

**Labour market experiences  
of people with seeing  
difficulties**  
Secondary analysis of LFS data

**Final report  
September 2008**

**ies**



supporting blind and  
partially sighted people

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# Labour market experiences of people with seeing difficulties

## Secondary analysis of LFS data

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# Executive summary

This study uses data from the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS), taking combined data from 12 quarters over the period July 2004 to June 2007, to look at the labour market situation and experiences of 'people with a seeing difficulty' (as identified in the LFS). The LFS is a sample survey, but the data presented in the report have been weighted and grossed up to be representative of the UK working age population as a whole.

Key points emerging from the research are set out below.

## Demographic characteristics

- There are **184,000 working age people recorded as having a seeing difficulty** in the LFS, of whom 108,000 meet the LFS definition of disability, i.e. they have a 'work-limiting disability', or a disability according to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) or both. The remaining 76,000 (presumably with less severe seeing difficulties) are not recorded as 'disabled'.
- Of the 108,000 disabled people with a seeing difficulty, 95,000 have a 'work-limiting' disability and 75,000 have a 'DDA disability' (62,000 have both kinds of disability).
- The **prevalence of seeing difficulties increases strongly with age**. People over 55 are three times as likely as 16-24 year olds to be disabled with a seeing difficulty, and twice as likely as 16-24 year olds to have a seeing difficulty but not to be disabled. Older people with seeing difficulties are more likely to be 'disabled' than younger people with a seeing difficulty. The increase with age in the prevalence of seeing difficulties is, however, much less than the increase in the prevalence of other kinds of impairments.
- **Men are over-represented** among working-age people with a seeing difficulty, and this is only partly due to the different official retirement age of men and women. Women are more likely to report that their seeing difficulty is disabling.
- **People with seeing difficulties are relatively well-qualified**. Disabled people with seeing difficulties are more likely to have high level qualifications (NVQ level 4 and above) and less likely to have low or no qualifications than other kinds of disabled people. Similarly, non-disabled people with seeing difficulties are better qualified

than other non-disabled people. This pattern is not due to the age profile of people with seeing difficulties, and also applies within individual age groups.

- There is **little variation** in the prevalence of seeing difficulties by ethnic **group or country of birth**. Such variation as there is, largely reflects differences in the age profiles of different ethnic groups.
- People with seeing difficulties are more likely than other groups to live in **single person households**, or in **couple households with no dependent children**. People with seeing difficulties who are also disabled, are particularly likely to live in single person households. These patterns are not primarily due to the age structure of the population with seeing difficulties.

## Economic activity and employment

The research looked in detail at the economic activity and employment status of people with seeing difficulties, distinguishing between: people who are **employed** (i.e. in work as an employee or self employed); people who are **unemployed** (i.e. out of work, but actively seeking work and available for work); and people who are **economically inactive** (i.e. who are out of work, but either do not want work, are not actively seeking work or are not available for work). The analysis showed the following:

- The **employment chances** of people with seeing difficulties are closely connected with the **severity of their seeing difficulties**. People with seeing difficulties who are disabled according to the LFS have a **lower employment rate** (48 per cent) than other disabled people (50 per cent); while people with seeing difficulties who are not disabled have a much higher employment rate (83 per cent), which compares with the overall working age employment rate of 75 per cent. If they have other health problems in addition to their seeing difficulty, their employment rate falls to a mere 36 per cent. The poorer employment chances of disabled people with a seeing difficulty are confirmed by multivariate statistical analysis, which suggests that these poorer chances are indeed associated with their seeing difficulty, and cannot be explained by other factors such as age, gender, qualifications, ethnic origin or family circumstances.
- Non-working people with seeing difficulties who are disabled are **more likely to be unemployed** and searching for work (with an unemployment rate of 13 per cent) than are other disabled people (whose unemployment rate is 8 per cent).
- 45 per cent of people with seeing difficulties who are disabled are **economically inactive**, but a third (33 per cent) of this group say that they **would like to work**. This is a higher proportion than is found among other groups of economically inactive people (disabled and non-disabled).

- Looking at working patterns, people with seeing difficulties (whether disabled or not) tend to have **similar rates of self-employment and part-time work** to other groups of the working age population, and there is no evidence that these particular forms of work offer particular advantages to people with a seeing difficulty in accessing the labour market.
- People with seeing difficulties who are disabled are, however, slightly more likely than average to be found in temporary jobs (7 per cent are in **temporary jobs** compared with 5-6 per cent in other groups). Despite this, however, their overall employment seems quite stable, and employed people with seeing difficulties who are disabled are likely to have been with their current employer for longer than average.
- If they are disabled, people with seeing difficulties are slightly more likely than average to be employed in the **public sector**; if they are not disabled, they are slightly more likely than average to be employed in the **private sector**. These differences are, however, small, as are differences between industrial sectors of employment and there is nothing from the LFS which suggests that some sectors are particularly well- or badly-suited to the employment of people with seeing difficulties.
- Employed people with seeing difficulties (whether disabled or not) are **more likely than average to be found in higher level occupations**: 46 per cent are in managerial, professional and technical occupations (compared with 42 per cent of the employed working population and only 36 per cent of people with disabilities other than seeing difficulties). This is likely to be due, in part, to their higher than average levels of qualification. Despite this, however, people with seeing difficulties, at least if they are disabled, are **less likely than average to have responsibility for supervising others** in their jobs.
- Employed people with seeing difficulties who are disabled are **slightly more likely to have received recent work-related training** than other disabled people; similarly non-disabled people with seeing difficulties also receive more training than other non-disabled people. This is likely to reflect the general phenomenon that people who are already better qualified tend to get more training at work.

## Earnings

- Compared with non-disabled people without a seeing difficulty, full-time employees with a **seeing difficulty who are disabled** have mean weekly and hourly earnings which are **2 per cent lower**; while people with a **seeing difficulty who are not disabled** have earnings **which are 8 per cent higher**. The earnings gap for people with other kinds of disabilities is greater at 10-11 per cent.
- Multivariate econometric analysis of the determinants of earnings, suggests that the relatively good position of employees with a seeing difficulty in earnings terms is not simply due to their qualification levels, although both age and qualifications play a part in these patterns. The multivariate analysis shows that the earnings disadvantage of disabled employees with a seeing difficulty and the earnings advantage of non-disabled employees with a seeing difficulty, both persist once other factors are controlled for. Interestingly, however, the difference between the earnings of disabled people with a seeing difficulty, and people with other kinds of impairments disappears once other factors (age, qualification, gender etc.) are controlled for, and both groups of disabled people are equally disadvantaged in earnings terms.
- The earnings gap for employees with a seeing difficulty who are disabled, increases to 9 per cent when we look at median rather than mean earnings, suggesting that the mean level is influenced in part by a minority of higher earners. The data also suggest that the dispersion of earnings among disabled employees with a seeing difficulty is greater than average.

## Benefits

- People with a seeing difficulty who are not disabled are **less likely to claim state benefits** than the general working age population (22 per cent of the former claim, compared with 33 per cent of the latter).
- However, **58 per cent of people with a seeing difficulty who are disabled claim state benefits**, compared with 54 per cent of disabled people with other kinds of impairment.
- People with a seeing difficulty who claim benefits are slightly more likely than other kinds of disabled people to be in receipt of sickness or disability-related benefits. People with a seeing difficulty are, however, more likely to be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, whereas disabled people with other kinds of impairment are more likely to claim Incapacity Benefit.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Method, sample size and reliability

The Labour Force Survey is a quarterly survey of 130,000 individuals living in the UK that focuses on their labour market, educational, and training experiences. On a quarterly basis, the survey is reliable to population estimates of 10,000 or more. A key problem faced by the current study is that people with seeing difficulties [1] are a minority group, and detailed analysis of such a group is heavily limited by this sample size restriction.

One method of overcoming this problem, however, is by using LFS data sets merged across several quarters or years, and this is the approach adopted in the present study. The calculation of sample reliability measures, such as confidence intervals, for the Labour Force Survey is complicated by the influence of sample ‘design effects’, which are based on the Labour Force Survey’s household level structure and its panel element. Guidance from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) suggests that caution should be applied when dealing with weighted quarterly estimates of below 10,000. In circumstances when data are aggregated over a number of quarters or years, however, the minimum reliable weighted cell size estimates are lower than this (Table 1).

Our approach for most of the analysis involves the merging of 12 quarterly data sets, covering the period July 2004 to June 2007 (in parts of the analysis, for reasons explained further below, we are constrained to use a smaller number of quarters), enabling us to deal with cell estimates containing 3,000 or more individuals.

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[1] Note: the terms “seeing difficulty” or “seeing difficulties” are used throughout this report, because these reflect the wording of the questions used in the Labour Force Survey. The report, therefore, talks about “people with seeing difficulties”, rather than using other terms common in the literature, such as “visually impaired people” or “partially sighted people”.

Table 1: Reliability estimates for the Labour Force Survey

Number of quarters	Minimum quotable estimate (weighted by person)
One	10,000
Four	6,000
Twelve	3,000
Sixteen	2,000

Source: ONS/Labour Force Survey Manual Volume 1

## 1.2 Definitional issues: ‘seeing difficulties’ and ‘disability’

The LFS asks all people of working age (i.e. men aged 16-64, and women aged 16-59):

**“Do you have any health problems or disabilities that you expect will last more than a year?”**

People who answer ‘yes’ to this question are then asked a series of further questions. The first of these is particularly relevant for the present study; it asks LFS respondents to say what kind(s) of health problem or disability(ies) they have, based on a list read to them by the interviewer. The list has 17 categories of health problem/impairment, one of which is a ‘difficulty in seeing’. This is the only way in which the LFS picks up visual impairment or partial sight, and the definition is qualified to say that it should not be considered a disability if

**“it is effectively compensated for, by wearing glasses or contact lenses”.**

Respondents with a health problem/disability, are then asked:

**“Does this (do these) health problem(s) or disability(ies) (when taken singly or together) substantially limit your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities?”**

It should be noted that, in this question, ‘normal day-to-day activities’ are defined as **“those which are carried out by most people on a daily basis”**, and it is emphasised that only disabilities/health problems **“which have a substantial adverse effect on the respondent’s ability to carry out these activities”** should be recorded.

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If a respondent answers 'yes' to this question, **and/or** if they have already identified that they have one or more specific health problems (in particular, progressive illnesses such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, symptomatic HIV, Parkinson's disease, muscular dystrophy), then they are recorded as having a current disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (a '**current DDA disability**').

People whose health problem(s) or disability(ies) are expected to last more than a year are also asked the following questions:

**'Does this health problem affect the KIND of work that you might do?'**

**'...or the AMOUNT of paid work you might do?'**

If the respondent fulfils either (or both) of these criteria they are defined as having a '**work-limiting disability**'.

Those people who meet the criteria for either current DDA or work-limiting definitions of disability are defined as having a '**current long-term disability**'.

Through this rather convoluted set of questions in the LFS, a range of definitions emerge which are of some use in the present study.

In particular, we can categorise respondents according to whether they have:

1. a seeing difficulty (note that, in the analysis which follows, we include only people who report that a seeing difficulty is their main health problem or disability)
2. a current DDA disability
3. a work-limiting disability – and this category can be further analysed into:
  - disability affecting the amount of work that can be done
  - disability affecting the kind of work that can be done
4. a current long-term disability

... or any combination of these. In practice, however, the range of analysis that can be undertaken with these different categories is heavily limited by cell size constraints and for the most part, in what follows, we make the greatest use of categories 1 and 4 (seeing difficulty and current long-term disability). In particular, when looking at people with a seeing difficulty, we distinguish between those who are categorised as long-term disabled, and those who are not. The LFS does not, unfortunately, enable us to distinguish in any robust way among people with seeing difficulties, according to the severity of their impairment. Nevertheless, given the way the different categories are defined (as above), it is reasonable to assume that, on average, people with seeing difficulties who have a current long-term disability will

have more severe seeing difficulties than those who do not have a long-term disability. This breakdown is, therefore, the best proxy available within the LFS for severity of seeing difficulty.

As well as making comparisons between people with seeing difficulties with and without a current long-term disability, we also make comparisons between these two groups and: a) people who have other kinds of long-term disability (i.e. disabled people whose main impairment or health problem is not a 'seeing difficulty'); and b) people who do not have a seeing difficulty and who are not disabled in any way.

Table 2 shows that, of the 36.5m people of working age in the UK, some 184 thousand are recorded in the LFS as having a seeing difficulty which is their **main** health problem or impairment. Among people with a seeing difficulty, over half (108 thousand or 59 per cent) are recorded as long-term disabled, and the remaining 76 thousand do not meet the LFS definition of long-term disability (i.e. they have neither a disability according to the DDA definition, nor a 'work-limiting' disability).

**Table 2: Working age population – seeing difficulty and whether disabled**

	Number	%
With a seeing difficulty	183,760	0.5
of which		
<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty</b>	<b>107,697</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty</b>	<b>76,063</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Other long-term disabled	6,848,001	18.8
Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty	29,474,269	80.7
Total working age population	36,506,029	100.0

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

In Table 3 we break down the 184 thousand working age people with a seeing difficulty according to whether they have a current DDA disability, a work-limiting disability, or both. It can be seen that a third are recorded as having both kinds of disability, just over 40 per cent are recorded as having neither, and the remaining quarter have one of the two types of disability (mainly a current DDA disability; there are very few people recorded as having a work-limiting disability but not a DDA

## 1 Introduction

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disability, perhaps suggesting that the work-limiting definition implies a greater degree of severity than the DDA definition).

**Table 3: Working age population with a seeing difficulty – by category of disability**

Work-limiting Disabled?		DDA disabled?		Total
		Yes	No	
Yes	Yes	62,325 (33.9%)	32,693 (17.8%)	<b>95,018</b> <b>(51.7%)</b>
	No	12,679 (6.9%)	76,063 (41.4%)	<b>88,742</b> <b>(48.3%)</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75,004</b> <b>(40.8%)</b>	<b>108,756</b> <b>(59.2%)</b>	<b>183,760</b> <b>(100.0%)</b>

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

## 2 Individual demographics: characteristics of the population of people with seeing difficulties

In this chapter we look at some of the personal characteristics of working age people with seeing difficulties, focusing on age, gender, educational qualifications, ethnic origin and family/household structure.

### 2.1 Increasing prevalence of seeing difficulties with age

Table 4 looks at how the prevalence of seeing difficulties varies with age. The table shows a clear increase with age in the likelihood of having a seeing difficulty – among 16-19 year olds, only 0.4 per cent have a seeing difficulty; among 55-59 year olds, the proportion has doubled to 0.8 per cent, and among 60-64 year old men, the proportion rises to 1.0 per cent. The increase with age in the prevalence of seeing difficulties is, of course, unsurprising, given that many types of seeing difficulty are age-related. It is interesting to note, however, that the increase with age in the prevalence of other kinds of impairments ('other long-term disabled') is much greater than the increase in prevalence of seeing difficulties – thus among 16-19 year olds, 8.7 per cent have a disability other than a seeing difficulty, but this proportion rises to 34.5 per cent among 55-59 year olds, and to 41.2 per cent among men in the pre-retirement group (i.e. a fivefold increase in prevalence between the beginning and the end of working life).

Also of interest from the table is the fact that the increase with age in the proportion with a seeing difficulty who are disabled is greater than the increase in the proportion of people with a seeing difficulty who are not disabled (the former increases by a factor of 3 over the working lifetime, while the latter doubles); thus the likelihood of a seeing difficulty being 'disabling' in the sense defined by the LFS increases with age.

## 2 Individual demographics

**Table 4: Working age population – seeing difficulty and disability by age group**

Age	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without seeing difficulty (%)	Total (n=100%)
16-19	0.2	0.2	8.7	90.9	3,089,910
20-24	0.2	0.1	9.8	89.9	3,682,393
25-29	0.2	0.1	10.5	89.1	3,611,529
30-34	0.2	0.2	12.7	86.9	3,967,816
35-39	0.3	0.2	14.7	84.8	4,485,329
40-44	0.3	0.2	17.9	81.6	4,526,651
45-49	0.3	0.2	21.8	77.7	4,049,791
50-54	0.4	0.2	27.4	72.0	3,672,909
55-59	0.5	0.3	34.5	64.8	3,861,570
60-64 (men)	0.6	0.4	41.2	57.7	1,558,128
All ages	0.3	0.2	18.8	80.7	3,650,6026

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Table 5 shows this more clearly with three broad age groups: it presents the total number of people with a seeing difficulty in each age group, and the proportion of these who meet the LFS definition of long-term disabled. It can be seen that, while for all age groups taken together, this proportion is 59 per cent, it varies from 55 per cent among the youngest groups to over 60 per cent among those aged over 45.

**Table 5: Working age population with a seeing difficulty by age: proportion 'disabled'**

	Total: people with a seeing difficulty	% of people with a seeing difficulty who are long-term disabled
16-24	23,490	54.9
25-44	69,006	57.5
45+	91,262	60.4
Total	183,758	58.6

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Finally, Table 6 shows the two main sub-categories of disability, broken down by broad age groups. In both sub-categories (DDA disability and work-limiting disability) the incidence of seeing difficulties increases with age less than does the incidence of other types of disability. However, it remains the case that both populations with seeing difficulties are significantly older on average than the non-disabled working age population without a seeing difficulty.

**Table 6: Working age disabled people – by age and whether DDA or work-limiting disabled**

	DDA disabled		Work-limiting disabled		Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)		
16-24	10.3	8.0	12.6	9.4	20.8	18.6
25-54	60.4	61.8	62.9	61.3	67.7	66.6
55+	29.3	30.2	24.5	29.3	11.5	14.8
Total	75,004	5,747,564	95,018	5,249,088	29,474,269	36,506,028
(n=100%)						
*note: some people have both a DDA disability and a work-limiting disability. Therefore the total population in the table is less than the sum of the columns						

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

## 2.2 Seeing difficulties by gender

Table 7 shows the gender composition of the different groups. For the working-age population as a whole, there are slightly more men (51.4 per cent) than women (48.6 per cent) which reflects the fact that 60-64 year old women are not counted in official definitions as 'working age', although men in this age category are so counted.

## 2 Individual demographics

**Table 7: Working age population – seeing difficulty and disability by gender**

	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Male	60.7	66.8	51.4	51.3	51.4
Female	39.3	33.2	48.6	48.7	48.6
Total (n=100%)	107,697	76,062	6,848,000	29,474,268	36,506,027

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Among working age people with a seeing difficulty, however, the gender imbalance is much more marked. Thus 61 per cent of disabled people with a seeing difficulty are male, and among those with a seeing difficulty who are not disabled on the LFS definition, the proportion of men rises to just over two thirds (67 per cent). Part of the explanation for this comes, of course, from the fact that the working age population includes older men aged 60-64, but not older women of the same age; and, as we have seen above (Table 4), the prevalence of seeing difficulties is highest in this group. The overall effect of the different way in which ‘working age’ is defined for men and for women, therefore, is to increase the proportion of men with a seeing difficulty in the working age population. This is only part of the explanation, however, because if we look at the ‘other long-term disabled’ group i.e. disabled people with an impairment other than a seeing difficulty, Table 4 showed that the prevalence of other disabilities also increases by age, but unlike seeing difficulties the proportion of men in the ‘other disabled’ group in Table 7 is the same as in the working population as a whole.

To throw further light on this relationship between seeing difficulties, gender and age, Table 8 repeats the analysis of Table 7 for the 16-59 year old population, and it is clear that the over-representation of men among people with seeing difficulties is not simply an age effect, due to the working age population being defined to include 60-64 year old men but not 60-64 year old women. Even among 16-59 year olds there is a significantly higher proportion of men in the groups with seeing difficulties than in those without seeing difficulties (both disabled and not disabled).

**Table 8: Population aged 16-59: seeing difficulty and disability by gender**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
Male	56.7	63.7	46.4	49.8	49.2
Female	43.3	36.3	53.6	50.2	50.8
Total (n=100%)	97,701	69,364	6,205,612	28,574,951	34,947,898

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Next, Table 9 shows that, among people with a seeing difficulty, women are rather more likely than their male counterparts to report that their seeing difficulty is 'disabling' in the sense defined by the LFS. Whereas 56 per cent of men with a seeing difficulty are also disabled according to the LFS definition, this rises to 63 per cent among women.

**Table 9: Working age population with a seeing difficulty by gender: proportion 'disabled'**

	Total: people with a seeing difficulty	% of people with a seeing difficulty who are long-term disabled
Male	116,141	56.3
Female	67,618	62.6
Total	183,759	58.6

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Finally, Table 10 looks separately at the two (overlapping) sub-definitions of disability used by the LFS, and their gender breakdown. The table shows that the over-representation of men among disabled people with a seeing difficulty applies to both categories of disability, but is particularly marked among the work-limiting disabled group, 61 per cent of whom are male.

## 2 Individual demographics

**Table 10: Working age disabled people – by gender and whether DDA or work-limiting disabled**

	DDA disabled		Work-limiting disabled		Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)		
Male	59.0	50.6	60.7	52.3	51.3	51.4
Female	41.0	49.4	39.3	47.7	48.7	48.6
Total	75,004	5,747,564	95,018	5,249,088	29,474,269	36,506,028

(n=100%)

\*note: some people have both a DDA disability and a work-limiting disability. Therefore the total population in the table is less than the sum of the columns

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Finally it should be noted that, as the multivariate analysis of employment probabilities and earnings shows (see chapter 4 and section 5.5), although gender is an important influence on labour market outcomes, most of the key findings of the research are not driven by the over-representation of men in the sample.

### 2.3 Educational qualifications

Table 11 uses LFS data on the highest qualification held by respondents to the survey. It is striking that people with seeing difficulties appear to be relatively well-qualified. Thus looking first at people with seeing difficulties who are not disabled on the various LFS definitions, 31 per cent are qualified to NVQ level 4 or above (university first degree level or equivalent). Among people who are not disabled, and who do not have a seeing difficulty, the proportion qualified to level 4 is slightly less than this at 29 per cent. Turning to people with seeing difficulties who are disabled, the proportion educated to level 4 is lower, at 22 per cent, but it is notable that this is still a higher proportion than is found among other long-term disabled people, of whom only 18 per cent have a level 4 qualification. At the other end of the qualifications spectrum, only 11 per cent of non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty have no qualifications at all, the same proportion as is found among non-disabled people who do not have a seeing difficulty. As far as disabled people are concerned, those who have a seeing

difficulty are less likely to have no qualifications at all than are disabled people whose main impairment is not a seeing difficulty (20 per cent and 26 per cent respectively).

**Table 11: Working age population – seeing difficulty and disability by qualification level**

Highest qualification held	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
NVQ Level 4 and above	22.4	30.9	18.3	29.0	27.0
NVQ Level 3	11.4	16.0	11.5	16.3	15.4
Trade Apprenticeships	5.6	8.1	7.2	5.2	5.6
NVQ Level 2	14.4	14.9	13.1	16.6	15.9
Below NVQ Level 2	18.2	12.5	15.3	14.3	14.5
Other qualifications	7.9	7.1	8.9	8.1	8.3
No qualifications	20.1	10.5	25.6	10.6	13.4
Total (n=100%)	107,069	75,735	6,774,350	29,255,650	36,212,804

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

These findings are potentially significant for the labour market experiences of people with a seeing difficulty. It is well-documented that qualification levels are an important predictor of labour market outcomes, and better-qualified people have better labour market prospects. Indeed, the advantage associated with education is, if anything, intensifying as the labour market becomes more skill-intensive, and knowledge industries account for a growing share of employment. It is also clear that, for disabled people in general, the labour market barriers associated with their impairments are reinforced by their lower than average levels of qualification (see Evans 2007). With this background, we might expect that the relatively strong educational position of people with a seeing difficulty would operate in their favour in labour market terms (we go on to look at their employment chances in chapter 3 below).

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Table 12 presents the same data as in Table 11 grouped into three broad qualification levels [2], making it easier to see the variations in the qualification profiles of the different groups.

**Table 12: Working age population – seeing difficulty and disability by broad qualification level**

<b>Highest qualification held</b>	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
High	22.4	30.9	18.3	29.0	27.0
Medium	31.3	39.0	31.8	38.0	36.8
Low	46.2	30.1	49.9	33.0	36.2
Total (n=100%)	107,070	75,736	6,774,350	29,255,651	36,212,807

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Among people with seeing difficulties, there would appear to be a strong relationship between the level of qualification obtained, and the reported severity of the seeing difficulties. Although as noted previously, the LFS only offers us very limited data on severity of impairment, Table 13 shows that the proportion of people with a seeing difficulty who report that they are disabled on the LFS definitions is inversely related to the level of qualification. Among people with a seeing difficulty with low or no qualifications over two thirds (68.5 per cent) are disabled, whereas among those with high (level 4 or above qualifications) only a half (51 per cent) are disabled. This relationship should be borne in mind when we go on to look at the labour market experiences of people with seeing difficulties, as it is likely that the effects of low qualifications and more severe seeing difficulties may reinforce each other in posing labour market barriers to the individuals.

[2] 'high' = NVQ level 4 and above; 'medium' = NVQ levels 2-3 + apprenticeship; 'low' = other qualifications, qualifications below level 2, or no qualifications.

**Table 13: Working age population with a seeing difficulty by broad qualification level: proportion 'disabled'**

Highest difficulty held	Total: people with a seeing difficulty	% of people with a seeing who are long-term disabled
High	47,443	50.7
Medium	63,114	53.2
Low	72,249	68.5
Total	182,806	58.6

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Table 14 shows that both sub-categories of disabled people with seeing difficulties (DDA disabled and work-limiting disabled) are better qualified than their counterparts with other types of disability, but less well qualified than the non-disabled working age population.

**Table 14: Working age disabled people – by qualification level and whether DDA or work-limiting disabled**

Highest difficulty held	DDA disabled		Work-limiting disabled		Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)		
High	21.3	17.6	20.4	15.8	29.0	27.0
Medium	29.0	31.2	31.2	30.2	38.0	36.8
Low	49.7	51.2	48.5	54.0	33.0	36.2
Total	74,542	5,683,820	94,390	5,186,200	29,255,651	36,212,803

(n=100%)

\*note: some people have both a DDA disability and a work-limiting disability. Therefore the total population in the table is less than the sum of the columns

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Finally, a key further question of interest is the relationship between age and qualifications. For the working age population as a whole, there is generally an inverse relationship between qualifications and age, with older age groups containing a larger share of people with low or no qualifications and a smaller share with high qualifications than is the case for younger groups. This is largely a 'cohort effect' due to the significant expansion of participation in post-compulsory education in recent decades, such that younger people are much more likely to remain in education beyond 16 than was the case among previous generations. Given this relationship between age and qualifications, and given that the prevalence of seeing difficulties increases with age (see Table 4 above), we might expect, other things being equal, that people with seeing difficulties would have a generally lower than average qualifications profile. As we have seen, however (Table 11 and Table 12) this does not seem to be the case. To explore this further, therefore, Table 15 looks at the relationship between qualifications and seeing difficulty/disability within broad age groups (note that, because of sample size constraints in the LFS, we can undertake this analysis only for broad age and qualification groups, and even in this case, some cells cannot be reported for statistical reasons).

First, the table shows, for the working age population as a whole, the usual relationship between age and qualification levels, with the oldest age group (55-59/64) having the smallest proportion of people with high level qualifications (24 per cent) and the largest proportion with low or no qualifications (45 per cent). The same relationship is also present within the different categories of disability/seeing difficulty. Of most interest, however, is the fact that within each age group (as far as can be assessed, given sample size constraints), we observe the relatively high level of qualification of people with seeing difficulties. Thus in each group for which data are available, among non-disabled people, those with a seeing difficulty have larger proportions with high level qualifications and smaller proportions with low level qualifications than do non-disabled people without a seeing difficulty. Similarly among disabled people, the same qualifications advantage applies to disabled people with a seeing difficulty compared with other groups of disabled people.

**Table 15: Working age population – seeing difficulty & disability by broad qualification level & age**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
<b>16-24</b>					
High qual	**	**	8.0	12.8	12.3
Medium qual	43.6	64.4	43.3	55.5	54.4
Low qual	43.0	**	48.7	31.7	33.3
<b>Total (n=100%)</b>	<b>12,834</b>	<b>10,595</b>	<b>627,297</b>	<b>6,059,185</b>	<b>6,709,911</b>
<b>25-54</b>					
High qual	23.7	36.0	20.4	34.1	31.7
Medium qual	32.4	34.9	31.3	33.7	33.3
Low qual	43.9	29.1	48.4	32.2	35.1
<b>Total (n=100%)</b>	<b>66,643</b>	<b>46,868</b>	<b>4,199,141</b>	<b>19,825,510</b>	<b>24,138,162</b>
<b>55-59/64</b>					
High qual	23.5	30.6	17.2	28.3	24.2
Medium qual	23.2	34.9	29.3	32.0	31.0
Low qual	53.3	34.5	53.5	39.7	44.7
<b>Total (n=100%)</b>	<b>27,592</b>	<b>18,274</b>	<b>1,947,912</b>	<b>3,370,955</b>	<b>5,364,733</b>
** sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate					

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

### 2.4 Ethnic origin

Sample size constraints greatly limit the analysis which can be done on the ethnic origin of people with a seeing difficulty, as the sample numbers of people with a seeing difficulty in some minority ethnic groups are very small. In Table 16, therefore, we need to combine the different non-white minority ethnic groups into three broad groups, and we need to combine both disabled and non-disabled people with seeing difficulties. It can be seen that the ethnic variations in the prevalence of seeing difficulties are relatively small. Among white people, other disabilities are more common than among the different minority ethnic groups; this largely reflects the very strong relationship between age and the prevalence of other disabilities (see Table 4 above) combined with the fact that the white population is, on average, older than the non-white population. Although, as we have seen, there is also a relationship between age and the prevalence of seeing difficulties, it is weaker than is the case for other disabilities, and it is not therefore reflected in a higher prevalence of seeing difficulties in the white working age population than among ethnic minorities taken as a whole. Indeed the data show that at 0.5 per cent the prevalence among white people is slightly higher than among the various Asian/Asian British groups (0.4 per cent), and slightly lower than among the various black/black British groups (at 0.6 per cent).

**Table 16: Working age population – seeing difficulty & disability, by ethnic origin**

	<b>Disabled and not disabled with seeing difficulty* (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (n=100%)</b>
White	0.5	19.1	80.4	32,918,195
Asian or Asian British	0.4	16.9	82.6	1,726,308
Black or Black British	0.6	14.3	85.2	848,515
Other	0.5	14.5	85.0	995,096
Total	0.5	18.8	80.7	36,488,114

\* disabled and not disabled with seeing difficulty are combined in this table, because sample numbers in cells are too small for reliable estimates, when the two groups are presented separately

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Finally, Table 17 shows that there is also little variation according to where people were born. The proportion of disabled people with seeing difficulties who were born in the UK is almost identical to the corresponding proportions in the non-disabled population and the overall working age population, although non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly more likely than average to have been born in the UK.

**Table 17: Working age population – seeing difficulty and disability by place of birth**

	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Born in the UK	87.4	89.9	90.5	87.6	88.1
Born outside the UK	12.6	10.1	9.5	12.4	11.9
Total (n=100%)	107,697	6,847,690	76,062	29,466,723	36,498,172

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

## 2.5 Family and household characteristics

We are heavily constrained in analysis of family and household structures for two reasons:

- In May 2006, the LFS moved to calendar quarters (previously it was done on a ‘seasonal’ basis) in order to ensure consistency with the European Labour Force survey. To guarantee continuity over time, many variables have been adjusted in the historical data to a calendar quarter basis. However, this process is not complete for all variables and, as the situation currently stands, the family/household variables are available to us only for seven quarters, rather than the twelve quarters which we have been using elsewhere in the analysis. This reduces the degree of statistical accuracy with which the results can be reported.
- It is not possible from the individual dataset used in this research to undertake analysis at the household level, because the main individual level dataset does not allow us to link up data from individuals in the same household to construct

## 2 Individual demographics

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household level analysis. While the Office for National Statistics does construct a household dataset twice a year, analysis of this dataset is beyond the scope and resources of this small project, and the fact that the data are available only every 6 months rather than quarterly greatly limits the scope for analysis of small subgroups through merging data from consecutive waves of the survey, as we have done with the individual level data.

As Table 18 shows, there are significant differences between the households in which people with seeing difficulties are found, and those of the rest of the working age population. Thus disabled people in general (without a seeing difficulty) are much more likely than non-disabled people to be in single person households, or in couple households without children, and less likely to be couple households with dependent children. Looking at disabled people with a seeing difficulty, the differences are even more marked, and they are nearly twice as likely to be in single person households than non-disabled people (23 per cent compared with 12 per cent), and much less likely to be in couple households with dependent children (27 per cent compared with 39 per cent). People with a seeing difficulty without a disability are closer to the non-disabled population without a seeing difficulty in some ways (e.g. 16 per cent are in single households compared with 12 per cent), but even more different in other ways (e.g. 41 per cent are couples without dependent children, compared with 33 per cent in the non-disabled group).

People of different ages are more likely to be found in some household types than others. Thus the likelihood of being in a single person household or part of a couple without dependent children increases with age, while the likelihood of being in a couple with dependent children peaks in the middle age ranges. An obvious question, therefore, is whether these observed variations in household structure between the different groups reflect the differences in the age composition of the population of working age people with a seeing difficulty, compared with non-disabled people and the population as a whole. As reported above (Table 4) the population with seeing difficulties is generally older than the working age population as a whole, and this may partly explain the over-representation of single people and couples without dependent children.

**Table 18: Working age population – seeing difficulty & disability, by household structure**

Household structure	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
single person	23.3	15.5	20.6	12.1	13.8
couple with dependent children	26.8	32.2	25.7	39.0	36.5
couple without dependent children	34.3	40.7	39.0	32.9	34.1
single parents	7.2	6.8	8.2	8.0	8.0
other household types	8.4	**	6.4	8.0	7.7
Total	107,402	74,227	6,848,812	29,574,386	36,604,827
(n=100%)					
** sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate					

Source: LFS April-June 2005, January 2006-June 2007 (aggregated data for seven quarters)

Sample size constraints prevent us looking in detail at the relationship between age and family structure for each of the disability categories, but Table 19 repeats the analysis of Table 18 for the mid age range only (25-54 year olds), i.e. excluding the youngest and oldest respondents. If age were a key determinant of differences in household structure between the different disability categories, then the household structure of 25-54 year old people with a seeing difficulty should be closer to that of the non-disabled population of that age, than was the case for the full working age population.

Looking first at people with seeing difficulties who are disabled, Table 19 does not suggest that the differences in household patterns are mainly due to age differences; in the 25-54 age range at least, the stark differences in household structure compared with the non-disabled population without seeing difficulties persist. In particular, the

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proportion of single people in the disabled group with seeing difficulties remains more than twice as large as in the non-disabled group without seeing difficulties (27 per cent compared with 12 per cent).

**Table 19: 25-54 year old population – seeing difficulty & disability, by household structure**

Household structure	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
single person	23.3	15.5	20.6	12.1	13.8
couple with dependent children	26.8	18.0	20.5	12.4	13.9
couple without dependent children	25.5	29.1	29.1	28.3	28.5
single parents	**	**	10.3	7.2	7.8
other household types	7.0	**	5.9	6.5	6.4
Total (n=100%)	67,280	44,794	4,234,774	19,900,100	24,336,948

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS April-June 2005, January 2006-June 2007 (aggregated data for seven quarters)

### 2.6 Region of residence

There is no strong reason to expect major regional variations in the prevalence of seeing difficulties, except in so far as different parts of the country have different population age structures, and/or different health profiles associated with different socio-economic structures. Unfortunately, cell size constraints mean that we need to consider both disabled and non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty as one group to undertake any analysis at regional level. This is done in Table 20 below.

**Table 20: Working age population – seeing difficulty & disability, by government office region**

	Disabled and not disabled with seeing difficulty* (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (n=100%)
North East	0.43	24.37	75.20	1,524,956
North West	0.52	20.14	79.33	3,295,979
Merseyside	0.53	22.17	77.30	801,711
Yorkshire & Humberside	0.54	20.11	79.35	3,046,595
East Midlands	0.56	19.29	80.15	2,591,517
West Midlands	0.64	18.90	80.46	3,194,396
Eastern	0.50	16.27	83.22	3,332,957
London	0.45	16.06	83.49	4,841,933
South East	0.50	16.48	83.02	4,975,316
South West	0.57	18.29	81.14	2,971,733
Wales	0.48	22.51	77.00	1,754,799
Scotland	0.39	20.49	79.12	3,121,077
Northern Ireland	**	19.06	80.69	1,053,059
Total	0.5	18.76	80.74	36,506,028

\* disabled and not disabled with seeing difficulty are combined in this table, because sample numbers in cells are too small for reliable estimates, when the two groups are presented separately

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

It can be seen from Table 20 that the prevalence of seeing difficulties in nearly all regions is very close to the national average of 0.5 per cent (in order to highlight the small degree of regional differences, we have presented percentages to two decimal places in the table). The highest prevalences are found in the West Midlands (0.64 per cent) and the South West (0.57 per cent), and the lowest in Scotland

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(0.39 per cent) and London (0.45). By contrast it can be seen that the regional variation in the prevalence of other kinds of disability is much larger than is found for seeing difficulties, which is likely to reflect the fact that the prevalence of some other impairments varies even more with age than is the case with seeing difficulties (see Table 4 above) so variations in regional age structures will have a larger effect for these impairments.

This study, commissioned by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) presents a secondary analysis of data from the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS) to look at the impact of seeing difficulties on individuals' labour market experience. Smith and Twomey (2002) undertook such an analysis for disabled people in general, but did not focus specifically on people with a seeing difficulties.

# 3 Economic activity and employment characteristics

The Labour Force Survey allows us to examine individuals' labour market status in some detail. In particular, we can distinguish at the most basic level between:

- People who are **employed** (i.e. in work, either as an employee or self-employed)
- People who are not employed, who can be further broken down into:
  - People who are **unemployed** and seeking work according to the International Labour Office (ILO) definition [3] of unemployment. Note that the official unemployment rate is normally expressed as the percentage of the economically active working age population (i.e. employed plus unemployed), rather than as a percentage of the whole working age population.
  - People who are **economically inactive**. i.e. they are out of work, but either do not want to work, are not actively seeking work, or are not available to start work. This may be for family/childcare reasons (e.g lone parents); for reasons of sickness or disability; because they are in full-time education; or because they have retired before normal state retirement age.

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**[3]** Under the ILO definition, as operationalised in the LFS by the Office for National Statistics, someone is unemployed if: a) they are without a job, want a job, have actively sought work during the last four weeks, and are available to start work within the next two weeks; or b) they are out of work, have found a job, and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks. If they are out of work, but do not meet this definition, they are recorded as 'economically inactive'.

### 3.1 Employment rate of people with seeing difficulties

When looking at the labour market chances of a particular population group, the key variable is the **employment rate** – the proportion of working age people in that group who are in work. The overall employment rate is 74.6 per cent, and the government has a longer-term Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to increase this rate to 80 per cent. Although the employment rate increased significantly in the late 1990s it has remained in the 74-75 per cent range for several years now, and in order to achieve the PSA target, it will clearly be necessary to take major steps to increase the employment rate among various disadvantaged groups (including disabled people), and the government also has PSA targets to reduce the differential between the overall employment rate and that of a number of such groups.

Table 21 shows, first of all, that the employment rate of people with seeing difficulties is (at 62 per cent) well below that of the overall working age population, and below that of non-disabled people who do not have a seeing difficulty (80 per cent). Other disabled people (without a seeing difficulty) have an even lower employment rate, at 50 per cent.

Of most note, however, is that whether or not a person with a seeing difficulty meets the LFS definition of disability seems to make a massive difference to their employment chances. Only 48 per cent of people with a seeing difficulty who are disabled are in work, but 83 per cent of people with a seeing difficulty who are not disabled are in work. Indeed the employment rate of the latter is higher than the overall working age population, and higher than other groups of non-disabled people. The relatively high employment rate among non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty is likely, in part, to reflect their educational and age profile (discussed in Chapter 2 above), in particular the fact that they are somewhat better qualified than other groups of non-disabled people and than the working age population as a whole.

Interestingly, however, this qualification advantage does not seem to offer a similar degree of benefit to those people whose seeing difficulties are more severe, such that they meet the LFS definitions of disability. Again we saw in Chapter 2 that this group is somewhat better qualified than other disabled people, but despite this they have a slightly lower employment rate than other groups of disabled people.

**Table 21: Working age population – seeing difficulty & disability, by economic activity status**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	All people with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
In employment	47.7	82.8	62.2	50.1	80.3	74.6
ILO unemployed	7.0	4.4	5.9	4.4	4.0	4.1
ILO unemployment rate (% of economically active)	12.8	5.1	8.7	8.1	4.8	5.2
Inactive	45.3	12.7	31.8	45.5	15.7	21.3
Total (n=100%)	107,696	76,063	183,759	6,848,001	29,474,268	36,506,028

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Table 22 breaks down the disabled population into the two main LFS sub-categories of disability (DDA disabled and work-limiting disabled), and looks at their economic activity patterns. As expected, among disabled people with other kinds of disability (i.e. not a seeing difficulty), those who report a work-limiting disability have an even lower employment rate (40 per cent) than those with a DDA-defined disability. Among disabled people with seeing difficulties however, the position is, perhaps surprisingly reversed; both groups have very low employment rates, but those reporting a work-limiting disability actually have a slightly higher employment rate than those reporting a DDA disability (43 per cent and 40 respect respectively). It is unclear why this might be the case.

### 3 Economic activity and employment characteristics

**Table 22: Working age disabled people – by economic activity status and whether DDA or work-limiting disabled**

	<b>DDA disabled</b>		<b>Work-limiting disabled</b>		<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)		
In employment	47.7	82.8	62.2	50.1	80.3	74.6
ILO unemployed	7.0	4.4	5.9	4.4	4.0	4.1
ILO unemployment rate (% of economically active)	12.8	5.1	8.7	8.1	4.8	5.2
Inactive	45.3	12.7	31.8	45.5	15.7	21.3
Total (n=100%)	75,004	5,747,564	95,018	5,249,088	29,474,268	36,506,029

\*note: some people have both a DDA disability and a work-limiting disability. Therefore the total population in the table is less than the sum of the columns

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Finally, Table 23 looks at whether or not people's seeing difficulty is recorded in the LFS as their only health problem or whether they have multiple disabilities, and if so what difference that makes to their labour market situation. It confirms that people with multiple disabilities are much worse off than those with who only report one main health problem or disability: those with multiple disabilities who report that their 'main' health problem or disability is a seeing difficulty have an employment rate of only 36 per cent (those with multiple disabilities whose main health problem is not a seeing difficulty have a slightly higher employment rate of 39 per cent).

**Table 23: Working age population – seeing difficulty & disability, by economic activity status**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)		Other long-term disabled (%)	
	with one health problem	with more than one health problem	with one health problem	with more than one health problem
In employment	58.6	36.5	63.7	38.8
ILO unemployed	9.0	4.9	5.0	3.9
ILO unemployment rate (% of economically active)	13.3	11.8	7.3	9.1
Inactive	32.4	58.6	31.3	57.3
Total (n=100%)	54,757	52,941	3,087,242	3,760,760

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

## 3.2 Unemployment

Also of interest from Table 21 above is that the difference in the employment rate between disabled people with a seeing difficulty and other disabled people is entirely due to a higher unemployment rate (13 per cent compared with 8 per cent for other disabled people); the rate of economic inactivity for the two groups, at 45 per cent, is the same. This suggests that the lower employment rate of disabled people with a seeing difficulty is because there is a significant minority who want to work, are looking for work and are available for work, but are unable to find work, rather than because they have a higher rate of withdrawal from the labour market through inactivity.

When we look at the duration of unemployment, however (Table 24), unemployed disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly more likely to be long-term unemployed (for over a year) than all people with seeing difficulties (31 per cent and 29 per cent), but slightly less likely to be long-term unemployed than other disabled people (34 per cent). All of these groups, however, have significantly higher rates of long-term unemployment than do non disabled people (18 per cent).

**Table 24: Unemployed – seeing difficulty & disability, by duration of unemployment**

unemployment duration	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	All people with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
less than 12 months	68.9	**	71.6	66.0	81.5	78.2
12 months or more	31.0	**	29.4	34.0	18.5	21.8
Total (n=100%)	7,525	3,367	10,892	300,773	1,178,239	1,489,904

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

### 3.3 Economic inactivity

We have seen in Table 21 above that the overall rate of economic inactivity for disabled people with a seeing difficulty is 45 per cent (the same as for other disabled people), while non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty have an economic inactivity rate of only 13 per cent, which is slightly below the rate for non-disabled people in general.

Table 25 looks at the reasons given by those people who are economically inactive, for their inactivity. Although the analysis in the table is heavily constrained by small cell sizes for some of the categories, it is clear that, as might be expected, the reasons for inactivity vary greatly between the different groups. Thus among, inactive disabled people with a seeing difficulty, two thirds (66 per cent) give their disability as the main reason for their inactivity, a similar proportion as is found among inactive disabled people of other types (64 per cent). We saw above (Table 21) that only a small minority (13 per cent) of non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty are economically inactive, but Table 25 shows that, of these, around half fall into the 'other reasons' category (the bulk of whom are students in full-time education).

Among people with a seeing difficulty, family and domestic reasons are cited by only 12 per cent as the reason for inactivity, much lower proportion than among non-disabled inactive people.

**Table 25: Economic inactivity: seeing difficulty & disability, by reasons for inactivity**

main reason for inactivity	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	All people with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
12 months long-term sick	68.9	**	71.6	66.0	81.5	78.2
or disabled	66.3	**	55.5	64.1	1.2	26.8
temporarily sick or injured	**	**	**	4.1	1.3	2.4
looking after family or home	12.5	**	14.1	15.5	39.4	29.6
retired	**	**	7.5	6.1	8.8	7.7
other reasons (incl full-time education)	13.0	50.1	19.1	10.3	49.4	33.5
Total (n=100%)	48,765	9,642	58,407	3,115,904	4,605,603	7,779,914

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Although people who are economically inactive according to the LFS definitions are either not looking for work or are not immediately available to start work, it is nevertheless possible that some of them would like to work, if suitable work were available. The LFS asks a set of questions to ascertain their work orientation in this sense. It is striking, as Table 26 shows that disabled people with a seeing difficulty who are economically inactive, are rather more likely than other groups of inactive people (disabled or not) to express a desire to work. Thus a third (33 per cent) of

### 3 Economic activity and employment characteristics

economically inactive disabled people with a seeing difficulty say that they want to work, compared with only 27-28 per cent of respondents in the other economically inactive categories. This implies that there is a significant latent desire to work among economically inactive people with a seeing difficulty.

**Table 26: Economic inactivity: seeing difficulty & disability, by whether respondent would like to work**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
would like to work	33.2	**	28.2	27.1	27.6
Would not like to work	66.8	72.6	71.8	72.9	72.4
Total (n=100%)	48,802	9,680	3,118,316	4,615,831	7,792,629

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

#### 3.4 Employment patterns: self-employment, part-time work and temporary work

We now turn to look in a little more detail at those who are in work. First we consider employment status, in particular the breakdown between employees and the self-employed (the LFS also distinguishes two other categories of employment status – those who are employed, but on some kind of government employment scheme such as a New Deal, and those who are working unpaid in a family business – but there are too few workers with seeing difficulties in these categories in the LFS sample to be able to report findings).

### 3.4.1 Self-employment

The role of ‘non-standard’ forms of employment in the labour market situation of disabled people has been discussed in the literature (see Jones and Latreille, 2006). In particular, Jones and Latreille note US evidence suggesting that disabled people are over-represented in self-employment, part-time work and temporary employment. They highlight a debate about whether this reflects employer discrimination which excludes disabled people from full-time, permanent employee jobs, or whether it is, in fact, a voluntary choice, with the flexibility embodied in such forms of employment offering particular benefits in meeting the needs of disabled people in the workplace. Jones and Latreille go on to argue with UK data that, at least for men with a work-limiting disability, the higher self-employment rate observed among disabled people does indeed partly reflect the opportunities offered by self-employment for disabled people to accommodate their disability by choosing times, hours and locations of work. While we cannot test such a hypothesis directly in the case of people with seeing difficulties, Table 27 shows that among disabled people with a seeing difficulty the self-employment rate at 13.3 per cent is slightly higher than for the working population as a whole (12.4 per cent), but slightly lower than among people with other kinds of disabilities (14.1 per cent).

**Table 27: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by employment status**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
Employee	86.6	87.0	85.2	87.5	87.2
Self-employed	13.3	12.8	14.1	12.1	12.4
Government scheme	**	**	.2	.2	.2
Unpaid family worker	**	**	.4	.2	.2
Total (n=100%)	50,928	62,840	3,416,004	2,364,0138	27,16,9910

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

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This suggests that, if self-employment does offer such advantages to disabled people, they are less marked, or at least less likely to be taken up, in the case of people with seeing difficulties than in the case of other disabled people. Equally, if self-employment was offering particular flexibility-related advantages, then in the LFS we might expect to find some relationship with severity of impairment, i.e. a higher self-employment rate among 'disabled' people with seeing difficulties, than among non-disabled people with seeing difficulties. The table suggests that any difference between the two groups in this respect is small or negligible – only half a percentage point separates the self-employment rates of disabled and non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty.

Similarly, when we look (Table 28) at the two sub-categories of disability according to the LFS (DDA disability and work-limiting disability), there is no evidence of a significantly higher rate of self-employment among people with a seeing difficulty. In both cases, people with a seeing difficulty have slightly higher self-employment rates than non-disabled people, but lower self-employment rates than people with other kinds of disabilities.

**Table 28: Employed working age disabled people – by employment status and whether DDA or work-limiting disabled**

	DDA disabled		Work-limiting disabled		Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)		
Employee	87.8	85.4	86.0	83.5	87.5	87.2
Self-employed	12.2	14.0	13.9	15.7	12.1	12.4
Government Scheme	**	.2	**	.3	.2	.2
Unpaid family worker	**	.4	**	.6	.2	.2
Total	29,852	2,677,095	40,683	2,107,090	23,640,138	27,169,910

(n=100%)

\*note: some people have both a DDA disability and a work-limiting disability. Therefore the total population in the table is less than the sum of the columns

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

### 3.4.2 Part-time work

A similar story can be told with regard to part-time work. As with self-employment, there is some research literature (see Jones 2007) which suggests that “...part-time employment provides an important way of accommodating a work-limiting disability, rather than reflecting marginalisation of the disabled by employers” (Jones 2007). Table 29 examines the incidence of part-time work among the various groups in our sample.

**Table 29: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by whether full-time or part-time**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
Full time	76.2	81.3	71.0	77.0	76.2
Part-time	23.8	18.7	29.0	23.0	23.8
Total (n=100%)	50,928	62,799	3,415,275	23,631,701	27,160,703

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Looking first at people without a seeing difficulty, the LFS does indeed confirm that disabled people have a higher rate of part-time work (29 per cent), than do non disabled people (23 per cent), and the incidence of part-time work in the employed workforce as a whole is 24 per cent. This higher rate of part-time work is not, however, found among people with seeing difficulties – thus disabled people with seeing difficulties have a part-time rate identical to the overall workforce rate (at 24 per cent), and non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty have a lower than average part-time rate (19 per cent). There is no evidence, therefore, from our analysis of the LFS data, of higher than average use of part-time work among people with a seeing difficulty, and no reason to hypothesise that this form of work is particularly beneficial in offering opportunities to people with seeing difficulties. This is, perhaps, unsurprising, since physical adjustments to the workplace and the working environment and/or assistive technologies or, in some cases, personal support are more likely to be beneficial to people with sight difficulties than are adjustments to working time (which may be more helpful for people with some other conditions that make it difficult for them to work a full working week).

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The picture is not changed when we look at the two sub-categories of disability – DDA and work-limiting disability (Table 30); again people with a seeing difficulty with either kind of disability are less likely to work part-time than their counterparts with other kinds of disability, and the incidence of part-time work is little different from that of the employed population as a whole. Further it is notable that people with a seeing difficulty who have a work-limiting disability actually have a lower part-time rate than people with a seeing difficulty with a DDA disability (23 per cent compared with 28 per cent), and if part-time work was being used as a kind of flexible adjustment for some people with a seeing difficulty with work-limiting disabilities, we might expect the opposite to be the case.

**Table 30: Employed working age disabled people – by whether full-time or part-time, and whether DDA or work-limiting disabled**

	DDA disabled		Work-limiting disabled		Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)		
Full time	73.2	70.5	76.6	67.8	77.0	76.2
Part-time	26.8	29.5	23.4	32.2	23.0	23.8
Total (n=100%)	29,852	2,676,510	40,683	2,106,479	23,631,701	27,160,703

\*note: some people have both a DDA disability and a work-limiting disability. Therefore the total population in the table is less than the sum of the columns

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

#### 3.4.3 Temporary work

When it comes to the other main form of ‘non-standard’ work, temporary work, there is some evidence (Table 31) of a slight over-representation of temporary work among people with a seeing difficulty; at least this is true among those recorded as having a disability, 7.2 per cent of whom are in temporary work, compared with 5.4 per cent among non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty (a figure very close to that of the overall population and to other disabled groups). Generally speaking, temporary work is often seen as a signal of labour market disadvantage, although it has also been

argued that, for new labour market entrants or re-entrants in particular, it can be an important ‘stepping stone’ to a more secure employment situation. It is not possible, from the LFS data, to ascertain how far this slight over-representation of temporary work among disabled people with a seeing difficulty can be seen as disadvantageous.

**Table 31: Employees – seeing difficulty and disability, by whether in permanent or temporary job**

	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Permanent	92.8	94.6	94.6	94.2	94.3
Temporary	7.2	5.4	5.4	5.8	5.7
Total (n=100%)	44,086	54,677	2,910,047	20,670,627	23,679,437

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

In Table 32 we go beyond the question of whether jobs are formally ‘temporary’ or ‘permanent’ from a contractual perspective, to look at how long employed people surveyed by the LFS had been with their current employers. There is no evidence from this that, in fact, people with seeing difficulties are concentrated in short duration jobs; indeed the data rather suggest the opposite. At one end of the spectrum, the proportion of people with a seeing difficulty (whether disabled or not) who have been with their current employer for less than a year at 16 per cent is actually slightly less than the average for non disabled people (19 per cent). At the other end, the proportions of people with a seeing difficulty who have been with the same employer for more than 20 years (17 per cent for disabled people with a seeing difficulty and 15 per cent for non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty) is higher than for non-disabled people and the for the employed population as a whole (both 11 per cent). This suggests that people with a seeing difficulty in work have a relatively stable employment situation.

**Table 32: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by length of time with current employer**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
12 months	16.1	16.1	15.6	18.6	18.2
>1 year; <5 years	27.8	29.5	31.0	35.0	34.5
>5 years; <10 years	22.3	20.1	18.0	17.9	17.9
>10 years; <20 years	17.2	19.4	20.1	17.7	18.0
20 years +	16.7	14.9	15.3	10.8	11.4
Total (n=100%)	50,653	62,609	3,403,324	23,530,613	27,047,199

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

### 3.5 Sectoral and occupational patterns

In this section we turn to look in more detail at the kinds of jobs occupied by employed people with a seeing difficulty. In particular, we examine the sectors of the economy in which they are employed, and the occupational levels of their jobs.

In Table 33 we can see that people with a seeing difficulty without a disability are slightly more likely than average to be employed in the private sector, while disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly more likely than average to be employed in the public sector. Although these differences are not large, they are in the expected direction, and much previous research shows a greater tendency for public sector employers to recruit and retain disabled employees than is the case in the private sector (see, for example, Simm et al. 2007). It should be stressed, however, that this difference is less to do with the public or private nature of the organisations in question, and more to do with their size. Public sector organisations and

establishments tend on average to be larger and to employ more people than do private sector employers, and there is a strong relationship between organisational size and the likelihood of employing disabled people (when we just look at large employers, there is little difference between the public and private sector in this respect). Unfortunately the LFS data do not allow us to explore this relationship between sector and size.

**Table 33: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by sector (public/private)**

	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Private or voluntary sector	74.4	77.2	74.2	75.8	75.6
Public sector	25.6	22.8	25.8	24.2	24.4
Total (n=100%)	50,880	62,673	3,408,241	23,580,432	27,102,226

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Table 34 shows that, at the level of broad industrial sectors, there is rather little variation between the groups, the main difference being that disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly under-represented in the 'primary, manufacturing and construction' sectors, while non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly over-represented in these sectors.

At the more detailed level of the Standard Industrial Classification (Table 35) there is similarly rather little difference between the various groups. Disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly under-represented in manufacturing (SIC D), distribution, hotels and restaurants (SIC G+H) and over-represented in finance and business services (SIC L-N), while non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly over-represented in manufacturing. It should be stressed, however, that these differences are small, and there is nothing from the LFS which suggests that specific sectors are particularly attractive or suited to staff with seeing difficulties, or the opposite.

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**Table 34: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by broad industrial sector**

	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Primary, manufacturing and construction	20.8	25.2	23.2	23.8	23.7
Public services	30.9	29.2	30.6	27.9	28.3
Other services	48.3	45.4	46.1	48.3	48.0
Total (n=100%)	50,927	62,878	3,415,601	23,618,075	27,147,481

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

**Table 35: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by industrial sector**

<b>Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code</b>	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
A,B: agriculture & fishing	**	**	1.4	1.3	1.3
C,E: mining, electricity gas & water supply	**	**	0.9	1.1	1.1
D: manufacturing	11.8	15.2	12.8	13.3	13.2
F: construction	7.4	7.8	8.1	8.2	8.2
G,H: distribution, hotels & restaurants	16.4	18.0	19.1	19.3	19.3
I: transport & communication	6.7	6.2	7.4	6.8	6.9
J,K: finance and business services	19.1	16.4	13.5	16.2	15.8
L-N: education, health and public admin	30.9	29.2	30.6	27.9	28.3
O-Q: other services	6.1	**	6.1	6.0	6.0
<b>Total</b> (n=100%)	<b>50,928</b>	<b>62,878</b>	<b>3,415,601</b>	<b>23,618,077</b>	<b>27,147,484</b>

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

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Turning to the occupations in which people with a seeing difficulty are employed, Table 36 shows that people with a seeing difficulty (irrespective of whether they are disabled or not) are over-represented in managerial, professional and technical occupations, with around 46 per cent of employed people with seeing difficulties being employed in these occupational groups (Table 37 provides the same information broken down in to more detailed occupational categories). The difference is particularly marked, when the comparison is made with other disabled people (of whom only 36 per cent are found in these occupations), but the share is also slightly higher than among the non-disabled population (43 per cent). It is likely that this pattern reflects the educational distribution of people with a seeing difficulty which, as we saw in section 0 above, contains an over-representation of highly qualified people compared with other disabled people. If we focus specifically on people with a seeing difficulty with a disability, however, it would seem that their concentration in managerial, professional and related occupations is even higher than might be expected from their educational levels – thus in Table 36, they are the group with the largest proportion of managerial, professional and technical employees, but it will be recalled that in Table 11 they are not the group with the largest proportion of people educated to NVQ level 4 and above.

**Table 36: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by broad occupational group**

	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Managerial, professional & technical	46.5	45.6	36.2	42.9	42.1
Other non manual	26.9	23.6	29.4	27.5	27.8
Skilled manual	9.4	11.2	11.7	11.3	11.4
Semi & unskilled manual	17.2	19.6	22.6	18.3	18.8
Total (n=100%)	50,928	62,829	3,416,206	23,625,818	27,155,781

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Table 37: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by occupation

Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
Managers and Senior Officials	16.0	15.5	13.2	15.3	15.0
Professional occupations	14.5	14.9	10.4	13.2	12.8
Associate Professional and Technical	16.0	15.2	12.7	14.4	14.2
Administrative and Secretarial	13.0	9.5	12.8	12.0	12.1
Skilled Trades Occupations	9.4	11.2	11.7	11.3	11.4
Personal Service Occupations	6.8	8.2	8.7	7.7	7.8
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	7.1	5.9	7.9	7.8	7.9
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	7.1	8.6	9.3	7.3	7.5
Elementary Occupations	10.2	11.1	13.3	11.0	11.3
Total (n=100%)	50,927	62,829	3,416,207	23,625,819	27,155,782

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

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Table 38 presents the occupational breakdown by the two sub-categories of disability (DDA and work-limiting disabled). In both categories, we note once again the over-representation of people with seeing difficulties in the managerial, professional and technical occupational groups, but that over-representation is greater among those who are recorded as DDA disabled, than among those who have a work-limiting disability.

**Table 38: Employed working age disabled people – by occupation and whether DDA or work-limiting disabled**

	<b>DDA disabled</b>		<b>Work-limiting disabled</b>		<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)	with seeing difficulty (%)	without seeing difficulty (%)		
Managerial, professional & technical	47.1	36.7	44.7	32.9	42.9	42.1
Other non manual	28.8	30.0	28.4	29.7	27.5	27.8
Skilled manual	**	11.1	9.6	12.9	11.3	11.4
Semi and unskilled manual	15.5	22.2	17.3	24.6	18.3	18.8
Total (n=100%)	29,851	2,677,128	40,683	2,107,151	23,625,818	27,155,781

\*note: some people have both a DDA disability and a work-limiting disability. Therefore the total population in the table is less than the sum of the columns

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Finally, it is, however, interesting to note that (Table 39), when it comes to responsibility for supervising other staff, disabled people with seeing difficulties are less likely than non-disabled people with seeing difficulties to have such responsibility in their jobs (36 per cent compared with 42 per cent).

**Table 39: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by supervisory responsibility**

Responsible for supervising other staff?	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
Yes	35.8	42.2	34.0	37.7	37.1
No	64.2	57.8	66.0	62.3	62.9
Total (n=100%)	64,276	61,281	4,330,228	23,351,481	27,807,266

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

### 3.6 In work training

Previous research has shown that disabled people tend to receive less training in work than non-disabled people, and that there is no tendency for the disadvantage that disabled people face because of their lower than average qualification levels to be compensated for, or offset, by a higher level of training in work.

The LFS asks a question about whether people have received any work-related training in the previous 3 months. Table 40 shows that, as with other kinds of disabled people, disabled people with seeing difficulties are less likely to receive training than their non-disabled counterparts. Having said that, the position of disabled people with seeing difficulties (27 per cent having received training in the last 3 months) seems slightly better in this respect than that of people with other kinds of impairments (26 per cent of whom received training). Similarly non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty are more likely to receive training than other non-disabled people; this is likely to reflect their higher than average qualification levels (it is well-documented in the literature that higher qualified people are more likely to receive work-related training, than are less well-qualified people).

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**Table 40: Employed working age population – seeing difficulty and disability, by whether received training in last 13 weeks**

<b>Received training?</b>	<b>Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Other long-term disabled (%)</b>	<b>Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	27.3	31.4	26.3	28.5	28.3
No	72.7	68.6	73.7	71.5	71.7
Total (n=100%)	50,425	62,306	3,395,507	23,348,231	26,856,469

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

## 4 Multivariate analysis: factors influencing the likelihood of being in work

The previous chapter looked at how the employment of people with seeing difficulties and disabled people varied according to a range of individual characteristics. The analysis looked separately at factors (independent variables) such as age, qualifications, nature of impairment etc. but did not enable us to identify the individual influence of each of these factors. Thus, as previously discussed, variables such as age, qualifications, and nature of impairment are themselves inter-related: more severely disabled people tend to be older, and less well-qualified, for example, and it is possible that what appears to be an effect of impairment may be wholly or partly a qualification effect or an age effect.

Multivariate analysis takes into account the effect of a range of independent variables and establishes the strength of the relationship between a dependent and independent variable. In this chapter we present results from some multivariate analyses using a logistic regression method.

The dependent variable for these analyses is whether or not an individual person is in employment.

The independent or explanatory variables are a range of variables used in previous chapters and which were seen as likely, in light of evidence from the bivariate analysis in the previous chapter, as well as previous research on disability and employment, to be relevant factors influencing the probability of an individual being in work. These include: various measures of seeing difficulties/disability; single or multiple health problems/disabilities; level of qualification; age; gender; ethnic origin; presence of dependent children.

In each case several models were run, and the models shown below are those which performed best statistically. The regression results are broadly similar to the findings of other econometric studies which have looked at disability alongside other factors influencing employment probabilities (Blackaby et al. 1999, Kidd et al. 2000, Berthoud 2006), although the other studies did not distinguish the effect of having a seeing difficulty as we have here.

## 4 Multivariate analysis

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Table 41 takes as a disability reference group, people who are not disabled or who are disabled but with an impairment other than a seeing difficulty. It then looks to see whether disabled people with a seeing difficulty are more or less likely to be in work than those in the reference group, after controlling for all the other independent variables. For each independent variable, the table the odds of being in work compared with someone in the reference group for that variable; if the odds ratio is greater than 1, the chances of being in work are higher than for those in the reference group, whereas if the odds ratio is less than one, the chances are lower.

The table shows that:

- Men are more likely to be in work than women;
- Disabled people with a seeing difficulty are less likely to be in work than non-disabled people or people without a seeing difficulty;
- People with multiple health problems are less likely to be in work than those with a single health condition;
- The odds of being in work increase with the level of qualification;
- White people are more likely to be in work than non-white people;
- People with dependent children are slightly more likely to be in work than those without dependent children;
- The odds of being in work increase with age.

All the variables included in the model are statistically significant at conventional levels.

Table 42 repeats the analysis with the same independent variables, but using a greater degree of disaggregation for the disability variable (and taking a different reference group: people who are not disabled and who do not have a seeing difficulty). In addition a quadratic term is also included in the regression equation for the age variable, to allow for the possibility that employment probability does not change linearly with age.

The results for nearly all the variables are broadly the same as in the previous model in Table 41. In particular:

- gender, multiple health problems, qualification and ethnic origin have the same direction and a similar volume of impact on the odds of being in work;

- The sign on the dependent children variable, is however, unstable between the two models. In Table 42, having dependent children is associated with a slightly **lower** chance of being in work;
- The quadratic term on the age variable is negative and significant, implying that, the odds of being in work initially increase with age, and then after a certain age, decline again (presumably an early retirement effect);
- Compared with non-disabled people without a seeing difficulty, non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly less likely to be in work. Disabled people are however, considerably less likely to be in work, and disabled people with a seeing difficulty are slightly worse off than other kinds of disabled people in this respect. This reinforces the findings on employment rates from the bivariate analysis in the previous chapter (see Table 21), confirming that the relationship between being disabled with a seeing difficulty and having a particularly low employment rate is not the result of other factors in the model, but is associated with the disability/seeing difficulty itself.

Finally, the model in Table 43 repeats the analysis, with exactly the same independent variables as in Table 42. This time, however, only disabled people are included in the model, and we look at the difference in employment probabilities according to whether or not the individuals in question have a work-limiting disability. The other variables all have similar effects as in Table 42 (except that having dependent children this time slightly increases the odds of being in work). As far as the disability variable is concerned it shows, as expected, that having a work-limiting disability significantly reduces the odds of being in work, compared with having other kinds of disability, and that a work-limiting seeing difficulty has a slightly more negative impact than other kinds of work-limiting impairments. Similarly, among people with non-work limiting impairments, those with seeing difficulties are less likely to be in work than those with other non work-limiting impairments.

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**Table 41: Logistic regression: dependent variable (1= in employment, 0 = unemployed or inactive)**

Independent variables	Exp(B): odds ratio
<b>Gender</b>	
(female)	(1.000)
male	1.241*
<b>Disability/seeing difficulty</b>	
(not disabled, or disabled without a seeing difficulty)	(1.000)
Long-term disabled with a seeing difficulty	0.579*
<b>Number of health problems/disabilities</b>	
(one health problem)	(1.000)
more than one health problem	0.307*
<b>Highest level qualification held</b>	
(low)	(1.000)
medium	2.171*
high	4.026*
<b>Ethnic origin</b>	
(non-white)	(1.000)
white	1.824*
<b>Dependent children</b>	
(no dependent children)	(1.000)
one or more dependent children	1.019*
<b>Age (in years)</b>	1.005*
<b>Constant</b>	0.675*
n (weighted) 11,066,692; -2 log likelihood 1.296E7	
* p<0.001	

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

**Table 42: Logistic regression: dependent variable (1= in employment, 0 = unemployed or inactive)**

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Exp(B): odds ratio</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
(female)	(1.000)
male	1.417*
<b>Disability/seeing difficulty</b>	
(not disabled, or disabled without a seeing difficulty)	(1.000)
Long-term disabled with a seeing difficulty	0.248*
other long-term disabled	0.303*
Not disabled, with a seeing difficulty	0.954
<b>Number of health problems/disabilities</b>	
(one health problem)	(1.000)
more than one health problem	0.436*
<b>Highest level qualification held</b>	
(low)	(1.000)
medium	2.159*
high	3.499*
<b>Ethnic origin</b>	
white	(1.000)
(non-white)	0.521*
<b>Dependent children</b>	
(no dependent children)	(1.000)
one or more dependent children	0.817*
<b>Age (in years)</b>	1.246*
<b>Age squared</b>	0.997
<b>Constant</b>	0.052*
n (weighted) 11,066,692; -2 log likelihood 1.209E7	
* p<0.001	

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

## 4 Multivariate analysis

**Table 43: Logistic regression: dependent variable (1= in employment, 0 = unemployed or inactive)**

Independent variables	Exp(B): odds ratio
<b>Gender</b>	
(female)	(1.000)
male	1.357*
<b>Disability/seeing difficulty</b>	
(work-limiting disabled, with a seeing difficulty)	(1.000)
non-work limiting disabled, with a seeing difficulty	4.759*
other work-limiting disabled	1.088*
<b>Number of health problems/disabilities</b>	
(one health problem)	(1.000)
more than one health problem	
<b>Highest level qualification held</b>	
(low)	(1.000)
medium	2.171*
high	4.026*
<b>Ethnic origin</b>	
(non-white)	(1.000)
white	1.824
<b>Dependent children</b>	
(no dependent children)	(1.000)
one or more dependent children	1.019*
<b>Age (in years)</b>	1.223*
<b>Age squared</b>	0.998
<b>Constant</b>	0.009*
n (weighted) 6,865,144 ; -2 log likelihood 7.310E6	
* p<0.001	

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

# 5 Earnings

## 5.1 Gross weekly and hourly earnings: full-time employees

Table 44 looks at the gross weekly earnings of full-time employees according to their seeing difficulty and disability status. If we take the gross weekly earnings of non-disabled people without a seeing difficulty as a reference point, then the data suggest that people with a seeing difficulty with a disability are slightly disadvantaged in wage terms, with gross weekly earnings at 98.3 per cent of the reference category. This disadvantage is, however, nowhere near as great as that experienced by other (without seeing difficulties) disabled people, whose gross weekly earnings are only 89.8 per cent of the reference category. On the other hand, it should be noted that people with a seeing difficulty without a disability have a mean level of weekly gross earnings somewhat in excess of that of the reference category (108.5 per cent).

Although, in Table 44, we looked only at full-time employees, it is nevertheless possible that part of the variation in weekly pay recorded for different groups of employees is due to variation between the groups in the average number of weekly hours worked per week. Before going further with the analysis of earnings, we check this in Table 45, which repeats the analysis of Table 44 but for hourly rather than weekly pay. Although the differentials are very slightly reduced when we look at hourly rather than weekly pay, the overall pattern is identical, suggesting that it makes little difference whether we conduct the relative earnings analysis in hourly or weekly terms, and in most of the rest of this chapter we simply present data on weekly earnings.

**Table 44: Full-time employees – seeing difficulty and disability, by gross weekly pay in main job**

	<b>Mean gross weekly pay (£)</b>	<b>Mean gross weekly pay as % of pay of reference group (non-disabled/ without a seeing difficulty)</b>	<b>n=</b>
Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty	470.88	98.3	36,612
Not disabled with seeing difficulty	519.89	108.5	42,502
Other long-term disabled	430.41	89.8	2,150,272
Not disabled & without a seeing difficulty	479.13	100.0	15,704,749
<b>Total</b>	<b>473.37</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>17,934,134</b>

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

**Table 45: Full-time employees – seeing difficulty and disability, by gross hourly pay in main job**

	<b>Mean gross hourly pay (£)</b>	<b>Mean gross weekly pay as % of pay of reference group (non-disabled/ without a seeing difficulty)</b>	<b>n=</b>
Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty	11.67	(98.1)	36,496
Not disabled with seeing difficulty	12.81	(107.6)	42,502
Other long-term disabled	10.79	(90.7)	2,139,175
Not disabled & without a seeing difficulty	11.90	(100.0)	15,621,560
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.76</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>17,839,733</b>

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

## 5.2 Earnings and qualification levels

It is of course likely that the earnings differences, in part, reflect the differences in educational qualifications and occupational level between the different groups, which have been observed in previous chapters, and it is certainly not possible to draw from these data any conclusions about the existence or extent of any wage discrimination faced by people with a seeing difficulty.

Some econometric analysis of the LFS exists in the literature (Blackaby et al. 1999, Kidd et al. 2000, and Jones et al. 2006), focusing on the possibility of wage discrimination against disabled people in general (for whom, as Table 44 shows, the wage differentials are somewhat larger than is the case for disabled people with a seeing difficulty). The general conclusion from these studies tends to be that there are unexplained wage differentials between disabled and non-disabled people, which can possibly be attributed to discrimination.

As Blackaby et al. (1999) note:

**“The most important characteristic in accounting for differences in earnings is the level of education. Disabled people have generally spent fewer years in education and have gained fewer qualifications. Investing in education and certifications is found to be a particularly effective way to increase the chance of being in employment. However, disabled people are still found to be under-represented in the more senior occupations and educational qualifications are found to increase the likelihood of being in a professional or management career more for non-disabled than for disabled people.**

**This research found substantial differences in earnings and employment probabilities between people with a disability and the rest of the population. However it has not been possible to distinguish fully employment and earnings differences that might arise from discrimination and those that might arise from, say, lower productivity in some cases. Such distinctions, however, are important when attempting to design and monitor effective public policy in this area”**

The main deficiency of the previous work from our current perspective is that most of the studies tend to treat disabled people as a homogeneous group. This is often because of sample size constraints but intuitively it is not plausible that, if earnings discrimination and disadvantage exists, it will be experienced in the same way and to the same extent by people with physical, sensory and psychological impairments. Although people with a seeing difficulty are not separately identified in these econometric earnings analyses, Jones et al. (2006) do however, include a variable which separates out broad impairment categories, one category of which consists of both sight and hearing problems. The main conclusion of their earnings analysis is that all of the broad impairment categories have a significant earnings advantage over

people with mental health conditions (who fare worst both in terms of access to employment and in terms of earnings when in employment). Given the significant role of educational qualifications in determining earnings and other labour market outcomes, it might be expected that people with seeing difficulties might fare better in labour market terms than people with some other impairments, as the current analysis in previous chapters shows that disabled people with a seeing difficulty are rather better qualified than disabled people in general, and Table 44 above confirms that earnings disadvantage is rather slight.

To explore further the relationship between impairment, qualifications and earnings, Table 46 repeats the analysis of Table 44, for each of the three broad qualifications categories used in previous chapters ('high', 'medium' and 'low' qualifications). At each level of qualification it looks at the earnings of each of the different disability categories as a percentage of the earnings of a reference group (defined as non-disabled people without a seeing difficulty). If, as hypothesised, qualification levels are a key determinant of earnings differentials between the different disability groups, then we would expect those differentials to be smaller when we look at people with a specific qualification level, than when we look at all qualifications taken together.

The table shows that this is exactly what happens for disabled people (without a seeing difficulty). Disabled people without a seeing difficulty taken together have an earnings level of 89.8 per cent the level of non-disabled people. In each of the three broad qualification groups, however, the ratio of earnings of disabled people to that of non-disabled people is higher than this (in the range 92-94 per cent in each case). Thus it is likely that, as expected, for disabled people as a whole (without a seeing difficulty), part, but not all of their earnings disadvantage is due to their lower qualification levels.

When we look at people with a seeing difficulty, however, the picture is less straightforward. Taking first those people with a seeing difficulty who are not disabled, we saw that their earnings were some 8.5 per cent higher than the other non-disabled group. If this difference was primarily due to their higher qualification level, once again we would expect a smaller earnings gap within each of the broad qualifications categories. As Table 46 shows, however, this is true only for people in the higher level qualifications group (NVQ level 4 and above), where the gap narrows to only 3.7 per cent. For people in the medium and low qualifications groups the earnings premium attached to having a seeing difficulty is even larger than previously (13.9 and 12.8 per cent respectively), suggesting that some other factors are important in explaining these wage differentials.

**Table 46: Full-time employees – seeing difficulty and disability, by gross weekly pay in main job and qualification level**

	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty	Not disabled with seeing difficulty	Other long-term disabled	Not disabled & without a seeing difficulty	n=
<b>highest qualification held</b>	<b>Mean gross weekly pay as % of pay of reference group (non-disabled/without a seeing difficulty)</b>				
high	98.0	103.7	92.8	100.0 = £622.07	6,341,624
med	95.4	113.9	94.2	100.0 = £422.09	6,587,747
low	103.3	112.8	92.3	100.0 = £365.45	4,913,001
All	98.3	108.5	89.8	100.0 = £479.13	17,934,134

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Similarly when we look at people with a seeing difficulty who are disabled, taking all qualifications together, their earnings are slightly less than those of the reference group (98.3 per cent). When we look at each qualification group separately, however, in each case the earnings differential increases rather than decreasing as expected, and in the lowest qualification group, the differential goes in the other direction (with disabled people with a seeing difficulty earning more than people in the non-disabled reference group with the same qualification).

### 5.3 Earnings and age

Another route to explore is to look at the role of age in explaining earnings: normally if one looks at the distribution of earnings by age in a cross-section population sample, earnings increase with age up to a point in the 40-50 range and then decline. This is also the case in the LFS sample; although sample size constraints mean that we can

## 5 Earnings

look only at broad age groups, Table 47 shows that, for our non-disabled reference group, earnings peak in the middle age group (25-54) where they are considerably higher than in the 16-24 age group, and then fall off slightly among 55+ year olds.

**Table 47: Full-time employees – seeing difficulty and disability, by gross weekly pay in main job and age**

age	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty	Not disabled with seeing difficulty	Other long-term disabled	Not disabled & without a seeing difficulty	n=
	<b>Mean gross weekly pay as % of pay of reference group (non-disabled/without a seeing difficulty)</b>				
16-24	99.1	96.2	93.2	100.0 = £275.90	2,400,112
25-54	99.6	103.7	86.9	100.0 = £516.34	11,888,171
55+	89.0	112.1	88.7	100.0 = £485.73	1,588,451
All	98.3	108.5	89.8	100.0 = £479.13	17,934,134

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Looking at earnings for each disability category within these broad age groups suggests that age is relevant, at least in the young and mid-age ranges. For both disabled and non-disabled people with seeing difficulties, the earnings gap is lower within each of these age ranges than it is when we take all ages together. Indeed for disabled people with a seeing difficulty, the gap is almost eliminated (and is less than one per cent) in the two younger age groups, although in the oldest age group it is increased. Within the 16-24 age range and the 25-54 age range, if we compare disabled people with a seeing difficulty with non-disabled, people of the same age but without a seeing difficulty, their earnings levels are almost identical.

Sample size constraints in the LFS prevent us from exploring in more detail the combined effects of age and qualification, but it would seem that both variables are likely to be important in explaining earnings variations. Overall, people with a seeing difficulty are not significantly disadvantaged in earnings compared with non-disabled people, and are on average significantly better off than disabled people with other kinds of impairments. While the analysis by age and qualification is not conclusive, it suggests that the (slightly) lower than average earnings of people with more severe seeing difficulties (i.e. those who meet the LFS definition of disability) may partly be due to the different age distribution of people with a seeing difficulty (when we look at individual age groups the differentials are smaller, except in the oldest groups). Similarly it suggests that the higher than average earnings of people with less severe seeing difficulties (i.e. those who are not 'disabled' in the LFS) may partly be due to the larger than average proportion of highly-qualified (NVQ level 4+) people in this group (when we just compare highly qualified people with a seeing difficulty with highly qualified people in the reference groups the earnings difference is much less).

## 5.4 Distribution of earnings

So far we have compared earnings of different groups by looking at the mean level of earnings. The mean value of earnings for a particular group of people can, however, be influenced by a small number of people among that group with very high, or very low earnings. It is possible, therefore, that the relatively good earnings position of people with a seeing difficulty is influenced in this way by a minority of high earners, and that the overall position of the rest of the employed population with seeing difficulties is less advantageous. To check this possibility we can look at median earnings (a measure of central tendency which is not influenced by extremes in this way), and at the distribution or spread of earnings (as measured, for example, by the ratio of the highest to the lowest decile of earnings). Table 48 does this.

The table shows that, as is common with earnings distributions, the median for each group is lower than the mean earnings for that group (reflecting the influence of a small number of high earners in each group). However, when we look at the differentials between each group and our chosen reference group (non-disabled people without a seeing difficulty) we find that while for disabled people without a seeing difficulty the median differential is virtually the same as the mean differential (both mean and median earnings are around 90 per cent of the level of the reference group), when we turn to disabled people with a seeing difficulty, the median differential is much larger than the mean. While mean earnings of this group are 98 per cent of the level of the reference group, median earnings are only 91 per cent of this level, confirming that the influence of the minority of high earners has a bigger effect on the mean of disabled people with a seeing difficulty than it does on the mean earnings of disabled people without a

## 5 Earnings

seeing difficulty. When we take this into account by concentrating on the median, the earnings penalty of disabled people with a seeing difficulty increases to nearly ten per cent. Similarly, the ratio of the 90th to the 10th percentile of earnings is greater for disabled people with a seeing difficulty than for any of the other categories, confirming that the spread of earnings is wider in this group than in the others.

**Table 48: Full-time employees – seeing difficulty and disability: mean, median and spread of gross weekly earnings**

gross weekly earnings	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty	Not disabled with seeing difficulty	Other long-term disabled	Not disabled & without a seeing difficulty
mean	470.88	519.89	430.41	479.13
median	369.00	431.00	365.00	404.00
mean as % of pay of reference group (non-disabled/without a seeing difficulty)	98.3	108.5	89.8	100.0
median as % of pay of reference group (non-disabled/without a seeing difficulty)	91.3	106.7	90.3	100.0
10th percentile	217.00	235.00	205.00	214.00
90th percentile	865.00	877.00	717.00	808.00
ratio of 90th to tenth percentile	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.8
total (n=100%)	36,612	42,502	2,150,272	15,704,749

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

### 5.5 Multivariate analysis: determinants of earnings

In order to disentangle the relative influence of the different factors which affect individual earnings such as qualifications, age and other personal characteristics, we need to undertake multivariate statistical analysis. This also enables us to isolate the

impact of disability on earnings and to establish whether there is any element of earnings variation which is associated with disability in general, and seeing difficulty in particular.

Table 49 estimates a wage equation, using ordinary least squares regression, with a dependent variable equal to the logarithm of hourly earnings. The variables in the model are all significant at conventional levels, and the explanatory power of the model is good. The signs on the coefficients in the model are generally in line with expectation. In particular, the model shows that, when we control for all the variables in the model:

- earnings increase with age up to a point and then decline (with a negative sign on the quadratic term);
- men have higher earnings than women;
- earnings increase with the level of qualification;
- there are significant regional variations in earnings, with the highest levels in London, the South East and Eastern regions, and the lowest levels in Northern Ireland, the North East and Wales;
- earnings increase with job tenure;
- whites have higher earnings than non-whites;

Looking at the role of disability, compared with the reference group (non-disabled people without seeing difficulty), disabled people have lower earnings (whether or not they have a seeing difficulty), while non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty have higher levels of earnings than average.

Thus, the multivariate results partly confirm the bivariate results presented earlier, showing that the earnings disadvantage faced by disabled people (both with and without a seeing difficulty), and the earnings advantage of people with a seeing difficulty who are not disabled, persist when other factors are controlled for.

Interestingly, however, the (negative) coefficients on the two disabled dummy variables (with and without seeing difficulties) are identical. So, while the bivariate analysis suggested that the earnings disadvantage of disabled people with a seeing difficulty was less than that of other seeing difficulty, the multivariate analysis shows that once other factors are controlled for, both groups of disabled people suffer the **same earnings disadvantage**. That is to say, the apparently better earnings position of disabled people with a seeing difficulty, compared with other disabled people, is largely due to other factors (such as age, qualification, gender etc.) rather than their impairment.

Table 49: OLS regression – dependent var: log (hourly earnings)

Independent variables	B
<b>constant</b>	0.50*
<b>age</b>	0.73*
<b>age squared</b>	-0.001*
<b>male</b>	0.204*
<b>qualifications</b> (reference category: no qualifications)	
NVQ level 4 & above	0.670*
NVQ level 3	0.343*
trade apprenticeships/other qualifications	0.194*
NVQ level 2	0.242*
below NVQ level 2	0.145*
<b>Region</b> (reference category: North East)	
London	0.318*
South East	0.179*
Eastern	0.161*
South West	0.056*
East Midlands	0.055*
West Midlands	0.053*
North West	0.047*
Yorkshire & Humberside	0.044*
Scotland	0.030*
Wales	0.017*
Northern Ireland	-0.014*
<b>Length of time with current employer</b> (years)	0.012*
<b>Ethnic origin</b> (reference category: other)	
White	0.088*
Asian/Asian British	-0.013*
Black/Black British	-0.070*
<b>Disability</b> (ref cat: not disabled without seeing difficulty)	
Long-term disabled with a seeing difficulty	-0.087*
Other long-term disabled	-0.087*
Not disabled with a seeing difficulty	0.018*
R <sup>2</sup> 0.635; * p<0.001	

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

## 6 State benefits

As might be expected, whether people with seeing difficulties are claiming state benefits depends very much on the severity of their impairment. Thus, as Table 50 shows, 22 per cent of working age people with a seeing difficulty who are not disabled are claiming state benefits. This proportion is lower than for the working age population as a whole and lower than for non-disabled people without a seeing difficulty, and is likely to reflect the relatively strong educational and labour market position of this group, reported in previous chapters.

When we turn to people with a seeing difficulty who are disabled according to the LFS definitions, the picture is a very different one: 58 per cent of this group are claiming state benefits and this is higher than is found among other disabled people.

**Table 50: Working age population – seeing difficulty & disability, by whether claiming state benefits**

Claiming state benefits?	Long-term disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Not disabled with seeing difficulty (%)	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled and without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
Yes	57.6	22.0	54.5	27.5	32.6
No	42.4	78.0	45.5	72.5	67.4
Total (n=100%)	107,697	76,019	6,837,626	29,414,796	36,436,138

Source: LFS July 2004-June 2007 (aggregated data for 12 quarters)

Of course, in order to understand these differences, we need to look in more detail at the nature of the benefits being claimed. In addition to the full range of state benefits, there is a large and complex system of benefits for disabled people in the UK. These fall into several broad categories:

**Income replacement benefits:** These are several benefits which are payable to replace lost income, where people of working age cannot work due to sickness or disability. The main ones are:

- **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).** This is payable to employees by their employers for a period of sickness up to 28 weeks;
- **Incapacity Benefit (IB)** [4], This is payable to people who have paid in sufficient National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and are incapable of work. For most people, the first 28 weeks of incapacity is assessed against their usual occupation; after that time, the test of eligibility is whether someone is incapable of all work.
- **Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA).** This is payable to people who have never worked or have not paid sufficient NICs to receive IB. Recipients must have been incapable of work for at least 28 weeks, and be at least 80 per cent disabled. From April 2001, SDA was phased out, and no new claims were accepted.
- **Income Support (IS).** This is the main form of means-tested social assistance for a range of non-working people (such as lone parents or elderly people). Disabled people can claim IS if they are unable to work (under the same rules as IB, above), and may then be eligible for a Disability Premium, payable on top of the basic benefit. People can claim IS to top up IB or SDA.

### **Benefits to meet the extra costs of disability:**

- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA).** This is payable to people who need help with personal care or supervision, or mobility. People have to pass the disability tests, but it does not depend on NICs or work status. It is not means-tested, nor taxable.
- **Independent Living Fund** and direct payments from local authorities. The Independent Living Funds (ILFs) are government-funded independent trusts which make cash payments to disabled people to buy their own personal assistance and so live independently in their own homes. Local authorities may now make similar payments to people who are assessed as needing community care services.

Sample size constraints mean that most of these disability-related benefits need to be combined into a single category when analysing LFS data. In addition, we are further constrained when breaking down the benefits variable into different categories, by a

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[4] Note that under the proposals outlined in the Welfare Reform green paper (2006), Incapacity Benefit will be replaced by a new Employment Support Allowance from October 2008.

break in continuity over time in the definition of the variable. ONS, in the LFS User Guide for 2007, recommend that the variable not be used prior to 2007 due to “**concerns over the derivation of the variable**”. For this reason in the following tables we use only data from the first two quarters of 2007, which greatly increases the minimum cell size for which robust cell estimates can be made. For these reasons, we also combine disabled and non-disabled people with a seeing difficulty in to a single category in the tables below.

**Table 51: Working age population claiming benefits – seeing difficulty & disability, by type of benefit claimed**

Type of benefit	All with a seeing difficulty (disabled and non-disabled) %	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled & without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
Unemployment related benefits, NI credits	**	5.2	6.1	5.9
Income support	18.3	28.8	9.0	15.2
Sickness or disability	58.8	55.7	3.8	20.2
State pension	**	1.6	0.9	1.1
Family related benefits (excl. child ben & tax credits)	**	0.4	0.6	0.6
Child benefit	32.1	35.4	79.8	65.7
Housing/Council tax	26.8	34.5	13.1	19.9
Tax credits	28.6	26.3	55.3	46.1
Other	**	3.2	3.6	3.5
Total (n=100%*)	75,423	3,741,728	8,237,044	12,054,194

note: \* columns do not sum to 100% as many respondents claim more than one benefit type

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS January-June 2007 (aggregated data for 2 quarters)

## 6 State benefits

Table 51 shows that 59 per cent of people with a seeing difficulty claim sickness or disability related benefits; this is the largest category of benefits claimed by people with a seeing difficulty, and the proportion claiming is slightly higher than the proportion of people who are disabled and who do not have a seeing difficulty (56 per cent). It should be remembered that the seeing difficulty category in this table includes people who are not disabled, so if we were able to further break the data down it is likely that the proportion of disabled people with a seeing difficulty claiming disability related benefits would be even higher than 59 per cent.

**Table 52: Working age population claiming disability-related benefits – seeing difficulty & disability, by type of benefit claimed**

Type of disability benefit	All with a seeing difficulty (disabled and non-disabled) %	Other long-term disabled (%)	Not disabled & without a seeing difficulty (%)	Total (%)
Incapacity Benefit	40.5	61.4	21.1	55.9
Severe Disablement Allowance	**	7.4	**	6.7
Statutory Sick Pay	**	1.9	7.5	2.6
Invalid Care Allowance	**	6.5	38.0	10.5
Disability Living Allowance	75.4	55.2	36.9	53.2
Attendance Allowance	**	2.5	5.2	2.8
Industrial Injury Disablement Allowance	**	3.5	**	3.3
Total (n=100%*)	44,474	2,068,682	309,368	2,422,423

note: \* columns do not sum to 100% as many respondents claim more than one benefit type

\*\* sample numbers in cell too small for reliable estimate

Source: LFS January-June 2007 (aggregated data for 2 quarters)

Finally, Table 52 looks at the different specific benefits being received by the 2.4 million LFS working age respondents claiming disability benefits. Cell size constraints limit what can be said about people with seeing difficulties, but the table shows that taking disabled and non-disabled people with seeing difficulties together, they are more likely than other kinds of disabled people to be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (with 75 per cent claiming this, compared with 55 per cent of other disabled claimants of disability benefits), and less likely to be claimants of Incapacity Benefit (40 per cent compared with 61 per cent).

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