DISABILITY
SOLUTIONS
@ABILITY BEYOND

2024-2025

DISABILITY AT WORK
SURVEY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, Disability Solutions conducted its inaugural Disability at Work Survey. The survey explores the barriers individuals face in pursuing employment and how obstacles within workplace systems and policies impact the productivity, longevity, and career success of people with disabilities. The 2024 survey gathered insights from individuals with disabilities seeking employment and those already in the workforce via an anonymous, online survey.

Participants were asked about various demographic factors and three key phases of their employment experiences:

1. Job search (which involves identifying job opportunities)
2. Application and interview processes
3. Maintaining employment (including workplace supports and accommodations)

The results of the survey were based on responses from 715 individuals who identified as having a disability and were residents of the U.S. Out of a total of 855 entries, 140 were excluded from the final count due to missing or incomplete information.

The survey's objective was to better understand the most significant barriers that individuals with disabilities face in attaining stable, inclusive, and long-term employment—and what aspects of a

workplace motivate individuals to seek new employment and/or apply for a job.

The report further examines the primary challenges to employment as identified by survey respondents. A notable 83% of respondents reported finding a job to be extremely challenging in some way. Additionally, 31% reported that using application technology was challenging, while 48% faced challenges during the interview process itself. Moreover, 49% indicated that the process of requesting accommodations for the interview was also challenging.

31%
Application Technology

48%
Interviewing

49%
Accommodations Request
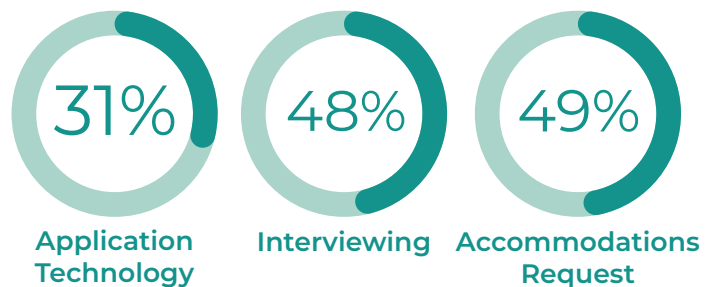
The survey also included an expanded focus on remote work to examine the complexities of this popular yet controversial work arrangement. Unsurprisingly, 81% of respondents indicated that remote work options were important to them, with most reporting either an increase in productivity or no change in a remote setting.

Disability Solutions aims to improve employers' understanding of disability in the workplace through this annual survey. The survey identifies key opportunities for enhancing employer practices and focuses on effective ways to support individuals with disabilities within organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Disability in the workplace is a crucial aspect of diversity, yet it is often overlooked by employers. Employees with disabilities experience significant barriers gaining employment and within the workplace, including higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, job insecurity, and workplace discrimination. Everyone deserves to work in an environment where they feel safe and valued; disability should never be a barrier to opportunity.

Employers frequently underestimate the prevalence of disability within their organizations. While 25 percent of employees with disabilities self-identify as having a disability that limits a major life activity, companies report only 4 to 7 percent of that overall figure. This misperception leads to inadequate investment in workplace disability inclusion and support systems[1].

The Disability at Work survey examines the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities during the job search and application process, as well as the difficulties encountered once they are employed.

By identifying and investigating these challenges, our goal is to empower employers to better understand the needs of their applicants and employees with disabilities. We aim to provide actionable solutions that improve workplace inclusion, fostering environments where individuals with disabilities feel understood, supported, and safe.

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A SAMPLE OF THE U.S. DISABILITY WORKFORCE

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, there has been a continued upward trend for disability employment in the last year. As of October 2024, people with disabilities have a 24.5% labor force participation rate, and a 7.6% unemployment rate2.

Overall, the Disability at Work survey results reveal that mobility/physical disability was the highest reported type of disability (53%), with medical disability/chronic illness (44%) and mental health disability (37%) falling into the second and third positions among respondents. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 35 to 54 years of age (49%); with the majority being straight, or heterosexual (72%), White/Caucasian (74%), and female (61%). While education levels of respondents varied more widely, most did have some level of higher education, with the highest being a bachelor's degree (25%).

Types of Disability
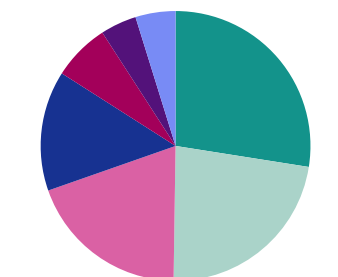
- Mobility/physical disability (52.7)
- Medical disability/chronic illness (43.6)
- Mental health disability (37.2)
- Cognitive/intellectual/learning disability (27.6)
- Visual disability (13.1)
- Hearing disability (8.3)
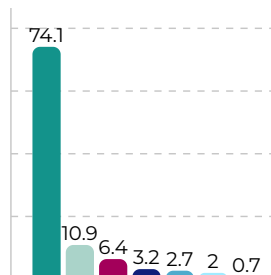- Other disabilities (9.2)

Gender

Values: 60.8, 30.6, 5.9, 2.2, 0.4
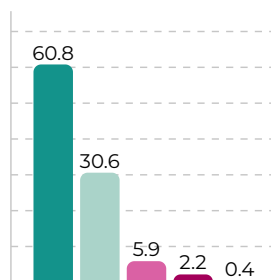
- Female
- Male
- Non-binary/non-conforming
- Transgender
- Prefer not to say

Sexual Identity

Values: 72.2, 9.2, 7.4, 6.6, 4.6
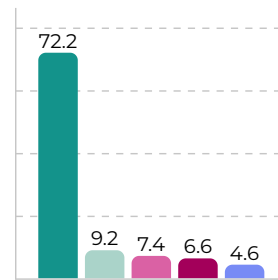
- Straight, that is, not gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- I use a different term
- Prefer not to say
- Lesbian or gay

Ethnicity

Values: 74.1, 10.9, 6.4, 3.2, 2.7, 2, 0.7

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Two or More Races
- Prefer not to say
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino

Values: 88.11, 9.65, 2.24

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

Education level

Values: 25.2, 18.3, 16.7, 15.8, 11.2, 5.2, 2.9, 2.7, 1.3, 0.6

- Bachelor's degree
- Some college credit, no degree
- High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (for example, GED)
- Master's degree
- Associates degree
- Trade/technical/vocational training
- Doctorate degree
- Some high school, no diploma
- Professional degree
- No schooling completed

Age Group

Values: 7.7, 18.6, 26.6, 21.8, 19.3, 5.3, 0.7
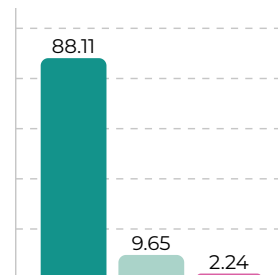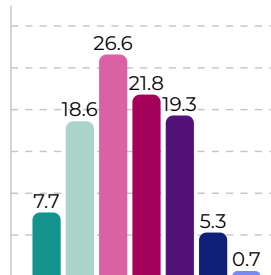
- 18 to 24 years old
- 25 to 34 years old
- 35 to 44 years old
- 45 to 54 years old
- 55 to 64 years old
- 65 to 74 years old
- 75 years or older

The Disability at Work survey, while representing only a small sample of the overall U.S. disability workforce, shows some correlations with findings and data sets from larger studies regarding trends in the disability workforce. Notably, there is a higher incidence of women with disabilities facing inequities in the workplace[3]. The survey also highlights a larger representation of non-apparent disabilities, such as chronic illnesses and mental health conditions, being the second and third most prevalent disability type noted. This aligns with the ongoing mental health crisis[4] in the U.S. and underscores the overall shortcomings of the U.S. healthcare system[5].

We can also correlate the challenges faced during the job search process, such as finding employment, crafting cover letters and resumes, completing job applications, interviewing, and requesting accommodations throughout the application and interview process, to specific types of disabilities.

**Table-1:
How challenging has each part of the job search process been for the respondents**

Job Search Difficulties	Not challenging	Slightly challenging	Neutral	Very challenging	Extremely challenging
Finding a job for which I am qualified	7.2%	11.0%	20.2%	18.4%	43.1%
Finding a job I'm interested in	6.2%	9.7%	22.4%	22.1%	39.7%
Creating a resume	23.2%	24.8%	20.8%	14.1%	17.1%
Writing a cover letter	18.1%	23.6%	21.4%	14.4%	22.6%
Filling out an application	23.1%	24.9%	22.9%	13.5%	15.7%
Using application technology	29.9%	21.1%	18.2%	14.1%	16.7%
Interviewing	10.0%	17.0%	25.3%	19.7%	28.0%
Requesting accommodations for the application/ interviewing process	17.3%	12.3%	21.6%	18.8%	30.0%
Others	28.9%	3.7%	13.3%	14.1%	40.0%

Table-2: Result of Chi-square test of association between disability type & Job search difficulties

Correlation between disability type & Job search difficulties	Finding a job for which I am qualified			Finding a job I'm interested in			Creating a resume			Writing a cover letter		
Type of Disability	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p
Mobility/physical disability	4.0	4	0.401	3.2	4	0.529	3.3	4	0.514	2.2	4	0.700
Medical disability/chronic illness	2.7	4	0.606	5.0	4	0.286	1.3	4	0.856	2.1	4	0.725
Mental health disability	12.1	4	**0.016***	6.0	4	0.202	16.6	4	**0.002***	32.5	4	**0.000***
Hearing disability	0.9	4	0.926	0.9	4	0.922	1.4	4	0.836	1.8	4	0.764
Cognitive/ intellectual/learning disability	7.4	4	0.118	6.6	4	0.162	7.9	4	0.094	18.3	4	0.001*
Visual disability	6.2	4	0.184	2.6	4	0.675	7.7	4	0.103	7.8	4	0.098
Other disabilities	0.3	4	0.990	1.8	4	0.766	3.0	4	0.552	2.3	4	0.676
Correlation between disability type & Job search difficulties	Using application technology			Interviewing			Requesting accommodations for the application/ Interviewing process			Filling out an application		
Type of Disability	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p
Mobility/physical disability	2.3	4	0.681	3.3	4	3.3	8.9	4	0.063	1.2	4	0.881
Medical disability/chronic illness	4.8	4	0.312	3.9	4	3.9	3.4	4	0.491	4.8	4	0.303
Mental health disability	2.8	4	**0.590***	11.3	4	11.3	20.3	4	**0.000***	2.6	4	0.631
Hearing disability	1.8	4	0.780	0.4	4	0.4	0.6	4	0.966	2.1	4	0.714
Cognitive/ intellectual/learning disability	12.6	4	**0.013***	15.6	4	15.6	19.1	4	**0.001***	4.4	4	0.350
Visual disability	7.9	4	0.097	0.47	4	0.7	4.8	4	0.308	9.8	4	**0.044***
Other disabilities	4.4	4	0.358	3.5	4	3.5	8.8	4	0.066	3.5	4	0.473

*A larger chi-square value indicates a greater deviation from the expected distribution, which is typically interpreted as more evidence against the null hypothesis. | Lower the p-value, (typically less than 0.05), the higher the significance. When p < 0.001, it indicates a highly significant association. When the values show 0.000, we express it as <0.001. it represents the probability of observing data as extreme or more extreme than what was observed if the null hypothesis were true.

BARRIERS IN THE PURSUIT OF WORK

The job search process was identified by survey respondents as one of the most significant barriers to employment, as shown in Table 2. 83% of respondents found job searching extremely challenging, with 43% indicating difficulties in finding jobs for which they are qualified. To better understand this issue, we must first explore what motivates individuals to seek new employment.

Survey participants indicated the aspects of a new job they valued most. The availability of accommodations was rated as extremely important by 58% of respondents, followed by location (55%) and the nature of the actual work (53%). Other considerations, such as company benefits (45%), diversity and inclusion efforts (44%), and workplace culture (42%), also ranked highly in importance (Table 3). These findings indicate that individuals

83%

Job Search Challenging

with disabilities prioritize having the necessary tools and accommodations to engage meaningfully in the workforce. Later survey data also suggests a relationship between accommodations and location, implying that remote or at-home work is highly valued when respondents indicate that location is extremely important. An inclusive workplace culture and environment also serve as significant motivators for individuals seeking new job opportunities.

58%

Accommodations

55%

Location

53%

Work

Furthermore, benefits such as health insurance and flexible work arrangements—excluding retirement savings and paid time off—are often considered more important than salary.

While the survey did not specifically address this issue, it is worth noting that some government assistance programs restrict eligibility based on income. Given this, the potential impact on access to these essential supports may have influenced some respondents' preference for benefits over salary. This underscores the importance of maintaining or even expanding health insurance coverage, including medical, dental, and vision care. It also encourages employers to consider additional wellness benefits, such as fitness programs, nutrition education, mental health support, health screenings, and stress management training.

Individuals with disabilities prioritize having the necessary tools and accommodations to engage meaningfully in the workforce.

Table-3: While searching for a new job, how important the following factors are

When searching for a new job, how important are the following	Not important at all	Slightly important	Neutral	Very important	Extremely important
Salary	1.6%	3.1%	17.7%	36.0%	41.6%
Benefits	3.3%	7.2%	19.1%	25.4%	45.0%
Retirement savings options	4.6%	14.3%	28.0%	27.5%	25.5%
Paid time off	2.6%	8.0%	23.6%	28.4%	37.5%
Availability of accommodations	2.4%	3.8%	13.0%	22.4%	58.4%
Company culture	29.9%	7.8%	20.8%	26.1%	42.4%
Company diversity and inclusion efforts	4.4%	7.2%	18.1%	26.3%	44.0%
Location	2.5%	3.0%	17.0%	22.1%	55.4%
Job title	10.3%	23.4%	38.5%	15.8%	11.9%
Job responsibilities	2.8%	6.7%	27.2%	33.1%	30.3%
Work	1.7%	2.2%	13.9%	29.5%	52.6%
Professional development opportunities	3.5%	11.0%	28.1%	25.8%	31.6%

Job descriptions are a primary indicator candidates use to assess whether they're qualifications meet a job's requirements. However, certain aspects of job descriptions can inadvertently create barriers for people with disabilities who could perform the job with reasonable accommodations. These aspects include complex language, excessive jargon, unclear physical requirements, reliance on tables for formatting, a lack of alternative formats like audio or large print versions, and failure to clearly specify essential job functions. Any of these factors could make it difficult for individuals with disabilities to understand the job expectations and apply if they are qualified.

Additionally, identifying and accessing job descriptions is a barrier in and of itself. Online job boards are the leading facilitator of the recruitment process for employers and jobseekers. But most career sites fail to meet accessibility standards outlined by **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG). WCAG is centered around four main accessibility principles: Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust that are then further divided into 12 specific guidelines. A study by Phenom People found that 89 of the Fortune 100 companies failed at least one of the six standards looked at in their study[6].

- **Color Contrasting** - Text color on top of backdrops or images must be a ratio of at least 4.5 to 1. This excludes large headings, incidental text, and logos.
- **Alt Text for Links and Images** - Text that describes image content so that it can be translated into print, braille, speech, or other forms.
- **Resize Font** - Text that can be resized up to 200% of its original size without assistive technology. This excludes image captions.
- **Keyboard Only Navigation** - Websites should be able to be navigated via keyboard with no use of mouse or mouse pad at any keystroke pace.
- **Focus Indicators** - Indicators highlight the web content users are interacting with and enable site navigation via the keyboard.
- **Using Tables** - Tables' structure and information should have text descriptions so that it can be translated into print, braille, speech, or other forms.

Phenom People reports that through inaccessible websites and job boards, companies are preventing upwards of one billion people with visual, speech, auditory, cognitive, mobility and neurological impairments from searching sites and applying for jobs[7].

Finally, as a majority of respondents in the Disability at Work survey identified as female, we would be remiss if we did not consider the role gender may also play in whether a person considers themselves qualified enough to apply for a role. A research article by **Mona Salwender, Dagmar Stahlberg** published in the European Journal of Social Psychology in September 2024[8], explores the commonly referenced statistic that women only apply for jobs when they are 100% qualified, whereas men apply when they are 60% qualified. In their studies, Salwender and Stahlberg, did not find gender differences when measuring application intentions depending on qualification fit but did note that women do contend with different social standards, workplace inequalities (i.e. gender pay gap), and emotional motivations such as a higher desire for preparedness, that could create higher psychological hurdles for women in the application process.

When participants were asked if they agreed with the statement, "My disability impacts my ability to get a new job," a significant majority responded affirmatively: 46% strongly agreed, and 28% agreed (Table 4).

74%

Believe Disability Impacts Ability to Get a Job

Disabled individuals continue to face challenges in being recognized as capable and valuable employees. Even in ideal conditions of accessibility and social acceptance, many disabilities require specific planning, specialized equipment, and both physical and emotional endurance—factors that non-disabled corporate leaders may overlook when developing workplace policies and processes, as well as shaping the overall culture of an organization. These areas are frequently shaped by ineffective systems and societal biases that unintentionally promote ableism.

Table-4: Support while looking for a new job & impact of disability

Factors related to support while looking for a new job & impact of disability	Percent
To what extent do you agree with the following statement: my disability impacts my ability to get a new job.	
Do not agree at all	4.4%
Slightly agree	11.3%
Neutral	10.1%
Agree	27.9%
Strongly agree	46.2%
In your experience looking for a job, what type of support has been most helpful?	
Online resources	35.6%
Community resources	26.7%
One to one mentorship	21.4%
Others	16.3%

SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Employers must recognize that traditional hiring systems are often flawed, reflecting narrow and biased views against marginalized groups, particularly the disability community. To better understand how employers can support individuals with disabilities throughout their employment journey, the Disability at Work survey examined which additional supports employers could provide, and the role of accommodations in retaining employees.

JOB SEARCH SUPPORT

Survey responses indicated that the most helpful resources when looking for a new job are online tools (36%) and community resources (27%). In comparison, one-on-one mentorships (21%) and other methods (16%) were ranked as less important (Table 4).

36%	27%	21%	16%
Online Tools	**Community Resources**	**One-to-one Mentorships**	**Other Methods**

While including a standard "equal opportunity employer" statement on company websites and job boards is a good starting point, a more proactive approach would be to clearly indicate that the organization provides accommodations for the application and interview processes, demonstrating openness and inclusivity for people with disabilities who may require additional supports. Employers may also consider providing application and interview tips on their websites and job boards to help jobseekers understand internal hiring processes.

Moreover, employers may want to consider partnering with community-based organizations, such as disability-focused nonprofits, veteran groups, and workforce and vocational rehabilitation centers. These organizations exist in many communities across the country and are actively engaged in helping individuals with disabilities, many of whom are seeking employment.

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of survey respondents stated that accommodations are extremely important to them when seeking new employment. Additionally, 56% reported that they had previously requested accommodations in their workplaces, while 45% found the process of requesting these accommodations to be extremely (35%) or very (10%) challenging. It is worth noting that 33% found the process of requesting an accommodation only slightly challenging, and 22% were neutral to the process (Tables 3 & 5). The most requested types of accommodations were for physical changes, with 38%, and policy enhancements, which were requested by 22%.

When we examined the correlation between disability type and the challenges faced in requesting accommodations, we identified significant association for individuals with medical disabilities/chronic illnesses, and mental health disabilities (see Table 6). These disabilities often vary in nature and severity, and their accommodation needs may be less straightforward, requiring more flexibility and sometimes additional time off. The difficulties in understanding and accommodating these disabilities highlight shortcomings in the American healthcare system, along with corporate corruption that prioritizes profit over people. Additionally, these issues may stem from a lack of education and inadequate policy around disability.

Table-5: Workplace accommodation

Factors related to workplace accommodation	Percent
Have you ever requested a workplace accommodation?	
Yes	55.7%
No	44.3%
How difficult was the process of requesting a workplace accommodation?	
Slightly challenging	33.3%
Neutral	21.8%
Very challenging	10.0%
Extremely challenging	34.8%
What type of accommodation(s) have you requested?	
Physical changes	38.0%
Accessible and assistive technologies	18.7%
Accessible communications	3.6%
Policy enhancements	22.0%
Others	17.8%

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as someone who has either a physical impairment (such as mobility, dexterity, or stamina issues, which may include conditions like arthritis, spinal cord injuries, limb differences, and muscular disorders) or a mental impairment that significantly limits one or more major life activities. This definition encompasses both visible and non-apparent (or hidden) disabilities.

Non-apparent disabilities may include, but are not limited to mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, personality disorders, autism, visual impairments, hearing loss, sensory and processing difficulties, cognitive impairments, and non-apparent health conditions (including diabetes, cancer, chronic pain, etc.). It is important to note that non-apparent conditions are often overlooked in the workplace.

A workplace accommodation is an adjustment made to a job or work environment, technology, or policy that enables an individual with a disability to do their job properly. Accommodations may include specialized equipment, modifications to the work environment, adjustments to work schedules, responsibilities, or company policies. It is also worth noting that most accommodations can usually be implemented for under $500, and many are free or low-cost including things like allowing for flexible hours, remote work options, or policy changes. Not all people with disabilities require the same type of accommodation, and some people with the same disability may require different accommodations.

45% **Found the process of requesting accommodations very or extremely challenging**

Table-6: Result of Chi-square test of association between disability type & asking for accommodation challenges

Association between disability type & asking for accommodation challenges.	How difficult was the process of requesting a workplace accommodation?		
Type of Disability	**χ2**	**df**	**p**
Mobility/physical disability	4.4	3	0.225
Medical disability/chronic illness	9.1	3	**0.028***
Mental health disability	14.2	3	**0.003***
Hearing disability	3.4	3	0.334
Cognitive/intellectual/learning disability	3.4	3	0.337
Visual disability	3.9	3	0.271
Other disabilities	7.2	3	0.066

*A larger chi-square value indicates a greater deviation from the expected distribution, which is typically interpreted as more evidence against the null hypothesis. | Lower the p-value, (typically less than 0.05), the higher the significance. When p < 0.001, it indicates a highly significant association. When the values show 0.000, we express it as <0.001. it represents the probability of observing data as extreme or more extreme than what was observed if the null hypothesis were true.

REMOTE WORK VS. RETURN TO OFFICE MANDATES

In 2022, the percentage of people with disabilities in the U.S. workforce reached a record high of 21.3% (up 2 percentage points from the previous year)[9]. This upward trend can be partly attributed to the shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as advancements in technology and a growing demand from workers for better work/life balance. However, many corporate employers have taken advantage of the end of the pandemic, reverted to traditional in-office 9-to-5 schedules. This return to in-office work directly impacts disabled workers who found new opportunities through remote work.

For example, in November 2024, Amazon.com Inc. announced a policy change that would implement a more rigorous vetting process for both new and existing remote workers. According to Bloomberg, these changes are making it much more challenging for disabled employees to obtain permission to work from home[10].

Employees impacted by the policy change have reported lengthy wait times and intrusive questioning to obtain remote work approval. Some employees are concerned that the new process is intended to decrease the chances of their requests being approved, while others believe it is a strategy to thin the workforce by pushing frustrated individuals to resign.

Research does support this theory. A recent survey by FlexJobs found, "56% of professionals know someone who has quit their job or plans to quit due to return-to-office mandates, with 63% of professionals saying they are even willing to take a pay cut to work remotely."[11]

The Disability at Work survey focused on factors related to remote work and return-to-office (RTO) mandates to gain a better understanding of the dynamics at-play. As noted earlier in this report, location is an extremely important motivator in looking for new work for those with disabilities. In the context of remote work, 59% indicated that the option to work from home was extremely important, while 22% found it very important. It should also be noted, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission does consider remote work to be a reasonable accommodation[12].

Sixty-six percent (66%) of survey respondents indicated that their companies do allow for remote work and 67% reported that their companies had not yet enacted a return to office policy, while 21% had been mandated to return to the office, and 12% have been able to work from home more. Additionally, of those that do work from home, most (46%) do so full-time (35 or more hours per week), and 32% do so part-time (25 hours or less per week), while 22% do so as needed.

81%

Find Remote Work Important

Of those that had experienced policy changes, 12% returned to the office, 33% transitioned to a hybrid model, 17% chose to resign in favor of looking for remote work elsewhere, and 6% were laid off as part of a staff reduction.

When asked about the comfort level of requesting to work from home, responses were quite mixed, with 25% saying they were extremely comfortable, 24% being very comfortable, and the remaining 51% being either neutral or less comfortable in making the request.

Table-7a: Remote Work

Factors related to Remote Work	Percent
Does your company allow remote work?	
Yes	33.8
No	66.2
How important is it for you to have the option to work from home, at least some of the time?	
Not important at all	3.6
Slightly important	7.8
Neutral	6.8
Very important	22.4
Extremely important	59.4
If you needed to, how comfortable would you feel requesting to work from home?	
Not comfortable at all	7.9
Slightly comfortable	19.9
Neutral	23.6
Very comfortable	24.1
Extremely comfortable	24.6

Table-7b: Remote Work

Factors related to Remote Work	Percent
Has your company made any changes to their work from home policy in the last year?	
Yes, we've had to return to the office more	21.4
Yes, we've been able to work from home more	12.0
No, the policy has not changed	66.7
How did your company's work from home policy change impact you?	
No change	31.3
I have returned to the office full-time	12.5
I have transitioned to a hybrid structure	32.8
I have chosen to resign in favor of looking for remote work elsewhere	17.2
I was laid off or part of a staff reduction	6.3
How many hours per week are you currently able to work remotely?	
Full-Time (35 or more hours per week)	46.0
Part-Time (25 hours or less per week)	31.7
As needed	22.3
How would you rank your productivity level in a remote setting compared to an office setting?	
Higher	37.1
Lower	12.9
Unchanged	50.0

In addition to policy changes, we looked at what difficulties, if any, people with disabilities experience while working remotely versus in-office. The majority of surveyed workers claim that remote work posed little to no challenges in regard to navigating time zones (68%), time management (50%), and access to Wi-Fi (64%). While maintaining social relationships (35%), good physical (36%) and mental health (38%), and a work/life balance (37%) were among the most challenging aspects of remote work, only marginally. Consistently, 87% of respondents believed their productivity to be unchanged or higher in a remote setting compared to an in-office setting (Table 8).

Alternatively, when asked about the most difficult aspects of working in an office, 59% of respondents cited commuting (transportation to and from work), 46% mentioned overstimulation (lighting, noise, etc.), and 43% pointed to environmental distractions (coworkers, etc.) as the biggest challenges. Social interactions (46%) and office accessibility (40%) were among the least challenging aspects of in-office work (Table 9).

Table-8: How difficult do you find the following aspects of working remotely?

How difficult do you find the following aspects of working remotely?	Not challenging at all	Slightly challenging	Neutral	Very challenging	Extremely challenging
Communicating/ collaborating with coworkers	28.6%	26.0%	20.1%	16.9%	8.4%
Communicating with managers/leadership	21.4%	22.7%	25.3%	16.9%	13.6%
Being in a different time zone than teammates	45.0%	22.5%	19.4%	4.7%	8.5%
Maintaining social relationships with coworkers	22.2%	18.4%	24.7%	18.4%	16.5%
Time management	30.4%	20.3%	22.3%	16.2%	10.8%
Finding reliable and/or affordable Wi-Fi	46.3%	17.9%	10.6%	8.9%	16.3%
Staying focused	27.6%	20.7%	22.1%	14.5%	15.2%
Maintaining good physical health	19.0%	16.5%	28.5%	17.7%	18.4%
Maintaining good mental health	23.1%	16.3%	23.1%	20.0%	17.5%
Maintaining a work/life balance	25.3%	15.8%	21.5%	20.3%	17.1%

Table-9: How difficult do you find the following aspects of working in an office?

How difficult do you find the following aspects of working in an office?	Not challenging at all	Slightly challenging	Neutral	Very challenging	Extremely challenging
Commuting (transportation to/from work)	9.8%	11.5%	19.5%	20.1%	39.1%
Office accessibility (doorways, desk set	24.5%	14.7%	28.7%	13.3%	18.9%
Over stimulation (lighting, noise, etc.)	22.2%	12.0%	19.6%	24.1%	22.2%
Distractions (coworkers, etc.)	14.2%	19.1%	23.5%	21.0%	22.2%
Social interactions	20.1%	25.8%	25.2%	10.7%	18.2%

We examined the correlation between types of disabilities and the challenges faced in-office versus remote settings. Our findings indicate that remote work generally supports employees with disabilities better, resulting in fewer difficulties. Specifically, we observed that nearly all types of disabilities were associated with difficulties related to in-office overstimulation. Additionally, respondents with medical disabilities or chronic illnesses reported challenges in three out of the five in-office difficulty categories covered in the survey: commuting, office accessibility, and overstimulation. Those with mental health and cognitive/intellectual/learning disabilities experienced more difficulties with distractions in the workplace (Table 10).

Table-10: Result of Chi-square test of association between disability type & in office challenges

Association between disability type & In office challenges	Commuting (transportation to/from work)			Office accessibility (doorways, desk set-up, etc.)			Over-stimulation (lighting, noise, etc.)			Distractions (co-workers, etc.)			Social interactions		
Type of Disability	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p
Mobility/physical disability	2.5	4	0.646	6.1	4	0.191	17.4	4	**0.002***	8.4	4	0.078	8.5	4	0.076
Medical disability/chronic illness	16.9	4	**0.002***	12.4	4	**0.014***	11.4	4	**0.023***	5.9	4	0.208	2.2	4	0.692
Mental health disability	9.2	4	0.055	2.2	4	0.699	18.0	4	**0.001***	11.2	4	**0.025***	8.3	4	0.080
Hearing disability	8.9	4	0.063	0.6	4	0.963	1.8	4	0.777	3.4	4	0.486	3.0	4	0.565
Cognitive/ intellectual/learning disability	4.9	4	0.298	6.3	4	0.180	15.1	4	0.005*	11.4	4	0.022*	8.7	4	0.068
Visual disability	8.0	4	0.093	1.8	4	0.774	10.4	4	**0.034***	3.1	4	0.541	3.4	4	0.492
Other disabilities	8.2	4	0.084	1.6	4	0.813	10.1	4	**0.038***	8.9	4	0.064	2.0	4	0.728

Table-11: Result of Chi-square test of association between disability type & Remote work challenges

Association between disability type & In office challenges	Communicating/ collaborating with coworkers			Communicating with managers/ leadership			Being in a different time zone than teammates			Maintaining social relationships with coworkers			Time management		
Type of Disability	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p
Mobility/physical disability	5.0	4	0.291	9.3	4	0.054	4.0	4	0.407	2.1	4	0.715	3.1	4	0.540
Medical disability/chronic illness	4.9	4	0.299	2.8	4	0.584	9.8	4	**0.044***	2.4	4	0.669	0.5	4	0.977
Mental health disability	8.4	4	0.079	7.5	4	0.113	3.6	4	0.461	1.0	4	0.908	6.8	4	0.147
Hearing disability	1.4	4	0.843	5.3	4	0.254	5.2	4	0.264	5.5	4	0.244	3.0	4	0.559
Cognitive/ intellectual/learning disability	2.3	4	0.674	4.3	4	0.364	3.2	4	0.523	6.5	4	0.167	5.7	4	0.220
Visual disability	6.8	4	0.145	1.3	4	0.860	7.4	4	0.115	1.1	4	0.887	1.0	4	0.909
Other disabilities	6.5	4	0.166	22.0	4	**0.000***	2.0	4	0.734	0.8	4	0.0939	67	4	0.155

*A larger chi-square value indicates a greater deviation from the expected distribution, which is typically interpreted as more evidence against the null hypothesis. | Lower the p-value, (typically less than 0.05), the higher the significance. When p < 0.001, it indicates a highly significant association. When the values show 0.000, we express it as <0.001. it represents the probability of observing data as extreme or more extreme than what was observed if the null hypothesis were true.

In contrast, the remote work environment showed less association of challenges to different disability types. Instead, we identified significant associations between specific disabilities and unique challenges. For instance, respondents with mental health disabilities primarily faced difficulties in maintaining good physical and mental health, while those with medical disabilities/chronic illnesses experienced more issues related to navigating time zone differences (Table 11).

It is the opinion of Disability Solutions that, beyond the impact to individuals with disabilities, RTO policies can hinder progress in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). As previously mentioned, office cultures, policies, and procedures are often influenced by implicit biases and ableism. This can result in the exclusion of people with disabilities, creating barriers to entry and inequalities in the workplace.

37%
More Productive in Remote Setting

DISMANTLING WORKPLACE BARRIERS

People with disabilities face numerous barriers throughout the employee lifecycle, from accessing applications to overcoming biases in the hiring process and securing reasonable accommodations. Disability is a form of diversity that is often misunderstood or underestimated and, as a result, excluded from the workplace, despite the many benefits that individuals with disabilities can bring to organizations. By creating a shared understanding of disability and the challenges faced by individuals in this community, we aim to encourage people to truly listen to the perspectives of those living with disabilities, rather than relying on stereotypes or biases. Both individuals and organizations can play a vital role in dismantling the barriers to employment for people with disabilities.

A CULTURE OF TRUST

Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents indicated that company culture is an important factor when searching for a new job. Disability Solutions has published numerous resources over the years that emphasize the significance of company culture and the importance of supporting individuals with disabilities. Additionally, trust is a crucial element in the relationship between employees and their employers. It is essential to recognize that genuine efforts to understand and support people with disabilities are vital for fostering and maintaining trust in the workplace. Companies can take several steps to organically build a solid culture of trust and inclusion that is welcoming to people with disabilities.

ENCOURAGE EDUCATION, TRANSPARENCY, & COMMUNICATION

Diversity and inclusion education is essential for a successful workplace. Businesses should provide relevant training aligned with their diversity goals. Investing in this type of corporate education creates a culture of inclusivity and respect, leading to a more satisfied and productive workforce.

Sharing critical information with employees, such as goals, policies, successes, and challenges, instills confidence in company leadership. Encourage open discussions and provide opportunities for employees to give feedback through anonymous questionnaires or surveys. Set clear measurable goals and prioritize incremental improvements over time. Share data openly in and outside of your organization.

An excellent and effective way to stay attuned and collect feedback from team members with disabilities is to create disability-focused Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Such groups allow employees with disabilities to voice concerns and get support from others with similar experiences and offer networking opportunities.

BUILD WITH DISABILITY IN MIND

Meaningful change begins with recognizing and understanding biases. By acknowledging systemic and policy biases and building with this awareness, company leaders can take important steps to transform the workplace in significant ways.

- Evaluate current processes and policies to identify areas that may overlook or fail to accommodate people with disabilities. Set clear goals for improvement and regularly monitor progress towards those goals.

- Implement accessible hiring practices to ensure that job advertisements, job boards, applicant tracking systems, job descriptions, and applications are fully inclusive and accessible. Additionally, make accommodations available during the application, screening, and interview processes. Consider offering onboarding and policy materials in multiple formats to accommodate different disability needs.

- Ensure that your physical office environment is accessible to everyone. Establish policies and procedures that allow for and deliver accommodations as needed.

PRIORITIZE EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Take proactive steps to ensure that people with disabilities feel seen and appreciated in the workplace. Provide inclusion training to empower employees with the knowledge and skills to effectively include and accommodate people with disabilities and recognize and address their own biases. Reevaluate processes and policies to ensure equitable practices. It is crucial to create an inclusive work environment and establish supportive policies for workplace accommodations when needed.

CONCLUSION

By taking a proactive approach to disability inclusion, employers can drive meaningful progress and create a more equitable workplace. Recognizing and addressing barriers, while fostering accessibility, allows everyone to engage fully and contribute to a diverse and thriving environment. The Disability at Work survey provides valuable insights into the significant challenges that individuals with disabilities face in securing stable and inclusive long-term employment. Additionally, the study highlights key opportunities for employers to enhance their practices and better support all employees.

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