International Employment Statistics for People with Intellectual Disability – The Case for Common Metrics

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The World Report on Disability identifies employment as an important element of social participation. The Report also points to the need for research that crosses national boundaries to identify and address central areas of concern. However, such efforts are hampered with respect to intellectual disability (ID) by inconsistencies in the population definitions used, the definition of employment or employability, and metrics of employment participation. The authors explore the varied ways in which employment participation rates for people with ID are determined and reported in jurisdictions around the world, and note that with respect to employment metrics, there remains substantial variation in the methods used in data collection and reporting across agencies and countries. They also note that close inspection of methodologies is required in order to interpret data from any official statistical agency (as even when methods and definitions are explicit, the variations in approaches make comparisons difficult). Recommendations for harmonizing disparate definitions and metrics include a systematic analysis of the terminology and methods used in national surveys that would assist in identifying which data are comparable, agreement on a protocol and process for examining employment outcomes in the ID population, and the creation of an international panel on employment and ID charged to identify common terminology and population parameters to be specified in sample selection and description in localized research and studies.

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