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Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Health-Related Determinants

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Authors	Russinova, Zlatka;de Wet, Anneliese;Bloch, Philippe;Shulman, Alex
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Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Health-Related Determinants

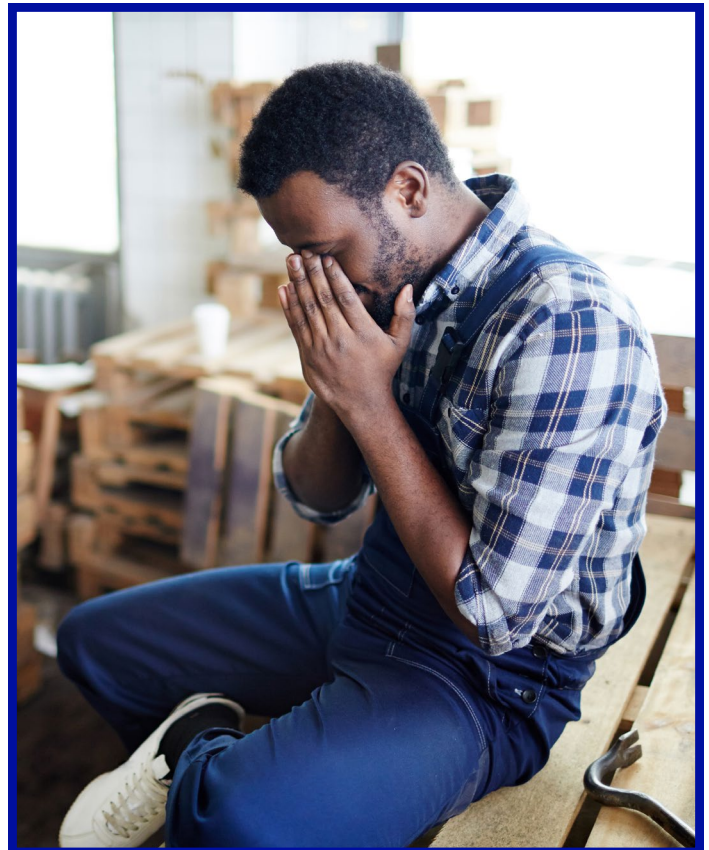
Selected Findings from NIDILRR-funded Disability Employment Research in the 21st Century

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. All papers comparing people with disabilities to those without were 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 part of a series of findings from CeKTER's systematic scoping review. In this brief we report on findings about a range of health-related determinants impacting the employment of people with disabilities, including disability characteristics, health challenges, and lifestyle related determinants. Please note that all comparisons are always about corresponding peers with disabilities.

Severity of Disability and Related Symptoms

- Greater severity of disability and related symptoms are associated with:
 - Lower rates of employment¹⁻¹⁰
 - Lower earnings⁵⁻⁶
 - Lesser number of work hours per week⁵
 - Lower job quality¹¹
 - Lesser likelihood to sustain employment for longer periods¹²
 - Lesser likelihood of having an employment goal²
 - Greater likelihood of receiving vocational rehabilitation (VR) services¹³
 - Greater likelihood of having unsuccessful VR case closure¹⁴

- Having a secondary disability or health condition contributed to:
 - Lower rates of employment^{2, 9-10, 15-17}
 - Lesser likelihood to be employed full-time¹⁸
 - Lower earnings¹⁹
 - Higher likelihood of losing a job²⁰



- Lesser likelihood of discontinuing receipt of Social Security disability benefits due to gainful employment²¹
- Greater likelihood of receiving VR services¹³
- Having a secondary mental health condition contributed to:
 - Lower rates of employment²²
 - Lesser likelihood to be employed full-time¹⁸

Onset of Disability

- People with spinal cord injuries who were under 50 years old at the time of the injury and with more than 10 years post-injury were more likely to be working.⁵
- People with spinal cord injuries who were more than 20 years post-injury were less likely to be working when compared to those with who were less than 10 years post-injury.⁶
- People with spinal cord injuries and co-occurring multiple sclerosis who were under 40 years old and had fewer years since the onset of their disability were more likely to work than their older counterparts who had more years since the onset of their disability.²³
- People with adult onset of disability were more likely of thinking how their jobs gave their lives purpose compared to those who had an earlier onset of disability.²⁴

Functioning and Activity Limitations

- People with disabilities with limited ability for self-care or independent living were less likely to work.²⁵
- People with disabilities who required assistance to perform routine activities or used specialized equipment were less likely to work compared to their peers who did not require assistance or use of specialized equipment.²⁶
- People who have experienced a spinal cord injury or a traumatic brain injury were more likely to work if they had greater upper extremity function and better cognitive functioning.²⁷
- People with multiple sclerosis with no perceived cognitive impairment were more likely to work compared to their peers with moderate and severe perceived cognitive impairment.⁴
- People with spinal cord injuries and co-occurring multiple sclerosis with better cognitive functioning, including not experiencing concentration or memory challenges, were more likely to work and to have greater earnings compared to their peers who experienced greater cognitive challenges.²³
- People with psychiatric disabilities who were receiving supported employment services were more likely to become employed if they had greater cognitive functioning.²⁸
- Youth with disabilities who were able to understand what is being said at the level of “no trouble” were more likely to work compared to their peers who had “a lot of trouble understanding” or “did not understand” what is being said.²⁹



- Youth with visual impairments were more likely to work if they had independent travel skills.³⁰
- People with intellectual disability who had communication and mobility challenges were less likely to work and to have an employment goal compared to their peers who did not have such limitations.²
- People with disabilities with functional limitations (with the exception of sensory impairments) were less likely to work when exiting VR services. People with difficulty walking or climbing stairs, chronic pain, difficulty dressing or bathing, or very frequent depression or anxiety had the lowest rates of employment at VR case closure.³¹
- People with disabilities with functional limitations (with the exception of hearing impairments) were more likely to have lower average monthly earnings compared to their peers without such limitations. People with visual impairments, difficulty walking or climbing stairs, and

difficulties doing errands alone had the lowest average monthly earnings.³¹

- People with fibromyalgia with better overall functioning were more likely to work full-time compared to their peers with lower levels of overall functioning.¹⁸
- People with psychiatric disabilities were more likely to sustain employment for longer periods if they did not experience difficulties with daily functioning.¹²
- People with spinal cord injuries and co-occurring multiple sclerosis without cognitive and mobility limitations had greater earnings compared to their peers who had difficulties with concentration, memory, shopping independently, walking or bathing.²³
- Young adults with visual impairments were more likely to work a greater number of hours per week if they had higher scores on verbal and math assessments.³²

Experiencing Pain

- People with spinal cord injuries were more likely to be employed if they:⁵
 - Had fewer painful conditions
 - Had fewer painful days
 - Never or occasionally, but not daily, used pain medication
- People with spinal cord injuries were more likely to work a greater number of hours per week if they:⁵
 - Had fewer painful conditions
 - Had fewer painful days
 - Experienced lesser pain intensity
 - Never or occasionally, but not daily, used pain medication
- People with spinal cord injuries were more likely to have greater earnings if they had no use or occasional use of prescription pain medication compared to their peers who used pain medication daily.⁵



Overall Health

- People with disabilities who reported having better overall physical health were more likely to:
 - Be employed^{29, 31, 33}
 - Work greater number of hours per week³²
 - Have greater earnings⁴
- People with disabilities who reported experiencing health challenges were more likely to have premature exit from VR services.³⁴⁻³⁵

Lifestyle

- Exercise increased the likelihood of employment among people with disabilities after controlling for their demographics, severity of disability, and having secondary health conditions.²⁶
- People with psychiatric disabilities who reported higher quality of life were more likely to work for longer periods.¹²
- People with fibromyalgia who reported higher quality of life and greater life satisfaction were more likely to work full-time compared to their peers.¹⁸



Type of Disability

- People who are blind or have visual impairments were the least likely to be employed. People with mobility and mental impairments were also less likely to work compared to people with other disabilities.³⁶
- People with cognitive impairments were more likely to work compared to their peers with physical disabilities.¹
- The gap in employment rates between people with disabilities who did and those who did not report activity limitations was smaller among persons with ambulatory and cognitive limitations compared to those with sensory limitations.²⁵
- Youth with physical or sensory disabilities had lower rates of employment compared to youth with cognitive, learning or emotional disabilities.²⁹
- Youth with intellectual or developmental disabilities were more likely to obtain employment compared to youth with learning or cognitive disabilities.³⁷
- Recipients of VR services who were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), mental illness, or physical disability were less likely to obtain employment compared to individuals who were diagnosed with sensory, intellectual or learning disabilities, or substance use disorders.³⁸
- Beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs with sensory impairments were more likely to be accepted in VR services, to start and complete a transition work plan, and to achieve a non-payment status due to gainful employment when compared with beneficiaries with back disorders, musculoskeletal and psychiatric disorders.³⁹

- People with sensory impairments had the highest employment quality, followed by those with physical impairments and mental health impairments. People with cognitive impairments had the lowest employment quality.¹¹
- The discrimination-related pay gaps were the largest for people with cognitive and mobility impairments compared to people with other disabilities.⁴⁰
- People with visual and mobility limitations were less likely to engage in job crafting behaviors.²⁴
- Youth with developmental, intellectual or physical disabilities were more likely to receive VR services than youth with cognitive or learning disabilities.³⁷
- Successful closure of VR services due to self-employment was the highest for people with visual impairments, followed by those with physical disability, sensory non-visual impairments, and mental illness; it was the lowest for individuals with cognitive and learning impairments.⁴¹
- Recipients of VR services who screened positive for substance use disorder were less likely to have a favorable VR case closure compared to those who screened negative.⁴²

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