Working in the Community

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report looks at employment for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who receive state IDD services. The information comes from the 2023–2024 National Core Indicators Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NCI-IDD) In-Person Survey.

The data include 16,925 adults from 30 states, including Washington, DC.

The data did not include people under age 22 who were in public school.

The data also did not include people under age 22 whose school status was unknown.

The report looks at:

- how many people have paid jobs in the community
- the types of jobs people have
- how much they work
- how much money they earn
- their employment goals
- how people spend their time during the week
- how employment has changed since 2016–2017

Important: These findings describe people who receive services from state IDD agencies that participated in the survey. They do not describe every adult with IDD in the US.

National Core Indicators (NCI) helps states learn about the lives and experiences of people who receive IDD services. NCI collects information about things like employment, where people live, relationships, choices, and community participation. States can use this information to understand what is working well and what could be improved.

Words to know

Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD): Disabilities that begin before age 22 and may affect a person's physical, intellectual, or emotional development.

Competitive integrated employment (CIE): A job where a person works alongside people without disabilities and earns at least minimum wage. The person does similar work and earns wages and benefits similar to coworkers without disabilities.

Individual job in the community: A job at a community business where a person works alongside people without disabilities. Some individual jobs in these data may pay less than minimum wage, so an individual job is not always CIE.

Underemployed: For this report, a person is underemployed if they do not fully work alongside people without disabilities or if they earn less than minimum wage.

Employment goal: A goal in a person's service plan that says employment is something the person wants to work toward.

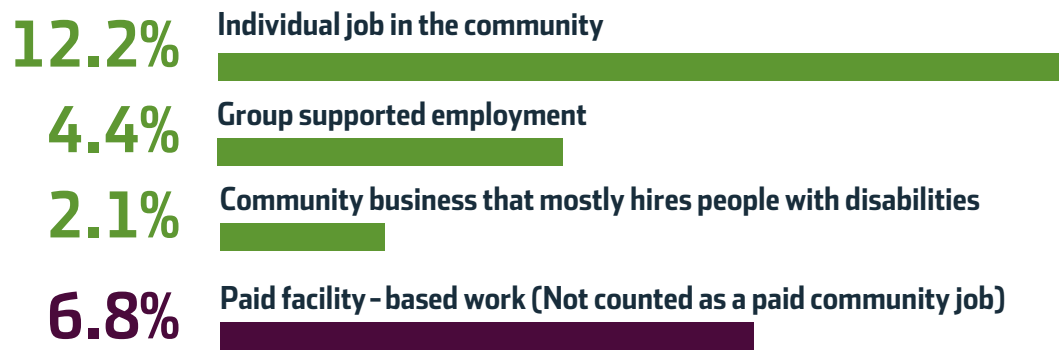
RESULTS

Most people do not have a paid job in the community.

18%: percentage of people who had a paid job in the community

About 18% of people in the survey had a paid community job. About 82% did not. Individual jobs were most common. Some people had more than one type of job during the week.

Employment among survey participants



People with individual jobs earned more per hour.

People with individual jobs worked about 14 hours per week and earned about $13 per hour. People in group supported employment earned about $11 per hour. People working at businesses that mostly hire people with disabilities also earned about $11 per hour.

People tend to work in the same types of jobs.

Food service and retail were common jobs for people with individual jobs. Cleaning and maintenance jobs were especially common in group supported employment. The findings suggest that people with IDD need access to a wider range of job choices in their communities.

Employment outcomes differ across groups.

Employment rates differed by:

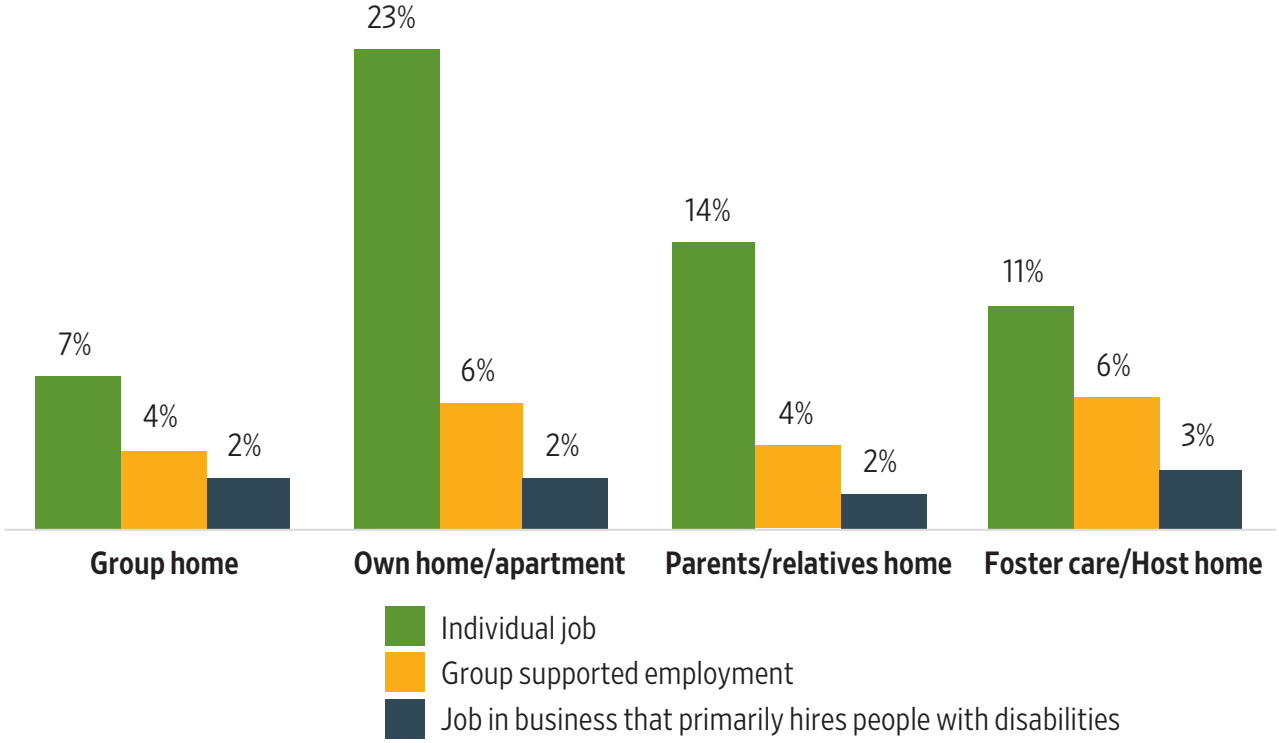
- age
- whether someone is a man or woman
- guardianship
- level of intellectual disability
- where people lived

About 32% of people living in their own home had a paid community job compared with 12% of people living in group homes

People living in their own homes were more often working in paid community jobs (31.6%) than people living in group homes (12.4%).

Employment also differed by guardianship. People without a guardian were more likely to have a paid community job than people with a guardian.

Figure 1. Type of Job by Where People Live



Many people want to work but are not competitively employed.

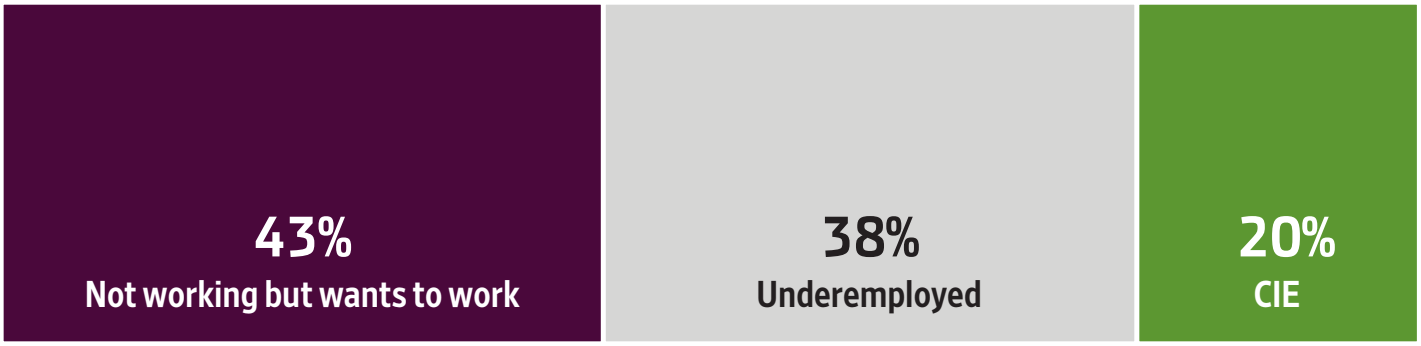
The researchers also looked more closely at a smaller group of about 4,000 people. This group included:

- people who were not working but wanted a job
- people who were underemployed
- people who were in competitive integrated employment (CIE)

In this group:

- 43% of people were not working but wanted a job
- 38% of people were underemployed
- 20% of people were in CIE

Figure 2. Employment Status of People Who Want to Work or Are Working



There were large differences across states. Depending on the state, between 3% and 49% of people were in CIE.

Employment goals are much more common among people in CIE.

Who had an employment goal?

35% of people who were not working but wanted to work had an employment goal

55% of people who were underemployed had an employment goal

73% of people who were in CIE had an employment goal

People in CIE were much more likely to have an employment goal in their service plan.

Past research has also found that people with an employment goal are more likely to get CIE.

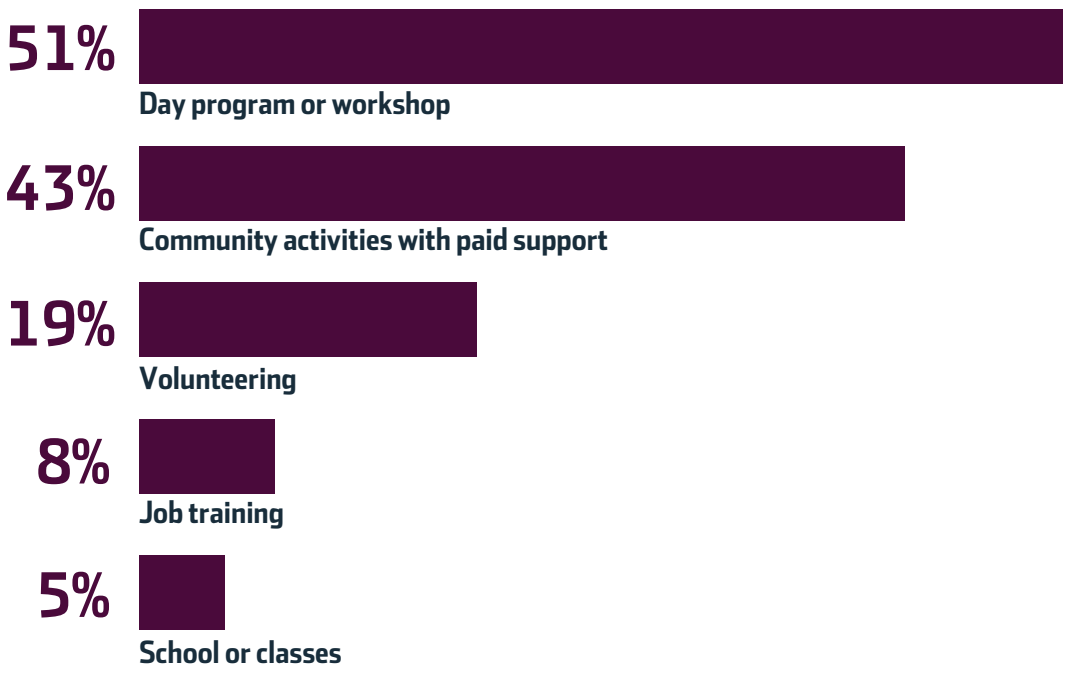
HOW DO PEOPLE SPEND THEIR WEEK?

Most people with IDD go to a day program or workshop each week. Many people also take part in community activities with paid support.

Fewer people volunteer, take job training, or go to school or classes.

Some people participate in other activities, while some people do not participate in any activities .

Figure 3. How People Spend Their Week



EMPLOYMENT HAS NOT CHANGED MUCH SINCE 2016–2017

Paid community employment has not changed much over time. About 20% of people had paid community jobs in 2016–2017. That is similar to the percentage of people with paid community jobs in 2023–2024.

Group supported employment became less common. People with individual jobs also earned more per hour, but earnings are still low.

WHAT DO THESE FINDINGS MEAN?

These findings show six ways that state IDD systems and providers can improve employment supports:

- Continue to make individual jobs and CIE a priority
- Use data to help people explore a wider range of jobs in their communities
- Include employment goals and supports in service plans when people want to work or want a better job
- Make sure people include classes, training, and learning new skills in their employment goals
- Help providers move away from day programs and workshops and toward CIE when a person wants to work
- Help make sure people have the same opportunities to work, no matter where they live or whether they have a guardian

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For more information on the Access to Integrated Employment Project, visit www.thinkwork.org/aie