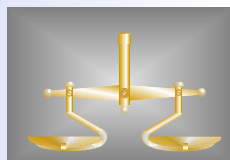


Disability Employment

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Introduction

The prospects for employment of disabled people form significant inputs in the legal arguments in cases of personal injury, medical negligence and employment litigation, and statistics of disability are often quoted in support of one side or the other. The major source of disability statistics in these cases is the Labour Force Survey of the United Kingdom, produced every quarter by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The object of this paper is to present these statistics in an informative way so as to provide a backcloth against which to interpret the employment arguments marshalled for and against individual cases. Statistics from four consecutive Labour Force Surveys from spring 1997 to winter 1997/98 have been added together to improve accuracy (see technical note) and to reduce the effects of seasonality.

All statistics presented in this paper are Crown Copyright.

Conventionally the Labour Force Survey (LFS) defines a disabled person as one who has a health problem or disability that will last for more than a year and which will affect the kind of paid work that a person might do. In spring 1997 other definitions were added to the survey including the amount of paid work, to accord with the Disability Discrimination Act. The ONS recommend (June 98 Labour Market Trends) using the first definition however for analyses related to the labour market (see technical note), and this is the definition used in this paper.

The Disabled Population

The size of the disability problem in the United Kingdom is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1. UK Labour Market 1997-98 000's
4 Quarter Average Males 16-64, Females 16-59

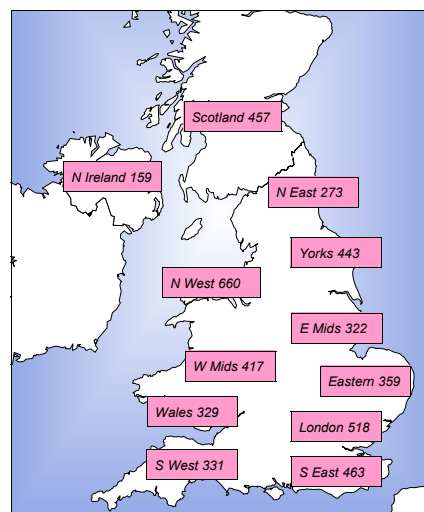
000's	All	Disabled	% Disabled
Employees in Employment	22,673	1,281	5.6
Self-employed	3,131	242	7.7
Govt Training, Other	301	38	12.6
Total in Employment	26,105	1,561	6.0
ILO Unemployed	1,954	306	15.7
Total Economically Active	28,059	1,867	6.7
Inactive	7,668	2,864	37.4
Total Population of Working Age	35,727	4,731	13.2

Around 13% of the population of working age has a disability as defined above. As might be expected, the disabled in the unemployed or inactive sectors form a larger proportion of the total. The above average of 4.7m is made up of 4.2m for spring 97,

97, 4.7m for summer 97, 4.9m for autumn 97 and 5.0m for winter 97/98. The ONS believe that the data for spring 97 were of poorer quality than the other quarters because the change in questions in spring 97 made it impossible to impute for non-response.

Disabled people are located all about the country, with significant pockets in London, the South East, Manchester, Merseyside, Birmingham and the West Midlands, Wales and Scotland.

Chart 1. Number of Disabled Persons of Working Age in the United Kingdom 000's
4 Quarter Average 1997-98 Males 16-64 Females 16-59



Within the areas, however, there are wide differences in disability density per head of working population, as is shown in Chart 1 overleaf.

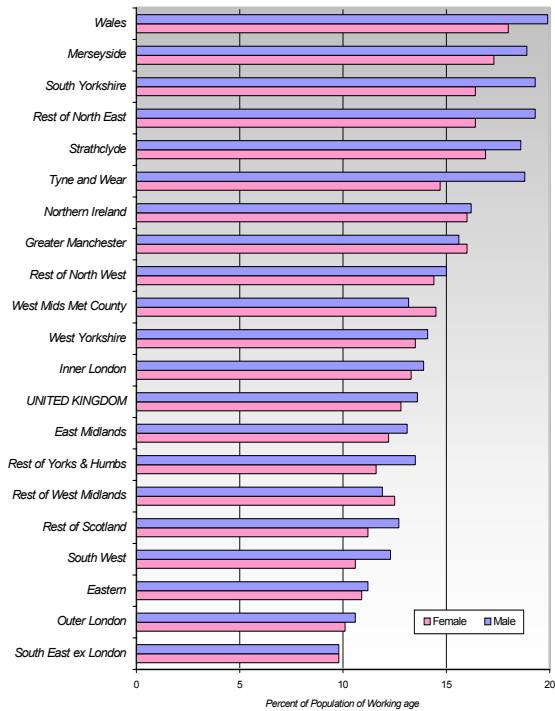
Technical Note

The Labour Force survey is carried out every quarter, among some 150,000 people throughout the United Kingdom. The survey is made up of five waves of about 30,000 people and each quarter a new wave enters the survey and one leaves it. Results from the survey are 'grossed up' to calculate the likely figures for the population as a whole. The survey asks a lot of detailed questions, and interpretation of the results can be limited when looking at only small sections of the survey. When looking at analyses by age, occupation, disability, economic activity, it is possible that individual cells can be quite small, and therefore open to significant errors. To avoid this the general recommendation of the ONS is that individual grossed up figures of less than 10,000 in a cell should be suppressed as unreliable. Any surveys presented in Labour Market Trends adhere to this principle. According to the ONS, however, it is possible to improve upon this accuracy by adding together the basic data of several surveys to arrive at an average from which ratios etc can be calculated.

Set against this however is the problem of seasonal variation and that definitions and scope of surveys change over time. The additional disability definitions introduced in spring 1997 following the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) have meant the introduction of several additional questions to the Labour Force Survey including limitations on the amount of paid work and several other questions to try to accord with the DDA. For analyses relating to service provision and for general equal opportunities analyses, ONS recommends the use of the DDA-current definition rather than the LFS disabled definition. It is likely to take some time before the results of the new questions accumulate statistical meaning. For labour market analyses, however, the conventional LFS disability definition is to be preferred.

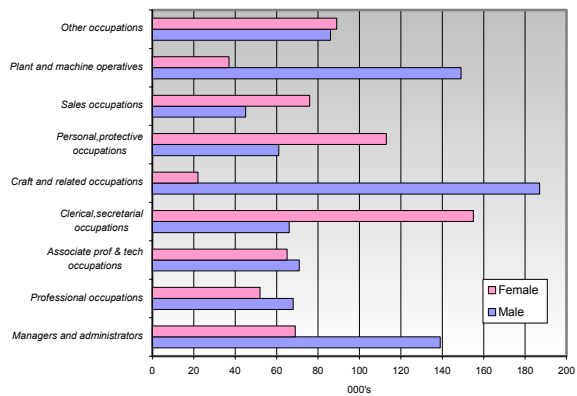
To arrive at a compromise this article takes the LFS disability definition for the quarters of spring, summer and autumn 1997 and winter 1997/98, and calculates an average for four quarters. This has the advantages of largely eliminating seasonal variation, and avoiding crossing major change periods. According to the ONS grossed up cells as small as only 6,000 can be regarded as statistically meaningful by putting together four quarters.

Chart 2. Disability Concentration – Persons of Working Age
4 Quarter Average 1997-98 UK Males 16-64, Females 16-59



The industrial areas of Wales, Merseyside, Yorkshire, Tyneside and Strathclyde have a high incidence of disability, whereas parts of London, the South East, the South West and the Eastern area have a low incidence. Men of working age score a little higher than do women.

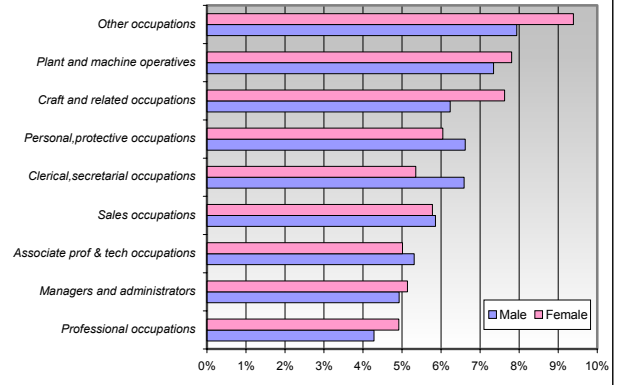
Chart 3. Disabled People in Employment by Main Occupation
4 Quarter Average 1997-98 UK Males 16-64, Females 16-59, 000's



Turning to occupational differences, Chart 3 shows the main divisions. Key groups of disabled persons within Managers and Administrators are those in services, specialists and production. Professional groups are relatively small but include engineers and teachers. The Associate Professional & Technical group include nurses and technicians. Clerical & Secretarial include storekeepers. Among Craft occupations are those involved in construction, machining, textiles, electrical, vehicles and wood-working. Personal & Protective Services encompass security, catering, travel, care assistants and auxiliary nurses. Key groups among Sales occupations are sales assistants and checkout operators. Plant & Machinery operators include groups such as lorry drivers, inspectors and assemblers. Other occupations include shelf fillers and cleaners & domestics.

The number of disabled in a group is governed not only by the occurrence of disability, but also by the ease with which it is possible to do such work in such a group. Chart 4 shows the per cent incidence of disability by main occupation.

Chart 4. % Disabled to Employed Population of Working Age



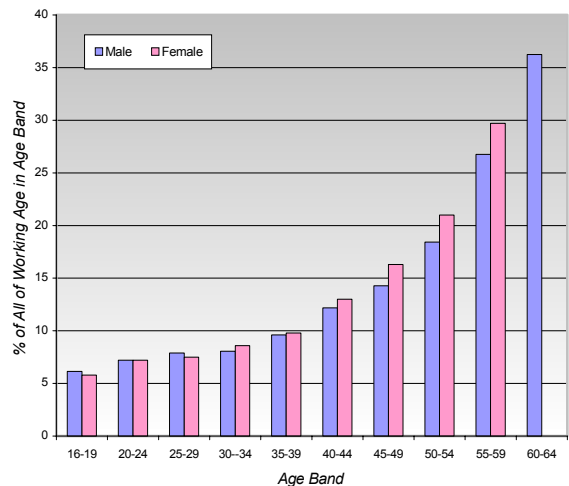
Predictably some occupations have a higher rate of disability than others.

The Age Factor

One of the largest factors that influences the incidence of disability is that of age. Chart 5 shows this clearly.

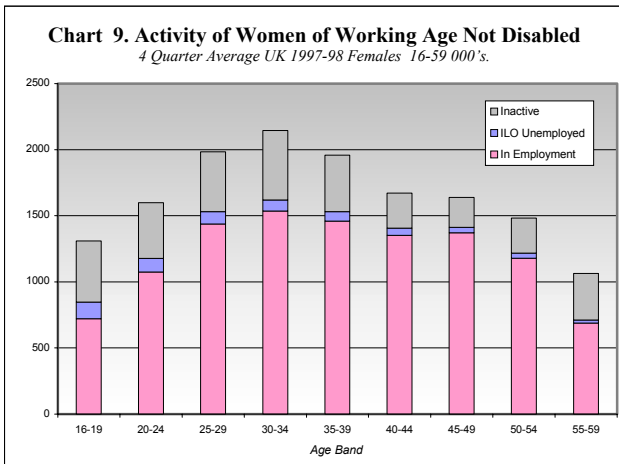
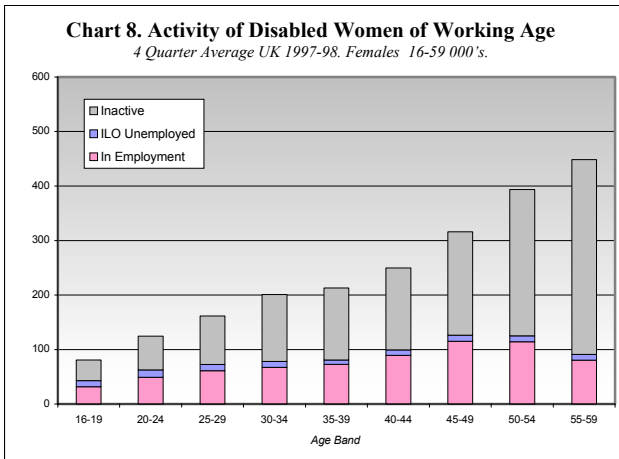
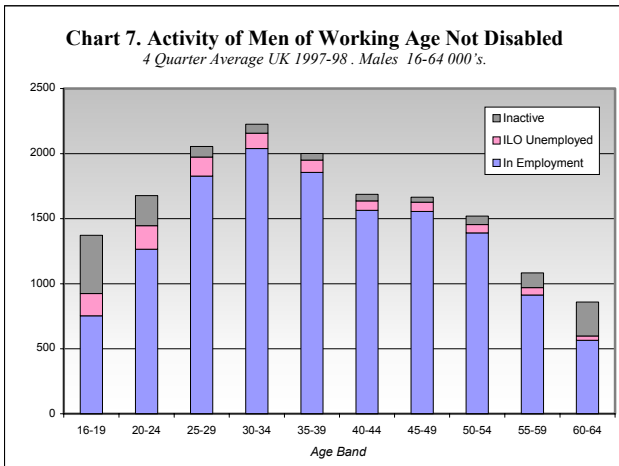
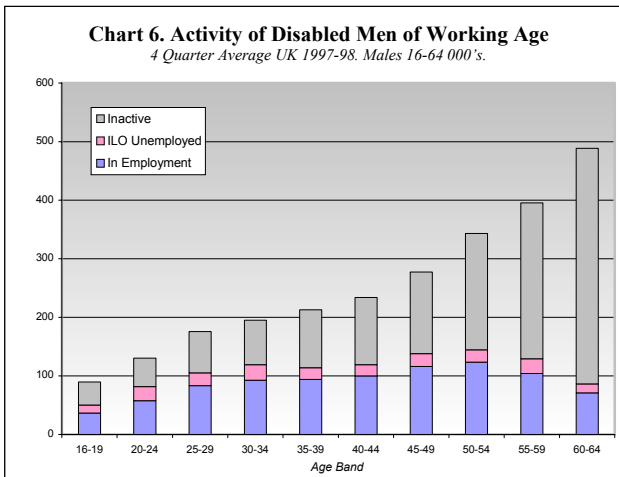
Chart 5. Disabled % of the Population of Working Age by Age Group

4 Quarter Average 1997-98 UK Males 16-64 Females 16-59

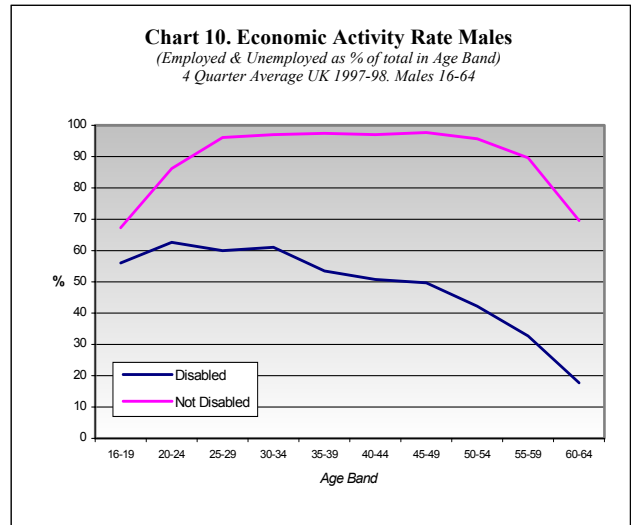


Charts 6-9 overleaf show how the above trend is spread by economic activity and compare the position of the disabled with those who are not defined as disabled.

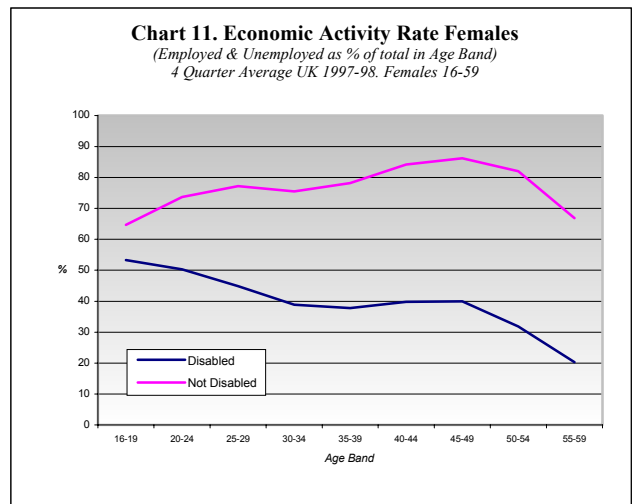
In general while those not disabled continue working until they retire, an increasing proportion of disabled men and women of working age become inactive, and by middle age this proportion becomes the majority. Among fit women a significant proportion are inactive across the age groups. These are women who elect to stay at home and look after children and the household.



The aforementioned statistics on activity levels are generally summarised according the 'Economic Activity Rate', which measures the proportion of the population that is either working or seeking work (unemployed) compared to the total population of working age. Charts 10 and 11 show the general trend for men and women by age band.

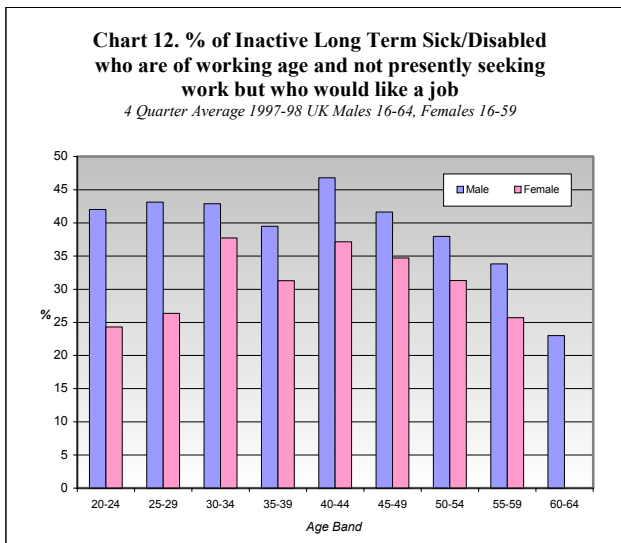


The curves for people not disabled follows a well-understood pattern. From age 16 to 25 economic activity rises as people gradually cease full-time education. Men generally remain economically active until age 50 onwards when an increasing proportion elect to retire early. For women the level of economic activity plateaus at a lower level to take account of child rearing, before rising as children go to school or leave home. A similar trend on early retirement occurs.



The contrast for disabled people is clear. While similar general shapes for education, child rearing and retirement occur, for both men and women of working age with a long-term health problem, the level of economic activity drops dramatically falling to around 20% by retirement. It becomes increasingly unlikely with age that these people will be able to return to the workforce. It must be remembered, however, that the labour market is essentially a dynamic one with people entering and leaving the inactive sector. Many people who have accidents or who are long-term ill and as a result become 'inactive' do eventually return to become employed again, but this does become more difficult with age.

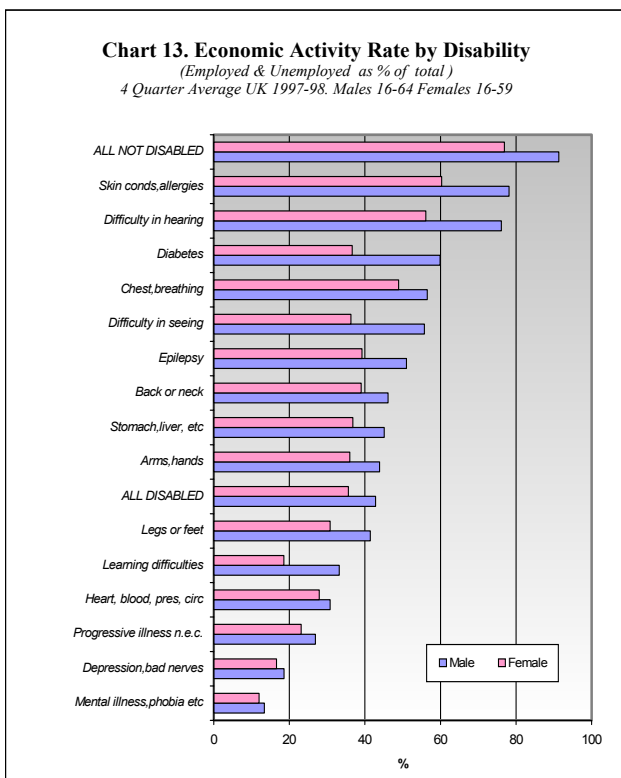
An indicator of how many of the inactive disabled would like to return to work at any time is shown by Chart 12.



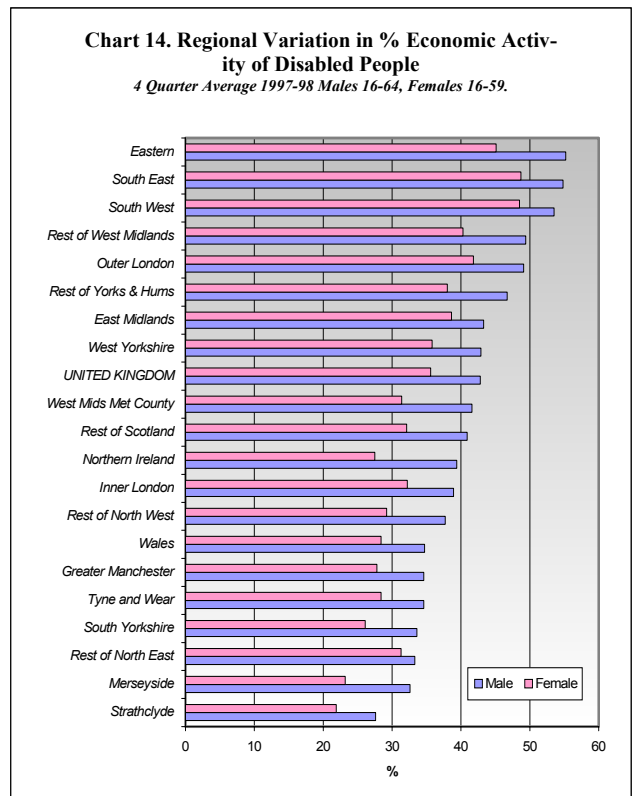
About 40% of disabled men generally would like work, but because of their situation are not seeking work. This percentage tails off as they approach early retirement. The percentage level for women is somewhat less at about 30-35%, but with a similar tail off towards early retirement.

Specific Disability

The kind of inactive disabled persons that are likely eventually to look for work depends to a significant extent upon the degree of long-term health problems that they have. A person with a skin allergy or who has a hearing problem is more likely to be economically active, than one who has a severe mental illness. Chart 13 summarises the economic activity rates of the disabled and compares them with the rates for those not disabled.



It is to be expected also that there will be some regional variation in economic activity rates for the disabled, some regions having a better than average rate and some worse. Chart 14 summarises the position.



Strathclyde, Merseyside, Tyneside, Manchester & Wales all have lower rates than the average. The Eastern, South East and the South West regions have higher rates.

Unemployment – the Position of the Disabled

In recent years unemployment has reduced significantly among the population. In spring 1993 ILO unemployment in the UK as a % of the workforce stood at 12.7% for all men and 8.0% for all women. The corresponding figures for spring 1997 were 8.3% for men and 6.1% for women (*Labour Market Trends Table C.1*).

The averages for the four quarters to winter 1997/98, on which this paper is based, were 7.7% for men and 6.0% for women, a further reduction. The position of the disabled, however, although it has come down is still relatively much higher than that for those not disabled. Table 2 summarises the position.

Table 2. ILO Unemployment % Workforce United Kingdom 1997-98
4 Quarter Average. Males 16-64, Females 16-59.

%	Men	Women
Disabled	19.2	12.6
Not Disabled	6.9	5.5
All	7.7	6.0

Charts 15 & 16 overleaf summarise the variation in unemployment rate by age group for the disabled and for those not disabled.

Chart 15. ILO Unemployment % of Male Workforce
4 Quarter Average UK 1997-98 Males 16-64

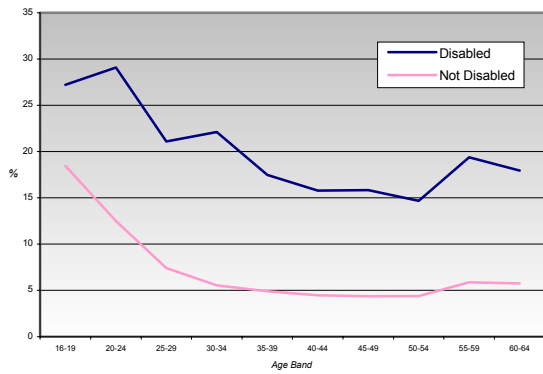
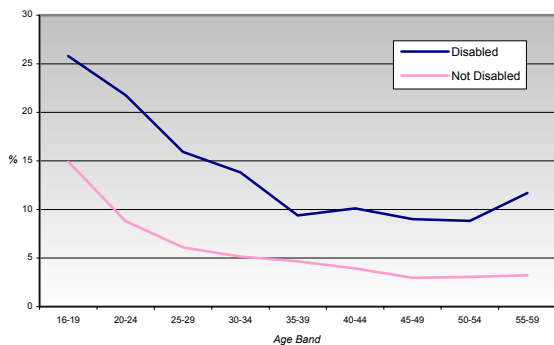


Chart 16. ILO Unemployment % Female Workforce
4 Quarter Average UK 1997-98 Females 16-59



Unemployment across the age groups of the disabled is much higher than that for those not disabled. The level for disabled males is more than three times the level for those not disabled, and in the case of women the ratio is in excess of two.

As with economic activity rates, there is also a wide variation in unemployment rates for the disabled on a regional basis and this is shown in Chart 17. It will be noted that the analysis has been curtailed to main areas and that the figure for females in Northern Ireland have been excluded. This is because the disabled sample size is too small to make the result reliable.

Chart 17. ILO Regional Disabled Unemployment Rate %
4 Quarter Average 1997-98 Males 16-64, Females 16-59.

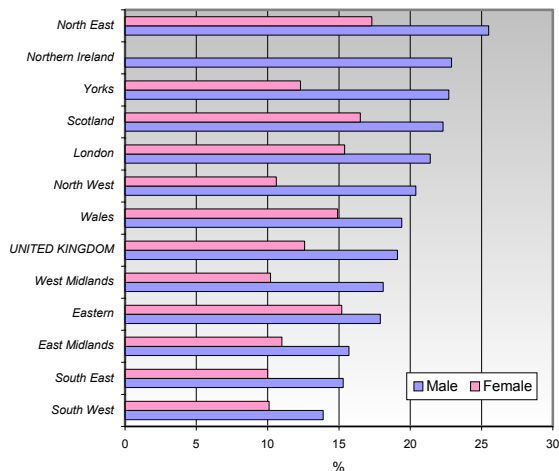
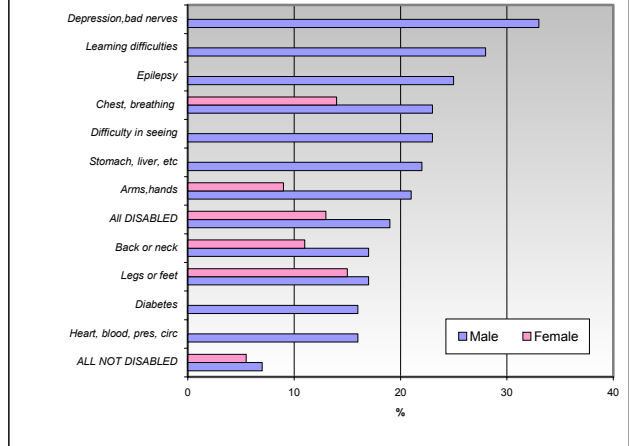


Chart 18 shows the distribution of unemployment rate by specific disability. Figures for those not disabled have been included for comparison. As with the regional analysis, many of the rates for women in the disability analysis have been excluded from the chart because the sample size was too small to make the results reliable.

Chart 18. ILO Unemployment % of Workforce by Disability
4 Quarter Average 1997-98 Males 16-64, Females 16-59.



The high rates for some categories such as depression and learning difficulties among men, compared to those not disabled, or even to the rate for all disabilities, makes it much less likely that people in these categories will be able to find work.

The Labour Force Survey also carries answers to questions on duration of unemployment, and Charts 19 & 20 show the distribution of unemployment by period, either disabled or not disabled. The durations represent the minimum of the length of time looking for work and the length of time since the respondent's last job. The figures are likely therefore to understate the actual duration of unemployment before finding work.

Chart 19. ILO Duration of Unemployment – Men
4 Quarter Average UK 1997-98, Males 16-64.

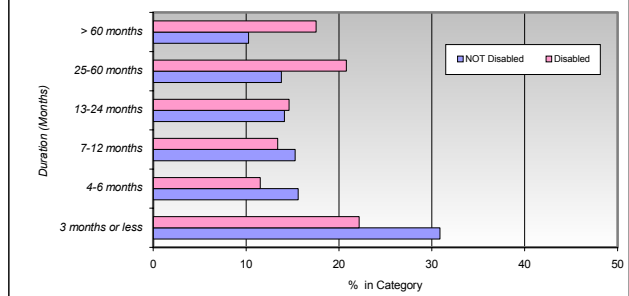
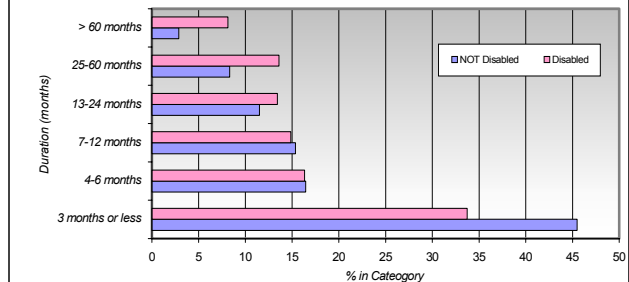


Chart 20. ILO Duration of Unemployment – Women
4 Quarter Average UK 1997-98, Females 16-59.



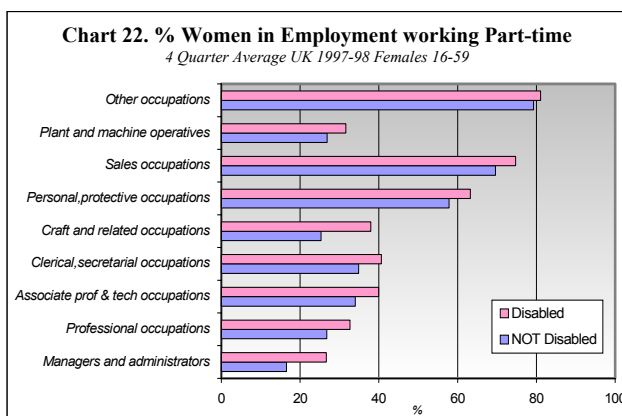
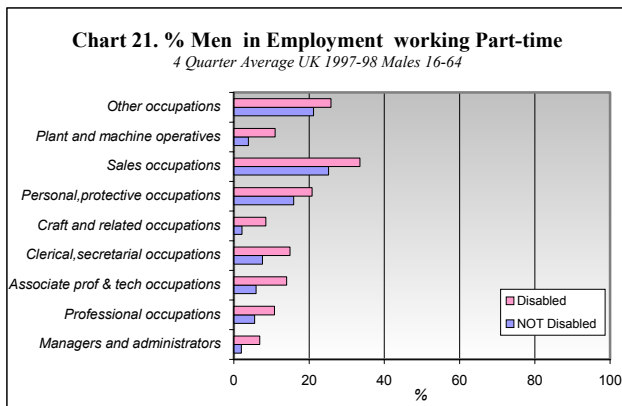
For disabled men and women there is a significant shift from the shorter periods of unemployment to the longer ones, in particular to two to five years or more. For disabled men aged 16-64, the median (or the mid point of the numbers) is about 14 months, whereas the median for men not disabled is between 7-8 months. Likewise for disabled women aged 16-59, the median is about 6 months, whereas the median for females not disabled is about 4 months.

The above figures, however, understate the significance of long-term unemployment and the skewed nature of the duration curve. Since the tables do not state the distribution of those out of work for more than 5 years, it is not possible to calculate the true mean duration. However it could be said that for disabled men the mean duration is at least 26 months and probably quite a bit longer (compared to 18 months for those not disabled). Likewise for women the mean duration is at least 16 months and probably quite a bit longer (compared to 10 months for those not disabled). Taking the average, it is probably fair to estimate that the average duration of all disabled people is at least one and a half times to twice that of those not disabled.

The likely duration of unemployment, if a disabled person attempted to find work, is therefore a complex equation of the rates by age and sex, the relative severity of their disability, how long they have already been away from work and the level of unemployment in their locality.

Full Time Versus Part Time Work

Many people who are disabled but who seek work, in the first instance may seek a part-time job rather than a full-time job, perhaps because of the greater effort required to get to work, their relative ability to work for a long period and other aspects. Charts 21 and 22 summarise the position by major occupation.



Both disabled men and women tend on average to do more part-time work than those not disabled. For disabled employed men the percentage that do part-time work is 13.6%, compared to 7.3% for those not disabled. Likewise the percentage of employed disabled women that do part-time work is 50.8% overall compared to 43% for those not disabled. There are clearly some major differences between the sexes. Major groups of female part-time workers include bar staff, waitresses, nursing auxiliaries, care assistants, shop assistants, check-out operators, cleaners and domestics.

Disability & Self-employment

The disabled are more likely to be self-employed than persons not disabled. Table 3 summarises employment data.

Table 3. Employed & Self-employed of Working Age 000's
Quarter Average 1997-98 UK Males 16-64, Females 16-59

	Men		Women	
	No (000)	%	No (000)	%
Disabled				
Employed	676	78.7	605	91.1
Self-employed	183	21.3	59	8.9
Total	859	100.0	664	100.0
Not Disabled				
Employed	11,425	84.1	9,966	93.1
Self-employed	2,157	15.9	733	6.9
Total	13,582	100.0	10,699	100.0

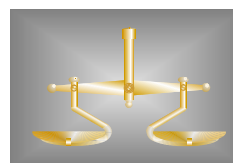
The larger percentage of disabled people who are self-employed compared to the percentage for those not disabled is however still dwarfed by the total number of employed people compared to self-employed. Significant areas of disabled self-employment include construction and related activities, woodworking, metal forming & welding, road transport operatives, arts professionals including graphic designers, photographers & video, childcare & related and managers in farming, horticulture & services industries.

Acknowledgement

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