

SUMMARY OF STATEDATA: THE NATIONAL REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND OUTCOMES THROUGH 2019

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Introduction

For over 30 years, the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) has been home to Access to Integrated Employment and StateData. Since 1988, StateData has gathered information on employment and day services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and has contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence employment outcomes at the individual, service-provider, and state-policy level. The current StateData Report highlights the most recent available data for each data set; most data are from fiscal year 2019.

Economic Status of Adults with IDD

Overall, the findings across all four data sources suggest that people with IDD experience greater levels of unemployment, underemployment, low wages, and poverty compared to those without disabilities and those with non-IDD disabilities. Data continue to highlight the economic disparities between people with and without IDD.

ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES HAVE DIFFERENT ECONOMIC OUTCOMES COMPARED TO ADULTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES

American Community Survey (ACS) data show that the employment rate for people with disabilities is far lower than their counterparts without disabilities. Only 37.7% of people with any type of disability have a job compared to 75.5% of people with no disability. This disparity in employment rates is even more pronounced for people with cognitive disabilities; only 29.7% of these individuals have a job.

Analyses of these data and data on poverty rates tell us that there is a significant relationship between being employed and the likelihood that one lives in a household with an income under the poverty line⁵. More specifically, people with disabilities who are employed are less likely to live in a household that is below the poverty line compared to people with disabilities who are not employed. This is an especially important finding given the relatively high proportion of individuals with disabilities who fall below the poverty line. Among working-age Americans, 24.4% of individuals with any disability live in a household below the poverty line compared to 9.8% of individuals with no disability. For individuals with a cognitive disability, however, this percentage climbs to 28.4%. These data highlight the need for continued research on the relationship between disability and socio-economic status.

Data from four sources are included:

1. US Census Bureau (the American Community Survey¹)
2. Social Security Administration (SSA, Supplemental Security Income Annual Statistical Report²)
3. State vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs (RSA-911³)
4. ICI's National Survey of State Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Agencies' Employment and Day Services⁴



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INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES HAVE THE POOREST ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

People with a cognitive disability who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) have the lowest employment rate of all people with a disability; only 8.1% are employed. Similarly, people with a cognitive disability who are receiving SSI are the most likely to live in a household that is below the poverty line. This varies sharply based on whether an individual in this population is employed, however. Only 15.6% of individuals with a cognitive disability who are working live below the poverty line compared to 38.4% of those who are not working.



ECONOMIC OUTCOMES ARE SLOWLY CHANGING

ICI researchers hypothesize that SSI recipients with cognitive disability may have higher involvement with state agencies that encourage labor participation compared to individuals with other disabilities. In the IDD system, data collected through the National Survey of State Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Agencies' Employment and Day Services suggest that there has been modest growth in the number of individuals in integrated employment services since 1988. In 2019, 21.5% of individuals who received employment or day services from a state IDD agency also participated in integrated employment services. Additionally, 2019 data suggest slight year-over-year growth in the number of people in integrated employment services compared to the five years before the year in which data collection took place (i.e., 2015–2020). These data also highlight drastic state-to-state differences with the percentage of adults receiving employment and day services who also participate in integrated employment services ranging from 4% at the lowest to 85% at the highest.



STATE IDD AGENCIES EFFORTS TO PRIORITIZE EMPLOYMENT VARY

Additional data from the ICI survey found that state IDD agencies continue to emphasize facility-based and non-work services over integrated employment services. For the past 10 years, funding for integrated employment services has reflected on average about 12% of state IDD agencies' employment and day services budgets. This suggests that, despite an increase in the number of people served by state IDD agencies in integrated employment, dollars have not transitioned away from facility-based and non-work services and towards integrated employment services. There is evidence, however, that individual states are taking steps to reduce facility-based work, and the number and percent of individuals in facility-based work is declining.



EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH ID SERVED BY STATE VR AGENCIES

State VR programs offer valuable services including assessment, job search assistance, and counseling to help improve the employment outcomes of individuals with ID.

In the VR system, the rehabilitation rate, defined as the percentage of people who entered employment out of those who completed an individual plan for employment (IPE), was 44% in program year 2020 for people with ID. For 2020, 26% of VR closures with ID exited with a job within one year of when they applied for services. This is down from a peak of 36% of closures in 2008. While outcomes varied across states, most people with ID who exited VR services with a job were male, white, and transition-age young adults. This finding highlights the need for future research to identify best practices for supporting the employment goals of individuals outside of this population such as those who identify as female, gender non-conforming, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and/or older than transition age.



Additionally, weekly wages for individuals with ID remained steady over time despite an increase in hourly wages earned. The lack of appreciable growth in weekly earnings is likely due to a decrease in the average weekly hours worked. Individual and labor market factors should continue to be examined to understand the reasons for the lack of overall growth in earnings.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION RESOURCES TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC OUTCOMES ARE UNDERUSED

Data from the Social Security Administration (SSA) show that work incentive programs for SSI recipients with disabilities, including the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE), Blind Work Expenses (BWE), section 1619(a) benefits, and section 1619(b) benefits are underused. PASS, IRWE, and BWE allow individuals to set aside money, resources, and expenses to be excluded from total earned income calculations.

Historically, work incentives have been underused and their current usage marks a significant decline from previous years. The PASS incentive program has seen a 70% decrease in participation over the last 19 years (i.e., 2000 to 2019). Similarly, BWE program enrollment declined 76% from 2000 to 2019, and IRWE enrollment declined by 67% in the same time span. This is especially concerning given that people with cognitive disabilities who receive SSI are more likely to work than other SSI recipients with disabilities but are also less likely to use work incentive programs. Therefore, it is important for employment and disability service professionals to make sure they provide explanations of work incentive programs and encourage more individuals to participate. In doing so, they could push towards higher employment rates and better employment outcomes for individuals, including individuals with cognitive disabilities, receiving SSI.



Conclusion

Legislation and regulation governing Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), and settlement agreements between states and the U.S. Department of Justice clarify federal intent regarding employment and pave the way towards meaningful economic opportunities for people with disabilities in their communities. With an increasing emphasis on integrated employment and adoption of Employment First policy at the state level, the nation is poised to raise expectations, improve economic outcomes, and increase self-sufficiency for Americans with IDD in every state. However, data for 2019 highlight the economic and employment disparities for individuals with IDD. While some data suggest progress, overall data reinforce the continuing need to strengthen policies, practices, and initiatives that prioritize employment.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The American Community Survey (ACS), an initiative of the US Census Bureau, provides a population perspective on employment, including people who do not have a connection with funded services.
- 2 The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Annual Statistical Report details work-incentive participation and the number of employed individuals receiving SSI.
- 3 RSA-911 is a public access database that captures individual characteristics, services provided, and employment outcomes at the point of closure from VR services. Records are at the individual level.
- 4 This survey collects summary state-level data on employment and day services distribution and funding from state IDD agencies in the 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC).
- 5 To determine poverty status, the ACS uses poverty thresholds (adjusted for inflation) determined by the size of a family in a household and the number of children under 18 in that family.

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