**New Employment Data for People with Dual Sensory Impairments**

Data compiled by NRTC researchers on the employment of individuals with dual sensory impairments (i.e., those who are deaf-blind or have combined vision and hearing loss) marks **the first release in recent history of current employment statistics for people with combined hearing and vision loss**.

Employment is a primary challenge for individuals with all types of disabilities, and individuals with dual sensory impairments face particular obstacles in this area, due in part to their unique communication difficulties. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, 0.77% of the U.S. population experiences both vision and hearing difficulties. In order to help these individuals achieve satisfying, fulfilling careers, it is essential to understand the overall employment outlook for individuals with dual sensory loss. However, prior to our analysis, current employment statistics for this population have been unavailable.

According to the data compiled by the NRTC, **individuals with dual sensory impairments experience a much higher unemployment rate[1] than the general population**, 15.7% compared to 7.7%, respectively. They are also much less likely to be active participants in the labor market, with a labor force participation rate[2] of just 36.6%, compared to a rate of 77.0% for the general population.

When compared to individuals with disabilities of all types, those who are deaf-blind still lag behind in key employment outcomes, such as the labor force participation rate (41.1% vs. 36.6%, respectively).

Data for this analysis come from the American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample, which is released by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS asks a number of questions about disabilities, including one that relates to vision loss and another related to hearing loss.[3] These questions were used in our analysis to identify the population of individuals with dual sensory loss. All employment statistics described here are averages across the five-year period from 2011-2015.

Learn more about our ongoing work related to employment for individuals with dual sensory loss here: www.blind.msstate.edu/research/current-research/research.php?id=6. To access resources to help individuals with vision loss, including those with dual sensory loss, achieve employment, visit our National Technical Assistance Center on Blindness and Visual Impairment at www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu.

| Employment Status of Working-Age U.S. Adults (Ages 18-64), 2011-2015 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Unemployment rate | Labor force participation | Employment-population ratio |
| **Individuals with dual sensory impairments** | 15.7% | 36.6% | 30.8% |
| **No disabilities** | 7.6% | 80.8% | 74.6% |
| **All disabilities** | 17.0% | 41.0% | 34.0% |

[1] Unemployment rate: The number of unemployed people as a percentage of the civilian labor force. U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). American FactFinder glossary. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/help/en/index.htm#glossary.htm.
[2] Labor force participation rate: The proportion of the population that is in the labor force, which includes all people classified as employed or unemployed, as well as members of the U.S. Armed Forces. U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). American FactFinder glossary. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/help/en/index.htm#glossary.htm.
[3] To identify vision loss, the ACS asks, "Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?" To identify hearing loss, the ACS asks, "Is this person deaf or does he/she have serious difficulty hearing?" U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). Why we ask questions about disability. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/disability/.