

# The direct and indirect role of physical activity on employment among individuals with disabilities

**What is this study about?** This scoping review explores the direct or indirect role of exercise in employment among individuals with disabilities?

Exercise is thought to contribute to better health-related outcomes. But little is known about whether exercise is associated with employment and work-related outcomes.

## What did we do?

Searched 6 databases to identify studies that fulfilled the following inclusion criteria:

- **Study design:** quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods design
- **Outcomes:** employment rate, occupational performance, work competence, productivity at work.
- **Participants:** persons with physical disability from different age groups

## We Found

### 23

papers met the inclusion criteria.  
**3243** participants included in the studies: youth and adults **65%**, youth **22%** and adolescents **13%**  
Gender distribution was **57%** men vs. **43%** woman

## Direct Measures

- **7** studies examined associations between sporting/exercise modalities and employment.
- Participation in wheelchair rugby, and basketball mitigated mobility impairments and was associated with **4%** increase in likelihood of employment.
- A positive relationship was found between physical fitness (aerobic, anaerobic and muscular endurance) and gainful employment in persons with spinal cord injuries

## Indirect Measures

- **16** studies reported on physical fitness, social functioning (participation), self-efficacy as a result of exercise, sports or recreational activities.
- **Occupational performance:** physical independence, mobility, self-care skills, transportation
- **Physical fitness:** aerobic and anaerobic fitness, agility, muscle strength/endurance, flexibility, weight management
- **Psychological well-being:** self efficacy, sense of belongings, sense of accomplishments

## Conclusion

- Challenges in terms of increasing employment chance for persons with disabilities is ongoing.
- Our finding shows that sporting/exercise modalities have a direct and indirect role on employment for persons with disabilities.
- Knowledge derived from this scoping review can assist vocational program professionals to consider sporting/exercise to a greater extent, than in the past