

Unpacking the Disability Employment Gap

In the UK, disabled people are much less likely to be in paid work than non-disabled people. This is known as the

Disability Employment Gap.



We recognise that work isn't appropriate for everyone but **lots of disabled people not currently in employment can work and want to work.**

The Government says that it wants to get more disabled people into work and reduce the size of the Disability Employment Gap (DEG). **By understanding why the DEG is so big, we can help to close it.**



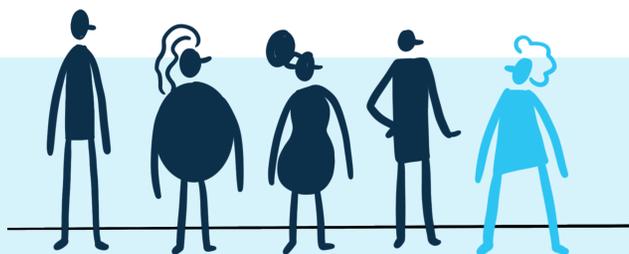
The Research

Our research at The University of Sheffield, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the DEG, and how it affects different people across the country. We looked at data on the health and employment status of a large number of working age people from across the UK.



What we know

About 1 in 5 people of working age in the UK is disabled.



A person is disabled if they have a long term mental or physical health condition (lasting 12 months or more) that affects their day to day activities. Disability prevalence increases with age and more women than men are disabled.

2 in every 5 disabled people say that their health reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a lot, so we consider these people to have a more severe impairment.



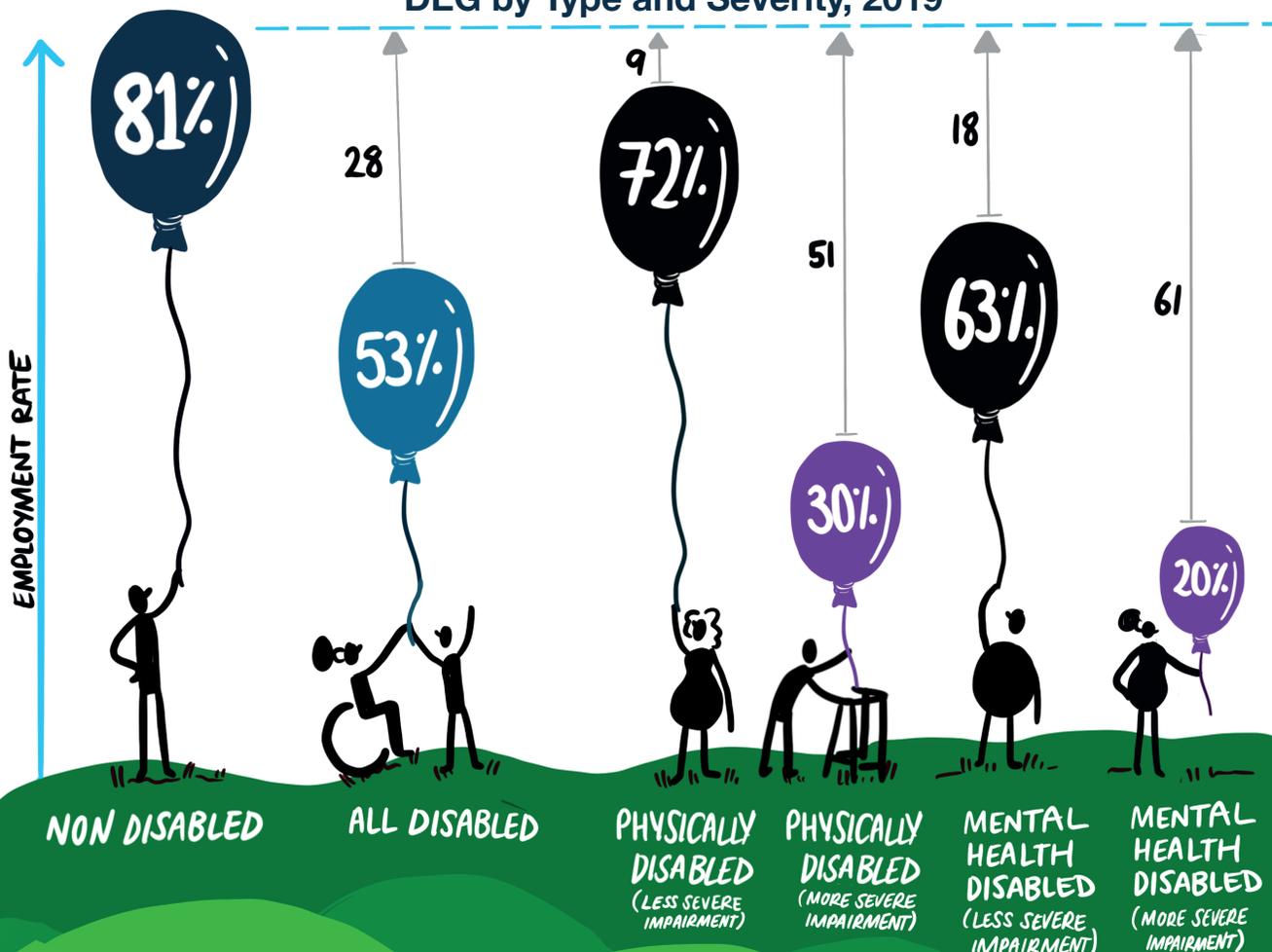
About three quarters of disabled people have a physical health condition while nearly half have a mental health condition (including learning disability). Many people live with both.



There is a stark difference in employment levels between disabled people with a less severe impairment and disabled people with a more severe impairment.

Physically disabled people with a less severe impairment are only 9 percentage points less likely to be employed than non-disabled people. People with a more severe impairment including a mental health condition are 61 percentage points less likely to be employed.

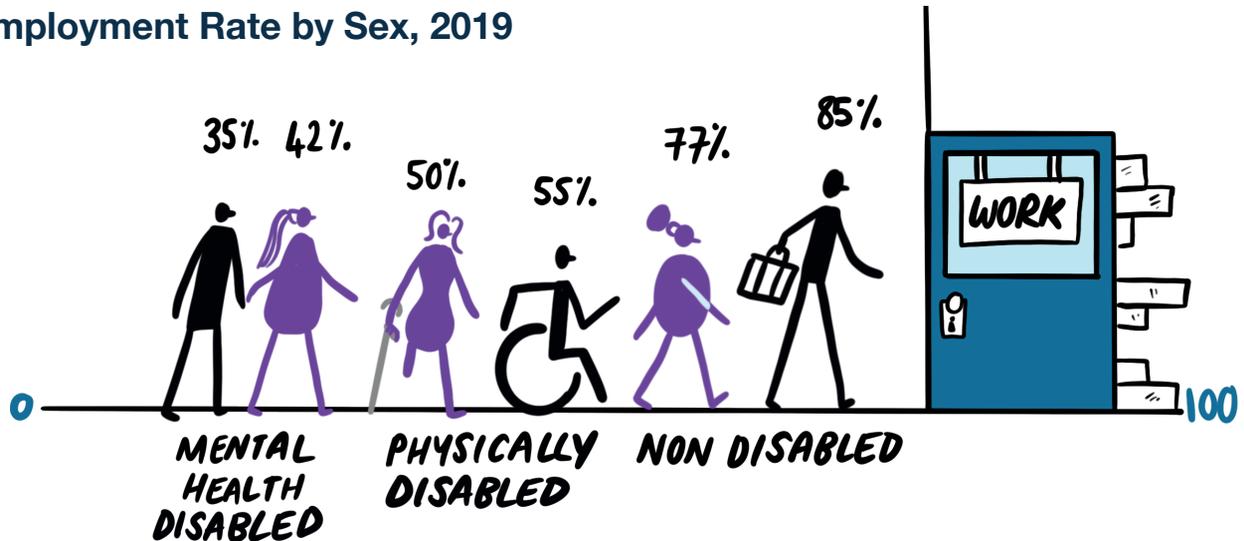
DEG by Type and Severity, 2019



The DEG is wider for men than for women.

Disabled men living with a mental health condition are particularly disadvantaged, with an employment rate 50 percentage points below that of non-disabled men.

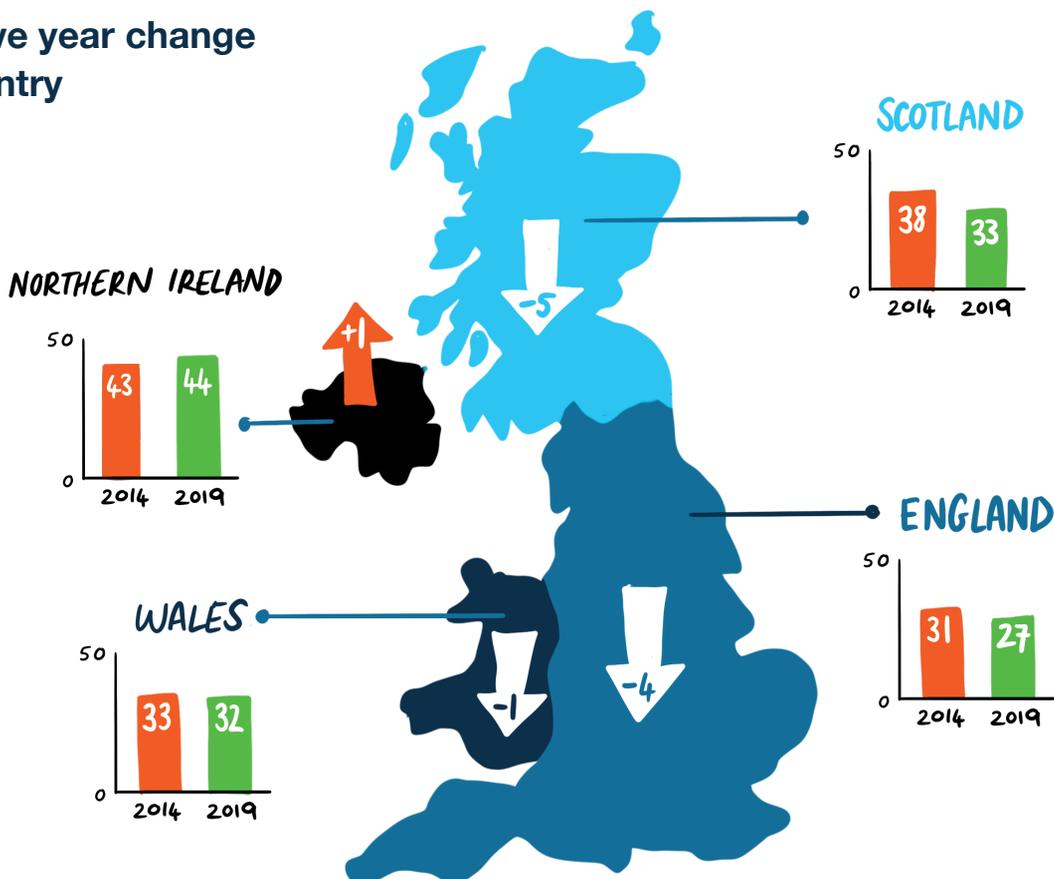
Employment Rate by Sex, 2019



There are national differences in the disability employment gap

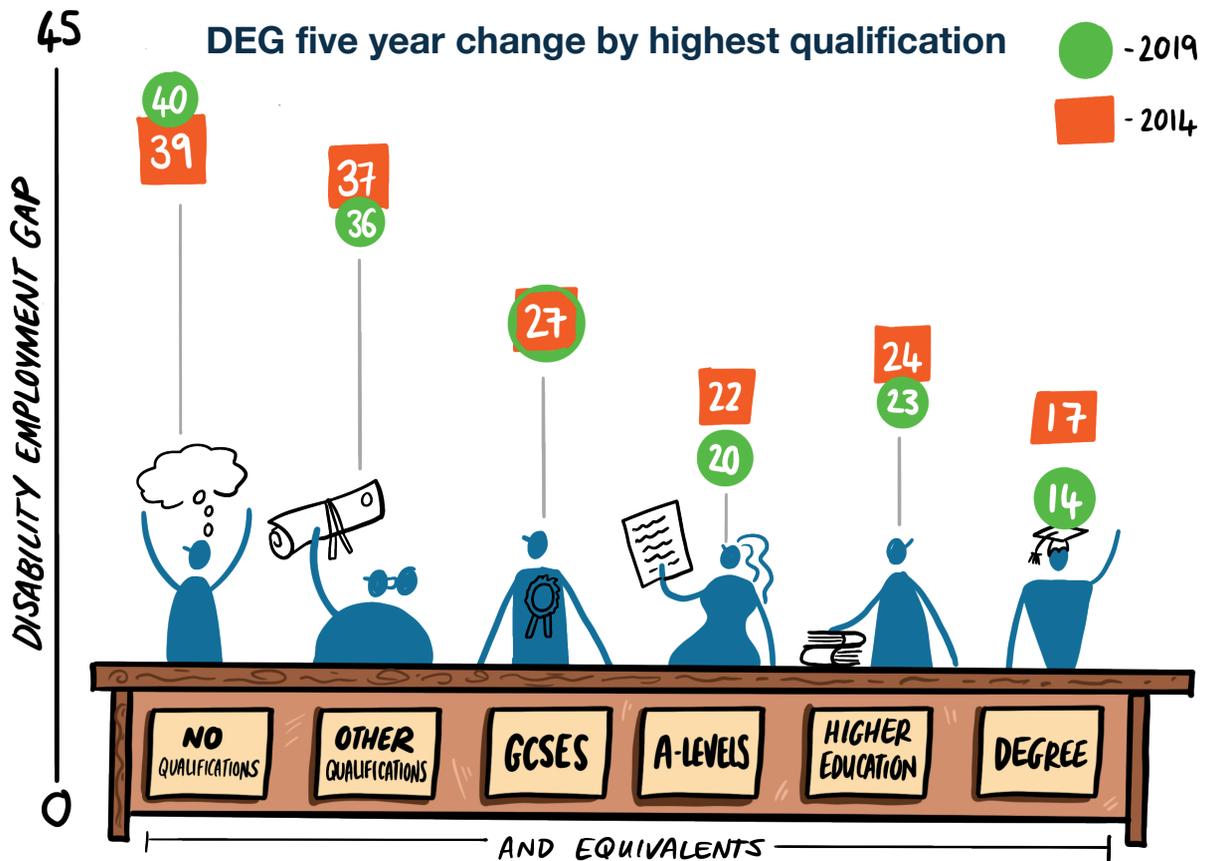
While the employment rates of non-disabled people are broadly similar in the four countries of the UK, the employment rate of disabled people in England is higher than that of the three other countries, and hence England has the smallest DEG (27 percentage points). Northern Ireland has by far the largest DEG (44 percentage points). The DEG has actually widened in Northern Ireland since 2014 while it has been narrowing in the rest of the UK.

DEG five year change by country



Educational factors play into the disability employment gap

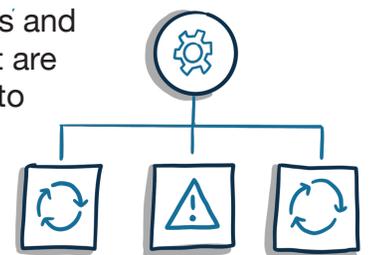
The DEG is much larger for people with low levels of education. The employment rate of disabled people with no qualifications is 40 percentage points lower than that of non-disabled people with no qualifications, and this gap has widened since 2014. By contrast, the employment rate of disabled people with a degree or equivalent is just 14 percentage points below the employment rate of similarly qualified non-disabled people, and this gap has been narrowing.



What next?

Now we need to disentangle the factors that contribute to the disability employment gap.

Identifying the key factors and understanding those that are changeable, will help us to remove barriers to employment for those disabled people who want to and can work.



For more information and to discuss with the research team, please see our website: bit.ly/sheff-DEG

Dr Mark Bryan
Dr Andrew Bryce
Prof Jennifer Roberts
Dr Cristina Sechel

