

## **Applying Aspects of Disability Determination Methods from the Netherlands in the U.S.**

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### **Key Findings and Policy Implications**

This paper looks at how the DI program in the Netherlands assesses work capacity, and how applying a similar measurement might impact disability assessment in the United States. It uses data from the Dutch Social Security Administration, including the Dutch functional abilities questionnaire; and newly collected U.S. data, modeled on the Dutch questionnaire, and administered as part of the RAND American Life Panel (ALP). The paper finds that:

- The Netherlands uses a unique, direct method of measuring an applicant's residual work capacity. Disability assessment focuses on first identifying specific residual functional abilities. These standardized functional abilities are then directly linked to standardized requirements of existing jobs in the Netherlands, allowing direct computation of the set of feasible jobs and residual earnings capacity of an applicant, conditional on educational attainment.
- There were 2,461 respondents to the ALP questionnaire. Their average age was just under 50. Respondents reported an average of 2.4 health conditions and 9.0 functional limitations, based on the limitations surveyed. These averages vary widely by education. Those with less than high school report on average 14.8 limitations, those with high school or some college report 10.0 limitations, those with a BA report 5.5 limitations, and those with a degree greater than BA report 6.4 limitations.
- Using screener questions corresponding to DI eligibility criteria in the Netherlands, 104 respondents were estimated to have zero feasible job profile options, and 111 were estimated to have zero feasible occupation options. Based on a measure of estimated earnings capacity, 11 percent of respondents had zero estimated earnings capacity, and 17 percent had earnings capacity below the Substantial Gainful Activity threshold.

In recent years, there has been a policy debate about whether the screening process used to determine SSDI eligibility should be revised to reflect changes in the functional requirements of work. And specifically, should information about occupational requirements be considered in disability determinations? This study explores an approach to disability determination that centers around functional abilities, and on identifying occupations that can still be done by individuals, based on their functional ability profiles.

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