

EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY RATES OF PEOPLE WITH AND WITHOUT A COGNITIVE DISABILITY

By Alberto Migliore

Data Source: American Community Survey, 2020

In this DataNote, we share census data from the American Community Survey (ACS) that demonstrates 5-year trends in employment rates and poverty rates for working-age individuals. We compare these two outcomes between individuals with no disabilities and individuals with a cognitive disability who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). We use the cognitive disability category in the ACS as the closest approximation for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Table 1 compares the employment rates for people with no disability to people with a cognitive disability receiving SSI between 2016 and 2020. Since 2016, employment rates for individuals without disabilities have steadily increased, taking a substantial dip in 2020 to rates below those of 2016. The employment rates for individuals with a cognitive disability receiving SSI, on the other hand, have fluctuated across these five years. For both groups, the drop in employment rates from 2019 and 2020 is likely due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Employment rates of people with and without a cognitive disability (2016–2020)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
People with no disability	74.3%	74.8%	75.5%	76.3%	73.5%
People with a cognitive disability who received SSI	8.2%	8.7%	8.2%	9.0%	8.1%

Table 2 compares people with no disability who are under the poverty line to people with a cognitive disability receiving SSI who are under the poverty line. The percentage of employed people with no disability who are under the poverty line has been steadily decreasing since 2016. Despite a substantial decrease in their employment rate in 2020 (from 76.3% in 2019 to 73.5% in 2020, as shown in Table 1), the poverty rate of people with no disability continued to decrease as well. However, the percentage of individuals who have a cognitive disability and are on SSI who live under the poverty line showed very little change from 2016 to 2020. This indicates that individuals with the most significant disabilities face more significant economic challenges. This group could benefit from targeted employment and poverty intervention strategies.

Table 2. Poverty rates of people with and without a cognitive disability (2016–2020)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
People with no disability	6.7%	6.2%	6.0%	5.7%	5.2%
People with a cognitive disability who received SSI	15.3%	15.1%	14.9%	14.7%	15.6%

Suggested Citation: Shepard, J. (2022). Comparing Employment and Poverty Rates of People with and without a Cognitive Disability. Data Note Series, Data Note 75. University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.