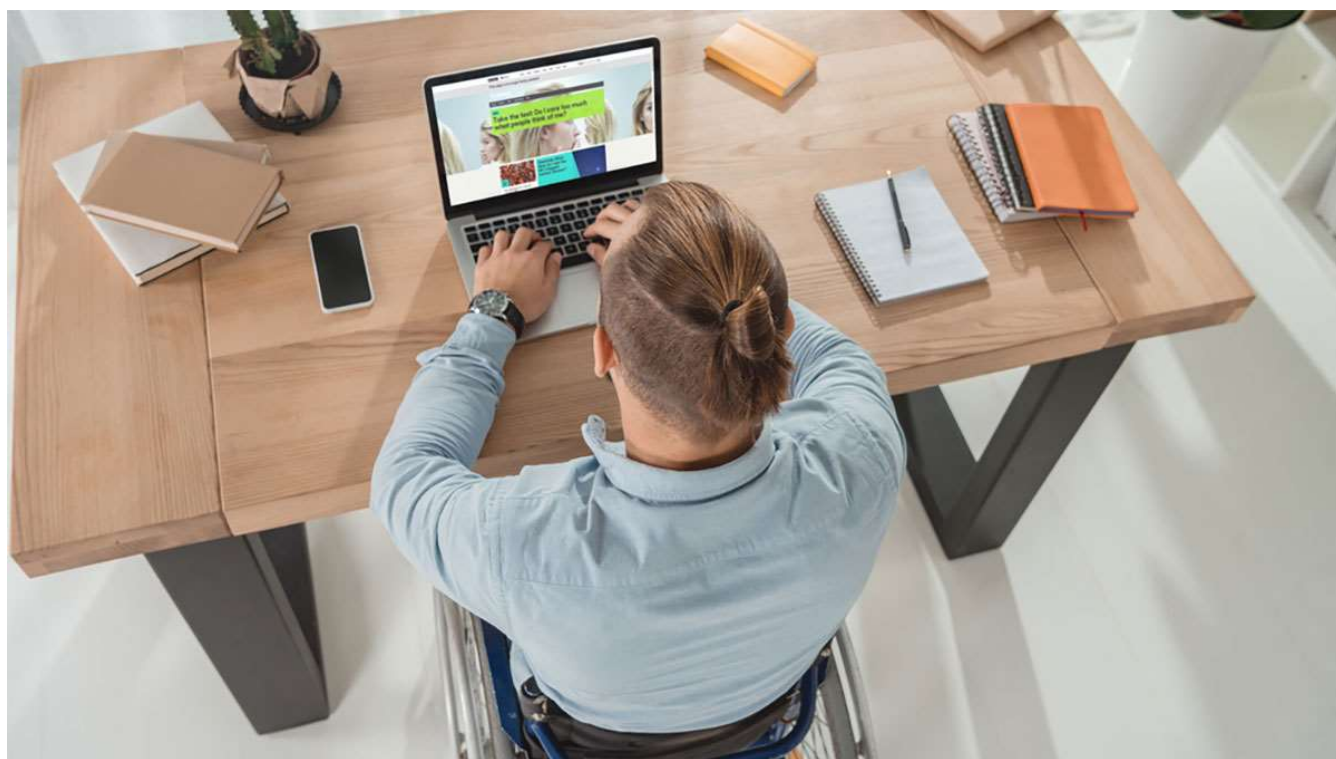


# Flexible Work Helps Disabled Workers

Disabled workers are helping close the labor gap thanks to remote work.

By Ryan James Boyle

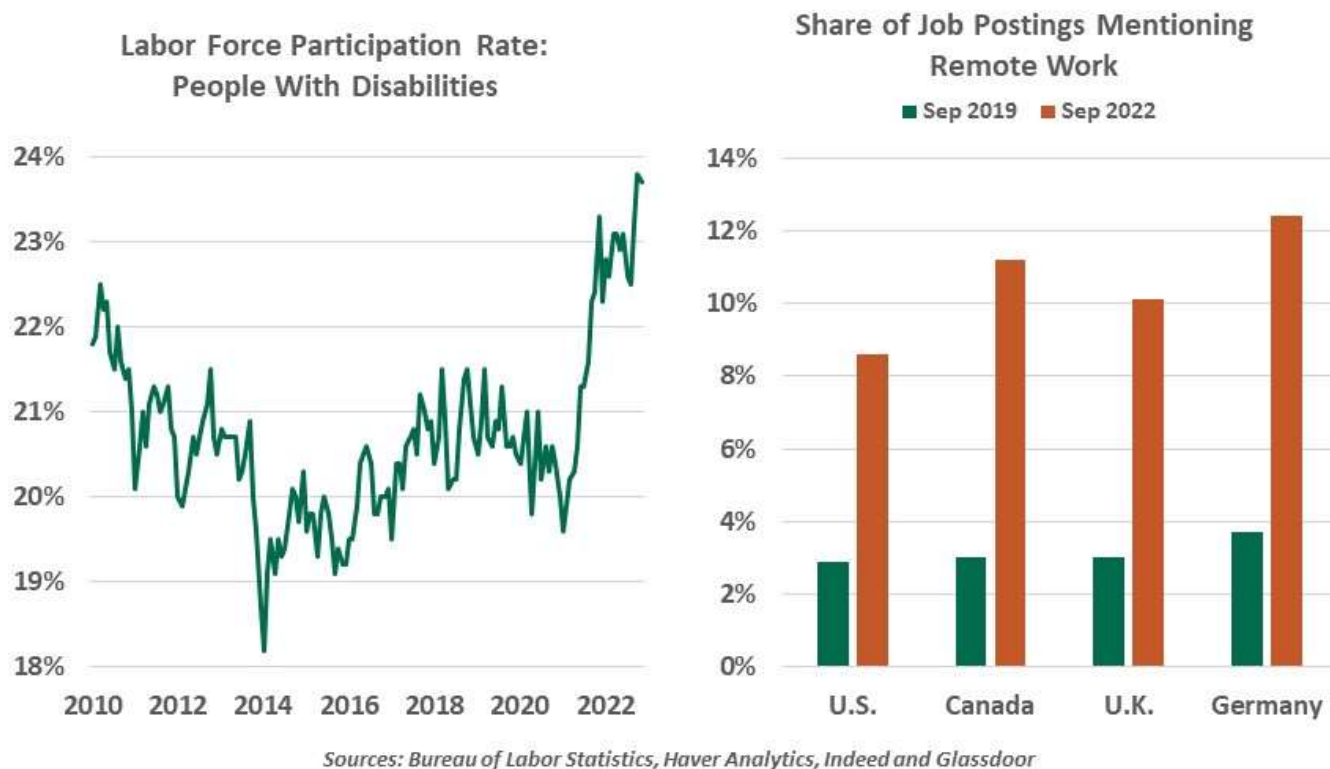


Tight labor markets can be great news for workers. As more employees are needed, workers find opportunities to earn and advance their careers that may have been withheld in times of greater slack. Today's tight labor market and the adoption of remote work are yielding gains for an often overlooked demographic: More disabled workers are returning to work.

**Research** by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that the number of disabled people in the U.S. workforce has increased by 900,000 since 2020. This classification is not an official

medical designation, but rather based on survey respondents self-identifying as disabled. Given the timing of this surge, one culprit stands out as most likely: **long COVID**. Sufferers of long COVID commonly report symptoms of brain fog and fatigue; the flexibility of working from home allows patients to better manage their symptoms.

**Tight labor markets and remote work arrangements have increased opportunities for the disabled.**



Of course, disability has causes far more diverse and severe than lingering COVID symptoms. Workers with physical disabilities often found any job with a commute to be impractical or impossible. These workers can stay fully connected and fully productive at home. However, remote work is not a universal option. Countless essential jobs, from those in healthcare to transportation to maintenance, cannot be done remotely. Only **37%** of jobs can be done entirely from home, according to recent estimates. The job forum Indeed **observes** that remote work opportunities are most often seen in only a subset of fields. These specialties require education and experience that cannot be assumed of the full work force. And as the economy is poised to slow, the perpetual availability of remote-only or remote-friendly positions cannot be assured.

For now, with the shortfall of workers proving persistent, every worker is needed. Bringing more potential workers back into the labor force is a win for employees, employers and taxpayers alike.

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