Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Demographics and Employment Determinants

CeKTER Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research

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Selected Findings from NIDILRR-funded Disability Employment Research in the 21st Century

A systematic scoping review of research published between 2000 and 2020 on employment of people with disabilities, that was funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) was conducted by CeKTER researchers at Boston University. All papers comparing people with disabilities to those without have been excluded from the systematic scoping review. Among over 100 publications reviewed there was a wide and very disparate array of findings with numerous variables used and varying research questions. This result belies summative findings. There are numerous ways of organizing the disparate findings. This brief is the first in a series of findings from the systematic scoping review. In this brief we report on findings categorized by the demographic characteristics of education, gender, marital status, race, and age. Please note that all comparisons are always about corresponding peers with disabilities.

Education

- Greater educational attainment contributes to:
  - Higher rates of employment.[1, 7, 11–12, 15, 17, 19–23, 25–28, 31, 33–34, 38]
  - Higher earnings and occupational status, better job quality, lengthier job tenure, and higher number of work hours per week.[1, 6, 8, 10, 13, 19–22, 25–26, 32, 35]
  - Higher likelihood of being enrolled in vocational rehabilitation services and having successful closure of vocational rehabilitation services due to competitive employment.[2, 4, 16, 35]

Gender

- Males are more likely to have higher rates of employment compared to females.[1, 3, 9, 11–12, 15, 25, 29, 31, 37]
- When compared to females, males are more likely to have higher earnings, better quality jobs, lengthier job tenure and higher number of work hours per week.[6, 8, 9, 13, 20, 22, 25–26]
- Male recipients of vocational rehabilitation services are more likely than female recipients to have successful closure of vocational services due to obtaining competitive employment or self-employment.[14, 16, 18]
- When compared to female beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), males receiving SSDI are more likely to be enrolled in vocational rehabilitation services, to start and complete a trial work period, and to discontinue receipt of disability payments due to successful return to work.[2]
- Female youth are more likely to be recipients of vocational rehabilitation services compared to male youth.[14]

Marriage

- Disabled people who are married are more likely to have higher rates of employment than those who are unmarried.[1, 3, 17, 21–22, 38]

- Married people with disabilities are more likely to have higher earnings, a higher occupational status, and work more hours per week than unmarried people with disabilities.[1, 10, 20–22]

Age

- Individuals with disabilities who are younger are more likely to be employed compared to their older peers.[1, 12, 17, 20, 23, 31]

- Individuals with cerebral palsy who were between the ages of 26 and 54 were more likely to be employed than those who were younger.[15]

- Social Security disability beneficiaries who were 40 years of age or younger were more likely to work.[24]

- Young African American men who had substance use disorders and were between ages 20 and 25 had higher rates of employment than those who were between ages 16 and 18.[33]

- Individuals with disabilities who are younger are more likely to work a higher number of hours per week.[22, 36]

- Older people with psychiatric disabilities who were employed in professional and managerial positions were more likely to have lengthier job tenure when compared to those who were of younger age.[10]

- Older individuals with visual impairments who also had either hearing impairment or traumatic brain injury were more likely to have a higher job quality.[25–26]

- Individuals with spinal cord injuries who were between the ages of 40 and 50 were more likely to have higher earnings when compared to their younger or older peers.[20, 22]

- SSDI beneficiaries with visual impairments had higher earnings if they were younger.[13]

- Individuals with spinal cord injuries and multiple sclerosis who were younger than 30 years of age had lower earnings compared to their older peers.[21]

- Individuals with spinal cord injuries who were between the ages of 40 and 50 had higher earnings compared to their younger or older peers.[20]

- SSDI beneficiaries who were younger than 40 years of age were more likely to be enrolled in employment services, to start and complete a trial work period, and to achieve nonpayment status due to successful employment.[2]

- Youth with disabilities between the ages of 20 and 25 were more likely to receive vocational rehabilitation services and to have successful closure of services compared to youth between the ages 14 and 18.[14]

- Older individuals with visual impairments were more likely to be accepted for vocational rehabilitation services.[4]

- Individuals with disabilities who were older at the time of applying for vocational rehabilitation services were more likely to have successful closure due to self-employment.[18]

Race

- Being a White person with a disability contributes to:
  - Higher rates of employment.[1, 12, 19–23, 26, 38]
  - Higher earnings, occupational status, and number of work hours per week.[1, 19–22, 35, 36]
  - Higher likelihood to be enrolled in vocational rehabilitation services and have successful closure of vocational rehabilitation services due to competitive employment or self-employment.[5, 14, 16, 18, 35]
- When compared to their White peers, African American Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries were more likely to enroll in vocational rehabilitation services, to start and complete a trial work period, to have higher earnings, and to discontinue receipt of disability payments due to successful return to work.[2, 13]
- Some studies identified that Hispanic individuals with disabilities were more likely to have higher rates of employment when compared to those who were White,[11] non-Hispanic[30] or non-Hispanic White.[31]

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