

The JVIB Beyond Employment Rates Series: Exploring Labor Force Statistics for People with Visual Impairments

What Were We Trying to Learn?

We aimed to explore various aspects of employment for people with visual impairments beyond simple employment rates to obtain a more complete picture of their employment status. The aspects explored were part-time work, job continuity, earnings, self-employment, and the intersection of Social Security disability benefit receipt and work. We compared results for people with visual impairments to those without visual impairments and by gender when appropriate.

How Was This Project Carried Out?

To address our research questions, we conducted descriptive analyses utilizing data from two nationally representative surveys, the 2019 American Community Survey and the 2014-2017 Survey of Income and Program Participation. We addressed one topic in each *Beyond Employment Rates* article published in the *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

- Almost one-quarter of currently employed people with visual impairments worked part-time, 5.4 percentage points higher than the part-time employment rate for people without visual impairments. On average, people with visual impairments worked about one hour less per week than those without visual impairments (McDonnall et al., 2022a).
- There were small differences in part-year versus full-year employment for people with and without visual impairments. Long-term continuous employment was rare for those with visual impairments: only 17.3% of people with visual impairments worked the entire time during a 4-year period (2013-2016). Most people with visual impairments did not work at all during the four years (McDonnall et al., 2022b).
- Almost 20% of working-age people with visual impairments received Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. Employment rates for those who received SSDI were much lower – 12.4% compared to 58.8% for non-recipients – which contributes noticeably to the overall employment rate for the population (McDonnall et al., 2022c).
- Considerable gaps in earnings between men and women with and without visual impairments exist. The gaps were smaller but still existed when considering education level (McDonnall et al., 2022d).
- People with visual impairments were significantly more likely to be self-employed and less likely to work for for-profit businesses than those without visual impairments, but the differences were very small (McDonnall et al., 2022e).
- The gaps between men with and without visual impairments were larger than those between women with and without visual impairments for part-time employment, part-year employment, and earnings. This suggests that men with visual impairments are comparatively more disadvantaged in terms of employment than women with visual impairments.

Research Takeaway

There were gaps between people with and without visual impairments for all employment-related variables studied, but most were small. The most significant gaps between these groups are in employment rates and earnings.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me as a Practitioner

The largest gap in employment between people with and without visual impairments is in employment rates because almost half of people with visual impairments are not in the labor force (not working or looking

for work). Practitioners who work with people with visual impairments can help them obtain the skills necessary for employment and provide encouragement and support for them to pursue employment.

Learn More

Findings were taken from the following articles:

McDonnall, M. C., Cmar, J. L., & McKnight, Z. S. (2022) [Beyond employment rates: Full-time vs. part-time employment for people with visual impairments](#). *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 116(1), 7-13.

McDonnall, M. C., Cmar, J. L., & McKnight, Z. S. (2022) [Beyond employment rates: Continuity of employment for people with visual impairments](#). *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 116(2), 275-280.

McDonnall, M. C., Cmar, J. L., & McKnight, Z. S. (2022) [Beyond employment rates: Social Security disability benefit receipt and work among people with visual impairments](#). *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 116(3), 396-403.

McDonnall, M. C., Cmar, J. L., & McKnight, Z. S. (2022) [Beyond employment rates: Earnings of people with visual impairments](#). *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 116(4), 526-532.

McDonnall, M. C., Cmar, J. L., & McKnight, Z. S. (2022) [Beyond employment rates: Self-employment and other categories of work among people with visual impairments](#). *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 116(5), 729-735.

For more information about this project, visit the [project overview page](#).

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