

Assistive Technology Use in the Workplace by People with Blindness and Low Vision: Perceived Skill Level, Satisfaction, and Challenges

What Were We Trying to Learn?

The purpose of this study was to understand how people with blindness or low vision (B/LV) use assistive technology (AT) at work, which is crucial given the increasing importance of digital skills in the modern workplace. The primary objectives were to gain insights into the specific types of AT these individuals rely on, their self-assessed skill with these tools, their satisfaction with them, and any challenges they encounter with AT at work.

How Was This Project Carried Out?

In this study, 314 employed individuals with B/LV completed an online or phone survey about their AT use at work. The survey was designed to capture information to address the four primary objectives mentioned above, as well as other study objectives. Data were collected between May to September 2021. The researchers utilized descriptive statistics to analyze the numerical data and content analysis to analyze the open-ended challenges data.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

Almost all participants (98.1%) used a computer at work, and 88.2% used a smartphone or tablet. Participants used an average of more than 7 ATS on the job, and most participants perceived themselves to be highly skilled with their AT. Commonly used workplace AT included screen readers, OCR technology, and apps on smartphones/tablets. While many were satisfied with their AT for specific work tasks, there were areas of dissatisfaction, including creating presentations, using photocopiers, and accessing print.

Although a significant portion of participants felt adept and satisfied with their AT tools, the study found persistent challenges, especially concerning the accessibility of certain digital resources. The findings highlight the pressing need for more universally accessible websites and software, given the challenges many participants encountered in these areas.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me?

Our findings are relevant for employers, technology developers, and B/LV professionals. They highlight the importance of AT in the workplace for this population. Employers should be aware of the challenges faced by employees with B/LV and consider accessibility when purchasing software.

Research Takeaway

Most people reported being skilled and satisfied with their AT, but still reported challenges. A challenge faced by over half of the participants was accessing specific software, websites, or digital documents, which highlights the need for accessible digital content.

For technology developers, there's a clear need for more user-friendly and accessible tools. Making digital content accessible should be considered during the initial development stages. If you are a professional who works with consumers with B/LV, this research provides insight into their experiences in the workplace and emphasizes the importance of advocacy for accessible digital tools and content. The results also suggest the significance of good AT skills to employment, indicating the importance of ensuring that consumers obtain these skills while receiving services.

Learn More

Findings were taken from the following article:

McDonnall, M. C., Steverson, A., Seller-Trinkowsky, R., & Sergi, K. (2023). [Assistive technology use in the workplace by people with blindness and low vision: Perceived skill level, satisfaction, and challenges](#). *Assistive Technology*, 36(6), 429-436.

For more information about this project, visit the [project overview page](#).

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