



Press Release

Labor Impacts of Recovery from Severe Mental Illnesses

PAULINA ENCK | OCTOBER 19, 2023

Between 2014–2020, nearly 2.5 million individuals diagnosed with a severe mental illness (SMI) were absent from the U.S. labor force due to disability; it is estimated that just over 1 million of these individuals would otherwise have been employed were it not for their disability. In new research, Labor Market and Immigration Policy Analyst Isabella Hindley examines the impact of SMI on the labor market and estimates the extent of economic productivity that could be recovered if individuals with SMI had greater access to mental health treatment.

Key points:

- The absence of 1 million workers due to SMI translates into a cumulative loss of almost 1.7 billion work hours and \$126 billion in real output.
- Assuming access to appropriate mental health treatment and a feasible rate of recovery, this study finds that 11–42 percent of these individuals could have been employed between 2014–2020; this recovery would have increased work hours by approximately 192–732 million and economic output by \$14–\$53 billion.
- Under this study’s assumptions, if every U.S. adult with SMI were to receive mental health treatment, the number of work hours and economic output produced by their reentry to the labor market could exceed these estimates by as much as fivefold.

[Read the analysis](#)