

9. Vocational Rehabilitation

A. General

The National Insurance Vocational Rehabilitation Department helps eligible persons who have lost their jobs, or eligible persons who have no work experience, find work that is commensurate with their professional skills or their functional abilities by giving them vocational training and job placement services. These services are delivered by rehabilitation officers who are social workers by training, and provide evaluation and employment counseling services and accompany the recipient throughout the entire rehabilitation process.

The main services provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Department are services in kind: evaluation, guidance and counseling in choosing a profession, preliminary training and vocational training, completion of schooling and higher education studies, and job placement assistance for those having difficulties finding work. In addition, participants are eligible for funding of the expenses associated with the rehabilitation process, including funding of vocational evaluation and studies, a rehabilitation allowance and transportation expenses to and from the place of training, subject to the Law's provisions.

The population that the department deals with is divided into three groups¹: new applicants for vocational rehabilitation, those in the midst of the rehabilitation process and those who have completed their rehabilitation program. Considerable efforts are invested in identifying the people most suited to rehabilitation from among those eligible, in order to maximize the percentage of those finding work at the end of the process.

In addition to vocational rehabilitation, the Vocational Rehabilitation Department provides expert opinions to the Benefits Administration branches on various matters, such as determining the level of a disabled person's earning capacity and the screening of benefit recipients, etc.. The branch staff also help victims of work accidents and victims of hostile actions to access all the financial benefits for which they are eligible and also assist widows and other victims of hostile actions at times of crisis².

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B. Those Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services³

- **General disabled persons** – a resident of Israel who is suffering from a physical, mental and/or emotional impairment, provided that he fulfills all the following criteria: (1) he has been certified with a medical disability of at least 20%; (2) he is unable to work in his previous occupation or in other suitable work, due to his impairments; (3) as a result of his impairments, he needs and is suited for vocational training and

1 A rehabilitation participant can, in a given year, belong to more than one group.

2 Dealing with victims of hostile actions includes supportive treatment and assistance throughout the victim's lifetime.

3 In addition to the details given here, eligibility for vocational rehabilitation is conditional on the claimant being below retirement age.

other rehabilitation services that will enable him to return to his previous occupation or other suitable work. The spouse of a disabled person who cannot be rehabilitated due to his/her impairments and who regularly resides with him/her is also eligible for vocational rehabilitation.

- **Work-injured persons**⁴ – anyone injured at work with a certified medical disability of at least 10%, who, as a result of this injury, is incapable of engaging in his previous occupation or in other suitable work, and who needs special vocational training so that he will be capable of returning to his previous occupation. However, the NII may approve vocational rehabilitation for a work-injured person with a disability of under 10% in instances where his continued work at his previous job is liable to seriously jeopardize his health or safety.
- **Widows/widowers** – a widow/widower, as defined in the law, who is receiving survivors' benefit or dependents' benefit, and who fulfills one of the following criteria: (1) he/she has no profession or cannot earn a sufficient living in his/her profession (2) he/she cannot continue to work at the previous workplace due to being widowed; (3) a rehabilitation clerk has determined that the widow/widower is suitable for vocational training/retraining, subject to his/her medical condition and education.
- **Victims of hostile actions** – anyone injured during a hostile action⁵, provided that his certified degree of medical disability is at least 20%⁶ and who, as a result of this injury, is incapable of engaging in his/her previous occupation or in other suitable work, or who needs special vocational training so that he/she will be capable of returning to his/her previous job. Bereaved family members as defined in the law (widow/widower, orphan and bereaved parents) whose family member died as a result of a hostile action are also eligible for vocational rehabilitation.

C. People Applying to the Vocational Rehabilitation Department

2012 was the third year running in which there was a preliminary mapping of people applying for rehabilitation, in order to separate those seeking only information from those seeking rehabilitation. In the first two years, the number of applicants for rehabilitation decreased, but in 2012 this trend was reversed and the number of applicants rose by 18% – 9,382 people applied for vocational rehabilitation. 63% of applicants were eligible for a monthly benefit from the various pension branches of the National Insurance Institute.

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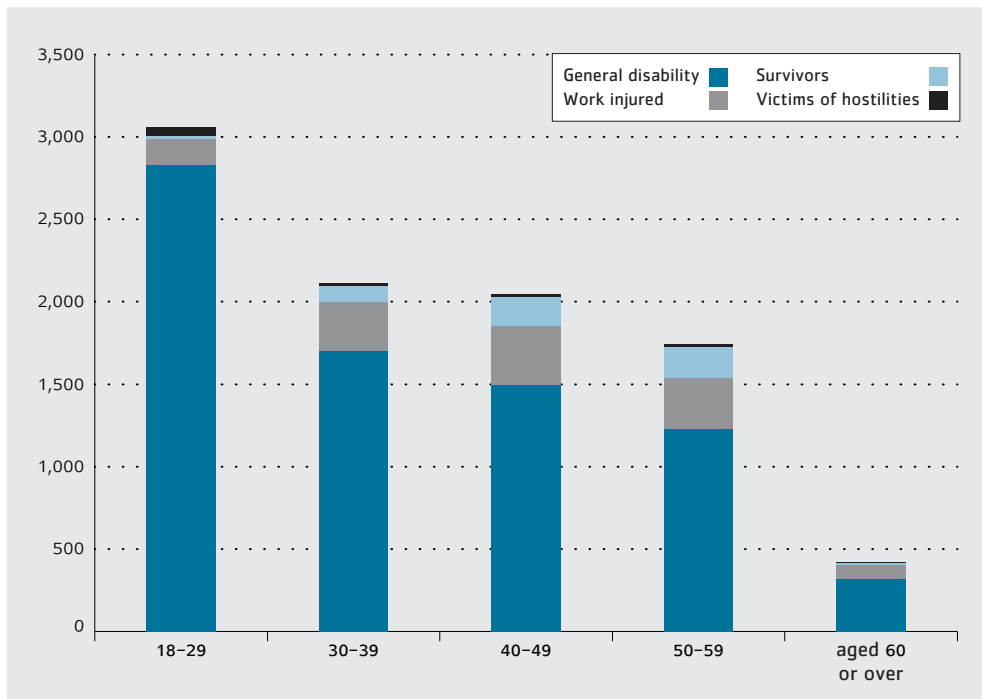
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4 A work-related injury is the result of an accident that occurs during and as a result of work, including an accident that occurs en route to or from work, or an occupational illness, according to the list of such illnesses defined in the Work-Related Injury Regulations.

5 A victim of hostile action is one who was injured in an action by military or paramilitary forces or irregular forces of a country or an organization hostile to Israel, or by an action involving assistance to one of the foregoing, in an action ordered by them or on their behalf, and directed against Israel.

6 A victim of hostile action who was injured before 1996 is eligible for vocational rehabilitation if he has been certified with at least 10% medical disability.

Graph 1
Applicants for Vocational Rehabilitation by Age and Branch, 2012



This year, too, as in other years, most applicants come from the General Disability branch (about 80%).

Young people in their twenties have the highest potential for rehabilitation, because the training or higher education will significantly improve their chances of finding work, and therefore it is not surprising that one third of the applications for rehabilitation are in this age bracket (Graph 1). Moreover, the younger the age group, the higher the rate of those being rehabilitated from the General Disability branch, because this group includes those disabled from birth who apply to exercise their rights to rehabilitation on reaching the age of 18. The older age brackets include more victims of work-related injuries and widows/ widowers.

One of the factors that greatly affects the success of rehabilitation is the individual's internal motivation. It is reasonable that someone who applies for rehabilitation on his own initiative is more highly motivated to succeed in the process. For 73% of applicants for rehabilitation in 2012, this was their first application, and 80% of those initiated the application themselves. Only 15% of applications were initiated by NII rehabilitation clerks – usually for those with general disabilities or survivors who had never previously sought their assistance (Table 1).

One third of the applications for rehabilitation are young

Table 1
Applicants for Vocational Rehabilitation by Branch, Number of Application
and Initiator of Application (numbers and percentages), 2012

Application number	Initiated by	Total		Branch			
		Number	Percent	General disability	Work-related	Survivors	Victims of hostilities
Total	Numbers			7,563	1,201	503	95
	Percentages	9,382	100	100%	100%	100%	100%
First application	Total	6,849	73	71%	80%	85%	63%
	The applicant	5,375	57	55%	74%	56%	53%
	NII clerks	1,190	13	13%	6%	27%	11%
	Community entity	284	3	4%	0%	2%	-
2nd application	Total	2,533	27	29%	20%	15%	37%
	The applicant	2,139	23	24%	18%	13%	34%
	NII clerks	224	2	3%	1%	1%	3%
	Community entity	170	2	2%	1%	1%	2%

D. Participants in Vocational Rehabilitation

As stated above, the primary objective of the Vocational Rehabilitation Department is to help participants integrate into the labor market. The rehabilitation process consists of a number of stages, in which the applicant's suitability for rehabilitation is examined and the program is optimally adapted to his needs, wishes and abilities, according to the professional opinion of the rehabilitation staff. The major stages in the vocational rehabilitation process are as follows:

- **Occupational evaluation** – The participant's occupational qualifications are evaluated, and the participant receives counseling and guidance by department professionals, evaluation institutes or vocational rehabilitation centers. The evaluation is performed in accordance with the disabled person's capabilities and the opinion of the rehabilitation professional.
- **Pre-training stage** – learning work habits in rehabilitation centers, empowerment courses, programs to fill educational gaps (high school matriculation, psychometric exams, college preparatory courses, etc.), based on the findings of the occupational evaluation, and as preparation for integration in a training program or in employment.
- **Vocational training** – training provided to participants who possess occupational qualifications suitable for studies that will equip them with a profession and help them to find work: studies at institutions of higher education (colleges and universities), practical engineering schools, vocational courses (such as technician training, secretarial courses, bookkeeping and cooking).
- **Job placement** – The department staff assist those participants who have a profession or who have completed their vocational training to find work compatible with their capabilities and training, and assist and monitor their assimilation in the workplace.

Table 2
Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Participants, by Insurance Branch
and Type of Program (numbers and percentages), 2012

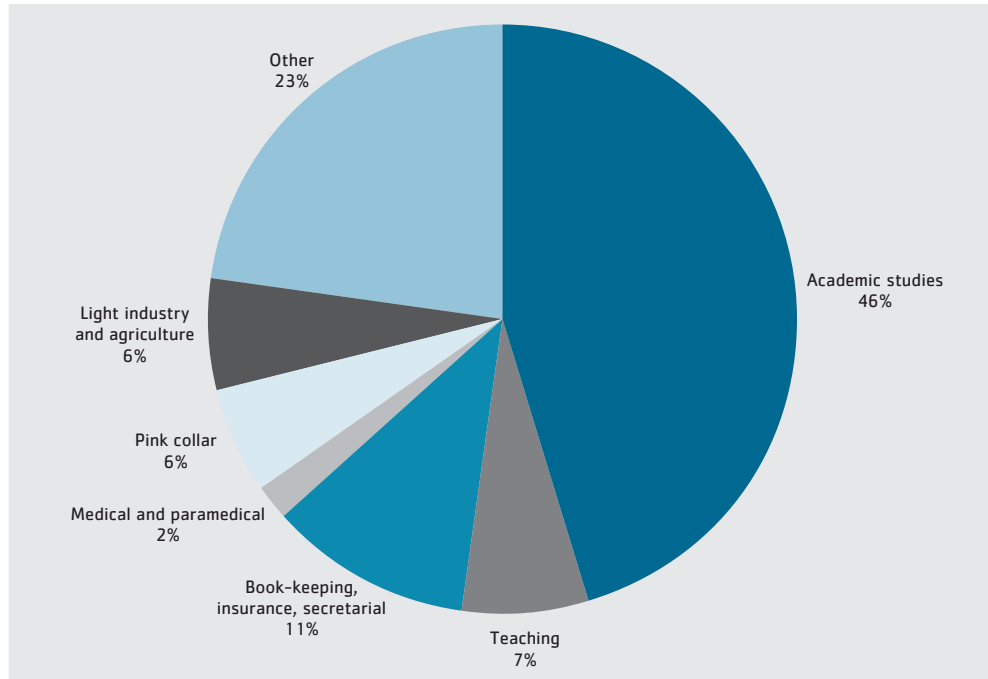
Type of Program		Total		Branch				
		Number	Percent	General disability	Work-related	Survivors	Victims of hostilities	
Total programs	Numbers	44,434	100	35,445	5,594	2,272	1,123	
	Percentages			80%	13%	5%	3%	
Evaluation	Total	18,788	100	79%	15%	4%	2%	
	Internal evaluation of eligibility	6,821	100	82%	13%	4%	1%	
	Internal evaluation for programs	7,069	100	80%	12%	5%	3%	
	External evaluation	4,898	100	74%	19%	4%	3%	
Pre-training	Total	3,824	100	75%	14%	7%	3%	
	Completion of education	2,541	100	75%	15%	8%	3%	
	Learning work habits	1,283	100	78%	12%	5%	4%	
Vocational training	Total	7,096	100	79%	10%	7%	4%	
	Vocational course	2,983	100	72%	14%	12%	2%	
	Higher education	4,113	100	84%	8%	3%	6%	
Placement help		3,385	100		82%	13%	5%	1%
Creating conditions for study		1,374	100		87%	10%	2%	1%
Referral to work in Hameshakem		324	100		96%	3%	-	1%
Referral to community entity		149	100		96%	3%	1%	-
Follow up and maintenance		9,494	100		81%	11%	6%	3%
Total participants	Number	21,192		16,665	2,795	1,033	699	
	Percentages		100	79%	13%	5%	3%	

Participants in the rehabilitation process include those who began a rehabilitation program this year and those who began in previous years and have not yet completed the program. In 2012 about 21,000 insured participated in about 44,000 different rehabilitation programs (Table 2), on average. Each participant took part in two programs, one of which was an evaluation. As already mentioned, about 80% of participants belong to the General Disability branch, and about 61% of them are eligible for a monthly benefit. 4,861 programs were given by suppliers of rehabilitation services, 94% of them in rehabilitation centers of the Rehabilitation Projects Fund.

In 2012 about 21,000 insured participated in about 44,000 different rehabilitation programs

Many economic studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between the number of years of education a person acquires and his income; therefore academic studies are the most efficient tool for integrating into the workforce and moving from welfare to work. About 53% of participants in vocational training this year were referred to academic studies (including those studying to be teachers) (Graph 2). On the other hand, only a

Graph 2
Participants in Vocational Training by Occupation Studied* (percentages), 2012



* Academic studies: art, practical engineering; “Pink collar” – cosmetics, cooking, sewing etc.; “Other” – vehicle appraisal, assistant veterinarian, etc.

few people were trained for physical work (agriculture, light industry, etc.) because of the physical effort needed for such work and because of the drop in demand for such workers today.

Another interesting development is the increasing number of vocational training programs involving academic studies. Israel is one of the leaders in the west in its percentage of college graduates, and this phenomenon has not passed over those who participate in vocational rehabilitation programs. As can be seen in Graph 3, the percentage of higher education programs has doubled since the turn of the century, and today they constitute nearly 50% of all the vocational education programs.

Table 3 shows the breakdown of participants by their main impairment⁷ and their rates of medical disability. It is reasonable to assume that those with the lower rates of medical disability are more independent and able to integrate into the job market by their own efforts, while the higher the degree of medical disability, the smaller the chances of finding work in the free market. It is not therefore surprising to discover that 36% of participants in the rehabilitation process in 2012 have 40%-59% disability,

36% of participants in the rehabilitation process in 2012 have 40%-59% disability, as this is the population group with the highest potential for rehabilitation among the disabled

7 This is the impairment that accounts for the individual’s highest degree of medical disability.

Graph 3
Programs for Vocational Training and the Rate of Higher Education Programs (numbers and percentages), 2001-2012

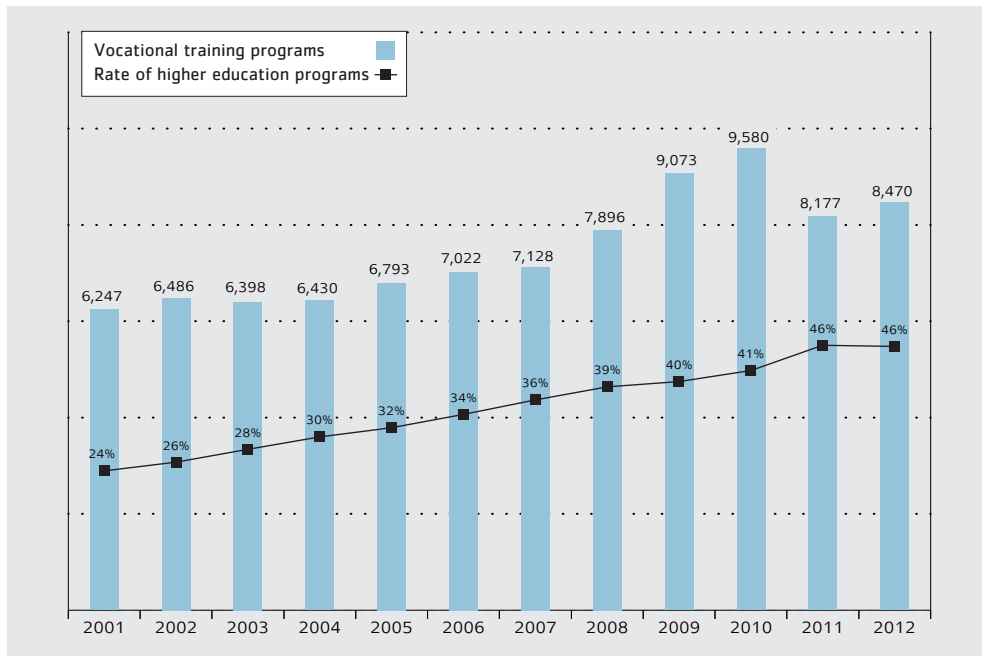


Table 3
Participants in Vocational Rehabilitation Programs by Degree of Medical Disability and Main Impairment (numbers and percentages), 2012

Main impairment	Total		Degree of medical disability (percent)					
	Number	Percent	None*	10-19	20-39	40-59	60-79	80-100
Total	21,192	100	1,827	1,023	3,841	7,696	3,838	2,967
			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Mental or retardation	5,042	24		6%	21%	44%	17%	5%
Internal	4,084	19		6%	22%	21%	25%	21%
Urogenital	569	3		1%	3%	2%	4%	6%
Neurological	2,581	12		4%	11%	10%	18%	22%
Locomotive	4,055	19		76%	30%	15%	16%	12%
Sight	1,133	5		1%	2%	2%	5%	22%
Hearing	942	4		2%	3%	2%	12%	5%
Other**	2,786	13	100%	4%	8%	3%	4%	7%

* Eligibility for rehabilitation in the Victims of Hostilities and Survivors is not necessarily due to the participant's medical condition.
 ** This category also includes participants with no impairment.

as this is the population group with the highest potential for rehabilitation among the disabled. Among participants with the lowest rates of medical disability (10%-19%), the proportion of those with locomotive problems is striking, while among those with higher

rates of disability, the proportion of sufferers from internal and neurological problems is striking. 65% of participants with locomotive problems belong to the work injured branch.

E. Participants who Completed Vocational Rehabilitation

The success of a vocational rehabilitation program depends on the motivation of the applicants for rehabilitation. Integration in the labor market is impossible if the participant is not interested in working.

In 2012 some 11,000 individuals completed a vocational rehabilitation program. Treatment of 45% of them was stopped, usually (60%) after evaluation, since they were found to be unsuitable (Table 4). The remainder (5,474) completed at least one of the programs preparing them for work in the free market. 74% of them managed to find work⁸, with just over half of them being eligible for a monthly disability benefit from the General Disability or Work Injury branches. This figure highlights the fact that the National Insurance Rehabilitation Department is a decisive factor in helping the disabled integrate into the work market.

Table 4
Completion of Rehabilitation Programs by Insurance Branch and Manner of Completion (numbers and percentages), 2012

Manner of completion		Total		Branch (percentages)			
		Number	Percent	General disability	Work-related	Survivors	Victims of hostilities
Total	Numbers	11,001		8,572	1,620	486	323
	Percentages		100	78%	15%	4%	3%
Found work		4,072	100	74%	16%	6%	4%
Completed the vocational training		659	100	79%	10%	9%	2%
Completed the pre-training		743	100	84%	10%	4%	1%
Referred to other organization		525	100	93%	5%	1%	1%
Treatment stopped		5,002	100	78%	16%	3%	3%

Table 5
Completion of Rehabilitation Programs by Age and Manner of Completion (numbers and percentages), 2012

Manner of completion		Total		Age bracket (percentages)				
		Number	Percent	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Total	Numbers	5,474		1,648	1,349	1,226	976	275
	Percentages		100	30%	25%	22%	18%	5%
Found work		4,072	100	29%	25%	23%	18%	5%
Completed the vocational training		659	100	34%	24%	21%	16%	4%
Completed the pre-training		743	100	35%	21%	21%	18%	4%

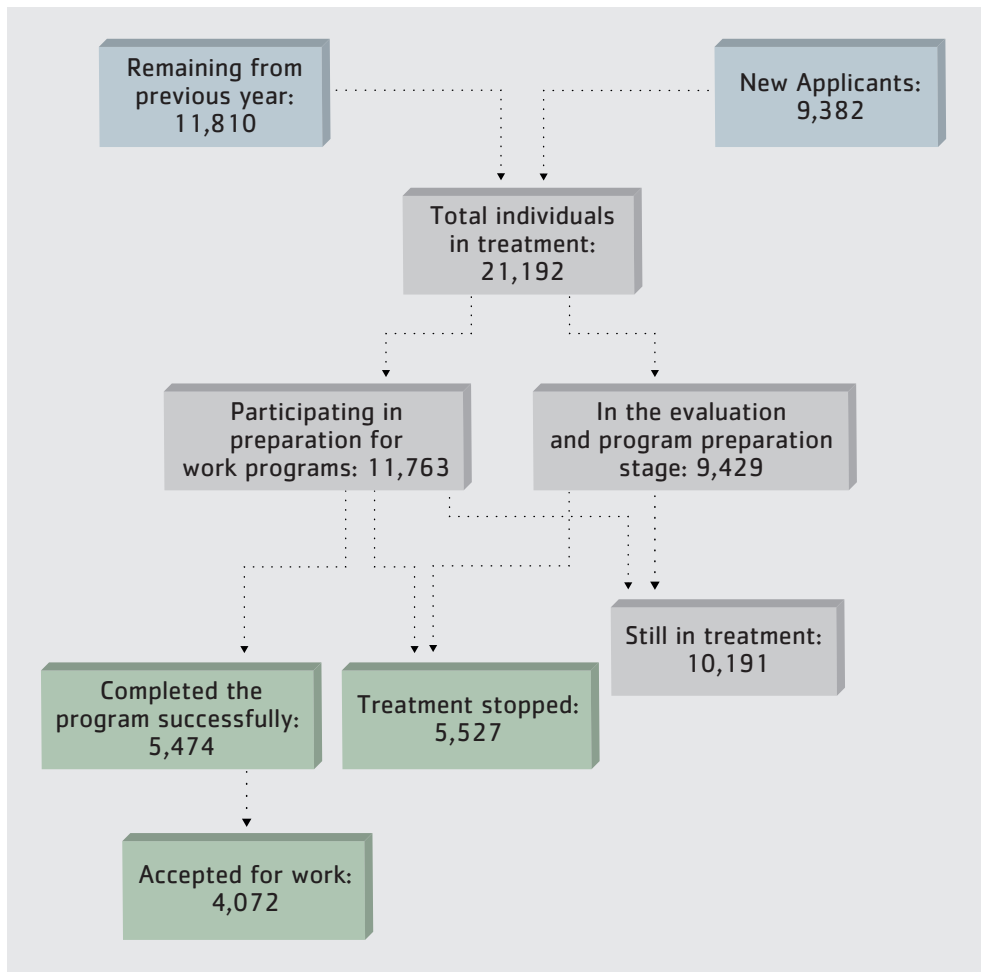
8 Since this group is most interesting for analysis purposes, we will focus on them later in the review.

The vocational rehabilitation process is of varying duration, and is influenced by many factors, from the number of programs in which the individual participates, through the type of training and his medical condition. Therefore, sometimes rehabilitation can take more than three years (for example, when the participant studies in a preparatory course followed by an academic degree, or when his medical condition prevents him from following a full course of studies, or where assistance in job placement is required).

The vocational rehabilitation process is of varying duration, and is influenced by many factors

Those who completed rehabilitation programs in 2012 required on average two years and four months to complete the program. However, there is a high degree of difference between groups. Individuals from the Work Injury insurance branch completed the program on average within one year and eight months, while individuals from the General Disability branch required on average two years and four months. These differences are due to different work habits and the degree of independence of

Graph 4
Population in Vocational Rehabilitation by Stage in the Process, 2012

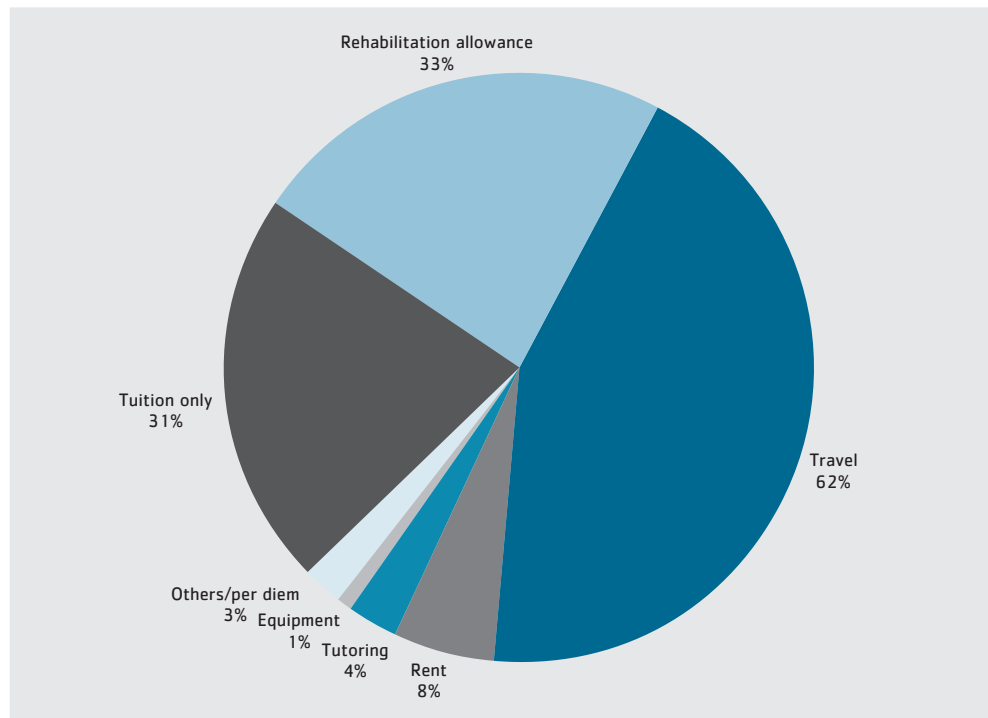


the individuals undergoing rehabilitation in these two groups. The individual's medical condition also strongly affects the duration of rehabilitation: for those whose degree of medical disability is over 80% the process was twice as long as for those with medical disability of less than 40% (3.1 years compared to 1.55 years). This correlation applies both to individuals from the General Disability branch and those from the Work Injury branch.

The age of new participants has a decisive influence on the percentage of those completing rehabilitation programs in every age group

An examination of the ages of those who completed a rehabilitation program in 2012 compared to the outcome is presented in Table 5. There is no doubt that the age of new participants has a decisive influence on the percentage of those completing rehabilitation programs in every age group (Graph 1). However, it can be seen that notwithstanding the effort to integrate them into the workforce, the rate of those aged 18-29 who find work is 29% (Table 5), slightly lower than their rate among new participants, which is 33% (Graph 1), perhaps because of their medical condition and lack of work skills.

Graph 5
Recipients of Assistance in Accessing Rights by Insurance Branch, 2012



F. Other Activities of the Rehabilitation Department

In addition to vocational rehabilitation, the Vocational Rehabilitation Department staff provide professional expert opinions to the Benefits Administration branches on the following: (a) determining the level of a disabled person's earning capacity; (b)

appointing a benefits manager; (c) determining eligibility of victims of work accidents for an increase in their degree of disability and eligibility for capitalizations; (d) determining eligibility for special benefits for the victims of work accidents and hostile actions. In addition, the rehabilitation staff write opinions outside the framework of the National Insurance Law.

In 2012, staff of the Rehabilitation Department wrote a total of 46,232 opinions, of which 52% dealt with determining earning capacity for general disability (Graph 5).

In addition, the Department staff help work injured and victims of hostile actions to obtain all the financial benefits to which they are entitled (such as the special benefit and special grants). In 2012, the Department assisted 3,185 people on average each month to obtain the special benefit for victims of work injuries and 4,881 people to exercise their financial rights – 1,180 of them first applied to the Department this year. Treatment of 1,002 of them was completed this year.

The rehabilitation employees, who are all social workers, also assist widows and other victims of hostile actions⁹ during crisis periods. In 2012 they dealt with 107 people.

The Department staff help work injured and victims of hostile actions to obtain all the financial benefits to which they are entitled

G. Payments

The vocational rehabilitation process involves the funding of associated payments that facilitate rehabilitation: living expenses, studies and mobility. Below are details of the payments:

- **Rehabilitation allowance:** a monthly maintenance benefit, at the level of a full disability pension, which is paid during the period of studies for participants in vocational rehabilitation who are not eligible for a general disability pension or a work injury allowance, provided that they are studying for at least 20 hours per week.
- **Travel:** reimbursement of travel expenses to the location of the training/evaluation by public transport, or by special transport¹⁰ or by a supplement to a mobility allowance for those receiving a partial mobility allowance as wage-earners.
- **Tuition:** participation by the NII in academic tuition fees or the cost of the training, up to the maximum amount prescribed in the regulations.
- **Tutoring and accessibility services for the disabled:** assistance through tutoring, as needed and according to participant's number of study hours, and special assistance to disabled participants who require translation into sign language, transcription, readers, etc.
- **Rent for housing:** participation in rent or the cost of the dormitories for participants whose permanent places of residence are more than 40 km from the location of the vocational training, depending upon their course of studies.

9 Treatment of victims of hostile actions includes support and assistance throughout their lives.

10 Given to the severely disabled whose medical condition makes them unable to use public transport and who are not eligible for a mobility allowance.

Table 6
Expenses for Vocational Rehabilitation, Total and by Branch,
2012 Prices (NIS thousand), 2008-2012

Year	Total expenses	General disability	Work-related	Survivors	Hostile action
2008	205,415	129,798	25,112	11,516	32,336
2009	220,984	144,967	30,598	14,242	31,072
2010	229,170	151,713	32,452	14,640	30,365
2011	193,360	126,951	26,751	11,875	27,784
2012	206,564	135,911	29,230	11,984	29,439

Table 7
Payments Associated with Vocational Rehabilitation,
by Branch and Number of Recipients (NIS thousand), 2012

Branch	Total	Allowance	Travel	Tuition	Tutoring	Rent	Equipment	Other*
Total expenses	206,564	64,808	11,405	97,953	5,425	8,909	1,048	17,016
General disability	135,911	38,681	8,813	73,607	5,201	8,523	1,017	70
Work-related	29,230	16,783	1,574	10,307	200	319	11	37
Survivors	11,984	5,921	908	5,095	14	16	20	10
Victims of hostile action	29,439	3,423	110	8,944	11	52	0	16,899
Total recipients	13,964	4,393	8,231	12,480	586	1,111	164	1,289

* Not all those eligible for another payment have participated in a vocational rehabilitation program.

- **Equipment:** helping the disabled purchase equipment that is necessary for participation in the rehabilitation program (computer, keyboard adapted for the blind, books, school supplies, etc.).
- **Other expenses (including per diem expenses):** assistance with exercising financial rights, mainly among victims of hostile actions and the work injured, as well as participation in living expenses, subject to the regulations.

In 2012, in the vocational rehabilitation framework, NIS 206.6 million were paid to 13,964 individuals

In 2012, in the vocational rehabilitation framework, NIS 206.6 million were paid to 13,964 individuals¹¹. In the last two years there has been greater stringency over granting approval of eligibility for rehabilitation and on optimum adaptation of rehabilitation programs. Therefore, although there was a slight increase in the expenditure compared to 2011, the expenditure on rehabilitation payments is still lower than for 2009-2010.

The breakdown of payments in 2012 is similar to the breakdown in 2011, as well as the number of recipients (13,964 compared to 13,796) and the average cost per recipient (about NIS 15,000 per annum) (Table 6). As expected, the expenditure in the general disability branch is the highest, accounting for 66% of the total annual expenditure. Payments for tuition fees are the main expense (about 48%) and are paid to about 90% of participants in rehabilitation.

11 These payments do not include payments for special benefits and capitalizations.

According to the Law, anyone who is found suited to completing their education or professional training is entitled to more associated payments (including tutoring, equipment, travel expenses and rent) than those who are not. Table 6 shows the associated payments (excluding tuition), where each individual can receive more than one payment.

As in previous years, in 2012 about a 33% of participants a supplement to the level of a full disability allowance (rehabilitation allowance) as part of their participation in rehabilitation programs. In 62% of cases, the NII subsidizes participants' transportation expenses to their place of study. A third of the recipients of tuition fees receive no other payments – it can be assumed that most of them receive benefits (Graph 6).

Graph 6
Additional Rehabilitation Payments to Recipients of Tuition, 2012

