

# Assessing the Impact of the 2008 Financial Crisis on the Labor Force, Employment, and Wages of Persons with Disabilities in Spain

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## Abstract

The financial crisis of 2008 has had a greater effect on people with disabilities than on those without disabilities in Spain. In recent years, the number of persons with disabilities registered as part of the labor force and having a higher educational level has increased. However, the unemployment rate among people with disabilities has grown at a faster pace, especially for women and young people. A similar situation has occurred with respect to the annual gross average wage; the gap between those with and without disabilities has increased in the years following the crisis. The present study reveals that Spanish public policies aimed at improving levels of employment for people with disabilities have not achieved the expected results. Here, we explore the possible causes and compare the results with those obtained in the United States.

## Keywords

disability, labor force, employment, wage, financial crisis

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that there are approximately 785 million people of working age around the world who have disabilities (Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch [GED], Employment and Labor Market Policies Branch [EMPLAB], 2015). Persons with the potential to work, but whose labor is lost due to disability, account for annual losses of global GDP between US\$1.37 trillion and US\$1.94 trillion (Metts, 2000). According to the Kessler Foundation Survey (2015), 61% of people with disabilities in the United States stated that having a job was very important, although this same section of society is far less likely to be employed. The same survey reports that people with disabilities in the United States identified their disabilities as the primary barrier faced during job searches, job retention, and career advancement.

In the last decade, the European Union (EU) developed a plan calling for various actions aimed at improving the employability levels of people with disabilities within the different member states. However, the “European Disability Strategy 2010-2020” arose from the lack of positive results around employment among people with disabilities in recent years (European Commission, 2010).

Located in the southwest of Europe, Spain is a member of the EU. With a GDP per capita of US\$25,831.6 in 2015, it is considered a high-income country according to the World Bank classification of the same year, and it is ranked 26 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index

(United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2015). In 2016, the total population of Spain amounted to approximately 46 million inhabitants, of which 6.5% (3 million) were recognized as persons with disabilities (Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales [IMSERSO] de España, 2015), compared with 12% of the U.S. population (Krahn, Walker, & Correa-De-Araujo, 2015).

Spain, the Eurozone’s fourth-largest economy, has suffered its worst financial and economic crisis of the last 50 years, and it has had a major impact on employment (López-Mourelo & Malo-Ocaña, 2015). As a result of the 2008 crisis and the implementation of austerity measures, the economy has slowed down, reducing the employment rate and quality of jobs for people with disabilities (Alonso-Bravo & Escudero-Prieto, 2014). This situation has increased the vulnerability of persons with disabilities in terms of labor matters, with the financial crisis forcing the Spanish government to develop various action plans and strategies, the most remarkable being the “Global Action Strategy for the Employment of Persons with Disabilities

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2008-2012,” henceforth referred to as Strategy for Employment. This strategy was aimed at increasing the labor force and employment rates and improving the quality of employment and working conditions for people with disabilities (Mercado-García, Aizpurúa-González, & García-Vicente, 2013). With employment rates falling among persons with disabilities, new laws aimed at promoting the employment of this cohort were introduced by several EU countries, including Portugal (Campos-Pinto, 2011), Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2015), France (Lo & Ville, 2013), and Italy (Zappella & Dovigo, 2014). These policies were directed at companies by supporting employers and establishing vocational training.

In Spain, the 2011 “Law on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Social Inclusion” (LGD) adapted the “Law of Social Integration of the Disabled” (LISMI)—which dated back to 1982—to the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), but it retained the obligation of public and private companies with 50 or more workers to employ a minimum 2% of persons with disabilities out of the total personnel (Hernández-Díaz & Millán-Tapia, 2015).

According to Greve (2009), almost all EU countries have in place a compulsory job reservation quota system for people with disabilities (e.g., in France, companies with 20 or more workers must hire a minimum of 6% of people with disabilities, while in Germany it is 5%, and in Austria 4%). This series of measures aims to promote the employment of people with disabilities based on employment rate growth, increases in their levels of education, and improvement in their numbers within the labor force. In previous decades, this cohort was excluded from labor growth-rate figures because they were considered to be inactive (Sánchez-Morales, 2015).

The adoption of the Strategy for Employment has seen an increase in labor force participation levels and the training of people with disabilities. Specifically, between 2008 and 2013, the number of people with disabilities in the labor force increased from 33.5% to 37.4%, with a total number of 241,300 people incorporated into the labor market. In addition, the percentage points of people with disabilities holding secondary- and tertiary-level education grew by 110% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística [INE] de España, 2015a).

## Study Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to examine the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** To what extent have changes occurred in the labor force participation, unemployment level, and wages of people with disabilities compared with people without disabilities in Spain during the period from 2008 to 2013?

**Research Question 2:** Have public policies adequately addressed employment creation for people with disabilities in Spain during the period from 2008 to 2013?

Similar research questions have been addressed in previous studies relating to the aftermath of the financial crisis on the employment of people with disabilities (e.g., in the United States; Livermore & Honeycutt, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to continue analyzing the effectiveness of measures aimed at promoting labor force participation and the training of people with disabilities on their employment, salary, and working conditions in the years following the financial crisis in other contexts such as Spain (Ibáñez-Rojo & López-Calle, 2012; Ortega & Peñalosa, 2012; Ruesga-Benito, 2013).

## Method

### Sample

For this study, we used labor force population data from the *Labor Force Survey* (EPA) of the INE, which is compiled periodically from a sample of 65,000 households. Since 2008, these data have been linked annually with the *State Database of Persons with Disabilities* (BEPD), which includes information on the characteristics of citizens who have been officially recognized as persons with disabilities. In addition, we used data from the *Wage Structure Survey* (INE) for information on the salaries of people with disabilities.

Unusually, the same information used for this study was available only for the second quarter of 2002, but with methodological differences as compared with 2008. Another source is the Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal (SEPE), which has registered contracts for people with disabilities since 2006. However, SEPE records the total number of contracts made by an individual over the course of a year. This means that while the EPA registers a single time to an individual who is working (employee), the SEPE records several times the same individual working when more than one contract has been issued throughout the year. Therefore, in this study, we were not able to perform a comparative analysis with disaggregated data for the years prior to 2008. This will be further explained in the “Discussion” section.

### Measures

In Spain, the classification of individuals as persons with disabilities is based on unified technical criteria set by scales following the model proposed by the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health* (ICF) of the World Health Organization. This scale assesses disabilities as sets of complementary social factors (e.g., family context, employment status, and educational status) and

**Table 1.** Definition of Study Variables.

Variables	Measure
Gender	Divided between males and female from 16 to 64 years in age
Age groups <sup>a</sup>	The INE subdivides labor force population and unemployed data into the age groups 16–24 years, 25–44 years, and 45–64 years.
Percentage of households with members within the labor force <sup>b,c</sup>	Households with members within the labor force.
Secondary and university education <sup>b</sup>	The percentage of people with and without disabilities who had passed secondary school or university before the end of the year.
Working day <sup>d</sup>	Subdivided into full-time (>30 hr per week) and part-time (<30 hr week)
Company size <sup>d</sup>	For this analysis, INE has established three intervals depending on the number of workers: 1 to 49 workers, 50 to 199 workers, and 200
Activity sector <sup>d,e</sup>	Industry and construction sector, and services sector.

Source. INE data 2015.

Note. INE = Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

<sup>a</sup>For wage data, the INE divides the age groups into 16 to 29 years, 30 to 44 years, and 45 and older. <sup>b</sup>Variables used for labor force and unemployment. <sup>c</sup>It is measured in number of households, not number of people. <sup>d</sup>Variables used for wage indicator. <sup>e</sup>All economic activities of the “National Classification of Economic Activities” (NCEA–09). Agricultural activity is not included in this classification.

cultural situations that may hamper social integration (Jiménez-Lara & Huete-García, 2014). From the databases mentioned above, we extracted data on the labor force, unemployment levels, and wages in relation to people with and without disabilities. In Spain, these three indicators are defined by the INE as follows:

1. Labor force consists of the number of people over 16 years of age who are either working (employment) or actively seeking work (unemployment).
2. The unemployed population consists of the number of people over 16 years of age who, during the week before the survey, did not have a job, had actively looked for work, and were currently available for work.
3. Annual gross average wage corresponds to all payments received on a yearly basis by employees with and without disabilities in Spain, expressed in Euros, without the application of the corresponding withholdings and contributions.

The definitions of *labor force* and *unemployment population* are similar to those used in the United States by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor, although in the United States a 4-week period is used (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2014) instead of the last week as in Spain.

## Analysis

This study used a methodological approach similar to that of Livermore and Honeycutt (2015), who found evidence of change in the employment trend of people with disabilities

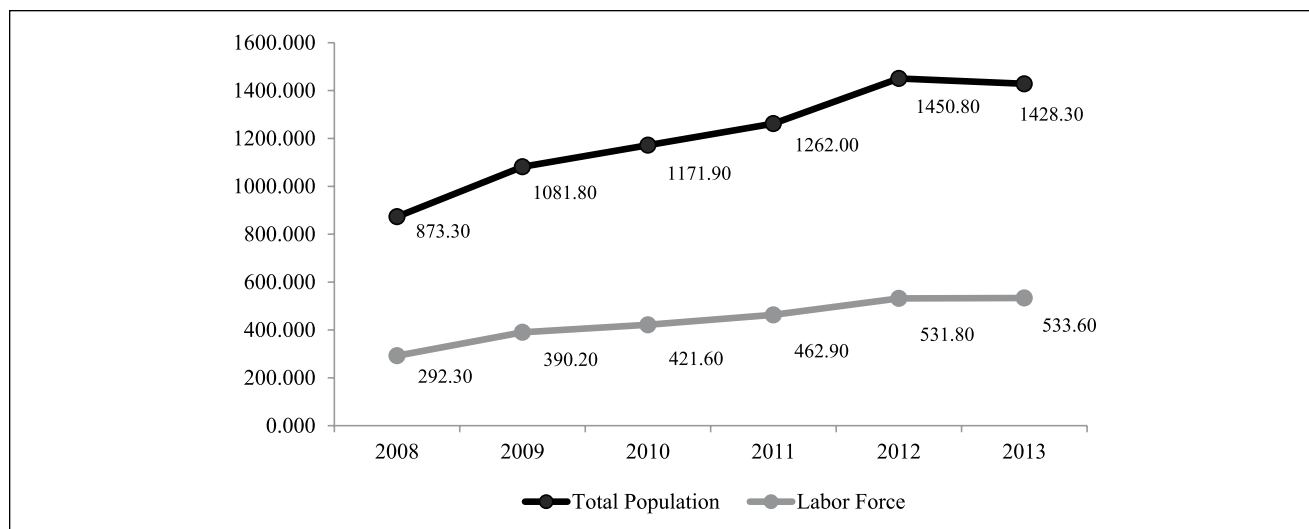
during the U.S. financial crisis. First, we compared people with and without disabilities by labor force, unemployment rate, and wages, calculating rates and disaggregating data by gender, age, percentage of households with members within the labor force who have disabilities, and educational level. In the case of wages, information was disaggregated by gender, age, working day, company size, and activity sector (these variables are shown in Table 1).

Second, we assessed the interannual variation for labor force and unemployment indicators between 2008 and 2013 in different figures to study the evolution pattern of both population groups. The same assessment was made with the wage indicator, but from 2010 to 2013 due to the absence of data for prior years.

## Results

### Labor Force

In general, labor force participants with disabilities nearly doubled between 2008 and 2013 (see Figure 1). The total labor force and labor force participation rates for the years 2008 and 2013 of people with and without disabilities, disaggregated according to different variables, are shown in Table 2. During that period, there was an important increase in total labor force participation among people with disabilities. In regard to gender, women with and without disabilities experienced higher increases compared with a lower or even negative increase among men. The percentage points of the labor force with disabilities reporting the completion of secondary- and university-level education increased by 8.1%, compared with 4.5% among those without disabilities.



**Figure 1.** Evolution of the labor force population with disabilities in relation to the total population with disabilities of working age (2008–2013).

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística data (2015a).

**Table 2.** Labor Force Population and Percentage Participation Rate of People with and without Disabilities According to Different Sociodemographic Characteristics (2008–2013).

Variable	People with disabilities			People without disabilities		
	2008	2013	% points	2008	2013	% points
Total	292,300 (33.5%)	533,600 (37.4%)	3.9%	22,396,100 (74.9%)	22,509,800 (77.2%)	2.3%
Gender						
Male	186,700 (38.4%)	310,800 (39.9%)	1.5%	12,746,000 (84.5%)	12,126,200 (83.1%)	-1.4%
Female	105,600 (27.3%)	222,800 (34.3%)	7.0%	9,650,100 (65.1%)	1,0383,500 (71.2%)	6.1%
Age group						
16–24 years	19,700 (34.2%)	20,400 (24.1%)	-10.1%	2,403,000 (53.1%)	1,680,800 (41.7%)	-11.4%
25–44 years	131,300 (42.5%)	223,100 (51.7%)	9.2%	12,912,300 (87%)	12,469,000 (90.4%)	3.4%
45–64 years	141,400 (27.9%)	290,100 (31.8%)	3.9%	7,080,800 (67.1%)	8,360,100 (73.6%)	6.5%
Households with members within labor force (%)	569,500 (68.8%)	948,700 (71.6%)	2.8%	12,596,400 (91.1%)	13,306,200 (90.5%)	-0.6%
Labor force population with secondary and university education (%)	211,100 (72.2%)	428,700 (80.3%)	8.1%	18,926,100 (84.5%)	20,068,800 (89%)	4.5%

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística data (2015a).

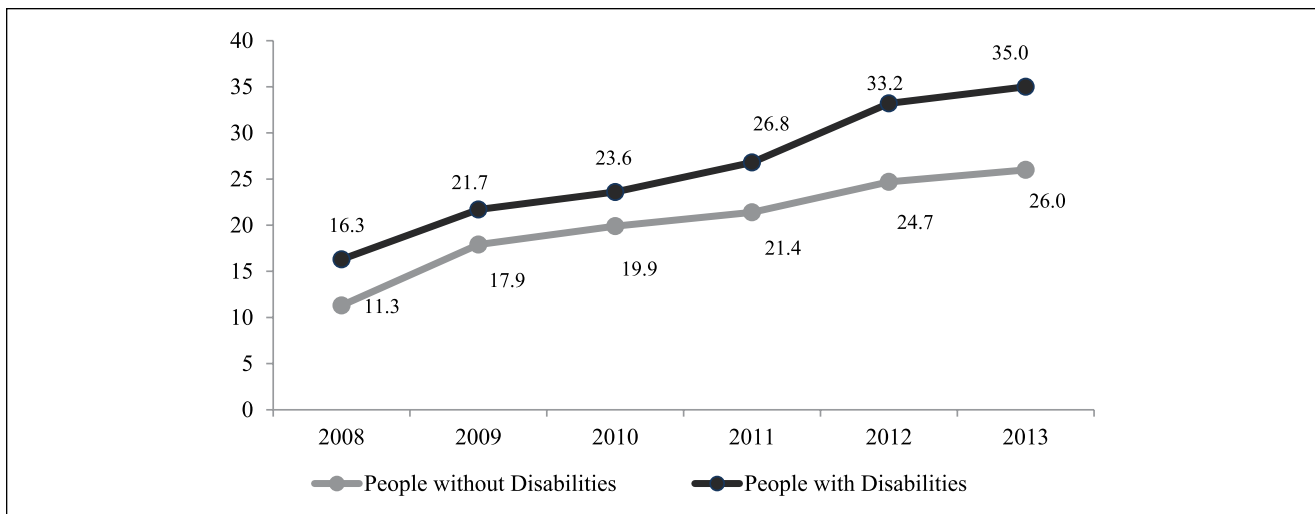
## Unemployment

During the same period, the unemployment rate among people with disabilities increased more than the rate of unemployment for those without disabilities, thus widening the gap between the two groups (as shown in Figure 2). Table 3 shows the unemployment total and rates for people with and without disabilities from 2008 to 2013. By gender, there was a higher increase in unemployment rates among men compared with women with and without disabilities. In terms of age groups, by 2013, young people with and without disabilities (ages 16–24 years) experienced a greater increase in the unemployment rate (approximately 30% in both cases), making

this one of the most disadvantaged groups. Households containing persons with disabilities and without income tripled from 2008 to 2013, increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion for many families (Anaut & Arza, 2015). In 2008, the percentage points of unemployed persons with and without disabilities who had completed secondary- and university-level education reflected an increase.

## Wages

People with disabilities experienced a decline in the annual average wage of nearly €1,500 from 2010 to 2013, while those without disabilities experienced no significant change,



**Figure 2.** Evolution of the unemployment rate of the population with and without disabilities (2008–2013).  
Source. Instituto Nacional de Estadística data (2015a).

**Table 3.** Unemployment of People with and without Disabilities for Both Absolute and Relative Values (2008–2013).

Variable	People with disabilities			People without disabilities		
	2008	2013	% points	2008	2013	% points
Total	47,700 (16.3%)	187,000 (35%)	18.7%	2,538,300 (11.3%)	5,854,800 (26%)	14.7%
Gender						
Male	27,200 (14.5%)	108,400 (34.9%)	20.5%	1,282,100 (10.1%)	3,091,700 (25.5%)	15.4%
Female	20,400 (19.4%)	78,600 (35.3%)	15.9%	1,256,300 (13%)	2,763,000 (26.6%)	13.6%
Age group						
16–24 years	8,400 (42.5%)	14,700 (72.1%)	29.6%	587,100 (24.4%)	930,300 (55.3%)	30.9%
25–44 years	23,400 (17.9%)	86,200 (38.6%)	20.3%	1,387,300 (10.7%)	3,152,000 (25.3%)	14.6%
45–64 years	16,000 (11.3%)	86,100 (29.7%)	18.4%	563,900 (8%)	1,772,600 (21.2%)	13.2%
% of households with no income and all members unemployed	3,100 (0.4%)	10,900 (0.8%)	0.4%	155,700 (1.1%)	396,600 (2.7%)	1.6%
% of unemployed with secondary- and university-level education	30,500 (14.4%)	139,500 (32.5%)	18.1%	1,939,400 (10.2%)	4,857,600 (24.2%)	14.0%

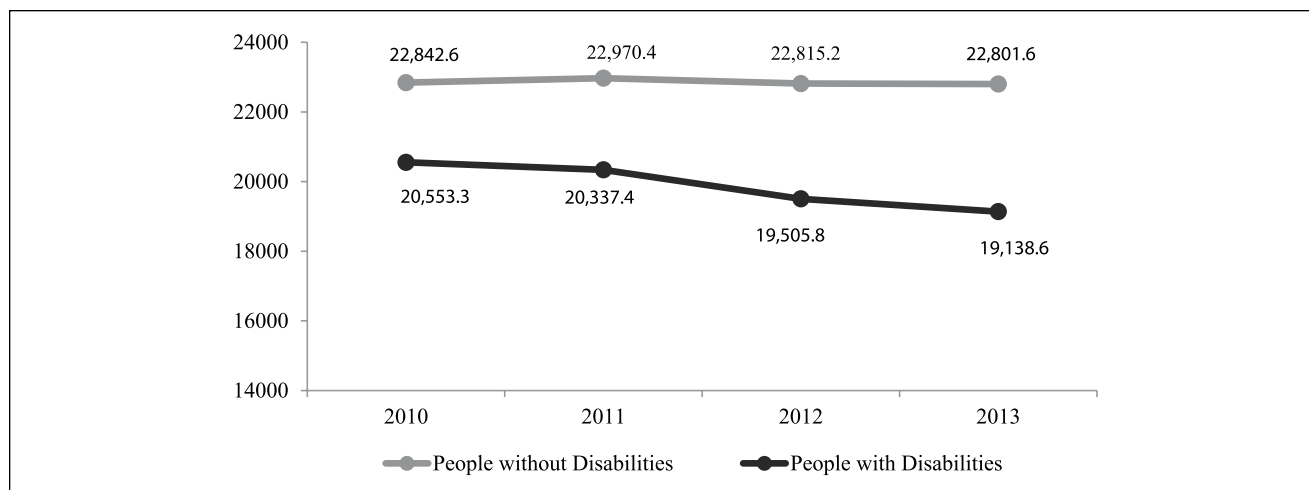
Source. Instituto Nacional de Estadística data (2015a).

as shown in Figure 3. Similarly, Table 4 shows the gross annual average wage of workers with and without disabilities in Spain between 2010 and 2013. When disaggregating the average wage data, we observed that men with and without disabilities were paid more than women, although the gender gap was smaller among people with disabilities by 2013. Meanwhile, in 2013, men without disabilities reported an average wage more than €5,000 higher than that for men with disabilities. By age group, young people with disabilities (ages 16–29 years) experienced the greatest annual wage reduction between 2010 and 2013. The average wage of people with disabilities working in the industry and construction sectors declined less than in the services sector. This appears to be the result of increased demands for specialization and

qualification in jobs associated with both sectors (Casado & Simón-Pérez, 2014).

## Discussion

This study allows us to understand the behavior of the labor market toward people with disabilities in relation to those without disabilities in Spain during the period 2008–2013. In the second quarter of 2002, the labor force participation rate of people with disabilities was 33.7% (INE, 2002), while in 2008, the same rate only varied slightly (33.5%). However, between 2008 and 2013, there was a growth in the labor force of more than 240,000 people (increasing the labor force participation rate by 3.9%).



**Figure 3.** Evolution of the gross annual average wage (€) (2010–2013).

Source. Instituto Nacional de Estadística data (2015b).

**Table 4.** Gross Annual Average Wage (€) of People With and Without Disabilities (2010–2013).

Variable	People with disabilities		People without disabilities	
	2010	2013	2010	2013
Total	20,553.30	19,138.60	22,842.60	22,801.60
Gender				
Male	21,302.10	20,535.40	25,593.40	25,844.00
Female	19,355.50	17,208.60	19,742.50	19,572.80
Age group				
16–24 years	14,208.10	10,555.80	16,285.20	14,390.30
25–44 years	18,158.80	17,241.90	22,959.60	22,225.60
45–64 years	23,132.50	20,781.00	26,043.20	25,575.10
Working day				
Full-time	22,992.10	22,356.40	26,015.60	26,458.90
Part-time	9,661.80	9,172.90	10,394.40	10,084.20
Company size (no. of workers)				
1–49	16,774.50	15,657.50	18,912.00	18,707.10
50–199	18,521.80	16,325.70	24,057.80	24,445.60
200+	24,731.80	24,012.90	28,537.40	28,408.30
Activity sector				
Industry and construction	20,804.60	20,636.00	24,270.00	25,738.80
Services	20,493.50	18,861.70	22,378.00	22,015.00

Source. Instituto Nacional de Estadística data (2015b).

This growth in the labor force between 2008 and 2013 was due to an increase in the number of people registered as persons with disabilities of working age, growing by more than 500,000 people, shifting from representing 2.8% to 4.7% of the total population. However, the Spanish labor market was unable to absorb this important increase in job seekers with disabilities because during the economic recession, companies were unable to create jobs even for those without disabilities (López-Mourelo & Malo-Ocaña, 2015).

To improve this situation, the previously mentioned LGD attempted to better regulate the quota system, allocating 2% of job positions to people with disabilities in companies with 50 or more workers. However, this action has proven to be ineffective because only 23% of companies achieved that quota in 2013 (Garrido-Cumbrera & Chacón-García, 2016). The same situation has occurred in countries such as Austria, where only 30% of companies achieved the 4% quota established by law (Zelderloo & Reynaert, 2007).

That said, in 2011, Spain presented a total unemployment rate of 23.3%, while Austria's was just 6%. In 2015, the unemployment rate in Spain (26%) was one of the highest in the EU, even above that of other EU countries that suffered on a similar scale during the financial crisis, such as Portugal (14.4%) or Ireland (17.9%; European Statistical Office [EUROSTAT], 2015a).

In the second quarter of 2002, the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities in Spain was 15.3% (INE, 2002), while in 2008, it was 16.3%. Starting in 2008, there was a continuous increase in the unemployment rate (from 16.3% in 2008 to 35% in 2013) as a result of growth in the number of people with disabilities and the effects of the financial crisis, among other factors not analyzed in this study. According to the data presented by Livermore and Honeycutt (2015), the increase of the unemployment gap between these two groups occurred with similar intensity in the United States, rising from 7% to 12% over a similar period (2008–2012).

Inequalities by age and gender among people with disabilities were also identified, as higher unemployment rates occurred in women and younger people (ages 16–24), both of which are the most vulnerable groups. However, workers with disabilities in Spain were characterized by greater levels of permanency within the same company, a higher percentage of permanent contracts, and lower turnover in annual contracting than those without disabilities (Díaz-Velázquez, 2014).

On the contrary, 152,262 contracts were made in 2006 to people with disabilities (representing 0.82% of total contracts), while 171,185 contracts were made in 2013 (1.16% of total contracts; SEPE, 2007, 2014). This meant a slight growth in the number of contracts issued to people with disabilities. However, during the period from 2008 to 2013, a registered increase of approximately 139,000 unemployed persons with disabilities was observed (see Table 3).

The period from 2008 to 2013 saw an increase in the number of households with persons with disabilities receiving no income, which could be related to the increase in the rates of risk of poverty and social exclusion. Specifically, rates of risk of poverty and social exclusion among people with disabilities were above 31% (INE, 2015a). According to EUROSTAT (2015b) data, this percentage was above the EU average (30%) and was higher than that of countries such as France (24%) and Italy (29%).

The gross annual average wage of persons with disabilities decreased during the period 2010–2013, despite an increase in educational level in the same period. However, wage inequalities based on gender, age, company size, and sector were slightly lower among people with disabilities than among those without disabilities by 2013.

Overall, there has been an attempt to reduce the downward trend on employment and wages through a series of national actions included in the Strategy for Employment.

Yet, this strategy has not proven to be effective in the efforts mainly aimed at increasing the labor force participation rate and educational level. At the same time, the labor market is unable to generate sufficient employment opportunities for people with disabilities, even with a slight recovery in the unemployment rate among the general population (SEPE, 2014).

One factor that could explain the difficulties that persons with disabilities have in entering the labor market is the social barriers faced by this group (Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, & Nijhuis, 2013). Specifically, more than 90% of people with disabilities of working age in Spain declared having experienced social barriers to access employment in 2012 (Observatorio sobre Discapacidad y Mercado de Trabajo en España [ODISMET], 2014). This situation may result in people with disabilities facing stigma and discrimination on the basis of their disability when job-seeking.

Countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, or Italy have legislation in place and prior knowledge that has allowed them to reduce these social barriers through better intervention and support for employers in the recruitment process, evaluation of workers, and development of a strategy to sensitize the employer (Bruyere, Erickson, & VanLooy, 2004; Zappella & Dovigo, 2014). Currently in Spain, there are very few of these types of programs, so there remains a strong social stigma (Alcover & Pérez, 2010; Cano, Diaz, Ferreira, Rodríguez, & Toboso, 2015; Huete-García, 2013). Workplace accommodations such as vocational flexible schedules, modified job duties, personal computer adaptations, or job mentors are proven strategies used to improve job task completion and workplace productivity for people with disabilities (Nevala, Pehkonen, Koskela, Ruusuvoori, & Anttila, 2015).

This article shows that the unemployment and wage gap between people with disabilities with respect to people without disabilities has increased since 2008, despite the various public strategies and policies aiming to revert this tendency.

### *Study Limitations*

Labor force and unemployment data were taken from official statistics relating to Spain; the information concerning the sociodemographic characteristics of persons with disabilities and employment characteristics became available for the first time in 2008. The INE responded to the absence of periodic information by undertaking in 2010 the same statistical operation for obtaining the disaggregated data referring to the wages of people with disabilities.

Although there exist previous sources of information on disability and employment, such as the second quarter 2002 survey (INE, 2002) and SEPE (2007) hiring data since 2006, the existing methodological and temporal differences with respect to the data used in this study have prevented

the inclusion of a comprehensive comparative analysis with data disaggregated for the years prior to 2008.

## Conclusion

As demonstrated in this article, the austerity measures implemented in Spain since 2008 may have been one of the factors that influenced the labor force participation, unemployment rates, and wage data shown in this study. The unemployment gap between people with and without disabilities increased by 4% during the 2008–2013 period. Moreover, people with disabilities, who in 2010 earned a wage 10% lower than that of people without disabilities, saw the wage gap increase to a wage of 16% lower in 2013. Unemployment inequalities have a number of implications for the population with disabilities, such as increases in economic dependence in the forms of disability allowance, poverty levels, and social barriers experienced by this population.

Several factors explain the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the policies aimed at the integration of people with disabilities into the Spanish labor market. Different studies have identified the attitude of employers and lack of qualification of people with disabilities as the main factors that influence employers' refusal to hire these people (Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities, 2001; Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles [ONCE] Foundation, 2009).

At an international level, different studies have shown how employers displayed preferences in hiring people depending on the type and severity of their disability, placing higher value on people with physical disabilities compared with those with intellectual or mental disabilities, with case studies from Australia (Graffam, Shinkfield, Smith, & Polzin, 2002), Canada (Cesare, Tannenbaum, & Dalessio, 1990), the United States (Jans, Kaye, & Jones, 2012; Nafukho, Roessler, & Kacirek, 2010), and the United Kingdom (Duff, Ferguson, & Gilmore, 2007).

Grewal, Joy, Lewis, Swales, and Woodfield (2002) surveyed more than 900 people with disabilities in the United Kingdom, and they found that 24% had suffered some form of discrimination in the workplace, while 37% had experienced some kind of prejudice or unfair treatment during the recruitment process. Moreover, the study of Bruyere et al. (2004), based on 1,200 U.S. and U.K. companies assessed, showed that 23% of employers admitted that negative attitudes and stereotypes were the most significant barriers to hiring people with disabilities.

In Spain, the ONCE and Manpower Foundations (2008) carried out a joint survey of 1,503 companies between 2006 and 2007 to assess the working conditions of people with disabilities. The results of this survey show that lack of information (39.0%) and difficulty in finding people with

disabilities adequate to the job (30.7%) were the main barriers noted by employers.

Therefore, new policies for people with disabilities in Spain should be addressed to increase the educational attainment of this group, and the removal of social discrimination and prejudice among employers and companies (Garrido-Cumbrera & Chacón-García, 2016; Jiménez-Lara & Huete-García, 2010).

It is necessary that companies with more than 50 workers implement the current legislation that obliges them to hire 2% of people with disabilities out of the total staff; therefore, public administration should improve controls on such companies (ONCE Foundation, 2009; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2007). In addition, awareness-raising campaigns on the advantages of hiring people with disabilities, together with programs to increase the transition from sheltered workshops to the open labor market, may help to increase the employability of this group (Álvarez, 2012; Hernández-Díaz Millán-Tapia, 2015; Milán & Milán, 2012).

This article assesses the repercussions of the financial crisis, and the consequences of austerity measures, on employment trends for persons with disabilities. The experience of a European country with different sociodemographic and historical characteristics may allow us to understand how the crisis affected people with disabilities in other nations.

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