

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People with disabilities represent a large and underutilized component of the United States labor market. Individuals with disabilities have a significantly lower workforce participation rate compared to their non-disabled peers (21% vs. 67%) and have nearly double the unemployment rate (10.1% vs. 5.1%).

One critical barrier to competitive integrated employment and entrepreneurship for people with disabilities is a lack of accessible transportation options. The promise of autonomous vehicles (AVs), particularly Levels 4 and 5, offers a potential transportation solution for many people with disabilities.

This study combined a robust literature review, economic impact analysis, and qualitative analysis to examine how accessible, affordable, and sustainable AVs could increase employment for people with disabilities and strengthen the broader economy.

Economic Impact Analysis Highlights:

Based on the study's moderate scenario:

- ↑ 4.4 million jobs for people with disabilities (and 9.2 million total jobs across the U.S.)
- ↑ \$867 billion in U.S. GDP
- ↑ \$1.6 trillion in U.S. output

Qualitative Analysis Highlights:

Interviewees emphasized AVs would offer them an increase in 1) employment opportunities, 2) entrepreneurship and small business success, 3) personal safety, 4) independence, and 5) health access.

“One of the largest barriers for employing [the disability community] is transportation. Transportation has been an absolute nightmare for [my] employment program. I feel like I’ve been able to overcome every other challenge in this space except this one.”
– Participant, Employer

“Aside from giving us all more independence, increasing our quality of life, increasing the amount of change we’ve got at the end of the day because it costs less and lets us have more opportunities, just the concept of being able to independently do anything is huge. It’s certainly an ego-boost.” – Participant, Transportation Professional

These findings suggest that accessible AVs could be a powerful factor in reducing transportation barriers, increasing employment and economic outcomes for many people with disabilities, and ultimately strengthening the economy.

Source: National Disability Institute & ICF. (Dec. 2022). Economic Impacts of Removing Transportation Barriers to Employment for Disabled Individuals Through Autonomous Vehicle Adoption.