

Understanding Nonparticipation in the Labor Force among Individuals with Blindness or Low Vision

What Were We Trying to Learn?

We aimed to understand the characteristics of individuals who are blind or have low vision (B/LV) who are out of the labor force (OLF) due to health or disability reasons and how these characteristics differ from those who are employed, unemployed, or OLF for other reasons. The goal was to gain insights into the factors influencing nonparticipation in the labor force among people with B/LV.

How Was This Project Carried Out?

We utilized data from national surveys, including the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). From this data we analyzed demographic, health, and socioeconomic characteristics of individuals with B/LV and employed multinomial logistic regression to examine the relationships between labor force participation status and demographics and other personal characteristics.

Research Takeaway

People with B/LV face employment barriers and higher nonparticipation rates in the labor force due to disabilities, and health limitations, but acquiring skills, receiving benefits counseling, and career planning may support their labor force participation and financial independence.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

- Approximately half of the individuals with visual impairments were OLF, and the majority of those OLF indicated this was due to health reasons.
- Individuals with B/LV who are OLF due to health or disability reasons often have additional disabilities, health limitations, and receive Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Several health-related factors significantly differentiated people who reported being unable to work and the other employment groups. The unable to work group were more likely to have a greater number of chronic conditions, poor physical health days, and functional disabilities than those OLF for other reasons, employed, or unemployed.
- Skills to accommodate vision disability and health conditions are crucial for employment or further education.
- Benefits counseling, encouragement, and careful career planning may assist persons with B/LV who are currently OLF in rejoining the labor force and moving toward financial independence.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me as a Practitioner

Understanding the challenges faced by individuals with B/LV in participating in the labor force can lead to policy and programmatic changes that support their engagement in employment and promote economic self-sufficiency. These findings highlight the importance of skills, education, and support in

overcoming barriers to employment. Recognizing the value of accommodating disabilities and providing equal opportunities for employment and education contributes to creating a more inclusive society.

Learn More

Findings were taken from the following articles:

Crudden, A. & McKnight, Z. (2022). [Out of the labor force due to health reasons? An analysis of the Survey of Income and Program Participation regarding persons with visual impairments.](#) *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research*, 45(3), 237-242.

Crudden, A., McDonnall, M., & Tatch, A. (2022). [Unable to work? Characteristics of people with blindness and low vision who are out of the labor force.](#) *Disability and Health Journal*. Advance online publication.

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