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Alberto Migliore

University of Massachusetts Boston, alberto.migliore@umb.edu

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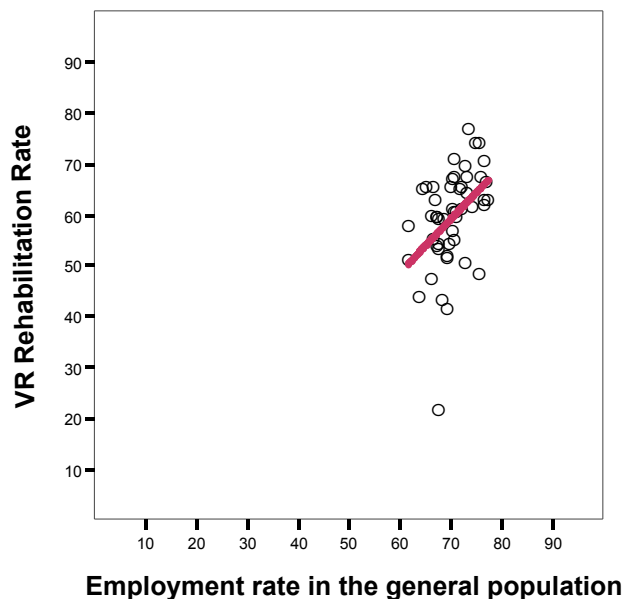
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Employment rates in the general population and VR Rehabilitation rates

By Alberto Migliore

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program plays a critical role in assisting people with disabilities gaining integrated employment. In 2006, for instance, 48,876 people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (ID/DD) exited the VR program after receiving services, with 56% of those who received services finding jobs in integrated employment. This percentage, known as the VR Rehabilitation Rate, varied from 42% in Hawaii to 77% in Maryland, if excluding the figure in Oklahoma where the VR rehabilitation rate was 22%. The state's employment rates in the general population, in contrast, varied only between 61% in West Virginia and 77% in Nebraska¹. The figure below shows these data with the 50 states and Washington DC represented by dots clustered relatively together in the center of the right half of the scatter plot. The figure shows that several states with employment rates in the general population close to 70% reported VR rehabilitation rates as low as 40% or as high as 70%. We found that the state's employment rate for the general population explained only about 19% of the VR rehabilitation rate. These findings show that the state's employment rate for the general population is a significant but not a strong predictor of how well a state VR agency does in assisting people with ID/DD finding integrated employment. This conclusion is important because it shows that an adverse labor market, within the limits described above, is not necessarily a barrier limiting the employment opportunities of people with ID/DD.

Figure 1: Employment rates in the general population and VR Rehabilitation rates.



¹ General population employment rate is a more appropriate comparison variable than the more widely known unemployment rate since the latter only counts people actively seeking work. More often than not, such a count does not include people pre-rehabilitation.

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