People with Disabilities: America’s Largest Minority

About this module

Goal: To make participants aware of the prevalence of disability in America and why it is important to know about this growing minority group

Format: Presentation

Time: 20 minutes

Potential audience: General audiences, employers/business leaders, educators

Materials needed: PPT slides and facilitator’s guide

Facilitator’s Tips for this Module

The intent of this module is to make participants aware of the prevalence of disability in America and why it is important to know about this growing minority group. Some participants may not be able to see the red boxes on the slides, but may be able to determine the square shape around the “person” on the slide.

Facilitator’s Notes for this Module

People with Disabilities: America’s Largest Minority

Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 1)

This is the title slide for this module.
Disclaimer

Information, materials, and/or technical assistance are intended solely as informal guidance, and are neither a determination of your legal rights or responsibilities under the ADA, nor binding on any agency with enforcement responsibility under the ADA.

The Northeast ADA Center is authorized by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) to provide information, materials, and technical assistance to individuals and entities that are covered by the ADA. The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the Department of Education, NIDRR grant number H133 A110020. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 2)

Change this slide to reflect your regional information.

Trainers, be sure to advise participants that this training is not intended as legal advice.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 3)

Expand on this slide by explaining that the growing population of people who have acquired disabilities along with those who are born with disabilities, better identification and earlier treatment of disabilities have increased the number of people with disabilities who require access and accommodations in order to participate more fully in society.

Emphasize that there are many different types of disabilities and they require different accessibility responses - it is not just about physical accessibility and wheelchairs. We also need to consider individuals with visual disabilities, hearing/speech disabilities, learning disabilities, psychiatric impairments, etc.

The source for the claim of 1 in 5 has disability: Brault, 2008. We use this figure because it captures both obvious and non-obvious disabilities, which are consistent with the definition of disability under the ADA. You may have seen other figures of disability prevalence. This number is different depending on what definition of disability was used by the source.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 4)

As indicated on the prior slide, our aging population is one of the reasons for an increase in the number of people with disabilities in the U.S. Tell participants that the next few slides indicate how increased age is associated with an increase in the prevalence of disability. Ask participants to pick a “person” on the slide to follow as you go through the next few slides.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 5)

Ask participants to raise their hand if their “person” has turned red (or if it has a box shape around it), indicating that they have acquired a disability.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 6)

On this slide, we look at the age cohort of 45–54 years. Ask participants to raise their hand if the “person” they have focused on has turned red, or is now in a box.

Point out that, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, this is where the median age of the American workforce now lies. This means that at least 30.8 percent of the American workforce is working with a disability. Further, if we expanded the definition of disability to match the definition used by the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), this number might even be greater.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 7)

Begin this slide by asking how many hands will now go up, indicating that their “person” has acquired a disability as they entered the age range of 55–64 years. In this age group, over one-in-five people has a disability. This has tremendous implications in our society. Businesses that are not accessible and welcoming to people with disabilities will be turning away over one-fifth of their potential market.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 8)

Ask again how many hands will now go up, indicating that their “person” has acquired a disability as they entered the age cohort of 65–69 years. In this age group, over one-in-three people has a disability. This statistic has profound implications for service providers and businesses. This age group tends to have more disposable income than other age cohorts and they will not spend this disposable income in businesses that are not welcoming and accessible.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 9)

Now, how many of the participants’ “people” have a disability? Refer to the slide which indicates that more than over 40% of people in this age range will have a disability.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 10)

Conclude this activity by making the following point:

Participants will notice that the disability prevalence statistics contained in these slides may differ somewhat from those cited in other places. This is because there are different definitions of disability used by different studies and even by different laws. As stated earlier, the figures on these slides are based on the definition of disability under the ADA, which includes a broad range of types of disabilities.
For more information on Disability Statistics

- Email - DisabilityStatistics@cornell.edu
- Website - www.disabilitystatistics.org
- Northeast ADA Center – www.northeastada.org
  - Finding and Using Disability Statistics: Available Data, Reporting Issues, and Resources http://www.northeastada.org/k-other.cfm#archives

Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 11)

Northeast ADA Center website, www.northeastada.org, also has an archived webinar about interpreting different disability statistics.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 12)

Remind participants that disability is all around us. Even if they don’t have a disability themselves, they are likely to have family members, friends, neighbors or colleagues with disabilities. Advise participants that the ADA Trainer Network and the National ADA Centers offer additional training about serving customers with disabilities and about creating more inclusive workplace communities. These efforts are important because the number of people with disabilities, America’s largest minority, will continue to grow.
Facilitator’s Notes (Slide 13)

National Network: Please insert your centers contact information into this slide.

Conclude by reminding participants that the training materials were produced by the Northeast ADA Center in collaboration with the National ADA Network. Remind them of the free and confidential technical assistance and other services available from your local ADA Center and from the ADA Centers throughout the country. Mention the ADA TA line: 800-949-4232.