

REALTIME FILE

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>>> Hello, everybody, this is Andrew Houtenville. Let's go ahead and get started.

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>> Good morning or afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the Covid update where we talk about the numbers in a little more detail from the regular nTIDE, which is on the first Friday of every month. I'm joined today by John O'Neill and Denise Rozell.

A little bit about nTIDE it's a joint effort of the University of New Hampshire and Kessler Foundation and the association of university centers on disability, AUCD. This is a special episode of our standard nTIDE lunch and learn series. Based on the unique circumstances in the U.S. economy and the Covid-19 pandemic. Today's agenda we'll do the welcome and introduction, then we'll do updates of the numbers. These are from the public-use micro data which are released two weeks after the jobs Friday reports, the first Friday reports.

We'll also hear about implications from the field from John and Denise as well as have an open Q&A period.

So, with that, I'm going to go through the numbers. So I'm going to look at employment trends first. Some of the stuff that we shared in the other -- in the traditional nTIDE. Kind of the story is we have a slow recovery from the great recession. Some good news, and then Covid hits, all right.

And so here's the long-term trend going back to 2008 when these data first started to be made available by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

And you can see kind of the fall during the great recession. You see the fall is relatively swift, you know, shorter time period for people without disabilities ending in, you know, basically 2009/2010. For people with disabilities, we really don't see a rise until, say, really we don't see -- there's kind of a flattening decline, but we don't really start seeing a rise until mid-2016 and upward.

This is the good news, period. If you kind of scan between the two lines of people with and without disabilities, it's actually narrowing. And this is one of the first times we've seen the employment gap between people with and without disabilities decline historically.

All the data I've looked at, this is really the only period that we've seen it. This is when the economy was going into what's called full employment, where the unemployment rate is below 4%.

And, however, we started to see that kind of flatten out during 2019 and into 2020.

There's kind of, you know, mixed news, economy's still in full employment but we're not seeing kind of the narrowing of the gap.

And then now we're going to see Covid's. This is for March, early March. These numbers are usually the second to third week in the -- of the month is when they asked the survey questions. You can actually already see a little bit of what might be Covid, I'm pointing at my screen so of course that's really helpful, I'm sure.

But if I point at my screen, there, you can see some softening of the -- of the unemployment rate, the employment population ratio for people without disabilities. So I'm going to add the successive months. Let's add in April. And April you see the massive decline due to Covid.

So, this is a little tricky because the people with disabilities are on the right axis and people without disabilities are on the left axis of the graph, so that's why 63.2 is below 31.7. If you put them both in the same graph, you get kind of flat lines. You don't see the big movements. So this chart is a little hard to take in.

But, one thing to note, the employment population to ratio, the percentage who are employed for people with disabilities didn't drop below its 2014/2013 levels, right?

Now, of course it's very unfortunate, but it's not as substantial as the decline that was exhibited by people without disabilities who went way below their past low value back in the 2010s.

Add in May, May we start seeing some of the bump back up as the economy starts to reopen. Oops, I went the wrong way.

That's May.

June, we start seeing some continued recovery. Although there's a little bit of a slowdown, it's not quite a big a jump percentage pointwise for people with disabilities.

Add in July and we're seeing some leveling off for people with disabilities. And a modest increase for people without disabilities.

Add in August, again, modest gains for people with disabilities. Larger gains for people without disabilities.

And now the new data for September, really a slowing down in -- in September for both people with and without disabilities.

This did not include the layoffs that occurred in many industries which were really towards the third and fourth week of September when you heard the airline industry shutting down and major retailers shutting down.

Let's put in the numbers for last September and what you see, this is -- we're still a long way away from where we were last September. People without disabilities really are around the same levels they were at the bottom of the great recession. People with disabilities are really back to where they were before we started to see the recent improvements.

And so there's still quite a ways to go. One of the stories that we're worried about is -- I'll put these numbers up for you to take in, one thing that we're watching, you're kind of seeing the -- what you saw before. So this is people without disabilities, this is -- this first bar is the 2019 average.

And you see the big increase in the unemployment, the number of people who are unemployed, right?

So that's where these -- when those gaps were dropping, when those numbers were dropping, they're moving into the unemployed sector, right?

Not employed sector, the unemployed status. So you see the big increase in unemployment and then a diminishing over time.

Same for people with disabilities. For people with disabilities, we see the July -- the 2019 average was 27.2 -- I'm sorry, 2.7% were unemployed and then it goes to 6.5, 6.5, it stays relatively tight and is still larger than it was on average in 2019. It's almost double what it was in the prior year.

Now, what's this one caveat to keep in mind, this is not the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate the denominator is people in the workforce.

So whereas the denominator for this is the entire population, whether they're in the labor force or not in the labor force.

One thing that can happen is people can be considered not in a labor force. That's this top bar. That's this top color for both -- both charts.

And, you know, being out of the labor force means two things. One is you're not looking for work. If you're not working, you're not actively looking for work in the last four weeks, or are on temporary -- you're not -- you're not on furlough, right?

So furlough and what's called temporary layoff, that's actually a form of unemployment, right?

Because you have the potential to be recalled.

If you're permanently terminated from your job, no longer being on recall and you're not actively looking for work, you actually are considered to be out of the labor force.

These statistics were developed as a way to think about the tightness of the labor market. And so that's why the official unemployment rate throws -- does not include this top box when it's calculated.

All right. So there is actually a bit good news. I did say that there's actually good news.

The good news is if you look at this percentage, the percentage that are not in the labor force, there hasn't been a lot of movement. There's a little bit of movement here, but it's been relatively stable for people with disabilities.

And, you know, I view that as a good sign because that means that people are either going back to work or they're -- they're staying engaged in the labor market, right?

And so I'm going to take a closer look at that in a little bit -- a little bit later.

Probably the biggest issue that we have and the thing that we're able to do with the micro-use data is to look at the unemployed a little bit closer.

So this is the number of people who are unemployed. So unemployed meaning, actively looking for new -- actively looking for a job, not working and actively looking for a job, or on temporary layoff with the hope of being recalled. That's what unemployment is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, all right. So you see this massive jump in unemployment for both people with and without disabilities. You see that it's narrowing. It's declining faster for people without disabilities. People with disabilities really have been kind of stagnate over the last three months whereas, people without disabilities have been declining.

This -- this stagnation is kind of a concern, you know. It may be due to kind of the regional nature that Covid is kind of -- it's like a balloon it seems, you squeeze a balloon, reduce rates in New York City, New York, New Jersey, the East Coast, California, and then it percolates elsewhere. So it goes to Texas, Florida, Georgia, Arizona, and now we squeezed off those but now it's squeezed into Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Idaho, Michigan. And so it really is -- Covid seems to be a moving target. And that will keep these numbers -- that will influence these numbers because some places are shutting down more and more.

But, one of the big things we can do is we can actually look at with the micro data look at how many people are on temporary layoff and furlough. How many people are actively looking for work among that unemployed group?

On temporary layoff was a small group. It's traditionally been a very small group. It's -- you know, it goes back to the factory closure days of the 1970s when they would close down a factory to retool, they'd be on layoff or close down a factory because of a recession or increased oil prices. And the people are on layoff, but they have the potential of being recalled.

But you see this massive jump, you know, 75 -- the highest rate I went back and calculated back to the '70s, the highest rate this has ever been before was 25%. Right? And so you see both for people -- let me put up people with disabilities. What you're seeing is unemployment may be going down, so the number of unemployed may be

going down, but it's becoming more concentrated among -- of people that are actively looking for work as opposed to people who are on temporary layoff, right?

And so basically about 3 out of 4 people who are unemployed are -- for people with disabilities are looking for work, only 1 in 4 is on temporary layoff.

Right?

So the temporary layoff was actually a really -- it was really nice to see back in April that the majority of people hadn't lost their jobs permanently, they were only on temporary layoff and this idea of being recalled. Back in April that was actually a relief.

Now we're seeing less and less of that. And my thought would be that as Covid continues to impact the ability of people to work and to shop and to go outside their home, that -- and be employed, that this will continue, that -- this concentration.

People with disabilities are seemingly more -- more concentrated in terms of not being on furlough. That's kind of a double negative. So this is something that we'll continue to watch.

Now, let me go back to the some good news. Here we're going to look at the percentage who are in the labor force. This is the percentage that are working. So the percentage of the population that's either working, looking for work actively, or on temporary furlough.

So it's kind of who's in the labor market?

This number goes down when people leave and stop looking for work and they leave the labor market.

This is the long-term trend, and the recession influences this as well. You know, we see that there's kind of a slow march, you know, it took a lot longer for this to turn around for people with disabilities and without disabilities to return to the labor market.

And so this is really, you know, very much -- it's pretty much indicating the same thing that the employment rate did, the employment to population ratio. But then if we put in Covid, we actually see that it's been relatively flat, although these -- these declines in recent months there are could be due to sampling variation.

But this is actually, for me, a good sign that people with disabilities are staying in the labor market either as furloughed or actively looking for work.

And so my biggest concern is that this declines because that signifies a more -- a larger exit, a bigger -- that more people with disabilities have stopped looking for work, they're not expected to be recalled and, you know, them and their families are going to be in much more dire straits and it's a more permanent change in their employment outlook. With that, I'm not going to turn it over to question and answers, but I'm going to turn it over to John and Denise for any comments that they have about -- from the field. So I'll pick you, John. You're the first.

>> Okay. Yeah, I was -- as we were looking at those results earlier today, I was kind of thinking back to the survey that occurred earlier. I think it was in July.

>> What's APSI for those who may not know it?

>> It's an association who represents a lot of organizations that are in the space of supporting people with disabilities in terms of the employment sphere.

And they -- they discovered that about 67% of the organization's recorded decrease in DR referrals during the -- during the -- I'd say the first three months of the Covid experience and that there was about 43% reported a slowing in Medicaid reimbursements.

And so this -- this very factor probably led to quite a bit of job loss or -- or at the very least not new people getting employed, folks that hadn't been employed in the past. But they also reported, if I have my results in mind correctly, they also found that -- that there was -- there was a fairly fast turnaround in terms of employment services being provided by vocational rehabilitation but also by Medicaid reimbursements.

It took a little bit of time, but those systems tended to rebound and be providing the kinds -- or be funding the kinds of services that APSI providers are engaged in.

So that's kind of a systems perspective.

>> It almost sounds like, John, a double whammy that not only people with disabilities impacted by the general economy and Covid itself, but also the fact that the support systems that were helping them and assisting them also closed, right?

And so I couldn't -- at the heart of the pandemic I had colleagues in New York City which was really hard hit, and they're like, well, Mike, so how are you doing with -- how are the people you're serving doing?

We're like, we don't know, we're closed. I was like oh, my gosh, you're kidding?

Get back out there.

>> Well, PPP helped.

>> Yeah.

>> Quite a few of the organizations kind of rebound. But a number of them did close for a period of time, or totally closed.

>> Wow.

>> And so, but the PPP did help. I know a couple of organizations that I work with in New York City that did receive the PPP and it was very, very helpful in terms of assisting them to maintain their staff.

So -- so they -- so the staff could work with the individuals that were still employed and even if they weren't employed, there were a number of remote kinds of career development activities that were occurring via Zoom and other means.

>> Yeah. So that brings me to Denise. Denise, any chance we're going to see additional PPP come on now?

Show us the money there, Denise.

>> So hi, everybody. I don't know what to tell you. I told you the same thing is which is I don't know what to tell you.

>> Tell us everything will be fine and we have nothing to be concerned about.

>> That will be someday, but I'm not sure when someday is going to be. You're reading the news, we're hearing things here. There seems to be a slight opening between -- with the White House and Speaker Pelosi's negotiations.

It appears they have agreed on a variety of things, including, we have heard, the HBCS money, including the FMAP bump, which are two different things which clearly would help the population we're talk about here.

>> Could you describe those programs a little bit.

>> Yes, this is all Medicaid. So the FMAP bump is what is paid to states for traditional Medicaid. Medicaid is a state-federal partnership. States pay a certain percentage and Federal Government pays a certain percentage, it varies by state. And what it would do is mean that there would be a bump for how much the Federal Government pays into Medicaid. Which obviously then frees up money for the states. That's the traditional Medicaid bump.

There is also in this bill -- it's not a bill because it's not even written. We understand that there is also in these negotiations an increase to what's called the -- community-based services. And that would also be an FMAP bump but it would be targeted specifically for home and community-based services. And for those on this call, you will know that that includes things around employment preparation and, in some states, we'll call it preparation. And also it includes things like transportation. It all depends on what your state defines and how you define those services. It's under your home and community-based waivers. Without getting too deeply in the weeds, it's a good thing, it's a big chunk of money. We need that money in order to move forward. So that's -- that's good. There appears to be continued some sort of payment in this negotiation that would go out to individuals making under a certain amount of money.

It also appears that there is something around -- something similar to PPE or PPE -- the PPE loan program itself, things for small businesses, some things for states.

There is still some -- some disagreement, even among the White House -- and the numbers are getting closer. We've talked about the fact that originally some of those numbers, the White House -- the Senate has been at around 500 billion that Senator McConnell would put on the floor.

He did, it didn't pass. The Democrats originally started at 3 point some odd trillion. The White House and Democrats have moved closer and closer together, and now looks like they're within -- I mean, some are talking around the 2 trillion mark. Again, however, and, again, it looks like the White House actually wants a deal. They keep saying that they could bring Senate Republicans along with them.

>> Yeah.

>> The House is negotiating and Speaker Pelosi sounds somewhat positive about this. Having said all of that, it is less than two weeks before an election.

>> Yeah.

>> Even if they come to an agreement, certain things have to be done. There are certain processes to go through, including writing the actual bill. And, it remains very unclear whether the White House can bring Senate Republicans -- enough Senate Republicans along to actually pass something.

So everything I just said and all the maybe, maybe, maybe stuff is still all up in the air because it still all depends on, first, can the White House and the speaker make an agreement?

Can the house then pass that bill?

Can the Senate then go to the Senate and can they get at least 13 Republicans to jump on to the bill?

I don't know. I am highly -- I think it highly unlikely that it will happen before the election. And then the question happens after the election, depending on what happens, is there -- is there movement?

Do people want to do it or do we have to wait until a new administration, if there is a new administration?

All I'm telling you is I have I no idea. We continue to think there's got to be something that comes to the country.

And the fact that a number of things that are of importance to people with disabilities are in a bill that is being negotiated where there appeared to be some agreement between Republicans and Democrats. All good stuff.

But whether you'll actually see it or not, Andrew, that's a whole other -- I don't have a crystal ball and I guess I'd give it a little bit better shot today than I would have a couple weeks ago. But that's still not a great shot.

>> Yeah.

>> Aren't you glad you asked where we are?

And, again, I couldn't get off this call without saying, vote, vote, vote. There is an election in two weeks, vote.

>> I plan on voting.

>> I've already voted.

>> A lot of people have already voted.

>> Go do it.

>> I'm not allowed to do early voting.

>> And continue to ask questions and continue to talk to your members of Congress about why this is all so important and about why this funding is important and about the

effect that it has on you, your constituencies, people you love with communities, et cetera, continue to pass the message.

>> Yeah. I mean, from, you know, consistent with the story that -- that the data are showing is that it's really important for people to, you know, "A," it's important for people to stay connected with their employer, if their employer is struggling. And, "B," it's important for -- to support employers who are moving from a temporary to a permanent layoff situation. The temporary layoff was a really good sign and it's really disappointing to see that people are kind of falling out of that -- that state. Because looking for work, because probably much more ominous in these times.

All right. Just some other news before I turn to Q&A is that I believe there's going to be some research studies coming out from the Office of Disability Employment Policy who use some of the same data that you see here. And they're going to be looking at work, you know, remote work and also essential workers. So patterns of disability and people with and without disabilities who -- I thought -- I just got a text, I thought it might be the ODEP people saying stop, don't talk about it now.

I think it's going through clearance now, but they are using the same data to look at more specific -- more specific occupations that might have been influenced.

We've been doing work with state agencies to try to find -- which are difficult because the sample sizes are small. Just to give you a sense of, you know, I split it between early and late states and now I'm going to have to do early, middle, late. When I started it, Arizona, Texas, Georgia, Florida were all the late states. Now they're kind of the middle states to be hit by Covid.

And, you know, patterns -- you know, it's the big shutdown in April that really -- it was a national event. And, you know, most of the action -- most of the changes in employment status was done at that time. And we're kind of either reopening bigger, reopening too soon, reopening too slow.

And I'm not saying reopening as a political statement, I'm saying it as a public health statement. Because as an economist who is a member of the American Public Health Association as well, good public health is good economics.

And, you know, yeah. They're not -- they're not mutually exclusive. They're -- I was going to get on a soapbox. I'll step away from the soapbox. All right.

So any questions?

Let's open up the Q&A. Do you have any data on unemployment of students and young adults with disabilities?

Any data on unemployment rates for minorities with disabilities?

Good question.

So Syracuse University early on and we did an update of that approach, they looked at -- by race ethnicity, they looked at Covid effects by race ethnicity. And their data was suggesting that the difference was felt by Hispanics more than others.

I -- you know, whether that was a statistically significant difference is -- I'm not quite sure. I have wrapped statistical significance around these statistics and the big jump from -- in April, the big decline in April, that's significant. It's hard to get statistical significance in part in the other changes because it's just such a small sample.

And when you cut by minority status, it becomes an even smaller sample.

But, Hispanics overall were, perhaps, the most impacted. And I can share -- Michelle, we can share Kessler Foundation has a blog about this. John, I don't know if you have a link to the blog or somebody has a link to that blog. Elaine, if you're on you can put a link to that blog in the Q&A box.

But, we did an update of the Syracuse analysis.

Okay, so with regard to youth, again, this is a really good question. And it's something at Kessler Foundation and UNH has been focusing on a while, particularly people coming out of school, transitioning to college or out of college or out of high school. I have not looked yet. That is something that I can do, the sample sizes, again, are going to be small. What I really want to know is, is actually out of high school and school and like my son who needs to go get a job, so I have -- I have a 19-year-old and a 20-year-old children and, you know, there are quite a few jobs but not necessarily the jobs that people would want.

So Elaine, for people listening and don't know, the Q&A, Elaine just posted her blog post about Covid and -- and some of the statistics related to minority status.

Autism, information on people with autism in the job market is another question by Gayle.

We wanted -- okay, so the data that we have, right, the data that we have does not ask about autism specifically. It asks six questions related to disability and the population of people with autism may be kind of combined with other people with -- with disabilities, with cognitive-related disabilities. So it doesn't do a great job picking up and it certainly can't identify the people with autism specifically.

So sorry about that, but the data doesn't really hold it.

You know, there is a possibility of -- yeah. So I guess the data really isn't there, I would say. I would love to be able to say that there is a data source, there's certainly not a monthly data source, and there's probably not a very good annual data source to get at people with autism and their employment and job market activities.

I can talk more about that and there are people who are trying to identify that population, but it really is something that the -- you know, I think a good Senator from maybe Scranton could push for the Census Bureau to do a supplement to identify people with autism.

>> There's a related question. Does anyone's data look at IDD?

>> It's a similar question. Sorry, I didn't scroll down.

>> That's okay.

>> So for IDD, same issue that -- and people -- in general, employment services, people who receive employment services or participate in Employment First programs, all of those programs are not really represented in the data.

I would think that people at the Bureau of Labor Statistics would be happen to investigate how to identify people with specific conditions whether it's IDD or autism. It's just a matter of money for these efforts are pretty expensive.

>> I think it's --

>> Certainly from a monthly perspective it's really hard.

>> I think it's also a pressure issue. I remember when you told me a story about when the six questions were added, there were only five and they combined deafness and sight.

>> That's right.

>> Blindness into one. And those two groups are, you know, really yelled loudly and said you can't combine us, we're different.

>> Yeah.

>> And so there were five questions and suddenly there were six.

>> Yeah, that's right. So, you know, they were up for redesign. There were six, they dropped the work limiting condition question and they split the sensory question between hearing and vision.

And that was a matter of political pressure. There was a -- there was a certain belief that the questions were difficult to answer. So it wasn't purely political pressure, but they -- they performed better on pilot testing when they were separate.

>> Right.

>> And the work condition didn't perform as well as they wanted. So there was rationale, but political activism really did.

Another question that comes up with data, so someone could ask me a really good question, also I'll ask of it of myself, Andrew, do you have any information on personal care assistance?

Disability support personnel. DSPs.

A lot of that data is difficult to get at because DSPs are not identified individually, they're put in with lots of other home health aides and things like that. And so DSPs is a place where some activism could push the committee that decides what occupational codes are and in ten years we could potentially change the occupational coding system when they revise it next time to split out DSPs. And that would help, because that's a struggling market. There's lots of turnover, there's lots of staffing issues for firms that provide those services, and we're not going to be able to understand that struggling market unless we're able to identify it in the national surveys.

>> Yeah. And there's some organizations that are trying to raise the status of DSPs by --

>> Right.

>> -- certification.

>> Certification processes, yeah.

>> Yeah.

>> And, you know, a lot of the good DSPs get sucked into management, you know. I have a friend whose son just moved up --

>> Oh.

>> Andrew, did we lose you?

>> I think we did.

>> Here.

>> We'll wait a minute or two. Hopefully he'll be back on. I think we were pretty close to finishing up.

>> Yeah, I don't see other questions.

>> Nor do I. Ferris, do you know what's happening on your end?

Or Karen, with Andrew?

>> I'm afraid I do not know, but it appears that he has disconnected.

>> That's right.

>> Oh, he's back.

>> Probably just in time to say good-bye.

>> Yeah, so my laptop fell off the back of my little shaky table here. I'm actually now on my phone. I can take these off, I guess. Sorry about that from the was an earthquake here. No, that's not true.

But --

>> I would say, Andrew, that we don't see any more questions in the question box.

>> Yeah, so let me -- let me wrap up with some of the -- you know, we talked a bit about the survey issues, about asking and getting additional questions placed on surveys, supplemental surveys. But let me just say that there's another avenue, and it's the avenue that we're pushing and we're trying to do.

And that's to do some more statistical work and draw together the power that you get from, say, the American community survey which has large samples and the monthly current population survey which has monthly data and occupation data.

And so we're really working on trying to come up with statistical ways to bring the data together from various sources.

And -- and that's thanks to the support of Needler who has had a focus on low incidence disability. You can think about specific disabilities that are very important to understand within the population with disabilities.

But it's also low incidence, it's not necessarily low incidence, as much as low prevalence and very specific circumstances, like specific occupations or specific states or specific age ranges.

And so we're really focusing on trying to develop those statistical methods. And I think we've got them down for state-level estimate, but we want to do it for disability type so that we can get statistics that speak more to the populations that you guys -- people on the call represent and/or serve.

So I'm excited about that work and we're hoping to move forward with that work. I think it's kind of our next big push to try to close the gap with missing -- you know, the data that's missing that is better suited for your advocacy or your personal work that you do in the area of disability and employment.

And so for the last meeting of the Disability Employment month, I'm going to close it down. I can't really -- I see that there's one question, DSPs need proper training.

>> Yeah, that's right. There's a question of DSPs and the quality and how they manage the independence and the high turnover of DSPs and the lower wages of DSPs. The certification process, John, that you were talking about, you know, those things are really, really important. And we need data, we need programs, we need educators, we need a lot of building. It's almost like there's a -- you know, I just thought of the infrastructure, if we can build bridges, can we build a market and a -- and a -- and a feeder system to feed DSPs?

And, you know, as a labor economist, the higher the wages are, the more people will commit resources to getting the training.

You know, and that training will pay off with higher wages. And so John had talked about the accreditation process. I think that that's a step in the right direction of developing a market. It is really quite sad and families and people are struggling and suffering under a market and a system that's just -- let's say on the positive, that's still developing, right?

And, you know, if we want to keep people out of -- out of group homes and we want to, you know, continue with the promise of the deinstitutionalization and things like that, having properly trained support personnel is really quite critical to that effort.

So, is that enough of a soapbox?

I hope it wasn't. But that's what I believe. Sorry.

I can't get any -- I don't hear any feedback. Am I even on?

>> Yes, we can hear you.

>> We can hear you.

>> On my phone it's a little -- my laptop is still rebooting up. So I'm just trying to see, was there any other questions?

>> I don't think so. I think that was it, pretty much.

>> Okay. Great. All right. Well, everybody stay safe, vote, be patient with the counting of votes. I know I'm going to have a hard time. I'll be itching to know the results. And I hope your Disability Employment awareness month continues and thank you all for participating. Thanks, bye-bye.