

## **A Comprehensive Analysis of the Effects of US Disability Discrimination Laws on the Employment of the Disabled Population**

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### **Key Findings and Policy Implications**

This paper analyzes the effect of both federal and state-level disability discrimination laws on the labor market for individuals with disabilities. It considers differential effects by disability type and severity, and by the degree to which a person's disabling conditions are salient to an employer. The study primarily uses data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), because of its longitudinal structure and specialized modules on disability and functional impairment. It also uses the Current Population Survey, because the larger sample sizes better identify impacts of state-level policy variation. The paper finds that:

- Expansions in the scope of disability discrimination laws are generally associated with modest to large improvements in hiring rates, while a narrowing of scope generally leads to lower hiring rates. However, the results vary by policy, and by how disability is defined.
- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), for example, when disability is defined using a conventional "work limited" definition, we find no effect on hiring or employment. The ADA did, however, increase hiring when disability was measured as having a non-severe ADL impairment (or limit to activity of daily living).
- There is suggestive evidence that the salience of the health condition, and the resulting greater ability of employers to continue to discriminate, mitigates the hiring gains from expansions in the scope of discrimination laws.

While the detailed results are mixed, the analysis is important in informing policy, because it is the first to comprehensively explore all of the major federal and state disability discrimination legal changes of the past 25 years and their effects across a range of disabled subpopulations.

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