
Employment of visually impaired people in Slovakia

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Main objectives of survey

The survey is intended to:

- fill information gap related to employment situation of visually impaired people
 - provide (within existing limits) comprehensive picture of labour market position of visually impaired people
 - indicate barriers and obstacles which hamper improving employment and employability of visually impaired people
 - build up range of knowledge required for policy designing towards visually impaired people
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Basic facts of survey sample composition

The survey sample was consist of 445 visually impaired respondents of working age in what:

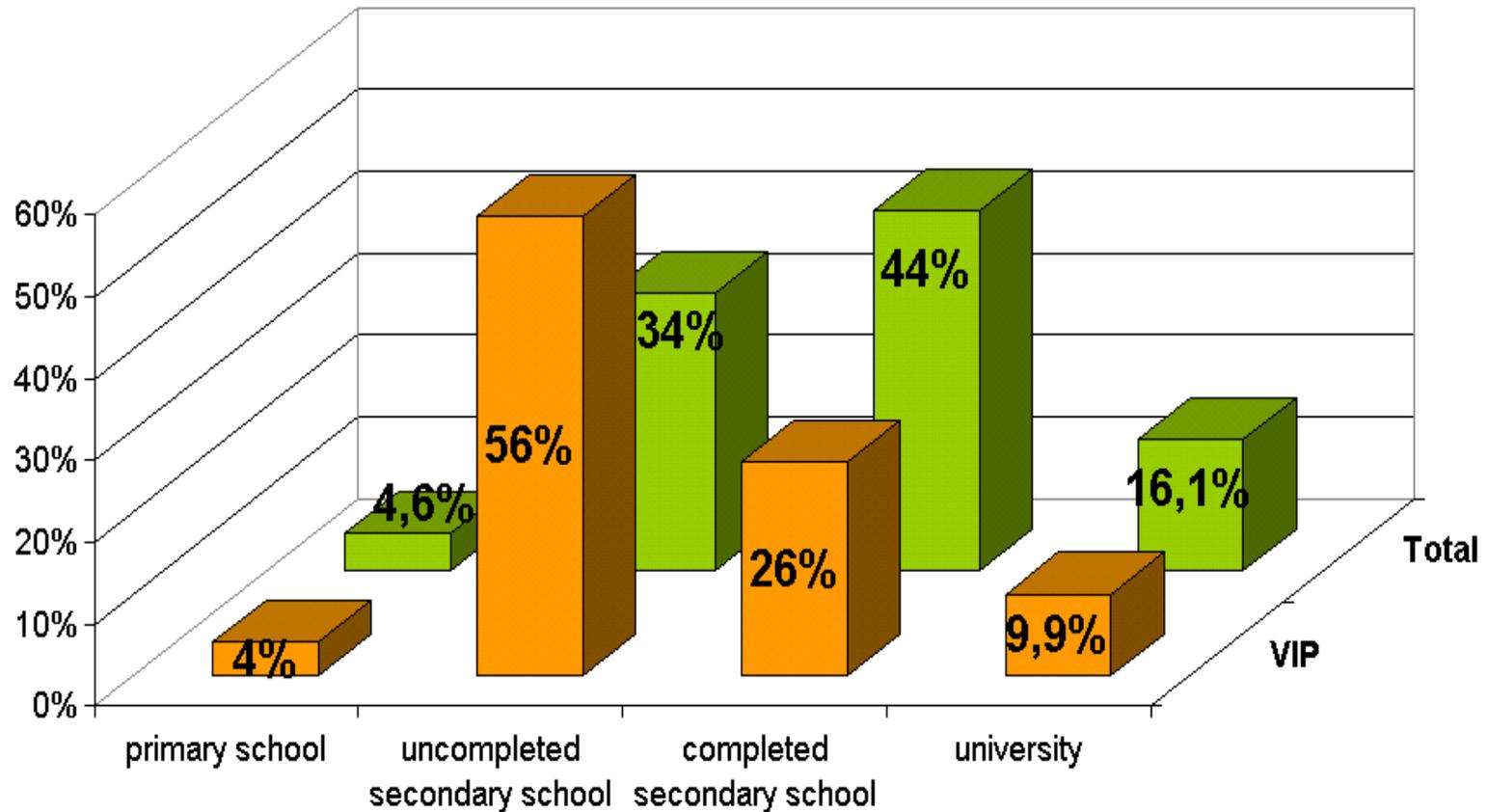
- 303 (67%) of total number of respondents were a working people (wage-earners and self – employed)
- 142 (33%) of total number of respondents were job seekers registered at public employment offices
- gender distribution was following: 244 (55%) of total number of respondents were men and 201 (45%) were women
- sample distribution according to degree of visual impairment was following:
 - ✓ 18% - blind people,
 - ✓ 40% - practically blind people
 - ✓ 37% - partially sighted people
 - ✓ 3% - people with binocular vision failure

- Age structure of the sample was characterized by low range of young people under 25 years of age (6,5%) and relatively low range (9,5%) of old people over 55 years of age. More than one third (35%) of total number of respondents belonged to the age group from 35 to 44 years, almost one third (29%) belonged to the age group from 45 to 54 years and one fifth (20,5%) belonged to the age group from 26 to 34 years.

Key findings

- Typical representative of employed visually impaired population is a person in the middle age (35 - 44) or (45-54) who is mostly blind or practically blind person with secondary education.
 - Educational composition of employed visually impaired respondents is mostly composed by people with secondary education (*completed secondary education - 25% and uncompleted secondary education - 56%*).
 - Almost every tenth respondent had university degree. Ratio of tertiary educated visually impaired people is lower in comparison with national average (9,9% against 16%).
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Educational composition



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- Majority (87%) of visually disabled people work in permanent employment and in full - time working regime.
 - Nevertheless incidence of full-time job within visually impaired working population is lower than national average (81% against 95%).
 - On the other hand the spread of part-time within working visually impaired population is significantly higher than national average and oscillate around 19% (national average -2,6%).
 - Notably, there is no significant gender distinctions concerning part-time employment: share of visually impaired men and women in part-time employment is practically identical (51% men and 49% women)
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- Almost half of the total number of respondents was engaged in unsheltered employment. This type of employment covers mostly practically blind and partially sighted people.
 - Practically every third respondent was employed in sheltered employment (sheltered workshops and sheltered work places). Most of them are blind and practically blind workers.
 - Around 13% of respondents were self employed.
 - Main occupations open for visually impaired people include:
 - masseur
 - assistant physiotherapist
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- switch board operator, informant etc.
 - corrector of Brail script
 - serving staff
 - teaching
 - archivist
 - janitorial work

Survey shows that employment of visually impaired people characterized by traditional jobs. Most of this jobs belong to secondary labour market e.i. jobs with low wages and weak possibilities for career development.

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- Collected survey data show that people with visually impairment are much more endangered by unemployment than sighted population; 52% of respondents have experienced unemployment at which 33% have entered into unemployment immediately after school leaving. The unemployment risk emerge not only from visual disability as well from low qualification which generally goes hand in hand with visual handicap. Visually impaired persons with low professional qualification have much more problems in finding job. Survey data once more acknowledged that qualification is a key prerequisite for access to employment.
 - Survey reveals that becoming unemployed people with visual impairment tend to be long-term unemployed. According survey data around two thirds visually impaired respondents registered at the public employment offices as jobseekers are long-term unemployed (more than one year). Alarmingly, 16% of visually disabled jobseeker is more than five years without job (extremely long- term unemployed).
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- Blind and practically blind people are more than other categories of visually impaired people endangered by extremely long-term unemployment; according survey data 23% of practically blind respondents and 18% of blind respondents were affected by extremely long-term unemployment.
 - Effectiveness of active labour market measures, especially training and re-training programmes, applied towards visually impaired people, is very low due to their unsuitability for need of visually impaired people.
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Major obstacles to employment identified by respondents are:

- high level of general unemployment
 - lack of suitable jobs for visually impaired people
 - employers prejudiced attitudes for hiring visually disabled people
 - low qualification
 - low IT literacy and skills
 - self apprehension of possible failure in the competition on the labour market
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Messages of survey

- Collected survey data provide rather qualitative (soft) than quantitative indicators concerning employment situation of people with visual impairment
 - Nevertheless, they serve as a good background for indicating various areas of problems and tensions in employment situation of visually impaired people.
 - Planning and designing policy towards disabled people in general and visually impaired people especially without adequate data and information is difficult and sometimes impossible. For that reason, building up developed data concerning this issue is a challenge not only for national statistical sources and as well for social research.
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