

# Snapshot 2005: Employment of People with Disabilities in Maine

## August 2005

### What is this report?

This report presents a snapshot of employment status of people with disabilities in Maine. The purpose is to provide people with disabilities, advocates, policymakers and other stakeholders with an overview of the current employment situation of people with disabilities, and of the available sources of information about this topic. The report was developed as part of Maine's CHOICES Comprehensive Employment Opportunity (CHOICES CEO) grant. Future reports will use these data as a baseline to track the progress of the CHOICES CEO grant and other initiatives that are designed to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Maine.

The report includes information on the employment of people with disabilities overall in Maine as well as data on particular populations of people with disabilities: those on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), people receiving services from the Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), and people receiving intensive services from One Stop Career Centers.

The snapshot is intended to provide an overall view of the "state of the state" and should not be used for comparison across agencies. Since every agency has a distinct population, mission, budget and data collection process, their employment placement rates are not directly comparable.

We have frequently heard from members of the disability community in Maine that there is a lack of state-specific information about people with disabilities and their employment status. Nationwide estimates are sometimes cited to describe the situation in Maine, potentially masking important differences between Maine and the rest of the United States. Maine-specific estimates are often unreliable because they are based on small sample sizes. The appendix to report provides background and detail on each data source -- pointing out the strengths, limitations and any controversies associated with each source -- so that readers can choose the most appropriate indicator for their purpose.

### How is disability defined? <sup>1</sup>

Before examining disability statistics in Maine, we need to define what we mean when we talk about the population of people with disabilities. There is no universal agreement on the definition of disability, but there are two primary conceptualizations of disability that most definitions fit into: impairment and activity limitation. Impairment is a broad concept, defined as a physical or mental loss or abnormality that limits a person's capacity to function. Examples of impairments include hearing loss or loss of a limb. Activity limitation is a narrower concept of disability, and actually represents a subset of impairment. An activity limitation is defined as an impairment that leads to an inability to perform or a limitation in performing roles and tasks that are socially expected. The implication of defining disability as an activity limitation is that disability results from the interaction between an impairment and the social environment.

To illustrate, a person with deafness who is accommodated with a TTY machine in the workplace that allowed them to use the phone would not be considered work-limited, despite their impairment. Other examples of impairment versus activity-limitation definitions of disability can be found within government laws and regulations. The Americans with Disabilities Act, for example, uses an impairment definition of disability: "...a physical or mental impairment that substantially

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<sup>1</sup> This discussion is drawn from: Burkhauser, R.V., Houtenville, A.J., & Wittenburg, D. (2003). A user guide to current statistics on the employment of people with disabilities. In R. V. Burkhauser & D. Stapleton (Eds.), *The decline in the employment of people with disabilities: A policy puzzle*. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.” The Social Security Administration, on the other hand, uses a much more restrictive activity-limitation definition of disability when determining eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI).

### **How is employment defined?**

Each survey and agency defines and measures employment a little differently. In general, this report defines employment as working for pay in the community, where the individual is paid directly by the employer. Detailed employment definitions are included in the appendix.

### **How do these data relate to the Maine economy as a whole?**

The data reported here are for 2000 – 2004, which were relatively slow years for the Maine economy. The unemployment rate rose from 3.5% in January 2000 to 4.8% in January 2004. Rapid job growth in the late 1990s, with the Maine economy adding more than 60,000 jobs from 1996 to 2000, was followed by a much slower pace of growth from 2000 to 2004, with only 10,000 jobs added.<sup>2</sup>

While the national recession during this period had a lesser impact on Maine’s economy than in the United States as a whole, the recession led to revenue shortfalls in both the state and federal governments, leading in turn to budget cuts. Those budget cuts affected some of the agencies and may be reflected in both numbers served and outcomes.

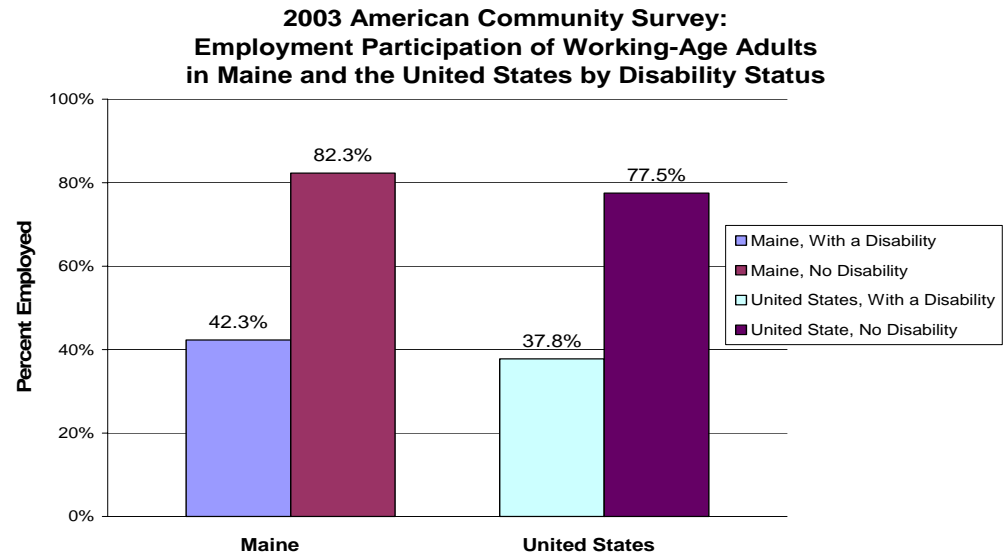
<h2><b>Employment Participation of Working-Age Adults in Maine and in the United States by Disability Status (ACS)</b></h2>
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<sup>2</sup> Maine State Planning Office. MaineGraph. <http://www.state.me.us/spo/economics/economics/megraph.php> Downloaded August 1, 2005.

The employment rate of people with disabilities is about one half the rate of those with no disability. This is true both in Maine and in the United States as a whole. In 2003, 42% of adult Mainers with disabilities were employed, compared with 82% of Maine adults without disabilities. But people with disabilities in Maine are, on average, faring better than their counterparts in the rest of the United States, where only 38% of adults with disabilities are employed.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



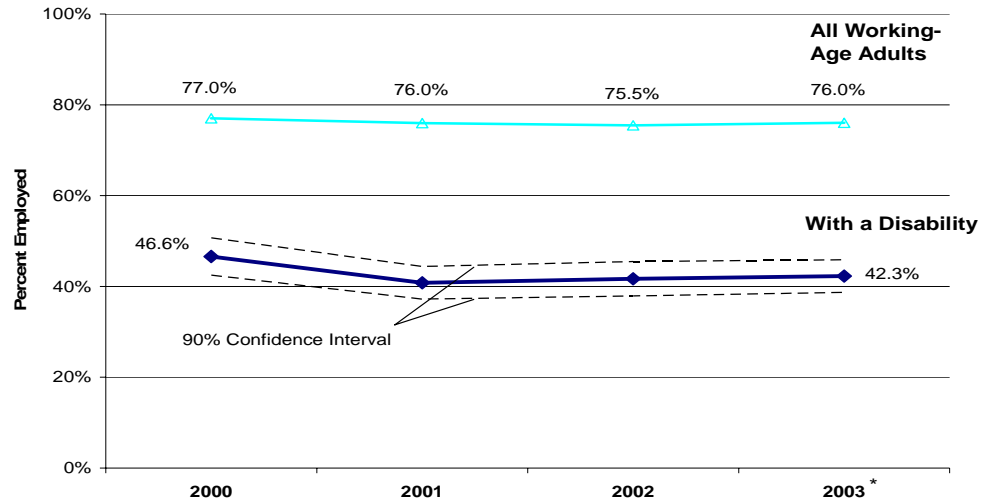
## Employment Participation of Working-Age Adults in Maine (ACS)

Overall, employment in Maine remained relatively constant in the early 2000s. From 2000 – 2003 (the year of the most recent Census data collection), the percentage of working-age adults employed dropped only from 77% to 76%. The economic recession that was taking place nationally during this period did not appear to have as great an impact on the general population of Maine. However, employment of Maine adults with disabilities did fall during this period, from 47% in 2000 down to 42% in 2002.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

\* Note: The Census changed the wording of the disability items in the 2003 survey, and does not recommend comparisons with prior years.

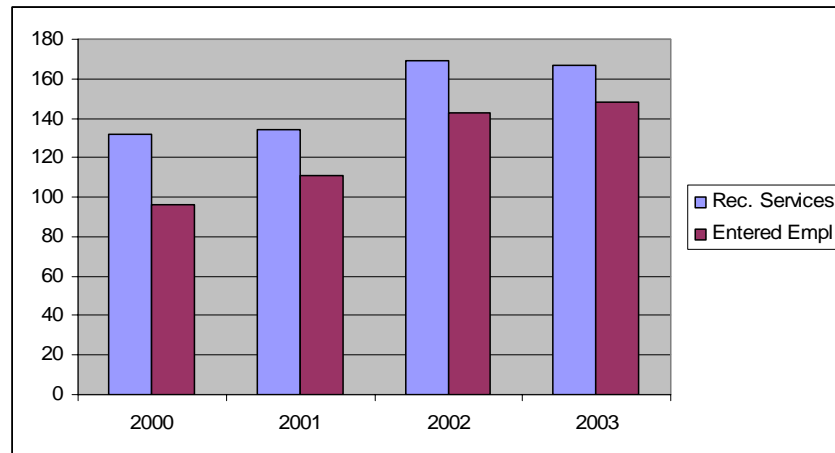
Employment of Working-Age Adults and Adults with Disabilities in Maine from 2000 to 2003



## People with Disabilities Receiving Intensive Services from One-Stop Career Centers\*\*

One-Step Career Centers, which provide services to job seekers in Maine's general population, reported seeing 167 people with disabilities in its Adult and Dislocated Workers programs in program year 2003. Of those, 148 (88.6%) entered employment.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, WIA National Performance Report



\*\*These figures do not include everyone who received services at a CareerCenter, but rather only those individuals with a reported disability who received services under

the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. These data therefore represent only a portion of the people who used a CareerCenter in a given year.

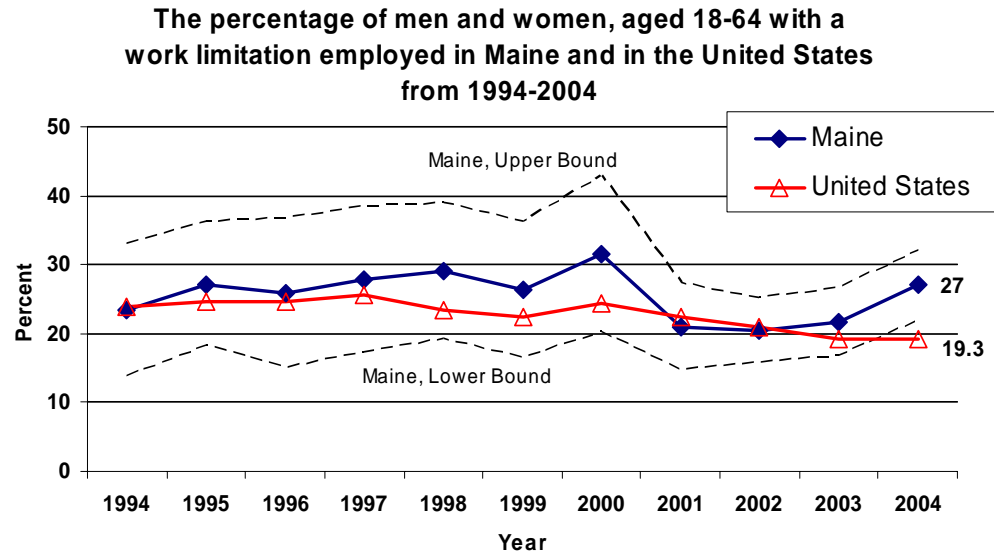
## Employment of Working-Age Adults with Work Limitations in Maine and in the United States (CPS)

The Current Population Survey, annually conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, indicates that the employment rate of people with disabilities in Maine fell from a high of 32% in 2000 down to 21% in 2001 where it remained through 2003, and then rebounded up to 27% in 2004.

Like the ACS, the CPS indicates that Maine adults with disabilities are faring better in the labor market than in the United States; in 2004, 27% of Mainers with disabilities were employed versus only 19.3% nationally.

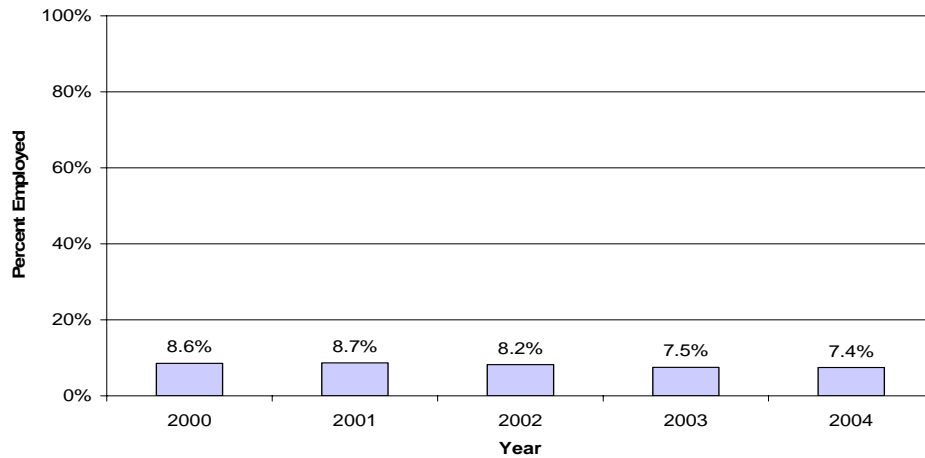
The estimated employment rate is lower in the CPS than in the ACS, primarily because the two surveys use different definitions of disability. There is actually considerable controversy among researchers over the use of the CPS to track employment outcomes among people with disabilities, centering on the CPS's work-limitation definition of disability and method of identifying the population of people with disabilities. (See appendix for more detail).

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey



## Employment Rate of Individuals on Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Employment Rate of Individuals  
on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in Maine



In 2004, 7.4% of SSI recipients in Maine were working. The use of SSI work incentives was very low. Out of 29,714 blind or disabled SSI recipients statewide, only 27 had a Plan for Achieving Self-Support and 46 took advantage of the Impairment Related Work Expenses income exclusion.

Source: Social Security Administration

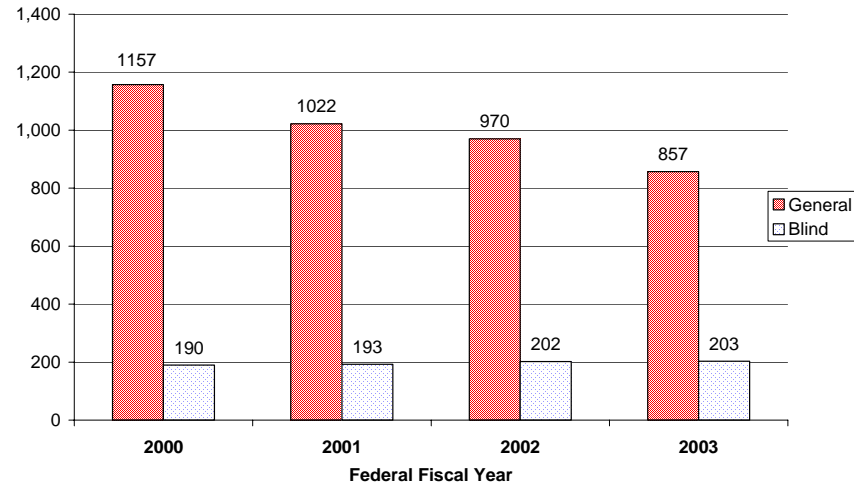
## Number Entering Competitive Employment: Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

In fiscal year 2003, 1,060 people with severe disabilities entered competitive employment and stayed employed for a minimum of 90 days after receiving services from the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services under the state/federal vocational rehabilitation program. Of those, 857 were served by the General VR program, and 203 were served by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. On average, people who became employed worked 28 hours per week and earned \$9.65 per hour.

The decline in the number of people entering competitive employment from 2000 to 2003 may reflect state and federal budget cuts to BRS programs, in addition to the tightening labor market.

Source: RSA 911 Data

**Number Entering Competitive Employment (Status 26):  
Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services**



## Appendix: Indicators and Data Sources

Indicator	Employment Rate of Working-Age Adults (Age 21 – 64) with Disabilities
<b>Data Source and Overview</b>	<b>U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.</b> The American Community Survey is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities a fresh look at how they are changing. It is a critical element in the Census Bureau’s reengineered census. The decennial census has two parts: 1) the short form, which counts the population; and 2) the long form, which obtains demographic, housing, social, and economic information. Information from the long form is used for the administration of federal programs and the distribution of billions of federal dollars. Since the decennial census is conducted only once every 10 years, long-form information becomes out-of-date after a few years. The American Community Survey is a way to provide long-form-type information every year instead of once in ten years. This ongoing survey will replace the long form in future censuses. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Most recent data available</b>	2003
<b>Definition of Disability</b>	The Census Bureau uses a activity-limitation definition of disability, defining it as: “...a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition. This condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning, or remembering. This condition can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or to work at a job or business.” <sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office. ACS – A Handbook for State and Local Officials. <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/ACS04HSLO.pdf> Downloaded August 1, 2005

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office. 2003 Subject Definitions. <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/UseData/Def.htm>. Downloaded August 1, 2005.

	<p>The ACS identifies six different types of activity limitations, using the following six questions. People aged 16-64 are classified as having a disability if they report having at least one of these conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sensory and Physical Limitation:</b> Respondents are asked if they had any of the following two long-lasting conditions: “blindness, deafness, severe vision, or hearing impairment,” or “a condition that substantially limits physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.”</li> <li>• <b>Mental Limitation:</b> Respondents are asked if they had a physical, mental or emotional condition lasting six months or more that made it difficult to “learn, remember or concentrate.”</li> <li>• <b>Self-Care Limitation:</b> Respondents are asked if they had a physical, mental or emotional condition lasting six months or more that made it difficult to “dress, bathe, or get around inside the home.”</li> <li>• <b>Going-Outside-Home Limitation:</b> Respondents are asked if they had a physical, mental or emotional condition lasting six months or more that made it difficult to “go outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor’s office.”</li> <li>• <b>Employment Limitation:</b> Respondents are asked if they had a physical, mental or emotional condition lasting six months or more that made it difficult to “work at a job or a business.”</li> </ul>
<b>Definition of Employment</b>	<p>This category includes all civilians 16 years old and over who either (1) were “at work” – those who did any work at all during the reference week as paid employees, worked in their own business or profession, worked on their own farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers on a family farm or in a family business; (2) were “with a job but not at work” – those who did not work during the reference week but had jobs or businesses from which they were temporarily absent due to illness, bad weather, industrial dispute, vacation, or other personal reasons. Excluded from the employed are people whose only activity consisted of work around the house or unpaid volunteer work for religious, charitable, and similar organizations; also excluded are all institutionalized people and people on active duty in the United States Armed Forces.<sup>5</sup></p>
<b>Reliability/Validity Considerations</b>	<p>In 2003, the Census Bureau introduced some changes to several of the disability questions on the ACS. As a result, the Census does not recommend trend analysis using 2003 disability items to compare against prior years. For more information, go to: <a href="http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/ACS_disability.pdf">http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/ACS_disability.pdf</a></p> <p>Nationwide, the Census surveys over 500,000 individuals each year for the ACS. Maine has had between 3,800 and 4,500 respondents to the ACS between 2000 and 2003, roughly double the size of the Current Population subsample for Maine. As a result, ACS estimates have tighter confidence intervals and are more reliable.</p>
<b>URL for Further Information</b>	<p><a href="http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html">http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html</a></p>

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Employment Rate of Working-Age Adults (Age 18 – 64) with Disabilities</b>
<b>Data Source and Overview</b>	<b>Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.</b> The CPS is a monthly survey of the non-institutionalized population of the United States. Information is collected on labor force characteristics (e.g. employment, earnings, hours of work). In March of each year, the CPS basic monthly survey is supplemented with the Annual Demographic Survey. This supplement focuses on sources of income, government program participation, previous employment, insurance, and a variety of demographic characteristics. The CPS and the Annual Demographic Survey are used extensively by government agencies, researchers, policy makers, journalists, and the general public to evaluate government programs, economic well-being and behavior of individuals, families, and households. Approximately 150,000 individuals participate in the surveys each year, although this number has increased in recent years. It is important to note that individuals living in long-term care facilities are excluded from CPS surveys. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Most recent data available</b>	2004
<b>Definition of Disability</b>	The Current Population Survey Annual Demographic Supplement (CPS) uses a work limitation-based definition of disability. The disability measure for work limitation in the CPS is based on the question "[d]oes anyone in this household have a health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do? [If so,] who is that? (Anyone else?)" <sup>7</sup>
<b>Definition of Employment</b>	Persons who are employed are persons 16 years and over in the civilian non-institutional population who, during the full week prior to their survey, (a) did any work at all (at least 1 hour) as paid employees, worked in their own business, profession, or on their own farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers in an enterprise operated by a member of the family, and (b) all those who were not working but who had jobs or businesses from which they were temporarily absent because of vacation, illness, bad weather, childcare problems, maternity or paternity leave, labor-management dispute, job training, or other family or personal reasons, whether or not they were paid for the time off or were seeking other jobs. Each employed person is counted only once, even if he or she holds more than one job. Excluded are persons whose only activity consisted of work around their own house (painting, repairing, or own home housework) or volunteer work for religious, charitable, and other organizations. The total population (the numerator of the employment rate) consists of persons who are employed, persons who are unemployed, and persons not in the labor force. <sup>8</sup>
<b>Reliability/Validity Considerations</b>	There is considerable controversy among researchers about the use of the CPS to track employment outcomes among people with disabilities. Some authors argue that the disability question on the CPS is not valid, in that it does not correctly differentiate between people who have a disability and people who do not. For example, someone with a broken leg or the flu may respond positively to the disability question. Conversely, an individual who is deaf but who works in an office with adequate accommodations may not consider themselves to be work-limited and respond negatively to the question. Further, the disability question on the CPS was not designed or tested to identify people who have a work disability, but was as a screening question for follow-up questions about receipt of disability payments. Other researchers have argued that that CPS

<sup>6</sup> Houtenville, Andrew J. 2005. "Disability Statistics in the United States." Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC), www.disabilitystatistics.org. Posted April 4, 2005. Accessed August 02, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> ibid

<sup>8</sup> ibid

	<p>is nonetheless useful for tracking trends in employment of people with disabilities, because CPS results mimic results from other surveys that use impairment-based definitions of disability.<sup>9</sup></p> <p>From a state perspective, the CPS is not as reliable as the ACS because the sample size is much smaller. From 1986 – 2001, fewer than 1,000 individuals from Maine were surveyed for the CPS, and with only about 1 in 10 respondents reporting a work limitation, the employment estimates were based on fewer than 100 individuals. Sample sizes were increased considerably beginning in 2002, but employment estimates for people with disabilities are still based on only 200 individuals surveyed, leading to wide confidence intervals.</p>
<b>URL for Further Information</b>	<p><a href="http://www.disabilitystatistics.org">www.disabilitystatistics.org</a>  <a href="http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/cpsmain.htm">http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/cpsmain.htm</a></p>

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Case Closures due to Competitive Employment</b>
<b>Data Source and Overview</b>	<b>RSA 911 Data</b>
<b>Most recent data available</b>	2003
<b>Definition of Disability</b>	To be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services, an individual must “have a disability that keeps them from getting or keeping a job and need VR services to find or keep a job.” <sup>10</sup> [MORE ON ORDER OF SELECTION – WHO IS BEING SERVED NOW AND WHO IS INCLUDED IN THE NUMBERS]
<b>Definition of Employment</b>	The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services closes active cases when the client has entered competitive employment and stayed employed for a minimum of 90 days after receiving services. BRS defines competitive employment as “...employment in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting and for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.” <sup>11</sup>
<b>Reliability/Validity Considerations</b>	
<b>URL for Further Information</b>	<p><a href="http://www.statedata.info">http://www.statedata.info</a>  <a href="http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html">http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html</a></p>

<sup>9</sup> For a summary of these arguments, see Silverstein, R.; Julnes, G.; and Nolan R. 2005. *What Policymakers Need and Must Demand from Research Regarding the Employment Rate of Persons with Disabilities*. Behavioral Sciences and the Law 23: 399-448. [http://www.disabilitypolicycenter.org/docs/BSL\\_v23\\_2005.pdf](http://www.disabilitypolicycenter.org/docs/BSL_v23_2005.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.state.me.us/rehab/dvr/dvr\\_vr.htm](http://www.state.me.us/rehab/dvr/dvr_vr.htm) Downloaded 8/3/05

<sup>11</sup> Code of Federal Regulations: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(11) <http://www.washingtonwatchdog.org/documents/cfr/title34/part361.html#361.5> Downloaded August 4, 2005

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Employment Rate of Individuals on Supplemental Security Income (SSI)</b>
<b>Data Source and Overview</b>	Social Security Administration
<b>Most recent data available</b>	2004
<b>Definition of Disability</b>	<p>The Social Security Administration defines disability as: “the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity (SGA) because of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* That can be expected to result in death, or</li> <li>* That has lasted or that we can expect to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.</li> </ul> <p>If your impairment is other than blindness, earnings averaging over \$830 a month (for the year 2005) generally demonstrate SGA. If you are blind, earnings averaging over \$1,380 a month (for the year 2005) generally demonstrate SGA.”<sup>12</sup></p> <p>In addition to meeting the SSA definition of disability, eligibility for the SSI is also limited to those with little or no work experience and limited income and resources.</p>
<b>Definition of Employment</b>	
<b>Reliability/Validity Considerations</b>	
<b>URL for Further Information</b>	<a href="http://www.statedata.info">http://www.statedata.info</a> <a href="http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html">http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html</a>

<sup>12</sup> Social Security Administration. 2005 Red Book. <http://www.ssa.gov/work/ResourcesToolkit/redbook.html> Downloaded August 4, 2005