

Poverty and Disability in Washington State

Health Sciences Track

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Background

- After studying the lack of awareness surrounding disabilities and the resources made available, our team decided to find correlations between people with disabilities and other potential trends in Washington State.
- The purpose behind our project is to raise awareness about the lack of accessibility and support available for those with disabilities. We also hope to bring about real change within our state to make it more accessible for all residents. Additionally, we aim to make community members feel more at ease about having conversations about accessibility and reduce negative stigmas against those with disabilities.
- We believe that the best way to raise awareness about the issue at hand is first analyzing data where people can later come together to learn more information and ask questions. This is because we want to be able to provide more in-depth information than something like a condensed infographic would be unable to provide. By creating this analysis, we would be able to provide a large amount of information. It would also fulfil our goal of creating spaces where community members can have genuine conversations about accessibility and how to improve it in the long run.

Overview

Disability: an umbrella term referring to a physical or mental impairment limiting a person's movements, learning, or senses.

In our project, we focused on:

- Both physical and intellectual disabilities
- The lack of awareness about available resources

Note: throughout our project, we refer to those affected by disabilities as “people with disabilities” rather than “disabled people”. This is due to the fact that those with disabilities should not be reduced to their physical state but rather who they are as people.

Nationwide Statistics



Initiating our Project

- **Problem**
 - Lack of awareness and stigma surrounding disabilities
 - Lack of awareness for available resources
 - Need to analyze data and reflect findings to broader audiences
- **Project Scope**



•Gathering
Data



•Relaying
Data to the
public



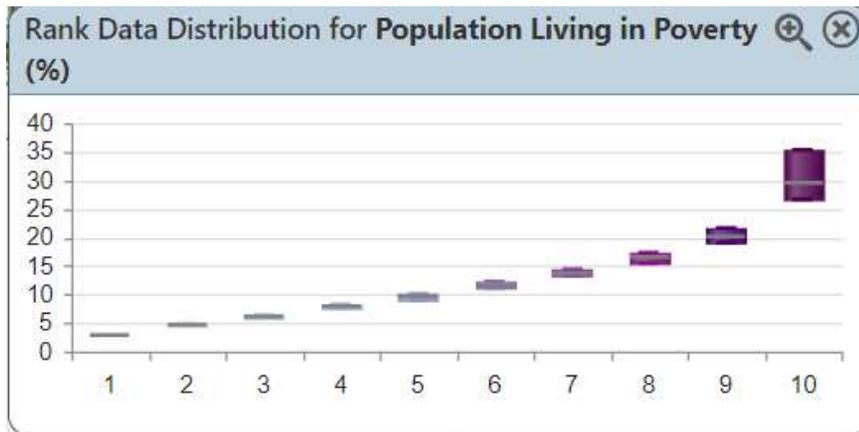
•Using data to
promote equity

Our Approach

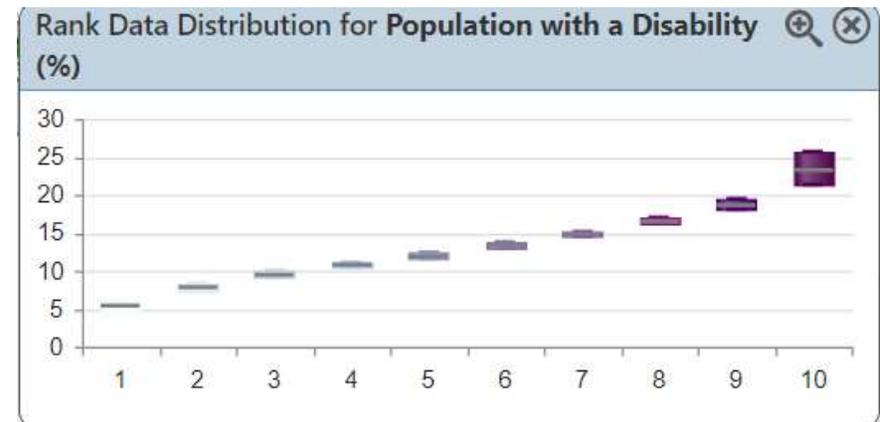
- We explored WTN data by regions, demographics, and much more. After carefully considering the relations between certain graphs and carrying out further research, we found an insightful connection:
- The regions of those who live with disabilities in Washington have a direct correlation with regions of people who live in poverty
- The possibility of a connection between these two factors would reveal a severe health disparity and represent inequity to thousands of Washington residents who live with disabilities
- Although initially focusing on our region of King County, Washington, our team realized that the issue was much broader and had a wider range
- We shifted our focus to specific counties that held a clear correlation between population with a disability and percent of population in poverty, as shown hereafter

Whatcom County

Population Living in Poverty

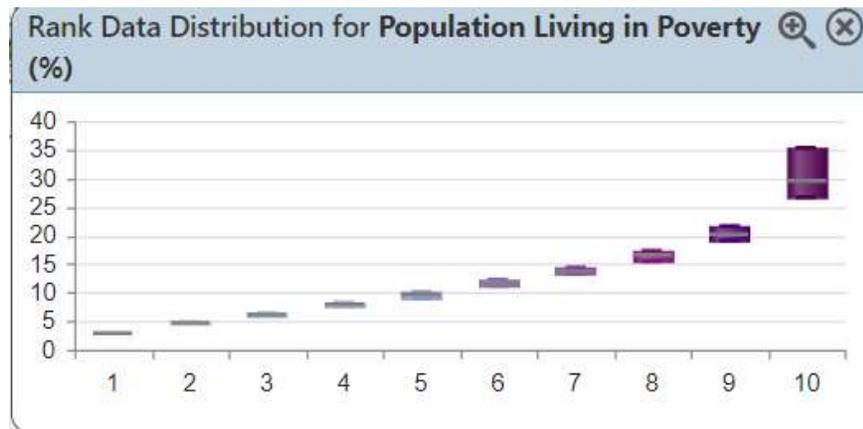


Population with a Disability

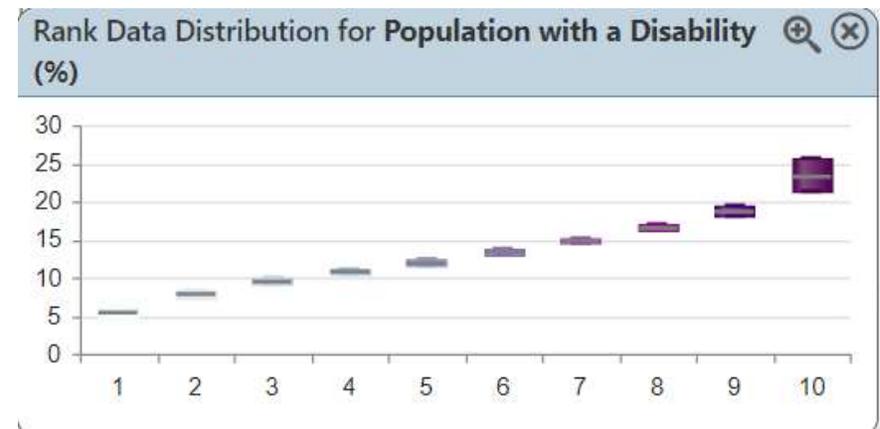


Chelan County

Population Living in Poverty

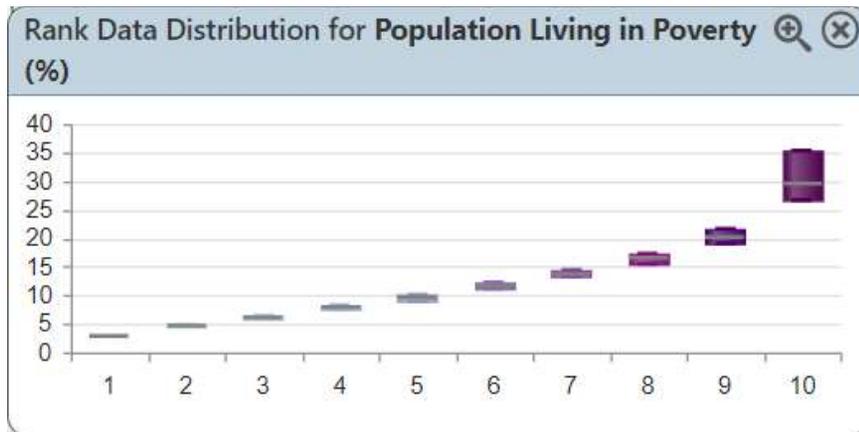


Population with a Disability

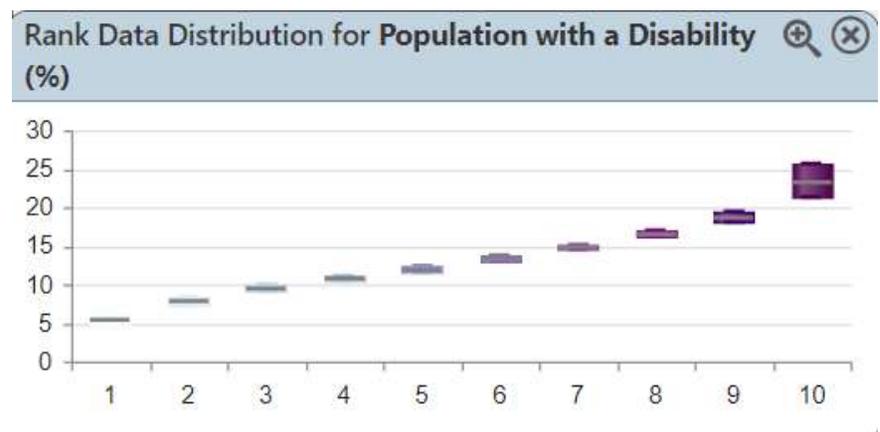


Okanogan County

Population Living in Poverty



Population with a Disability



Outside Research

- As recent studies show, this is not quite a case of correlation without causation.
- According to the Borgen Project, disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. This means that people who experience poverty are more likely to become disabled and people who are disabled are more likely to live in impoverished conditions.
- Almost half of this population cannot afford healthcare. Oftentimes, disability is preventable or treatable, but frequently, disabled people in poverty will go their entire lives without proper healthcare. Without treatment, medical conditions can worsen.

Outside Research

- People with disabilities in poverty often times are put at risk due to impoverished living conditions. Recent research shows that there are alarming health condition trends associated with disability. UNICEF, an agency of the United Nations responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide, states that people with disabilities are more likely to contract infectious diseases and experience injuries. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), many people with disabilities are victims of premature death.

Outside Data

Disabilities in Minority Communities

- 40% of adults age **65 years and older** have a disability
- 25% of **women** have a disability
- 40% of **non-Hispanic Native Americans/Alaska Natives** have a disability

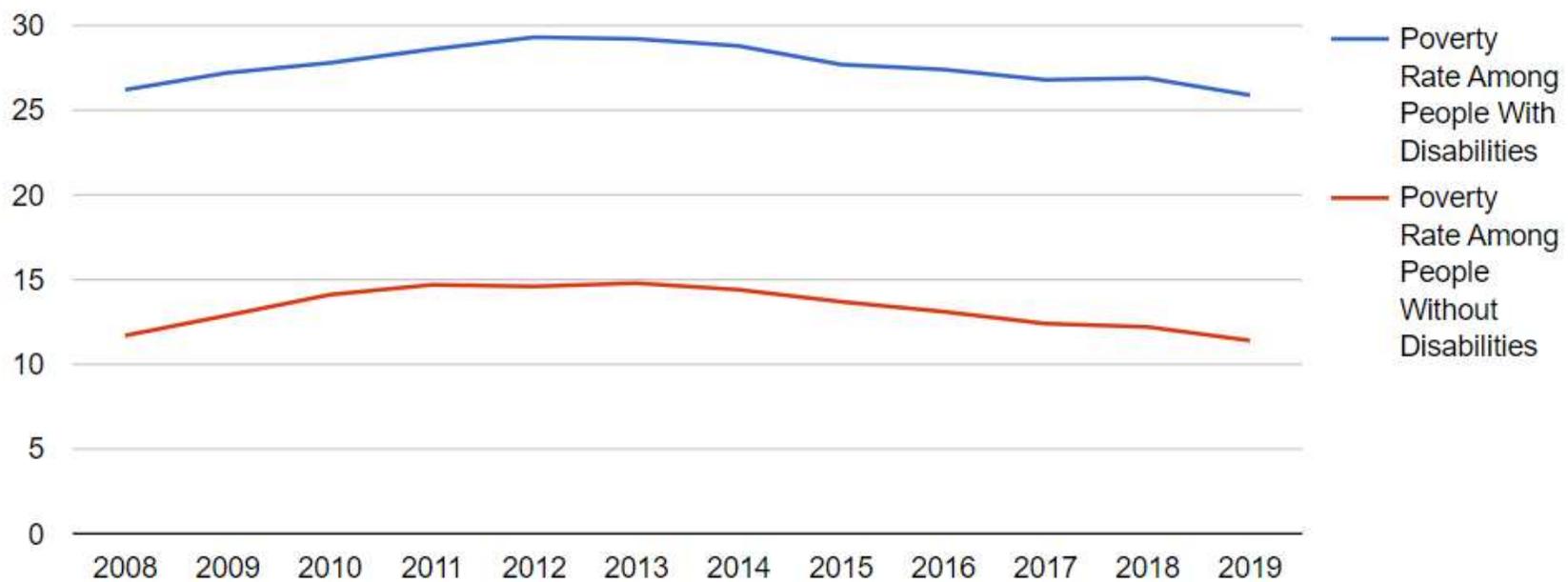
In adults with disabilities (18-44 years)

- 1 in 3 do not have a **usual healthcare provider**
- 1 in 3 have an **unmet healthcare need** because of the cost in the past year
- 1 in 4 did not have a **routine check-up** in the past year

Outside Data

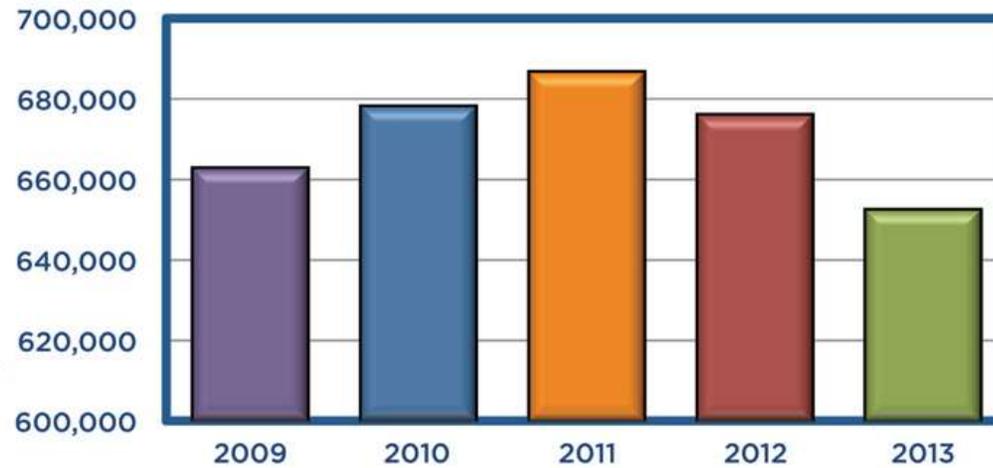
- Disability is much more prevalent among those with relatively lower incomes; 50% of people with disabilities cannot afford healthcare, often due to a lack of available transportation
- **Stroke** reduces mobility in more than 50% of stroke survivors aged 65 and over
- **COVID-19 Pandemic**
 - During the recent global pandemic, there were three major risk factors that affected those with disabilities the most: the risk of getting infected, developing severe symptoms and dying of COVID-19, and finally having poorer health for the duration of the pandemic and afterward

**Poverty Rate (in Percentages) Among People With and Without Disabilities in the US
From 2008 to 2019**



Individuals Receiving Long Term Disability Payments

The number of individuals receiving long term disability insurance payments from CDA member companies decreased for the second year in a row.



Source: 2014 CDA Long Term Disability Claims Review

What do these findings show?

- Health inequities exist when there is a difference in health outcomes across different groups of people, **and** when that difference is caused by something – in this case, poverty caused by disability.
- Promoting equity requires attention to the root causes of health issues and a focus on the communities that are most affected, disabled or impoverished populations, as highlighted earlier.
- To fairly combat this issue, Washington state policymakers and other influential figures must take the first step to help those with disabilities overcome poverty.
- How can this be done?
 - Interviews conducted with people with disabilities reveal that they are discriminated against in the workplace.
 - This leads to reduced pay, which means that those in poverty have no way to escape their financial condition.

Reflection

How did we choose our topic?

- At our school, Eastlake High School, there are ongoing efforts to spread awareness about different disabilities and how they affect the student body. These efforts inspired us, and we decided to understand the equity imbalance regarding disabilities in our own state.

Aid

- We received valuable assistance from trained para educators who work with special needs children on a daily basis. This firsthand resource allowed us to gain a deeper insight into the experiences of those with disabilities in our own community.

Reflection

What challenges did we encounter?

- It was challenging to assess the final scope for our project. There was plenty of useful WTN data, all of which could be related to our final topic. However, we had to be wise with our time management and efforts. This was to ensure that we were not just doing a broad, weak overview but rather an in-depth, detailed analysis. We had to scour through several counties and several different versions of the data until our team finally settled on a result we were satisfied with.

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