Australian Government
Australian Institute of Family Studies

TEN to MEN
The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health

Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Disability trajectories and employment across the life course: Australian men from 2013 to 2025

Ten to Men Snapshot Series – Issue 6 | October 2026

A note on language

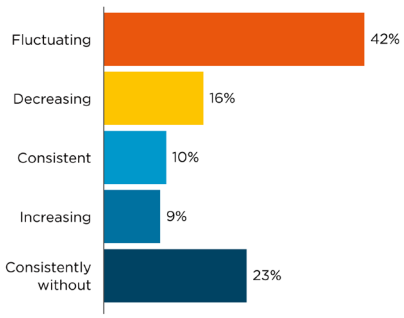
This report uses person-first language, consistent with Australian Government style and People with Disability Australia (PWDA) guidance. We use 'people with disability' when referring broadly to people's lived experience and rights, and 'reported functional difficulty' when referring specifically to the measures used in the *Ten to Men* data, in line with international and national guidance on defining disability in terms of functional limitation.

Disability is complex, diverse and shaped by the interaction between people, environments, systems and supports. The study measure captures self-reported difficulty across 6 functional domains. It does not fully capture identity, lived experience, access to supports, discrimination, workplace adjustments, pain, fatigue, episodic conditions or the broader social and structural barriers that shape employment.

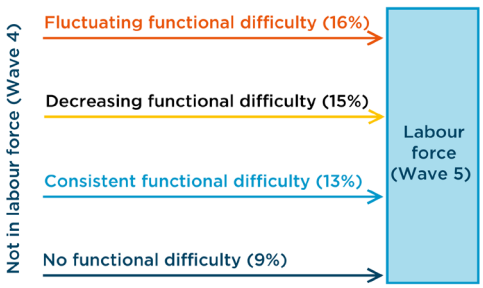
In this report, 'disability trajectories' refer to changes in the survey response over time. Men who consistently reported being without functional difficulty are included as a comparison group.

Key findings and implications

1. Disability, or functional difficulty, changed over time for many men. Between Wave 1 (2013–14) and Wave 5 (2024–25), the largest group had fluctuating functional difficulty (42%). Smaller groups had decreasing functional difficulty (16%), consistent functional difficulty (10%) or increasing functional difficulty (9%). The remaining 23% of men were consistently without functional difficulty.



2. Labour force participation varied depending on men's disability trajectory. Men with increasing functional difficulty had the steepest decline in labour force participation, and the gap widened over time. Men with consistent functional difficulty had low levels of labour force participation across all waves. Men with decreasing or fluctuating functional difficulty had participation rates closer to those of men reporting no functional difficulty.



3. Movement into the labour force also differed across disability trajectories and survey waves. For example, between Wave 4 (2022) and Wave 5 (2024–25), 9% of men reporting no functional difficulty entered the labour force. Entry rates were higher for men with consistent functional difficulty (13%), decreasing functional difficulty (15%) and fluctuating functional difficulty (16%).

4. Education was one of the clearer factors linked to positive employment transitions, although the relevant qualification level differed by transition. Undergraduate qualifications were linked to higher labour force entry for men with consistent functional difficulty, while some qualification beyond Year 12 was linked to employment entry among men with any functional difficulty.

5. Different factors were linked to labour force entry for different groups. For men with decreasing functional difficulty, living in less disadvantaged areas and no financial stress were linked to higher entry. For men with fluctuating functional difficulty, having been previously married or partnered was linked to higher entry compared with being single or never married. For men without functional difficulty, financial security, including higher household income and lower financial stress, was most clearly linked to higher entry.

6. Older men with decreasing or fluctuating functional difficulty were less likely to enter the labour force than younger men in the same trajectory groups.
7. Age was also associated with the type of work men held across trajectories. Over time, men without disability increasingly moved into permanent or ongoing work. In contrast, older men with increasing or fluctuating functional difficulty were more likely to move into self-employment from around Wave 3 (2020–21).

Policy implications

- Consider changes in functional difficulty over time when designing supports or reviewing program eligibility. A single assessment at one point in time may not capture how functional difficulty changes. Tracking change over time may help identify when to review supports, adjust service intensity and prioritise employment-focused assistance.
- Consider targeting more intensive supports to groups facing the greatest barriers to participation, particularly men with consistent functional difficulty and men with increasing functional difficulty. This aligns with the finding that these groups had the lowest or most clearly declining labour force participation.
- Strengthen access to post-school education pathways, skills development and vocational pathways through employment services and training systems. This reflects the finding that education was linked to some positive employment transitions, including labour force entry for men with consistent functional difficulty and employment entry for men with any functional difficulty.
- Tailor employment supports for older men and recognise that pathways into work may differ across disability trajectories. For some older men with increasing or fluctuating difficulty, self-employment may be a relevant pathway, provided appropriate safeguards and support are in place.

About *Ten to Men*

Ten to Men: The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health (*Ten to Men*) is a nationwide longitudinal study on the health and wellbeing of Australian boys and men. *Ten to Men* was established by the Australian Government's *National Male Health Policy* (2010) and currently serves the *National Men's Health Strategy 2020–2030*. This snapshot is part of a series of research focused on male health and wellbeing over the life course commissioned by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. More details on the *Ten to Men* study can be found by visiting aifs.gov.au/tentomen.

What do we know?

Many people in Australia live with disability. In 2022, about 5.5 million people (21%) reported having a disability, including around 8% with profound or severe disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2022). Improving employment outcomes for people with disability has been a longstanding policy priority in Australia but gaps in labour force participation and employment remain. Although job quality and employment conditions are important, this report focuses on labour force participation and employment outcomes. It adds nuance to this policy challenge by examining how labour force and employment outcomes differ across disability trajectories and by identifying factors associated with participation over time.

Barriers to employment can come from both individual circumstances and broader structural issues. These issues include inaccessible workplaces, discrimination, stigma and disincentives within income support and service systems (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2024; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2010). National reporting also shows that employed people with disability are more likely to experience underemployment: 10% wanted and were able to work more, compared with 7% of employed people without disability (AIHW, 2024). Together, these factors can limit access to the workforce. This report recognises this broader context but focuses mainly on characteristics and selected socio-economic factors measured at the individual level.

Improving access to fair and inclusive employment is a key focus of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031* and related disability programs and employment initiatives, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Inclusive Employment Australia, formerly Disability Employment Services (Department of Social Services [DSS], 2024, 2026; National Disability Insurance Agency [NDIA], 2023). Australia's Disability Strategy recognises that employment can support better mental and physical health, increase financial independence, strengthen community connections and provide opportunities to develop new skills. These benefits extend to individuals, families and carers and the wider Australian economy (NDIA, 2026a, 2026b). Strengthening evidence on how employment participation changes over time is important for informing these priorities.

A growing body of evidence shows that disability can be dynamic rather than static, and that many people do not follow a single, stable disability pathway (Burchardt, 2000; Nusselder et al., 2006). People may develop disability in adulthood, experience worsening or fluctuating functional limitations or recover over time (Kim et al., 2020; Kumar & Lal, 2024; Morris et al., 2019). However, much Australian employment research continues to rely on cross-sectional comparisons that classify people simply as 'with' or 'without' disability at a single point in time (ABS, 2022; AIHW, 2024). Such approaches do not capture disability trajectories and provide limited insight into how changes in functioning and supports over time are associated with labour force participation and employment transitions.

In longitudinal data, disability ideally needs to be measured in a way that is comparable over time. Disability is increasingly defined in terms of everyday functioning and the interaction between impairment and/or health conditions and environmental demands. International best practice recommends that disability measures be based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (World Health Organization [WHO], 2001). This means measuring functional limitations, including activity and participation limitations and restrictions, rather than relying on medical diagnosis (United Nations [UN], 2006; WHO, 2011, 2012). Although it has some limitations, this is the approach adopted by the Washington Group Short Set (WG-SS) study, which supports consistent measurement across waves and allows disability status to change as functioning and circumstances change over time (Hall et al., 2022; Landes et al., 2025; Lauer et al., 2019).

Disability trajectories and employment outcomes vary over time as people move through working life and into retirement. In Australia, workers with disability are less likely to remain employed than workers without disability (Milner et al., 2017). Disability-related gaps in labour force participation also tend to be larger at older ages (AIHW, 2024; Job Access, 2023).

Continuing to work in later life can support financial security, skills and wellbeing (Zacher et al., 2021). At the same time, higher rates of health conditions across adulthood and older age can make accessible workplaces and appropriate supports more important (AIHW, 2024). However, frameworks focused on 'healthy ageing' or 'ageing' often overlook the experiences of people ageing with, and into, disability (AIHW, 2000; Council on the Ageing [COTA] Victoria, 2025; Langmann & Weßel, 2023). Consistent with these patterns, continued employment is associated with better physical and overall health, particularly for men in part-time or higher job quality roles (Baxter et al., 2021).

Beyond disability status itself, research indicates that employment outcomes are shaped by a range of risk and protective factors, including education, financial stress, social support and place-based disadvantage (Bambra et al., 2014; OECD, 2010; Schur et al., 2009; Teborg, 2024). Longitudinal and policy-oriented studies also suggest that these factors may interact with different disability trajectories (Jones et al., 2018; Morris et al., 2019). More broadly, systemic factors such as workplace accessibility, inclusive recruitment practices, employer capability and flexible work arrangements may intersect with, and amplify, the individual and trajectory-related factors that shape employment outcomes (Ingold et al., 2026; Sharma et al., 2025).

Examining disability trajectories alongside employment transitions and relevant structural and psychosocial conditions can therefore provide evidence about when barriers to equitable participation emerge across the life course, while recognising wider social and workplace factors.

How will this research help to address policy-relevant gaps?

Policy needs clearer long-term evidence on how paid work changes over time for people with disability, and how these changes differ across different stages of life and circumstances. In Australia, there is relatively little longitudinal evidence linking changes in disability status to employment transitions, including job entry and retention, and to the structural and personal factors shaping these transitions, particularly for people approaching later working life (Milner et al., 2017).

Australia's Disability Strategy and its Outcomes Framework emphasise tracking, measuring and reporting on outcomes for people with disability, including employment, to assess whether policy objectives are being met (DSS, 2024; Fortune et al., 2020; National Disability Research Partnership [NDRP], 2024). AIHW (2024) tracks employment and related outcomes for people with disability over time at the population level. This shows what is happening but doesn't examine why outcomes differ, when barriers to employment emerge or which policy responses work best for different groups.

This study addresses these limitations using longitudinal data from *Ten to Men*. It examines disability trajectories and employment transitions over time, specifically for men. This focus is important because most school leavers with disability who received employment supports were male (67% male compared with 31% female in December 2024; NDIA, 2024).

A trajectory-based approach can strengthen policy design and evaluation by showing how employment outcomes change over time for people with different disability trajectories. This provides more detail than single point-in-time comparisons and supports policy development and evaluation across the life course. It also aligns with Australia's Disability Strategy's priority to strengthen the disability evidence base (DSS, 2024).

Using disability trajectories as the primary analytical lens, this study examines how different patterns of functional difficulty, such as emerging, worsening and improving, are linked to men's employment outcomes over time. Employment transitions, life-course stage and selected structural and personal factors are then used as secondary lenses to help explain how these trajectories relate to labour market entry, movement into employment and continued employment. Together, this evidence can help government design employment and disability policies that better remove barriers to employment and respond to people's changing needs at different stages of life.

Research questions

1. How do different disability trajectories over time shape employment outcomes for men (from 2013–14 to 2024–25)?
2. Which employment transitions appear to help explain differences in employment outcomes over time between men with different trajectories?
3. How do employment outcomes within trajectory groups vary across life-course stage (18–35 years old vs 36–57 years old at Wave 1)?
4. Within each trajectory group, which personal and structural factors are associated with positive employment transitions?[1]

Data in focus

Sample

This analysis used data from all 5 waves of *Ten to Men*: Wave 1 (2013–14), Wave 2 (2015–16), Wave 3 (2020–21), Wave 4 (2022) and Wave 5 (2024–25).

For all research questions, we restricted the sample to men who participated in all 5 waves of the study, provided valid responses to disability and 2 employment questions (employment type and status) and were not studying full-time at each of the waves (n = 3,732). Full details of the *Ten to Men* study design and sample are available at aifs.gov.au/tentomen.

Key variables

Brief descriptions of measures are provided here to support interpretation; full measurement details, including item wording, scale construction and classification thresholds, are available in the Supplementary Materials.

Disability status

Disability was measured using the Washington Group on Disability Score (WG-SS) (2006), which includes 6 questions related to core functional domains (seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care and communication). All answers were reported on a severity scale (no difficulty, some difficulty, a lot of difficulty and cannot do at all). They were further categorised into 3 groups as suggested by Hanass-Hancock and colleagues (2023):

- Without disability – persons with *no difficulty* in all domains
- With moderate or non-severe disabilities – persons with *some difficulty* in one or more domains
- With severe disabilities – persons with *at least a lot of difficulty* in one or more domains.

Disability trajectories

These disability statuses, measured at each of the 5 waves, were then used to define 4 disability trajectories: (i) Consistent functional difficulty, (ii) Increasing functional difficulty, (iii) Decreasing functional difficulty and (iv) Fluctuating functional difficulty. Those who are consistently without functional difficulty across the 5 waves are included as a comparison group.

1 For employment entry and retention analyses, trajectory groups were divided into 2 groups: without disability, and any reported functional difficulty at any wave. More details to follow in the report.

For analyses of employment entry and retention, disability categories were collapsed into 2 groups due to small sample sizes: consistently without functional difficulty, and any reported functional difficulty at any wave.

Employment outcomes and transitions

Employment type was asked in each wave as 'What is your form of employment in your main job?' and employment status was asked in each wave[2] 'Are you currently: 1. Employed/working for profit or pay, 2. Unemployed and looking for work, and 3. Neither working nor looking for work.

For employment outcomes in this study, the 2 variables were combined into 5 categories:

1. Permanent or ongoing

2. Self-employed

3. Casual/temporary/fixed-term/type unknown

4. Unemployed and looking for work

5. Neither working nor looking for work.

The 5 categories were then dichotomised in some analyses to:

- In the labour force (consisting of the first 4 employment categories) vs not in the labour force (defined as neither working nor looking for work)
- Employed (comprising the first 3 employment categories) vs unemployed and looking for work.

For employment transitions, we looked at:

- labour force entry: a transition from not being in the labour force at the previous wave to being in the labour force at the next wave[3]
- employment entry: a transition from being unemployed at the previous wave to being employed at the next wave[4]
- employment retention: remaining employed across consecutive waves, among respondents who were employed at the previous wave.[5]

Personal characteristics and protective factors

Other variables included were personal characteristics (age, country of birth, marital/partnership status, sexual identity, main language spoken at home, Indigenous status) and structural and socio-economic protective factors associated with employment (education, region, financial stress, SEIFA IRSD, social support, household income). These variables are described in detail in the **supplementary materials**.

Analysis

For research questions 1–3, weighted proportions were calculated using longitudinal survey weights for the 5 trajectory groups (defined as above). For research question 4, modified Poisson models were fitted for the 3 key employment transitions using generalised estimating equations (GEE) to account for the repeated measures for each individual (as each individual could contribute data at multiple waves). For labour force entry, analysis was conducted for the 5 trajectory groups. For employment entry and employment retention, analysis was conducted for 2 groups. The key exposures examined in these models were risk and protective factors such as financial stress, SEIFA and social support (measured at the earlier wave), and models were adjusted for related factors such as age, education and region.

The conceptual framework for the analysis is outlined in Figure 1.

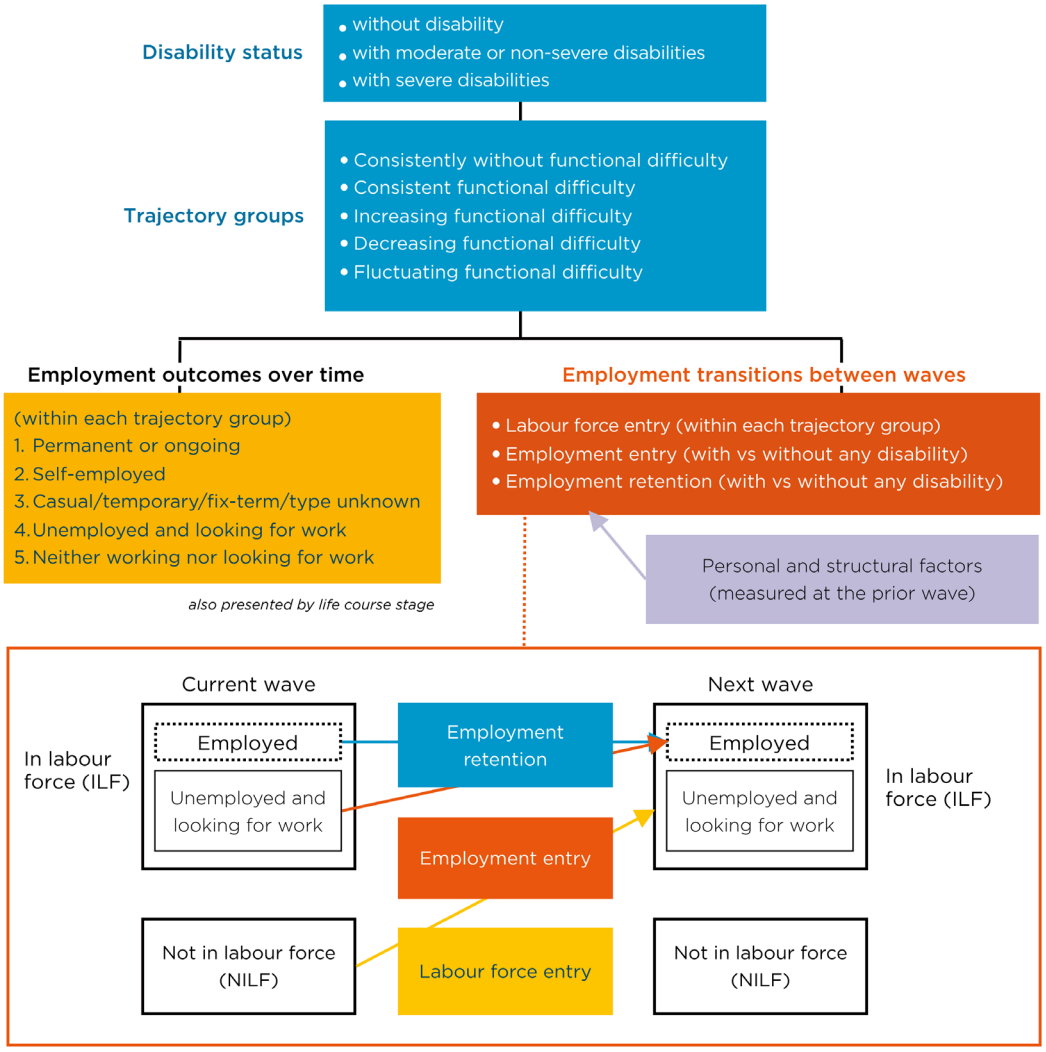
2 From Wave 3 onwards, the employment status question includes responses such as full-time, part-time, and retirement (in Wave 5).

3 For example, from being not in labour force (NILF) at Wave 1 to either NILF or in labour force (ILF) at Wave 2, but not from NILF at Wave 1 to NILF/ILF at Wave 3.

4 For example, from being unemployed at Wave 1 to either employed or unemployed at Wave 2 and from being unemployed at Wave 2 to either employed or unemployed at Wave 3.

5 For example, from being employed at Wave 1 to employed at Wave 2 and from being employed at Wave 2 to employed at Wave 3.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Findings

The findings are organised around trajectory groups, recognising that disability is dynamic and can change over time. First, we identify disability trajectories and a comparison group, then describe how employment outcomes differ across waves for each group. Next, we examine employment transitions over time, such as moving into the labour force and into employment, to better understand how these patterns emerge. We then look at how employment outcomes differ by life-course stage within trajectory groups. Finally, we examine how selected personal and structural factors are associated with entering the labour force, entering employment and staying employed, to identify which factors appear to buffer or compound barriers to employment.

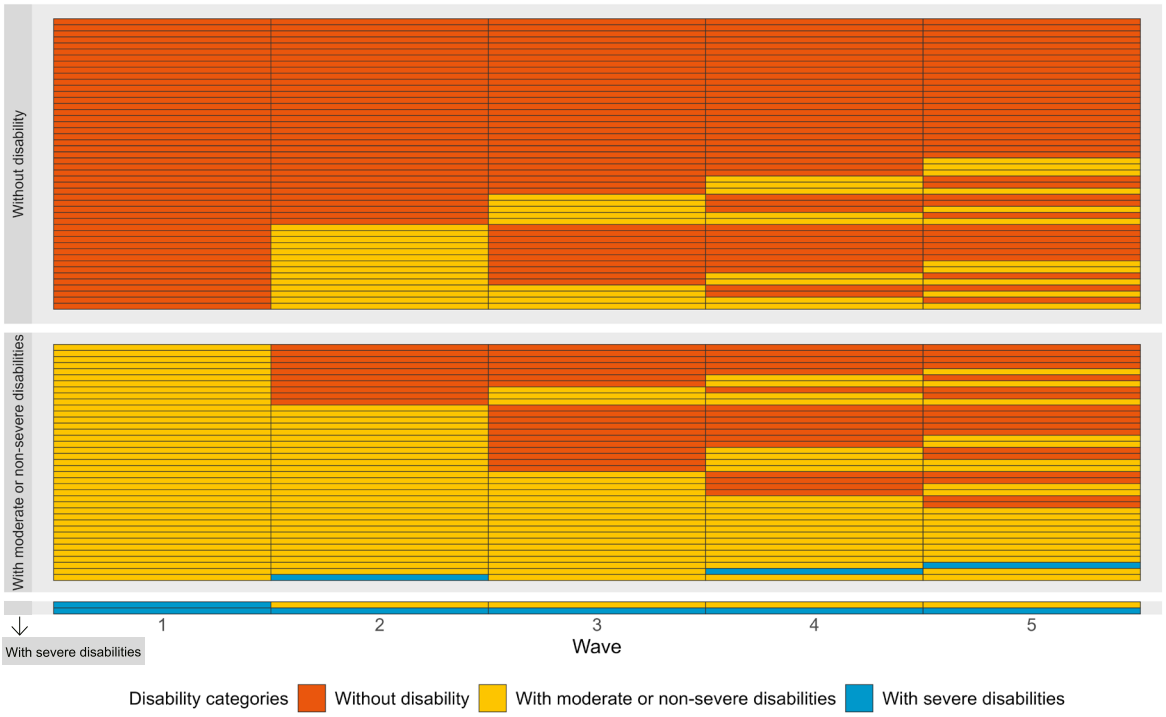
Disability changes over time: 5 trajectory groups

Disability status changed for many men across the 10-year study period, with movement into and out of disability categories. Figure 2 shows disability status across the 5 waves of data, grouped by men's disability status in Wave 1. Among men who reported no functional difficulty in Wave 1 (orange), around half remained without functional difficulty across all waves, while many others moved into moderate or non-severe functional difficulty in later waves and sometimes moved back again.

Men who reported moderate or non-severe functional difficulty in Wave 1 (yellow) also showed substantial movement across waves, most commonly shifting between no functional difficulty and moderate or non-severe functional

difficulty. By contrast, men who reported severe functional difficulty in Wave 1 (blue) were unlikely to later report no functional difficulty, although many moved between severe and moderate or non-severe functional difficulty over time.

Figure 2: Disability status for men who participated in 5 waves



Notes: Sample consists of those aged 18+ in Wave 1 (2013–14) and who participated in all 5 waves of *Ten to Men* over the 10 years. Each row represents 1% of the sample. Patterns with <1% (after rounding) are excluded.

Source: *Ten to Men* Waves 1–5

To describe these patterns more clearly, we grouped men's disability status across all 5 waves into 5 trajectories (Nusselder et. al., 2006; Shields et al., 2022). The groups show whether men consistently reported no functional difficulty, consistently had functional difficulty, had increasing functional difficulty, had decreasing functional difficulty, or had fluctuating functional difficulty over time. These 5 trajectory groups are used throughout the rest of this report.

- **Consistently reported no functional difficulty**: no reported disability across all waves (i.e. orange across all waves), referred to from here onwards as *(consistently) without disability*. This trajectory group is included as a comparison group.
- **Consistent functional difficulty**: non-severe, moderate or severe disability reported across all waves (i.e. yellow or blue across all waves)
- **Increasing functional difficulty**: an increase in disability severity over time that is sustained in subsequent waves (i.e. orange -> yellow or yellow -> blue)
- **Decreasing functional difficulty**: a decrease in disability severity over time that is sustained in subsequent waves (i.e. yellow -> orange or blue -> yellow)
- **Fluctuating functional difficulty**: changes in disability status over time, characterised by movement into and out of disability or across severity levels (i.e. orange -> yellow -> orange; yellow -> orange -> yellow or yellow -> blue -> yellow).

The largest trajectory group was men with fluctuating functional difficulty (42%), followed by men with decreasing functional difficulty (16%), consistent functional difficulty (10%) and increasing functional difficulty (9%). In addition, 23% of men reported no functional disability (see Supplementary Materials, Table S1). This broadly aligns with previous research, which shows fluctuations in functional limitations are common. For example, around 37% of people with disability in Canada have some fluctuations; and 22% experience worsening limitations over time (Morris et al., 2019).

Grouping men by trajectories allows us to see whether barriers to employment are concentrated in particular pathways (e.g. where functional difficulty increases or remains moderate or severe over time), rather than seeing disability as a single, fixed category.

Employment outcomes over time by trajectory groups

Employment outcomes differed across the 5 trajectory groups, indicating that changes in reported functional difficulty over time were linked to different employment outcomes for men.

Men without disability are included as a comparison group. This group had the highest labour force participation and the most stable pattern of permanent employment over the 10 years to Wave 5 in 2024–25 (see Figure 3). Men with consistent functional difficulty had much lower participation in each wave and spent more time out of the labour force. Differences between trajectory groups reflected both lower rates of labour force entry for some groups and movement between employment, unemployment and different types of work among men who stayed in the labour force.

By Wave 5, labour force participation was around 95% for men without disability. Participation was lower for other trajectory groups, including around 88% for men with fluctuating functional difficulty and around 79% for men with consistent functional difficulty. These rates were higher than some previously reported estimates (such as AIHW, 2024), which may partly reflect the socio-demographic profile of the sample (see Table S3 in supplementary materials). For example, *Ten to Men* participants were generally proficient in English and more highly educated (Quinn & Martin, 2022; Swami et al., 2022), which are both known to be associated with higher labour force participation.

Men with increasing functional difficulty showed the clearest decline in labour force participation over time (from 96% in Wave 1 to 81% in Wave 5). Men with decreasing and fluctuating functional difficulty had participation rates closer to those observed among men without disability, generally maintaining (or regaining) labour force participation across waves.

Among men who remained in the labour force, employment type changed over time. The trajectory groups showed similar shifts among those who stayed in the labour force, although there were some differences. Self-employment increased for most groups, except among men with consistent functional difficulty. Overall, barriers to employment were concentrated among men with consistent functional difficulty and men with increasing functional difficulty (see supplementary materials Table S4 for full results).

These findings show there were different employment outcomes across trajectory groups over time. Barriers to employment appear to be most concentrated among men with consistent functional difficulty, while men with increasing functional difficulty experienced increasing barriers to labour force participation over time. Men with decreasing functional difficulty generally had employment patterns closer to those observed for men without disability.

These differences point to different support priorities across trajectory groups, including supporting labour force connection, timely entry into work and meaningful work that enables people to meet their needs.

The transitions driving these gaps

This section looks at 3 labour market transitions that help explain the employment outcomes described above. These are movement into the labour force, movement from unemployment to employment, and employment retention. Movement into the labour force means moving from not being in the labour force in one wave to being in the labour force in the next wave. Employment retention means staying employed across consecutive waves.

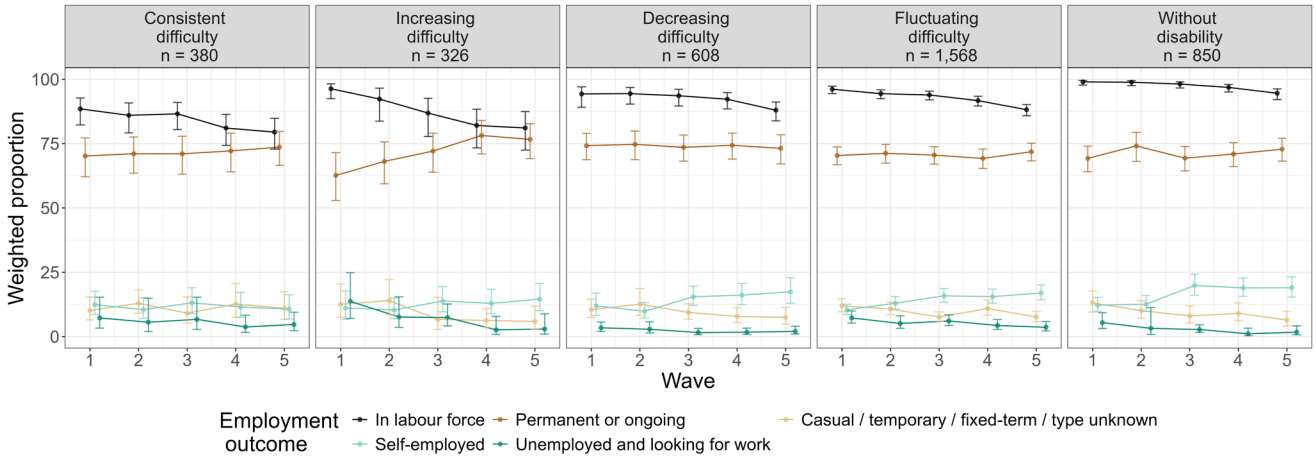
Some estimates cannot be reported because sample sizes were too small, particularly for some trajectory groups and wave-to-wave transitions. Unemployment was also uncommon, making up around 3% of observations. This limited our ability to examine transition from unemployment to employment across the 5 trajectory groups (see supplementary materials Table S2).

Rates of entry into the labour force varied across trajectory groups and between survey waves. For example, men with fluctuating functional difficulty had relatively high labour force entry between Wave 2 and Wave 3 (2015–16 to 2020–21) but lower entry between Wave 4 and Wave 5 (2022 to 2024–25). Men with increasing, decreasing and consistent functional difficulty also showed variation in labour force entry across waves. Among men with any functional difficulty who were unemployed and looking for work, around half to two-thirds moved into employment by the next wave (see supplementary materials Tables S5–S6).

Employment retention was consistently high. Across all wave-to-wave transitions, around 97%–99% remained employed at the following wave (see supplementary materials Table S7).

Overall, differences in employment outcomes across trajectory groups appear to be driven mainly by differences in movement into the labour force. Once men entered the labour force, many moved from unemployment to employment, and most employed men remain employed from one wave to the next.

Figure 3: Employment outcomes for men in the labour force across 5 trajectory groups over time



Notes: *n* represents the number of participants responding to the item (unweighted). 'In labour force' consists of employment categories including 'permanent or ongoing', 'self-employed', 'casual/temporary/fixed-term/type unknown', and 'unemployed and looking for work'. Proportions for employment type categories are calculated among men who are in the labour force only. Labour force status proportions include men who were 'neither working nor looking for work'.

Source: *Ten to Men* Waves 1–5

How patterns differ by life-course stage

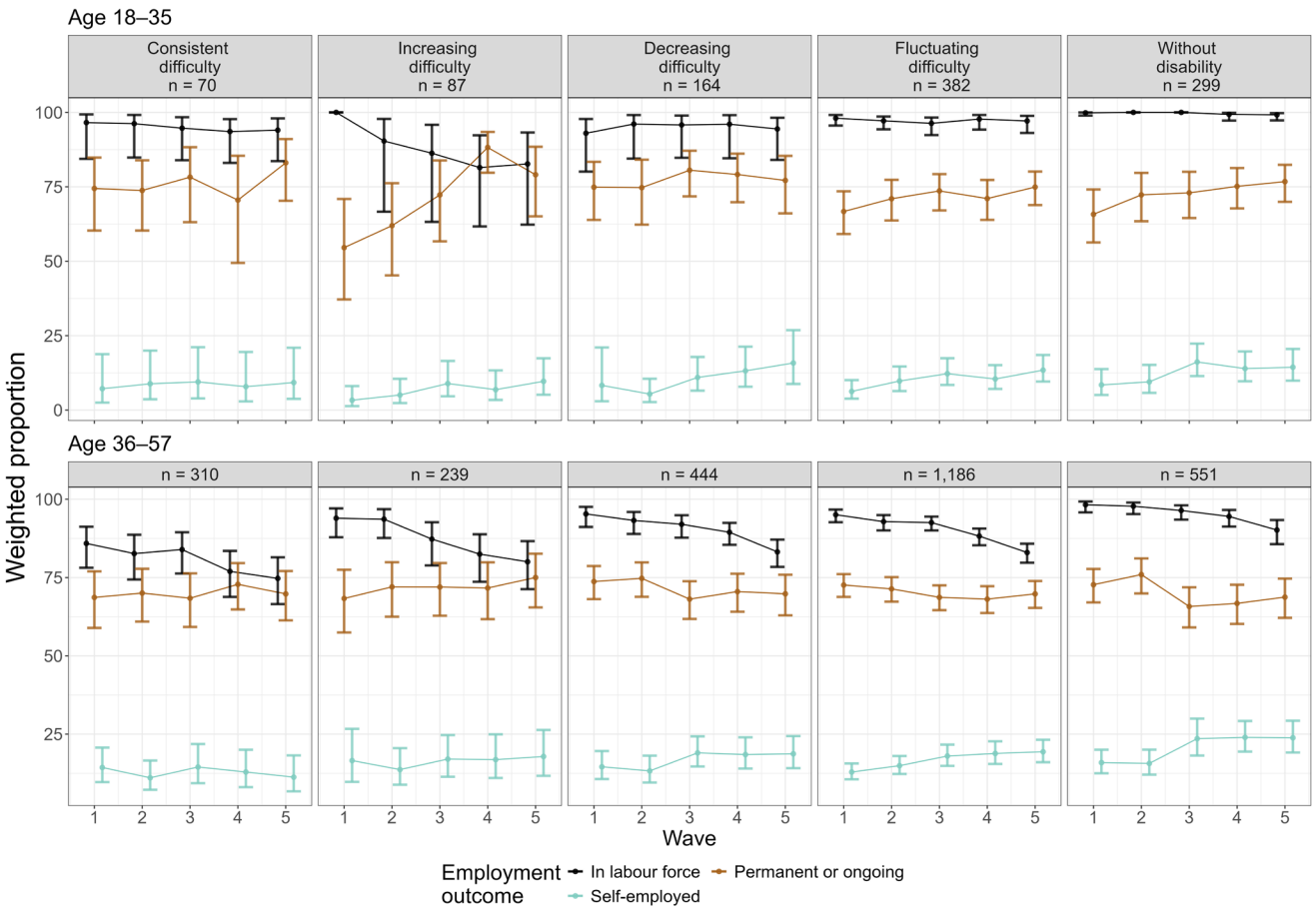
Employment outcomes can vary at different life stages. We examine these patterns by men's age in Wave 1 across the 5 trajectory groups. We focus on 3 outcomes: labour force participation, permanent or ongoing employment, and self-employment. Figure 4 shows that life-course stage can shape how employment type changes over time. Full results are provided in supplementary materials Tables S8–S9 and Figure S1.

Among men without disability, younger men aged 18–35 in Wave 1 increasingly moved into permanent/ongoing employment as they aged. Older men aged 36–57 in Wave 1 showed a more mixed pattern, including a disruption in permanent/ongoing employment around Wave 3 (2020–21).

Among men in the disability trajectory groups, the clearest age-related differences were in the types of work men did. For men with increasing or fluctuating functional difficulty, older men were more likely to move to self-employment from around Wave 3 onwards. This is consistent with findings for NDIS participants, where self-employment becomes more common with age and is reported by around 15% of participants aged 60 or older (NDIA, 2022). Younger men in these trajectory groups were more likely to remain in, or move into, permanent or ongoing employment. Men with consistent functional difficulty were less likely to be in labour force overall. However, among those who were employed, most worked in permanent or ongoing roles.

Overall, these patterns suggest that age and life-course stage play an important role in shaping employment outcomes across trajectory groups. Among men who remained in the labour force, younger and older men showed different patterns of permanent employment and self-employment. This suggests that employment supports and pathways into work may need to reflect the different experiences of younger and older men, even within the same trajectory group.

Figure 4: Employment outcomes by age group in Wave 1 across the 5 trajectory groups



Notes: *n* represents the number of participants responding to the item (unweighted). Some employment categories are not plotted and not published due to low cell count. 'In labour force' consists of employment categories including 'permanent or ongoing', 'self-employed', 'casual/temporary/fixed-term/type unknown' (not shown), and 'unemployed and looking for work' (not shown). Proportions for employment type categories are calculated among men who are in the labour force only. Labour force status proportions include men who were 'neither working nor looking for work'. Full graph is shown in supplementary materials.

Source: *Ten to Men* Waves 1–5

What buffers and compounds barriers within trajectory groups

Building on the descriptive patterns, this section looks at which factors are linked to employment transitions *within* each trajectory group. We focus on 3 transitions from one wave to the next: (1) moving from not in the labour force to in the labour force (labour force entry), (2) moving from unemployment to employment (employment entry), and (3) staying employed (employment retention).

Movement into the labour force

We first fitted one model including all trajectory groups to test whether labour force entry differed by trajectory group after accounting for age and education. Men without disability were included as the comparison group. After accounting for age and education, differences between trajectory groups were modest.

We then fitted separate models for each trajectory group, adjusting for age, education, region and area disadvantage. These models show which factors were linked to labour force entry within each pathway. For example, they show whether education was associated with labour force entry within a given trajectory group.

One clear education-related finding was for men with consistent functional difficulty: having an undergraduate degree was associated with higher labour force entry (Table 1). For men with decreasing or fluctuating functional difficulty, older age was more consistently linked to lower labour force entry.

These findings are consistent with evidence that education shapes employment outcomes (Albinowski et al., 2023; Riddell & Song, 2011; Wilkins, 2004) and that lower levels of educational attainment can be a barrier to employment (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2026a). However, education alone is unlikely to explain differences in labour force participation for people with disability. Previous research suggests that broader structural or systemic barriers can limit employment opportunities even among people with similar qualifications (Bliksvær, T., 2018; Bryan et al., 2025).

Patterns in the social and economic factors linked to labour force entry differed across trajectory groups. Compared with men without disability, the other trajectory groups showed different associations between labour force entry and the factors financial security, mental health and relationship status.

Among men without disability, higher household income and financial security were linked to higher labour force entry. For men with decreasing functional difficulty, financial security was also linked to labour force entry, although the association was smaller, and living in a less disadvantaged area was linked to higher entry. For men with fluctuating functional difficulty, having previously been married or partnered was linked to higher labour force entry in the next wave, compared with being single or never married.

Overall, education appears to be associated with some positive employment transitions, particularly undergraduate qualifications for labour force entry among men with consistent functional difficulty. This aligns with other findings that education can help improve employment opportunities for people with disability (Keating et al., 2022). Older age (aged 45–57 years) was linked to lower labour force entry for men with decreasing or fluctuating functional difficulty, consistent with contemporary evidence (Olney & Frean, 2026). Financial security was linked to higher labour force entry most clearly among men without disability and, to a lesser extent, among men with decreasing functional difficulty. In contrast, mental health, living in less disadvantaged areas and social support had limited influence on labour force entry.

Key results are summarised in Table 1 and full results are provided in the Supplementary Materials, Tables S10–S11.

Table 1: Summary of personal and structural factors associated with entry into the labour force across trajectory groups

	Consistent functional difficulty (n = 192; i_n = 70)[a]	Increasing functional difficulty (n = 91; i_n = 47)	Decreasing functional difficulty (n = 145; i_n = 70)	Fluctuating functional difficulty (n = 348; i_n = 189)	Without disability (n = 70; i_n = 42)
Adjusting for age, education, region living in and area disadvantage at once					
Age (ref = 18–30 years old)	**31–44 years old**	-	**45–57 years old**	**45–57 years old**	-
Education (ref = Up to Year 12 education)	**Undergraduate degree**	-	-	-	-
Region living in (ref = major cities)	-	-	-	**Outer regional**	-
Area disadvantage (ref = high disadvantaged area)	-	-	**Middle disadvantaged area**	-	**Low disadvantaged area**
Other risk and protective factors one at a time (adjusting for age, education, region living in and area disadvantage)					
Financial stress (ref = yes to financial stress)	-	-	**No financial stress**	-	**No financial stress**
Depression (ref = moderate/severe depression)	**Mild depression**	-	-	-	-

	Consistent functional difficulty (n = 192; i_n = 70)[a]	Increasing functional difficulty (n = 91; i_n = 47)	Decreasing functional difficulty (n = 145; i_n = 70)	Fluctuating functional difficulty (n = 348; i_n = 189)	Without disability (n = 70; i_n = 42)
Social support (ref = none/little of the time)	-	-	-	-	-
Marital/ partnership status (ref = single or never married)	-	-	-	**Previously married/partnered**	-
Household income (ref = less than $80,000)	-	-	-	-	**$150,000+**
Country of birth (ref = Australian born)	-	-	-	-	-
Main language spoken at home (ref = English)	-	-	**(Sample size too small for valid inference)**	-	-
Sexuality (ref = Heterosexual)	-	-	-	-	-

Notes: a We use *n* to represent the number of observations (which may be repeated for individuals), i_n as the number of individuals with the relevant information and '-' for no difference found. Red indicates a lower likelihood of labour force entry and blue indicates a higher likelihood of labour force entry. Darker shades indicate stronger evidence, while lighter shades indicate weaker evidence.

Source: *Ten to Men* Waves 1–5

Movement from unemployment into employment, and retention

Because relatively few men were unemployed in any wave (i_n = 279),[6] we could not reliably compare movement from unemployment into employment across all 5 trajectory groups. Instead, the employment entry models compare 2 broader groups: men who reported any functional difficulty at any wave, and men without disability at all waves.

In the analyses, we first used a baseline model for men with reported functional disability at any wave. For men with functional difficulty, the model adjusted for their disability trajectory group at any wave, age, education, residential region and area disadvantage. We then added other risk and protective factors one at a time. We attempted the same analyses for men without functional difficulty across all waves. However, too few men in this group were unemployed at any wave to support reliable estimates, so employment entry could not be examined for this group.

Among men with functional difficulty, structural and socio-economic factors were most strongly associated with employment entry after accounting for disability trajectory group, age and residential region. For example, men with some qualification beyond Year 12 were 32% more likely to move from unemployment to employment by the next wave than men with Year 12 or below. Men living in low-disadvantage areas were 47% more likely to enter employment than those in high-disadvantage areas. Men with higher household incomes were at least 33% more likely to move into employment than those with lower household incomes (Table 2).

Employment retention showed a different pattern. Among men with functional difficulty who were already employed, most factors were linked to only small differences in the likelihood of staying employed by the next wave, after some baseline adjustments. Depressive symptoms were linked to small decreases in employment retention. Higher social support, being married or partnered, financial security and higher household income were linked to small increases. Higher social support was also linked to small increases among men without disability (Table 2).

Overall, the results suggest a consistent pattern for men who reported functional difficulty at any wave. Education, and related structural advantage, were among the clearest factors linked to positive employment transitions, although the specific education-related association differed by transition and group. Among men who were already employed, factors

6 i_n as the number of men who were unemployed at any wave between Wave 1 and Wave 5, regardless of their trajectory group.

such as financial security, mental health, social support and household income were less consistently linked to staying employed across waves.

While this analysis did not examine the influence of broader systemic and workplace factors (e.g. accessible workplaces, reasonable adjustments, employer supports (Lawrence et. al., 2025; Olney & Frean, 2026)), these factors are known to influence employment outcomes for people with disability by interacting with individual-level characteristics (Ingold et.al., 2026; Sharma et al., 2025). Our findings highlight the importance of supporting access to education and other pathways into work and improved financial security, alongside practical workplace supports and other measures to help sustain employment.

Table 2: Summary of results examining personal and structural factors for entry into employment and employment retention for 2 groups of men, with and without any functional difficulty, from Wave 1 to Wave 5

	Employment entry		Employment retention	
	With any functional difficulty (n = 297; i_n = 224)[a]	Without disability (n = 65; i_n = 55)	With any functional difficulty (n = 9,785; i_n = 2,729)	Without disability (n = 3,125; i_n = 837)
Adjusting for disability trajectory group, age, education, region living in and area disadvantage at once				
Age	-		-	-
Education (ref = up to Year 12)	**Some qualification beyond Year 12**		**Some qualification beyond Year 12**	-
Region living in (ref = major cities)	-		-	-
Area disadvantage (ref = high disadvantaged area)	**Low disadvantage**		-	-
Other risk and protective factors (adjusting for disability trajectory group, age, education, region living in and area disadvantage)				
Financial stress (ref = yes to financial stress)	-		**No**	-
Depression (ref = moderate/severe depression)	**Mild depression**		**No depression**	-
Social support (ref = none/little of the time)	-		**Some/most of the time** and **All of the time**	**All of the time**
Marital/partnership status (ref = single or never married)	-		**Currently married or partnered**	
Household income (ref = less than $80,000)	**Upper-middle household income** ($80,000–$149,000 annual income) **and** **Higher income** ($150,000 and above)		**Upper-middle household income** ($80,000-$149,000 annual income) and **Higher income** ($150,000 and above)	-
Country of birth (ref = Australian born)	-			-
Main language spoken at home (ref = English)	-			-
Sexuality (ref = Heterosexual)	-			-

Notes: a We use *n* to represent the number of observations (which may be repeated for individuals), i_n as the number of individuals with the relevant information and '-' for no difference found. Red indicates a lower likelihood of employment entry/retention and blue indicates a higher likelihood of employment entry/retention. Darker shades indicate stronger evidence, while lighter shades indicate weaker evidence. Analyses on employment entry could not be done for men without disability due to relatively small sample size.

Source: *Ten to Men* Waves 1–5

Implications for policy and practice

This report examines how employment outcomes differed across disability trajectory groups, including changes in labour force participation, employment and, for older men, shifts in employment type. It included men without disability as a comparison group because their labour force participation over time was relatively stable.

The implications below are organised around the main findings. They focus on where employment patterns differed across trajectory groups, when support may be most useful and which policy levers are most consistent with the evidence in this report. These include education and skills pathways, place-based disadvantage, social support, financial security and practical workplace supports.

The findings should be interpreted with some caution. The analysis of personal and structural factors was conducted within trajectory groups and does not test whether the same factor has a stronger or weaker association across groups. Some results also used a simpler 2-group comparison because sample sizes were smaller. More broadly, while this report uses functional measures of disability among a nationally representative sample of Australian men, people with disability are a diverse population and experiences of employment can differ substantially according to factors such as disability type, gender, cultural background and location, among other intersecting factors. Due to sample size limitations, not all factors and groups could be examined separately. Findings should therefore be interpreted as population-level patterns rather than evidence of the experiences of all people with disability.

Design employment policies around changes in functional difficulty over time

Employment policies should recognise that functional difficulty can change over time. Across the study period, men moved into, out of and between different levels of functional difficulty. Labour force participation and employment outcomes changed alongside these shifts.

Policies that rely only on a single point-in-time category such as 'with disability' and 'without disability' may miss these changes. They may also be less responsive when people's circumstances alter or support needs to change. This aligns with recent NDIS reforms, including through more consistent and standardised reassessment processes, which place greater emphasis on assessing functional capacity and recognising that support needs can vary over time (Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, 2026).

The findings show that men in different trajectory groups experienced different employment patterns. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach won't work equally for all men. Employment supports may need to be flexible across working lives and responsive to changes in functional difficulty, age, career and stage of career (NDIA, 2026c).

Men with consistent or increasing functional difficulty had the clearest barriers to labour force participation. Men with consistent functional difficulty had lower participation across all waves, while men with increasing functional difficulty showed the clearest decline over time. This suggests that policy attention should focus on supporting continued labour force attachment, where possible, and timely labour force entry where men are outside the labour force.

The findings for men with decreasing functional difficulty point to an opportunity for policy and practice. When functioning improves, many men appear able to stay connected to the labour force. Further research could examine what helps people return after time out of work, such as rapid re-engagement with employment services, support building confidence and in job searches, and clear pathways back into suitable roles. This could help identify whether improvements in functioning are more likely to translate into timely re-attachment to work.

Continue to strengthen post-school employment pathways, including education and skills development

Education was linked to some positive employment transitions in this report, although the relevant qualification level and transition differed across analyses. This suggests that improving access to post-school education and skills pathways should remain a priority for men with disability. This includes supporting the completion of qualifications beyond Year 12 and ensuring that education and training options remain accessible when functional difficulty begins, increases or fluctuates. This focus aligns with NDIS employment support resources and the Participant Employment Strategy, which aim to strengthen pathways into work for NDIS participants, including school leavers and other cohorts (NDIA, 2023).

The findings also point to the importance of tertiary pathways for men with consistent functional difficulty. For this group, having an undergraduate degree was linked to a higher likelihood of being in the labour force in the next wave. A practical implication is that policies and programs should focus on reducing barriers to enrolment and completion, including structural and financial barriers, so that education can be a realistic pathway into, or back into, the labour force.

The findings also suggest that education and broader structural advantage were linked to movement from unemployment into employment among men with any reported functional difficulty at any wave. In this analysis, men with some qualification beyond Year 12, those living in lower-disadvantage areas and those with higher household incomes were more likely to move into employment by the next wave. This reinforces the importance of accessible post-school education, skills pathways and structural supports as potential pathways into employment.

Provide targeted employment support for older men with disability

Employment policies should recognise that age and life-course stage shape employment patterns. The findings suggest that older men in some disability trajectory groups were less likely to enter the labour force than younger men in the same group. Employment services should consider older men with disability as a priority cohort and tailor support to their circumstances.

Support should also recognise that older men with disability may face overlapping barriers, including age-related barriers, changing work capacity and lower likelihood of labour force entry or re-entry. Employers may also need support to offer flexible and inclusive work arrangements for men whose functional capacity changes over time, particularly men with fluctuating functional difficulty and, in some cases, increasing functional difficulty.

Strengthen place-based employment strategies

The findings suggest that place matters. Among men who reported any functional difficulty at any wave, living in more socio-economically disadvantaged areas was linked to a lower likelihood of moving from unemployment to employment between waves. This suggests that local labour market conditions and place-based barriers may affect employment opportunities.

Policy responses should therefore complement individual employment services with place-based approaches. This could include prioritising employment supports in highly disadvantaged areas, strengthening local employer engagement to increase disability-inclusive recruitment and retention, and reducing practical barriers to employment, such as transport, service access and local job availability.

Recognise the role of self-employment, especially for older men

The findings suggest that self-employment became more common for older men in some disability trajectories, particularly among men with increasing or fluctuating functional difficulty. Self-employment should be treated as a legitimate employment option for some men with disability, rather than as an exception.

This does not mean self-employment will be suitable for everyone. However, where it is viable, supports could include business advice, navigation support, mentoring and safeguards to manage financial risk. This may include access to appropriate advice and support through initiatives such as Specialised Supported Employment for NDIS participants (DSS, 2025). With appropriate safeguards (OECD, 2022), supported self-employment may provide the flexibility and autonomy for some men whose work capacity changes over time.

Reframe success measures for disability employment policy

A trajectory and transitions approach suggests that success metrics for disability employment policy should go beyond point-in-time employment rates. Monitoring should also track key transitions, including movement into the labour force, movement from unemployment into employment and employment retention.

Monitoring should also examine when gaps emerge, how quickly they appear after functional difficulty begins or worsens, and how often men return to the labour force or employment after time out of work.

Success measures should also assess whether policy is changing the conditions that can be influenced by government and service systems. This includes reducing structural barriers linked to education and place-based disadvantage and strengthening supports that may help people stay in work, including financial security, mental health support, social support and practical workplace support.

Where feasible, reporting outcomes by disability trajectory and life-course stage would make performance information more useful by showing which supports work for which groups and at what stages of life.

Consider structural and systemic factors

This study did not directly examine workplace-level structural factors, such as reasonable adjustments, employer attitudes or workplace flexibility. However, other evidence suggests these factors play an important role in obtaining and maintaining employment for people with disability (Olsen, 2024; Lawrence, 2025).

Evidence also suggests that only a small proportion of employment differences between people with and without disability can be explained by differences in education, age or job type, highlighting the role of broader societal factors (Ananian & Dellaferrera, 2024). These structural influences may intersect with, and amplify, the individual and trajectory-related factors examined in this study (Sharma et al., 2025).

For example, limited awareness of reasonable adjustments and uncertainty about how to access or implement them remain common barriers for both employers and employees (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2026b). Accessing adjustments often requires the employee's disclosure but stigma and concerns about how the disclosure will be received can discourage people from requesting support.

Together, these issues suggest that improving employer understanding, workplace flexibility and inclusive practices may support stronger labour force attachment, particularly as functional capacity changes over time.

Next steps with *Ten to Men* data

Building on the findings in this report, future work with *Ten to Men* should treat labour force entry and/or exit (moving from not in the labour force to in the labour force, and vice versa) as a key transition point for analysis. This is because this is where the largest differences between trajectory groups emerge. Further suggested research with *Ten to Men* data:

- Model labour force exit and re-entry explicitly by disability trajectory, and test which factors predict each direction of movement (rather than focusing on levels of participation alone). Future work could adopt a trajectory-based approach to examine outcomes over time in relation to changes in disability over time, rather than at a single point.
- Extend employment outcomes beyond labour force participation to job quality and job characteristics across trajectories (e.g. occupation/industry, job type and skill level, hours/underemployment, flexibility) and assess how these relate to retention and to transitions into and/or out of the labour force.
- Strengthen analysis of unemployment by using designs that increase power (e.g. modelling non-employment →employment more broadly, or applying multi-state models that allow movement between employment, unemployment and not in the labour force), then assess whether transition patterns vary by disability trajectory.
- Strengthen sub-group analysis by testing whether trajectories and key transitions differ by priority populations (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, diverse sexual identities, veterans) and disability types (e.g. autism, stroke and hearing impairment). This may require targeted strategies to increase effective sample sizes for some groups to support robust inference. It would also improve statistical power and enable more robust analysis of how overlapping characteristics shape employment experiences.
- Test whether the key levers identified in this report differ by trajectory and life-course stage (e.g. marital/partnership status and financial stress for labour force entry, mental health and social support for employment retention) using interaction terms or stratified models where sample sizes allow.
- Investigate self-employment among older men in more depth by examining: (a) the sustainability of self-employment over time, and (b) whether it follows labour force exit or other employment disruptions; complement this with qualitative work to understand enabling conditions and barriers.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2022). *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*. Canberra: ABS.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2000). *Disability and ageing: Australian population patterns and implications*. Canberra: AIHW.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *People with disability in Australia*. AIHW. doi:10.25816/5ec5be4ced179

Albinowski, M., Magda, I., & Rozszczypała, A. (2023). *The employment effects of the disability education gap in Europe* (IZA Discussion Papers, No. 15932). Institute of Labor Economics (IZA).

Ananian, S., & Dellaferrera, G. (2024). *A study on the employment and wage outcomes of people with disabilities* (ILO Working Paper No. 124). International Labour Organization.

Bambra, C., Lunau, T., Van der Wel, K. A., Eikemo, T. A., & Dragano, N. (2014). Work, health, and welfare: The association between working conditions, welfare states, and self-reported general health in Europe. *International Journal of Health Services*, *44*(1), 113–136.

Baxter, S., Blank, L., Cantrell, A., & Goyder, E. (2021). Is working in later life good for your health? A systematic review of health outcomes resulting from extended working lives. *BMC Public Health*, *21*(1), 1356.

Bliksvær, T. (2018). Disability, labour market participation and the effect of educational level: Compared to what? *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, *20*(1).

Bryan, M., Bryce, A., Roberts, J., & Sechel, C. (2025). The role of education in the disability employment gap. *Oxford Economic Papers*, *77*(4), 1106–1127.

Burchardt, T. (2000). The dynamics of being disabled. *Journal of Social Policy*, *29*(4), 645–668.

COTA Victoria. (2025) *Agenda for action: Understanding the intersection of ageing and disability in Victoria*. COTA Victoria. cotavic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Agenda-for-action-Understanding-the-intersection-of-ageing-and-disability-in-Victoria.pdf

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA). (2026). *Securing the NDIS for future generations*. DHDA. www.health.gov.au/our-work/ndis-legislation-changes/amendments/securing-the-ndis-for-future-generations

Department of Social Services (DSS). (2024) *Australia's Disability Strategy 20212031*. DSS. www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2025-01/5831-dss3513-ads-strategy-2021.pdf

Department of Social Services. (2025). *Supported employment*. DSS. www.dss.gov.au/disability-employment-support-programs/supported-employment

Department of Social Services. (2026). *Inclusive Employment Australia*. DSS. www.dss.gov.au/inclusive-employment-australia

Fortune, N., Badland, H., Clifton, S., Emerson, E., Rachele, J., Stancliffe, R. J. et al. (2020). The Disability and Wellbeing Monitoring Framework: Data, data gaps, and policy implications. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, *44*(3), 227–232.

Hall, J. P., Kurth, N. K., Ipsen, C., Myers, A., & Goddard, K. (2022). Comparing measures of functional difficulty with self-identified disability: Implications for health policy. *Health Affairs (Project Hope)*, *41*(10), 1433–1441. doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00395

Hanass-Hancock, J., Kamalakannan, S., Murthy, G. V. S., Palmer, M., Pinilla-Roncancio, M., Rivas Velarde, M., Tetali, S., & Mitra, S. (2023). What cut-off(s) to use with the Washington Group short set of questions? *Disability and Health Journal*, *16*(4), 101499.

Ingold, J., Lee, Q. Y., & Donmanige, I. (2026). *Engaging employers to increase the employment of people with disability in Australia: Evidence synthesis report*. Centre for Inclusive Employment. doi.org/10.60836/1cn2-9610

Job Access. (2023). *The compelling case for disability employment in Australia*. Job Access. www.jobaccess.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2025-09/8156-compelling-case-disability.pdf

Jobs and Skills Australia. (2026a). *Employment and disability in Australia*. Jobs and Skills Australia. www.jobsandskills.gov.au/download/19932/employment-and-disability-australia/3943/employment-and-disability-australia/pdf

Jobs and Skills Australia. (2026b). *Employer attitudes towards disability inclusion in the Australian Workforce*. Jobs and Skills Australia. www.jobsandskills.gov.au/download/19933/employer-attitudes-toward-disability-inclusion-australian-workforce/3945/employer-attitudes-toward-disability-inclusion-australian-workforce/pdf

Jones, M., Mavromaras, K., Sloane, P. J., & Wei, Z. (2018). The dynamic effect of disability on work and subjective well-being. *Oxford Economic Papers*, *70*(3), 635–657.

Keating, B. W., Keramat, S. A., Beatson, A., Mulcahy, R., Riedel, A., Waller, I., & Hashmi, R. (2022). *Understanding employment mode trajectories for people with disability*. Queensland University of Technology.

Kim, H. R., Lee, H., Seong, Y., Lee, E., Jung, H., Park, Y. R., & Jang, I. (2020). Longitudinal trajectory of disability in community-dwelling older adults: An observational cohort study in South Korea. *BMC Geriatrics*, *20*, 430.

Kumar, R., & Lal, K. (2024). Understanding different types of disabilities. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology*, *11*(3), 2349–6002.

Landes, S. D., Hall, J. P., Swenor, B. K., & Vaitsiakhovich, N. (2025). Comparative performance of disability measures. *PloS One*, *20*(1), e0318745.

Langmann, E., & Webel, M. (2023). Leaving no one behind: Successful ageing at the intersection of ageism and ableism. *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine*, *18*(1), 22.

Lauer, E. A., Henly, M., & Coleman, R. (2019). Comparing estimates of disability prevalence using federal and international disability measures in national surveillance. *Disability and Health Journal*, *12*(2), 195–202.

Lawrence, K., Mellifont, D., & Bulkeley, K. (2025). Disability employment policy in Australia: Barriers and facilitators to workforce participation. *Social Policy & Administration*.

Milner, A., King, T. L., LaMontagne, A. D., Aitken, Z., Petrie, D., & Kavanagh, A. (2017). Underemployment and its impacts on mental health among those with disabilities: evidence from the HILDA cohort. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, *71*(12), 1198–1202.

Morris, S. P., Fawcett, G., Timoney, L. R., & Hughes, J. (2019). *The dynamics of disability: Progressive, recurrent or fluctuating limitations*. Statistics Canada.

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). (2022). *Employment outcomes for NDIS participants as at 31 December 2022*. NDIS.

NDIA. (2023). *Participant Employment Strategy 2024–2026*. NDIS.

NDIA. (2024). *School leaver employment: Provider reported services & outcomes January to December 2024*. NDIS.

NDIA. (2026a). *Employment outcomes: Participants, their families and carers*. NDIS.

NDIA. (2026b). *Guide to employment*. NDIS.

NDIA. (2026c). *Guide to providing employment supports*. NDIS.

National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP). (2024) *Research Agenda Guiding the National Disability Research Partnership's research investment*. Canberra: NDRP. www.ndrp.org.au/researchagenda

Nusselder, W. J., Looman, C. W. N., & Mackenbach, J. P. (2006). The level and time course of disability: Trajectories of disability in adults and young elderly, *Disability and Rehabilitation*, *28*(16), 1015–1026.

Olney, S., & Frean, J. (2026). '*What works' in employment services and supports for mature-age jobseekers with acquired disability and health conditions: Evidence synthesis report.* Centre for Inclusive Employment. doi:10.60836/v5h5-t013.

Olsen, J. (2024). Employers: Influencing disabled people's employment through responses to reasonable adjustments. *Disability & Society*.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2010). *Sickness, disability and work: Breaking the barriers. A synthesis of findings across OECD countries*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD. (2022). *Disability, work and inclusion: Mainstreaming in all policies and practices*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Quinn, B. R., & Martin, S. (Eds.). (2022). *Insights #2: Findings from Ten to Men – The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health, 2013–21*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Riddell, W. C., & Song, X. (2011). The impact of education on unemployment incidence and re-employment success: Evidence from the US labour market. *Labour Economics*, *18*(4), 453–463.

Schur, L., Kruse, D., Blasi, J., & Blanck, P. (2009). Is disability disabling in all workplaces? Workplace disparities and corporate culture. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, *48*(3), 381–410.

Sharma, R. H. et al. (2025). Ableism and employment: A scoping review of the literature. *Social Sciences*.

Shields, M., Spittal, M. J., Dimov, S., Kavanagh, A., & King, T. L. (2022). Trajectories of disability throughout early life and labor force status as a young adult: Results from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, *48*(2), 118–126.

Swami, N., Prattley, J., Bandara, D., Howell, L., Silbert, M., Renda, J., Rowland, B., & Quinn, B. (2022), Ten to Men: The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health: Waves 1–3. *The Australian Economic Review*, *55*, 155–165. doi.org/10.1111/1467-8462.12453

Teborg, S., Hünefeld, L., & Gerdes, T. S. (2024). Exploring the working conditions of disabled employees: A scoping review. *Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology*, *19*(2).

United Nations (UN). (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. New York: UN.

Washington Group on Disability Statistics. (2006). *Washington Group short set of questions on disability*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

World Health Organization (WHO). (2001). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).* Geneva: WHO.

WHO. (2011). *World report on disability*. Geneva: WHO. iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/cdced85a-86ce-47b9-ae21-156fab9a96a0/content

WHO. (2012) *Measuring health and disability: WHODAS 2.0*. Geneva: WHO.

Wilkins, R. (2004). The effects of disability on labour force status in Australia. *Australian Economic Review*, *37*(4), 359–382.

Zacher, H., Sagha Zadeh, R., Heckhausen, J., & Oettingen, G. (2021). Motivation and healthy aging at work. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, *76*(Supplement 2), S145–S156.

Further details

See Supplementary Materials for technical details of this research, including a description of other measures, detailed results and a bibliography.

Suggested citation: Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2026). *Disability trajectories and employment across the life course: Australian men from 2013 to 2025*. (*Ten to Men* Snapshot Series – Issue 6). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

About the authors

Dr Swen Kuh, Dr Katrina Scurrah, Dr Mulu Woldegiorgis, Anaïs Keenan, Dr Constantine Gasser, Catherine Andersson and Dr Sean Martin are from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS).

Series editors: Dr Sean Martin and Catherine Andersson

Acknowledgements

The authors of this chapter are grateful to the many individuals and organisations who contributed to its development and who continue to support and assist in all aspects of the *Ten to Men* study. The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing commissioned and continues to fund *Ten to Men*. The study's Scientific Advisory and Community Reference Groups provide indispensable guidance and expert input. The University of Melbourne coordinated Waves 1 and 2 of *Ten to Men* and Roy Morgan collected the data at both these time points. The Social Research Centre collected Waves 3–5 data.

A multitude of AIFS staff members and external collaborators collectively work towards the goal of producing high-quality publications of *Ten to Men* findings. This publication greatly benefited from the discussion with organisations and individuals such as National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP, Sue Tape), Kirsten Campbell (AIFS), and Sarah Maher (AIFS), and also under the guidance of the AIFS Executive (Liz Neville, Catherine Andersson) and Communications teams (Katharine Day, Rachel Evans). We would also like to thank the survey methodology (Karen Biddiscombe, Aeysha Corrigan, Anaïs Keenan) and data management and linkage (Melissa Suares, Frank Volpe, Michelle Silbert) teams at AIFS for their efforts in collecting and managing *Ten to Men* data.

We would especially like to thank every *Ten to Men* participant and their families who give so generously with their time and energy in completing our study surveys.

Website: aifs.gov.au/tentomen

Email: tentomenstudy@aifs.gov.au

© Commonwealth of Australia 2026

With the exception of *Ten to Men* and AIFS branding, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, content provided by third parties, and any material protected by a trademark, all textual material presented in this publication is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (CC BY 4.0) creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/. You may copy, distribute and build upon this work for commercial and non-commercial purposes; however, you must attribute the Commonwealth of Australia as the copyright holder of the work. Content that is copyrighted by a third party is subject to the licensing arrangements of the original owner.