



# **Report on the Employment of Individuals with Disabilities in Massachusetts State Government**

Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development  
Department of Economic Research  
March 2025

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Requested by the Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons  
with Disabilities



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# Executive Summary

This report analyzes the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities within the Massachusetts state government, using data from the American Community Survey (ACS, 2018-2022) and the Massachusetts Human Resource Division (HRD) Diversity Dashboard (through Q4 FY2024). Our goal is to identify successes and areas for improvement in diversity and inclusion efforts.

## Key Findings:

- **Higher Representation, but Potential Under-Reporting:** The Commonwealth employs a higher proportion of individuals with disabilities (6.3% according to ACS) compared to the broader Massachusetts economy (5.5%). However, HRD data indicates a lower self-identification rate within the state government workforce (3.4%).
- **Experienced and Professional Workforce:** Employees with disabilities in state government are more likely to hold professional positions, have longer tenures (over 75% with 10+ years), and earn higher median salaries (\$75,000 - \$100,000) compared to their non-disabled colleagues.
- **Age Gap:** There is a significant under-representation of younger individuals (especially ages 20-30) with disabilities in the state workforce, raising concerns about potential barriers to entry.
- **Workforce Dynamics:** While the overall number of employees identifying with a disability has increased since 2022, this growth appears driven by existing employees self-disclosing rather than new hires. Separations consistently outpace new hires for this group, indicating potential challenges in recruitment and retention.

## Key Observations:

- **Agency Variation:** Representation of employees with disabilities varies significantly across state agencies, with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development showing the highest representation (9.1%) and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security the lowest (1.1%).
- **Job Distribution:** Individuals with disabilities are concentrated in professional, administrative, and clerical roles and underrepresented in protective services.
- **Disability Types:** Ambulatory and vision difficulties are the most prevalent types reported by state government workers, while cognitive and hearing difficulties are less common compared to the non-state sector.

## Recommendations for Future Research:

The report identifies several areas for future investigation, including:

- Understanding the factors driving agency-level variations in disability employment, including self-disclosure rates, agency culture, and accessibility of hiring processes.
- Learning from other states with successful disability employment initiatives in the public sector.

- Identifying and addressing barriers to entry for young workers with disabilities.
- Assessing the impact of evolving work arrangements (remote work, flexible schedules) on employees with disabilities.
- Developing strategies to promote self-disclosure and build trust among employees with disabilities.

**Conclusion:**

This analysis provides a valuable foundation for understanding the current state of disability employment within the Massachusetts state government. By addressing the identified challenges and building on existing strengths, the Commonwealth can create a more inclusive and representative workforce for individuals with disabilities. Continued monitoring, analysis, and targeted action are essential to achieve this goal.

# Introduction

This report provides a data-driven analysis of the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities within the Massachusetts state government, aiming to identify both successes and areas for potential improvement in diversity and inclusion efforts.

This report draws upon two distinct data sources to analyze employment trends among Massachusetts state government employees with disabilities. The first is the American Community Survey (ACS), a comprehensive demographic and socioeconomic survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. For this report, the ACS data captures individuals with disabilities related to hearing, vision, cognition, ambulation, self-care, or independent living. It's important to note that the ACS defines disability differently than the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which adopts a broader definition that includes any impairment or history of impairment that substantially limits major life activities. The ACS definition, used in this report, is more focused on functional limitations in six specific areas. This difference can impact how individuals with disabilities are identified and counted.

The ACS provides data on a wide range of characteristics, including disability status, employment, and demographics, for a representative sample of the population. The five-year estimates from the 2018-2022 ACS are used in this report to calculate reliable estimates, focusing on the subpopulation of Massachusetts residents who self-identify as having a disability and report working for a state government employer.

The second data source is the Massachusetts Human Resource Division (HRD) Diversity Dashboard. This dashboard provides detailed quarterly data on the demographics of state government employees, including those who self-identify as having a disability. This data is more granular than the ACS, offering insights into specific agencies and job categories within the state government. It is important to note that workers who self-identify as having a disability in the ACS may not self-disclose to their employer—i.e., the Commonwealth—as having a disability. This difference in self-identification could be due to a variety of factors and requires further investigation.

The methodology employed involves comparative analysis, drawing from both datasets to identify trends, differences, and areas of focus. The ACS data allows for benchmarking the Commonwealth's employment of individuals with disabilities against broader economic trends. Meanwhile, the HRD data enables a more detailed exploration of the demographics and employment patterns within the state

government workforce. By combining these sources, we aim to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the representation and experiences of employees with disabilities in Massachusetts.

Our analysis suggests several key observations regarding the employment of individuals with disabilities within the Massachusetts state government:

1. **Commonwealth Employment:** The ACS data indicates that the Commonwealth employs a higher proportion of individuals with disabilities compared to the broader economy. However, the HRD data suggests potentially lower self-identification within workplace than in the ACS.
2. **Worker Profile:** Within the HRD data, employees with disabilities appear more likely to hold professional positions, have higher average earnings, and have longer tenure compared to the overall state workforce. Further analysis is needed to understand the factors contributing to these observed differences.
3. **Age Demographics:** Representation of individuals with disabilities is significantly lower among younger age groups within the HRD data. This observation raises questions about potential barriers to entry for younger individuals with disabilities.
4. **Workforce Dynamics:** The HRD data shows that separations (including voluntary and involuntary) currently outpace new hires among employees who identify as having a disability. However, overall employment numbers for this group have not decreased, potentially due to an increase in existing workers self-disclosing a disability. Further research is needed to confirm this hypothesis and explore contributing factors.

## Findings

### Overall Employment Trends

As of Q4 FY2024, approximately 1,550 individuals working for the executive branch self-identified as having a disability, representing 3.4% of the workforce, according to HRD data. Comparatively, the ACS estimates that an average of 6.3% of state government workers identified as having a disability between 2018 and 2022. This difference may suggest that some individuals may choose not to disclose a disability when applying for or working in state government positions. Several factors could contribute to this, including concerns about stigma, perceived barriers, or differences in survey methodologies.

Figure 1

**FTE identifying as having a disability**

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q1 FY2022 - Q4 FY2024



Source: Human Resource Division

Comparative analysis of the ACS and HRD data both point to positive trends. The ACS data indicates that the state employs a larger proportion of individuals with disabilities (6.3%) than is represented in the broader Massachusetts economy (5.5%). Additionally, the HRD data shows a positive trend in the number of FTEs identifying as having a disability, with a 20% increase since Q1 2022 ([Figure 1](#)).

**Table 1. Share of workers with disabilities in the overall economy and state government based on data from the American Community Survey**

Rank	State	% workers with disabilities in the overall economy	% workers with disabilities in the state government	Difference in % between the overall economy and state government
1	New Hampshire	6.6	8.8	2.2
2	Illinois	5.5	7.6	2.1
3	Kansas	7.7	9.7	2.0
4	Montana	7.9	9.8	1.9
5	Oregon	7.7	9.6	1.9
...				
<b>20</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>0.8</b>
...				
46	Mississippi	8.4	7.5	-0.9
47	Vermont	7.6	6.6	-1.0
48	North Dakota	6.9	5.8	-1.1
59	Ohio	7.0	5.5	-1.5
50	Wyoming	8.1	6.4	-1.7

Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022 5yr PUMS

Compared to other states, New Hampshire, Illinois, Kansas, Montana, and Oregon exhibit a larger positive difference between the share of state government employees with disabilities and the overall proportion of individuals with disabilities within their respective workforces, based on ACS data ([Table 1](#)). Given this dynamic, these states may offer examples of successful strategies for promoting inclusion. Illinois, for example, introduced the Disabled Hiring Incentives (HB 0040) in 2009, creating a structured approach with clear expectations and incentives for state agencies to increase the employment of individuals with disabilities. Further research into the specific initiatives of these states could provide valuable insights for Massachusetts.

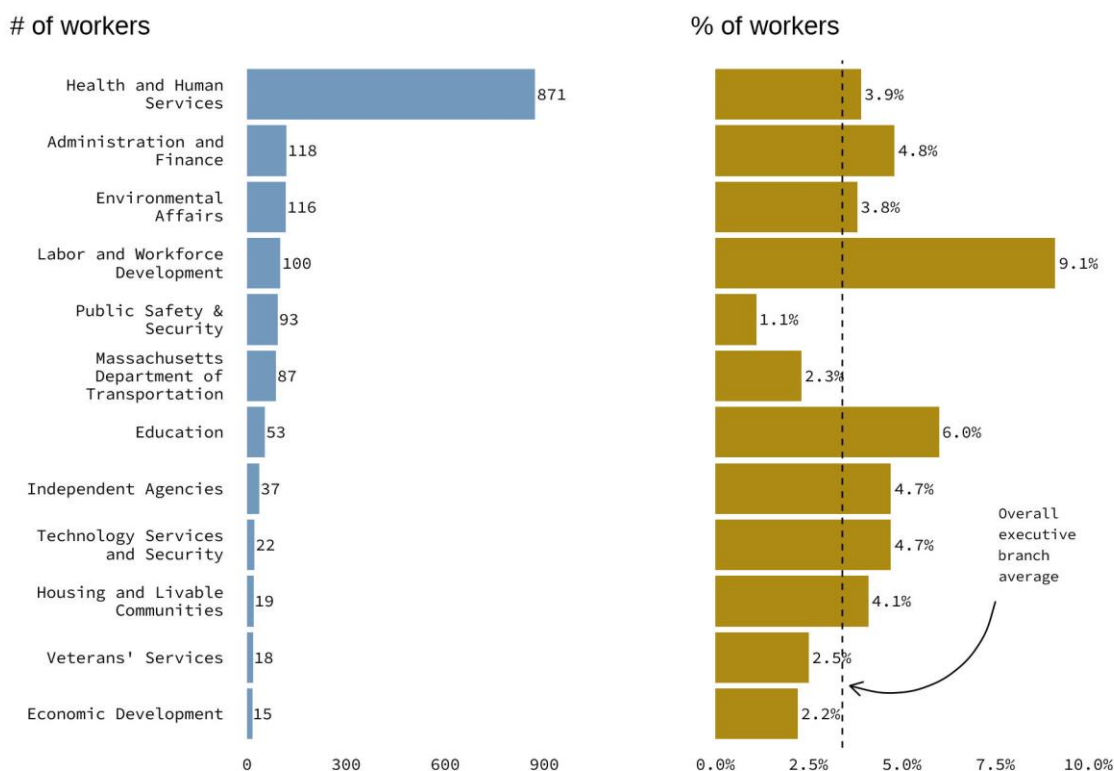
## Worker Profile



Figure 2

### Workers identifying as having a disability

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q4 FY2024



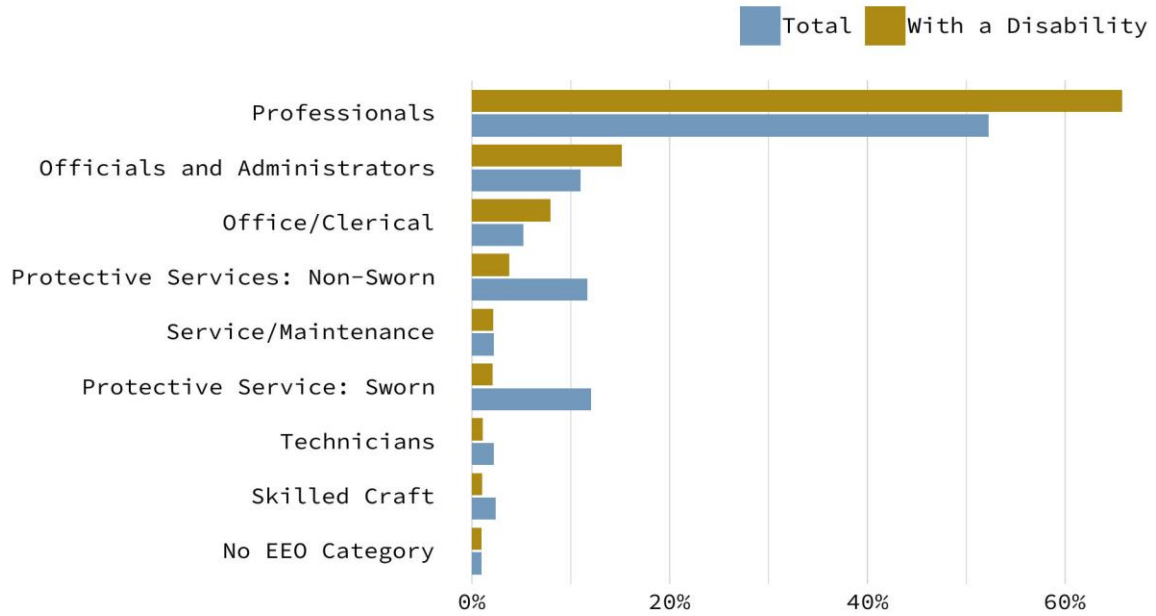
Source: Human Resource Division. Data for the Governor's office is excluded due to suppression for small populations.

The distribution of employees who self-identify as having a disability across state agencies varies significantly, according to HRD data (Figure 2). As of Q4 FY2024, over 9% of workers in the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development self-identified as having a disability, compared to 1% of workers in the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, which has the lowest representation. The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, Department of Transportation, Executive Office of Veterans' Services, and Executive Office of Economic Development each had lower shares of workers identifying as having a disability than the overall executive branch workforce. These variations may reflect differences in job requirements, agency culture, or accessibility. Further research is needed to understand the factors contributing to these disparities. It's important to consider that Health and Human Services employs a large number of individuals and accounts for more than 50% of all executive branch workers who identify as having a disability. This concentration within a single agency could influence overall trends.

Figure 3

### Share of state workers by job category

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q4 FY2024



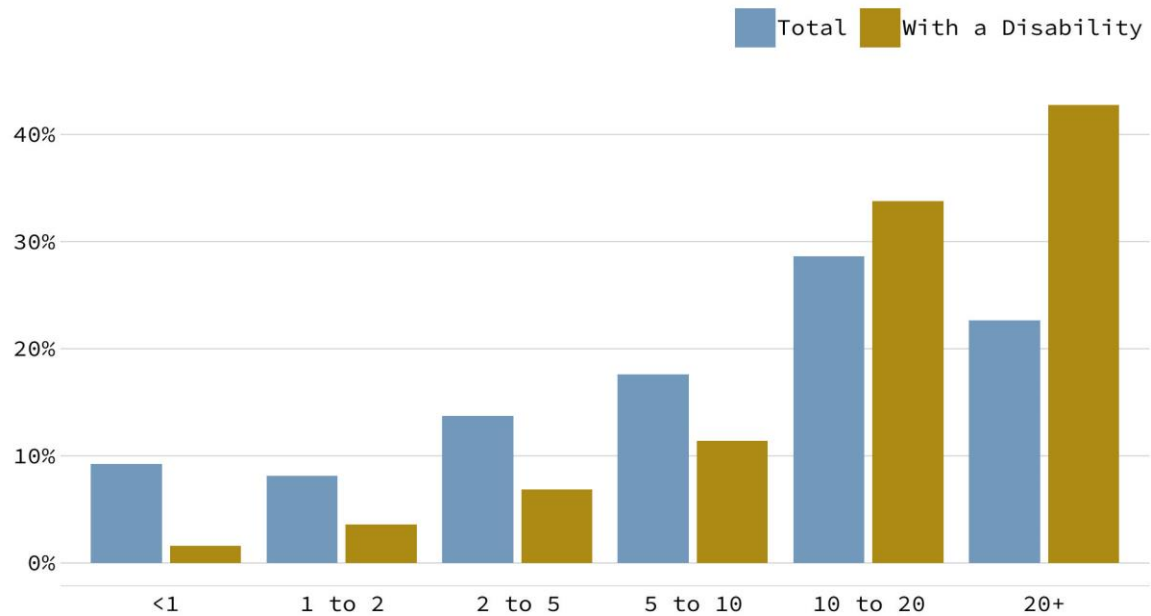
Source: Human Resource Division

HRD data indicates that almost 90% of state workers who self-identify as having a disability work in professional, official/administrator, or office/clerical roles ([Figure 3](#)). In contrast, individuals with disabilities appear underrepresented in protective service positions, both sworn and non-sworn. This distribution may be influenced by various factors, such as job requirements, accessibility, and recruitment practices.

Figure 4

### Share of state workers by years of service

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q4 FY2024



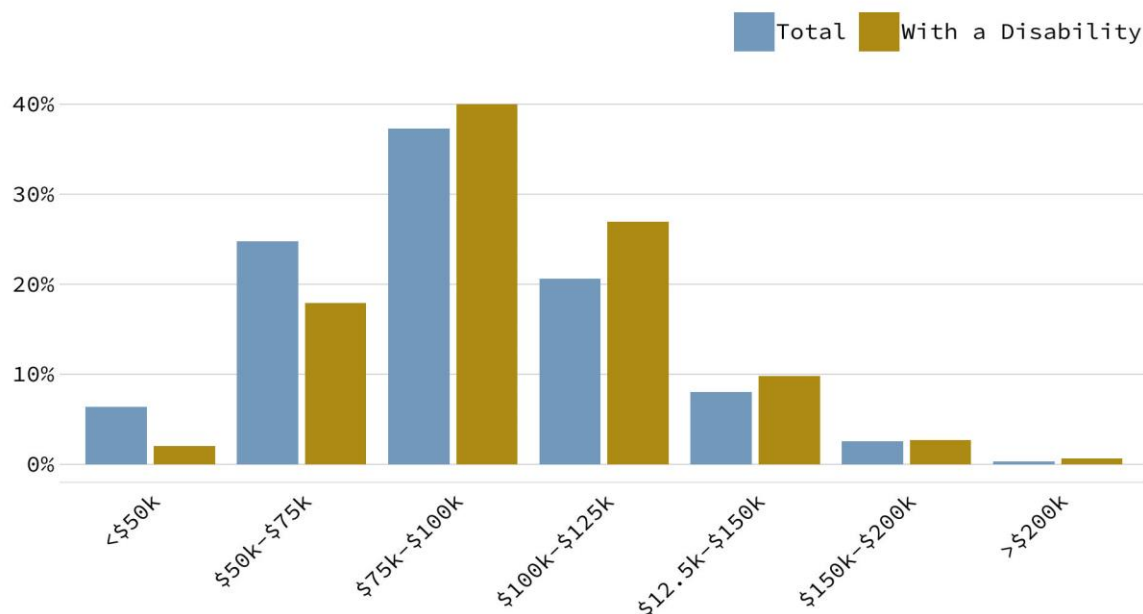
Source: Human Resource Division

HRD data shows that individuals who self-identify as having a disability tend to have longer tenures with the Commonwealth, with over 75% having worked in state government for over 10 years ( [Figure 4](#)). While this observation could suggest a supportive work environment, it could also be related to other factors, such as the possibility that the likelihood of developing a disability increases with age, leading to a higher representation among long-tenured employees. Conversely, people with disabilities are significantly underrepresented among new employees with the Commonwealth, suggesting low recent hiring rates.

Figure 5

### Share of state workers by salary

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q4 FY2024



Source: Human Resource Division

The longer tenure and concentration in professional, official/administrator, and office/clerical roles is associated with a higher median salary among workers identifying as having a disability compared to their non-disabled counterparts, according to HRD data. The median salary for those identifying as having a disability falls between \$75,000 and \$100,000, with a higher likelihood of earning within the \$75,000-\$100,000 and \$100,000-\$125,000 ranges than other state workers ([Figure 5](#)).

## Demographics

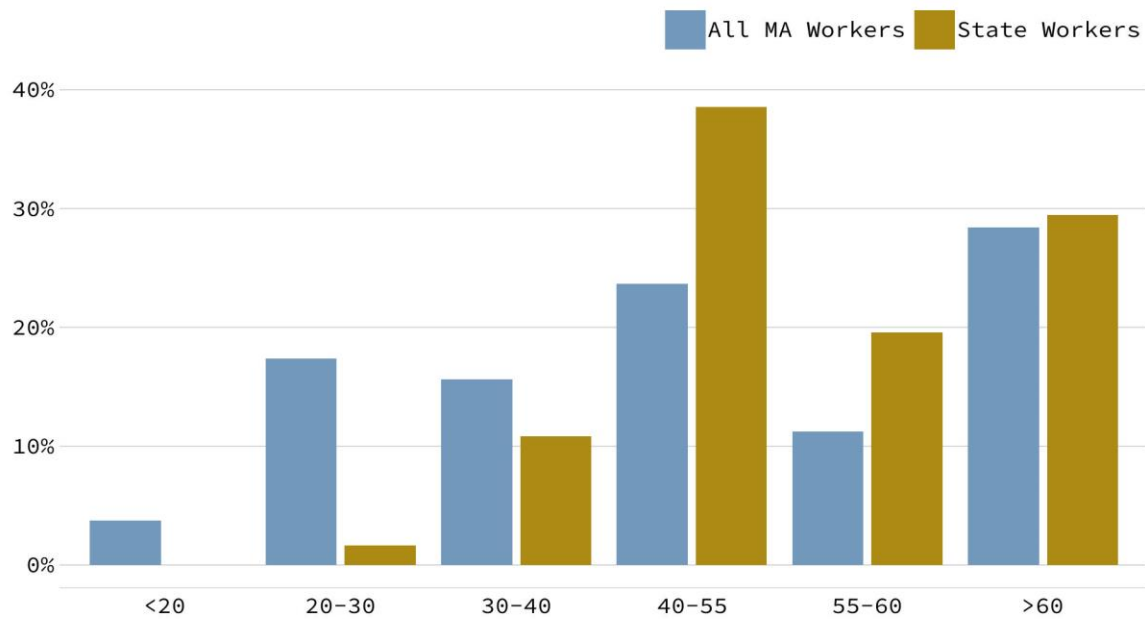
The age distribution of state workers with disabilities differs from the overall population of workers who identify as having a disability, according to HRD and ACS data. Individuals with disabilities employed in state government tend to be older than 40, with the largest gap emerging in the 40 to 55 year old group ([Figure 6](#)). This age distribution aligns with the finding that state workers with disabilities tend to have longer tenures. The data shows a noticeable underrepresentation of younger individuals with disabilities employed in state government. While 17% of Massachusetts workers with disabilities are between 20-30, less than 2% of state employees fall within that age range. This demographic gap merits further investigation to understand potential barriers to entry for younger individuals with disabilities and to inform targeted recruitment strategies. It is important to note that

differences in data collection methodologies between the ACS and HRD data could contribute to the observed discrepancies.

**Figure 6**

**Share of workers with a disability by age group**

Q4 FY2024 compared to 2018-2022 average among all MA workers



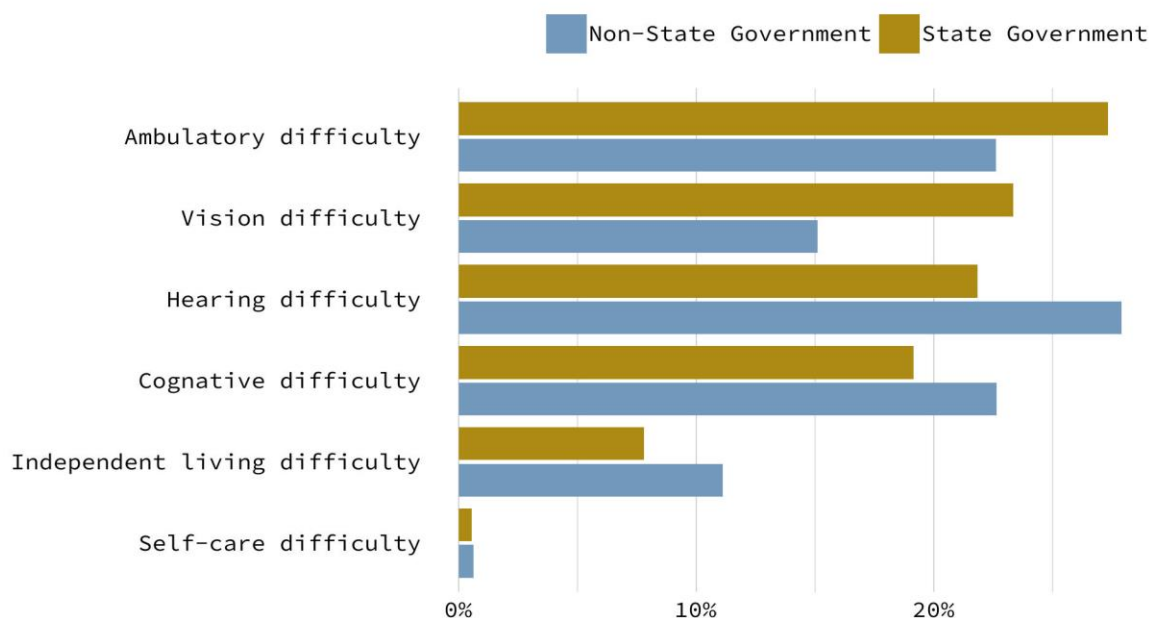
Source: Human Resource Division. American Community Survey PUMS - 2022 5yr Sample

The American Community Survey (2018-2022) indicates varying prevalence rates of disability types among Massachusetts state government workers versus non-state government workers ([Figure 7](#)). Ambulatory and vision difficulties are the most prevalent disability types reported by state government workers, with notably higher rates among state employees compared to non-state employees. Cognitive and hearing difficulties are reported by roughly 20% of state government workers but are less prevalent compared to workers in the non-state sector. Several factors could contribute to these variations, including differences in job demands, accessibility accommodations, and reporting patterns across sectors. These findings underscore the importance of inclusive efforts tailored to the specific needs of individuals with diverse disability types.

Figure 7

### Share of workers with a disability by disability type

Massachusetts | 2018 - 2022



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-year PUMS

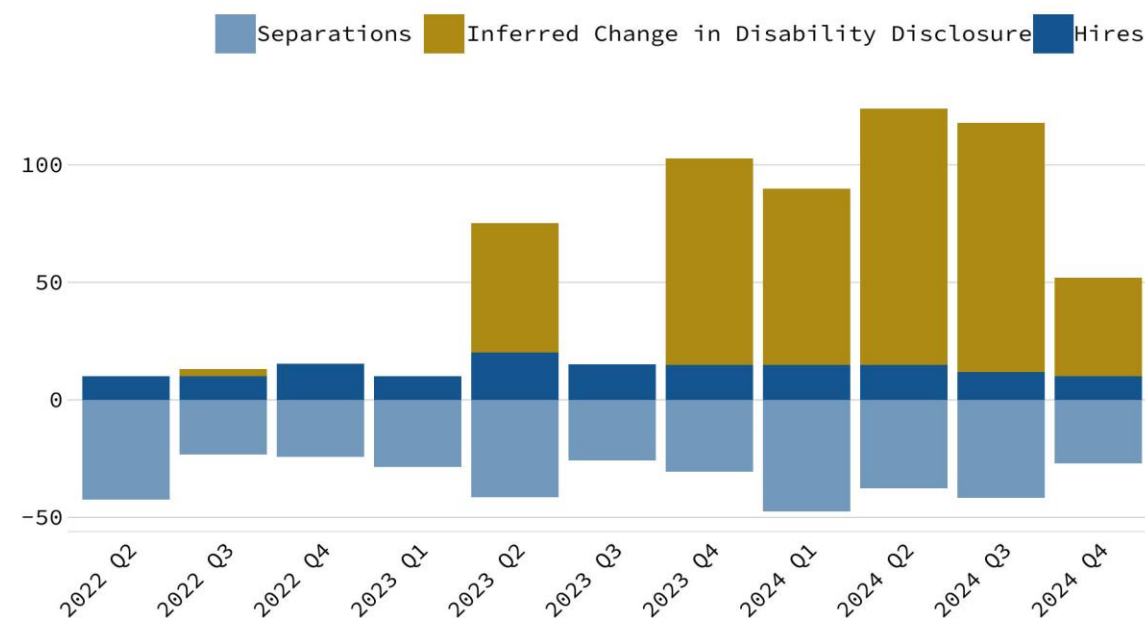
## Workforce Dynamics

As shown in [Figure 1](#), the number of executive branch workers identifying as having a disability has increased since 2022, according to HRD data. [Figure 8](#) decomposes this change into quarterly changes in new hires and separations (both voluntary and involuntary). New hires with disabilities have averaged about 13 per quarter. This low hiring rate is consistent with the finding that people who identify as having a disability are underrepresented among workers with short tenures ([Figure 4](#)). Over the same period, separations have averaged around 33, suggesting that the number of workers with a disability should be falling. The consistent growth despite higher separation rates suggests that the number of existing workers who choose to self-identify as having a disability has grown.

Figure 8

### Components of net-change in state workers with a disability

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q1 FY2022 - Q4 FY2024



Source: Human Resource Division

This dynamic could be due to several factors, including increased awareness and comfort with self-disclosure or changes in workplace culture. While the available HRD data is limited to post-2022 trends, it is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated increase in remote work opportunities may have influenced self-identification rates. While a correlation between the pandemic and increased self-reporting of disabilities has been observed in broader studies, further research is needed to establish a causal link within the state government workforce. Investigating the types of disabilities reported and changes in workplace policies related to remote work and accommodations could shed light on this potential connection.

Overall, the trends paint a mixed picture. While growth could be a positive sign of increased comfort with self-disclosure, it could also reflect aging within the workforce or changes associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. New hires identifying as having a disability have been consistently lower than separations, suggesting that either new hires are less likely to self-disclose, or that people with disabilities may face barriers to finding employment with the Commonwealth.

## Conclusion

This report provides a snapshot of the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities within the Massachusetts state government, based on available ACS and HRD data. The analysis reveals both potential areas of strength and areas where further investigation and targeted action may be beneficial. The ACS data suggests that the Commonwealth employs a proportionally higher number of individuals with disabilities compared to the broader Massachusetts economy. Within the state government workforce, the HRD data indicates that employees with disabilities tend to hold professional positions, have longer tenures, and earn higher average salaries. These observations may reflect positive aspects of the Commonwealth's efforts to create an inclusive workplace.

However, several areas warrant further attention. The discrepancy between ACS and HRD data regarding the overall representation of employees with disabilities raises questions about potential under-reporting within the state workforce. The under-representation of younger workers with disabilities, particularly in the 20-30 age group, highlights a potential need for targeted recruitment, retention, and engagement strategies. Furthermore, the variation in representation across different state agencies suggests the need for agency-specific approaches to inclusion and belonging strategies for individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

Continued monitoring and analysis of employment trends for state workers with disabilities, using both ACS and HRD data, will be essential for informing evidence-based policies and initiatives. This analysis raises several topics that could be covered in future research, including:

- **Learning from Leaders:** Identifying states with exemplary records of disability employment in the public sector can offer valuable insights. This research should analyze the specific policies, practices, and initiatives employed by these states, with a focus on areas like targeted recruitment, comprehensive accommodation processes, and leadership commitment to inclusion.
- **Removing Barriers for Young Workers:** Understanding the underrepresentation of young people with disabilities in the state workforce requires a focused examination of potential barriers. This research should investigate accessibility of entry-level positions, effectiveness of internship and mentorship programs, and the role of attitudes and biases in hiring and promotion decisions.
- **The Future of Work and Disability:** As work arrangements continue to evolve in the wake of the pandemic, it's essential to assess the impact on employees with disabilities. This research



should examine how flexible work options, remote work, and technology influence accessibility, career progression, and social inclusion for employees with disabilities.

- **Promoting Self-Disclosure:** To address the discrepancy between ACS and HRD data, research should investigate the factors influencing self-disclosure among state employees with disabilities. This includes identifying potential disincentives, exploring strategies to build trust and ensure privacy, and evaluating the effectiveness of current initiatives to promote self-disclosure.

By exploring these areas, the Commonwealth can refine existing programs and develop new strategies to foster a more inclusive and representative workforce for individuals with disabilities.

## Data Appendix

**Figure 1 FTE identifying as having a disability.** Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q1 FY2022 - Q4

Fiscal quarter	Full-time equivalents with a disability
2022 Q1	1,296
2022 Q2	1,263
2022 Q3	1,253
2022 Q4	1,244
2023 Q1	1,226
2023 Q2	1,260
2023 Q3	1,249
2023 Q4	1,321
2024 Q1	1,363
2024 Q2	1,449
2024 Q3	1,526
2024 Q4	1,550

Source: Human Resource Division

**Figure 2** States with higher rates of employment of people with disabilities in state government compared to the rest of the economy. Percentage point gap between the share of state government employment among people with a disability and share of people with disability employed in the rest of the economy

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State	
New Hampshire	2.2%
Illinois	2.1%
Kansas	2.0%
Montana	1.9%
Oregon	1.9%

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Source: IPUMS US. 2022 5-year ACS sample.

**Figure 3 Workers identifying as having a disability.** Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q4 FY2024

Secretariat	Total workers that identify as having a disability	Share of workers that identify a having a disability
Health and Human Services	871	3.9%
Independent Agencies	37	4.7%
Labor and Workforce Development	100	9.1%
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	87	2.3%
Public Safety and Homeland Security	93	1.1%
Technology Services and Security	22	4.7%
Administration and Finance	118	4.8%
Education	53	6.0%
Environmental Affairs	116	3.8%
Economic Development	15	2.2%
Housing and Livable Communities	19	4.1%
Veterans' Services	18	2.5%

Source: Human Resource Division. Data for the Governor's office is excluded due to supression for small populations.

**Figure 4 Share of state workers by job category.** Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q4 FY2024

Job category	With a Disability	Total
Professionals	65.7%	52.3%
Officials and Administrators	15.1%	11.0%
Office/Clerical	7.9%	5.2%
Protective Services: Non-Sworn	3.8%	11.7%
Service/Maintenance	2.2%	2.2%
Protective Service: Sworn	2.1%	12.0%
Technicians	1.1%	2.2%
Skilled Craft	1.1%	2.4%
No EEO Category	1.0%	0.9%

Source: Human Resource Division

**Figure 5 Share of state workers by years of service.** Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q4 FY2024

Service length	With a Disability	Total
<1	1.6%	9.2%
1 to 2	3.6%	8.1%
2 to 5	6.9%	13.7%
5 to 10	11.4%	17.6%
10 to 20	33.8%	28.7%
20+	42.7%	22.7%

Source: Human Resource Division

**Figure 6 Share of state workers by salary.** Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q4 FY2024

Salary bin	With a Disability	Total
<\$50k	2.0%	6.4%
\$50k-\$75k	17.9%	24.8%
\$75k-\$100k	40.0%	37.3%
\$100k-\$125k	26.9%	20.6%
\$12.5k-\$150k	9.8%	8.1%
\$150k-\$200k	2.7%	2.6%
>\$200k	0.6%	0.3%

Source: Human Resource Division

**Figure 7 Share of workers with a disability by age group.** Q4 FY2024 compared to 2018-2022 average among all MA workers

Age group	State Workers	All MA Workers
<20	0.0%	3.7%
20-30	1.6%	17.4%
30-40	10.8%	15.6%
40-55	38.5%	23.7%
55-60	19.6%	11.2%
>60	29.5%	28.4%

Source: Human Resource Division. American Community Survey PUMS - 2022 5yr Sample

**Figure 8** Share of workers with a disability by disability type. Massachusetts | 2018 - 2022

Disability type	Non-State Government	State Government
Ambulatory difficulty	22.6%	27.3%
Cognitive difficulty	22.6%	19.1%
Hearing difficulty	27.9%	21.8%
Independent living difficulty	11.1%	7.8%
Self-care difficulty	0.6%	0.6%
Vision difficulty	15.1%	23.3%

Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-year PUMS

**Figure 9 Components of net-change in state workers with a disability.** Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Branch | Q1 FY2022 - Q4 FY2024

Fiscal quarter	Hires	Separations	Inferred Change in Disability Disclosure
2022 Q2	10	-42	0
2022 Q3	10	-23	3
2022 Q4	15	-24	0
2023 Q1	10	-28	0
2023 Q2	20	-41	55
2023 Q3	15	-26	0
2023 Q4	15	-31	88
2024 Q1	15	-47	75
2024 Q2	15	-38	109
2024 Q3	12	-42	106
2024 Q4	10	-27	42

Source: Human Resource Division