Industry, Occupation, and Disability Insurance Beneficiary Work Return

*by Evan S. Schechter**

This article uses the New Beneficiary Data System to describe the first job held after award of Disability Insurance benefits, in terms of occupation and industry. It examines work activity within sectors of employment, and looks at the issues of whether work return in certain industries and occupations varies according to the demographic characteristics of the beneficiaries. The article also presents data on sector-specific employer accommodations that can aid in sustained work return.

Postentitlement work was fairly evenly distributed across occupational and industrial sectors. Persons with higher levels of educational attainment were found to be in white-collar employment sectors. There were noticeable differences in the availability of employer accommodations across postentitlement occupations and industries.

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Introduction

Recently published articles in the *Social Security Bulletin* have focused on work activity of Disability Insurance (DI) beneficiaries. These articles have examined factors influencing the decision of disabled-worker beneficiaries to seek employment,[1] the effect of work-incentive program provisions (trial work and Medicare extended period of eligibility) on return to work,[2] job patterns of disabled-worker beneficiaries,[3] and dimensions of the process of beneficiary work return.[4]

Each of these investigations was based on information collected as part of the New Beneficiary Data System (NBDS), a merging of data from two surveys conducted by the Social Security Administration: (1) 1982—the New Beneficiary Survey and (2) 1992—the New Beneficiary Followup.[5] In these presentations of work-related data, the units of analysis were those persons awarded DI benefits from mid-1980 to mid-1981. The focus was on the characteristics of the beneficiaries, with the inquiry centering on the issue of discerning first what individual traits affect work outcomes, and in turn modeling these traits to predict employment status and levels of work activity after the award of DI benefits.

This article looks at the NBDS from a different perspective. The units of analysis are industries and occupations of beneficiaries in their first postentitlement job. The research questions posed are whether work outcomes of DI beneficiaries vary by sector of employment. There is potential policy significance in determining any relation between the type of work and beneficiary work return. In particular, this article investigates the association between type of work and accommodations for working DI beneficiaries.

There are several factors that, at least in theory, should foster return to work among DI beneficiaries. The Social Security Act provides various work incentives to safeguard cash benefits and Medicare coverage while

a beneficiary tries to return to work. The Trial Work Period (TWP) allows for up to 9 months of earnings (in a 60-month rolling period) before its completion and termination of benefits. A TWP month is any month where total earnings exceed $200. Premium-free Medicare coverage continues for up to 3 years following a TWP as long as the disability persists. The Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE), commencing in the month following TWP completion, reinstates (for a 36-month term) cash benefits for any month in which the beneficiaries' earnings fall below the $500 substantial gainful activity level.

In recent years, there has been an increased sensitivity to the rights of the disabled in the workplace. Assistive technology and advances in disability management either bring under control or palpably reduce some types of functional limitations. Barriers in access to the workplace and in the work site itself have lessened. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) encourages the disabled's own expectations that they have the right to work, and requires employers to make effective workplace accommodations. While the data from the NBDS (assembled in 1991) are likely to predate much of the potential change in the relationship between DI benefit status and labor force participation, the approach of this article and its benchmark data can aid in discussing the issues of placement of DI beneficiaries in the labor force.

The Data

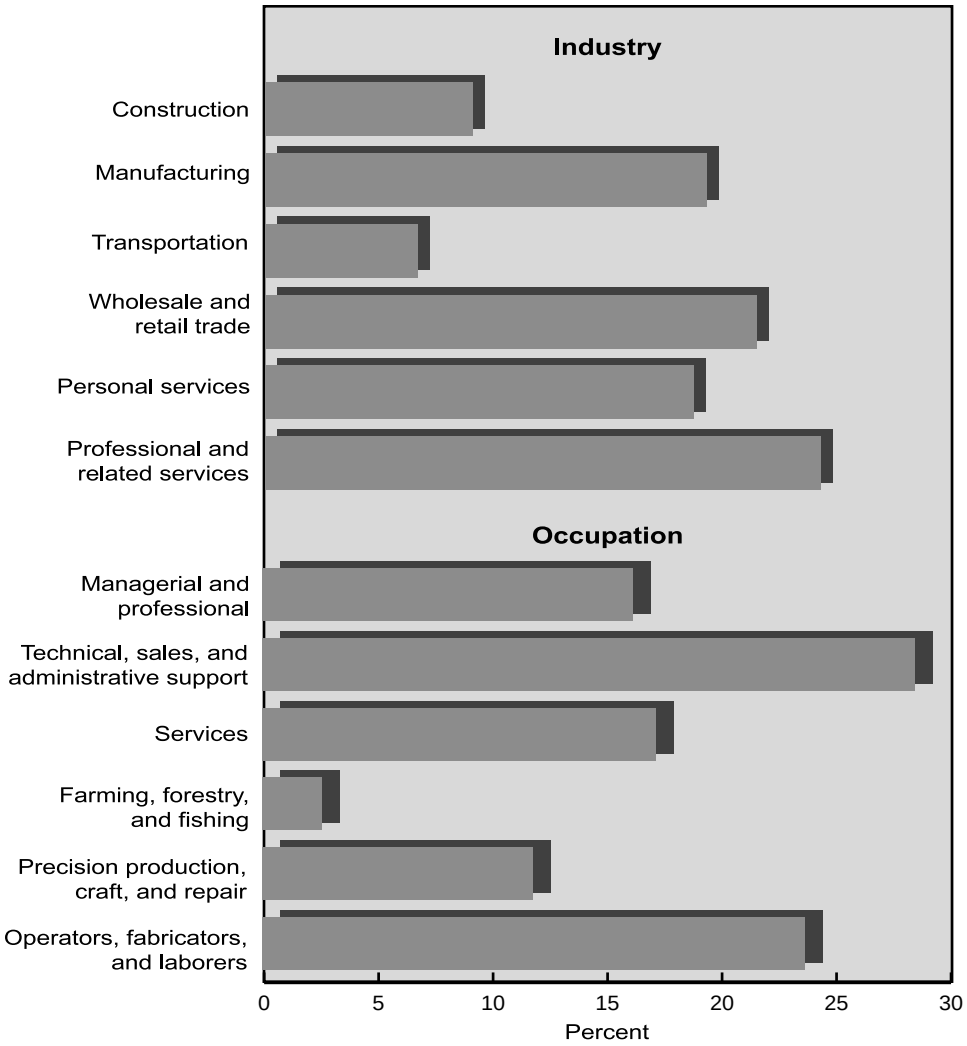
The NBDS consists of merged data from a nationally representative cross-sectional survey and a follow-up survey: the 1982 New Beneficiary Survey (NBS) and a reinterview of respondents who were still living in 1992 called the New Beneficiary Followup (NBF). Original sample persons first received benefits in the period June 1980 through May 1981. To augment the 5,188 disabled persons in the NBS sample, an additional 3,000 beneficiaries (entitled in the 1980-81 period) who engaged in some post-entitlement work were interviewed in the NBF.

Postentitlement Industries and Occupations

It has been documented that, despite having severe chronic health problems, some disabled persons do work. For those who reported postentitlement work activity, the NBDS provided data for two jobs in the NBS-NBF period: (1) the first postentitlement job held and (2) the job held at the time of the 1992 followup. Chart 1 shows how these post-entitlement workers were distributed across industries and occupations in their first job. Chart 2 shows how workers were distributed across their respective industries and occupations in jobs held in 1992 (current at the time of the NBF).

Of the entire NBDS population representing 137,144 persons, 1 out of 5 reported working in some job after their entitlement to benefits in 1981. Of this proportion, approximately one-fifth of these working beneficiaries were employed in each of four main sectors: (1) manufacturing (19.4 percent); (2) wholesale and retail trade (21.6 percent); (3) personal services (18.8 percent in financial, insurance, real estate, business, repair, entertainment, and recreation); and (4) professional and related services (24.4 percent). Notably fewer workers reported that their first postentitlement job was either in the construction (9.1 percent) or transportation (6.7 percent) industry. Regarding the first postentitlement occupation, slightly over one-quarter of the working beneficiaries were either employed in technical, sales, or administrative support

Chart 1.—Percentage distribution of the first postentitlement job held by DI beneficiaries, by type of industry and occupation



(28.5 percent) or as operators, fabricators, or laborers (23.7 percent). Slightly less than one-fifth were either in managerial and professional (16.2 percent) or service (17.2 percent) sectors.

At the time of the 1992 survey, slightly over one-tenth of the NBDS population was working at a job. As shown in chart 2, the pattern of the distribution for industries and occupations at the time of the NBF essentially mirrored the first postentitlement job findings.

Demographic Characteristics of Working DI Beneficiaries

The question that can be posed is whether, for either the first postentitlement job or the job held at the time of the NBF, the profile of demographic traits of disabled workers varied by industry and occupation. Tables 1 and 2 present the data for the first postentitlement job. When looking at the first postentitlement job categorized by industry, the construction and transportation sectors had proportionately fewer females than did the other industries (table 1). The other four industry categories all had approximately the same differential proportion of male and female disabled workers. Educational attainment profiles were the same for manufacturing, sales, and service industries. As would be expected, the professional sector had the largest proportion of disabled workers with 13 or more years of education (43.7 percent).

Table 2 presents the NBDS demographic data for the first postentitlement occupation. Farming, forestry, fishing (9.9 percent); precision production, craft, repair (21.5 percent); and operators, fabricators, laborers (26.3 percent) had proportionately fewer females than were in the other first postentitlement job occupation categories. There were no significant differences in the proportion of blacks and whites in any of the occupation groupings. When examining the level of educational attainment for DI beneficiaries in their first postentitlement job, those who worked as farmers, foresters, or fishermen had the highest proportion of persons whose education did not go beyond 8 years of schooling. The managerial and professional and technical, sales, and administrative support sectors had in excess of 80 percent of their disabled workers with at least a high school diploma.

The gender distributions for industry at the time of the NBF interview (1992) were essentially the same as those reported for the first postentitlement industry (table 3). Manufacturing had the highest percentage of black disabled workers (24.9 percent). Those industries that had substantial proportions of first postentitlement job holders with high school education or greater (wholesale and retail trade, personal services, and professional and related services) also had high proportions in 1992. For construction and transportation, almost one-half of their disabled workers had 11 years of education or less.

In 1992, as was the case for the first postentitlement job, the farming, forestry, and fishing sector had the highest proportion of male and of black disabled workers (table 4). A very small percentage of workers with less than a high school diploma were in either managerial and professional (6.1 percent) or technical, sales, or administrative support (17.1 percent) jobs. For every occupational group-

Chart 2.—Percentage distribution of the job held by DI beneficiaries at the time of the NBF, by type of industry and occupation

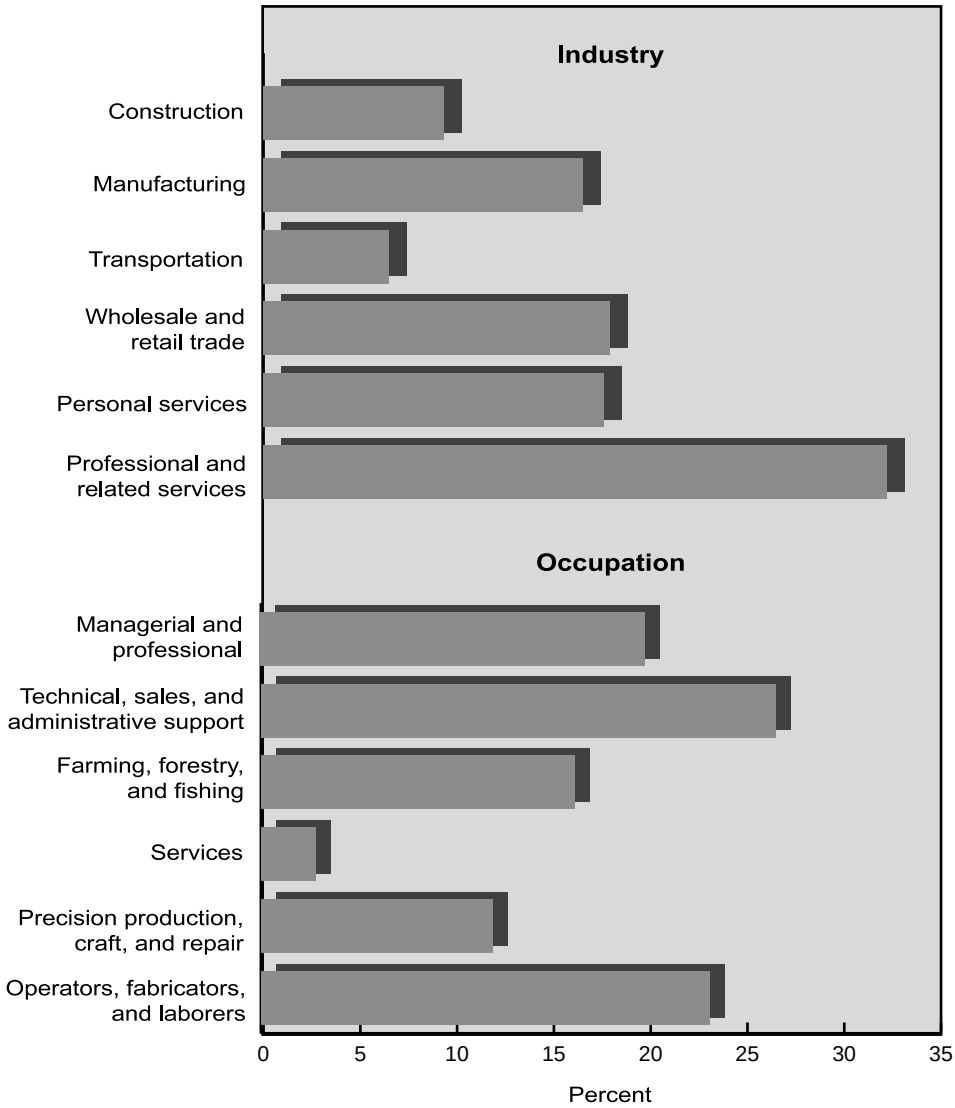


Table 1.—Demographic characteristics of persons in first job after award of DI benefits, by industry

[In percents]

Characteristic	Industry							
	Total number	Total percent	Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Wholesale and retail trade	Personal services	Professional and related services
Total	26,642	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender:								
Female	8,329	31.3	19.7	29.4	20.5	33.3	34.3	35.9
Male	18,313	68.7	80.3	70.6	79.5	66.7	65.7	64.1
Race:								
White	21,561	83.3	91.2	83.2	81.7	87.8	83.1	83.5
Black	3,614	16.7	8.8	16.8	18.3	12.2	16.9	16.5
Education (in years):								
0-8 years	2,511	9.8	13.2	13.6	3.0	11.6	11.4	4.4
9-11 years	5,088	19.9	21.4	22.3	38.5	23.1	16.6	11.9
High school grad	10,703	41.8	47.6	36.8	46.2	42.7	44.1	39.9
13 or more	7,287	28.5	17.7	27.3	12.4	22.6	27.9	43.7
Age at entitlement:								
16-25	4,932	19.0	21.3	20.7	6.6	19.0	21.0	16.7
26-34	6,517	24.9	25.4	20.3	24.2	24.1	21.0	30.5
35-44	3,907	14.7	12.8	12.1	10.4	17.3	17.1	14.3
45-54	4,306	16.3	21.6	19.7	24.8	11.6	14.2	14.5
55-62	6,719	25.1	18.9	25.7	34.1	27.4	26.2	22.1

Note: Total numbers may differ because of response rates.

Table 2.—Demographic characteristics of persons in first job after award of DI benefits, by occupation

[In percents]

Characteristic	Occupation							
	Total number	Total percent	Managerial and professional	Technical, sales, and administrative support	Service	Farming, forestry, and fishing	Precision production, craft, and repair	Operators, fabricators, and laborers
Total	28,036	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender:								
Female	8,531	30.4	31.6	35.3	36.3	9.9	21.5	26.3
Male	19,505	69.6	68.4	64.7	63.7	90.1	78.5	73.7
Race:								
White	22,689	85.6	86.2	83.3	76.6	74.1	90.4	76.2
Black	3,730	14.4	13.8	16.7	23.4	25.9	9.6	23.8
Education (in years):								
0-8 years	2,883	10.7	3.5	5.9	12.7	42.8	6.7	18.3
9-11 years	5,337	19.8	4.7	13.3	28.3	3.8	30.8	28.4
High school grad	11,259	41.7	34.6	44.2	40.0	32.0	51.3	41.1
13 or more	7,505	27.8	57.1	36.6	18.8	21.5	11.3	12.2
Age at entitlement:								
16-25	5,307	18.9	16.0	21.5	15.8	22.9	21.2	18.7
26-34	6,816	24.3	25.7	26.2	23.9	10.7	21.8	24.2
35-44	4,231	15.1	16.1	12.4	14.2	30.2	18.5	15.0
45-54	4,342	15.5	18.9	11.7	13.2	3.0	18.4	19.4
55-62	7,080	26.3	20.4	27.7	32.8	33.2	20.2	21.8

Note: Total numbers may differ because of response rates.

ing, at least three-fifths of the disabled beneficiaries who worked in 1992 were aged 45 or older.

Job Characteristics

Hours worked.—The NBF provided some detailed self-reports about the first job held after award of DI benefits. A previous article[7] documented the proportion of beneficiaries who engaged in full-time and part-time work. Table 5 presents data that answers the question of whether specific industries and occupations are more likely to have full-time first job returnees than others. For the first postentitlement job, there were two clusters of industrial sectors. Over two-thirds of those DI beneficiaries in either construction, manufacturing, or transportation reported full-time work, compared to two-fifths of those working in sales, service, or professional and related services. These latter three industrial categories also had the highest proportion of persons who were employed at a limited part-time level (one-third of the workers at 20 hours or less in a typical week). Limited work schedules (less than 20 hours) were least likely to be found in the following occupations: managerial and professional; precision production, craft, and repair; and operator, fabricator, and laborer. Those in the service sector had the lowest percentage (35.6 percent) of full-time workers.

In general, regardless of employment sector, the proportions of full-time workers were substantial. This is a noteworthy statistic, given that these persons all had health problems so severe as to have resulted in their inability to work for at least 12 months.

Employment status.—Overall, only 3 percent of those persons in their first postentitlement job were self-employed; in few instances do disabled workers try to establish (or reestablish) their own businesses. The NBF data on first postentitlement jobs indicate that there were variations in the proportion of DI beneficiaries who were self-employed across industries and occupations (table 6). In construction, over 10 percent of those who returned to the work force were self-employed. In contrast, essentially no one was self-employed in the first postentitlement job in the manufacturing and professional and related services sectors. The largest percentage of self-employed persons was found in farming, forestry, and fishing (16.7 percent) and managerial and professional (7.8 percent) occupations.

Comparison of preaward and first postentitlement job characteristics.—The NBDS data included self-reported comparisons between preaward and first postentitlement jobs. Such comparisons provide a sense of the kind of changes disabled workers make. The data on comparisons for DI beneficiaries grouped according to their reported first postentitlement industry (which is not necessarily the industry

Table 3.—Demographic characteristics of persons reporting some work in the NBS-NBF period, who worked at a job in 1992, by industry

[In percents]

Characteristic	Industry							
	Total number	Total percent	Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Wholesale and retail trade	Personal services	Professional and related services
Total	15,656	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender:								
Female	4,698	30.0	14.9	29.6	31.6	33.4	30.1	32.3
Male	10,958	70.0	85.1	70.4	68.4	66.6	69.9	67.7
Race:								
White	12,999	83.9	88.0	74.1	91.7	85.2	86.9	83.9
Black	2,494	16.1	12.0	24.9	8.3	14.8	13.1	16.1
Education (in years):								
0-8	1,349	9.0	14.6	14.9	3.5	11.8	7.3	4.7
9-11	2,846	19.0	35.0	17.2	49.2	17.9	18.7	10.2
High school grad	6,743	45.1	36.5	50.3	33.8	44.9	48.1	45.7
13 or more	4,017	26.9	13.9	17.5	13.6	25.4	25.8	39.5
Age in 1992:								
26-34	2,450	16.9	9.5	18.4	12.7	13.2	12.3	20.8
35-44	4,886	33.6	48.6	29.5	40.6	24.8	37.2	32.7
45-54	2,063	14.2	11.3	14.1	9.3	15.6	13.6	14.6
55-62	1,649	11.3	6.2	8.1	11.9	11.9	16.7	10.6
63-70	3,483	24.0	21.5	25.4	22.1	33.5	18.0	19.6

Note: Total numbers may differ because of response rates.

of the preaward job) are given in table 7. As there were no significant gender or race differences, the table presents data for the NBDS sample as a whole.

For every first postentitlement industrial sector, at least three-fifths of disabled workers in their first postentitlement job did not return to their preaward employer. Almost one-half of persons employed in either the construction, manufacturing, or transportation sectors performed the same tasks in their first postentitlement job as they had done prior to coming on the DI rolls, while only one-fourth of those in the wholesale and retail trades or in personal services had the same job duties before and after receipt of DI benefits. In all industries, substantial proportions of those who returned to work reported less exertion in the first postentitlement job. However, construction jobs appeared to make the most exertional demands on work returnees, as in excess of one-half of these persons reported either more or the same exertion as they were required to do in the job held prior to their receipt of DI benefits. Across all industries, there was a shift in the level of responsibilities when comparing the two jobs. For only one-fifth of the workers did job responsibilities remain the same. Almost one-half (or greater) reported diminished responsibilities in the first post-entitlement job.

Many disabled persons reported working fewer hours and for less pay. Wholesale and retail trades and personal services sectors had about two-thirds of their postentitlement work force, indicating that they were working fewer hours per week compared to their schedule prior to award of benefits. In contrast, almost three-fifths of those in manufacturing or transportation reported working the same number of hours as they did before going on the DI rolls. Persons in manufacturing and construction were least likely to earn a reduced salary in their first postemployment job, which may in part be due to a substantial proportion of these beneficiaries working the same or more hours than they did in their preaward jobs.

Return-to-Work Strategies

The NBF survey data permit exploration of whether there were either industry-specific or occupation-specific patterns in modes of and reasons for job search after receipt of DI benefits. Targeting of job search strategies is helpful in fostering return to work. If approaches actually reported by the survey participants vary by type of job, those particular strategies can be encouraged.

Table 4.—Demographic characteristics of persons reporting some work in the NBS-NBF period, who worked at a job in 1992, by occupation

[In percents]

Characteristic	Total number	Total percent	Occupation: Managerial and professional	Technical, sales, and administrative support	Service	Farming, forestry, and fishing	Precision production, craft, and repair	Operators, fabricators, and laborers
Total	16,561	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender:								
Female	4,994	30.2	31.0	40.9	28.4	5.5	20.8	26.3
Male	11,567	69.8	69.0	59.1	71.6	94.5	79.2	73.7
Race:								
White	13,751	83.9	89.9	89.9	81.2	67.0	94.1	70.2
Black	1,877	16.1	10.1	10.1	18.8	33.0	5.9	29.8
Education (in years):								
0-8	1,502	9.5	2.8	6.5	11.5	30.1	7.2	15.9
9-11	3,048	19.2	3.3	10.6	26.8	37.8	24.1	32.6
High school grad	7,073	44.6	45.2	44.5	46.4	6.2	57.9	40.5
13 or more	4,239	26.7	48.6	38.3	15.3	26.0	10.8	11.0
Age in 1992:								
26-34	2,643	17.9	15.2	17.2	17.7	7.9	19.2	13.6
35-44	5,120	31.9	34.3	32.7	24.4	46.9	35.6	28.0
45-54	2,252	15.6	18.3	9.5	14.4	26.6	14.8	14.8
55-62	1,712	11.3	10.7	10.6	15.4	8.4	7.5	10.0
63-70	3,621	22.9	16.6	25.7	26.1	10.6	20.9	22.3

Note: Total numbers may differ because of response rates.

Table 8 shows the data pertaining to those job search modes that led to actual job offers tendered by prospective employers. The percentages show the proportion of occurrences of each job activity that led to job offers. Looking at the industry section of the table, those who obtained first postemployment jobs in either construction, manufacturing, or wholesale and retail trade were more likely to report that checking with their former employers resulted in a job offer than were those whose jobs upon postaward work return were in other industrial sectors. Asking relatives about jobs where they worked produced few job offers for those in professional and related services (18 percent). State employment agency job leads were cited most by those in manufacturing (38.7 percent), while private employment agency referrals were reported most by beneficiaries who worked in the personal services sector (63.5 percent). The results of following up leads from a vocational rehabilitation agency were consistent across first postentitlement industry of employment; if a contact was made, well over one-half of the contacts resulted in an offer of a job.

For the first postentitlement occupation data, those in the service sector (30.2 percent) were least likely to have a job offer after checking where they worked before benefit entitlement. Operators, fabricators, and laborers were more likely to get job leads from relatives than were those in other occupational groupings. No significant differences in first postentitlement occupations were reported for job leads resulting from the other modes of postentitlement job search.

The NBF data provide an added feature to the description of work return: respondent's recall of the most important factor in their decision to re-enter the labor force. There was notable uniformity in reporting main reason for return to work across both first postentitlement industry and occupation (table 9). More respondents cited financial need as the most important reason than any other consideration. Persons in the construction industry (69.7 percent) and persons in the precision production, craft, and repair (72.6 percent) and operators, fabricators, and laborers (63.1 percent) occupational sectors had the highest proportion of persons citing this reason. Overall, about one-fifth of the disabled persons who returned to work cited their preference of wanting to be back at work as the most important factor in postentitlement job return. Greater proportions of persons in personal services and professional and related services industries attached primary importance to this reason than did persons in the other industrial categories.

Table 5.—Distribution of hours worked per week for first postentitlement industry and occupation

[In percents]

Employment sector	Total number	Total percent	Hours in work week: 20 or fewer	21-39	40 or more
Industry					
Construction	2,302	100.0	16.7	16.8	66.5
Manufacturing	5,019	100.0	9.7	14.3	76.0
Transportation	1,513	100.0	13.2	15.4	71.4
Wholesale and retail trade	5,602	100.0	35.1	23.1	41.8
Personal services	4,921	100.0	30.4	24.5	45.2
Professional and related services	6,325	100.0	33.4	26.2	40.4
Occupation					
Managerial and professional	4,320	100.0	20.5	16.5	63.1
Technical, sales, and administrative support	7,855	100.0	35.3	19.3	45.5
Service	4,733	100.0	32.4	32.0	35.6
Farming, forestry, and fishing	707	100.0	30.2	22.6	47.2
Precision production, craft, and repair	3,182	100.0	20.2	14.4	65.5
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	6,102	100.0	14.4	21.9	63.7

Table 6.—Distribution of employees/self-employed in first postentitlement job, by industry and occupation

[In percents]

Employment sector	Total number	Total percent	Employee	Self-employed
Industry	13,728	100.0	96.4	3.6
Construction	1,113	100.0	88.1	11.9
Manufacturing	2,393	100.0	99.8	.2
Transportation	985	100.0	95.1	4.9
Wholesale and retail trade	3,286	100.0	93.9	6.1
Personal services	2,340	100.0	95.7	4.3
Professional and related services	3,612	100.0	99.6	.4
Occupation	14,601	100.0	95.8	4.2
Managerial and professional	2,022	100.0	92.2	7.8
Technical, sales, and administratiave support	4,030	100.0	95.6	4.4
Service	2,767	100.0	97.2	2.8
Farming, forestry, and fishing	297	100.0	83.3	16.7
Precision production, craft, and repair	1,626	100.0	93.9	6.1
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	3,859	100.0	98.7	1.3

Among the occupational groupings, persons working in their first postemployment job in precision production, craft, and repair (11.5 percent) or as operators, fabricators, and laborers (15.1 percent) were the least likely to give major importance to this factor. Improved health was cited by proportionately more persons in the transportation sector (17.3 percent) than in any other industrial or occupational grouping. The effect of rehabilitation services on improving ability to sustain work was given as the most important reason for about 10 percent of the postentitlement work force in almost every industry and occupation category.

Industry, Occupation, and Employer Accommodations

The NBDS provided extensive information about accommodations employers made available to the disabled-worker beneficiary in his or her first postemployment job. Employer-stimulated job features can (a) promote work return and (b) help to sustain the work attempt. The data in table 10 disclose whether there were industry or occupation variations in the availability of reported accommodations.

For all DI beneficiaries who returned to work, no more than one-fifth of these persons, regardless of the type of postentitlement work they sought, were offered any particular form of accommodation by their first postentitlement employer. The construction industry was notable for providing several work return aids: getting someone to help with work (21.7 percent), purchasing special equipment (19.1 percent), helping worker to learn a new skill (21.8 percent), shortening the work day (17.6 percent), and allowing more breaks (23 percent). The wholesale and retail trade industry was somewhat more likely than average to offer to obtain help (22.1 percent) and provide for a shortened workday (19.6 percent). Those working in the professional and related services industries were more likely to be offered help in the form of learning new job skills (22.5 percent) than were DI beneficiaries in other industries.

Help with the work was offered to over one-quarter (26.8 percent) of postentitlement work returnees in the precision production, craft, and repair sector. Persons in the farming, forestry, and fishing sector reported offers in the following accommodation modes: help to do the work (22.6 percent), special equipment (21.0 percent), switch to a different type of work (16.5 percent), more breaks (48.3 percent), and special transportation to the job site (19.7 percent).

Table 7.—Preaward and first postentitlement job comparisons, by industry

[In percents]

Job factor	Total	Industry					
		Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Wholesale and retail trade	Personal services	Professional and related services
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Same employer:							
Yes	27.9	30.0	40.0	35.2	21.7	18.4	24.9
No	72.1	70.0	60.0	64.8	78.3	81.6	73.8
Same tasks:							
Yes	33.8	45.4	48.7	45.9	23.9	25.7	29.5
No	66.2	54.6	51.4	54.1	76.2	74.3	70.5
Exertion:							
More than before	17.3	30.8	12.6	26.2	19.7	7.7	19.4
Less than before	63.5	44.6	62.7	56.2	62.5	77.0	61.0
About the same	19.3	24.6	24.7	17.6	17.8	15.3	19.6
Responsibility:							
More than before	58.6	68.1	45.6	48.0	61.8	60.8	60.8
More after	22.8	11.7	32.7	38.2	19.9	23.6	19.2
About the same	18.6	20.3	21.7	13.8	18.3	15.6	20.1
Hours worked:							
Fewer than before	56.7	54.8	40.4	41.0	69.5	65.0	56.3
Same or more	43.3	45.2	59.6	59.0	30.5	35.0	43.7
Rate of pay:							
More than before	22.4	20.7	25.6	31.0	14.6	23.0	24.7
Same	45.5	44.4	41.5	16.8	27.5	19.0	30.5
Less than before	32.1	34.3	26.3	51.5	56.4	57.9	44.1

Industry and occupation reports of the efficacy of employer accommodation efforts are presented in table 11. Clearly, returning disabled workers respond in the affirmative as to whether employer accommodations help them to remain in their first postentitlement jobs. With few exceptions, the prevailing rate of helpfulness of each accommodation exceeded 80 percent. Help with work and special equipment were cited as most useful by postentitlement work returnees. Looking at the industry-specific information, persons in wholesale and retail trade reported slightly less help relative to the rate for all persons. Helping to acquire new skills was particularly important in construction (98.1 percent). Switching to a different type of work was quite helpful to those in the personal services industry (93.5 percent). Shorter workdays were important to those in construction (91.3 percent) and personal services (92.3 percent).

For the occupation categories, persons in managerial and professional and technical, sales, and administrative support greatly benefited from employer accommodations when compared to all workers in the NBS. In contrast, operators, fabricators, and laborers were less likely than the population as a whole to indicate that particular accommodations helped them to remain on the job. For those persons in precision production, craft, and repair, only about three-fifths of the workers

Table 8.—First postentitlement job search modes that led to job offers, by industry and occupation

[In percents]

Mode of search	Total percent	Industry						Occupation					
		Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Wholesale and retail trade	Personal services	Professional and related services	Managerial and professional	Technical, sales, and administrative support	Service	Farming, forestry, and fishing	Precision production, craft, and repair	Operators, fabricators, and laborers
Checked where you worked	53.4	73.5	65.1	41.6	63.7	42.5	30.6	64.1	46.8	30.2	(1)	74.7	54.5
Asked a relative about a job opening where the relative worked or did business	41.2	67.4	62.4	50.4	34.3	37.7	18.0	29.8	31.2	24.4	(1)	(1)	63.2
Asked a friend about a job opening where the friend worked or did business	61.7	74.0	61.8	65.7	65.6	54.7	58.6	56.8	61.2	55.6	(1)	69.0	70.2
Answered an ad for a job opening	54.6	54.9	42.6	55.6	66.8	58.5	45.2	54.9	52.6	50.5	(1)	72.3	46.3
Followed up a lead from the state employment agency	19.7	(1)	38.7	(1)	15.7	13.3	28.6	7.6	14.9	22.1	(1)	(1)	25.8
Followed up a lead from a private employment agency	42.9	(1)	47.0	(1)	(1)	63.5	29.9	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Followed up a lead from a vocational rehabilitation agency	65.0	(1)	63.0	(1)	56.5	68.6	72.7	60.7	65.2	55.3	(1)	(1)	82.3
Checked with employers to see if they had any openings	46.9	(1)	62.1	(1)	37.1	47.1	48.8	58.1	40.3	34.6	(1)	27.0	62.8
Did something else	83.2	90.4	73.1	(1)	86.8	87.0	79.4	80.6	80.8	83.0	(1)	89.3	89.5

[1] Percentage too small to report.

reported that either switching to different work or having more breaks played a role in their sustaining the length of their work return.

Employer accommodations are likely to help different persons to different degrees. The NBF questionnaire asked the working DI beneficiary to indicate the accommodation that helped him or her the most in the initial postentitlement work return. Table 12 presents the percentage distribution of these ratings by industry and occupation.

The two most helpful accommodations were getting someone to help the beneficiary with his or her work and helping the beneficiary to learn a new job skill. Three elements of modified work schedules—shortened work day, changed time of coming to and going from a job, and more breaks and rest periods—were also cited as important factors in job retention. Special equipment was of most importance to those beneficiaries whose first postentitlement job was in construction (29.1 percent). Switching to a different job helped the most for those persons in the transportation industry (43.1 percent).

When looking at the accommodations ratings by occupation, special equipment (25.9 percent) and more breaks and rest periods (35.1 percent) were most important for persons in the farming, forestry, and fishing sector. Aside from getting help in doing the work in the new postentitlement job, helping to learn a new job skill was of notable importance for those in technical, sales, and administrative support (28.4 percent) and for operators, fabricators, and laborers (20.6 percent).

Summary and Implications for Return-to-Work Policy

Several findings can be compiled from the presentations and analyses presented in this article.

- No particular industrial sector has a disproportionately large percentage of DI beneficiaries who return to work.
- An essentially even distribution of workers was found across occupational sectors.
- There is no self-selection into first postentitlement occupations or industries by either age, race, or gender.
- Persons with higher levels of educational attainment were found to be in white-collar employment sectors.
- A large proportion (52.7 percent) of DI beneficiaries reported working full-time; some industries and occupations had noticeably higher proportions of full-time work returnees than others.
- There were sector differences in particular job search modalities that led to job offers.
- There were no statistically significant employment sector differences related to reasons for returning to work. Over half of the workers reported financial

Table 9.—Most important reason for working at first postentitlement job, by industry and occupation

[In percents]

Reason	Total percent	Industry						Occupation					
		Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Wholesale and retail trade	Personal services	Professional and related services	Managerial and professional	Technical, sales, and administrative support	Service	Farming, forestry, and fishing	Precision production, craft, and repair	Operators, fabricators, and laborers
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Financial need	55.2	69.7	60.4	61.4	54.1	47.8	51.5	47.4	48.5	57.8	58.1	72.6	63.1
Your personal preference—you wanted to work	19.9	15.4	20.3	8.0	18.9	23.1	23.1	26.9	21.6	19.4	25.9	11.5	15.1
Your health improved so that you could work	7.2	1.5	4.1	17.3	8.0	10.1	5.5	8.0	8.2	4.5	6.7	4.0	8.1
Rehabilitation services made you able to work	9.0	6.5	7.8	4.0	9.3	11.1	10.1	9.4	9.9	10.5	(1)	7.4	6.1
Some other reason(s)	8.7	6.9	7.4	9.3	9.7	7.9	9.8	8.3	11.8	7.8	9.3	4.5	7.6

[1] Percentage too small to report.

need as a key factor in the return-to-work decision. One-fifth of the workers cited wanting to work as the prime motivational factor.

- There was a fair amount of difference across postentitlement industrial and occupational sectors in the use of employer accommodations. These accommodations were judged to help disabled beneficiaries remain at their first postentitlement job.

These findings can inform policymakers on the factors promoting work return. It would appear that no specific industrial or occupational segments were particularly attractive to working DI beneficiaries. Further, the same sorts of adjustments or differences (for example, changes in hours worked or rate of pay) found in the first postentitlement job occurred essentially evenly across all industries and occupations. Additionally, there were no significant age, race, or gender differences associated with first postentitlement industry or occupation. These points all suggest that targeting return-to-work strategies according to industry and occupation would not be productive. Large proportions of persons reported working for new employers and having new job tasks in their post-entitlement employment. This suggests that those who work with diminished functional capacities are not necessarily intent in following up on their preaward work experience. Vocational rehabilitation counseling might make return to work rather than return to the DI beneficiary's old job(s) as the focus of its efforts. The level of educational attainment is clearly a factor in return to work. This information should be considered in designing return-to-work strategies.

Lastly, the importance of employer accommodation did emerge from the NBDS data. Different industries and occupations seemed to favor certain types of employer efforts in these areas. To the extent that these programs of change can be identified, industry- and occupation-specific programs that highlight particularly appropriate changes could be made part of a formal campaign to increase an employer's sensitivity to encouraging DI beneficiary work return.

Table 10.—Accommodations offered in first postentitlement job, by industry and occupation

[In percents]

Accommodation	Total percent	Industry						Occupation					
		Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Wholesale and retail trade	Personal services	Professional and related services	Managerial and professional	Technical, sales, and administrative support	Service	Farming, forestry, and fishing	Precision production, craft, and repair	Operators, fabricators, and laborers
Get someone to help you with your work	17.2	21.7	16.5	6.8	22.1	15.6	16.0	16.3	10.2	18.4	22.6	26.8	20.0
Get special equipment for you to use on the job	7.1	19.1	7.6	.4	5.6	4.6	7.5	10.0	4.5	2.8	21.0	10.7	9.5
Switch you to a different type work than what you started doing	9.4	12.8	13.7	9.3	9.0	6.4	7.2	8.1	7.9	10.3	16.5	8.0	14.6
Help you to learn a new job skill	18.8	21.8	20.7	6.6	16.6	17.3	22.5	18.2	20.9	16.7	20.9	17.2	19.2
Shorten your work day	14.6	17.6	16.3	4.7	19.6	14.1	11.1	16.0	12.4	15.5	14.2	15.1	14.2
Change the time you could come and go	12.0	8.6	10.1	7.6	17.0	11.9	11.9	17.4	15.3	9.2	14.2	6.7	8.8
Allow you to have more breaks and rest periods	14.5	23.0	13.2	3.6	17.4	17.7	10.7	16.9	9.4	15.9	48.3	19.0	15.7
Arrange special transportation for you	4.5	8.5	4.8	(1)	2.7	2.8	6.9	5.5	1.8	2.0	19.7	4.3	8.3
Have someone to take you to work because you could not get there on your own	3.1	11.0	1.5	.3	2.1	1.4	4.7	1.5	1.7	2.2	2.7	7.4	5.0

[1] Percentage too small to report.

Table 11.—Accommodations that helped beneficiary to remain in first postentitlement job, by industry and occupation

[In percents]

Accommodation	Total	Industry						Occupation					
		Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Wholesale and retail trade	Personal services	Professional and related services	Managerial and professional	Technical, sales, and administrative support	Service	Farming, forestry, and fishing	Precision production, craft, and repair	Operators, fabricators, and laborers
Get someone to help you with your work	89.7	96.8	94.4	(1)	85.2	90.5	92.4	95.3	92.6	83.4	(1)	89.7	90.4
Get special equipment for you to use on the job	90.3	100.0	93.1	(1)	85.3	94.5	80.5	94.4	96.6	(1)	(1)	100.0	78.2
Switch you to a different type of work than what you started doing	80.8	83.5	80.2	(1)	78.6	93.5	70.4	80.3	88.8	81.7	(1)	62.6	80.0
Help you to learn a new job skill	86.6	98.1	90.8	(1)	81.3	85.0	82.6	76.7	86.9	89.0	(1)	95.7	83.4
Shorten your work day	83.7	91.3	79.4	(1)	76.6	92.3	84.6	89.5	86.1	75.4	(1)	92.0	79.6
Change the time you could come and go	77.4	(1)	85.9	(1)	78.9	70.6	79.8	92.8	77.4	83.4	(1)	(1)	68.8
Allow you to have more breaks and rest periods	84.3	81.6	75.9	(1)	72.5	96.3	93.1	83.3	91.8	93.9	82.5	61.9	86.0
Arrange special transportation for you	89.8	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	86.4	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	92.9
Have someone to take you to work because you could not get there on your own	90.4	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)

[1] Percentage too small to report.

The data on employer accommodations indicate that a sizable minority of employers provided accommodations to disabled workers. Further, the vast majority of workers who received them regarded the accommodations as being helpful in sustaining their work return. In addition, a study conducted in the Netherlands in 1993 found that 60 percent of disabled workers who found a new job were able to resume working as a result of accommodations provided by the employer.[8] Therefore, the participation of employers is likely to be critical to the development of effective return-to-work initiatives.

Table 12.—Most important accommodation that helped beneficiary to remain in first postentitlement job, by industry and occupation

[In percents]

Accommodation	Total	Industry						Occupation					
		Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Wholesale and retail trade	Personal services	Professional and related services	Managerial and professional	Technical, sales, and administrative support	Service	Farming, forestry, and fishing	Precision production, craft, and repair	Operators, fabricators, and laborers
Total percent…..	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Get someone to help you with your work…….	23.1	12.5	22.4	10.7	28.0	24.7	24.7	23.8	13.0	31.7	14.0	27.2	23.4
Get special equipment for you to use on the job…….	7.2	29.1	3.1	(1)	5.8	2.3	5.8	12.2	4.3	4.8	25.9	13.9	4.6
Switch you to a different type of work than what you started doing….	8.7	3.8	11.4	43.1	8.4	4.4	7.7	7.5	12.2	4.1	2.8	7.7	14.9
Help you to learn a new job skill……..	20.3	10.4	27.9	29.0	15.4	13.9	27.0	15.0	28.4	18.5	2.9	13.1	20.6
Shorten your work day……..…	14.1	12.9	16.0	2.2	17.4	20.4	6.5	7.0	16.8	15.6	16.0	13.4	13.5
Change the time you could come and go……..…….	7.1	1.0	6.2	2.4	9.5	9.7	7.0	17.9	10.9	.7	2.1	.3	3.7
Allow you to have more breaks and rest periods…….	11.9	13.6	8.2	11.4	10.5	20.9	9.2	12.6	9.7	20.8	35.1	6.5	10.4
Arrange special transportaion for you……..	4.4	2.4	4.7	(1)	2.2	2.6	9.0	2.4	1.1	2.1	(1)	7.0	8.5
Have someone to take you to work because you could not get there on your own…….……	3.3	14.3	.2	1.3	2.9	1.0	3.0	1.6	3.5	1.6	1.3	11.1	.4

[1] Percentage too small to report.

Notes

[1] John C. Hennessey and L. Scott Muller, "Work Efforts of Disabled-Worker Beneficiaries: Preliminary Findings From the New Beneficiary Followup Survey," *Social Security Bulletin,* Vol. 57, No. 3 (Fall), 1994, pp. 42-51.

[2] John C. Hennessey and L. Scott Muller,"The Effect of Vocational Rehabilitation and Work Incentives on Helping the Disabled-Worker Beneficiary Back to Work," *Social Security Bulletin,* Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring), 1995, pp. 15-28.

[3] John C. Hennessey, "Job Patterns of Disabled Beneficiaries," *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Winter), 1996, pp. 3-11.

[4] Evan S. Schechter, "Work While Receiving Disability Insurance Benefits: Additional Findings From the New Beneficiary Followup Survey," *Social Security Bulletin,* Vol. 60, No. 1, 1997, pp. 3-17.

[5] Ibid., p. 4.

[6] See note 3.

[7] See note 4.

[8] J. Timmermans and I. Schoemakers-Salkinoja, *"Rapportage Gehandicapten 1995," Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, Rijswijk, 1996.* Cited in Patricia Thornton and Neil Hunt, "Employment Policies for Disabled People in Eighteen Countries: A Review." Social Policy Unit, University of New York, 1997, p. 196.