

Navigating a Changing Job Market

2026-27 JOB MARKET GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- The State of the 2026 Job Market
- Turn Your Skills Into Opportunity
- Building a Smarter Job Search
- Preparing Your Career for AI
- What to Expect from the 2027 Market
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THE STATE OF THE 2026 JOB MARKET

Today's job market is challenging, with slower hiring and greater competition in many roles and industries.

U.S. employers added just 29,000 jobs in September 2026, while unemployment was 4.2%. Indeed Hiring Lab also reports that active job seekers continue to face a difficult hiring environment, even as postings show early signs of improvement.

For job seekers with disabilities, navigating the market may require a more focused approach. A difficult search isn't a reflection of your talent.

Where are you getting stuck?

• Applying, but few interviews?

Focus on strong-fit positions, tailor your resume, and spend more time building connections with target employers.

• Interviewing, but few offers?

Prepare strong STAR or SET examples, research each employer, and practice talking about your results.

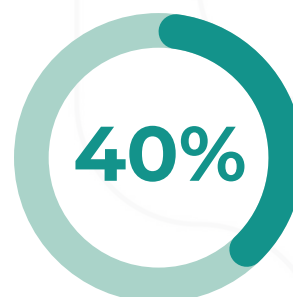
• Searching for months?

Look for patterns. Which roles generate responses? Consider related job titles and transferable skills, and protect your energy along the way.

Know the Market

Disability employment continues to make progress. In September 2026, 40.3% of working-age people with disabilities were employed, the highest employment-to-population ratio reported in the current disability employment data. Labor-force participation reached 43.8%, while unemployment was 7.8%.

Opportunity also varies significantly by field. Indeed Hiring Lab found stronger demand in areas including engineering and personal care/home health, while technology remained more challenging.



Employment of working-age people with disabilities reached a record 40.3% in September 2026.

TURN YOUR SKILLS INTO OPPORTUNITY

Find where your skills fit

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 5.9 million additional jobs between 2025 and 2035. Healthcare and social assistance is projected to add more than 2.2 million jobs, while professional, scientific, and technical services is projected to add 926,700.

Areas to watch

- **Healthcare & social assistance:** BLS projects this sector to account for about 37% of new jobs through 2035.
- **Professional, scientific & technical services:** Demand for AI systems, research, development, and consulting is expected to support growth.
- **Utilities & energy:** Utilities is projected to be the fastest-growing major sector through 2035, supported in part by rising electricity demand.

- **Technology roles:** Data, cybersecurity, IT infrastructure and AI-connected skills remain important, while hiring conditions vary significantly across tech occupations.

Think skills, not only titles

Indeed analysis points to broad, portable skills such as business operations and communications appearing across many kinds of jobs. For job seekers, that makes skills-based thinking valuable: look beyond your previous job title and identify what you know how to do that can transfer to a growing field.

Administrative Assistant →

Project coordination | Microsoft 365 | scheduling | documentation | reporting

Retail →

Customer service | sales | training | inventory | conflict resolution

Hospitality →

Customer experience | operations | scheduling | team coordination

TIP: Search for skills you have across several related job titles.

BUILDING A SMARTER JOB SEARCH

A selective market makes focus especially valuable. With the right strategy, tools, and preparation, you can confidently pursue opportunities.

Try this approach

- **Choose 10-20 target employers**
Follow their career pages and set alerts.
- **Identify 2-3 job families**
Search several titles that use similar skills.
- **Prioritize strong matches**
Spend more time on applications where your experience aligns with the core requirements.

Instead of:

"Responsible for customer inquiries."

Try:

"Supported 40+ customer inquiries per day across phone and email."

- **Track what works**
Record applications, interviews, and outcomes. Adjust your strategy based on which roles generate responses.

Navigating AI in Hiring

AI may be involved in resume screening, candidate matching, assessments, and other parts of recruiting. Automated hiring technology can also create accessibility barriers for applicants with disabilities.

Use AI to help your search

AI can help you:

- Compare your resume with job descriptions
- Identify relevant keywords
- Brainstorm transferable skills
- Practice interview questions
- Research occupations
- Improve clarity and grammar

Keep yourself in control. Check AI-generated information for accuracy and make sure your application still represents your real skills, experience, and voice.

AI is showing up in more jobs.



7.3% of Indeed job postings mentioned AI in September 2026, but was just 3.7% in September 2025

PREPARING YOUR CAREER FOR AI

AI is changing the jobs themselves, too.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics now includes AI exposure in its employment projections and expects demand for AI-based systems to contribute to growth in professional, scientific, and technical services.

Ask yourself:

- **What tasks in my field are changing?**
- **Which skills will become more valuable?**
- **What could I learn next?**

Look at current job postings in your field. Pay attention to AI tools, software, certifications, and skills that appear repeatedly.

You don't need to become an AI expert. Build the AI literacy that makes sense for your career.

Know your Access needs

You have the right to request reasonable accommodations during the hiring process when the law applies.

An accommodation could involve an interview, assessment, application technology, or another part of the process.

Keep your request simple

"I'm looking forward to the interview. I need [specific adjustment] as a reasonable accommodation for the interview process. Please let me know who I should coordinate with."

If technology creates a barrier

- Contact the employer
- Explain the the specific accessibility issue
- Ask about an accessible alternative
- Save relevant emails, screenshots, and the job posting

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE 2027 MARKET

Expect hiring to remain selective.

A September 2026 Indeed/Pulsenomics survey of more than 120 economists projected limited movement in hiring demand over the following year, with the average forecast putting unemployment at 4.3% by September 2027.

Build your 2027 strategy around five things:

1. TARGETED

Know which jobs and employers you want.

2. SKILLS-BASED

Know what you can do across different roles.

3. CONNECTED

Build relationships alongside applying online.

4. AI-AWARE

Understand how technology is changing your field.

5. ACCESSIBLE

Know what you need to perform at your best.

Your Job Search Checklist

GET READY

- Identify 2-3 target job families
- Choose target employers
- Update your resume and LinkedIn
- Identify transferable skills
- Set job alerts

BEFORE APPLYING

- Check the core qualifications
- Tailor your resume
- Show measurable results
- Save the job posting

BEFORE INTERVIEWING

- Research the employer
- Prepare STAR/SET examples
- Test interview technology
- Prepare questions
- Request accommodations if needed

EVERY FEW WEEKS

- Review what is generating responses
- Adjust your target roles
- Reconnect with your network
- Check trends in your field
- Take a break when you need one

- **Build your network:** Professional associations, former colleagues, LinkedIn connections, disability-focused organizations, and local workforce resources can help you discover opportunities and information.
- **Protect your energy:** A slower hiring market can extend the search. Set a realistic application routine, prioritize strong-fit opportunities, and give yourself room to reset.
- **Research accessibility:** Review career-site accessibility, accommodation information, work arrangements, and employee resources before deciding where to invest your time.
- **Prepare for disclosure and accommodations:** Decide what information you want to share and what support you need to participate in the hiring process.

Disability Solutions is here to help

- **Career Center:** jobs.disabilitytalent.org - explore opportunities from employers seeking to reach disability talent.
- **Job Seeker Support:** visit disabilitytalent.org/jobseekers to access career resources, articles, webinars, interview guidance, and practical tools.
- **Changing Minds & Changing Lives Podcast:** hear conversations about disability, work, access, and career experiences.

The current job market may ask job seekers to be more focused and adaptable. Your skills, experience, and access needs still matter. Use data to identify opportunities, use technology intentionally, ask for access when you need it, and build connections that can help your experience reach the right employer.