment. The long-term severely disabled, however, undoubtedly included individuals whose physical condition had degenerated. The problems of work adjustment for that group were great, as unemployment figures indicate. Thus, it was not the passage of time in itself but the progress of the disabling condition that affected work adjustment.

It might be anticipated that the workers disabled on the job would work after onset, as employers' personnel policies could be influenced by some notion of obligation to the injured party. As table 5 indicates, however, no evidence was

found that work status was related to work injury. No significant difference appeared in the percentage with reduced-work status between the work-accident and non-work-related groups. This finding replicated those from the 1966 survey.⁹

For employers as a whole, according to one study, the criteria of employee usefulness, in terms of physical requirements, govern the decision to hire disabled workers. The national survey data appear to bear out this observation.¹⁰

WORK ADJUSTMENT AND SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT

Those injured on the job do not seem to be treated differently by employers in providing for resumption of pre-onset work levels. It is possible, however, that maintenance of the earlier work status varies with certain characteristics of those jobs. The 1966 survey of the disabled presented data relating the nature of work before onset and the extent of functional limitations¹¹ but did not examine the issue of differential rates of retention—the percentage in each disability category whose job does not change.

Job Retention

Characteristics of job retention after the onset of disability result from the operation of two sets of factors. One set relates to the characteristics of workers themselves. Individuals with generalized capacity to adjust to disability conditions and the ability to cope with changing job conditions are not necessarily found with equal probability in all employment contexts. Thus, some jobs may have a stable (in terms of returning to the job after onset) work force because they attract workers with particular psychological characteristics.

⁹ Lawrence D. Haber, "The Chronology of Disability," in *Proceedings of the 24th Annual Meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association*, 1972, pages 324-331.

¹⁰ Leo G. Reeder, "Employment Practices and the Cardiac," *Journal of Chronic Diseases*, vol. 18, 1965, pages 951-963.

¹¹ Lawrence D. Haber, *The Epidemiology of Disability II: The Measurement of Functional Capacity Limitations* (Survey of the Disabled 1966, Report No. 10). Social Security Administration, Office of Research and Statistics, 1970.

TABLE 5—Disabled adult population aged 20-64 employed before onset. Percentage distribution by change in work status and by severity and type of disability, 1972

Severity and type of disability	Total number ¹ (in thousands)	Percentage distribution, by change in work status			
		Total	No change ²	Work reduced	
				Still working ³	Not working ⁴
All disabled					
Work-related	2,399	100.0	46.1	12.9	41.0
Not work-related	5,704	100.0	40.7	11.1	48.2
Severe					
Work-related	1,033	100.0	9.9	8.4	81.7
Not work-related	2,755	100.0	12.9	5.2	81.9
Occupational					
Work-related	824	100.0	69.7	17.8	12.5
Not work-related	1,418	100.0	51.9	27.1	21.0
Secondary work limitation					
Work-related	542	100.0	79.4	14.0	6.6
Not work-related	1,531	100.0	80.4	7.0	12.6

¹ Excludes 4,724,000 disabled with unknown work status, either before or after onset or cause of disability.

² See table 2, footnote 2.

³ See table 2, footnote 3.

⁴ See table 2, footnote 4.

The other focus of effect is the work itself. Elements of work management—such as extent of division of labor, size of organization, and presence of explicit employer bias regarding the disabled—allow for variations in the receptivity of work sites to work adjustments after onset—in accommodations to the disabled, as well as in rehiring practices. Without the data that specifically measure these factors, the effects of the conjoint influence of both explanatory concepts can only be noted.

Among the severely disabled, workers in manufacturing were significantly less likely to remain in the same industry than workers in agriculture, finance, and service (table 6). The latter groups had the highest retention rates among the severely and the occupationally disabled. For the occupationally disabled, however, the pattern of rates indicated that construction and transportation were essentially different from all other industries. Those with secondary work limitations were least likely to remain in the wholesale/retail trades after onset, and this rate was significantly lower than the percentages shown for each of the other industries.

Any hypothesis generated to account for the relative retention of industries will undoubtedly have recourse to assumptions about the occupations that predominate in those industries. The

relevant data in table 6 also show that, among the severely disabled, those who worked in crafts before onset were least likely to remain in those occupations. To the extent that the workers in manufacturing were rank-and-file craftsmen, the low retention rate for that industry group is explained. A similar linkage can explain the differences in industry retention rates for the occupationally disabled.

All occupations retained the disabled with secondary limitations at rates not significantly different from each other. This finding is interesting in view of the fact that those with secondary limitations did not show, for retention percentages, the types of differences between industries found in the other disability classifications. Possibly, movement to another line of work, in the case of disability with secondary limitations, was more likely to be a function of individual preference than a forced decision based on factors associated with work. If retention among these disabled had been to a significant degree determined by occupational characteristics, more variation across sectors would be noted.

Table 6 also shows the percentages remaining in the same broad employment sector before and after onset. Persons in government employment, primarily those in the Armed Forces, were the least likely to remain in that sector after onset of disability. Among the disabled with secondary work limitations, percentages were high for the self-employed and those employed in private concerns.

TABLE 6—Percent of disabled adult population aged 20-64 employed before onset and remaining in same industry, occupation, or employment sector after onset, by severity of disability, 1972

Industry, occupation, and employment sector	Severity of disability		
	Severe	Occupational	Secondary work limitation
Industry			
Agriculture and fishing	87.9	70.1	93.0
Mining	(1)	54.6	(1)
Construction	81.3	25.1	90.0
Manufacturing	62.7	59.2	77.1
Transportation and utilities	(1)	32.3	85.0
Wholesale and retail trade	73.5	60.3	49.6
Finance, insurance, and real estate	92.9	69.8	90.9
Service	87.9	85.5	82.1
Public administration	(1)	60.6	92.2
Occupation			
Professional and managerial	88.4	76.1	87.8
Clerical and sales	76.4	86.2	69.8
Craftsmen and operatives	55.1	56.7	84.5
Farmers and farm laborers	86.8	63.6	95.3
Service (laborers and private household)	75.1	63.5	83.6
Employment sector			
Private	78.8	83.8	88.8
Government	54.9	54.1	68.6
Self-employed	88.9	70.7	90.8
Family	(1)	84.7	(1)

(1) Not shown, base fewer than 25,000

Reduced Work Schedules

The effect of job characteristics on work can also be examined to see what percentage of those who maintain their pre-onset status after becoming disabled do so with a "reduced" work schedule (table 7). Such a description of work adjustment appears to provide a reasonable measure of the flexibility of a given employment sector on re-employment. Those who reported engaging in part-time employment after onset might have been just as likely to be unemployed, given the implicit bias in the operating policies and practices of employers toward regular 40-hour work schedules. The high proportions of employees with reduced work schedules might reflect a desire on

TABLE 7—Percent of disabled adult population aged 20-64 remaining in same industry, occupation, or employment sector after onset and working a reduced schedule, by severity of disability, 1972

Industry, occupation, and employment sector	Severity of disability		
	Severe	Occupational	Secondary work limitation
Industry			
Agriculture and fishing	41 1	10 1	10 0
Mining	(¹)	(¹)	(¹)
Construction	54 0	18 2	12 4
Manufacturing	28 7	18 7	10 7
Transportation and utilities	(¹)	9 1	24 4
Wholesale and retail trade	40 7	17 5	4 8
Finance, insurance and real estate	(¹)	17 7	1 6
Service	26 8	53 8	11 6
Public administration	(¹)	0	0
Occupation			
Professional and managerial	17 9	21 4	(¹)
Clerical and sales	37 3	15 1	(¹)
Craftsmen and operatives	25 3	30 9	13 0
Farmers and farm laborers	39 5	12 0	(¹)
Service (laborers and private household)	41 2	47 3	14 7
Employment sector			
Private	30 1	28 2	10 7
Government	(¹)	(¹)	14 3
Self-employed	63 3	33 6	10 0
Family	(¹)	(¹)	(¹)

¹ Not shown, base fewer than 25,000

the part of workers not to accept the alternatives of unemployment and explicit decisions by employers (either self-imposed or in response to agreements with unions) to accommodate the disabled

For those who remained in the same kind of employment, the only statistically significant percentage differences with respect to work schedules were those between service and manufacturing and between service and wholesale/retail trade in the occupationally disabled category. A significant difference was also found for occupationally disabled clerical workers and those in household service. Those who were self-employed after onset and severely disabled were significantly more likely to work a reduced schedule than were those in private firms.

ASPECTS OF ADJUSTMENT PROCESS

One descriptive dimension of work adjustment following onset of disability focuses on what individuals go through, in personal terms. In this area, some purchase is sought on (a) the possible effect of dislocation on the degree of disruption and (b) the reasons for the changes in work status.

For those employed at onset, cessation of work

because of functional limitations can be presumed to have an unsettling effect. For those who continued to work after onset, the question is, how long did they have to endure the idleness and possible uncertainty associated with being out of work?

Among the severely disabled, the percentage not working was 58.7 percent (table 8). In addition, these disabled persons were less likely to continue working without stopping after onset (21.9 percent) than were the occupationally disabled (35.3 percent) and those with secondary work limitations (36.9 percent). Regardless of severity of disability, among those disabled who stopped working when their physical incapacity limited their ability to work, most (69 percent) who worked after onset returned to work within half a year.

Women were more likely to take longer than a year to return to work than men. For the occupationally disabled, 90 percent of the men returned to work before 1 year after onset was reported; the percentage of women who returned by that time was significantly lower (70 percent). One other significant difference was found. Men with secondary work limitations were almost three times as likely to return to work within a month after onset than were women.

Without data on what the disabled did before they returned to work, the forms of behavioral response to disability cannot be assessed. Possibly, the passage of time after onset becomes so wearing that some of the disabled despair of finding work despite their initial intention to resume working. The research question is why, with the amount of medical care received taken into account, some abandon their intention to be employed. The decision is in part determined by what happens when employment is actively sought.

The data in table 8 also show that, for virtually every category of disability, substantial numbers of the disabled were in two other classifications: those who resumed work and those who did not report missing work after onset. This finding reinforces the fact noted earlier, that, for a given level of severity of disability, the perception of its implications is not homogeneous.

Among those disabled who worked in a different job after onset, persons with secondary work limitations—both men and women—were significantly more likely to be employed within 3 months

TABLE 8—Work status after onset and time elapsed before return to work Number and percentage distribution of disabled adult population aged 20-64, by severity of disability and sex, 1972

[Numbers in thousands]

Work status after onset and time elapsed before return to work	Severity of disability							
	Total		Severe		Occupational		Secondary work limitation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	Total							
Employed at or before onset, total	12 827	100 0	6 221	100 0	3 290	100 0	3 316	100 0
Not working	5 249	40 9	3,651	58 7	935	28 4	664	20 0
Continued working	3 745	29 2	1 361	21 9	1 160	35 3	1 224	36 9
Returned to work	3 403	26 5	1 000	16 1	1,172	35 6	1 250	37 1
Not reported	430	3 4	209	3 4	23	7	198	6 0
Returned to work, time elapsed (in weeks), total	3 403	100 0	1 000	100 0	1,172	100 0	1,230	100 0
1-4	659	19 3	196	19 6	212	18 0	250	20 3
5-13	940	27 6	208	20 8	342	29 1	391	31 7
14-26	755	22 1	269	26 9	236	20 1	250	20 3
27-52	427	12 5	136	13 6	164	13 9	129	10 4
52 or more	565	16 6	179	17 9	200	17 0	186	15 1
Unknown	56	1 6	13	1 3	18	1 5	25	2 0
	Men							
Employed at or before onset, total	6 177	100 0	2,658	100 0	1,904	100 0	1 614	100 0
Not working	1,997	32 3	1 450	54 5	400	21 0	148	9 1
Continued working	2,110	34 2	597	22 4	750	39 7	757	46 9
Returned to work	1,994	32 3	581	21 9	744	39 1	669	41 4
Not reported	75	1 2	31	1 2	4	2	41	2 5
Returned to work, time elapsed (in weeks), total	1,994	100 0	581	100 0	744	100 0	669	100 0
1-4	442	22 1	98	16 8	154	20 6	190	28 4
5-13	557	27 9	125	21 5	228	30 6	204	30 4
14-26	441	22 1	173	29 7	170	22 8	98	14 6
27-52	285	14 2	89	15 3	104	13 9	91	13 6
52 or more	321	11 0	89	15 3	71	9 5	61	9 1
Unknown	48	2 4	7	1 2	16	2 1	25	3 7
	Women							
Employed at or before onset, total	6 651	100 0	3 563	100 0	1,386	100 0	1,702	100 0
Not working	3 252	48 9	2,201	61 8	535	38 6	516	30 3
Continued working	1 635	24 6	764	21 5	404	29 1	467	27 4
Returned to work	1,409	21 2	419	11 8	428	30 9	562	33 0
Not reported	355	5 3	178	5 0	20	1 4	157	9 2
Returned to work, time elapsed (in weeks), total	1,409	100 0	419	100 0	428	100 0	562	100 0
1-4	217	15 4	98	23 3	58	13 5	60	10 6
5-13	383	27 1	83	19 8	113	26 4	187	33 2
14-26	314	22 2	90	22 6	66	15 4	152	27 0
27-52	144	10 2	47	11 2	60	14 0	37	6 5
52 or more	344	24 4	90	21 4	129	30 1	125	22 2
Unknown	8	5	6	1 4	2	4	1	1

after onset than those in the other severity categories (table 9). Another indication of the relationship between severity of disability and difficulty of reentry into the work force is the fact that more than 90 percent of the occupationally disabled and those with secondary work limitations who looked for a different job found one, compared with only 57 percent of the severely disabled.

Those survey respondents who did not work after onset were asked to cite the reasons (table 10). Severely disabled men and women cited

"doctor's advice" and "inability to work" most frequently as reasons for not working. Women in the other disability categories reported resumption of family responsibilities as the predominant reason for not returning to work.

The rank order of reasons for resuming work with a different employer after onset (table 10) reflects the obvious point that a perceived change in capacity for work provided the impetus to change the work site. That is, if a worker feels that he cannot do the same work and he still wishes to work, he will do different work, and this

TABLE 9—Job status after onset and length of time spent in finding different job Number and percentage distribution of disabled adult population aged 20-64, by severity of disability and sex, 1972

[Numbers in thousands]

Job status after onset	Severity of disability							
	Total		Severe		Occupational		Secondary work limitation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	Total							
Employed at or before onset, total	12,827	100 0	6,221	100 0	3 290	100 0	3 316	100 0
Same employer	5 697	44 4	1 907	30 7	1,765	53 6	1,025	61 1
Found different job	1,357	10 6	380	6 1	615	18 7	363	10 9
Looked, found no job	403	3 1	312	5 0	61	1 9	80	2 4
Did not look	4,919	38 3	3,410	54 8	809	24 6	700	21 1
Not reported	452	3 5	212	3 4	41	1 2	199	6 0
Interested in different job, total	1,760	100 0	692	100 0	676	100 0	393	100 0
Found job	1 357	77 2	380	55 0	615	91 0	363	92 4
Looked, found no job	403	22 8	312	45 0	601	9 0	30	7 6
Found job, time spent (in weeks), total	1,357	100 0	380	100 0	615	100 0	363	100 0
1-4	591	43 5	173	45 5	211	34 3	206	56 7
5-13	294	21 6	45	11 8	153	24 8	96	26 4
14-52	215	15 7	75	19 7	127	20 6	13	3 5
52 or more	49	3 6	19	5 0	24	3 9	6	1 6
Not reported	208	15 3	67	17 6	99	16 0	42	11 5
	Men							
Employed at or before onset, total	6,177	100 0	2,658	100 0	1,904	100 0	1 614	100 0
Same employer	3,365	54 5	942	35 4	1,194	62 7	1,230	76 2
Found different job	902	14 6	232	8 7	444	23 3	226	14 0
Looked, found no job	220	3 6	177	6 7	21	1 1	21	1 3
Did not look	1 610	26 1	1 271	47 8	242	12 7	97	6 0
Not reported	80	1 3	36	1 4	3	2	41	2 5
Interested in different job, total	1,122	100 0	409	100 0	465	100 0	247	100 0
Found job	902	80 4	232	56 8	444	95 5	226	91 5
Looked, found no job	220	19 6	177	43 2	21	4 5	21	8 5
Found job, time spent (in weeks), total	902	100 0	232	100 0	444	100 0	226	100 0
1-4	355	39 3	100	43 1	161	36 2	94	41 5
5-13	232	25 7	29	12 5	108	24 3	95	42 0
14-52	168	18 6	56	24 1	102	22 9	9	3 9
52 or more	36	3 9	11	4 7	21	4 7	5	2 2
Not reported	111	12 3	37	15 9	51	11 4	23	10 1
	Women							
Employed at or before onset, total	6,651	100 0	3 563	100 0	1,386	100 0	1 702	100 0
Same employer	2,332	35 1	965	27 1	571	41 2	795	46 7
Found different job	455	6 8	148	4 1	171	12 3	137	8 1
Looked, found no job	183	2 7	135	3 8	40	2 9	8	5
Did not look	3,509	49 8	2,139	60 0	567	40 9	603	35 4
Not reported	372	5 6	176	4 9	38	2 7	158	9 3
Interested in different job, total	638	100 0	283	100 0	211	100 0	145	100 0
Found job	455	71 3	148	52 2	171	81 0	137	94 4
Looked, found no job	183	28 7	135	47 8	40	19 0	8	5 6
Found job, time spent (in weeks), total	455	100 0	148	100 0	171	100 0	137	100 0
1-4	236	51 8	73	49 3	50	29 2	113	82 4
5-13	62	13 6	17	11 4	45	26 3	1	7
14-52	48	10 5	19	12 8	25	14 6	4	2 9
52 or more	13	2 8	8	5 4	3	1 7	1	7
Not reported	97	21 3	30	20 2	48	28 0	20	14 5

decision often means a change in employer For both men and women the percentage of respondents noting "other" reasons for change in work was large This finding indicates that a wide range of factors contribute to adjustments to disability

Those disabled who were employed after onset in different jobs were asked to report the reasons for their changed status (table 11). The proportion who encountered explicit opposition when trying to resume their pre-onset work and who did

TABLE 10—Reasons for not working or changing employer after onset Percentage distribution of disabled adult population aged 20-64, by severity of disability and sex, 1972

Reason for not working or changing employer after onset	Severity of disability for those—							
	Not working after onset				Changing employer			
	Total	Severe	Occupational	Secondary work limitation	Total	Severe	Occupational	Secondary work limitation
Total								
Total number reporting a reason (in thousands)	5 249	3 651	935	664	1 449	453	567	428
Total percent ¹	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0
Wanted to stop working	7 3	6 3	6 1	14 1	1 1	2 2	6 6	8 8
Wanted to cut down amount of work	1 7	1 3	4 5	1 1	5 3	8 9	5 5	1 3
Laid off	3 9	2 2	4 4	12 3	5 6	6 9	2 5	8 1
Seasonal job completed	6 6	2 2	2 1	5 5	3 8	2 2	5 0	4 0
Could no longer do same kind of work	28 1	28 4	40 3	9 8	33 5	35 7	48 6	10 0
Problems with travel to work	1 5	1 6	1 8	2 2	4 2	1 3	3 7	11 9
Unable to work at all	31 8	44 0	5 2	2 3	4 5	9 7	3 7	2 2
Doctor's care, advice, or recommendation	39 9	45 1	36 7	15 4	19 8	26 1	28 0	2 2
Age	2 2	2 2	1 1	1 1	3 3	6 6	0 0	2 2
Housewife (family responsibilities)	17 7	10 3	23 4	50 7	10 1	5 4	10 1	15 2
Retirement	1 8	2 3	8 8	2 2	1 8	1 1	4 4	4 5
School	3 3	2 2	4 4	1 0	0 0	1 0	4 4	4 4
Other	11 2	10 9	8 6	16 7	35 2	28 2	30 6	48 8
Not reported	1 7	1 3	2 4	2 5	9 9	8 8	9 9	1 1
Men								
Total number reporting a reason (in thousands)	1,997	1 450	400	148	737	236	307	195
Total percent ¹	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0
Wanted to stop working	2 5	2 0	2 2	13 3	9 9	2 3	4 4	0 0
Wanted to cut down amount of work	6 6	6 6	1 1	0 0	4 0	7 4	3 3	1 0
Laid off	5 5	1 8	7 7	36 4	7 3	4 8	2 6	17 4
Seasonal job completed	2 2	1 1	0 0	1 5	2 6	3 5	3 3	6 6
Could no longer do same kind of work	41 0	33 9	73 1	23 2	44 2	41 5	64 0	16 5
Problems with travel to work	9 9	1 0	5 5	0 0	1 2	2 1	1 0	6 6
Unable to work at all	42 0	55 0	7 7	7 7	6 7	13 8	5 5	0 0
Doctor's care, advice, or recommendation	50 1	55 4	41 3	22 4	23 2	23 8	35 8	2 6
Age	3 3	4 4	2 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
Housewife (family responsibilities)	1 3	5 5	3 3	10 9	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
Retirement	2 4	2 7	1 6	3 8	3 4	1 7	7 7	9 8
School	6 6	2 2	9 9	3 8	5 5	2 2	7 7	5 5
Other	9 6	8 5	9 6	20 3	35 5	27 8	23 1	64 0
Not reported	2 3	1 6	4 4	2 8	1 3	1 6	1 6	0 0
Women								
Total number reporting a reason (in thousands)	3,252	2 201	535	516	711	218	261	233
Total percent ¹	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0
Wanted to stop working	10 2	9 2	10 4	14 4	1 4	2 0	8 8	1 5
Wanted to cut down amount of work	2 4	1 8	7 1	2 2	6 7	10 5	8 1	1 6
Laid off	2 9	2 5	2 0	5 4	3 8	9 2	2 4	3 3
Seasonal job completed	8 8	3 3	3 6	2 2	5 1	9 9	7 1	6 8
Could no longer do same kind of work	20 3	24 7	15 7	6 0	22 3	31 6	30 4	4 5
Problems with travel to work	1 9	2 0	2 8	3 3	7 3	5 5	4 4	21 4
Unable to work at all	25 5	36 7	3 3	8 8	2 3	5 3	1 6	3 3
Doctor's care, advice, or recommendation	33 6	38 4	33 3	13 4	16 2	28 5	18 8	1 9
Age	1 1	1 1	1 1	2 2	5 5	1 3	0 0	4 4
Housewife (family responsibilities)	27 9	16 7	40 7	62 1	20 6	11 2	22 0	27 9
Retirement	1 4	2 0	2 2	0 0	1 1	4 4	0 0	0 0
School	1 1	1 1	0 0	2 2	7 7	1 9	0 0	3 3
Other	12 2	12 5	7 8	15 6	35 0	28 6	39 3	36 1
Not reported	1 3	1 1	8 8	2 5	6 6	0 0	0 0	1 7

¹ Percentages may not add to total because respondent may indicate more than one reason.

find other jobs is relatively small for each disability category (6.3 percent for the severely disabled, 4.4 percent for the occupationally disabled, and 0.9 percent for those with secondary work limitations). Furthermore, with the degree of severity of the disability controlled, equal proportions of men and women indicated that they alone

made the decision to change work—that is, “change had nothing to do with work limitation” and they “didn’t want to do same work after limitation”.

Change due to a doctor’s advice was most likely to occur among the occupationally disabled. The occupationally disabled were, of course, medically

TABLE 11—Reasons for doing different work after onset
Percentage distribution of disabled adult population aged
20-64, by severity of disability and sex, 1972

Reason for doing different work after onset	Severity of disability			
	Total	Severe	Occupational	Secondary work limitation
Total				
Total number reporting a reason (in thousands)	2 617	428	1,374	815
Total percent ¹	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0
Doctor's advice	21 2	18 7	32 1	4 3
No one would hire me for that kind of work	3 6	6 3	4 4	9
Could not work in same kind of place	10 9	15 9	15 1	1 3
Could not do that kind of work	38 7	37 9	55 7	10 3
Change had nothing to do with work limitation	21 9	11 4	12 2	43 8
Did not want to do same work after limitation	10 1	11 0	12 2	6 1
Other	22 1	12 1	19 4	31 8
Not reported	11 7	25 5	4 4	16 8
Men				
Total number reporting a reason (in thousands)	1,801	211	1,058	532
Total percent ¹	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0
Doctor's advice	22 0	19 4	30 8	5 5
No one would hire me for that kind of work	4 0	9 5	4 3	1 3
Could not work in same kind of place	13 4	22 3	17 8	1 1
Could not do that kind of work	44 4	52 1	59 7	10 9
Change had nothing to do with work limitation	19 7	7 1	12 8	38 5
Did not want to do same work after limitation	10 5	13 3	11 1	8 3
Other	21 8	9 5	19 8	30 6
Not reported	9 6	20 4	2 4	19 5
Women				
Total number reporting a reason (in thousands)	816	217	316	282
Total percent ¹	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0
Doctor's advice	19 5	17 5	36 4	2 1
No one would hire me for that kind of work	2 8	3 2	5 1	0
Could not work in same kind of place	5 5	9 7	6 0	1 8
Could not do that kind of work	25 9	24 0	42 4	9 2
Change had nothing to do with work limitation	26 8	15 7	10 4	53 9
Did not want to do same work after limitation	9 3	9 2	16 1	2 1
Other	22 7	14 7	18 4	33 7
Not reported	16 3	30 0	11 1	11 7

¹ Percentages may not add to total because respondent may indicate more than one reason

incapacitated enough to have sought clinical treatment yet physically able to work a full week if required, and they can thus be somewhat flexible regarding vocational placement. Only a small proportion of those who changed jobs after onset reported that they did so because of perceived discrimination ("no one will hire me") Unfortunately, it was not possible to observe whether

any persons were not working because of unwarranted bias on the part of employers

FAMILY WORK ADJUSTMENTS

Discussions of the effects of onset of disability often mention adjustments made by the family of the disabled person¹² The family is the most important context within which social support is provided for individuals with chronic functional limitations Faced with the consequences of economic loss, one form of adjustment a family can make is to replace lost wages by having other family members work

A relationship was found between increased

¹² Sidney H Croog et al, "Help Patterns in Severe Illness: The Role of Kin Network, Non-family Resources, and Institutions," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, February 1972, pages 32-41, and Theodor J Litman, "The Family as a Basic Unit in Health and Medical Care: A Social Behavioral Overview," *Social Science and Medicine*, vol 8, 1974, pages 495-519

TABLE 12—Family work adjustment after onset Percentage distribution of disabled adult population aged 20-64, by severity of disability and sex, 1972

Family work adjustment after onset	Severity of disability			
	Total	Severe	Occupational	Secondary work limitation
Total				
Total number ¹ (in thousands)	15,550	7 717	3,473	4,360
Percent with family member(s) increasing work	10 8	12 9	11 2	6 6
<i>Reason spouse increased work</i>				
Total number (in thousands)	1,194	686	327	181
Total percent ²	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0
<i>Because of respondent's disability</i>				
Would have gone to work anyway	80 9	85 8	70 9	80 1
Other	8 2	6 2	12 2	7 7
Don't know	6 9	3 4	16 2	2 7
Don't know	5 0	2 8	2 1	8 2
<i>Reason other family member increased work</i>				
Total number (in thousands)	583	377	96	110
Total percent ²	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0
<i>Because of respondent's disability</i>				
Would have gone to work anyway	50 7	57 8	52 0	25 4
Other	39 4	27 8	47 9	71 8
Don't know	10 2	13 7	5 2	2 7
Don't know	2 5	2 6	2 0	2 7

See footnotes at end of table

TABLE 12—Family work adjustment after onset Percentage distribution of disabled adult population aged 20-64, by disability status and sex, 1972—Continued

Family work adjustment after onset	Severity of disability			
	Total	Severe	Occupational	Secondary work limitation
Men				
Total number ¹ (in thousands)	7,036	2,972	1,919	2,145
Percent with family member(s) increasing work	15.1	18.9	14.9	10.1
<i>Reason spouse increased work</i>				
Total number (in thousands)	883	463	249	172
Total percent †	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Because of respondent's disability	84.4	87.4	80.7	80.8
Would have gone to work anyway	9.2	6.9	14.4	7.5
Other	2.7	2.1	4.4	1.7
Don't know	4.8	4.5	2.4	9.3
<i>Reason other family member increased work</i>				
Total number (in thousands)	270	161	60	49
Total percent †	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Because of respondent's disability	66.2	83.2	53.3	26.5
Would have gone to work anyway	30.3	13.0	45.0	69.3
Other	3.3	3.1	5.0	4.0
Don't know	2.9	3.1	1.6	4.0
Women				
Total number ¹ (in thousands)	8,514	4,745	1,554	2,215
Percent with family member(s) increasing work	7.2	9.2	6.6	3.2
<i>Reason spouse increased work</i>				
Total number (in thousands)	311	224	78	9
Total percent †	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Because of respondent's disability	71.0	82.1	39.7	66.7
Would have gone to work anyway	5.1	4.9	5.1	11.1
Other	18.9	6.2	53.8	22.2
Don't know	5.4	7.1	1.2	0.0
<i>Reasons other family member increased work</i>				
Total number (in thousands)	314	217	35	61
Total percent †	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Because of respondent's disability	37.2	38.7	51.4	24.5
Would have gone to work anyway	47.1	38.7	54.2	72.1
Other	16.2	21.6	8.5	1.6
Don't know	2.2	2.3	2.8	1.6

¹ Represents total disabled noninstitutionalized population aged 20-64 employed and not employed before onset

† Percentages may not add to total because respondent may indicate more than one reason

work on the part of family members (particularly the spouse of the disabled) and severity of dis-

ability (table 12) This finding is to be expected since wage loss is a direct function of relative capacity to manage full-time work schedules Families of severely disabled men were almost twice as likely (18.9 percent) to increase work after onset as wives of men with secondary work limitations (10.1 percent) Husbands of women with severe disability were three times as likely (9.2 percent) to increase the number of hours worked than were husbands whose wives had secondary work limitations (3.2 percent)

Another 1972 survey report discloses that the rate of work for spouses of the severely disabled aged 35 and over is similar to that for the non-disabled population and higher than the rate for the wives of the severely disabled under age 35¹³ This finding indicates that the more severe the financial need the more likely are attempts by wives to replace their husband's lost earnings The young married disabled men, for example, may not have had as much time as older workers to accrue personal assets, union benefits, and other supplementary sources of income that help to offset the reduction in the earnings of the severely disabled Since men tend to be the primary wage earners, their inability to work makes it essential that their wives work, and the tabular evidence shows this to be the case More than 80 percent of the women who did increase their work when their husbands became disabled were specifically reported to have done so because of the disability The percentages of men who changed their work schedules because of their wife's disability were lower

It is interesting to note that the disabled person's spouse was considerably more likely than other family members to respond to onset by working more, except in the families of severely disabled men For the latter group, the percentage who increased work because of the disability is at the same level as that for wives of disabled men

The assumption of increased workloads is not the only way families marshal their social resources when confronted with the onset of disability Other possible consequences are disruption of home activities, role alteration or role reversal, and restricted mobility Two general questions

¹³ Philip Frohlich, *Income and Disability* (1972 Survey of Disabled and Nondisabled Adults, unpublished report), Office of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration, in process, table B

remain Under what conditions is the home situation "reestablished" after onset of disability? Do patterns of adaptation vary with the disabled as to status within the family setting?

Technical Note*

STUDY DESIGN

The survey data were collected and processed by the Bureau of the Census. Survey estimates are based on a sample of 18,000 interviewed persons selected from the 5-percent Census. Of these 18,000 persons, 11,700 were selected from all who indicated that they were disabled before October 1969 on the 1970 Census questionnaire. These persons make up the disabled sample. A mail screening in 1971 of the remaining persons resulted in two other sample groups—5,100 nondisabled persons and 1,200 recent-onset cases. In addition to the sample of interviewed persons, there were 2,850 noninterviews. Thus the rate of "good responses" for the survey—based on 18,000 interviewed persons out of 20,850 eligible for interview—is 86 percent. The number and reason for noninterviews were as follows.

<i>Noninterview reason</i>	<i>Number of persons</i>
Total -----	2,850
Unable to contact -----	1,240
Temporarily absent -----	100
Refused -----	620
Moved outside 357 PSU's -----	650
Miscellaneous -----	240

* For a description of the reliability of the estimates, see the data in the technical note in Kathryn H. Allan, *op cit*, pages 35-37.

In general, the sample was a stratified multi-stage cluster design comprised of 357 sampling areas including every county and some independent cities in the United States. The disabled persons were selected from all 357 strata, the non-disabled and recently disabled groups were chosen from a special subset of 105 strata. The sample was designed to represent the noninstitutionalized civilian population of the United States aged 18-64 as of April 1970.

DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

Disability is defined in this study as a limitation in the kind or amount of work (or housework) resulting from a chronic health condition or impairment lasting 3 months or longer. The disability classification is based on the extent of the individual's capacity for work, as reported by the respondent in a set of work-qualification questions. Data on employment and on functional capacities—such as mobility, activities of daily living, personal care needs, and functional activity limitations—were also collected to evaluate further the nature and severity of disability.

The severity of disability was classified by the extent of work limitations as.

Severely disabled—unable to work altogether or unable to work regularly

Occupationally disabled—able to work regularly but unable to do the same work as before the onset of disability or unable to work full time

Secondary work limitations—able to work full time, regularly, and at the same work, but with limitations in the kind or amount of work they can perform, women with limitations in keeping house, but not in paid work are included as having secondary work limitations