

ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ACCESS AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AMONG YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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This publication summarizes vocational rehabilitation services and employment outcomes for Hispanic and non-Hispanic youth and young adults with intellectual disabilities in 2020. National-level data are reported separately for two age groups: 16 to 21 years old, and 22 to 30 years old. Data are from the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Rehabilitation Services Administration 911 (RSA-911). See “Data Sources” for more information on these data sets and variables.

Data Sources:

American Community Survey, 2020

Rehabilitation Services

Administration (RSA) 911, FY2020

Access to VR services

In both age ranges (16–21 and 22–30), the percentage of Hispanic people with cognitive disability according to the ACS was higher than the percentage of Hispanic people among VR clients with intellectual disability (ID). This difference suggests that Hispanic youth are not accessing VR services at the same rate as other ethnic groups. Our [previous analyses](#) have identified a similar disparity in access among the full working-age population of people with cognitive disability/ID.

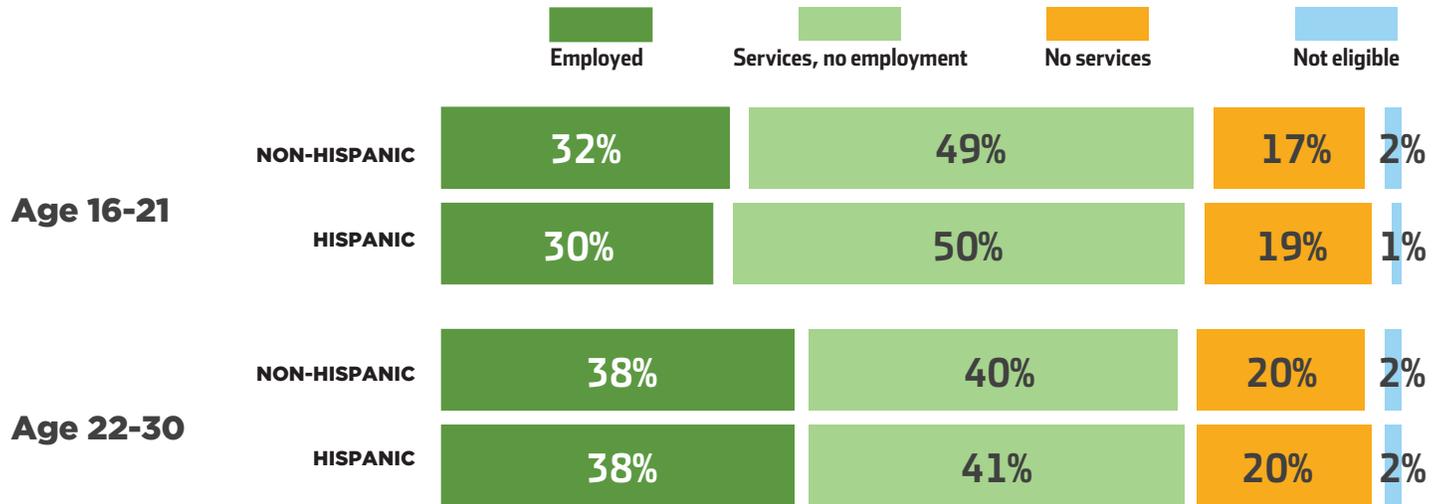
Figure 1: Percent Hispanic among youth and young adults with ID: ACS vs. RSA911



VR Outcomes

When Hispanic youth with ID do access VR services, they have similar closure outcomes to non-Hispanic youth with ID (Figure 2). Employment outcomes are slightly lower for 16–21-year-olds, but that disparity disappears in the 22–30 age group.

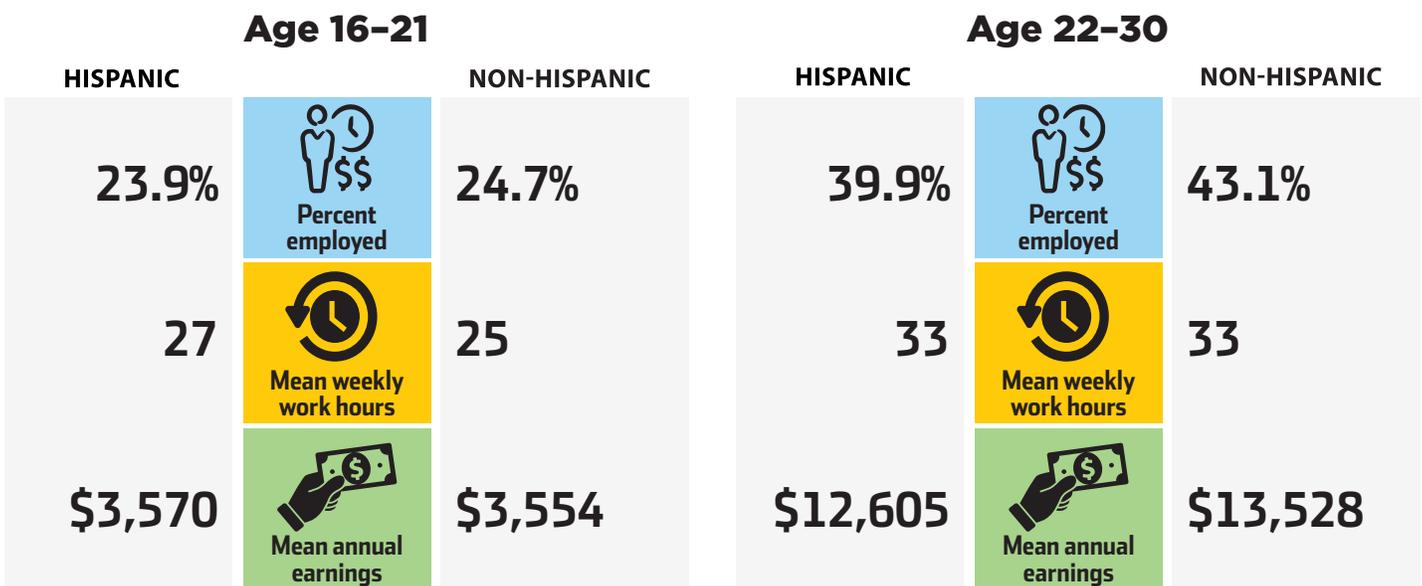
Figure 2. Vocational rehabilitation outcomes (RSA911)



Employment Outcomes

While employment outcomes for VR clients were similar, in the overall population (ACS data), employment outcomes were lower for Hispanic youth with IDD than for non-Hispanic youth (Figure 3). In fact, the disparity in both employment rate and income was larger for young adults (ages 22–30) than for youth. Given the comparable VR outcomes for both groups, addressing the lack of access to VR noted above could be one strategy for reducing this overall disparity

Figure 3: Employment Outcomes (ACS)



Data Sources

The American Community Survey (ACS) collects information annually from a sample of about 3 million people randomly selected from the 50 states and Washington, DC. The survey is carried out by the Census Bureau to better understand changing communities, with the goal of informing state and national policies. Topics include gender, age, race, disability, education, income, commute time to work, hours worked, veteran status, and other demographic and personal data.

In this report, we compare employment and economic outcomes for individuals with cognitive disability who identify as Hispanic. Cognitive disability in the ACS is the category that most closely approximates the category of intellectual and developmental disabilities. The ACS identifies a person as having a cognitive disability when a “yes” response was provided to the following question: ***“Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?”*** The individual’s ethnicity is specified by providing an open-text response to the question, ***“What is this person’s ancestry or ethnic origin?”***

The ACS asks individuals to identify if they are of Hispanic or Latino origin. For readability, the authors use the term Hispanic throughout this document.

For individuals who are Hispanic, we show estimates for the following variables for individuals with no disability, any disability, and cognitive disabilities:

- percentage employed
- mean weekly hours worked
- mean annual earnings (adjusted for inflation)

Estimates are generated using the weights provided with the sample data.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration 911 (RSA-911) is a public access database that captures individual characteristics, services provided, and employment outcomes at the point of closure from vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. Records are at the individual level, covering about 500,000 case closures each year. In this report, “intellectual disability” refers to a person for whom code 25 (“intellectual disability” in the RSA-911 dataset) was reported as the cause of either a primary or secondary impairment to employment.

We show the following data items for people with intellectual disabilities for program year 2020:

- total number of closures
- rehabilitation rate
- percentage employed of the total
- mean weekly work hours

The total number of closures represents the number of people who exited the VR program in FY 2020. This includes people who were not eligible (a very small number), people who were eligible but did not receive services, people who received services but did not gain employment, and people who received services and gained employment.

Suggested Citation

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