

## Employment and Retirement Among Workers Who Develop Vision Loss in Midlife

### What Were We Trying to Learn?

This study aimed to understand how developing vision loss in midlife affects employment and retirement decisions. With more people working past traditional retirement age, the study explored whether workers who experienced vision loss kept their jobs and how this changed over time, how financial situations were associated with job retention, and whether they were satisfied with their retirement if they chose to retire.

### How Was This Project Carried Out?

We used Health and Retirement Study data from 1994 to 2020, comparing 167 people who developed vision loss from age 44 to 64 while working with a matched group of 800 workers with similar backgrounds who did not have vision loss. We looked at job status, financial situations, and reasons for retirement to see how vision loss affected these factors.

### What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

This study found that vision loss in midlife often led to leaving the workforce. Still, more recent cases show higher job retention, likely due to improved assistive technologies and workplace accommodations. People in management, sales, and office jobs were more likely to continue working than those in more physically demanding occupational categories. Those who kept working were better off financially prior to their vision loss compared to those who stopped working. Many who retired felt forced into it and were much less satisfied with their retirement than those who retired without vision loss. These findings highlight the importance of workplace accommodations and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services for individuals experiencing vision loss.

### How Do These Findings Relate to Me?

If you or someone you know develops vision loss while working, understanding and utilizing available supports—such as rehabilitation programs, assistive technologies, and job modifications—can help maintain employment and financial stability. Accessing these resources can improve career outcomes, help maintain independence in the workplace, and prevent the challenges of involuntary retirement, ensuring a better financial future. With the proper support, individuals with vision loss can successfully adapt to their changing needs and stay engaged in their careers.

### Research Takeaway

Midlife vision loss increased the risk of job loss, particularly for those in certain occupational categories, but job retention after vision loss has improved over time. Many who stopped working faced financial hardship, stressing the need for better vocational support to allow continued employment.

## Learn More

Findings were taken from the following article:

McDonnall, M. C., & Cmar, J. L. (2024). [Employment and retirement among workers who develop vision loss in midlife](#). *WORK*, 79(2), 819-830.

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

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