

## Use of Braille in the Workplace by People Who are Blind

### What Were We Trying to Learn?

The study aimed to understand how people who are legally blind use braille in the workplace, particularly focusing on the role of refreshable braille technology (RBT). Key questions included the types of work tasks RBT supports, how workers obtain and use these devices, and what factors—such as personal or job characteristics—are linked to RBT usage. By exploring these questions, the study sought to gain insights into the importance of braille and RBT in helping individuals who are legally blind perform their jobs effectively and identify any barriers that might affect its usage, such as funding or braille skills.

### How Was This Project Carried Out?

We collected survey data from 304 employed legally blind individuals. Participants answered questions about their use of braille technology including RBT, job roles, and tasks performed with RBT. The study also gathered personal and job-related details, like age, vision level, braille proficiency, and job industry and categories to determine whether these factors were related to RBT use.

### What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

- About two-thirds of the participants used braille at work, and over half utilized RBT, such as braille displays or notetakers.
- Older age, early-onset blindness, and higher proficiency in braille skills were linked to greater RBT use on the job. Surprisingly, workers in blindness-related organizations used RBT less frequently than those in other sectors.
- Proficiency in braille was a key factor associated with whether people used RBT, underscoring the importance of braille literacy to enable the option of utilizing RBT on the job.
- Many participants reported purchasing RBT devices themselves, particularly braille notetakers, indicating a need for increased funding or employer support for this technology.
- RBT was not used for every work-related task. For example, it was more commonly used for notetaking in meetings than for creating spreadsheets or presentations.

### How Do These Findings Relate to Me?

For individuals who are legally blind, these findings emphasize the value of braille literacy, regardless of age of vision loss onset. Proficient braille skills and early exposure to braille can enhance flexibility and possibly efficiency as RBT provides tactile access to information that screen readers alone do not

#### Research Takeaway

The study found that many legally blind workers use braille, especially refreshable braille technology (RBT), often purchasing it themselves and only using it for certain tasks. Key factors like braille proficiency, early-onset blindness, and age were linked to RBT use, underscoring the need for braille literacy.

offer. Professionals who help prepare people who are blind for employment should offer them the opportunity to learn braille, and provide encourage and support to do so. Because many individuals must purchase RBT devices themselves, professionals and blind individuals should advocate for support from employers or seek other funding assistance for expensive RBT devices.

## Learn More

Findings were taken from the following article:

McDonnall, M. C., Sessler-Trinkowsky, R., & Steverson, A. (2024). [Use of braille in the workplace by people who are blind](#). *Journal on Technology and Persons with Disabilities*, 12, 58-75.

For more information about this project, visit the [project overview page](#).

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