

ARTICLE SUMMARY

Why I'm Not Working: People With Vision Impairments Explain

What Were We Trying to Learn?

This study was designed to enhance understanding of why people with visual impairments are neither working nor looking for work (i.e., out of the labor force). We hoped that by hearing individuals explain their stories and the factors that influenced their nonparticipation in the workforce, we could promote changes in policies and service delivery systems to be more responsive to their needs. We talked with participants about various factors that influenced their workforce participation, with special attention to their skills and training needs. We also learned how not working influenced their financial situations.

How Was This Project Carried Out?

This study was conducted by interviewing 30 people with visual impairments who were out of the labor force. Researchers used semi-structured interviews to explore how each individual came to be in a place where they were neither working nor looking for work. Participants were recruited through previous studies, social media, and organizations supporting people with vision impairments. These interviews helped us gather information directly from them about their experiences and thoughts on employment barriers.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

We found that people with vision impairments face multiple, interconnected barriers that prevent them from working. These challenges include additional health issues, unreliable or unaffordable transportation, lack of support, economic concerns, age, training needs, employer attitudes, lack of necessary job accommodations from employers, and concerns about losing disability benefits. Even when individuals have the desire and basic skills to work, these challenges often make employment seem unattainable. As they got older, many felt less motivated to work and attributed employer bias due to their age as a key reason they were unlikely to return to the workforce. Workplace accommodations, like flexible schedules or remote work, were often unavailable, making it difficult for people to stay employed. Addressing these issues through targeted support, better training, and improved access to resources could help more people with vision impairments enter or return to the workforce.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me?

These findings can relate to anyone with a visual impairment by showing that many people face similar challenges. It highlights the importance of having support from family, friends, and

Research Takeaway

People with visual impairments faced barriers that prevented them from working, including additional health issues, lack of transportation, and employers unwilling to provide accommodations. Many also needed more training in technology and worried about losing disability benefits if they returned to work.

professional services like vocational rehabilitation (VR). As a practitioner, these findings highlight the importance of providing comprehensive, individualized support to people with visual impairments who are not working. The study shows that employment barriers often extend beyond vision loss. Understanding these interconnected challenges can help in assessing clients' needs and providing targeted services, such as career counseling, assistive technology training, and transportation solutions. These results also emphasize the need for better workplace accommodations, flexible work options, and benefits counseling. Addressing these barriers and involving clients' families and support networks can foster a more supportive environment that encourages workforce participation.

Learn More

Findings were taken from the following articles:

Crudden, A., Steverson, A., & Sergi, K. (2024). [Why I'm not working: People with vision impairments explain](#). *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 61(1), 39-53.

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