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# What is the relationship between gender and employment status for individuals with IDD? Findings from the National Core Indicators Adult Consumer Survey (Bringing Employment First to Scale, Issue No. 9)


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# BRINGING EMPLOYMENT FIRST TO SCALE

## What is the relationship between gender and employment status for individuals with IDD? Findings from the National Core Indicators Adult Consumer Survey

By Kelly Nye-Lengerman, Caro Narby, and Sandra Pettingell

### Key Findings from the RRTC on Advancing Employment

## Introduction

Gender-based discrimination is a persistent problem in the workforce. Like their peers without disabilities, women with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) often have less opportunity to achieve employment outcomes as compared to their male counterparts.

Analysis of data from the 2012–2013 National Core Indicators (NCI) Adult Consumer Survey shows a disparity in access to community jobs between men and women. These data show that women are significantly less likely than men to have a paid job in the community. Among the sample of respondents who worked in a community setting, only about one third were women.

## Overview

This study examined data from a sample of 12,213 people with IDD who responded to the NCI Adult Consumer Survey in 2012–2013. This sample captured data from 26 states. The purpose of the study was to observe and describe different demographic characteristics among the respondents, and how those characteristics correlate to different outcomes. Gender was one of the demographic categories included in the survey, and all respondents were categorized as male or female.

Four categories of employment settings were included in the data analysis for this study. These were 1) individual employment in the community, 2) group employment in the community, 3) facility-based work, and 4) no paid job.

The setting categories were created by combining two items from the NCI survey. The background information section of the survey includes a question about whether an individual has engaged in a paid job in a community setting, and this is followed up by another question about whether the job activity was done primarily by a group of people with disabilities.

If “yes” is marked for both questions, the individual was deemed to have a job in the community in a group setting. If the questions were marked “yes” to engaging

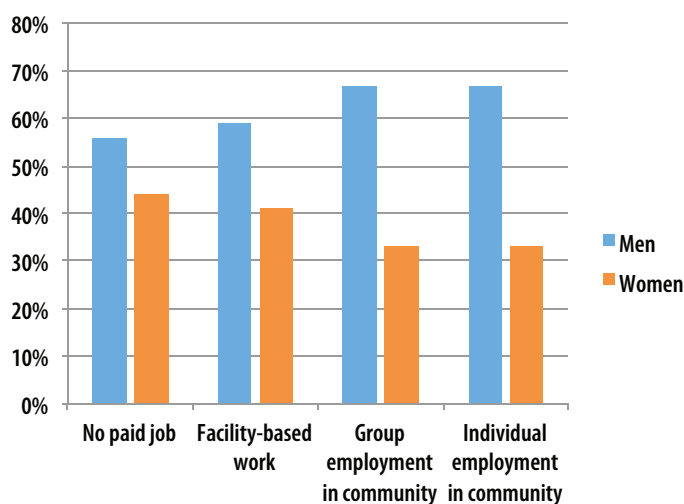
in a paid community setting job, but not primarily with a group of individuals with disabilities, they were categorized as having an individual job in the community. If “engagement in facility work only” was selected, they were included in the facility-based work setting group. If the question did not indicate engagement in any of the employment groups, the individual was classified as not having a paid job.

## Findings

Men slightly outnumbered women in the sample overall, and therefore women were less represented across all of the employment categories. Among people without a paid job, about 56%, or slightly more than half, were men. Likewise, among people working in facility-based settings, about 58.7% were men.

However, women were disproportionately underrepresented in both categories of community-based employment. Among people with either group or individual work in the community, about two thirds, or 67%, were men. That means that, while women represented slightly less than half of the sample in other employment categories, they accounted for only about one third of the people working in community-based jobs.

### Employment Setting and Gender



RRTC on Advancing Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

A project of

**ThinkWork!**  
at the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston



## Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that there is a gender-based disparity between men and women in the area of community-based employment. More research is needed to understand why women seem to be underrepresented among people with IDD who are employed in community-based settings.

To support women with IDD, researchers and advocates need to explore the intersection of gender and disability as it relates to employment. How, and to what degree, do women with IDD experience employment discrimination and/or a lack of opportunity on the basis of their gender? What unique barriers might women with IDD face due to the distinct intersection of gender with disability? Is it possible, for example, that guardians or service providers may sometimes deny women access to community-based work because women with disabilities are perceived as being especially vulnerable? Questions like these need further exploration.

## Conclusion

Women in general experience gender-based discrimination across various domains and institutions, including employment. As a distinct sub-population of women, women with IDD are in a unique position. Their experience is shaped by the social expectations associated with being a woman, and having a disability.

More research is needed to understand the correlation between gender and lack of employment opportunities for women with IDD. In the meantime, the goal of any intervention should be to empower all people with IDD to understand their rights, to make decisions about their own lives, and to participate fully within their communities.

## References

Nye-Lengerman, K., Pettingell, S., Nord, D., & Hewitt, A. (Under review). Utilization of employment services by people with IDD: An analysis of National Core Indicator data. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

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## Bringing Employment First to Scale Key Findings series

The Bringing Employment First to Scale Key Findings series shares research from ICI's ThinkWork projects, which focus on increasing employment for individuals with IDD. The goal of this series is to identify and share findings that support state agencies, providers, advocates, individuals and families to make the philosophy of Employment First a reality.

## ThinkWork!

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT AND OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Advancing Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities is a project of ThinkWork! at the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. ThinkWork! is a resource portal offering data, personal stories, and tools related to improving employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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[www.ThinkWork.org/rrtc](http://www.ThinkWork.org/rrtc)

This brief was developed in collaboration with the RRTC on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. The study used data that was collected by the National Core Indicators Project.

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