

Employment Statistics for People with Dual Sensory Impairments

Employment can be a challenge for individuals with all types of disabilities, and individuals with dual sensory impairments (i.e., those who are deaf-blind or have combined vision and hearing loss) face particular obstacles in this area, due in part to their unique communication difficulties. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, 0.76% of the U.S. population experiences both vision and hearing difficulties. It is helpful for professionals who work with these individuals to understand their overall employment outlook. However, prior to our analysis published in 2018, current employment statistics for this population were unavailable.

According to updated data compiled by the NRTC, **individuals with dual sensory impairments experience a much higher unemployment rate¹ than the general population**, 10.5% compared to 4.9%, respectively. They are also much less likely to be active participants in the labor market, with a labor force participation rate² of just 38.5%, compared to a rate of 80.7% for the general population.

When compared to individuals with disabilities of all types, those with dual sensory impairments lag behind in key employment outcomes, such as employment rate (36.1% vs. 34.3%, respectively).

Data for this analysis come from the American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample, which is released by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS asks a number of questions about disabilities, including one that relates to vision loss and another related to hearing loss.³ These questions were used in our analysis to identify the population of individuals with dual sensory loss. All employment statistics described here are averages across the five-year period from 2016-2020.

Learn more about the NRTC's research related to employment for individuals with dual sensory loss on our website: <https://www.blind.msstate.edu/research/current/project-6-exploration-secondary-data-increase-our-knowledge-about-subpopulations>. To access resources to help individuals with vision loss, including those with dual sensory loss, achieve employment, visit our National Technical Assistance Center on Blindness and Low Vision at www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu.

Employment Status of Working-Age U.S. Adults (Ages 18-64), 2016-2020			
	Unemployment rate	Labor force participation	Employment-population ratio
Individuals with dual sensory impairments	10.5%	38.5%	34.3%
No disabilities	4.9%	80.7%	76.1%
Any disability	11.9%	41.2%	36.1%

¹ Unemployment rate: The number of unemployed people as a percentage of the civilian labor force. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/topics/employment/labor-force/about/glossary.html>

² Labor force participation rate: The proportion of the population that is in the labor force, which includes all people classified as employed or unemployed, as well as members of the U.S. Armed Forces. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/topics/employment/labor-force/about/glossary.html>

³ To identify vision loss, the ACS asks, "Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?" To identify hearing loss, the ACS asks, "Is this person deaf or does he/she have serious difficulty hearing?" U.S. Census Bureau. Why we ask questions about disability. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/disability>



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