

Factors Related to Employment Outcomes for Adults with Visual Impairments

What Were We Trying to Learn?

Compared to the general U.S. population, people who are blind or have low vision (those with visual impairments) have significantly lower employment rates. NRTC researchers reviewed 22 previous research studies to identify factors that are associated with employment for adults with visual impairments.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

These factors were positively associated with employment outcomes for people with visual impairments:

- Higher education level
- Use of braille for reading (compared to only reading print)
- Having attended an integrated or public school
- For VR consumers, reporting earnings or self-support at the time of application to VR

In contrast, having a secondary disability and being legally blind (compared to having a less severe visual impairment) were negatively associated with employment.

Research Takeaway

Compared to the general U.S. population, people who are blind or have low vision (those with visual impairments) have significantly lower employment rates. NRTC researchers reviewed 22 previous research studies to identify factors that are associated with employment for adults with visual impairments.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me as a Practitioner?

- Support consumers who do not have a high school diploma (or equivalent) in obtaining one.
- When working with consumers who do not have a college degree, encourage them to explore options for postsecondary education. Obtaining a degree can improve their odds of finding a job.
- You may need to provide more targeted support for consumers with a secondary disability or legal blindness. People with these characteristics may benefit from extra job-focused supports.
- Provide resources to consumers who need to brush up on their braille skills or increase their braille reading speeds. Refer consumers who may benefit from braille for assessment and instruction in this area.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me as a Person with Blindness or Low Vision?

- If finding a job or advancing your career is your goal, you can receive a variety of employment-related services from federal, state, and local agencies to overcome the challenges you face. You can find a list of state agencies that work with people with visual impairments [here](#).
- If you do not have a college degree, your state VR agency can help you create a plan for attending college and earning your degree. This is an important goal to pursue if you are interested in employment.

How Were These Projects Carried Out?

NRTC researchers systematically reviewed peer-reviewed studies published from 1990 to 2018 that used (respectively):

- Thirteen survey-based U.S. research articles that included analysis of factors related to employment in adults with visual impairments
- Nine articles that used the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA-911) Case Service Report data related to employment of individuals with visual impairments

The researchers looked for factors linked to employment outcomes among individuals with visual impairments that repeatedly appeared across the various studies.

Learn More

Lund, E. M., & Cmar, J. L. (2019). A systematic review of factors related to employment outcomes for adults with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 116(6), 493-517.

Lund, E. M., & Cmar, J. L. (2019). Factors related to employment outcomes for vocational rehabilitation consumers with visual impairments: A systematic review. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 113(6), 518-537.

For more information about this project, visit the project overview page.

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