

Disability in East Sussex

Introduction

This briefing provides insights into disability prevalence and lived experience of disabled residents in East Sussex, as recorded by the 2021 Census. Readers are advised that due to statistical disclosure control measures applied by the ONS, there may be small differences between estimated numbers contained in this and other Census briefings and analysis (see page 19 of this briefing for further details).

Key Findings

- 8% of all residents under 15 years were disabled, compared to 18% of those aged 15 to 64 years, and 33% of those aged 65 years and above.
- 63% of disabled residents under the age of 15 were male, but a notable increase in the proportion of disabled females between the ages of 10 and 20 years meant that only 48% of residents aged 15 to 20 years were male.
- Between ages 20 and 43, there was little change in disability rates for both sexes, after which, rates started to rise steadily until around retirement age, when they began to level out again. Rates then began to rise sharply after the age of 73 years. Given that the last of the postwar baby boomer generation (born 1946-1954) is due to turn 70 in 2024, this will likely put increased pressure on health services over the next few years.
- 44% of disabled residents were in some form of paid employment on census day, compared to 78.2% of non-disabled residents.
- There was a noticeable employment gap when looking at residents with Level 4 qualifications, with disabled residents more likely to be working in routine roles and less likely to hold managerial posts compared to their non-disabled counterparts.
- Disabled people were less likely to own their own home than non-disabled people of the same age and were more likely to live in social rented accommodation.

Disability in East Sussex

To identify disability in England and Wales, the census asked people "Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?". If they answered yes, a further question "Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?" was presented. The identification of disability differs from the 2011 Census question used, which asked "Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or expected to last, at least 12 months?".

The question changed in order to collect data that more closely aligned with the definition of disability in the Equality Act (2010). The Equality Act defines an individual as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The way disabled people are identified has therefore changed between 2011 and 2021 and this may have had an impact on the number of people classified as disabled.

When interpreting the data, it is important to keep in mind that the census was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which may have influenced how people perceived their health status and activity limitations and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

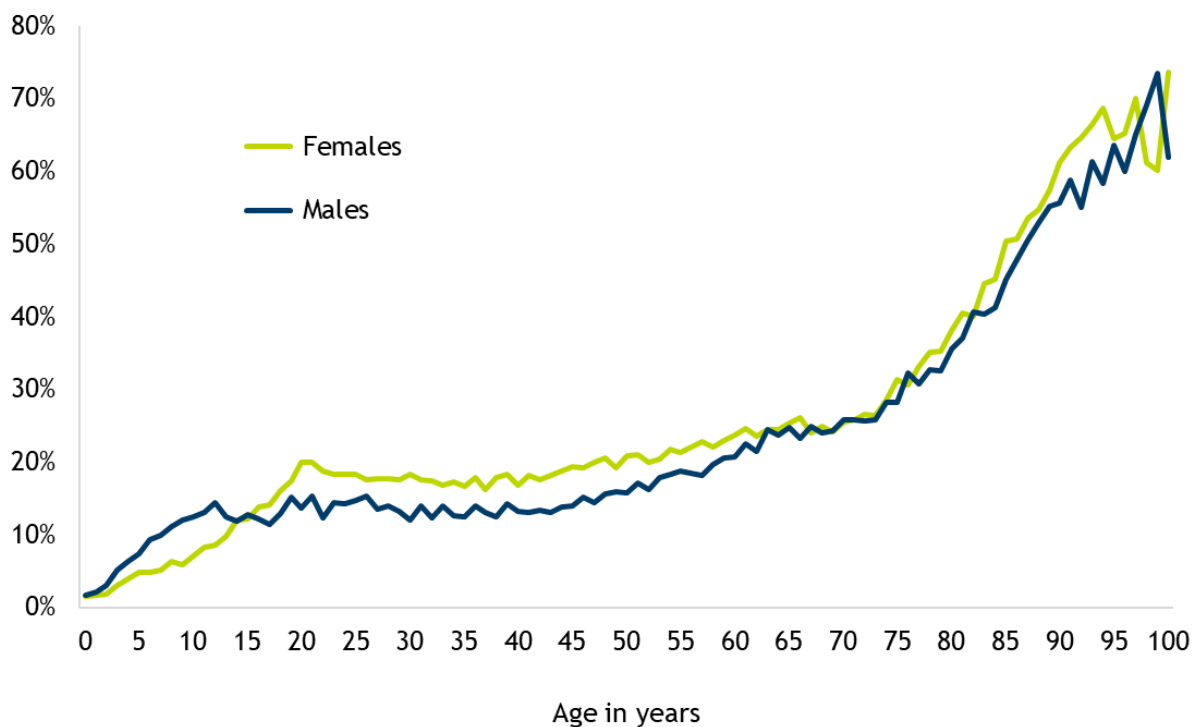
Analysis exploring disability prevalence in East Sussex and its constituent districts and boroughs is available in our previously released [Health and Disability briefing](#). This revealed that 110,550 people in the county were classified as disabled in 2021, representing 20.3% of the total population. 34.8% of households in East Sussex had at least one disabled member, and 7.3% of East Sussex households had two or more disabled members.

In this briefing, we provide further exploration of disability by sex and age, and explore disparities in education, employment and housing between disabled and non-disabled residents in East Sussex.

Disability by sex and age

Disability prevalence increased with age. In those aged under 15 years (where responses were most likely to be reported by parents or guardians), a higher percentage of males were disabled compared with females (9.2% of all males aged 0-14 were disabled, compared to 5.9% of females aged 0-14). However, after the ages of 15, a higher percentage of females were disabled. The percentage of disabled females increased notably between the ages of 10 and 20 years, rising from 7.1% to 20.0% respectively. By contrast, the percentage of disabled males between these ages rose by only 1.3 percentage points from 12.5% to 13.8%.

Proportion of disabled residents by single year of age

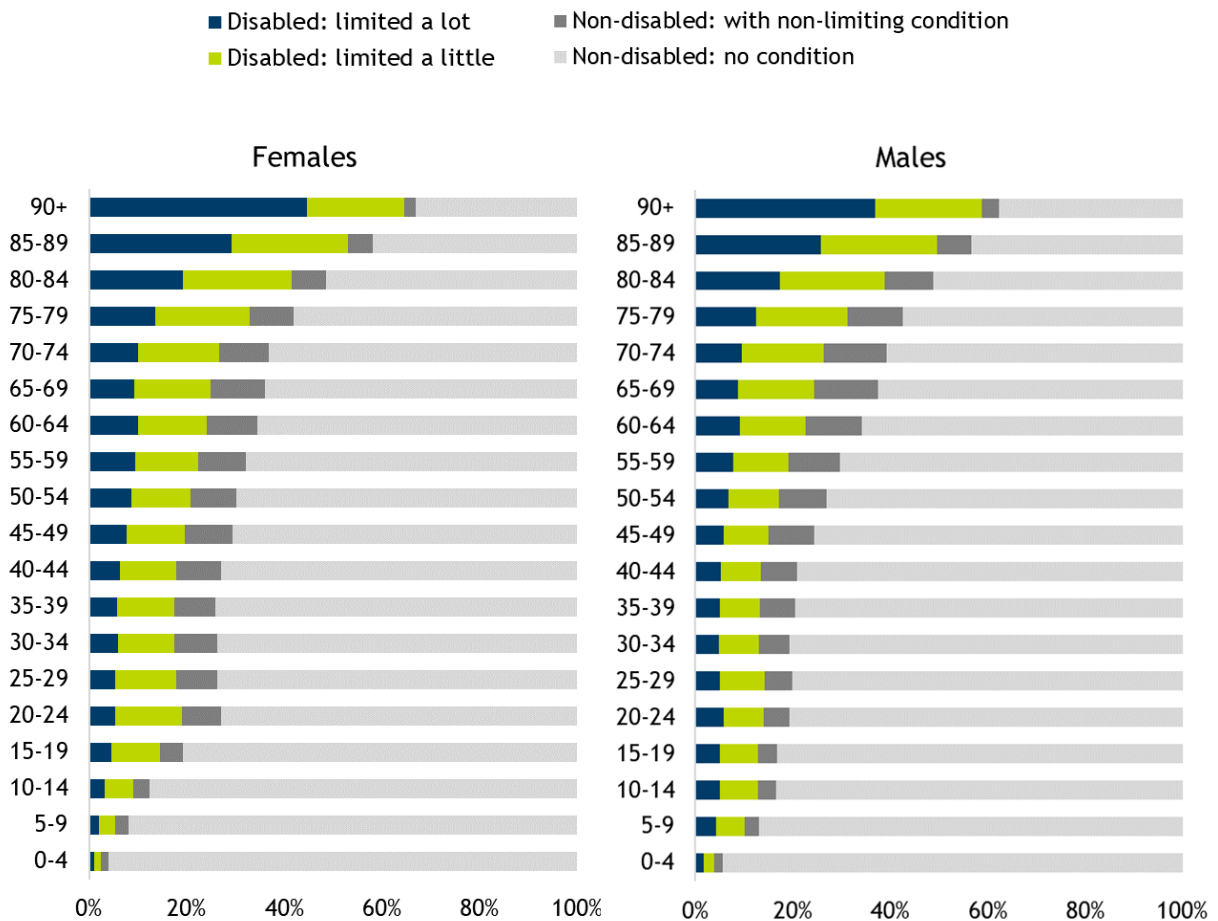


Source: ONS

Disability rates flattened out between the ages of approximately 20 and 40, then began to increase steadily for both males and females from around age 43 years; 16.8% of females and 13.2% of males aged 40 years were disabled, compared to 25.4% of females and 24.8% of males aged 65 years. Rates then stayed largely constant between the ages of 65 and 73 years for both sexes (perhaps due to increased activity in the

years immediately following retirement), after which they began to rise sharply. 25.6% of females aged 70 years were disabled, compared with 31.4% of females aged 75 years, rising to 50.4% for females aged 80 and above. For males, 25.8% of those aged 70 years were disabled, compared with 28.2% aged 75 years, rising to 45.3% among those aged 80 years and above.

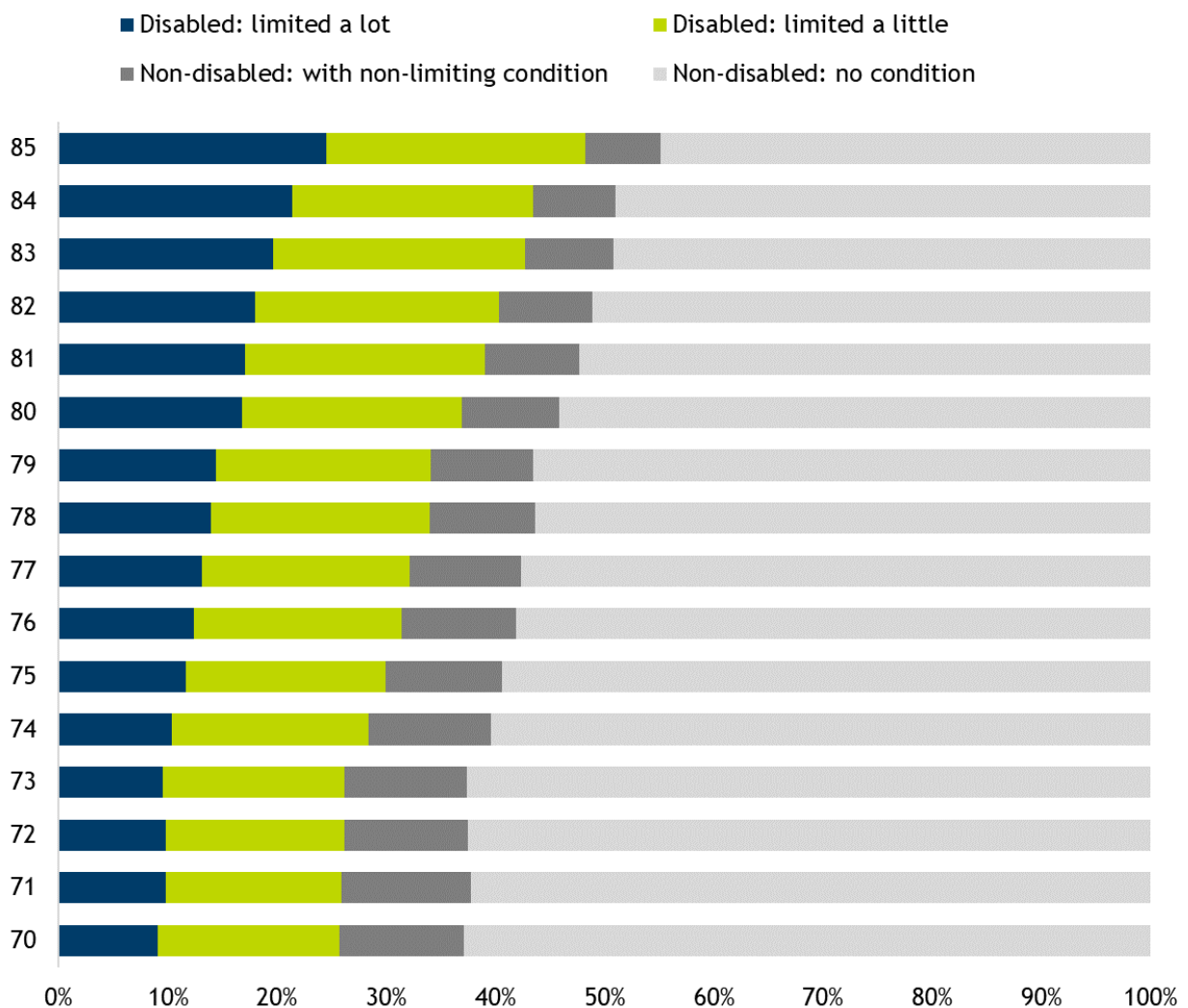
Age-specific percentages of disability by age group and sex



Source: ONS

The chart below shows the jump in rates of disability between residents aged 73 years and residents aged 74 years more clearly. As can be seen, the increase in disability rates was mainly among those whose activities were limited a lot; 9.1% of residents aged 70 were limited a lot, compared to 16.7% of residents aged 80 (and 26.1% for all residents aged 80 and above). Given that the last of the postwar baby boomer generation (born 1946-1954) is due to turn 70 in 2024, this will likely put increased pressure on health services over the next few years.

Age-specific percentages of disability from 70 years - 85 years (both sexes)

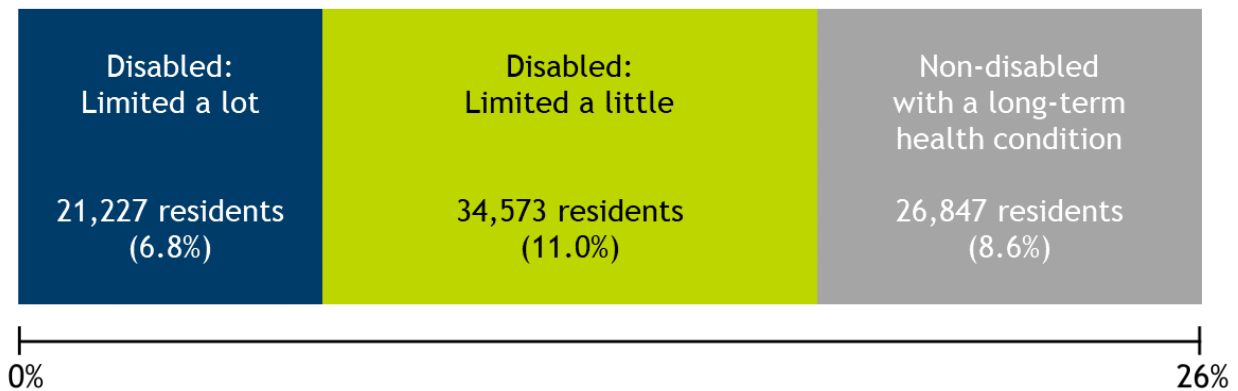


Source: ONS

Education and Employment

17.8% of the East Sussex working-age population aged 16 to 64 years was classed as disabled (55,800 residents) in 2021. Of these, around two fifths (21,230 residents) considered themselves to be limited a lot in terms of their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. A further 26,850 residents of working-age who were not classed as disabled reported having a long-term health condition.

Proportion of working-age population who are either disabled or have a long-term health condition



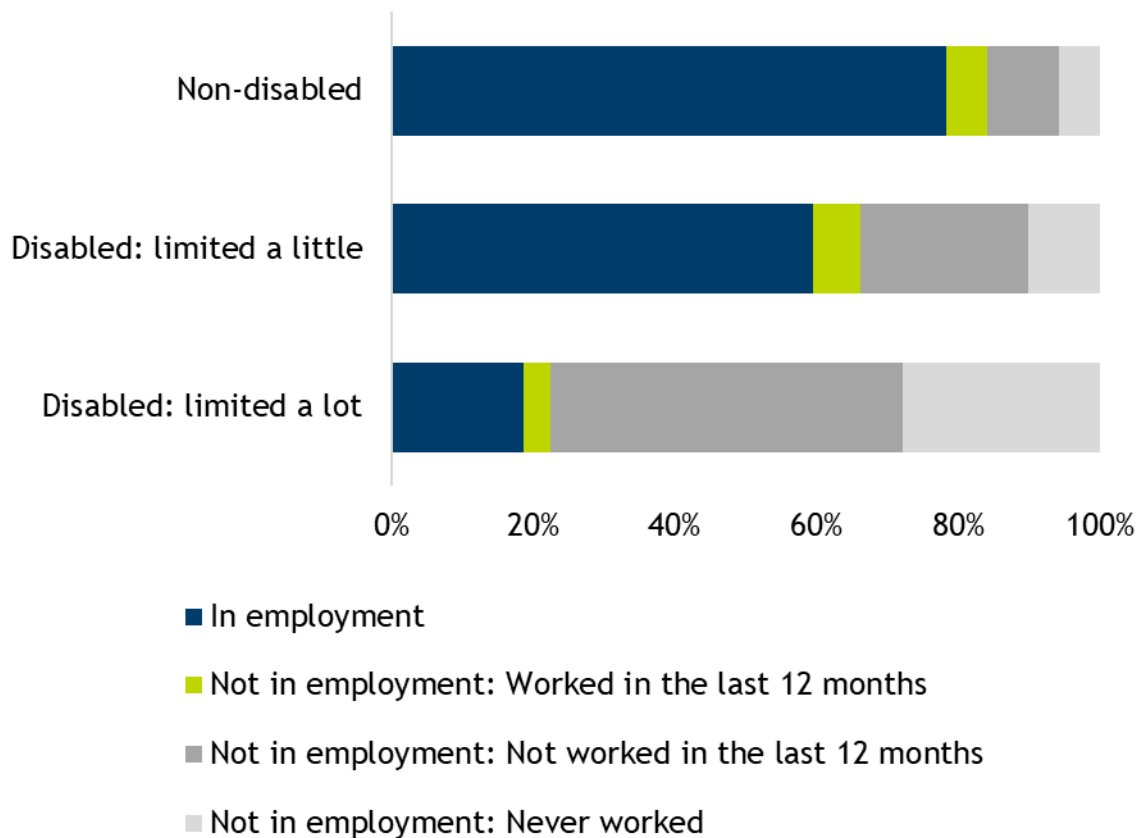
Source: ONS

Employment

Within the working-age population, 72.1% of all residents stated that they were in some form of paid employment on the day the Census was taken. However, only 44.0% of disabled residents stated they were employed, compared to 78.2% of non-disabled residents.

Just 5.9% of non-disabled residents stated that they had never worked, compared to 16.9% of disabled-residents. However, this was largely driven by the high proportion of disabled people who stated their day-to-day activities were limited a lot; while 10.2% of those who were only limited a little had never worked, this rose to 27.9% among those who stated their day-to-day activities were limited a lot.

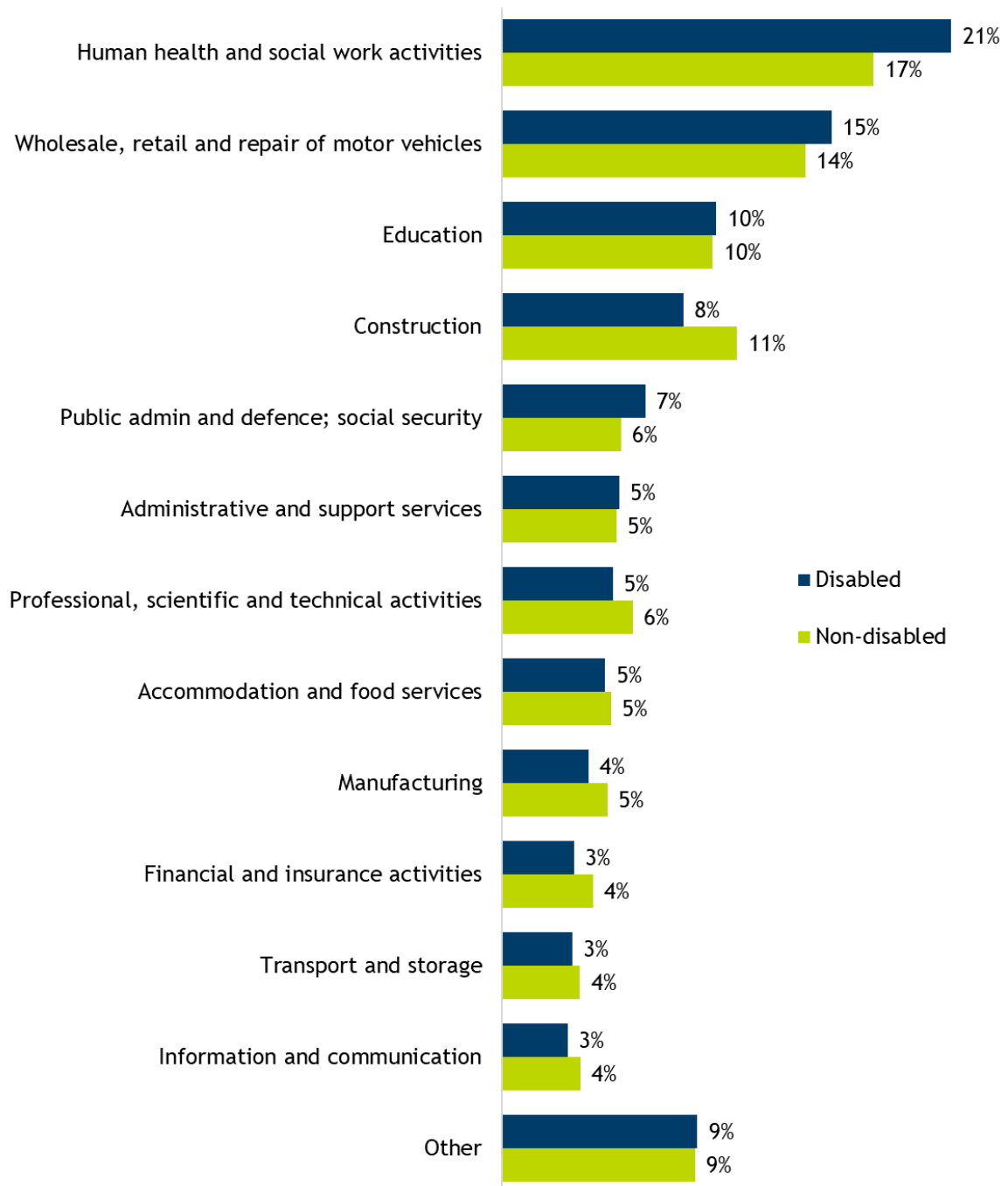
Employment status of working-age population by disability status
(includes full-time students)



Source: ONS

A slightly higher proportion of disabled people whose day-to-day activities were only limited a little stated they had worked in the past 12 months but were not working now (6.7% versus 5.8% among non-disabled residents). However, it is important to keep in mind that the pandemic may have affected both people’s ability and willingness to work around the time the census was taken.

Percentage of people aged 16-64 employed in each industry by disability status

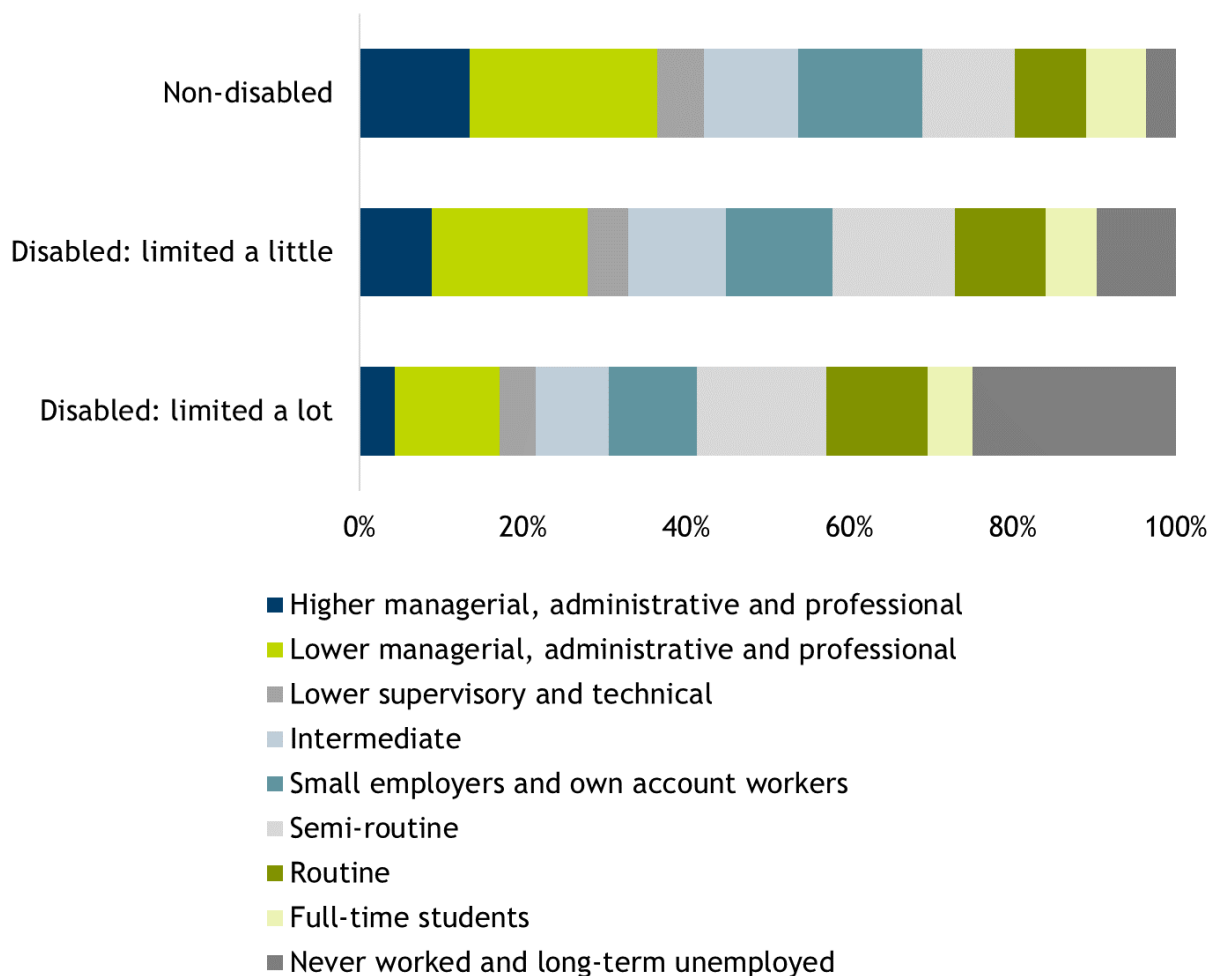


Source: ONS

In terms of industry, disabled workers were more likely to be working in health, retail, education, public administration and defence, social security, and administrative and support services than non-disabled workers.

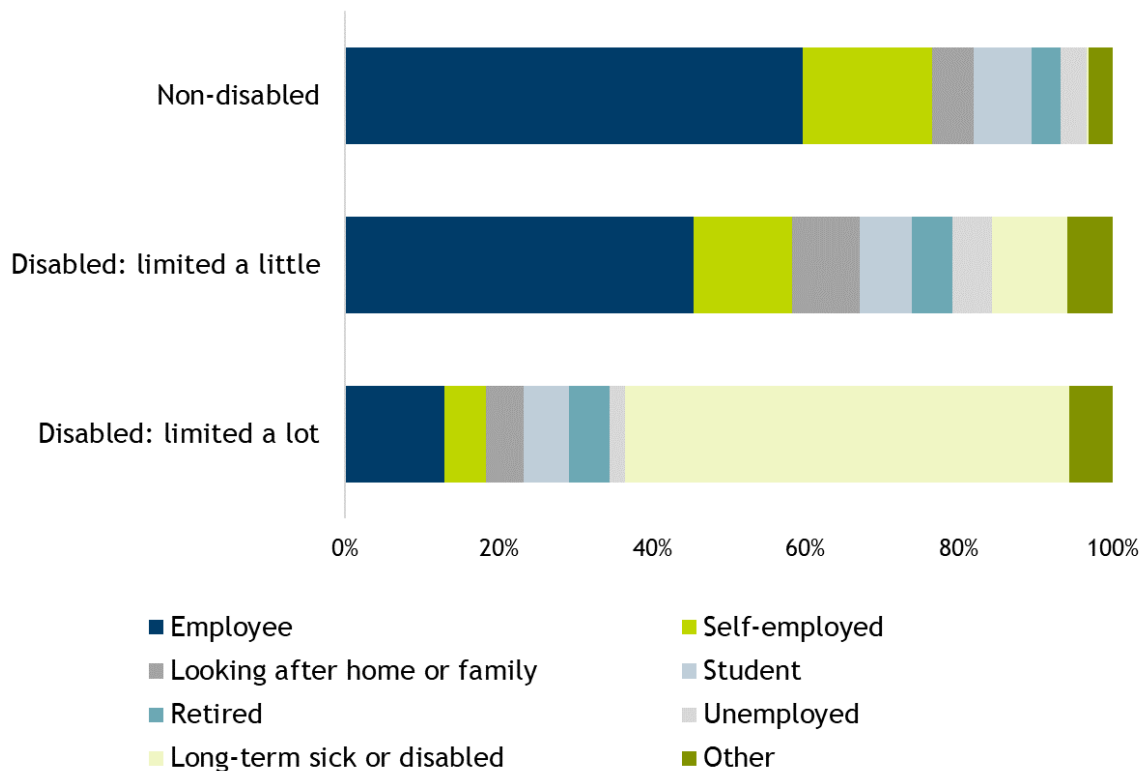
Disabled workers were also less likely to be in managerial, professional and supervisory occupations than non-disabled workers, and more likely to be working in semi-routine and routine occupations.

Proportion of disabled and non-disabled people by National Statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SeC)



Source: ONS

Proportion of disabled and non-disabled people by economic activity status



Source: ONS

Rates of self-employment were also lower among disabled residents; 5.3% of disabled residents aged 16-64 whose day-to-day activities were limited a lot were self-employed at the time of the Census, compared to 12.8% of those whose day-to-day activities were limited a little, and 16.9% of non-disabled residents.

Disabled people whose day-to-day activities were limited a lot were much more likely to have never worked or to be long-term unemployed (24.9%), compared to those whose day-to-day activities were limited a little (9.7%) and non-disabled people (3.6%).

There was a less noticeable difference in the proportion of full-time students; 7.3% of non-disabled residents were full-time students, compared to 6.2% of disabled people whose day-to-day activities were limited a little, and 5.5% of disabled people whose activities were limited a lot.

Highest level of qualification

Residents were asked to record any qualifications they had ever achieved, even if they were not using them now. This can be used to calculate the highest level of qualification using the following categories:

- No qualifications: No formal qualifications
- Level 1: 1 to 4 GCSE passes (i.e. grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) and any other GCSEs at other grades, Foundation Welsh Bacallaureate, or equivalent qualifications.
- Level 2: 5+ GCSE passes (i.e. grade A* to C or grade 4 and above), Intermediate Welsh Bacallaureate, or equivalent qualifications.
- Apprenticeships
- Level 3: 2+ A Levels, Advanced Welsh Bacallaureate, or equivalent qualifications.
- Level 4 or above: Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or post-graduate qualifications.
- Other qualifications, of unknown level.

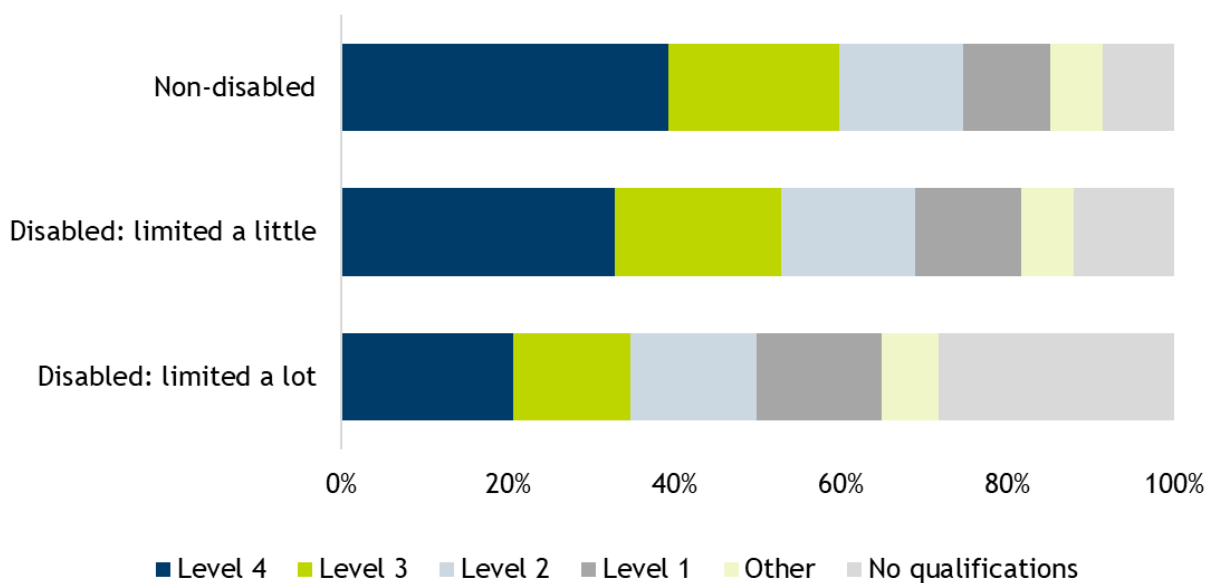
In this section, we look at residents aged 25-64, since by the age of 25, most residents will have completed their highest level of qualification.

18.3% of disabled people aged 25-64 had no formal qualifications, compared to 8.5% of non-disabled people. Disabled people whose activities were limited a lot were less likely to hold formal qualifications. 28.2% of disabled people whose activities were limited a lot held no formal qualifications, compared to 12.0% of disabled people whose day-to-day activities were limited a little.

Disabled people whose activities were limited a lot were also much less likely to have achieved a qualification at Level 4 or above (20.7%) compared to those whose day-to-day activities were limited a little (32.8%) and non-disabled people (39.2%).

There was a much smaller difference between disabled and non-disabled people in terms of the ‘Other’ education category, which includes apprenticeships, vocational or work-related qualifications. Disabled people whose activities were limited a lot were the most likely to have achieved a qualification in this category (6.9%) followed by disabled people who were limited a little (6.4%) and non-disabled people (6.3%).

Highest level of qualification held by disabled and non-disabled residents aged 25-64

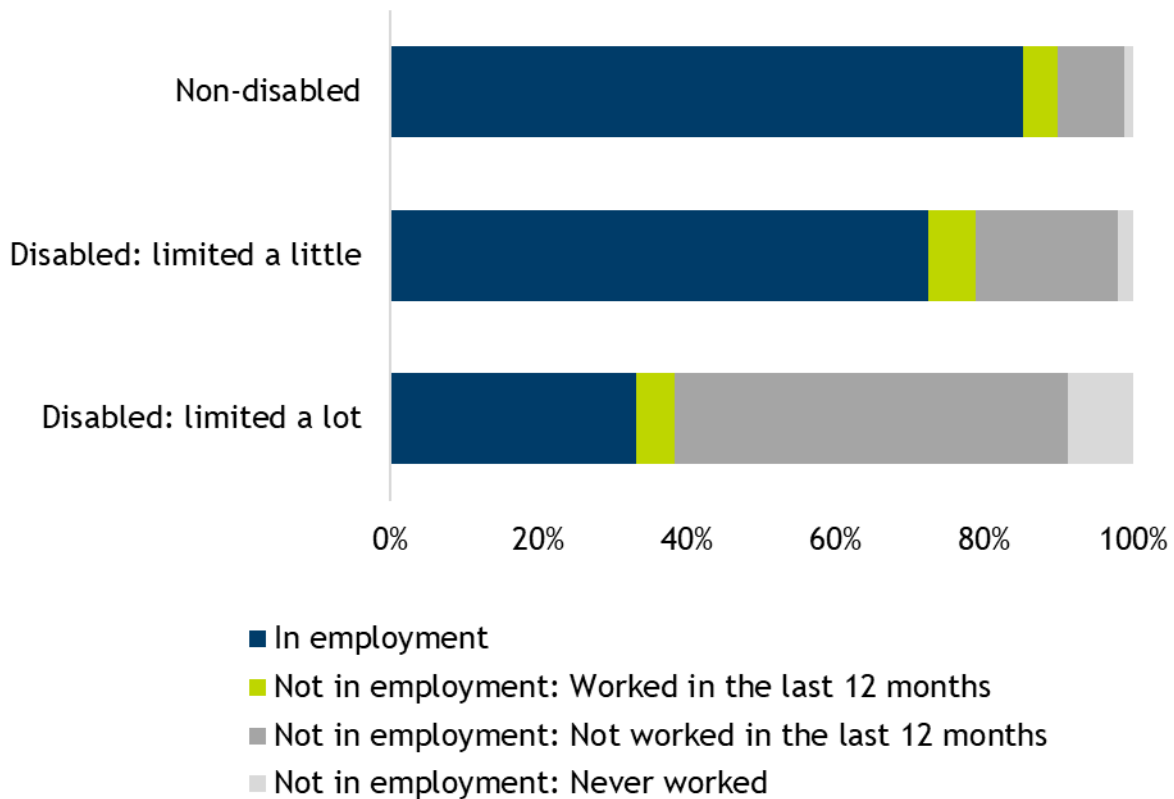


Source: ONS

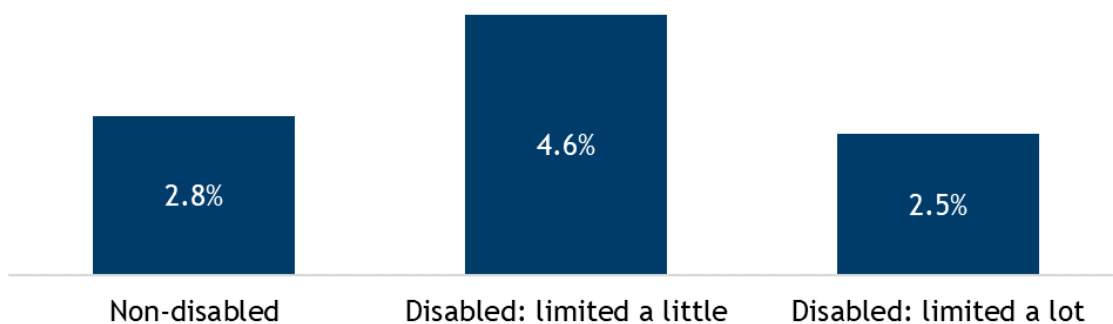
Employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people with Level 4 qualifications

It would be easy to attribute the employment gap and the differences in socio-economic classification mentioned on Page 9 to differences in level of qualifications held by disabled people compared to non-disabled person. However, when we look at the employment situation of disabled people holding Level 4 qualifications, we see they are much more likely to be both unemployed and underemployed when compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

Employment status of working-age population with an HNC, HND, Bachelor’s degree or higher by disability status (includes full-time students)

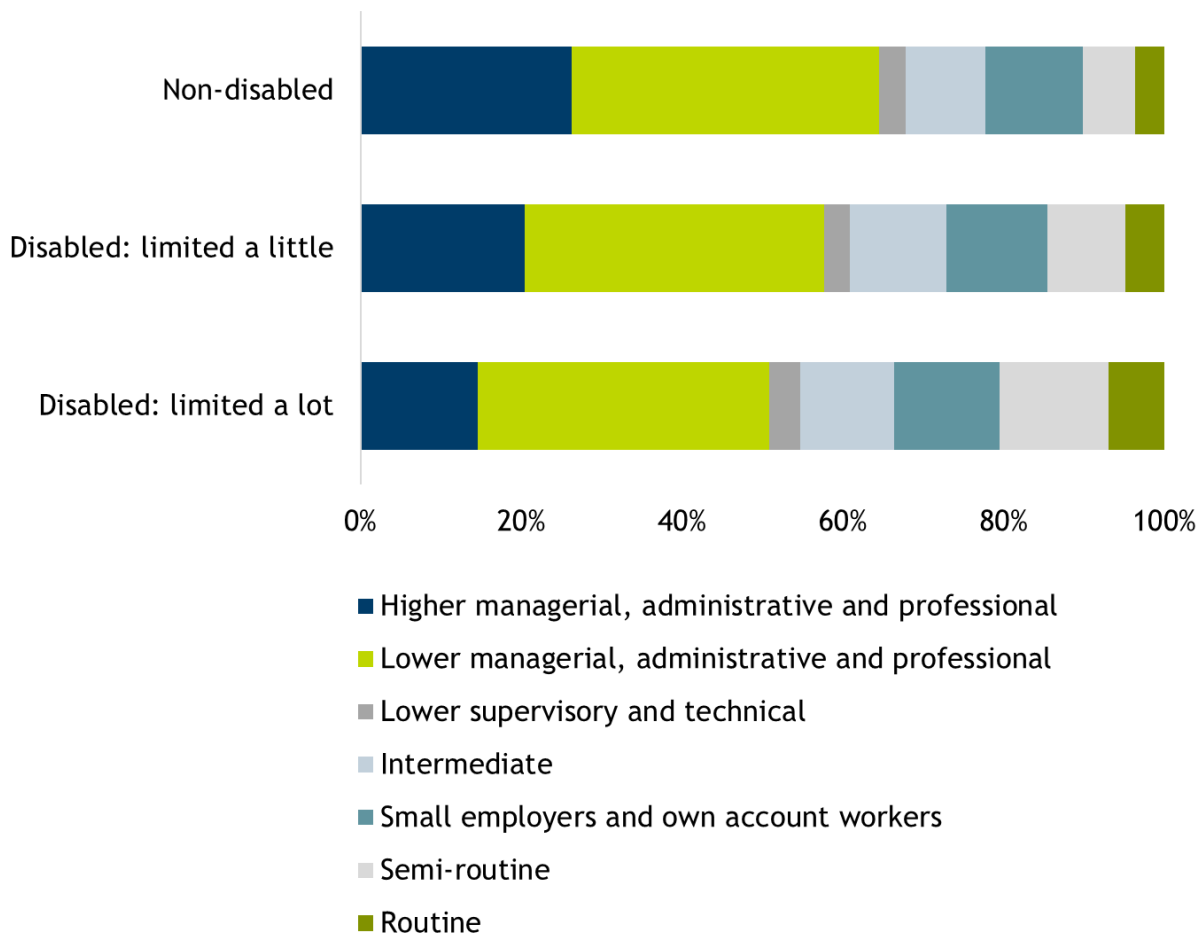


Proportion of residents aged 16-64 with an HNC, HND, Bachelor’s degree or higher who said they were unemployed and actively seeking work or waiting to start a job already obtained



Source: ONS

Proportion of disabled and non-disabled working-age population (excluding students and long-term unemployed) with an HNC, HND, Bachelor’s degree or higher by National Statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SeC)



Source: ONS

4.0% of disabled residents aged 16-64 with Level 4 qualifications said they were unemployed and actively seeking work (or waiting to start a job already obtained) at the time of the Census, compared to 2.8% of non-disabled residents. This figure rises to 4.6% when just considering those whose day-to-day activities are only limited a little by their disability. Overall, only 64.8% of disabled residents aged 16-64 with an HNC, HND, Bachelor’s degree or higher were in active employment on Census Day, compared to 91.0% of non-disabled residents.

Further, of those that were in active employment, only 18.8% of disabled people with an HNC, HND, Bachelor's degree or higher held a higher managerial post, compared to 26.3% of non-disabled workers. Disabled people whose activities were limited a lot were the least likely to hold a higher managerial post (14.5%), followed by those who were limited a little (20.4%).

At the other end of the spectrum, disabled people with Level 4 qualifications were more likely than non-disabled people to work in routine and semi-routine positions; 16.2% of disabled residents with Level 4 qualifications stated they worked in routine or semi-routine roles, compared to 10.1% of non-disabled residents. Among those who had Level 4 qualification but said they were limited a lot by their disability, 20.5% worked in routine and semi-routine positions, compared to 14.6% of those whose disability limited them a little.

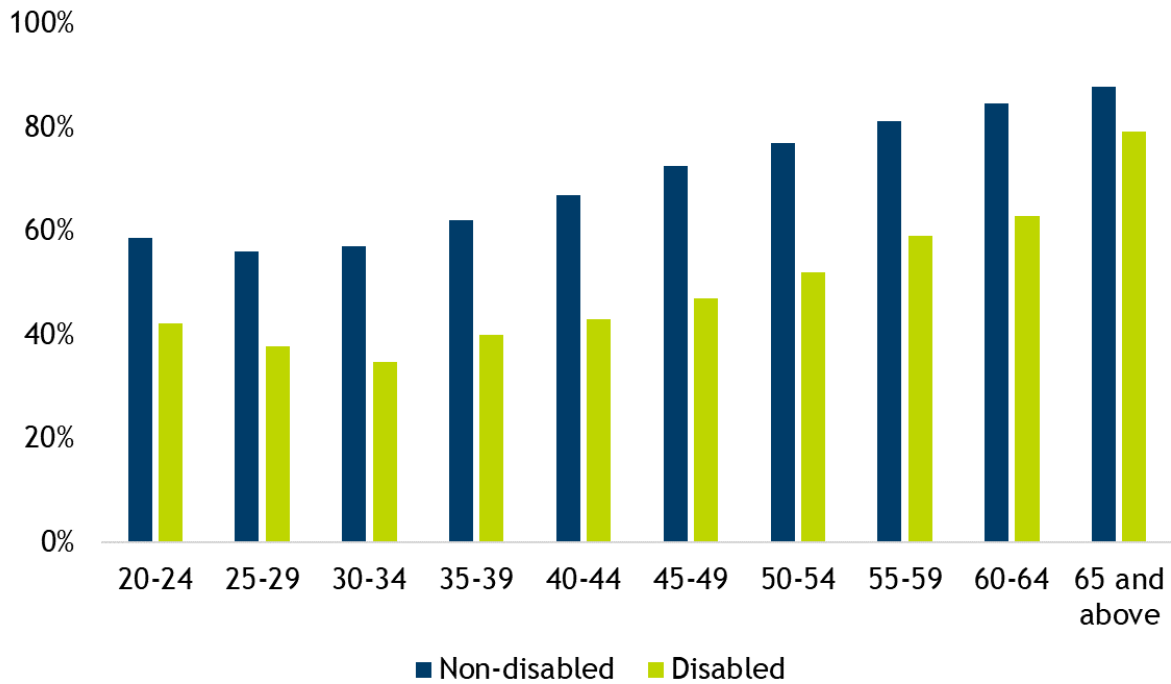
Housing disparities

Residents in households were asked how they would describe the tenure of their accommodation. For the purposes of this section, we have condensed the options into 5 categories, namely owned outright, owned with a mortgage, loan or shared ownership, private rented, social rented from the council or LA, and other social rented.

When looking at the population as a whole, we see that disabled people are significantly more likely to own their own home (40.8% of disabled household residents lived in an owner-occupied home without a mortgage in 2021, compared to 30.0% of non-disabled residents). However, since disability increases with age - and older people are more likely to have paid off their mortgage - this is not an unexpected finding.

To see the full picture, we therefore need to look at tenure broken down by age. Here, we see that disabled people are less likely to live in owner-occupied households in every age group.

Proportion of disabled and non-disabled household residents by age living in owner-occupied households

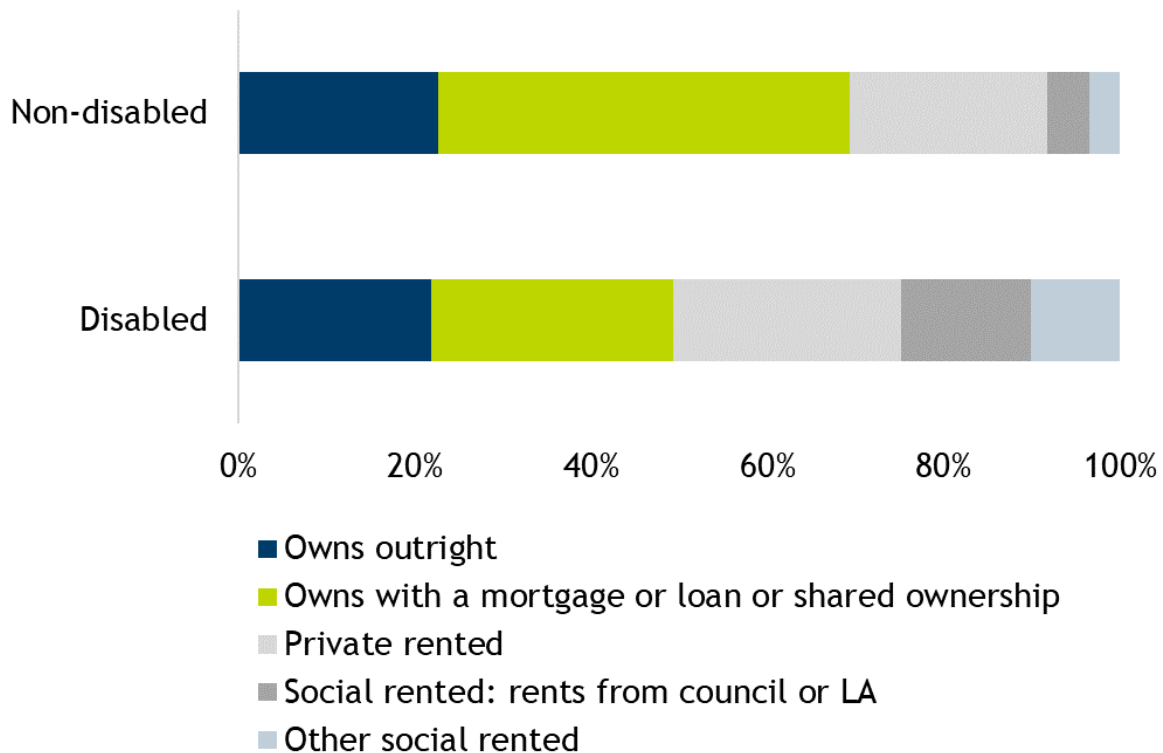


Source: ONS

Breaking the data down further, we can see that disabled people are slightly less likely to live in an owner-occupied home without a mortgage compared to non-disabled people (21.9% versus 22.7% respectively when looking at working-age residents). However, disabled people of working age are significantly more likely to live in social rented accommodation than non-disabled people (24.9% versus 8.3% respectively for working-age residents).

There was, however, little difference between those who rented privately; 25.9% of disabled residents between the ages of 16 and 64 lived in rented accommodation, compared to 22.3% of non-disabled residents.

Housing tenure of residents aged 16-64 years living in households



Source: ONS

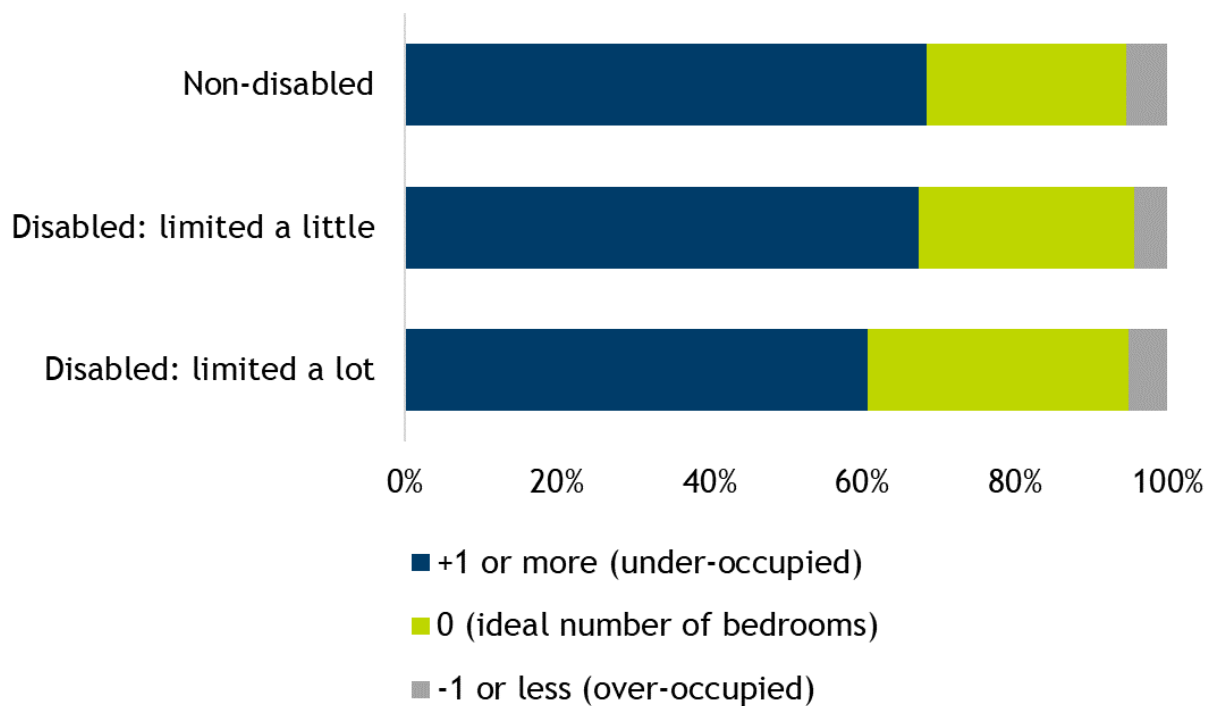
In terms of overcrowding, there was less difference between the living situation of disabled people compared to non-disabled people.

An occupancy rating of -1 or less implies that a household’s accommodation has fewer bedrooms than required (overcrowded), while an occupancy rating of +1 or more implies that a household’s accommodation has more bedrooms than required (under-occupied); 0 suggests an ideal number of bedrooms. This is calculated by comparing the number of bedrooms the household requires to the number of available bedrooms.

According the census, disabled people were slightly less likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than non-disabled people; 5.4% of non-disabled residents lived in overcrowded accommodation in 2021, compared to 4.4% of disabled residents who

were limited a little, and 5.1% of disabled residents who were limited a lot in terms of their day-to-activities. However, this still means that there are approximately 5,000 disabled residents living in overcrowded accommodation.

Proportion of residents living in under-occupied and over-occupied households



Limitations and mitigations

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces census data for a range of different output geographies. This includes census statistics for small areas/neighbourhoods right up to statistics for large administrative units. When added together, detailed census results for smaller areas may not exactly match the same data for larger areas. This is because the ONS uses statistical disclosure control methods which swap very small numbers between areas, and/or add small changes to some counts (cell key perturbation). For example, they might change a count of four to a three or a five, to make sure that it is impossible to identify specific individuals. This means that data for small areas may not sum to the totals for higher geographical levels.

For this reason, in any discussion of the census results, we have chosen to round numbers to the nearest 10. Where percentages have been provided, these are based on unrounded numbers. Tables published in this report and on East Sussex in Figures website contain unrounded data as supplied by the ONS, but come with the caveat that individual numbers and totals may vary slightly between tables depending on the selected output geography, as detailed above.

Census statistics are estimates rather than counts, and therefore have measures of uncertainty associated with them. As with all self-completion questionnaires, some forms will have contained incorrect, incomplete, or missing information about a person or household. While the ONS takes numerous steps to correct and minimise possible sources of error, as described in their [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) Report](#), no census is perfect.

Further Information

For more information about the census data visit the [ONS website](#). For queries specifically relating to East Sussex, please contact the Research and Intelligence Team via email at esif@eastsussex.gov.uk.

The Research and Intelligence Team, Governance Services, provides demographic and socio-economic data, intelligence and insight to support East Sussex County Council and other East Sussex Partners. The Team also manages East Sussex in Figures (ESiF), the Local Information System for East Sussex. Visit www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk for more information.